

## CHANGES IN CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLISH ENTERPRISES

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### ABSTRACT

Protection of the natural environment from further pollution should become one of the main goals of mankind. To act effectively in this area, it is not enough to believe in the importance of protecting natural resources as a condition for the survival of humanity and increase in the quality of life for societies and individuals. Neither knowledge about the technical methods of preventing environmental pollution nor the possession of adequate financial resources is sufficient. Most of all, it is necessary to be aware of the responsibility for environmental protection, to be aware of what factual and systematic actions can be taken to protect the environment, from the global to the local level. Responsibility for the protection of the natural environment lies in the hands of both consumers and enterprises. The aim of this paper is to present, in a synthetic way, the impact of pro-ecological attitudes and behavior of consumers on the scale and scope of activity of enterprises in the field of environmental protection. Reflections contained in the paper do not have definite characteristics and should be treated as an opinion in the discussion in fields management sciences.

**Keywords:** Management, development, consumer attitudes, natural environment, economic perspective.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most important social (economic) problems is progressive pollution of the natural environment. All over the globe, to varying degrees, human beings are affected by the negative effects of environmental degradation. The current course of development of civilizations has taught the majority of people to treat the natural environment as a source of valuable resources and a place to dispose of waste. Unfortunately, this course of development of civilization has not taught them to treat it as their own nest: as the source of life and the place of living for further generations. With this in mind, the protection of the natural environment should become one of the main tasks of mankind.

Environmental awareness is the system of values expressed by preferences and attitudes of humans, characterized by reliable knowledge about the natural environment, the determination to combat threats to the natural environment, and consequently, responsibility for keeping it in its best condition. This is the origin of the majority of social movements that propagate ecological ideas. Environmental awareness has to become common knowledge; actions to protect the environment should bring positive results in the global and local scales.

### Research Methodology

Customer migration on the micro scale means changes in customer behavior, resulting in changes in marketing, assets and business strategies. Moving of purchasing power and customers themselves is caused by different reasons and can take different directions and

intensity. This may mean an increase or decrease in demand for the offers of individual companies, as well as a change in the level and duration of customer loyalty. Changes in demand for a company's offer translates directly into the value of the company. The main aim of this paper is to show:

- the microeconomic and macroeconomic determinants of customers' attitudes and behavior on the market,
- changes in the lifestyle of contemporary consumers and the consequences for companies,
- role of eco-innovation in business and economy.

The research methods used will include constructive criticism, a literature review, research synthesis and qualitative analysis. This will enable answering on signed above of research questions, problems or matters.

The issues presented in this work do not exhaust the list of problems that aggravate researchers in this field. The contents (threads) included here give a sketch of the issues in order to stimulate the asking of further questions, rather than looking for specific answers. They are to become an inspiration for further exploration, to expand the boundaries of our knowledge and research abilities in the fields of economic science.

### **Factors determining environmental awareness**

The process of building environmental awareness among consumers often begins when consumers begin to be aware of the environmental problems around them. Consumers gradually start to pay attention to details connected to these issues (they gather information and educate themselves in this area). It is then that consumers want – in their daily activity– to take into account these environmental ethics; they take appropriate actions that are beneficial for the environment, under the influence of ecological motivation. Buying ecological products, waste segregation, etc. are such actions.

Consumers' environmental awareness determines the strength and scope of their pro-ecological behavior; it also decides about their behavior in the market (Xiao & Nicholson, 2013). The following components are the basis of this type of behavior:

- cognitive component – acquired ecological knowledge, understanding the ways of coexistence between man and nature,
- emotional component – ecological sensitivity, i.e. emotions that the natural environment awakens in consumers,
- behavioral – pro-ecological actions and behavior in accordance with the idea of environmental protection.

Consumers' environmental awareness is shaped by many factors: the state of general knowledge (including professional, ecological knowledge) and access to information, a sense of danger (inter alia resulting from not respecting environmental standards or rules), external stimuli and emotional responsibility for the state of the environment (Czarniewski, 2016a). Thus, environmental awareness is shaped by knowledge, ecological education, opinions and beliefs and the consumer's own experiences. Undoubtedly, this awareness has an impact on certain attitudes and behavior seen in the market. These attitudes are also the engine of change at the company level, in the context of new needs and requirements of customers (Kine & Rosenberg, 1986, pp. 275-305).

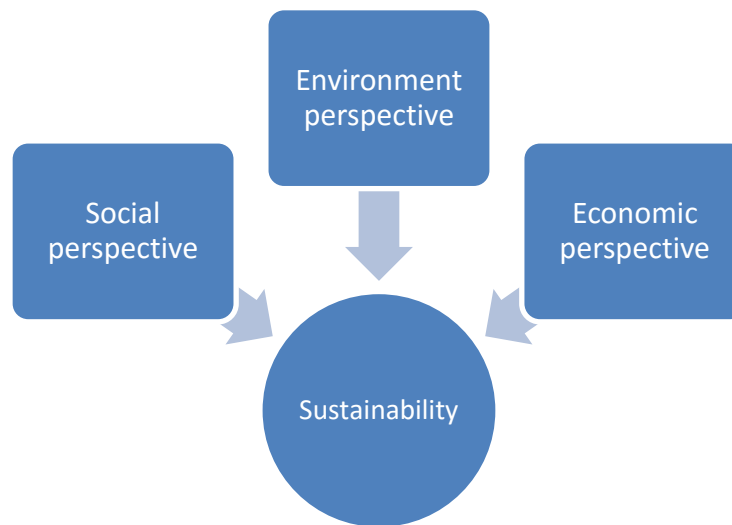
**Table 1. Consumer characteristics versus the consumption model**

<b>Categories of consumers</b>	<b>Consumer characteristics</b>	<b>The consumption model</b>
Non-ecological	material prosperity as a basis of quality of life, lack of knowledge and awareness	intensive exploitation of resources, raw materials - lack of actions towards the protection of nature, indifference concerning contamination (their storage and / or utilization), purchase of products under the pressure of advertisements, fashion, surrounding
Partly pro-ecological	basic ecological knowledge, environmental awareness at an average level, desire to be perceived as a pro-ecological person	reasonable exploitation of resources only for economic reasons, minimum pollution only because of fear concerning the financial consequences of their entering into the environment, ecological goods rarely purchased – if so, they are bought under peer pressure, without inner conviction
Fully pro-ecological	back to nature, a high level of environmental awareness, pro-ecological lifestyle, clean natural environment as an essential element of quality of life	big saving in exploitation of natural resources, minimization of pollutant emissions, purchases only environmentally friendly food products, purchases of durable products reduced to the bare minimum

Source: own research.

