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industry are plants that are particularly
Some raw materials used in the textile
ecology and waste disposal [20, 21].
market. Within the former, the three main
concerns are production ecology, human
economy and waste disposal [20, 21].

The certification and labelling of 'socially responsible products' has been clearly attract-
more and more interest in recent years. The systems and practical solutions developed
in this field aim to make "ethical products" recognisable and generally available. This
trend arises from growing consumer appreciation of not only the technical advantages,
price, quality, delivery times and environmental safety of the products they buy but also of
their social and ethical aspects. This article evaluates the importance of socio- and eco-
certification and labelling for meeting buyers' expectations of textile and clothing products.
It also discusses consumers' opinions on this matter.

Key words: social labelling, eco labelling, corporate social responsibility, textile and
clothing market, fast fashion, consumer behaviour.

Corporate social responsibility
and the textile and clothing
sector

Ecological and social problems exert
strongly affect the textile and clothing
market. Within the former, the three main
concerns are production ecology, human
economy and waste disposal [20, 21].
Some raw materials used in the textile
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burdensome for the environment, as their
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this the industry’s finishing processes
dyeing, printing, and washing) consume
huge amounts of chemical substances.
The social problems that the textile
and clothing industry has to cope with
are particularly acute in the develop-

ing countries, where child employment,
forced and slave labour, workers’ exposure
to physical and mental harassment,
very long working hours, pay below the
minimum rates, dangerous working condi-
tions and discriminatory practices have
reached record high levels.

These problems occur with varying in-
tensity throughout the life cycle of textile
and clothing products (Figure 1, more
information on this subject can be found in [6]).

The main factors responsible for this sit-
uation are the globalised structure of the
textile and clothing industry and the way
it has developed over the centuries. The
second half of the 20th century witnessed
an unprecedented speed of the relocation
of garment manufacturing facilities,
as a result of which the early stages of
manufacturing were transferred to less
developed countries. As a result, a large
geographical gap has appeared between
the sites where production actually takes
place and the markets for the finished
products. Transactions are carried out
through a complex network of agents,
subcontractors and suppliers. The manu-
facturing end of the clothing industry
is so scattered that even the companies
awarding production contracts do not
always know where garments are made
and what the production conditions are.

This situation should be mainly attrib-
uted to the low labour costs and flexible
labour force in the developing coun-
tries, as well as to inducements offered
by countries competing for manufactur-
ing contracts, such as tax havens, looser
environmental protection standards, the
efficiency of modern ICT solutions and
their falling prices, and considerably
lower shipment costs.

As a result, garment retailers and estab-
lished brands have become global agents
awarding contracts under which the early
stages of production (i.e. the delivery of
raw materials, manufacturing, and pack-
aging) are performed by suppliers and
contractors comprising a complex net-
work known as 'a global supply chain'.
One end of the chain is markets domi-
nated by several leading retailers and
renowned brands (the largest brands and
chains of clothing retailers control 75% of
the clothing market), and the other
end is a workforce busily producing gar-
ments for minimum wages earned under
frequently unacceptable conditions.

Although clothing prices keep falling,
firms’ profits are steadily rising. This is
mainly due to the fast growing number
of countries and producers that are ready
to deliver products to the stores of large
firms. This imbalance gives a lot of power
to western retailers and brands that can
afford to constantly cut their market
prices while demanding that their suppli-
ers produce faster and faster. The pres-
sure of time and cost reductions mainly
hurts the producer’s workforce i.e. work-
ers’ wages keep declining and they have
to work longer and longer hours under
deteriorating conditions. Moreover, the
complexity of garment making makes it
possible for many factories producing for
renowned firms to conceal all these bad
aspects. Labour conditions in the global
south countries allow clothing compa-
nies to earn large profits in spite of the
constantly falling prices and costly sales
promotions.
Another factor that makes these problems difficult to solve is so-called ‘fast fashion’. Because the world today is always on the move, ever-shorter production times, electronic payments and more efficient transport facilities also accelerate the flow of textile and clothing products. Despite the fact that garments are still made manually, new designs are ready for sale within 12 days. Consumption is keeping pace with production – according to the most recent reports, the volume of clothing that consumers have purchased over the last four years has increased by 1/3.

However, the faster production and consumption of goods cannot change some basic factors – fibre still needs the same amount of time to grow (e.g. cotton becomes harvestable after 1 year) and ignores the speed at which products are expected to appear in the market; cleaning, bleaching and dyeing can be neither shortened nor skipped. The time when a product is purchased and then used seems to be unrelated to the making of a finished product. Accelerating production and consumption is very costly. It would not be possible to deliver cheap clothing ‘overnight’, if the workforce and the natural environment were not exploited [22].

