Wiesława Ilnicka
WSB University in Poznań (Poland)
Faculty in Chorzów
orcid.org/0000-0002-7239-813X

Łukasz Makowski
WSB University in Poznań (Poland)
Faculty in Chorzów
orcid.org/0000-0002-1944-642X
email: lukasz.makowski@chorzow.wsb.pl

Corporate social responsibility:
A case study of selected clothing companies

Abstract. The aim of the article is to present activities undertaken by selected clothing companies with respect to corporate social responsibility. The authors provide the definition of corporate social responsibility, the main areas of a CSR strategy and its potential benefits using examples of good practices undertaken by large clothing companies that operate globally: H&M, CCC S.A., Adidas, LPP S.A. CSR policies pursued by these brands are an expression of their concern for the environment, society and the future of our planet. CSR activities undertaken by these companies contribute to their positive image, which can translate into higher sales and a competitive advantage.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, clothing industry, responsible fashion

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a management strategy that has emerged in response to consumer interest in activities of businesses related to cooperation with their customers, business partners, the impact of companies on the environment, treatment of their employees and the question of their support of social action (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 9).

The premise of socially responsible business is based on undertaking such activities that take into account the aspect of responsible and honest behaviour at every stage of the company’s operation. In addition, activities in the area of social responsibility become an asset in competition with business rivals, gain market advantage and attract new customers (Buglewicz, 2017, p. 7).
The idea behind corporate social responsibility for companies is to be responsible for their activities not only economically and legally, but also feel obliged to take action in order to achieve social objectives (Bartkowiak, 2011, p. 9).

CSR is a significant and increasingly popular concept, it influences the actions taken by a company, but also the economic policies of the world including the European Union. The government of the European Communities promotes CSR as an instrument of the European strategy for sustainable development, which makes the concept of corporate social responsibility even more popular (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 9).

The European Commission has defined Corporate Social Responsibility as: “the concept that a company voluntarily takes into account social and environmental aspects when conducting its business activities and in its relations with its stakeholders. [...] companies take voluntary action to improve the lives of their stakeholders and help to ensure a cleaner environment”. According to the Commission, such actions are taken because companies “are increasingly aware that responsible behaviour leads to continued business success” (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 10). The European Commission highlights that social responsibility is not limited to meeting legal requirements in the said area, but it means caring for the environment, investing in human capital and maintaining good relations with stakeholders (Krukowska, 2010).

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines corporate social responsibility as: “an ongoing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to sustainable economic development by improving the quality of life of employees and their families, as well as the local community and society as a whole” (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 10). This definition is complemented by the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group by adding that “corporate social responsibility is a commitment to contribute to sustainable development by working with employees, their families, the local community and society as a whole to improve the quality of life in ways that are good for both business and development” (Slownik, n.d.).

Another current definition of CSR is the formula in Standard PN-ISO26 000: “the responsibility of an organisation for the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment ensured by transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development, including the well-being and health of society, takes into account the expectations of its stakeholders, complies with applicable law and is consistent with international standards of conduct, and is also integrated into the activities of the organisation and practised in its relationships” (Encyklopedia CSR, n.d.).

M. Raich, S. L. Dolan, J. Klimek define Corporate Social Responsibility as “a philosophy based on an idea that a company is a social entity and as such should engage in initiatives of the local community, it is the undertaking of such
decisions and actions by the company’s management that contribute both to caring for the company’s interests and to protecting and promoting social welfare. It is also, and perhaps above all, a corporate management concept whereby a company voluntarily integrates social and environmental interests into its strategies and actions” (Raich, Dolan & Klimek, 2011, p. 282).

There are many conceptualisations defining what corporate social responsibility is. Drawing on the above definitions, CSR can be characterised as a management strategy that:

– assumes carrying out activities for the protection of the natural environment;
– commits to taking into account the interests of employees and their families, business partners, the local community;
– helps achieve strong market positioning and growth;
– draws attention to the impact of a company’s activity on society;
– emphasises clearly the importance of cooperation, honesty, and conducting forward-thinking activities.

