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Motywy zachowań proekologicznych w kontekście zmieniającego się poziomu świadomości ekologicznej Polaków

Motives of pro-environmental behavior in the context of changing level of Poles ecological awareness

Celem niniejszego opracowania było wskazanie i scharakteryzowanie motywów wybranych proekologicznych zachowań konsumentów na tle zmian poziomu świadomości ekologicznej Polaków. Podstawowe dla realizacji tego celu informacje pochodziły z przeprowadzonych przez autorkę badań pierwotnych – dwóch badań ankietowych zrealizowanych w 2012 roku na niereprezentatywnych próbach studentów Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach. Zmiany w poziomie świadomości ekologicznej Polaków analizowano na podstawie informacji pochodzących ze źródeł wtórnych – raportów z ogólnopolskich badań przeprowadzonych przez wyspecjalizowane agencje badawcze. Podstawowym wnioskiem opracowania jest stwierdzenie, że proekologiczne zachowania konsumentów mają charakter polimotywacyjny. Pomimo rosnącego poziomu świadomości ekologicznej Polaków przesłanki ekologiczne nie są też podstawową przyczyną ich proekologicznych zachowań.

Słowa kluczowe: motywy, proekologiczne zachowania konsumentów, świadomość ekologiczna

Introduction

The impact of individual consumption on the environment has become an issue of increasing concern since the concept of sustainable development was introduced and formally adopted to the economic policy of the well developed countries. The list of behaviors that may be undertaken by individuals and are recommended to help sustain the environment is quite long. It encompasses both buying behaviors and behaviors connected with the way of handling the purchased products. A key role in achieving a sustainability goals is also played by intentional non-consumption driven by and resulting in environment

conservation.¹ Regardless of its nature none pro-ecological activity may occur without a background of one's beliefs and knowledge, values and attitudes generally called environmental consciousness. This term which arose out of everyday language doesn't have an unequivocal definition in the literature. Ecological awareness may be defined in a broad or narrow way. According to the narrow definition it represents a human knowledge, views and images of the environment. The broad definition treats this concept as a part of social consciousness manifested in a way of thinking and experiences of specific people as well as in the socially accepted standards of understanding, experiencing and evaluating the nature.² Thus the environmental consciousness is a multidimensional construct with a cognitive, affective and conative components.³ The first one refers to the possession of subjective knowledge by the consumer about the environmental consequences of his action. The second one includes the anxieties, expectations and emotive responses of an individual as well as his emotional judgment about the consequences of his actions to the environment. The third component of environmental awareness makes reference to the behavioral tendencies of the individual with regard to the object. It expresses consumers' willingness to undertake pro-environmental action.

Undoubtedly an analysis of the level of environmental consciousness of consumers provides an appropriate background for considerations on motives of their green behaviors. Motivation defined as an activation, drive and/or reason to engage in certain behavior and to maintain it, determines the direction and the strength or intensity of that behavior.⁴ In terms of environment protection the knowledge of motives underlying green behaviors may help to understand the gap between pro-environmental attitudes that are formed on the base of environmental awareness and the real consumer behaviors. An existence of such a gap is confirmed by researchers⁵ and explains why environmentally conscious individuals not necessarily undertake pro-environmental activities. In consequence the rise of environmental awareness can't be directly translated into the increase of frequency of green behaviors.

¹ H. Cherrier, I. R. Black, M. Lee: Intentional non-consumption for sustainability. Consumer resistance and/or anti-consumption? *European Journal of Marketing* vol.45 no. 11/12 2011, p. 1757 – 1767.

² A. Papuziński: Świadomość ekologiczna w świetle teorii i praktyki (Zarys politologicznego modelu świadomości ekologicznej). *Problemy Ekorozwoju* vol. 1 no. 1 2006, p. 33 – 40.

³ S. Dembkowski, S. Hanmer – Lloyd: The Environmental Value – Attitude – System Model: a Framework to Guide the Understanding of Environmentally – Conscious Consumer Behaviour. *Journal of Marketing Management* no. 10 1994, p. 593 – 603.

⁴ M. J. Evans, L. Moutinho, W. F. van Raaij: *Applied Consumer Behaviour*. Addison – Wesley, Harlow 1997, p. 20.