Several models of consumption, depending on the category of the consumer, have been shown in Table 1. The following consumption models have been specified: non-ecological, partly pro-ecological and fully ecological. From the social point of view, and the implementation of principles of ecology, the fully pro-ecological model is most desirable. It suggests a return to the solutions associated with nature; it is characterized by a high level of knowledge and ecological awareness. An important aspect here is a clean natural environment which is an essential element of the quality of life of the consumer.

Researchers and practitioners have investigated sustainability from several perspectives, however, there is relative agreement within the academic community that the concept of sustainability encompasses three perspectives, namely, environmental, social and economic perspective (Christofi, Leonidou & Vrontis, 2015). This three dimensional perspective of sustainability (Figure 1) challenges firms to consider the environmental and social equity dimensions of organizational success without creating a negative impact on the economic dimension. While the environmental perspective of sustainability has been the main subject for investigation within the sustainability literature, recent scholarly research has underlined the significance of embracing the three perspectives of sustainability.

**Figure 1. Perspectives of Sustainability**

Source: own research.

Current research investigating the environmental perspective of sustainability has usually focused on the antecedents of integrating environmental strategy and the performance outcomes of such initiatives. Towards this direction, Roxas and Coetzer refer to the environmental orientation of sustainability as the overall strategic position of organisations towards the incorporation of environmental concerns and practices into their tactical, strategic and operational activities (Roxas & Coetzer, 2012). Thus, an organization develops and demonstrates its environmental dimension of sustainability by incorporating environmental concerns into its culture, strategy, business operations, decision-making, and through its interplay with stakeholders.

### **Consumers' attitude to environmental values**

Interest in environmental values among consumers has increased over the past dozen years. The purchase of a particular product is not always justified by economic criteria. Customers have recently started to take into account the environmental and ecological aspects of their purchases. Under the ecological concept, consumers do not buy mass products, with a high content of chemicals that can lead to disease. Moreover, they do not buy products that pollute the natural environment in the phase of manufacturing and utilization.

If consumers pay attention to environmental values, this means that they buy products labeled in a specific way that confirm that the product is ecologically safe. In addition, they buy biodegradable products, in packages that can be returned or recycled (Łuczka-Bakuła, 2007, pp. 60-62).

Widely understood ecological education undoubtedly influences people to have pro-environmental attitudes and changes consumer behavior on the market. Environmental education increases public awareness in respect to nature (Habibi, Laroche & Richard, 2014). It is also defined as a psycho-pedagogical process that has impact on the consumer and shapes their ecological awareness. Colloquially, it means all forms of activities directed at society which are intended to influence their level of environmental awareness, to promote specific behaviors beneficial for the environment, and to disseminate knowledge about nature (Sekaran, 2003).

Modern consumers are increasingly more educated about the natural environment (Czarniewski, 2016a). In addition, they are aware of the mutual interactions between man and the environment. As a result, their environmental awareness, the condition for change in consumption habits and lifestyles of consumers, is formed and strengthened (Ngugi, Johnsen& Erdelyi, 2010, pp. 260-278). In other words, environmental awareness shapes the patterns of consumer behavior, whose essence are actions to protect the environment.

### Customers and the development of companies

The value of the company for shareholders is created when the rate of return from invested capital exceeds the weighted average cost of this capital. Capital investors expect an above-average rate of return from invested capital and constant or ascending dividends of shares.

Enterprises increase their capital thanks to customers, employees and investors. If companies are able to provide customers with profitable offers, they have a chance to attract capital and generate profits. In this sense, companies with valuable products for customers have a better chance of attracting capital (Winterich & Barone, 2011). Relationships between the value of the company, customer migration and migration of capital are very strict. Factors such as satisfaction, loyalty and incoming new customers create the value of the company (Czarniewski, 2014). The increasing value of the company attracts investment capital. Departing customers reduce the value of the enterprise, and this causes an outflow of invested capital.

Thus, a legitimate question becomes in which customer segments should the company invest, guided by the criterion of the influx of value (this criterion often has an impact on the overall value of the enterprise). While it is impossible to provide a clear answer to this question, it is still possible to analyze the impact of particular groups of customers on the inflow or outflow of values to the company (Cambra-Fierro, Florin, Perez & Whitelock, 2011).

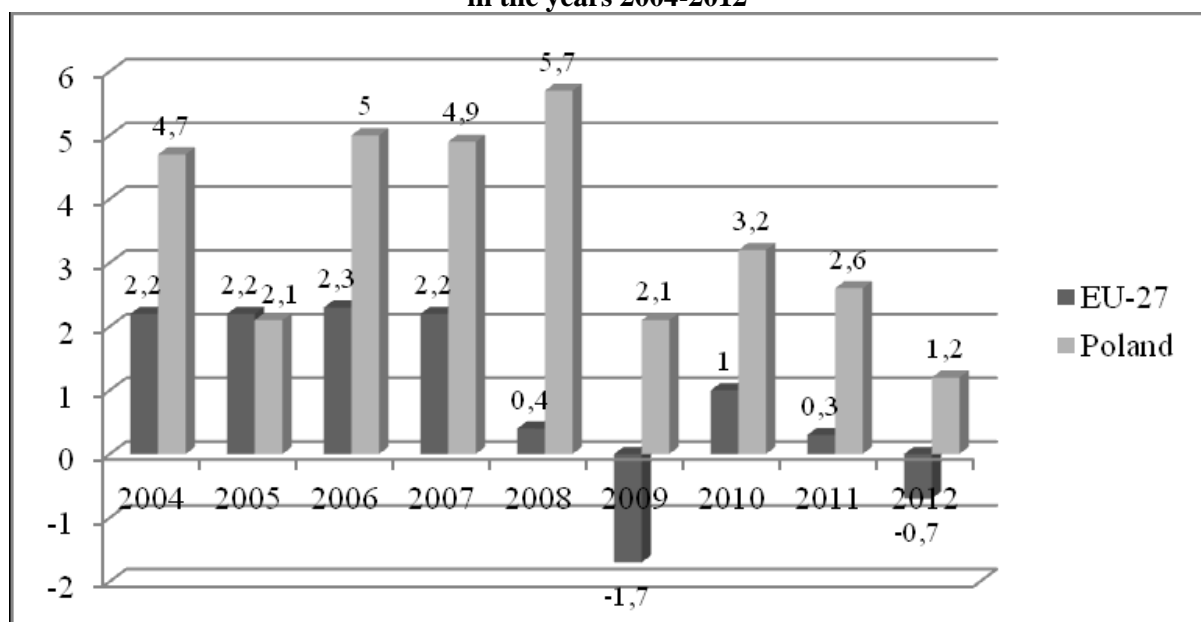
**Table 2. Customer segmentation of an online shop taking into account their impact on the migration of value**

