

**MARKETING
IDENTITY:
POWER(S)
OF COMMUNICATION**

**MARKETING
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**THE POWER(S)
OF COMMUNICATION**

ÜSM FMK

**Bianka Francistyová
Lucia Furtáková
Monika Prostináková Hossová
(eds.)**

Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

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Conference Proceedings
from the International Scientific Conference
11th-12th November 2025
Voderady



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MARKETING IDENTITY: POWER(S) OF COMMUNICATION

International Scientific Conference “Marketing and Media Identity: Power(s) of Communication”, 11th-12th November 2025, Voderady, Slovakia.

The international scientific conference held annually by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava has become a traditional event supported and attended by renowned mass media communication theorists and researchers as well as by media and marketing professionals. The aim of the conference is to discuss the latest knowledge and trends in the field of marketing communication and to create a space for sharing and disseminating up-to-date scientific knowledge and practical experience in the fields of marketing, media studies and communication sciences while outlining the importance of innovations and supporting the critical dialogue between scholars affiliated with academic institutions and professionals with practical experience. The annual international conference Marketing and Media Identity (formerly called New Trends in Marketing and re-named in 2013 to Marketing Identity and again re-named in 2022), which was held for the 18th time. The conference took place on 11th-12th November 2025 in Voderady. It was attended by more than 100 participants.

The main theme of the conference was concisely expressed by its subtitle: Power(s) of Communication. Marketing and Media Identity has always tried to react to the latest trends in marketing communication and media production.

More information on the Marketing and Media Identity conference, programme schedules, deadlines and photo galleries related to previous years are available at:

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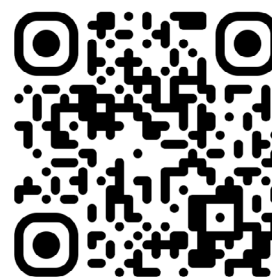
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NON-FINANCIAL REPORTING AS A CURRENT CHALLENGE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Jana Hroncová Vicianová – Janka Beresecká – Petra Gundová – Štefan Hronec

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Abstract:

The increasing number of annual reports on sustainability in business is currently caused by the increasing control of the social and environmental behavior of companies by interested groups, but also by the growing tendency of legislative obligations in this area. For this reason, the reports in question become an important tool for building a positive corporate image and good relations with the public. The presented article analyzes annual reports declaring corporate social responsibility, taking into account the specifics of environmental, social and management criteria, and assesses current trends in non-financial reporting in the context of marketing communication. Communication through annual reports and the selection of information also entails the risk of “greenwashing”, which can negatively influence public opinion. For this reason, not only investors, but also other interested groups require high-quality and transparent disclosure of information not only about financial performance, but also about the social and environmental impact of business.

Key words:

Annual Report. Environmental Criteria. Marketing Communication. Non-Financial Reporting. Public Relations. Social Criteria.

1 Introduction

There is a growing interest in information about the sustainability of businesses not only at the level of interested groups and under the pressure of public opinion but also as part of the competitive struggle. The increasing number of annual reports on sustainability in business is currently caused by the growing control of the social and environmental behavior of companies by interested groups, but also by the growing tendency of legislative obligations to disclose and publish reports in which non-financial information about the activities of companies is published (Michelon et al., 2015; KPMG, 2022; *Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) – Directive 2014/95/EU and the Proposal for a Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)*, 2014). The set trend in reporting is also influenced by the fact that companies with *ESG (environmental, social, government) practices* achieve higher profits compared to companies that do not follow ESG practices (Sanchez Garcia et al., 2017), better financial performance of companies (Chen & Xie, 2022), because investors are already increasingly using ESG criteria to make investment decisions (Alda, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2022; Chai et al., 2022; Gangi et al., 2022) and is also a corporate response to public demand for reducing pollution levels and meeting the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Turzo et al., 2022). Therefore, annual reports become an essential part of marketing communication, and companies must be more concerned with what information needs to be published and with the form and visual aspect of the annual report itself. Since the essence of marketing communication is to influence the buying behavior of consumers using the means of the communication system, which public relations, the publication of annual sustainability reports can be considered a current trend, but also an opportunity to create and build a positive image of the company and systematically refine relations with the broader environment. Hasprová (2010), within the European Union (EU), non-financial reporting is based on the Directive on Disclosure of Non-Financial Information (*Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) – Directive 2014/95/EU and the proposal for a*

Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), 2014), which has primarily influenced the level of social responsibility reporting in Europe (Hroncová Vicianová et al., 2019). The business's country of origin influences sustainability reporting adoption, extent and quality (Saini et al., 2022). In December 2022, another directive came into force (*Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive – CSRD*), which supplemented the existing non-financial reporting requirements within the NFRD and continues to develop the requirements of the current non-financial reporting directive (NFRD) to harmonize sustainability reporting about the EU taxonomy and regulation on disclosure of information on sustainability of financial services. The guidelines recommend using the best practices of international reporting frameworks, such as the *Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, n.d.)* or the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB). The stated procedures are intended to achieve better comparability of information and limit misleading or targeted information (known also as “greenwashing”).

In Slovakia, non-financial reporting applies to large entities of public interest (companies with more than 500 employees, companies listed on the stock exchange, banks and insurance companies). As early as 2024, the obligation to report non-financial information arises for selected companies. Still, companies will submit the first reports only in 2025. The purpose of this delay is to provide companies with sufficient time to collect the necessary data and process the particular report.

2 Methodology

The presented article aims to analyze annual reports (Lidl, 2023; Coop Jednota, 2020; DM, n.d.; Billa, n. d.; H&M, n. d.; Ikea, 2023; Kaufland, n.d.; Obi, 2023; Tesco, n. d.) declaring sustainability in the business of selected retail chains, considering the specifics of published environmental, social and management criteria, and to assess their impact on interested groups based on quantitative indicators (number of likes and followers) on the selected social network.

We analyzed the researched issue using a primary survey conducted in May and November 2023, aiming to analyze the annual reports of the largest retail chains in Slovakia. By the study's aim, the research subject is defined, which are the published areas of business sustainability in the context of environmental, social and management (economic) criteria. The object of research is the annual reports on sustainability in selected largest retail chains in Slovakia. The research sample was nine companies operating in the retail trade. The critical methods of scientific investigation are classification analysis, concretization, comparison, and abstraction; methods of quantitative analysis using statistical methods of processing and evaluating information; and methods of synthesis and partial induction in drawing research conclusions. We used Pearson's and Spearman's coefficient test statistics. We got the information from the official websites of the investigated entities, from published annual and other reports while considering the last published annual report. When choosing the companies whose annual reports we analyzed, we considered that not all companies must report on sustainability. Therefore, we chose the most significant companies that have been publishing annual reports on social responsibility and sustainability for several years, but also those to which the obligation will arise in the next reporting period. As part of the analysis, we focused on processing information from the point of view of environmental, social and economic areas of socially responsible business, which were updated with the adoption of the new directive. When processing the data, we assigned the importance to the individual criteria so that it was possible to quantitatively evaluate the company's reporting in individual ESG areas to compare, evaluate and improve the reporting of the specific criteria in the defined areas. In each area of ESG (environmental, social, government), we have selected relevant indicators; for the environmental area, they are CO₂ emissions, energy and resource consumption, circularity and

waste, sustainable mobility and biodiversity. For the social area, these are the protection of human rights, remuneration, health promotion, diversity and inclusion. For corporate management, these are ethical and anti-corruption principles, diversity in management and sustainability reporting. We then assigned the specific importance on a scale from 0 to 3 based on the completeness of separately reporting individual indicators for each ESG area. If the reporting of the specific indicator is complete, we assign it the highest score; if it is incomplete, we assign it a lower score. If the company does not report the indicator, we assign it a score of 0. Using this method, we emphasize critical areas in which the completeness of reporting is low and identify areas that require more attention from companies or are intentionally less described because they are sensitive data that the company is not interested in publishing (e.g., CO2 emissions).