⁵ G. K. Dagher, Omar S. Itani: The influence of Environmental Attitude, Environmental Concern and Social Influence on Green Purchasing Behavior. *Review of Business Research* vol. 12 no.2 2012, p. 104 – 110.

Purpose and methodology

The main purpose of this paper is to identify and characterize the motives of selected pro-environmental consumer behaviors on the background of changes in the level of environmental awareness of Poles. Achieving this objective requires the use of both secondary and primary sources of information. While determining the level of Poles environmental consciousness and analyzing its changes the information from research reports published by CBOS, TNS Poland, Our Earth Foundation and The Institute for Sustainable Development were taken into account. The main (from the viewpoint of the analyzed issues) information come from two field research projects carried out by the author in 2012. The first of them concerned the pro-environmental behaviors in the household and the second environmentally friendly non-consumption. In both studies the respondents were students from the University of Economics in Katowice (there was only a slight percentage of respondents not belonging to this group in the second research project) and the samples had the same size – each of them consisted of 213 consumers. The samples were similar also in terms of basic demographic and economic characteristics. They were dominated by women and both were comprised primarily of young people (under 25 years old). Respondents represented mainly four- and three-person households, and their households were relatively wealthy. It should be also noted that all the respondents were residents of Silesia and both samples were dominated by city dwellers.

Although a survey was the method of research used in both projects, the questions concerning the motives of pro-environmental behaviors have been scaled differently in each of the questionnaires. In the first study consumers were asked to point to the one, the most important reason of pro-environmental behavior in the household. In the second project each of the respondents was asked to distribute 100 points among the various motives of subsequent green non-consumption actions.

Research findings and discussion

Changes in ecological awareness of Poles

Although an environmental awareness of Poles aroused the interest of researchers already in the 80s of twentieth century⁶, this problem is being researched cyclically and on a large scale only since the 90s. Most studies of Poles environmental consciousness is a part of broader research projects related to the implementation of governmental and non-governmental policies and

⁶ K. Górnicki: Wybrane problemy badań świadomości ekologicznej. Interes jako kategoria badania świadomości ekologicznej. [W]: Kapitał ekologiczny mieszkańców Polski Północno-Wschodniej. Red. K. Górnicki, Fundacja Zielone Płuca Polski, Białystok – Bydgoszcz – Toruń – Olsztyn – Warszawa 2010, p. 18.

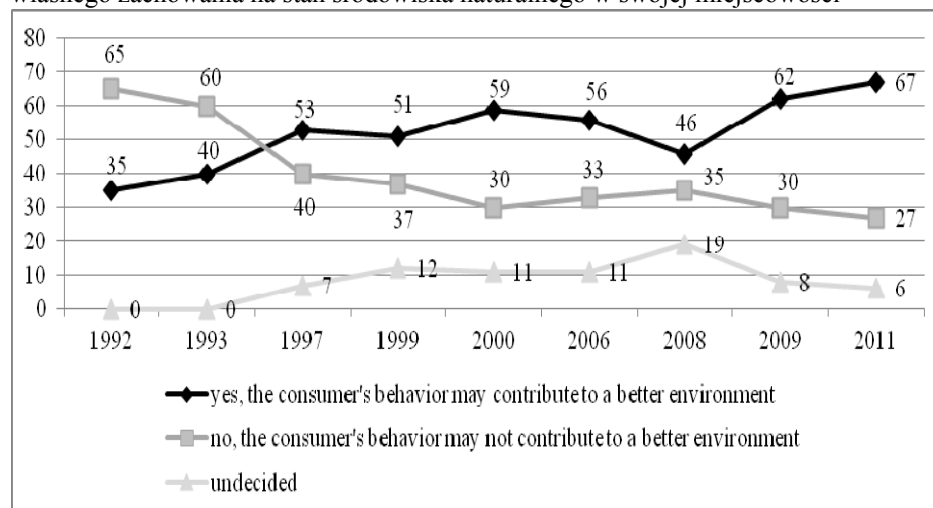
programs for sustainable development. It should be noted that the methodology of these studies is not uniform.

Taking into account all the shortcomings of the research that are conducted on this topic one can easily perceive that their results indicate a significant interest of Polish consumers in environmental issues. Also the level of their environmental consciousness is evaluated as gradually increasing.