<b>Segment of customers who:</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>The impact on the migration of value</b>
Browse shop webpages	Browsing shop web pages without intention of buying or publishing product reviews	Minimal direct impact on the migration of values. Possible positive impact of migration may arise from a recommendation of the shop to a third party.
Publish product reviews	By publishing reviews or evaluating products, customers increase the value for others who intend to make a purchase	Indirect impact on the inflow of values through publishing of information and knowledge relevant to the process of purchasing. Through published reviews there is a possible increase in the shop's reliability. In case of publishing false or negative information about the shop - possible outflow of values.
Make a purchase	By purchasing products, customers generate cash flows for a company. This is the most valuable customer segment.	Strong direct impact on the inflow of values. With difficult customers, the return of products or time-consuming customer services, possible outflow of values.

Source: own research.

Table 2 shows an example of customer segmentation in an online shop, taking into account their impact on the migration of values. There are three groups of clients in this segmentation: those who browse the web page of the shop, those who publish reviews of products and those who purchase goods. These groups have a different impact on the inflow or outflow of values. It is understood that the company, in its activities, should aim to increase the number of customers who contribute to the inflow of values for the company. In this case, this means customers who make purchases and who are profitable.

**Figure 2. Changes in household final consumption expenditure in Poland and EU-27 in the years 2004-2012**



Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

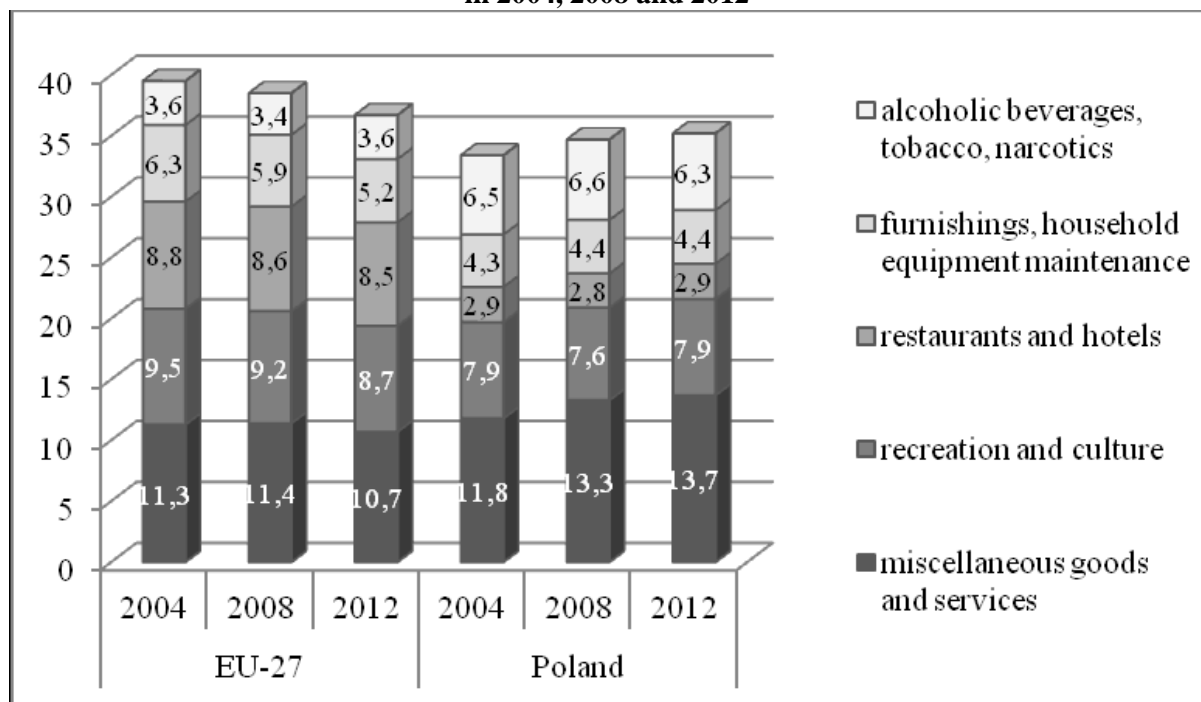
A process of modernising consumption means some permanent improvement and contemporisation of consumption in its all possible dimensions. This involves value, quantity and quality related changes in consumption of food and non-food products along with services. Moreover, traditional methods of satisfying needs or methods that are different than those in use at present, along with satisfying new needs that have been non-existent so far, are elements of the process in question (Grzeza, 2014).

In Poland the situation was different. After accession there was some increase in final consumption by 4,7%. In subsequent years excluding 2005 the pace of growth was increasing – up to the level of 5,7% in 2008. After that period there was some decrease in the growth dynamics of final consumption – to slightly more than 2% in 2009. In the period of 2010-2011 slight improvement was reported. However, in 2012 final consumption expenditure increased by 1,2% only. A slowing pace of growth in Polish consumption resulted from detrimental conditions of both world and European economies. Nevertheless, in the context of the world crisis Poland was relatively successful since we managed to avoid negative dynamics of consumption (Figure 2).