We consider the relevant indicators as an independent variable and will analyze their mutual relationship with the level of likes and followers of company profiles on the Facebook social network. The analysis was based on the assumption that a higher score assigned to individual indicators will declare the company’s responsible behavior in the environmental, social and management business areas and positively affect interested groups who will appreciate the particular facts or become followers. The results and average values for individual monitored areas are shown in the table.

Table 1: Overview of average indicator values in the studied areas

Company/indicator	LikeFeb	Followers	Environmental average	Social_ average	Governance average
Lidl	534000	536000	2,4	2,5	2,67
Kaufland	299000	306000	2,6	1	1,67
Tesco	212000	212000	1,4	2,25	2,00
Billa	142000	144000	1,2	1,25	0,67
Ikea	32000000	32000000	3	3	3,00
HM	40000000	41000000	2,8	2,5	3,00
Coop_Jednota	169000	170000	0,2	1,75	1,67
DM_drogerie	184000	186000	1,2	0,5	0,00
OBI	934000	935000	0,2	0,5	0,00
Spolu	-	-	1,67	1,69	1,63

Source: own processing, 2023

The complexity of the research subject in the field of retail business practice presupposes a high degree of abstraction in research of a secondary nature. The secondary collection of information from available annual reports and reports declaring sustainability in business is realized through the constructive method of scientific observation. The information obtained is processed and evaluated through statistical methods emphasizing correlation analysis (Pearson and Spearman coefficient).

3 Results

According to the new CSRD directive, companies must publish information about their impact on the environment. They must also publish information that is sensitive in terms of their impact on the environment. Therefore, they must consider how they will communicate the effects of their activities on the environment to interested parties. Four of nine companies publish sustainability reports according to the GRI guidelines, which have an ideally refined methodology for disclosing information, including a subsequent audit. Next to each other, we can see two graphs presenting the reporting of sustainability indicators in the environmental field and their average reporting according to the researched companies and the relevant

indicators in the researched sample. We can state that company I achieved a 100% level of reporting sustainability indicators in the environmental field, which means it reports all the required indicators at the highest quality level. This company publishes annual reports according to the GRI methodology. According to the GRI methodology, three other companies that achieve the highest average values of the specific indicators also publish. Based on the second graph, we can conclude that the researched companies communicate the circularity and waste indicator (70.37%), CO2 emissions (66.67%) and energy and resource consumption (55.56%) in their reports. On average, companies are the least dedicated to sustainable mobility (37.04%).

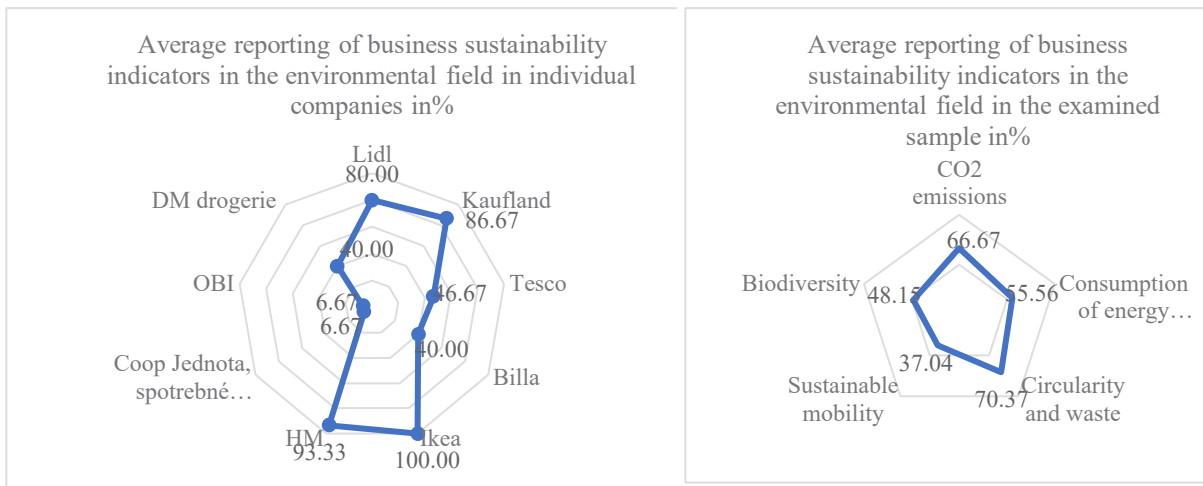


Figure 1: Average reporting of business sustainability indicators in the environmental field in individual companies and according to the investigated indicators
Source: own processing, 2023