According to the outcomes of research conducted in 2008 a vast majority of Poles - about 70%, states that the environment protection doesn't stand in opposition to the economic growth.⁷ Furthermore 67% of Polish consumers surveyed in 2011 by CBOS had a sense that their actions may have a positive impact on the natural environment in their place of living.⁸ The percentage of Poles expressing such a conviction has systematically increased during the years 1992 - 2011. Figure 1 shows these changes in details.

Fig. 1. Changes in the percentage of Poles who have seen the possibility of a positive impact of their behavior on the state of natural environment in their locality

Wyk. 1. Zmiany odsetka Polaków dostrzegających możliwość pozytywnego wpływu własnego zachowania na stan środowiska naturalnego w swojej miejscowości



Source: Zachowania proekologiczne Polaków. Komunikat z Badań CBOS, Warszawa, marzec 2011 http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_023_11.PDF, access: 27.02.2013.

⁷ A. Bałtromiuk, T. Burger: Polacy w zwierniadle ekologicznym. Raport z badań nad świadomością ekologiczną Polaków w 2008 roku. Institute For Sustainable Development, <http://www.inisd.org.pl/theme/UploadFiles/File/publikacje/raporty/polacywzwierniadleekologicznym.pdf>, access: 27.02.2013.

⁸ Zachowania proekologiczne Polaków. Komunikat z Badań CBOS, Warszawa, marzec 2011 http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_023_11.PDF, access: 27.02.2013.

These results are also confirmed by the research conducted in 2012 by the Biostat at the commission of Our Earth Foundation.⁹ 83.9% of respondents answering the question about who they think is the most responsible for the state of the environment in the first place indicated the answer "everyone". Only 5% of researched individuals as the most responsible entity chose "state authorities", 3.7% "industry plants" and 2.8% "city authorities".

In turn the information obtained in a research conducted in 2012 by TNS at the commission of the Polish Ministry of the Environment show that the level of Poles environmental awareness is still not satisfactory despite its growth over the recent years.¹⁰ Admittedly 76% of respondents agreed with the statement that the environment protection can have a positive impact on the economic development of the country, however, only 54% of consumers surveyed by TNS found that the state of the environment to the greatest extent depends on the "activity of each of us."

The level of ecological awareness of researched consumers

In the course of the surveys that were conducted by the author the level of environmental consciousness was evaluated only through a measurement of its cognitive component. In the first study, respondents were asked whether their everyday behavior and their consumer decisions influence the state of natural environment. In the second one, the researched individuals were asked to make the similar evaluations concerning only the non-consumption actions. Furthermore in both research projects this problem was analyzed separately taking into account the state of the environment in the closest surroundings of the consumer (neighborhood, city, region) and considering a global environment (taking into account the environment of the entire country, continent, world).

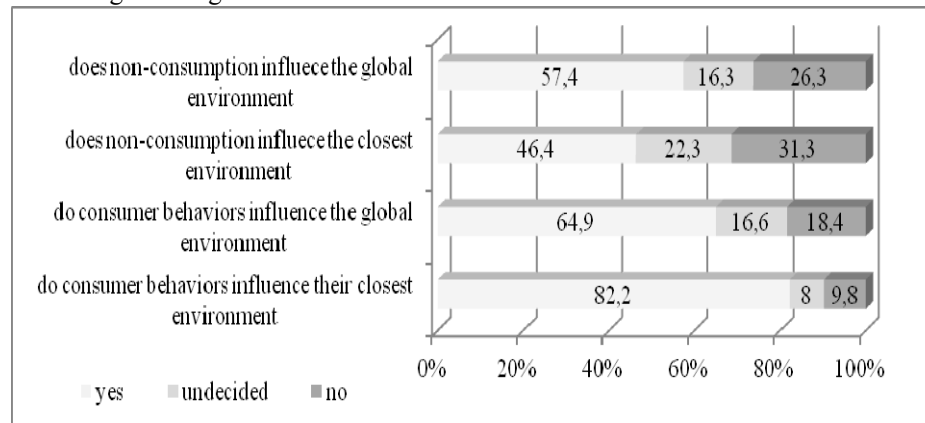
The results of both research projects show that generally speaking, the respondents are conscious that their behaviors influence the natural environment. However there was a distinct difference of evaluations for the subjectively perceived scale of such impact. In the first study, consumers were declaring that through their everyday behaviors, lifestyle and consumer decisions they influence primarily the closest surroundings. There was recorded the opposite situation in the second study. While restricting their considerations only to the non-consumption actions respondents first of all indicated on their consequences to the global environment. A compilation of the responses from the both samples is presented on figure 2.

