

THE PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF ELECTROMOBILITY BY ENTERPRISES AS A COMPONENT PART OF GREEN MARKETING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

Research Background: Consideration for the environment is a very current social phenomenon nowadays. Responsible behaviour towards the environment is becoming not only a modern business concept, but also an important factor in companies' competitiveness. Social responsibility is becoming an integral part of corporate strategies. And it is precisely the concept of corporate social responsibility that is the basic prerequisite for the use of green marketing activities. A responsible approach to society was included among the criteria for assessing organizations and their values,

Purpose of the article: For this reason, the aim of the contribution is to find out whether the use of electric vehicles by a company can positively influence the perception of socially responsible company' communication, by all consumers and individual generations as well, because the key factor of the socially responsible company's success is its appropriate communication with target groups.

Methods: Due to the nature of the research objective, two-dimensional descriptive statistics Chi-square test, Index and Mediation analysis were used. The results indicate the positive mediation role of the use of electric cars on the perception of socially responsible company' communication.

Findings & Value added: The relationship between the concept of social responsibility and the reputation of the organization is a current topic because the concept helps to create value and thanks to it the organization builds goodwill and a sustainable competitive advantage. Based on the current requirements of institutions of public interest and the governments of European countries themselves, we can expect that vehicles with alternative drives, such as the electric car, will increasingly come to the fore.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; green marketing; electromobility; mediation

JEL Classification: M31; D91; R00

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility, together with the issue of sustainable development, have been among the most discussed topics in recent years. Several companies are convinced that spreading goodwill together with solving social and environmental issues will make it possible to leave a permanent mark that will remain here for future generations. The essence of the concept of corporate social responsibility lies in the fact that companies do not focus only on profit, but above all on sustainable growth and development. In addition to their economic activities, they also pay attention to social and environmental aspects and emphasize that the mentioned interests do not have to be in conflict, but on the contrary, they can work in mutual cooperation and thus increase their efficiency.

The natural environment is part of the company's marketing environment, and therefore it is logical that its protection should be an integral part of the company's marketing strategy. It is green marketing, the basic premise of which is the corporate social responsibility concept, that represents an environmentally oriented and responsible marketing approach, the application of which is continuously gaining momentum in almost all developed and developing countries (Nadányiová et al., 2015; Nadányiová, 2016a). The starting point for the application of green marketing is therefore an orientation towards environmental production, the sale of environmentally friendly products and the overall behavior of companies that can be described as "friendly" to the environment (Nadányiová & Kramárová, 2013; 2014).

Green marketing is an important subject of academic research, the essence of which consists in trying to solve the social dimension of marketing in terms of the use of environmental resources, the social and environmental impact of current marketing and the greening of various aspects of traditional marketing. In its essence, green marketing represents a holistic management approach and does not only concern the promotion and sale of products with environmental characteristics. Green marketing also includes more than just building a positive image of the company (Nadányiová et al., 2015). This way of perception is confirmed by the definition of Peattie (1995), who emphasizes a holistic perception of green marketing and defines it as: a holistic management process adapted to identify, anticipate, and satisfy the requirements of various stakeholders in a profitable and sustainable manner. Responsible behavior towards the environment is becoming not only a modern business concept, but also an important factor in the competitiveness of companies (Porter, Kramer, 2007; Porter, Kramer, 2011; Calabrese et al., 2013). According to the study "Europeans' attitudes towards the issue of sustainable consumption and production", which was carried out in 2009 by the Gallup organization on a sample of 26,500 inhabitants of the European Union, eight out of ten respondents admitted that the impact of a product on the environment is an important element for them in purchasing decisions (Gallup, 2009).