Some of the researched companies included the reduction of CO2 emissions among their main long-term goals, which they declare as follows: Company L aims to achieve carbon neutrality and reduce emissions by 80% by 2030 compared to 2019. As part of this goal, the company encourages its suppliers to, so that they also reduce the production of their emissions. According to company analyses, up to 90% of emissions are caused by the production of products. However, he must state the actual emissions within the same report, which were 1,755,093 t in the year. in 2019, 2,036,901 tons in 2020 and in 2021 it was 2,161,469 tons of CO2. Based on the mentioned trend, Company L and its turnover increase emissions. However, within the framework of communication with interested entities, it tries to use a positive approach to communicate that it is committed to reducing emissions in the coming years, by what amount and in what way. Company K presents that it will become a climate-neutral company by 2025 at the latest by compensating the remaining operational emissions of greenhouse gases through compensation projects. Company T stated in its reports that it is taking long-term steps to achieve carbon neutrality in its operations by 2035 and climate neutrality in the entire supply chain for its brands by 2050, in line with its commitment to limit global climate change by 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Company I commits to halving greenhouse gas emissions in absolute terms by 2030 throughout its value chain while reducing emissions, removing carbon from the atmosphere, and storing it. It explains this commitment by stating that it plans to research and improve the possibilities of carbon storage by various methods in forestry and agriculture. Instead of buying emission certificates, it plans to do everything to ensure that the carbon stored in its products remains longer through the circular economy. The examples in question declare the

communication of negative impacts on the environment because the actual CO2 emissions must also be stated in the reports, not just plans to reduce them in an essentially positive way.

Companies also communicate unsuccessful projects, e.g., company L had a running project to install water savers on taps, but the expected water saving was not proven in practice. Therefore, the project was canceled during the same period. Currently, the company has not announced a new project or any activity of ecological water treatment on its premises but regularly checks and evaluates water consumption based on invoices from suppliers. It does not report consumption in its reports. Company K’s water consumption decreased by 9% year-on-year. However, this company does not show why the water consumption decreased because the pandemic and the reduced opening hours of the establishments could also have caused this outage. The chain also reports on energy efficiency, which it improves in new department stores by installing modern, efficient technologies. As part of saving resources, the company also reports on the reduction in paper consumption, which it achieved with the help of innovation and digitization. The signed documents are stored electronically, and since the introduction of the electronic signature in May 2021, it has saved 20% of paper year-on-year and spent less money on the purchase of toners for printers. Based on the table below, we can conclude a positive, very strong, statistically significant relationship between the reporting level of the indicator of all environmental indicators and the number of likes. Within the research sample of companies, we can state that the number of likes depends on the level of reporting of the environmental indicators in question, i.e., the higher the level of reporting, the more followers and likes the companies have.

Table 2: Correlation analysis of the relationship between environmental indicators of sustainability and the number of likes

Spearman’s rho		CO2 emissions	Consumption of energy and resources	Circularity and waste	Sustainable mobility	Biodiversity
	Correlation Coefficient	0,468	0,497	0,383	0,499	,667*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,204	0,174	0,309	0,172	0,050
likeFcb	N	9	9	9	9	9

Source: own processing, 2023

The highest dependence, and thus a powerful statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.667$, $p = 0.050$), which can be generalized, exists for the biodiversity indicator. Biodiversity companies report various goals in their annual reports, such as preventing soil, air and water pollution related to the extraction and cultivation of raw materials. They prefer renewable resources and certified raw materials to preserve natural ecosystems while actively communicating sustainability commitments to their suppliers. They are also committed to the sustainable production of textiles and footwear, i.e., production responsible for people and the environment, and to actively managing pesticides in fruits, vegetables, plants and flowers. Some companies, for example, do not specifically show this indicator but only declare specific goals in the area, such as offering as many goods as possible from Slovak suppliers of Slovak origin, as long as Slovak production can cover it.