In 2004-2012 participation of free choice expenditure of the EU-27 households went down by 1,8 percentage points. However, there was a 0,5% percentage point increase in participation of free choice expenditure in case of Polish households. Nevertheless, Poles spend less on

free choice consumption as compared to the EU average. The most visible differences refer to expenditure on restaurants and hotels (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. The structure of expenditures free choice in Poland and EU-27 in 2004, 2008 and 2012**



Source: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>.

### The reactions of enterprises to pro-environmental attitudes of consumers

Enterprises are increasingly investing in environmental management systems. They are taking so called 'active attitude'; whose effect is to achieve a better competitive position in the market (Kacen, Hess & Walker, 2012).

Effective actions in terms of environment protection shape a positive image of the company, they positively affect its position in the market and consequently gain acceptance from consumers (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Increasing ecological awareness of consumers and appropriate legal regulations have forced entrepreneurs to deeply examine the effects of their actions on the natural environmental.

It should be noted that a significant number of companies have responded to the ecological needs of consumers. However, some do so in an unethical manner, offering non-ecological products advertised as natural and environmentally friendly, misleading consumers. The main motive for such behavior is not protection of the environment, but maximization of profit (Wadhwa, Mishra & Chan, 2009, pp. 163-186). Such unethical actions are contrary to the definition of ethics in business and deceive consumers who want to participate in ecological activities.

Ethical companies offer organic products, aimed at pro-ecological customers willing to pay a higher price for better quality goods. Success for such companies is when these niche consumers become loyal customers, making repeat purchases (Frambach, Prabhu & Verhallen, 2003). Environmentally friendly companies may also influence consumer habits

by highlighting their pro-ecological activities (e.g. saving water and energy during the production process). For the average consumer, the ecological value of the product is only a supplement. By stimulating people's emotions and providing high quality manufactured products - the company can influence the decision to buy a given product (Gabriel, 2008, pp. 25-29).

Two basic concepts, or business strategies, that pursue environmental goals, may be distinguished here. The first concept is the offensive strategy which is characterized by the implementation of all possible methods, tools and ways of operation concerning production, organizational structure or marketing, in order to improve the natural environment and to improve the ecological attitude of employees at each position (maximize ecological activity).

The second concept is called the innovative strategy. It is based on finding and implementing new production technologies and know-how to protect the environment (i.e. waste-free production, closed water circuits, recycling, using reusable packaging, energy saving, etc.). Companies that implement this concept are often seen as forerunners on the market in terms of environmental protection, in this way improving their image and obtaining additional profits (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2005). They may even become unrivaled pioneers. However, any failures connected with such changes, or consumers misunderstanding the company's intentions, generate additional costs (Warner & Witzel, 2004, pp. 126-132). This is why companies usually introduce only high quality innovative products when it comes to meeting higher environmental protection standards. For pro-ecological consumers, this is seen as an additional advantage and the basis for their purchase.

The healthy lifestyle has become more and more fashionable these days. This means following a proper diet (greater access to organic products) and physical activity. The focus on health and beauty by consumers can mean tremendous opportunities for ecological companies, as well as cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies. The fact that capital will move into companies from these sectors seems more certain as societies in developed countries age (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011)

Increased access to information technology, and a general proliferation in education have increased consumers' awareness, limiting social acceptance for enterprises that pose threat to the environment (Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn, 2008, pp. 231-234). Sustainable development and protection of human rights are the foundation for corporate social responsibility that expresses harmony between economy, ecology and ethics (Tang, 2006, pp. 451-488). Business managers must take into account these principles in order to avoid erosion of customers' confidence in their activities. Nowadays the success of the company is affected not only by economic results, but also by their impact on the environment and society.

### **The role of eco-innovation in business and economy**

The main objective of eco-innovation is to reduce the impact on the environment, creating new market opportunities, products, services or processes designed to improve environmental performance (e.g. saving energy and other resources, reducing pollution and waste). Their implementation is dependent, for example, on industry, regulations or standards, as well as on consumer sensitivity and awareness. Eco-innovation also shows different possibilities for improving the economic situation of Polish enterprises, whilst minimizing negative impacts on the environment (Urbaniec, 2015).



Eco-innovations have an impact not only on environmental aspects, but also on economic issues. Eco-innovation can be defined as a sustainable development tool used during the entire life-cycle of a product or service, contributing to numerous environmental and economic benefits.

According to the EIO, Poland is a country with very low eco-innovativeness and is classified in the non-innovative group of EU countries. In a study from 2013, it was reported that Poland had reached a result significantly below of the EU average, occupying the penultimate place among EU countries (EIO, 2014). This low level of eco-innovativeness in the European ranking is due to poor results in research and development as well as investments in green technologies. Poland's low position in the European ranking of eco-innovativeness should be assessed in terms of opportunities and not lost chances, because the EIO report emphasizes that there is great eco-innovation potential in Poland, especially in industry raw materials savings. In spite of overall changes, trends point to significant economic opportunities in the modernization of production processes, particularly in the most energy- and resource-intensive sectors.

**Table 3. Possibilities and limitations to eco-innovations in Polish economy**

Possibilities to eco-innovations	Limitations to eco-innovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new EU financial perspective for 2014-2020, with a focus on innovativeness, low-carbon economy and sustainable development.</li> <li>• A large number of strategic documents refer to the significant role of eco-innovations in Poland's development,</li> <li>• Establishment of numerous local initiatives that can evolve into eco-innovation promotion,</li> <li>• Slow but steady consolidation of the scientific and technological base,</li> <li>• New requirements of the increasingly stringent environmental protection law.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive EU fund support for traditional sectors and transport infrastructure – instead more funds should be allocated for R&amp;D and implementation of innovations,</li> <li>• High risk level of investments in eco-innovations (market uncertainty),</li> <li>• Limited knowledge about economic benefits as a result of eco-innovation</li> <li>• Insufficient cooperation between research units and companies/financial institutions,</li> <li>• Lack of political and social climate for the development of eco-innovations.</li> </ul>

Source: own research.

Table 3. shows eco-innovation in business processes, as well as to identify the possibilities (drivers) and limitations (barriers) of its implementation in Polish economy. Eco-innovation is a tool for sustainable development at the enterprise, society and state levels, which should be applied throughout the product or service life-cycle in order to contribute to the achievement of economic and environmental benefits. Its implementation is dependent on numerous drivers and barriers. In order to overcome current difficulties, significant support from the state is required because eco-innovations are associated with multiple barriers independent of companies. Eco-innovations can be supported by changes in the economic-political system.