⁹ Badanie świadomości osobistego wpływu człowieka na środowisko. Wyniki – 2012. Fundacja Nasza Ziemia, <http://www.nfosigw.gov.pl/gfx/nfosigw/userfiles/files/aktualnosci/2012/09/raport-z-badania-opinii-publicznej-2012.pdf>, access: 2.03.2013.

¹⁰ Badanie świadomości i zachowań ekologicznych mieszkańców Polski. Raport TNS Polska dla Ministerstwa Środowiska, Warszawa 2012, http://www.mos.gov.pl/g2/big/2012_11/037ac15934792054904ccafce588677c.pdf, access: 3.03.2013.

Fig. 2. Subjective assessment of impact of consumer behaviors on the environment according to the percentage of indications

Wyk. 2. Subiektywna ocena wpływu zachowań konsumentów na stan środowiska naturalnego według odsetka wskazań



Source: Field data.

The motives of pro-ecological behaviors of researched consumers

In both discussed research projects a third-person technique was applied in the questions about the motives of pro-environmental behaviors. Accordingly respondents were not directly asked about the reasons of their actions, but they had to evaluate why the "other people" behave in the described manner.

While researching the motives of pro-environmental behaviors taking place in the household, the different aspects and manifestations of such activities were taken into account. Respondents were asked to point out the most important reasons of:

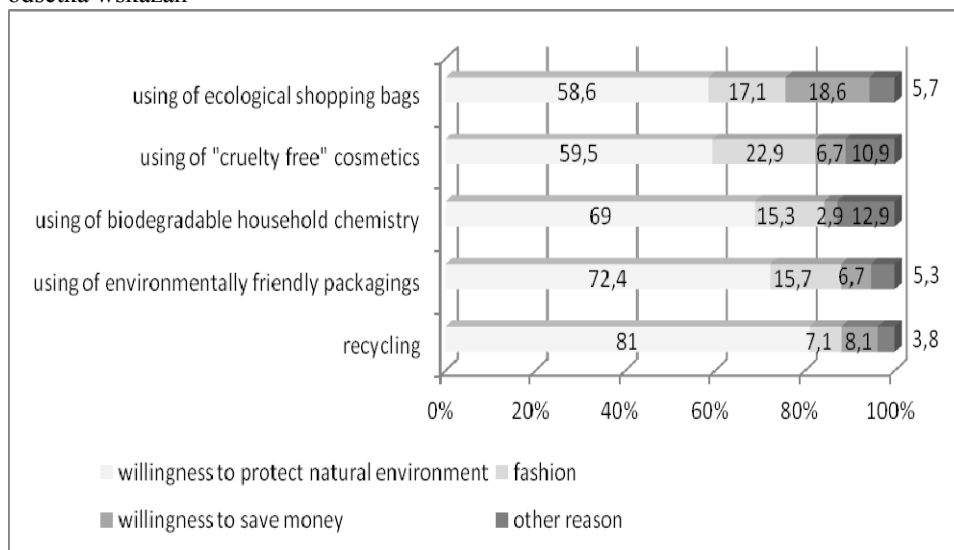
1. consumption of green products – organic food, cosmetics made of biocomponents, cosmetics not tested on animals („cruelty free”), biodegradable household chemistry,
2. usage of environmentally friendly packaging and ecological shopping bags,
3. recycling,
4. limiting the usage of natural resources (of water, electricity and natural gas),
5. green non-consumption behaviors – renunciation of using a car for the benefit of public transportation, biking and walking.

The research results indicate that only some of the described behaviors are predominantly motivated by willingness to protect the natural environment. This situation applies to recycling and to using of: environmentally friendly

packaging, biodegradable household chemistry, "cruelty free" cosmetics and ecological shopping bags. It has been illustrated on the figure 3.

