

# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABILITY & CSR MEASURES ON COMPANIES

Venera-Cristina Manciu, Jeanina-Biliana Ciurea \*, Andreea-Mihaela Zgardan

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration,  
1-4, Traian Vuia Square, Reşita, Romania

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: [jeanina.ciurea@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:jeanina.ciurea@ubbcluj.ro)

**Abstract:** Sustainability and CSR are concepts applied by companies to implement sustainable and equitable development in terms of both the environment and society. This paper analyzes how business management, in order to meet current requirements, adopts and implements measures that ensure and protect the balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects. Through the Sustainability and CSR measures implemented by companies, the goal is to reduce their negative impact on the environment, to ensure ethical behavior in their relationships with all partners whether consumers, employees, or collaborators—and to achieve a positive effect on the community and society as a whole.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, CSR, management, business.

## 1. Introduction

Retail businesses are numerous, including in Caraş-Severin County, and they continue to grow. As a result, Sustainability & CSR measures are becoming increasingly important for the parties involved in commercial activities, having a direct impact on the environment and local communities through the products and services traded.

Existing government regulations place constant pressure on companies, and their management must incorporate sustainable practices into their operations. Managers of companies that integrate these principles not only help protect the planet in general but also strengthen the long-term economic future of the businesses they lead.

Sustainability ensures a long-term balance between economic, social, and environmental needs [5], while Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the way in which a company becomes involved in integrating into its business those values that best contribute to the development of its employees, customers, community, and the environment, [6].

CSR becomes an important strategy for companies through which they take responsibility for the impact they have on society and the environment in general.

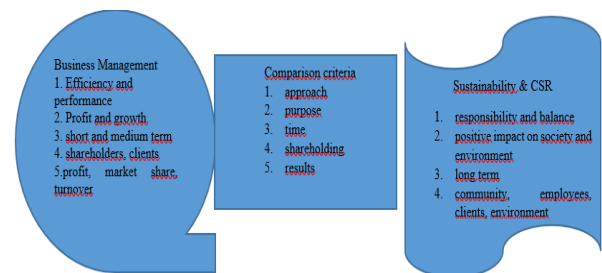
Sustainability & CSR have become common terms for all businesses, regardless of their size or field of activity.

The benefits of integrating Sustainability & CSR into the business environment primarily include the following: improving brand reputation in order to gain consumer trust and attract them toward ethical values; gaining access to new markets, given that global standards regarding Sustainability & CSR have become very strict and compliance can generate a competitive advantage; reducing long-term costs through the exclusive use of

renewable resources; and expanding the circular economy, which aims to reduce waste and reuse materials [4].

Business management is concerned with the efficient operation and profitability of any company, while Sustainability & CSR are important for its reputation and social relevance.

A suggestive comparison between business management and Sustainability & CSR is presented in the figure below:



**Fig. 1.** Comparison between Business Management and Sustainability & CSR [adapted from 1]

## 2. Theoretical Considerations

CSR is a relatively new concept in business history, but it is becoming increasingly important every year.

This management concept is a product of the 20th century, attracting the attention of various sectors, including business, beginning in the early 1950s.

The concept has evolved considerably since the beginning of the 20th century, when companies were often focused on maximizing profits. Today, CSR encompasses a broader range of issues related to ethical

labour practices, environmental sustainability, community involvement, and transparency in business governance [2].

According to the European Commission (2011), CSR is defined as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society,” integrating social, environmental, and ethical aspects into business operations, collaborating with stakeholders, and measuring its outcomes from a sustainable perspective [3].

Since 2000, the concepts of Sustainability & CSR have expanded their scope, becoming an element for ensuring the sustainable development needs of society. Achieving the proposed objectives is based on three fundamental pillars that every company must consider: social performance (people), environmental performance (planet), and economic performance (profit). This new approach integrates societal issues into the objectives of any business, and companies must create economic value for shareholders, stakeholders, and the community while taking into account their impact on the surrounding environment.

For example, by analyzing Sustainability & CSR in commercial activities, it is possible to assess the impact that these activities have on the environment, the economy, and the society, taking into account that commercial practices contribute to sustainable development.