Based on empirical studies, carried out on the example of Polish enterprises, a number of eco-innovation motives and barriers can be indicated. For example, research results (carried out in 2013 on a sample of 300 enterprises, including 50 large, 100 medium and 150 small enterprises) show that the most important motives of eco-innovations include: improvement of the company's image, reduction in operating costs, as well as the existing environmental regulations (Ryszko, 2014), whereas major barriers have been identified as being, e.g. uncertain return on investment in eco-innovation or overly long payback periods, lack of external financing and lack of financial resources in enterprises.

Results another studies (results of a survey conducted by the *Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska* - Environmental Partnership Foundation - in small- and medium-sized enterprises in Poland in 2010) show that the lack of financial resources (68% of respondents), excessive implementation costs (61% of respondents), as well as difficulties in finding partners for collaboration (21% of respondents) are the major factors hindering the implementation of eco-innovation in enterprises. Whereas, among the most important factors determining environmental efforts, the following motives are listed: cost reduction (76%), improving the environment in their neighborhood (55%), improving the company's image (55%), (*Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska*, 2010). This indicates that Polish entrepreneurs perceive some benefits of eco-innovation efficiency. The important factors also include willingness to improve the environment in their surroundings and the company's image, as well as the need to upgrade technology.

**Table 4. Kinds of eco-innovations**

Types	Characteristics and examples
Product eco-innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• launching on the market a product or service that is new or significantly improved in terms of its features or uses,</li> <li>• producing goods in a manner that leads to decreased environmental impacts and less resource use during operation, e.g. due to eco-design,</li> <li>• replacing inputs with materials of improved characteristics (breathable textiles, lightweight but resistant composites, environmentally friendly plastics, etc.),</li> <li>• products with significantly reduced energy consumption (energy efficient devices, etc.),</li> <li>• green financial products (e.g. eco-leases), environmental services (e.g. waste management).</li> </ul>
Process eco-innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation of new or significantly improved production or supply methods,</li> <li>• which reduce material consumption and risks as well as resulting in cost savings,</li> <li>• substitution of harmful inputs during production (e.g. replacing toxic substances),</li> <li>• optimization of the production process (e.g. improving energy or resource efficiency),</li> <li>• reducing the negative impacts of production outputs (e.g. emissions).</li> </ul>
Marketing eco-innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction of new marketing methods or techniques, which lead to changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing with particular regard to environmental principles or the shaping of ecological awareness as part of promotion (e.g. eco-labelling),</li> <li>• introduction of green branding for better commercialization of products or services.</li> </ul>
Organizational eco-innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction of organizational methods and management systems for dealing with environmental issues in production and products (e.g. pollution prevention schemes, environmental management),</li> <li>• various collaborative organizational forms and their potential eco-innovative qualities (e.g. business networks and clusters).</li> </ul>
Social eco-innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market-based dimensions of behavioral and lifestyle change and the ensuing demand for green goods and services,</li> <li>• user-led innovation, meaning that the functionality of new goods is developed with stakeholders, thereby minimizing the risk of</li> </ul>

	<p>superfluous product features,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• product sharing, which may lead to an absolute decrease of material use without diminishing the quality of the services they provide to users,</li> <li>• innovative social concepts (e.g. green living).</li> </ul>
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Source: own research based on EIO 2013; Urbaniec 2015.

Table 4. shows types of eco-innovation in field business and economy. Innovation may relate to product, process, marketing and organizational issues. As shown in Table 4, besides product, process, marketing and organizational innovation and social eco-innovation can also be mentioned.

### Sustainable consumption and consumer behavior

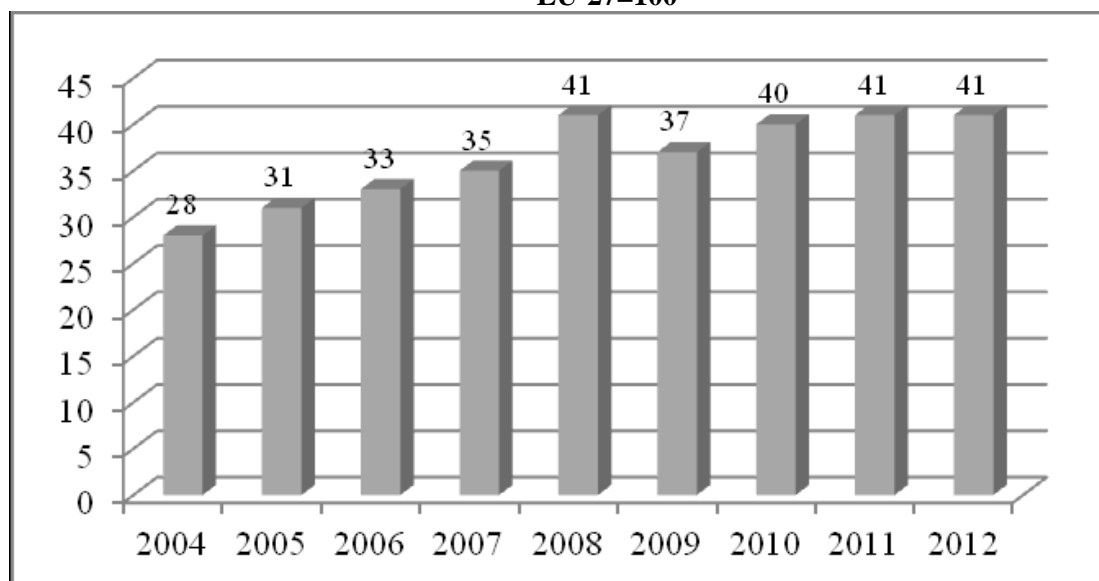
It is a fact, that consumers are “more environmentally and socially aware today”, although, “they still do not generally consume with concern” (O’Rourke, 2005). The consumer behaviour is strongly influenced by such worldwide tendencies as globalization, demographic changes, rise in global economy, technological progress and innovations, besides, it is also influenced by many various elements of socio-cultural system and interactions between economical, socio-cultural, technological and many other factors.