A responsible approach to society was included among the criteria for assessing organizations and their values. The relationship between the concept of social responsibility and the reputation of the organization is a current topic because the concept helps to create value and thanks to it the organization builds a goodwill and a sustainable competitive advantage. Scientific experts emphasize that organizations use their corporate and brand goodwill (Pallathadka and Pallathadka, 2022; Srivastava et al., 2022; Ramu and Vethirajan, 2019), reputation (Flores-Hernández, et al., 2020; Javed et al., 2019; Singh and Misra, 2021), image (Lu et al., 2020; Suhartini and Pertiwi, 2021; Phan et al., 2021), trust (Abd-El-Salam, 2021; Le et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2021) and loyalty (Lu et al., 2020; Latif et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021) build based on the implementation of corporate social responsibility activities. Corporate social responsibility and its direction can be identified through various activities tied to certain specific values. Its mission can be considered to ensure the sustainability and

development of the company by increasing the level of responsibility and a culture aimed at increasing the level of values.

Analyzing the impact of the use of electric cars in the context of building their corporate and brand goodwill, reputation, trust, and loyalty is absent in the literature based on the implementation of CSR activities, which represents a literature gap. For this reason, the aim of the contribution is to find out whether the use of electric cars by a company can positively influence the perception of socially responsible company' communication, by all consumers and individual generations, because the key factor of the socially responsible company's success is its appropriate communication with target groups.

We consider it important to focus on the issue of electromobility, as it is becoming more widespread every year. In 2021, 6.75 million electric cars were sold worldwide. That's a 108% increase compared to 2020. Even more expensive batteries didn't stop sales growth. The price of batteries began to rise last year after decades of decline due to high demand for lithium outstripping supply (Irle, 2022). Vehicles with classic combustion engines are considered as major polluters of the environment. Therefore, it can be expected that vehicles with alternative drives, such as Battery Electric Vehicle, Range Extended Electric Vehicle and Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle, will be increasingly pushed to the fore. The European Union also approved the so-called climate law, by which it is committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Subsequently, the European Commission presented the "Fit for 55" legislative package, a set of proposals and measures aimed at meeting the climate goals. It focuses on low-emission modes of transport, such as electromobility.

2. Methodology

The research question of this paper is whether the use of electric cars by a company can positively influence the perception of socially responsible company' communication, by all consumers and individual generations. The survey was conducted in May 2022 by means of the CAWI method. A total of 405 respondents participated in the study. Using a Likert scale, they expressed their beliefs about how they perceive the green mtg activity of companies and what attitude they have towards the use of electric cars by companies. As part of the general questions, they were asked about their year of birth, according to which they were included in the respective generational cohorts.

The research methodology followed these steps.

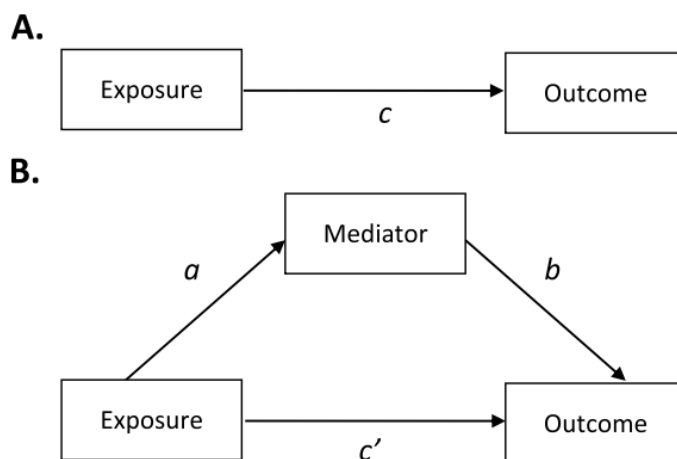
As a first step, the relational hypothesis was set. The hypothesis was verified by Chi-square test. The Chi-square test is one of the most utilized statistical analyses (Franke et al., 2012) used to determine the relation of concordance or the significance of the connection between two variables in a certain dependency relation in marketing research (Dura & Drigă, 2017) when processing qualitative data (Siegel, 2016) and quantitative data (Martin et al., 2022) and it is relevant for analysis of the measures of consumer behavior (Valaskova et al., 2021; Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). A significance level was determined at 0.05 and corresponded to a 95% confidence interval for the hypothesis stated (Vrtana et al., 2020). IBM SPSS statistical software was used to test the Chi-square test.