There is also a high degree of closeness of dependence in the indicators of sustainable mobility ($r = 0.499$, $p = 0.172$) and consumption of energy and resources ($r = 0.497$, $p = 0.174$). It can also be concluded that the higher the level of reporting of these two indicators, the more followers and likes increase. With the energy and resource consumption indicator, businesses have a wide range of options for activities they will communicate with their interested groups. Most companies report on reducing paper consumption, which can be achieved with the help of innovation and digitization, reducing plastic consumption, and replacing shopping baskets

in stores with more ecological versions. For example, by introducing new paper bags for pastries, we will save almost 7,000 kg of plastic per year, and the company is thus slowly approaching the goal of reducing plastic consumption. Furthermore, Billa reports that 84% of the electricity comes from renewable sources, saving more than 8,000 tons of CO₂ annually. Like Kaufland and Lidl, it uses LED lighting in stores and warehouses. Another example of how to report even negative information is the presentation of long-term goals for mobility reporting in the sense of using alternative drive vehicles and optimizing route plans. For example, Lidl presents that the logistics department regularly evaluates transport indicators, which include, for example, the speed per truck/shift, load capacity, the number of kilometers driven, the number of exported pallets, the load per kilometer traveled or the development of the price of diesel on the market. However, it does not publicly display these specific indicators. However, we managed to identify from the report that from year to year, it fulfills the goals related to reducing the share of kilometers driven on diesel and increasing the share of kilometers driven on the alternative drive.

One of the ways to draw attention to positive information and thus reduce the impact of negative ones is to present, e.g., the use of a truck powered by LNG-liquefied natural gas. Operating such a vehicle will reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 20% and improve fuel efficiency. Another way is to focus on electromobility, e.g., by buying electric cars or own charging stations.

As part of the social pillar, companies will also have to inform about their impact on society, the people in the company, and the communities close to the companies' operations. They will also need to evaluate suitable working conditions, equal opportunities and gender, or long-term training of employees. The monitored indicators are presented in chart XX. The highest level of reporting is achieved by protecting the human rights indicator in the entire value chain (66.67%). The indicators remuneration and employee benefits (59.26%), diversity and inclusion (55.56%) and health support (44.44%) also reach a relatively high level. There is also a positive, very strong, statistically significant relationship between the level of reporting of social indicators and the number of likes. However, not at the same level as we can see with environmental indicators. Even though the indicator protection of human rights in the entire value chain has the highest average level of reporting (66.67%), there is no statistically significant relationship between this indicator and the number of likes or followers. On the contrary, there is a positive, very strong statistically significant relationship between the health promotion indicator ($r = 0.498, p = 0.172$) and the number of likes and employee remuneration and benefits ($r = 0.474, p = 0.197$) and the number of likes.

Table 3: Correlation analysis of the relationship between social indicators of sustainability and the number of likes

Spearman's rho		Protection of human rights throughout the value chain	Remuneration and employee benefits	Health promotion	Diversity and inclusion
likeFcb	Correlation Coefficient	0,091	0,474	0,498	0,395
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,815	0,197	0,172	0,293
	N	9	9	9	9

Source: own processing, 2023

In their reports, companies declare support for the health and fitness of employees by ensuring the protection of employees at the workplace, fitness and a sufficient supply of vitamins, ensuring automatic defibrillators, strengthening the provision of personal protective equipment, disinfection, regular receipt of vitamin packages, more frequent delivery of fruit to employees, but also mental health support employees. Within the specific indicator, companies report on supporting employees' health and declare the support of healthier foods, e.g., by

reducing added sugar and salt in their brand products. They can declare the fulfillment of quality requirements by different standards, e.g., an international quality guide, according to which they must analyze fresh fruits and vegetables to determine the content of pesticides or residues of active substances in pesticides. (internationally recognized IFS (International Featured Standards) or BRC (British Retail Consortium) standards).