In the scientific literature, a wide range of approaches help to understand what sustainable consumption is as a practical approach. Inter alia, Wang *et al.*, label sustainable consumption as an “umbrella term” and enumerate the key issues: “meeting needs, enhancing the quality of life, improving resource efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, minimizing waste, taking a life cycle perspective and taking into account the equity dimension” (Wang, Liu & Qi, 2014). Sustainable consumption has two main objectives: reducing the volume of consumption of goods and changing consumer habits, consumption patterns; and to achieve a sustainability based, permanent value system.

We can raise the question: whose task (responsibility) is it to provide information about the environmental impacts of products? The next question is: how, by what kind of measures can this task be completed? It is important to note that providing information about the (environmental impacts of) products cannot only be considered as a responsibility, but it can or should be seen as an opportunity as well. It is an opportunity for the producer to influence the choice of consumers and to motivate them to buy their products. If it happens, providing information – in an indirect way – may contribute to the growth of market share of the given organisation (Csigéné Nagypál, Görög, Harazin & Péterné Baranyi, 2015).

The second question is easy to answer, as there are several practical tools to satisfy the information need of consumers. Information about the environmental impacts of the product can be provided in written form or by symbols placed on products or packaging. Environmental information helps consumers to make consumption decisions that are beneficiary for the environment (Aragon-Correa & Rubio-Lopez, 2007).

**Figure 4. Household final consumption expenditure in Poland in relation to the EU average; EU-27=100**

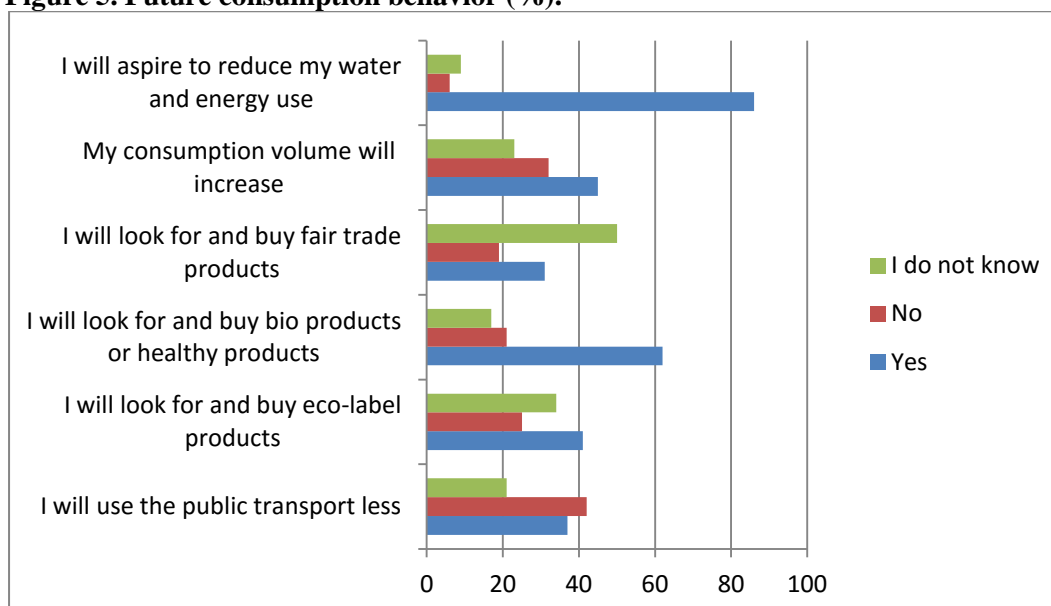


Source: own research based

<http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do;jsessionid=9ea7d07e30e20db9dc3aeaeb46d48f20e1c02ca9e89a.e340aN8Pc3mMc40Lc3aMaNyTbh0Ne0>.

Analysing Figure 4, it is possible to conclude that the period of 2004-2012 witnessed some improvement in the level of individual consumption that is financed by means of available income of Polish households as compared to average consumption of EU-27 households (calculated in current prices in Euro per capita based on the classification of individual consumption by purpose). Since 2004 a ratio of individual consumption in Poland to the EU average value increased by 13% and reached 41% in 2012. This means reduction in the gap between the average consumption in Poland and the EU average. Unfortunately, this value is still much below the EU average. However, it is necessary to remember that purchasing powers along with level and structure of households' consumption depend on the levels of the households' incomes and the level of prices.

**Figure 5. Future consumption behavior (%).**



Source: own research based on Csigené Nagypál, Görög, Harazin & Péterné Baranyi, 2015.

In Figure 5 showed future consumption behavior. The reader can see that most respondents (more than 80% of respondents) answer is that they will aspire to reduce their water and energy use. Moreover, more than 60% of respondents plan to buy bio or healthy food products, suggesting that healthy lifestyle is a bit more important for respondents than sustainable consumption.