Customers who feel emotionally connected to a brand because of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts are more likely to become loyal customers and to recommend the company to others, further strengthening the business’s market presence [1]. In addition, a focus on CSR contributes to employee engagement and satisfaction.

Employees are more likely to be motivated and committed to an organization that reflects their ethical values and standards. This alignment increases productivity and reduces employee turnover rates, creating a more stable and efficient workforce.

With regard to a sustainable business model, researchers have provided various concepts over the years. The term “*sustainable business model*” refers to how firms are managed with a focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects. These companies place the highest priority on long-term sustainability and consider how their operations will affect society and the environment. The way a business organization operates is determined by its sustainable business model.

The link between CSR and business sustainability is increasingly recognized as crucial for long-term success. CSR contributes to sustainability by addressing the social and environmental effects of business activities. In turn, sustainable business practices enhance an organization’s reputation, foster customer loyalty, and drive economic performance.

Companies that integrate CSR as part of their identity are better positioned to manage social and environmental challenges, to build resilience, and to achieve sustainable growth [9].

### 3. Research Methodology

Commercial activities have a major impact on the environment and aim to reduce the carbon footprint, manage natural resources more efficiently, reduce and recycle waste, use biodegradable packaging, promote responsible consumption, limit waste, expand the use of green energy, invest sustainably, and so on.

The large retail chains of foreign traders conducting business in Romania, as well as independent local retailers, have implemented the above-mentioned actions or have integrated Sustainability & CSR measures into their activities.

The Sustainability & CSR measures applied in businesses within the commercial sector contribute to ensuring the well-being of the communities in which they operate.

Responsible trade, business ethics, promoting consumer responsibility, respecting employees’ rights, contributing to the development of the local community, and supporting and engaging in social projects in education, health, sports, or environmental restoration are some of the good social responsibility practices in which the retail sector is involved.

Therefore, it becomes appropriate to investigate the attitudes of consumers in Caraş-Severin County toward existing commercial units that have understood how important it is for them to rapidly implement Sustainability & CSR measures. In this regard, a direct qualitative research study was conducted based on a questionnaire administered to consumers in the county during the period May 5, 2025 – May 31, 2025. The questionnaire included 20 content-related questions, all with closed answers, allowing respondents to choose multiple response options, and 5 identification questions. The identification criteria focused on respondents’ age, gender, occupation, average net family income, and place of residence.

The sample structure of 120 respondents included the following:

- Gender: 36.7% male, 56.7% female, and 6.6% preferred not to answer.

- Age: Respondents under 40 years old (50%), followed by those aged 40–60 (33.3%), and respondents over 60 years old (16.6%).

- Occupation: Employees in the public/private sector (46.7%), followed by students (20%), self-employed/entrepreneurs (13.3%), unemployed/persons without occupation (5.2%), and retirees (14.8%).

- Average net family income: Below 2,575 lei – 23.3%, between 2,575 and 5,000 lei – 46.7%, above 5,000 lei – 30%.

- Place of residence: 63.3% from urban areas and 36.7% from rural areas.

The qualitative direct research established the following:

Research purpose: to identify the Sustainability & CSR measures implemented and applied in commercial businesses, as well as to assess the level of consumer awareness of these measures in Caraş-Severin County.

Main objective is represented by the analyze of the impact of sustainability and social responsibility on commercial practices, consumer behavior, and companies' financial performance, with the goal of identifying the most effective strategies for integrating these concepts into modern commerce.

Secondary Objectives:

- Identifying the main areas of involvement in Sustainability & CSR.
- Evaluating the level of adoption of sustainable and socially responsible practices in commerce.
- Understanding consumers' perceptions of sustainability and social responsibility practices.
- Identifying sustainability and social responsibility factors that influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions.
- Analyzing the role of government policies in promoting sustainability in the commercial sector.
- Investigating the impact of management and marketing strategies on consumer behavior.