Fig. 3. Green behaviors that are motivated mainly by environmental concerns according to the percentage of indications

Wyk. 3. Proekologiczne zachowania motywowane głównie troską o środowisko według odsetka wskazań

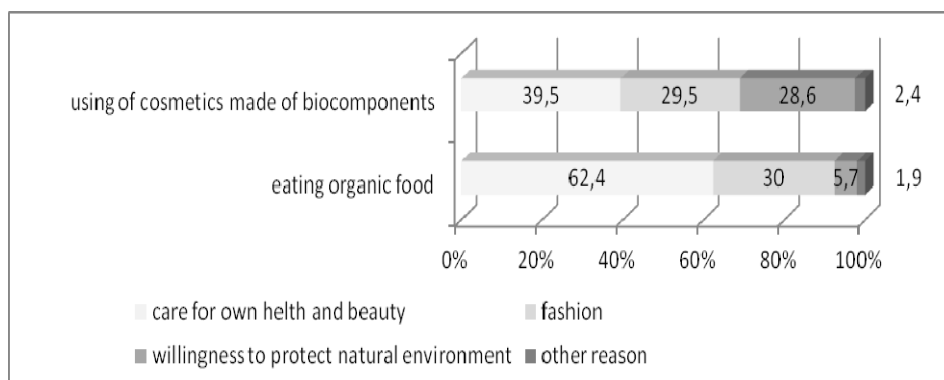


Source: Field data.

While analyzing the most important motives of two subsequent green behaviors - eating organic food and using cosmetics made of ecological components, respondents the most frequently indicated a desire to care for their own health and beauty. Such a motivation can be linked to environment protection only in indirect way - if one assume a narrow, anthropocentric approach to the issue. Figure 4 shows a percentage decomposition of indications of motives concerning organic food consumption and usage of ecological cosmetics.

Fig. 4. Green behaviors that are motivated mainly by caring for own health and beauty according to the percentage of indications

Wyk. 4. Proekologiczne zachowania, które są motywowane głównie dbałością o własne zdrowie i urodę według odsetka wskazań

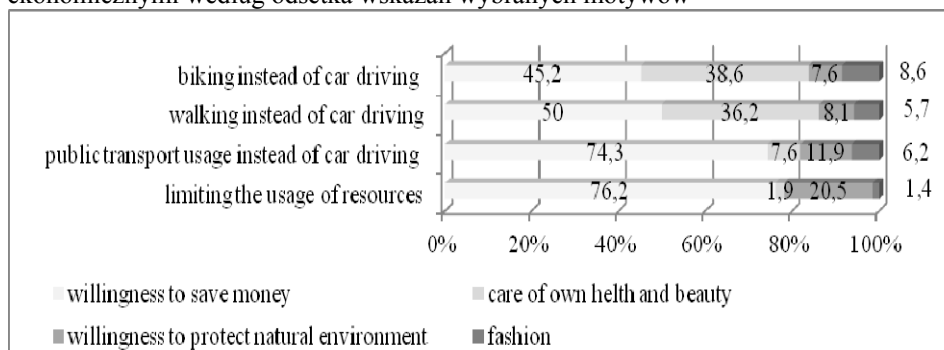


Source: Field data.

Economic premises were the most frequent indicated motives of reducing the consumption of resources in a household and renunciation of using a car for the benefit of other means of transportation. The most important motives of these behaviors according to the percentage of indications is presented on figure 5.

Fig. 5. Green behaviors that are motivated mainly by economic considerations according to the percentage of indications of chosen motives

Wyk. 5. Proekologiczne zachowania, które są motywowane głównie względami ekonomicznymi według odsetka wskazań wybranych motywów



Source: Field research.

In-depth research of factors motivating green non-consumption behaviors was conducted in the second project. Comparing to the first one the scope of analyzed non-consumption actions was significantly expanded in this research. Besides the previously analyzed reasons of limiting the consumption of resources and limiting the car use for the benefit of other means of transportation, respondents had to evaluate the motives of following behaviors:

1. resignation or restriction of purchasing products in environmentally harmful packages,