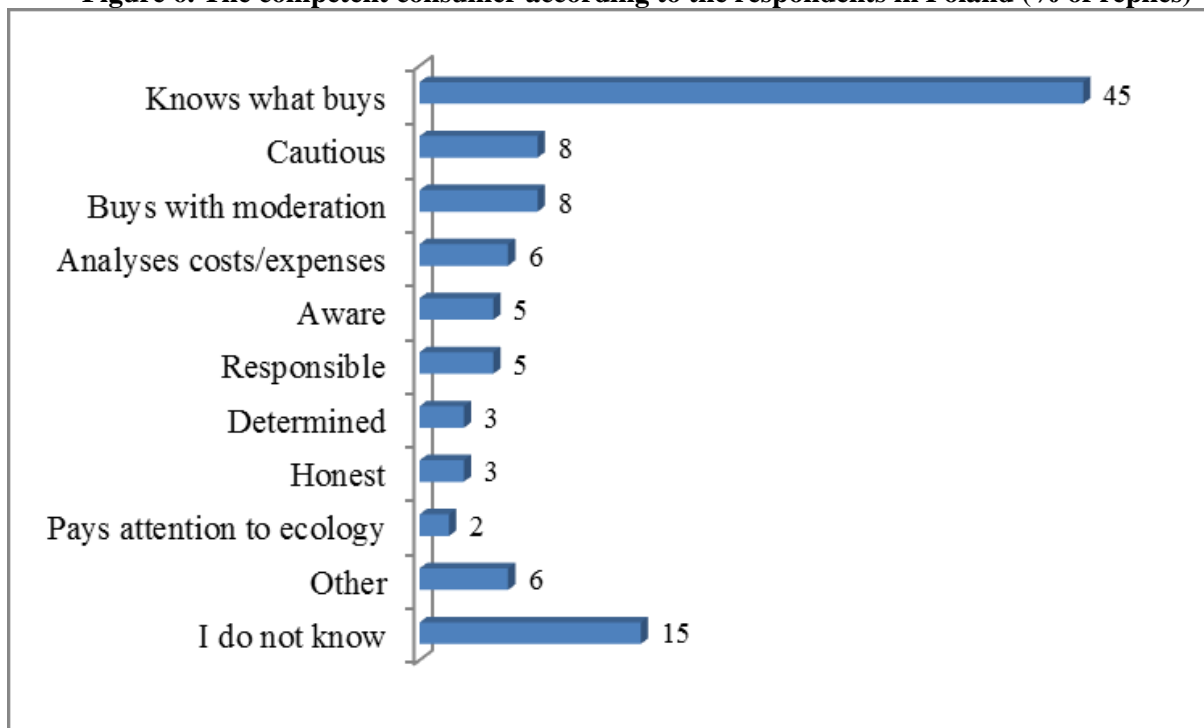
### **Attitudes and consumer behavior in the market for products/ services**

The issues of ecological marketing and pro-ecological behaviour in consumers were discussed in the Boston Consulting Group Report “Capturing the Green Advantage for Consumer Companies” (2009). The report was based on a survey answered by nine thousand people aged between 18 and 65 (Manget, Roche & Muennich, 2009). The surveyed consumers came from nine countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Great Britain, United States and China. The analysis demonstrated that the emphasis people place on particular pro-ecological behaviours varies greatly depending on where they live. For Italians, for instance, exclusion of animal testing constitutes an important element of “acting green.” This issue, however, does not affect so strongly the way in which Japanese look at companies. When it came to using recyclable materials, the issue was crucial for Americans, but hardly mattered among Germans. The survey also checked what actions the respondents take to protect the environment.

Similar tendencies were indicated by the survey concerning “Attitudes of Europeans Towards Building the Single Market for Green Products” (2013). That survey included 28 European Union member states. It was carried out in the form of telephone interviews conducted on behalf of the European Commission and involved 25.568 respondents with different social and demographic backgrounds. Among European consumers, 80% considered the impact of products on the environment to be an important issue and they declared readiness to change their habits and to purchase more environmentally-friendly products. However, many respondents stated that they were not sufficiently informed and that they did not trust manufacturers’ declarations concerning the organic nature of their products. The survey showed that over three quarters of all the respondents were prepared to pay more for environmentally-friendly products, providing that they could be certain that producers’ self-claims were true - 77% (European Commission, 2013).

We can speak of competencies not only with reference to employees and managers but also consumers. Functioning under the conditions of highly competitive markets, where consumers every day make choices of products and services from among a very rich supply offer, and, moreover, are subjected to impact of different marketing practices, requires from them possession of adequate consumer competencies.

By the respondents, the competent consumer is, first of all, the consumer who “knows what he/she buys” – 45% of respondents (Figure 6). As the respondents emphasised, the competent consumer is sure he has made a good decision; therefore he does not change it. Moreover, he is the person satisfied with the decisions being made by him. Every sixth person (15% of respondents) could not indicate what was specific to the competent consumer (Figure 3). The survey was carried out in Poland in August 2013 on the sample of 1000 adult Poles (18-74 years) having at least the minimal consumer competencies, with the use of survey questionnaire by the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) method.

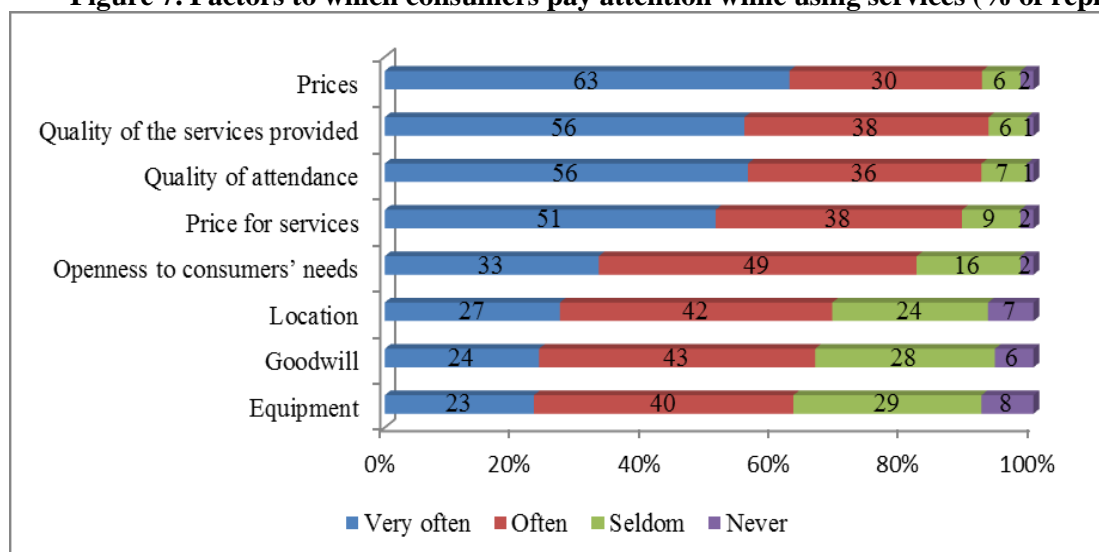
**Figure 6. The competent consumer according to the respondents in Poland (% of replies)**

Source: own research based on Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2015.

More and more often the consumer desiring to be an equal participant of the market towards the business offering consumer goods and services meeting basic and higher level needs is expected to have definite knowledge, skills, personality, intellect and commitment, definite behaviors and attitudes (Czarniewski, 2016b).