The challenges that the textile and clothing industry has to deal with have led to the development of a range of initiatives to address the situation. More and more firms seem to understand that the growing community of conscious and demanding consumers will insist more and more strongly that manufacturers respect the principles of ethical conduct, people and the natural environment. This awareness has encouraged renowned firms to add ‘ethical’ garment lines to their fashion collections; another sign of change has been the establishment of the Fairtrade Cotton Mark [1].

The ODCE surveyed the quality of CSR communication between textile and clothing manufacturers and their consumers and of the instruments that textile and clothing manufacturers use to inform buyers about their manufacturing conditions [1]. It was found that textile and clothing manufacturers employ almost all available CSR tools, and they are more successful in doing this than the other sectors of industry (see Table 1).

Reporting initiatives are very common in the textile and clothing industry, especially compared with other sectors trading globally in products such as fresh fish, cut flowers, and cosmetics. Most of them include reports on working conditions in global supply chains, whose printing as well as downloadable versions are usually available to the public.

The big names in the textile and clothing industry draw up their reports according to various reporting guidelines and invite independent organisations to audit the entire process on which they report to ensure report credibility. Manufacturers apparently wish to respond to the growing expectations of the public and understand very well how important communication and business transparency are in the globalising economy. It is notable that social or environmental reports are a tool for communication (with the company’s internal and external stakeholders) and management (allowing companies to structure their approach to sustainable development, progress measurement, formulation of strategies and improvement goals). This trend characterises both the manufacturers of consumer goods and industrial goods [see 23].

Trying to cope with the problem of long and complex supply chains and of controlling each aspect of organisations’ relationships with thousands of partners and subcontractors scattered all over the world, some textile and clothing firms have decided to disclose the names and locations of their suppliers.

The ODCE survey additionally revealed that the textile and clothing industry provides buyers with access to a huge number of publications and online information services. Consumer guides such as Ethical Consumer, Ethiscores, New-consumer, Lift the Label Ethical Directory, and Getethical contain a wealth of information on apparel stores, ethical fashion, organic cotton, fair trade, etc.

Moreover, more and more textile and clothing manufacturers decide to apply for process certification to label their products appropriately (e.g. Clean Clothes Campaign, Rugmark, and No Sweat labels). In a growing number of cases, such labels co-occur with standard labels giving information on raw material composition, the product’s country of origin, etc.

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**Table 1.** Comparison of schemes; Source: CSR and trade: informing consumers about social and environmental conditions of globalised production, OECD Trade Policy Working Paper No. 47.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification and labelling</th>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Cut flowers</th>
<th>Textiles</th>
<th>Cosmetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>several</td>
<td>several (mostly business-to-business)</td>
<td>many (mostly business-to-business)</td>
<td>seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR reporting</td>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>frequent</td>
<td>very frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General/CSR specialised consumer guides</td>
<td>only some fish guides</td>
<td>very seldom (general guides or CSR guides)</td>
<td>frequent</td>
<td>seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate marketing</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>mainly in niche market of organic cut flowers</td>
<td>very frequent</td>
<td>dominant (branding)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 1.** Stages of the textile product life-cycle and impacts; Source: Pruzan-Jorgensen P. M., Sustainability in the European Apparel and Textile Industry, 2010 EURATEX General Assembly, June 10, 2010.
An evaluation of textile and clothing manufacturers should not skip, however, a much less favourable picture of the situation that emerges from the research and practices of many NGOs - the declarations that companies make in their reports, codes of conduct, etc., which are frequently illusory and misrepresent the true facts (more on this matter in [7]).

Let us now consider what consumers think about the various sources of information and its content. Why some of the CSR communication tools are more effective than the others?

An average European consumer asked about the most appropriate CSR communication method would point to informing affixed directly to products and labels. Respondents also tend to prefer spontaneous and specific informational actions launched by producers, appreciating them much more than regular social reporting, etc. [8]. Furthermore, when asked about the type of information that garment labels should carry to facilitate their buying decisions, 65% of the British surveyed in 2005 pointed to no child labour involved in the making of a product. The other types of important information were the fabric composition in the case of garments (58%), ‘not tested on animals’ (53%), fair pay for workers (53%), and the producer’s country (46%). The ‘environmentally-friendly’ label was important for 42% of respondents, while 36% appreciated good labour conditions [9].