Corporate social responsibility strategy is very popular today and, although it is voluntary, it would be difficult to find a company that does not include the implementation of CSR in its activities. Due to the development of the economy, companies can no longer just focus their activities on high quality production, low costs, finding and filling market niches. Today, customers are concerned about the treatment of employees by companies, it is important to them if a company cares for the environment, uses renewable energy sources in production and participates in community life. Today, a company that wants to mark its presence on the market and remain competitive cannot pursue a policy geared towards making the highest profit, but must first and foremost take care of its employees. This does not only mean taking care of the material aspect, as today companies do not only attract employees with a high salary, but they also do with non-financial considerations such as very good working conditions, a friendly atmosphere, health-oriented programmes, restorative meals, Multisport cards, etc. Often such programmes are offered not only to the employee, but also to their family, e.g. company picnics, subsidised family trips, cinema tickets, integration meetings.

These are all activities based on a corporate social responsibility strategy at an internal level. Parallel to it, companies carry out CSR activities at the external level. These include various actions carried out for the benefit of the local community, the construction of playgrounds or sports fields, collections, cooperation with animal shelters. By implementing a corporate social responsibility strategy, enterprises gain better contact with the external environment, participate in the life of the local community and their employees, and influence environmental protection. CSR benefits both the enterprise and its employees and the company’s environment, which is why the concept is gaining in popularity.
The areas of CSR that can be introduced into a company’s policy depend on its corporate character, and should be tailored to the core competencies and corporate profile.

ISO 26000 is a practical guide to the principles of responsible business and provides guidance for organisations of all types, regardless of size or location (PAPR, n.d.). It also distinguishes the following areas of corporate social responsibility:

1. **Organisational governance** – the system through which an organisation makes and implements decisions to achieve its objectives.

2. **Human rights** – due diligence, dealing with situations when human rights might be violated, avoiding complicity/assistance in unlawful activities, handling complaints, discrimination and vulnerable groups, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, fundamental principles and rights at work.

3. **Labour relations** – employment and labour relations, working conditions and social protection, social dialogue, occupational health and safety, human development and training in the workplace.

4. **Environment** – pollution prevention, sustainable use of resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation to climate change, environmental protection, biodiversity and habitat restoration.

5. **Fair market practices** – anti-corruption policies, responsible political engagement, fair competition, promotion of social responsibility in the value chain, respect for property rights.

6. **Consumer relations** – fair marketing, truthful and objective information and fair contractual practices, consumer health and safety, sustainable consumption, consumer service, support and complaints and dispute resolution, data protection and consumer privacy, access to basic services, education and awareness.

7. **Community engagement and community development** – community engagement, education and culture, job creation and skills development, technology development and access, wealth and income creation, health, social investment (ISO 26000, n.d.).

Corporate social responsibility can be applied in a company both externally and internally. External activities will much more easily earn public recognition and will have a strong impact on shaping the company’s image in the market; internal CSR mainly concerns treatment of company employees (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 17). Based on the external and internal areas of CSR activities of companies, a distinction can be made into the following:

1. **Local community** – activities to support and fund local initiatives, creating new jobs, educating the public, helping local charities.

2. **Environment** – activities in the areas of environmental protection, control of pollution emissions, recycling of waste, use of innovative technologies in pro-
duction, rational use of natural resources and energy, use of raw materials with the least possible negative impact on the environment.

3. **Workplace** – respecting employees’ rights, applying health and safety rules, providing employees with equal opportunities for development, training, subsidised medical care, assistance in difficult life situations, creating opportunities for work-life balance.

4. **Market** – respecting human and consumer rights, applying good marketing ethics, providing accurate and truthful information on product labels, controlling the high quality of products (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 18).