In this paper, a particular attention is paid to the market for services. Services play a greater and greater role not only in the country's economy but also in households, in life of every human being. We speak of servicisation of the economy but also of servicisation of consumption; this phenomenon is an effect of achievement of higher and higher level of socioeconomic development. Services play and will play the most important role, and it will be them to decide an efficient functioning of the economy and the society; this also concerns Poland (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2015).

While using services consumers pay attention to various factors. Taking into consideration only responses "very often", the most important factors are product prices, quality of the rendered services, quality of attendance and service price; the percentages of responses for each of these factors were above 50% (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Factors to which consumers pay attention while using services (% of replies)**

Source: own research based on Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2015.

At present, the information source, for which consumers reach out most often, is the Internet. Various research findings show that the Internet is one of the most common sources of knowledge supporting the purchasing process. The survey implemented by the Interactive Market Research Institute (IIBR) commissioned by IAB Polska in the period from 8 to 26 April 2013 has showed that on average every third purchasing decision of Polish Internet users is made on the basis of information obtained from the net. In some categories – the most Internet-like – this is almost half of purchases (e.g. computer games, software – 52,6% of individuals buying on the basis of information found on the net related to all buyers; household appliance and RTV devices – 49,6%; books – 48,1%; tickets to the concerts, to the cinema, to the theatre – 45,1%; catering services – 20,3%). Taking into account all the consumers surveyed, the Internet was mentioned by 69% of e-consumers; this is by more than 10 percentage points more than the family and acquaintances (56%) – this source took the second place, and by 25 p.p. more than advertising and TV - by 44% (Internet, 2013).

**Table 5. Trends in consumer behaviour regarding the purchase of eco- products in Poland**

	Ranking 1999/2000		Ranking 2012/2014		Trend
<b>Price</b>	1	above 80%	1	above 80%	= no change
<b>The ecological criteria</b>	6	above 20%	7	12%	↓ a marked decline
<b>Brand of products</b>	3	about 60%	3	44%	↓ a marked decline
<b>Advertising</b>	7	6% - 9%	8	5%	= no change
<b>Opinion of family and friends</b>	4	25% - 35%	4	39%	↑ slight upward Trend
<b>The experience of the first purchase</b>	2	65% - 70%	2	51%	↓ a marked decline
<b>The opinion of experts</b>	5	about 25%	6	about 16%	↓ downward trend
<b>Opinions in online forums</b>	no data	no data	5	about 20%	

Source: own research based on Lorek, 2015.

Trends in consumer behaviour were analyzed the households of the Silesian Voivodeship in the years 1999/2000 in Poland (research funded by the State Committee for Scientific Research) and 2012/2014 in Poland - research conducted as part of statutory research carried out by the Department of Environmental Protection of the University of Economics in Katowice in Poland (Lorek, 2015).

The price is still the main criterion the respondents consider when shopping (above 80% of survey participants). An important motive for buying eco-friendly products are savings associated with using energy-efficient appliances. 91% of respondents in the survey 2012/14 equips their apartments in the energy-efficient light bulbs, appliances and electronics. Significant downward trend also applies to the declaration of the driving while shopping by:

- the product brand (down from approx. 60% in 1999/2000 ranking to 44% in the period 2012/14),
- the experience of the first purchase (decrease of 65-70% in the 51%).

Upward trend can be seen on an opinion of family and friends about the products they purchase. Such opinions are taken into account by 25% of respondents in 1999, 35% in 2000 and 39% in a study conducted in the years 2012/14. New phenomenon, worthy of further analysis, are purchases decisions guided by the opinions on online forums, which declared about 20% of the participants of research in the years 2012/14. The Table 5 illustrates these trends.

The results of the survey carried out among competent consumers showed that prior to buy they were looking for information of goods and services, first of all, on the Internet as well as they sought for opinions of their acquaintances. The most important factors in the course of using services they pay attention to are mainly prices and quality.

The ever expanding market offer of services as well as the growing living standard of households will result not only in reduction of deficits of consumption of services but also in growth of their share in the process of meeting needs. Of a greater and greater importance will be the problem of building consumers' competencies.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Companies that want to gain a higher position in the market must use offensive or innovative strategies and actively take actions that surpass the competition in implementation and improvement of resource-intense processes (in the spheres of production, management, organization and culture of work).
2. Enterprises have increasingly been looking for niches in order to achieve a competitive advantage; they have started to focus on unsatisfied consumer needs and have begun to produce pro-ecological products. It is mainly an opportunity for small businesses that are specialists in the field.
3. Environmental awareness is shaped by many factors: acquired knowledge, environmental education, certain beliefs about specific products, and the consumer's experience. This awareness undoubtedly has an impact on certain attitudes and behaviors seen in the market. One of the main tasks of enterprises is to take into account the specific and pro-ecological requirements of customers.
4. The movement of customers (changes in their behaviors in the market) can be an opportunity or a threat to the development of the company. Company management has to look for opportunities to better satisfy the needs of consumers in the process of



analyzing changes in trends in the global environment. This can ensure the attraction of customers to the enterprise and their retention. This is the only way an enterprise can exploit the chances for growth from the migration of customers.

5. Eco-innovation plays an important role in the implementation of sustainable development. The overall objective of eco-innovation is to reduce impact on the environment, as well as to create new market opportunities, products, services or processes aimed at improving environmental performance. Eco-innovation generates changes not only in companies but also in their environment, i.e. within existing socio-cultural norms and institutional structures.
6. Sustainable consumption is existing in theory; however it should exist in practice, too. The promotion of practical aspects, feasibility of sustainable consumption should be emphasised. Communication, education should concentrate on informing future generations about practical solutions, which also contain information about the interpretation of eco-labels. This communication could be the task of educational institutions – from kindergarten to higher education – producers and also commercial institutions as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility; however agencies, associations and environmental NGOs also could make more efforts in this field. Achieving sustainable consumption, achieving the overarching goal of sustainability is a step-by-step process, where education and communication has an emphasised, initial role.
7. More and more customers choose companies that offer safe products and services. An important issue for many businesses is to gradually reduce the use and sale of products that contain chemical ingredients that cause certain diseases or illnesses. Providing safe ecological products has become the new challenge.

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