Although labelling is a generally accepted source of information that can present a company as a socially responsible organisation, its influence on most consumers continues to be relatively weak. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of CSR labelling that applies to textile and clothing products seems especially useful, as well as an evaluation of the role of labelling in product differentiation.

**Eco- and social labelling and its role in differentiating textile and clothing products**

Eco-labelling, and increasingly more often social labelling, is a method of differentiating products that better meet social (ethical) and ecological standards with respect to traditional products. Eco- and social labels (special quality marks) are awarded by public or private organisations that aim to popularise and promote products that are kinder to humans or the environment while having comparable usability and functional characteristics. As well as influencing consumer choices, such labels have become the linchpin of the entire certification process and the main object of producers’ interest [5].

Recently a huge number of social and eco-labelling systems for certifying products have appeared that meet the criteria prescribed.

Labelling systems can be divided along many lines. One criterion can be their territorial coverage (i.e. national – Germany’s Blue Angle, supranational – EU Ecolabel, or international – Fair Trade) or thematic scope (the type of products covered by a label), etc.

**Figure 2.** Classification of CSR labels; Source: developed by the author.

**Table 2.** Comparison of the types of ISO eco-labels; Source: developed by the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Eco-labelling</th>
<th>Type I</th>
<th>Type II</th>
<th>Type III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>ISO 14024</td>
<td>ISO 14021</td>
<td>ISO 14025</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party involvement</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life cycle analysis</td>
<td>simplified</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>multi-criterial</td>
<td>selected product traits</td>
<td>parameter categories defined for the sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of differentiating products ecologically within a group of products</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information carrier</td>
<td>a label – graphic mark, logo</td>
<td>graphic mark / word/slogan</td>
<td>numerical data represented by graphs, drawings, text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verifiability/reliability</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects for development</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>weak (low reliability)</td>
<td>average (complex procedure, analysis of a large volume of data)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An evaluation of textile and clothing manufacturers should not skip, however, a much less favourable picture of the situation that emerges from the research and practices of many NGOs - the declarations that companies make in their reports, codes of conduct, etc., which are frequently illusory and misrepresent the true facts (more on this matter in [7]).

Let us now consider what consumers think about the various sources of information and its content. Why some of the CSR communication tools are more effective than the others?
The other types of eco-labelling are:

- **Industry labelling** – specific to an industry, e.g. forest exploitation, agriculture, textiles
- **Corporate labelling** – used by organisations manufacturing or selling products. However, it must be remembered that the meeting of some specific environmental requirements by the organisation may not be related to its product’s compliance with other environmental criteria [13].

**Package labelling** – gives information on the packaging and not on the product inside.

Table 3 shows some examples of the most popular eco-labels attached to textile and clothing products.

### Table 3. The most popular eco-labels (For a review of eco-labels used in particular countries see [18]); Source: developed by the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Logo</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Angel Germany</td>
<td>The Blue Angel is the first and oldest environmental label for products and services. It is a voluntary market-oriented instrument of environmental policy which has been designed to emphasise the positive environmental properties of products and services. About 10,000 products and services in 80 product categories carry the Blue Angel eco-label.</td>
<td>ISO type I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Eco-label / EU Marguerite</td>
<td>The European Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme established in 1992 to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment. Products and services awarded the Ecolabel carry the flower logo, allowing consumers - including public and private buyers – to identify them easily.</td>
<td>ISO type I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Swan (Scandinavian countries)</td>
<td>Covers 66 different product groups</td>
<td>ISO type I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAS</td>
<td>The Eco-management and Audit Scheme EMAS is a European instrument that was implemented based on a Regulation of the European Parliament and Council to encourage different organisations (companies, plants, institutions, etc.) to keep improving their environmental performance. Being an EMAS member is equivalent to having a trademark showing that the organisation aims to be perfect. The basic EMAS principle is to distinguish and appreciate those organisations that exceed the minimum legal requirements and never cease to make efforts to improve their environmental performance.</td>
<td>Industry label for the textile industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last 30 years have witnessed many initiatives that were designed to certify products and services that have better environmental properties than those required by the standards in force. To ensure a uniform approach to this type of labelling, the International Organisation for Standardisation has published a series of standards (ISO 14020, ISO 14021, ISO 14024, ISO 14025).

As the ISO classification provides for three types of information describing the environmental advantages of a product or service, three ISO eco-labels have been established. Table 2 compares the labels and presents the related standards.

Many social labelling systems have been designed to provide consumers living in developed countries with information about producers operating in developing countries. Most of the systems apply to exporting markets and niche products [3] (Table 4 see page 24).