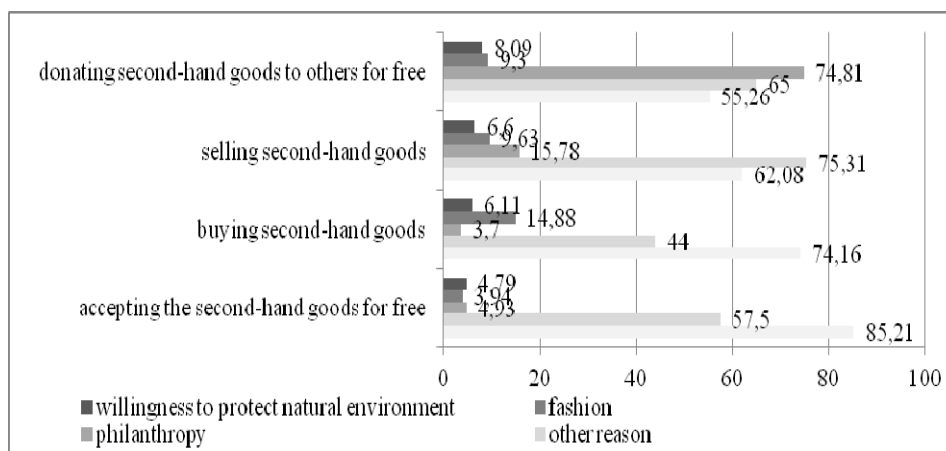
2. resignation or restriction of purchasing cosmetics that were tested on animals,
3. resignation or restriction of purchasing environmentally harmful household chemistry,
4. resignation or restriction of usage of environmentally unfriendly shopping bags,
5. participation in consumer boycotts,
6. buying second-hand goods e.g. on Internet auctions, in second hand shops,
7. selling one's second-hand goods e.g. on Internet auctions,
8. accepting the second-hand goods for free,
9. donating second-hand goods to others for free.

With regard to the restriction of consumption of resources and limitation of car usage, answers of the respondents fully confirmed the results obtained in the previous study. The prevailing motive of such a behaviors is, according to researched consumers a willingness to save money. High ratings have been also awarded to the other motives than those mentioned in the question. In case of limiting consumption of resources these were consumer's habits and advertising. With regard to the behaviors connected with a limitation of car usage there were mentioned motives of convenience (particularly in a case of resignation from using a car for benefit of public transport) and the premises arising from the care of one's health and beauty.

According to the decomposition of average ratings, a willingness to save money is also a major reason of buying and selling the second hand goods and receiving for free used stuff from other consumers. Among the relatively highly rated other reasons of such behaviors there were respectively: convenience of shopping, the willingness to save time, the opportunity to purchase unique products in this way, the intention of getting rid of redundant products, the willingness to earn money, and in the case of accepting the second-hand goods for free also a sentiment to certain goods (e.g. family keepsakes) and social norms (it is not befit to refuse a gift). In turn if the consumer himself acts as a donor (i.e. donates his second-hand goods to other consumers for free) according to the respondents he is driven mainly by a desire to help others. Among the other reasons of this behavior there were mentioned a desire to get rid of unnecessary goods and dislike for their disposal. A detailed decomposition of the average ratings for these behaviors has been shown on figure 6.

Fig. 6. Motives of paid and unpaid exchange of used goods made by consumers according the average ratings

Wyk. 6. Motywy odpłatnej i nieodpłatnej wymiany przez konsumentów używanych rzeczy według średnich ocen

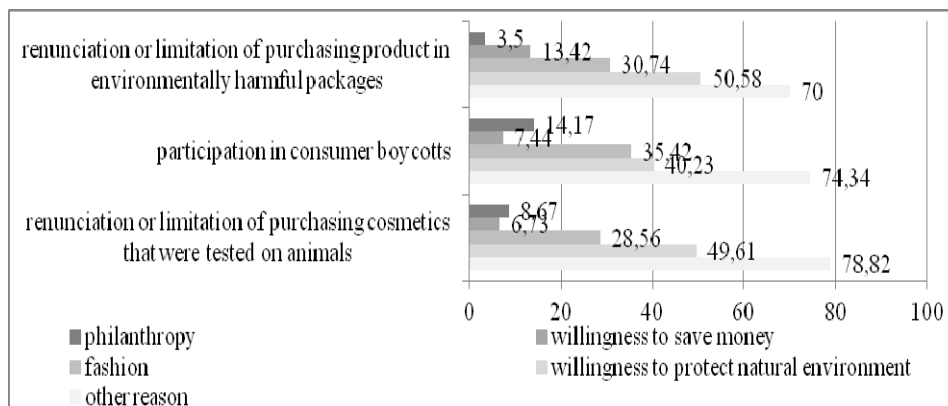


Source: Field data.