The hypothesis proposed to be tested through the qualitative research was: *business management is involved in implementing Sustainability & CSR measures applied by companies.*

#### 4. Research Results

Following the administration of the questionnaire to the qualitative research sample of 120 respondents, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Commercial businesses are among the most dynamic both globally and in Romania. Since they target end consumers, it is important for them to take consumer requirements into account.

Studies show that Sustainability & CSR have a significant impact on commerce, and consumer interest in these two areas is increasing. Accordingly, the respondents participating in the qualitative research valued the importance of Sustainability & CSR in their choice of products and services, as shown in the graph below:

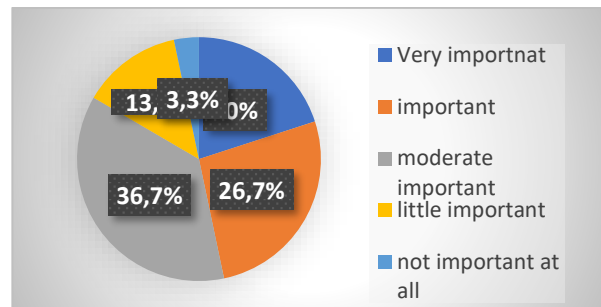


Fig. 2. The importance of Sustainability & CSR

For 36.7% of respondents, it is important to choose and purchase products and services that benefit from Sustainability & CSR measures implemented by the company; for 20%, it is very important; for 13.3%, it is slightly important; and only 3.3% mentioned that it is not important at all for the products and services they need to incorporate Sustainability & CSR.

The main Sustainability & CSR aspects requested by consumers in the products and services they purchase may include:

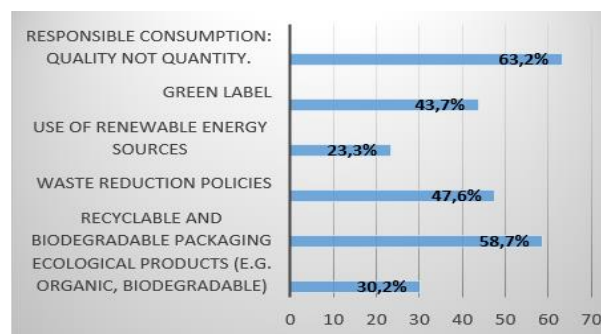
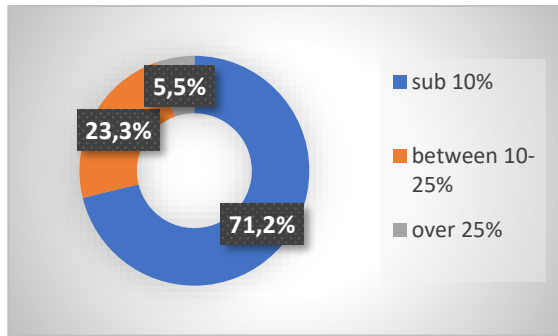


Fig. 3. Main aspects of Sustainability & CSR

Over 63.3% of respondents consider quality over quantity consumption as the main Sustainability & CSR aspect they seek; 58.7% value recyclable and biodegradable packaging as a Sustainability & CSR feature; 43.7% appreciate the green label as a Sustainability & CSR aspect; and 23.3% consider the use of renewable energy sources to be a Sustainability & CSR aspect.

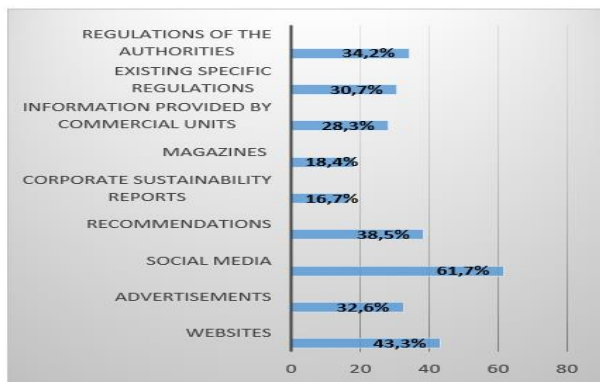
The implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures also generates higher costs, meaning that products/services will be more expensive. The respondents participating in the qualitative research indicated the percentages by which they consider products/services with Sustainability & CSR could be more expensive as follows:



**Fig. 4.** Costs generated by Sustainability & CSR measures

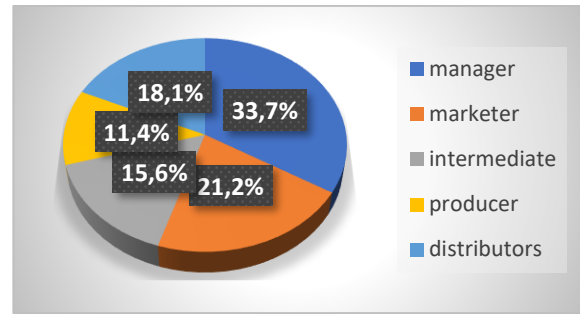
Over 71.2% of respondents are willing to purchase products/services that are up to 10% more expensive if they incorporate Sustainability & CSR; 23.3% are willing to pay 10–25% more for products/services with Sustainability & CSR; and 5.5% are willing to pay 25% more for products/services that benefit from Sustainability & CSR.

The sources of information used by respondents regarding the implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures in commercial activities are as follows: Mass media is the main source, used by 61.7% of respondents; Websites are used by 43.3%; Recommendations received through various channels are followed by 38.5%; Knowledge of regulations issued by authorities regarding the implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures is cited by 34.2%; Information from company activities and reports on the implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures in commercial activities is known by 16.7% of respondents.



**Fig. 5.** Sources of information

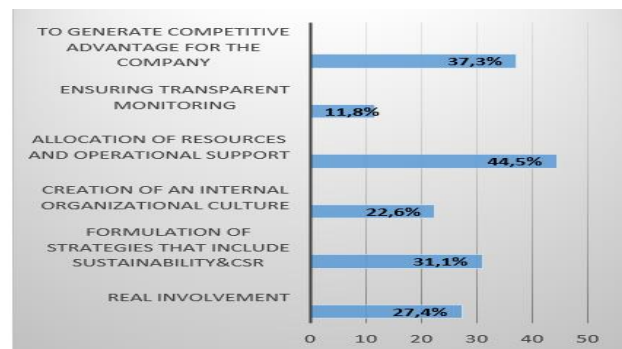
The initiative to implement Sustainability & CSR measures in commercial activities is a fairly challenging task due to the complexity of operations and the large number of partners involved. The respondents participating in the research evaluated it as follows:



**Fig. 6.** Responsible for initiating implementation

Over 33.7% of respondents believe that the implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures in commercial activities should be carried out by the company manager; 21.2% think it should be done by marketers; 18.1% indicated distributors as responsible for implementing Sustainability & CSR in commercial activities; and 11.4% believe that producers (of products/services) have the obligation to implement Sustainability & CSR measures in commercial activities.

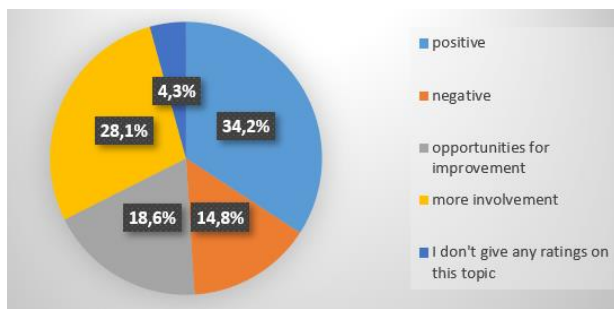
The role of management in implementing Sustainability & CSR measures in companies must be active, strategic, and integrative [7]. Business management should formulate long-term objectives and have a clear vision regarding Sustainability & CSR. Respondents' assessment of this role is as follows:



**Fig. 7.** The role of management in implementing measures

The role of management in implementing Sustainability & CSR measures in companies was assessed by over 44.5% of respondents as the allocation of resources and operational support that should be provided to companies; 37.3% of respondents consider it to be the generation of competitive advantage that management should achieve for companies through the implementation of Sustainability & CSR measures; and 11.8% believe that the role of management should be transparent monitoring.