### Knowledge of CSR labels among Polish buyers of textiles and clothing

This section of the article presents the results of a survey involving a representative random sample of 981 adults living in Poland, conducted by the author through the Public Opinion Research Centre between 30 November and 8 December 2010. The survey was focused on consumer awareness of CSR labels. The respondents were a representative sample of the Polish adult population aged 16 years and older. The survey was conducted by mail and telephone interviews. The analysis is based on the results of an intercepted survey.

The survey was conducted between 30 November and 8 December 2010. The respondents were a representative sample of the Polish adult population aged 16 years and older. The survey was conducted by mail and telephone interviews. The analysis is based on the results of an intercepted survey.
The sample was drawn from the PESEL system. The interviews utilised face-to-face methodology and CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

According to the research findings, the best known CSR label is the EU Eco-label. Every fifth Polish consumer noticed the label attached to textile products. The Ecolabel was followed in the ranking by the Global Organic Textile Standard, recognised by almost 19% of Polish consumers, and next by the Oeko-Tex Standard (18.2%) – see Figure 3 (see page 25).

At the same time, almost every fourth Polish consumer bought a textile product with an eco- and/or social label attached to it.

The weak and strong points of labelling as a tool for differentiating socially responsible textiles in the market

A straightforward evaluation of the role of labels in product differentiation is not possible. Eco-labels and social labels are sometimes an effective tool enabling communication with consumers and a
Another group of problems arises from the general level of environmental awareness, or in broader terms, from corporate social responsibility.

There are also problems caused by fact that it is difficult to award labels when production chains are long, like those in the textile and clothing industry. The Fairtrade label is usually given to unprocessed goods (or low-processed ones), but even simple products such as tea or coffee give rise to many controversies about what auditing and monitoring methods would be the most relevant. Transparent control over the work of thousands of petty farmers, agents and cooperatives scattered all over the world is not easy, even in the case of coffee, which is sold almost unprocessed. Trying to certify the entire garment making process, from cotton growing, fibre processing, dyeing and weaving to cutting and sewing the fabric is much more difficult, not to mention the production of accessories, such as buttons, clasps and sequins.

Nowadays we know that eco-labels are also frequently abused and counterfeited. The growing popularity of ‘false’ eco-labels prevents ‘real’ labels from becoming more credible. Many products are given labels such as flowers, bushes, trees, shrubs, hares and birds, but no modification to the product or its manufacturing is required. Many manufacturers have been misled by companies presenting labels associated with environmental protection.

While media campaigns promoting eco-labelling apparently raise the awareness of consumers and gradually remodel their behaviour, the business community has not made much progress, one reason being certification and licensing costs [10, 14]. Developing countries also complain more and more that they often have to struggle with the huge burden of costs that significantly impede trade [15].

With all the weaknesses of present labelling systems, they still seem to be one of the most convenient and consumer-friendly channels of communication that manufacturers can use in this area. The research showed that they are also one of the most effective. For over 70% of Polish consumers noticing any CSR message from textile and clothing manufacturers, this was a label or tag attached to a textile product to confirm its eco-friendly nature.

Two factors determine the success of labelling systems: one is the awareness of consumers and their ability to understand their message, and the other one is the business community’s willingness to accept the systems.

Conclusions

The above review of various CSR communication initiatives shows that certification and labelling systems belong to the most effective instruments that can induce positive changes in consumer behaviour. The empirical research findings, showing that consumers prefer information attached to products and labels, corroborate this conclusion. Another finding is that the role certification and labelling plays in product differentiation is not sufficient. The latent
benefits of signs and labels need the following to become fully available:
1. transparent standardisation and certification systems,
2. the harmonisation and standardisation of existing systems,
3. a methodological framework ensuring some systematisation of the present diversity of signs and labels.
4. a new approach to consumer education and information – although product labelling is a simple method for sending complex messages, CSR intricacy calls for a completely new approach to communication strategies.

Textile and clothing companies will have to confront most of these challenges. Although ODCE data show that companies use almost all CSR communication instruments that are available, the communication is still insufficient. Another huge problem that this sector of industry has to solve is the development of effective communication systems that will be able to cope with its long, complicated and barely controllable supply chain.

### Editorial note

1) The mark only shows that some cotton cultivation and picking rules were respected (e.g. fair pay, workers’ rights), but gives no information on how workers involved in the later stages of garment production were treated. Unfortunately, many companies tend to exploit consumers’ ignorance of this fact and intentionally mislead them.

### Acknowledgment

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