When confirming the existence of a statistical dependence between the two examined variables, it is necessary to deal with their internal structure of relationships. So as the second step, the data was analyzed more comprehensively, using an index, an expression that measures each value based on its relative significance to the other values in the table. The index indicates the relative significance of a particular value in a pivot table cell (n_{ij}) relative to other cells and the total number of responses (n). The index calculates the weigh that an item contributes to the

overall total. The index compares each value to its row total, its column total, and the overall total, using a weighted average (Dalglish, 2008).

As the third step of the methodology, a mediation analysis was performed. The aim of mediation analysis is to determine the relation between the independent and dependent variable, completely or in part to the mediating variable. Ravikumar et al., 2014 Traditional mediation analysis is based on the estimation of the four pathways shown in Figure 1. In Figure 1A, the c path represents the total exposure-outcome effect. In Figure 1B, the path represents the exposure-mediator effect, the b path represents the mediator-outcome effect, and the c' path represents the direct exposure-outcome effect (Rijnhart et al., 2021).

Figure 1: Traditional mediation analysis



Source: Rijnhart et al., 2021

IBM SPSS statistical software was used to test mediation effect by PROCESS, a tool developed for conditional process modelling in SPSS. In all analyses presented below, the significance of the indirect effect was obtained by computing 95% confidence intervals using 5 000 bootstrap samples.

3. Results

The role of statistical inference is to decide on the basis of information on the available choices whether to accept or reject certain hypotheses with respect to the basic sample set. To do so, we proceeded in accordance with the methodology of statistical hypothesis testing, which consists of the following steps: Formulation of the null hypothesis (H_0); Formulation of the alternative hypothesis (H_1); Determination of the level of significance (α); Calculation of test statistics and probability; and Conclusion (Rimarčík, 2007). To calculate the test statistics for the hypothesis, IBM SPSS Statistics software was used (Table 1). Because the primary data in this research is of a nominal nature as well, the test statistic is a Chi-square test of independence.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	203.115 ^a	12	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	216.662	12	0.000
N of Valid Cases	405		

Source: authors according to SPSS

Based on the results (Asymptotic Significance ≤ 0.05) there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. Differences in the perception of green communication activities by individual generations can be clearly confirmed.

After confirming the dependence, we examined the internal relationships between the variables using the Index. The calculations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Indexes of responses

		Impact of green marketing activities on company/brand reputation				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Generation	BB	0.120464	0.223053	1.911880	3.143016	1.796009
	X	0.168376	0.801686	1.707295	1.255165	1.255165
	Y	1.991542	0.990375	0.579475	0.197947	0.890762
	Z	1.201384	1.741935	0.235397	0.110565	0.331695

Source: Authors' calculation

The index expresses the degree of protrusion or backwardness in a given sample. That is, how much the index for a particular cell loses to or exceeds 1. Thus, Generation Y shows the most positive attitudes towards green marketing activities of companies. Generation Z also has positive attitudes. Respondents from Generation Baby Boomers expressed negative attitudes and representatives of Generation X have neutral attitudes towards green marketing communication of companies.

When testing the mediating path, it is possible to find out the direct and indirect effect of the independent variable to the dependent variable (Figure 1).

4. Discussion

The results of Chi-square test of independence and Index coincide with the majority of research carried out so far, which prove the active involvement of millennials in the process of achieving sustainable development of society (Wheeler, 2018). A survey by Cone Communications showed a significant interest of this generation in participating in socially responsible activities (Cone Communications, 2015). Similar conclusions were also formulated based on the evaluation of a survey carried out by the Nielsen agency, when even 90% of respondents preferred ecologically compliant products in the sense of a real purchase decision. At the same time, on the basis of the aforementioned survey, it was estimated that up to a quarter of all products on the market will be sustainable and ecological products by 2021 (Nielsen, 2018). Research has also shown that, in addition to changes in consumption preferences, there are also changes in favor of the overall greening of lifestyles within the millennial generation. Such an attitude was found in the case of almost 75% of members of the millennial generation. The issue of socially responsible behavior among millennials was also addressed by Schoolman et al. (2016) who, on a sample of students living in large cities, demonstrated their formal interest in ecological forms of transport.