Respondents' assessments of the effectiveness of management activities carried out by companies to implement Sustainability & CSR measures revealed the following:



**Fig. 8.** Effectiveness of management activities

The effectiveness of management activities carried out by companies to implement Sustainability & CSR measures is assessed by over 34.2% of respondents as positive; 28.1% recommend greater involvement; 18.6% believe there are more opportunities for improvement; 14.8% expressed negative opinions regarding management effectiveness; and 4.3% stated that they did not wish to provide an assessment.

The results obtained from the qualitative direct research, analyzed and graphically presented above, support the acceptance of the tested hypothesis, namely: *business management is involved in implementing Sustainability & CSR measures applied by companies.*

## 5. Conclusions

Sustainability & CSR have a significant impact on all social and economic sectors in Romania.

Businesses in the commercial sector have implemented management strategies that include Sustainability & CSR measures, the most important being: environmental protection, competitive advantage, increased demand for eco-friendly products, and others.

Consumers have become informed and increasingly interested in sustainable and responsible products, leading to changes in companies' offerings. Sustainability & CSR are not perceived as temporary trends by either companies or consumers; they have become intelligent, long-term strategies with proven success.

At the global level, for example, Sustainability & CSR in the commercial sector have become priority strategies for companies, shaping trade flows and business models in general. The integration of ESG principles (environmental, social, governance) strengthens the financial resilience of businesses in all sectors, not just commerce, and creates opportunities to identify new growth prospects.

In general, companies have made significant investments in digital and "green" technologies as concrete measures to implement Sustainability & CSR, while also subscribing to the European Green Deal. [10]. Supporting the business environment in Romania in implementing Sustainability & CSR measures is the

Academy of Sustainability, a project developed by Social Innovation Solutions - a marketplace for sustainable solutions aimed at entrepreneurs interested in sustainable products and services offered by local businesses. Also known as IMM4IMM, the initiative supports the development of such businesses through continuous promotion of their offerings on digital platforms and online media. [11].

CSR is vital for achieving the long-term sustainability of business organizations. [2] Ongoing research and development in this area are important for advancing CSR practices and ensuring their alignment with broader sustainability goals.

## 6. References

- [1] Holtbrugge D., Oberhauser M.: "CSR orientation of future top managers in India". J. Indian Bus. Res. 2019, 11, 162–178, 2019.
- [2] Kelvin W. K. H.: "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Its Impact on Business Sustainability", International Journal of Recent Research in Commerce Economics and Management (IJRRCEM) Vol. 11, Issue 3, pp: (48-67), Month: July - September 2024, ISSN 2349-7807, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12911664>, 2024.
- [3] Lopez B., Rangel C., Fernandez M.: "The impact of corporate social responsibility strategy on the management and governance axis for sustainable growth", Journal of Business Research 150 (2022) 690–698, 2022.
- [4] Luchinger R.: "Visionary Brands" (in original in Romanian), Lucian Georgescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005.
- [5] Pohoată I., Diaconășu D.E., Crupenschi V. M.: "Sustainable development theory. A critical approach" (in original in Romanian), Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2022.
- [6] Stancu A.: "Marketing and Social Responsibility: A Strategic Approach to the Sustainable Company" (in original in Romanian), ASE Publishing House, Bucharest 2018.
- [7] Țuclea C.: "Strategic Management", Uranus Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003.
- [8] Wentzel L., Fapohunda J.A., Haldenwang R. A.: "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Model to Achieve Sustainable Business Performance (SBP) of SMEs in the South African Construction Industry" Sustainability 2023, 15, 10007, 2023.
- [9] Zadek S.: "The path to corporate responsibility", Harvard Business Review, 82(12), 125-132., 2004.
- [10] [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/industry-and-green-deal\\_ro](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/industry-and-green-deal_ro)
- [11] <https://www.revista-piata.ro/fmcg/csr-excellence/sustenabilitate/item/19432-academia-de-sustenabilitate-lanseaza-imm4imm-un-marketplace-cu-solutii-sustenabile-pentru-afaceri>