The Table 1 shows the internal and external forms of corporate social responsibility in actions performed by companies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External forms of corporate social responsibility</th>
<th>Internal forms of corporate social responsibility</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active participation in the life of the local community.</td>
<td>Social funds for employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship of local events.</td>
<td>Investing in human capital through training and providing development opportunities for employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution reduction.</td>
<td>High workstation standards, application of health and safety rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving energy.</td>
<td>Subsidised medical care and leisure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair standards of communication and advertising.</td>
<td>Integration of employees and their families, organisation of meetings and company picnics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-quality products.</td>
<td>Assistance in difficult life situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: own compilation based on: (Jarczyk & Makowski, 2020, p. 18).

An enterprise that wants to be recognised by the public as socially responsible should carry out activities in all the above-mentioned areas of CSR. However, the forms and elements of the activities undertaken should be consistent with the company’s profile. This will make the company effective in its actions and ensure its credibility in the internal and external environment (Kazojc, 2014).

**2. CSR in the garment industry**

The clothing sector worldwide is among the infamous top polluters and destroyers of the environment. A lot of water is used in the production of clothes, it is further poisoned by the chemicals used to dye the fabrics, the microfibres
created in the production of artificial fabrics are hazardous to human and animal health, and the process of their complete decomposition takes several hundred years (Wiszowata, 2018). For the production of artificial silk, modal and viscose, tree felling is increasing. Intensive grazing of the animals from which wool is obtained leads to soil degradation. The situation of farm animals, which are to meet the demand for natural leather and fur in the clothing market is also tragic. A huge amount of discarded clothing fills up landfills. According to the UN, the garment industry is responsible for more than 10% of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions, CO$_2$ is generated by the production and transport of clothing. Turnover of new collections is an ever-increasing process in clothing shops, prompting customers to replace clothes not yet worn out with new ones. The earth is being flooded by a wave of unnecessary textiles, which is exerting a destructive effect on the climate (Przemysł i Środowisko, 2021).

In addition to its disastrous environmental impact, the fashion industry also has a bad reputation when it comes to the working conditions of those employed in garment production. The fashion sector employs around 40 million people worldwide, a large proportion of whom are women. The fashion industry still has a long way to go when it comes to protecting workers and providing them with decent working conditions (Stowarzyszenie Wolnej Herbaty, 2020). Today, most clothing is produced in Asia, with factories sewing for world-famous brands located in China, Bangladesh and Thailand. The location is no accident – production costs are very low in these countries. This is largely due to the fact that the people employed in Asia to make the garments are not protected by any labour laws (Stowarzyszenie Wolnej Herbaty, 2020). Factory owners place the main emphasis on minimising costs, workers are not provided with decent working conditions, minimum wages or other labour-related privileges. Although the problem of mistreatment of sewing workers in Asia is widely known and loudly criticised, there are also companies in European countries where workers sewing clothes, work in poor conditions for “starvation wages” (Luginbühl & Musiolek, 2014).

The spread and development of the concept of socially responsible business has led apparel companies to integrate pro-social issues into their strategies and operating policies. The apparel industry could not remain indifferent to trends that shape consumer behaviour and are a source of competitive advantage. Companies operating in the market face the challenges of linking sustainability goals to the products they offer, their production processes, their financial performance, the nature of their supply chain, their employment structure and consumer expectations (Rudnicka & Koszewska, 2020).

Apparel companies around the world are focusing their activities mainly on environmental protection when implementing their corporate social responsibility
strategy. In addition to individual actions, companies are increasingly expressing their willingness to work together to protect the climate and are signing voluntary declarations expressing environmentally friendly orientations. Such a document is, among others, the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, which was established in 2018, on the initiative of the UN Climate Programme, and sets 16 climate targets. Clothing companies that commit to participate in this initiative are among the global leaders in the fashion industry, with the common goal of fighting for sustainable fashion and doing business in ways that combat climate change (Przemysł i Środowisko, 2021). On the basis of the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, the **Climate Action Playbook** was published in September 2020, a kind of guide with guidelines for the fashion industry, designed with a purpose to make it easier for fashion companies to achieve climate neutrality (Oleksyn-Wajda, 2020).