According to the statements of the researched consumers there can be also distinguished the group of pro-environmental non-consumption behaviors driven by the motives not mentioned in the question. However these motives are indirectly related to environmental protection and this protection itself has been also highly rated by the respondents. This situation applies to renunciation or limitation of purchasing product in environmentally harmful packages, renunciation or limitation of purchasing cosmetics that have been tested on animals and participation in consumer boycotts. Among other reasons for such behaviors consumers indicated respectively: a conviction that non-ecological packaging is perishable, ethical considerations including a willingness to help animals and sensitivity to their fate, a desire to cut a dash in front of other consumers. A particular attention should be paid to the fact that respondents have been pronouncing a close relationship between buying "cruelty free" cosmetics and joining consumer boycotts. Figure 7 shows the detailed decomposition of average ratings for mentioned behaviors' motives.

Fig. 7. Behaviors indirectly motivated by willingness to protect environment according to the average ratings of motives

Wyk. 7. Zachowania pośrednio motywowane chęcią ochrony środowiska według średnich ocen poszczególnych motywów

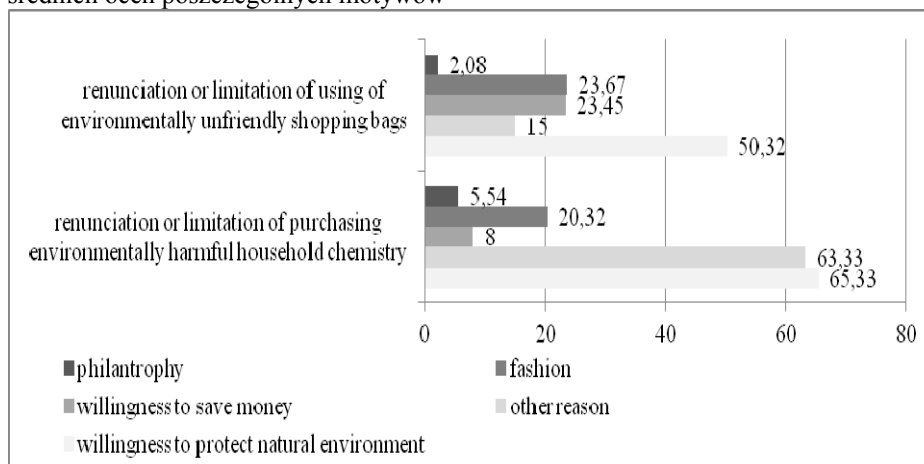


Source: Field data.

From among all the thirteen green non-consumption behaviors included in the question only two of them have been perceived as directly driven by ecological premises. According to the researched consumers the environment protection is the most important reason of renunciation or limitation of purchasing environmentally harmful household chemistry and renunciation or limitation of using of environmentally unfriendly shopping bags. Average ratings of motives of such an actions are shown on figure 8.

Fig. 8. Behaviors that are directly motivated by willingness to protect the environment according to the average ratings of motives

Wyk. 8. Zachowania bezpośrednio motywowane chęcią ochrony środowiska według średnich ocen poszczególnych motywów



Source: Field research.

Conclusions

Summing up the discussed issues it should be said that environmentally friendly consumer behaviors are driven simultaneously by more than one motive. Among the identified motives there are positive and negative premises as well as internal and external ones. This multiplicity and diversity of motives the most probably results from a wide scope of behaviors that can be considered as environmentally friendly ones. It is also the most likely reason why, despite growing and relatively high level of general environmental awareness of Poles, only a part of analyzed behaviors was linking by respondents with environmental motivation. In particular it seems to be important that a considerable number of green behaviors is motivated primarily by economic incentives.

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Summary:

The purpose of the present study was to identify and characterize the motives of selected pro-environmental consumer behaviors on the background of changes in the level of ecological awareness of Poles. Taking into account this goal the basic information derived from the field research conducted by the author – two surveys carried out in 2012 on unrepresentative samples of students of University of Economic in Katowice. Changes in the level of Poles environmental consciousness were based on information that originate from secondary sources – reports from nationwide researches conducted by specialized research agencies. This article concluded that environmentally friendly consumer behaviors are driven simultaneously by more than one motive. Even though the level of Poles environmental awareness is growing the ecological premises are not the main driving force of their pro-ecological behaviors.

Key words: motives, pro-ecological consumer behavior, ecological awareness

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