Based on the results of the mediation analysis, it can be claimed that the use of electromobility by companies is a positive activity within the corporate social responsibility strategy. The results again indicate a high correlation with generations Y and Z. However, the remaining studied generations did not show negative attitudes either. It can be identified with many studies (Melovic et al. 2019; Öberseder et al. 2013; Pouliopoulos et al., 2017; Luger et al., 2021), which demonstrate a positive reaction in connection with the perception of corporate social responsibility among all generations of consumers in developed countries.

Figure 2: Mediation analysis

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*****
Model : 4
  Y : Green
  X : Generat
  M : Electric
Sample Size: 405
*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE: Electric

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      ,3679      ,1354      1,0487      63,0919      1,0000      403,0000      ,0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      1,5190      ,1170      12,9865      ,0000      1,2891      1,7489
Generat      ,3589      ,0452      7,9430      ,0000      ,2701      ,4477

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE: Green

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      ,4855      ,2357      ,7375      61,9861      2,0000      402,0000      ,0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      1,2083      ,1168      10,3430      ,0000      ,9787      1,4380
Generat      ,3597      ,0408      8,8264      ,0000      ,2796      ,4398
Electric      ,1280      ,0418      3,0637      ,0023      ,0459      ,2101

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****
OUTCOME VARIABLE: Green

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      ,4667      ,2179      ,7529      112,2498      1,0000      403,0000      ,0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      1,4027      ,0991      14,1539      ,0000      1,2079      1,5975
Generat      ,4056      ,0383      10,5948      ,0000      ,3304      ,4809

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c_ps      c_cs
      ,4056      ,0383      10,5948      ,0000      ,3304      ,4809      ,4139      ,4667

Direct effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c_ps      c'_cs
      ,3597      ,0408      8,8264      ,0000      ,2796      ,4398      ,3671      ,4139

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
Electric      ,0459      ,0177      ,0143      ,0836
    
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Source: authors according to SPSS

5. Conclusions

At present, there is a growing interest in socially responsible brands/companies and environmentally friendly products. This naturally leads to growing interest in green marketing. Environmental protection is increasingly attracting the public's attention. People are actively trying to reduce the negative impact of their activities on the environment. With the growing interest of consumers in environmental issues, socially responsible companies are integrating environmental issues into their activities and are changing their business strategies in favor of a greener concept. Thus, companies applying green marketing gain a competitive advantage over those that do not deal with environmental issues. However, the most important thing is to choose an appropriate green marketing strategy as a part of efficient and properly targeted communication of socially responsible activities; thus, the company may achieve its goals. With the right strategy, the socially responsible brand may gain new business opportunities and competitive advantages, but also make a significant contribution to protecting the environment and protecting the world from environmental disasters. Therefore, the most important benefits

of green marketing as a part of the socially responsible communication focused on individual consumer generations include gaining competitive advantage, increasing the corporate and brand goodwill, reputation, image, trust, and loyalty.

The outcomes of the research provide space for further discussions on specific activities of green marketing in relation to generational cohorts. It is obvious that Millennials (Generation Y) and Post-Millennials (Generation Z) represent the target group of the socially responsible marketing activities. These two generations clearly showed the most positive attitudes towards the use of electromobility by companies as a green marketing activity. However, the remaining studied generations did not show negative attitudes either. Thus, it can be claimed that the use of electromobility by companies is a positive activity within the corporate social responsibility strategy, despite the public questioning only the positive impact of electric cars on the environment.

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