Another joint initiative of the fashion industry is the Fashion Pact, announced at the 2019 G7 Summit. The pact was created under the leadership of the French company Kering, bringing together brands such as Gucci and Saint Laurent, and the French Ministry of the Environment. The document has been signed by some of the most recognisable and luxurious brands and aims to stop climate change, restore biodiversity and reduce the impact of the fashion industry on the oceans (Posełek, 2018).

Clothing companies have recognised the negative environmental impacts of the textile industry and have taken action to prevent them, and have also seen the opportunity to minimise the negative impact by developing a change in consumer habits among their customers. Clothing companies have introduced measures to educate customers on the proper use of clothing so that it retains its qualities longer, and are promoting initiatives to donate unwanted clothing to those in need. Increasingly conscious consumers want to be sure that they are not harming the environment when buying clothes. Clothing companies are launching eco-friendly and even fully or partly recycled clothes, in order to reconcile the desire to own with the feeling of being eco-friendly. Plastic bags into which shopping was packed not so long ago are not available in clothing shops today. Nowadays, the eco-conscious customer is encouraged to buy a recycled paper bag, with the added message that the proceeds from the sale of the bag support environmental protection.

Clothing manufacturers are keen to boast about their efforts in the areas of modernising production, reducing the use of raw materials, introducing new technologies tailored to extend the life cycle of products, precise quantity planning limiting overproduction and considering the market for alternative uses (COE, 2020).
3. Selected good CSR practices in the apparel industry

Companies recognised as leaders in the fashion industry are taking a number of initiatives to make their operations more environmentally responsible. Reputable brands are setting ambitious targets that include climate action and are publicly committing to achieving them within a certain timeframe.

3.1. H&M brand action on climate protection

The Swedish company H&M, which is active in the European and American markets, has committed that, by 2030 at the latest, all their products will be made from recycled or otherwise responsibly sourced raw materials. The company declares that 65% of production is already made from such materials (H&M, n.d.). Since 2010, the Swedish chain has systematically launched collections made from environmentally friendly materials such as organic cotton, linen, hemp, polyester recycled from used PET bottles and a very nature-friendly material called tencel, derived from wood cellulose, which biodegrades in just six weeks after use (Zawrzykraj, 2018). In 2013, H&M launched a huge second-hand clothing collection campaign, which was very popular. Through this campaign, H&M showed itself as a company that promotes recycling and cares about the well-being of the planet, but also encouraged its customers to refresh their wardrobes and exchange their old clothes for new ones from an environmentally friendly collection (La Mode, 2012). In November of the same year, alongside its climate-saving efforts, H&M launched an action that caused quite a stir in fashion industry – the company introduced the Fair Living Wage programme and announced that it would guarantee “fair wages” for 850,000 workers in its 750 garment factories by the end of 2018. “Fair wages”, according to H&M’s promises, were to be enough for workers to meet their basic living needs. The company declared that it felt a shared responsibility for low wages, the problem of overtime and unsafe working conditions, and the widespread abuse in form of physical, psychological and sexual violence in the factories (Salus, 2018). As part of its Fair Living Wage programme in 2016, H&M highlighted the need to start working on business relationships in the clothing industry, implementing better wage management systems in supplier factories, and introducing workplace dialogue training for workers and executives. H&M implemented such programmes in eight countries producing their goods (Michalak, 2017). Another of H&M’s brand actions to protect the environment was the introduction of two brand new materials used in garments in 2014 – vegetable-dyed leather sourced from cows raised for organic meat production and organic silk from silkworms raised on mulberry trees (Avanti 24, 2014). 2017 was a spectacular year for H&M’s brand efforts to combat ocean pollution and the problem of litter that goes into them. The company created a collection
of clothes made from BIONIC polyester made entirely from plastic trash washed ashore by the seas and oceans. Next year, 2018, H&M used recycled silver from melting down old candlesticks and cutlery to work on yet another collection, and they also introduced ECONYL, a fibre created from 100% recycled old fishing nets and other nylon rubbish poisoning the oceans (Zawrzykraj, 2018). Each year brings new environmental campaigns introduced by the H&M brand:

- **bottle2fashion** – a campaign with Danon Aqua to turn plastic bottles collected in Indonesia into recycled polyester;
- **It’s time to share** – a campaign to donate good, no longer used clothes to other people;
- **H&M Take Care** – posted on the company’s website, tricks and tips on how to repair, alter and refresh your favourite clothes to make them last as long as possible.

In 2021, the H&M brand launched Innovation Stories, a new sustainability programme; from now on the company is to be even more natural and eco-friendly. Materials sourced from animal husbandry such as leather or goose down are to be replaced with plant-based alternatives (Sznyt, 2021). H&M is constantly looking for new solutions that are better for the environment, and shows customers that fashion can not only be beautiful, but also responsible.

### 3.2. CSR strategy of CCC S.A.

CCC S.A. is a Polish company involved in the production and sale of footwear; it is the largest retail company in Central Europe in the sector (CCC. Najnowsze informacje, 2018) Almost from the beginning, it has introduced various corporate social responsibility activities. One of the first activities in that area was to support, since 2000, cycling and volleyball teams, among which were the spectacularly successful ones, but also the ones known only to the local communities (CCC Team, 2022). In 2017, the CCC group published its first non-financial report “Go for more – towards sustainable development”, which showed the company’s social responsibility strategy for 2017-2019. The strategy was based on three sustainable development goals selected out of the seventeen ones defined by the United Nations in 2015: Responsible Consumption, Gender Equality, Climate Action (CCC Group, n.d. a).

In addition to the designated CSR strategy for 2017-2019, the CCC group decided to start cooperation with UNICEF and in 2018 it was the first Polish company to become a global partner of the fund. As part of the partnership, CCC committed to provide UNICEF with donations for three years to improve conditions and save the lives of children around the world (UNICEF, 2018). In 2020, CCC S.A. adopted a new strategy for conducting activities in the area of corporate social responsibility – the “Sustainable Development Strategy GO.22.” – based on four strategic pillars:
1. Responsible product.
2. Environmental responsibility.
3. Responsibility towards employees.

The CCC company has been a signatory of the Diversity Charter since 2019, which imposes obligations to eliminate discrimination in the organisation, promote diversity, apply equal treatment policies, and places particular emphasis on the company’s willingness to involve employees in its CSR policy. The CCC Group joined the partnership for the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and made an individual commitment, in which it confirms the implementation of specific actions steps that, in their scope, are part of achieving the selected sustainable development goals, relevant to the company’s activities. In 2021, CCC was the first Polish company to sign the Fashion Industry Climate Action Charter (CCC Group, n.d. c). CCC also encourages its employees to work together for the benefit of local communities, for example through the “Grant Programme”, which has been running since 2018 – it is a project for CCC employees who are open to helping and supporting those in need. By joining the programme, employees have the opportunity to receive funds to carry out their own volunteering activities (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2018).

According to the assumptions of the introduced strategies, CCC S.A. aims to counteract climate change, use resources responsibly and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Effective management of the supply chain and building lasting relationships with partners are also important elements of the implemented policy of corporate social responsibility. The company ensures that it supplies the market with safe and good quality products. By improving its organisational culture and engaging in dialogue with employees, the company provides itself with a long-term, well-trained workforce that cares about the company’s well-being (CCC Experience, 2021).

3.3. Adidas as an example of an environmentally conscious company

The Adidas brand is one of the most recognisable brands among sports footwear manufacturers. In 2014, the company pledged to improve its recycling policy and took radical steps in that direction (Adrenaline.pl, 2018). In 2015, Adidas reached an agreement with Parley for the Oceans, an environmental company that creates projects and develops strategies to protect the oceans. The brands joined forces and created a collection called adidas x Parley – made entirely from plastic retrieved from the ocean. The first model of the collection – the Ultra Boost shoes – went on sale in 2016, the collection was available in shops around the world and
was very popular. To this day, Adidas still uses recycled materials from Parley in many of its products (Radzki, 2019). Adidas bases its environmental efforts on the **Three Loop Strategy**. The first loop means using recycled materials in production. The second is to develop materials and technologies so that the company’s products can be fully recycled and the process should be simple and cheap to complete. The third loop concerns biodegradability, which means that goods with the Adidas logo are to be recycled several times, and when this is no longer possible, they should simply decompose (Sikorski, 2020). The concepts behind the first of the three loops are already being implemented, primarily through the collaboration with Parley for the Oceans mentioned above. Activities in loop two include the launch, in 2019, of the Adidas Futurecraft Loop shoes, which are made entirely from recyclable material. Moreover, Adidas has announced that it already has access to technology to process the worn-out footwear inhouse into new shoes (Wojajczyk, 2019). The implementation of the measures announced in the third loop is apparently problematic for the company – the idea of biodegradable products seems a distant future. The brand does not intend to achieve climate neutrality until 2050 (Sikorski, 2020).

In 2021, the Adidas brand surprised the world with a very original idea – creating mushroom-based leather in collaboration with Bolt Threads, a biotechnology company. The popular Stan Smith sneakers are produced from Mylo, which is the name given to the “mushroom leather”. The mushrooms for the material are grown on organic matter and sawdust in vertical farms in the Netherlands. The process of turning the mycelium into a soft flexible material with leather-like properties remains a secret known only to Adidas, and the selling price of the “mushroom” shoes has not been announced yet (Kostyra, 2021). By implementing climate protection measures, the brand is responding to the needs of the modern world and gaining recognition in the eyes of environmental organisations and customers. More and more famous athletes and show business celebrities decide to cooperate with the Adidas brand because of its CSR activities.

### 3.4. LPP S.A. and its corporate social responsibility activities

LPP S.A. is a Polish clothing company, the owner of five popular brands: Reserved, Cropp, House, Mohito and Sinsay. The company runs a comprehensive business, starting from clothing design, through production, distribution and sales (LPP, n.d. a).

From the beginning, LPP wanted to be perceived as a family business for which people are the most important asset and implemented measures to support local communities. The years 2013-2015 were a time of intensive charitable activities of the LPP company carried out in the regions where the branches of the company’s headquarters operate – namely Małopolska and Pomerania. In line with
the CSR strategy of the time, the company engaged in cooperation with social organisations counteracting social exclusion. The company’s activities included financing holiday trips for the most needy children from Trójmiasto (Tricity) and Kraków, as well as providing financial support to the charges of the Orphan Children’s Fund. At the same time, the company’s owners noticed that customers pay attention to how the clothes they buy are made (Guzik & Zapart, 2017). Since 2013, LPP S.A. has been an active member of ACCORD – *The Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety*. The organisation works towards improving working conditions in the garment industry in Bangladesh, and aims, among other things, to implement solutions to ensure fire safety in factories and to train factory workers on their rights and safety (LPP, n.d. b). In 2014, LPP set up special cells for supply chain control, they operate in the Bangladesh office and in the Audit Department at the headquarters in Gdansk. Since their establishment, all suppliers have been bound by the LPP Code of Conduct. This document takes into account the provisions of the conventions of the International Labour Organisation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as serves as a commitment to environmental care (LPP, n.d. c). In 2016, LPP reached an agreement with the *Otwarte Klatki* (Open Cages) organisation, pledged to stop using natural fur and joined the international *Fur Free Retailer* initiative. In doing so, the company showed its respect for consumers fighting for animal rights (Otwarte Klatki, 2016). Another CSR policy move was to join the *Responsible Business Forum* in 2017, an association which works comprehensively for sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. In the same year, LPP also joined the *Family Business Network Poland*, adopted the LPP MORE sustainability strategy for 2017-2019 and published the first consolidated report on the company’s activities (LPP, n.d. b). **LPP MORE sustainability strategy for 2017-2019** was based on four pillars: MORE SAFE – our product; MORE CARE – our employees; MORE MINDFUL – our environment; MORE ETHICAL – our principles. Simultaneously with the adoption of the LPP More strategy, the company started selling environmentally friendly clothing – **Eco Aware**. Currently, environmentally friendly collections account for almost 30% of all LPP production (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2022). The following years of LPP’s activity saw the continuous implementation of corporate social responsibility measures:

1. The establishment of the LPP Foundation, which is strongly committed to helping the excluded become independent, assisting the disadvantaged, protecting and promoting health, protecting the environment and promoting eco-friendly behaviour (Fundacja LPP, 2020).

2. Joining the Pomeranian Employers organisation and the partnership with the Fundusz Grantowy FIR (FIR Grant Fund) – these institutions supported initiatives contributing to social and economic change in the local environment (LPP, n.d. b).
3. Initiating activities to extend the life cycle of manufactured clothes. Launching a programme to collect used clothes in selected LPP stores, under which the company cooperates with Towarzystwo Pomocy Św. Brata Alberta (St. Brother Albert Aid Society) and donates the collected clothes to people affected by the homelessness crisis (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2022).

Since 2019, LPP S.A. has been effectively joining forces with international organisations fighting the effects of the climate crisis. The company has joined the world’s largest initiative bringing together businesses working for sustainable development – the **United Nations Global Compact** – the organisation operates on the basis of 10 principles established by the UN and grouped into four categories: human rights, labour standards, environmental protection, anti-corruption (Barankiewicz, 2020). In the same year, LPP was the first Polish company to join the **New Plastics Economy Global Commitment** initiative, and is also an active member of the **Polish Plastics Pact**. As a result of these activities, LPP has eliminated plastic packaging for online shipping, replacing it with recycled foil and recycled cardboard boxes; and in stationary stores plastic carrier bags have been replaced with eco-friendly ones (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2022). LPP S.A. has made a committed to meet 8 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved globally by 2030; the selected goals were considered by LPP to be particularly important due to the industry type and the nature of its business (LPP, 2019). With the beginning of 2020 LPP S.A. starts the implementation of a new sustainable development strategy for 2020-2025 – **For People For Our Planet**, which is a response to the climate challenges faced by the fashion industry. The aim of the new strategy is to significantly reduce the company’s negative impact on the environment, with actions to be carried out in four areas: product and production, chemical safety, plastic under control, head office buildings and sales network. The activities carried out in the selected areas include:

1. The introduction of a programme that sets out the resource reduction requirements that factories sewing for LPP must meet.

2. LPP’s accession in 2020 to the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals Agreement in 2020, the purpose of which is implementation of best sustainable practices for chemical safety throughout the supply chain of the textile, clothing and footwear industry.

3. Receiving RDS or RWS certification for 100% of products containing feathers or wool.

4. Reducing the amount of plastic in packaging, reducing the use of single-use foil for commercial sample packaging, eliminating plastic fillers, using cardboard boxes and other recycled packaging only (LPP, n.d. b).

5. Introducing environmentally friendly standards for the construction, equipment and operation of the head office buildings and retail stores; starting cooperation with a company supplying LPP buildings with energy from renewable
sources (Reserved, n.d.). These objectives are successively being met and are to be achieved by 2025 (LPP, 2020).

Simultaneously, LPP even goes a step further and performs activities that go beyond those outlined in the strategy. In 2021, LPP becomes the first Polish company to start cooperating with Canopy, an organisation that has been working to protect endangered forests for more than 20 years (Retail 360, 2021). It also becomes a partner of Cotton made in Africa, an initiative launched by the Aid by Trade Foundation actively working to improve the working and living conditions of African cotton farmers (LPP SA, 2022a).

Principles – responsibility, honesty, fairness, mutual respect, respect for human rights – are an important pillars in the management of the company. The company has developed a number of documents and guidelines to act as signposts for employees and contractors, from whom the company requires absolute adherence to the accepted principles. Each of these documents has been published and is easily accessible not only to employees, but also to business partners and customers; such behaviour strengthens the company’s transparency and credibility. LPP S.A. provides employees with opportunities for development and promotion, promotes diversity and constantly monitors the level of the gender pay gap. The company also cares about the healthy lifestyle of its employees; at its head office bicycles are available for LPP employees whose professional duties require them to move between different branches of the company. LPP also has a sports team, LPP TEAM, with running, triathlon and cycling sections. The company sponsors its members, enables them to participate in sports competitions and equips them with sportswear (LPP, n.d. c). There is an absolute ban on discrimination and mobbing at LPP S.A. The company operates a system of anonymous reporting of any situations in which these improprieties have occurred. Another important aspect of anti-discrimination is the fact that LPP employs people with disabilities (LPP SA, 2022b). LPP S.A. supports its employees with numerous benefits, the company invests in staff training, also conducts internal recruitment and defines clear career development paths. LPP promotes and appreciates the values of the employee talent development (LPP SA, 2022b). The activity of LPP S.A. is marked by continuous development and transformation into an increasingly sustainable company responding to the needs of the changing market.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The strategy of corporate social responsibility is based on voluntariness, but nowadays every company should care about the environment in which it operates, as it makes the company’s actions more eco-friendly and it gains a lot of positive public recognition. Today, to be socially responsible is something mandatory and
quite obvious, which translates into investing in human resources, environmental protection, relations with the company’s environment and informing the public about these activities. All this increases the company’s competitive advantage and has an impact on its development.

Companies in the clothing industry, due to their reputation as the biggest polluter of the environment, place particular emphasis on implementing measures to save the planet.

The H&M brand and the LPP S.A. company systematically launch collections made from environmentally friendly materials, educate consumers on use of clothes for longer, initiate second-hand clothes collection campaigns and donate the clothes to those in need.

Alongside these efforts, H&M and the Adidas are making spectacular efforts to combat ocean pollution and materials made from recycled plastic rubbish washed ashore are used in their production process.

The Polish companies CCC and LPP place emphasis on combating climate change through responsible use of resources and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, use of energy from renewable sources, total elimination of plastic. They also carry out extensive charitable activities, provide their employees with very good working conditions and foster positive relations with business partners.

In their corporate social responsibility activities, LPP and the H&M brands have initiated programmes to improve the working conditions of clothing industry workers in Asia. The issue of employing workers and respecting their rights in that region remains the weakest point of the whole corporate social responsibility policy in the clothing business.

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Corporate social responsibility: A case study of selected clothing companies

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie działań z zakresu społecznie odpowiedzialnego biznesu prowadzonych przez wybrane firmy branży odzieżowej. W artykule omówiono istotę i obszary działania strategii CSR oraz korzyści płynące z jej realizacji na przykładzie dobrych praktyk

Społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu na przykładzie wybranych firm odzieżowych


podejmowanych przez duże przedsiębiorstwa odzieżowe działające na świecie: H&M, CCC S.A., Adidas oraz LPP S.A. Polityka odpowiedzialności społecznej realizowana przez wymienione marki jest wyrazem ich troski o środowisko naturalne, społeczeństwo i przyszłość naszej planety. Prowadzone działania kształtują pozytywny wizerunek firm, co w efekcie może prowadzić do zwiększenia sprzedaży i uzyskania przewagi konkurencyjnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu, przemysł odzieżowy, moda odpowiedzialna