In the framework of employee remuneration, companies report on creating a pleasant working environment, motivations, space for career growth, adequate remuneration, reconciliation of work and private life. Evidence and confirmation of the reported information are, for example, in the case of Lidl, the Top Employer Slovakia and Top Employer Europe awards in the fifth row, and the title of the best employer in the Profesia survey for the third time. The benefits reported by the surveyed companies can take the form of, for example, a MultiSport card, vitamin packages, pension savings contributions, children's summer camp, or vacation beyond the scope of the law for employees under 33 years of age. A particular benefit several companies provide is a sabbatical – the opportunity to take unpaid work and annual leave. Sabbatical is a new work and free time model focusing on different employee life phases. It is an essential contribution to employees' rights to rest and regeneration. Among the surveyed companies, it is very popular to report the amount of wages and compare them with the average wage or the industry average, thereby emphasizing the financial attractiveness of jobs since the readers of the annual reports are current and potential employees. Tesco also offers various unique benefits that currently have a higher value for employees than financial benefits, e.g., assistance to parents in coping with various life situations, support during maternity leave, provision of paternity leave, rules for adoptive parents, 8 weeks of paid leave to adapt to a new situation in the family, provision of leave in the event of the death of a child, a program to help solve mental and financial problems health as well as legal advice.

As part of the reporting of diversity and inclusion, we detected significant differences in the reporting. Some companies call for minimal reporting and report only on gender equality, i.e., they publish information on the total number of employees and the share of women from the total number of employees, which is not identical. I cannot even identify the age structure of the employees from the report because it only shows the age diversity associated with employee turnover. Almost in all researched companies, the share of women in the total number of employees is over 70%, which is almost related to the nature of the work in the particular sector. The quantitative indicator in the subject area is the diversity index, shown only by three researched companies that report gender, age diversity and diversity by region and managerial positions. As part of the annual report, Tesco also published a Report on the implementation of the strategy within diversity and inclusion, in which it publicly published data, results and plans to increase the share of women in leadership positions, increase responsiveness to the family and support people, so that work ability has changed, information about the differences in remuneration of women and men and the representation of 18 different nationalities among employees.

Within the scope of equal treatment and observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the examined companies are bound by the currently valid legislation at the international level, namely the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the declaration of the International Labor Organization. Companies internally adjust the national and international legislative norms through the Code of Ethics and General Business Conditions, which regulate relations with business partners. By reporting this indicator, they send a clear signal to all interested parties that they will continue to work on improving social and ecological standards throughout their value chain and adhere to the principles of sustainable business. According to the new regulations, the economic pillar is referred to as Governance – the area of corporate management. We can observe that companies must focus more on reporting on leadership and corruption or reporting on the company's sustainability than on profit.

Businesses must also include business ethics in their reporting, including the inclusion of women in company management. Non-financial reporting of the company’s attitude towards corruption and fraud prevention is also essential. There is a diverse but positive statistically significant relationship between indicators of the field of business management and the number of likes and followers. Within the research sample of companies, we can state that the number of likes depends on the level of reporting of the relevant social indicators, i.e., the higher the level of reporting, the more followers and likes the businesses have. The highest dependence, and thus a powerful statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.685$, $p = 0.042$), which can be generalized, exists for the sustainability reporting indicator. The indicator of ethical and anti-corruption principles also has a moderately strong degree of closeness of dependence ($r = 0.452$, $p = 0.222$), and a weak degree of closeness of dependence is present in the indicator of diversity in company management ($r = 0.346$, $p = 0.361$). It can also be concluded that the higher the level of reporting of these two indicators, the more the number of followers and likes increases, although to a lesser extent than in the case of sustainability reporting.

The Ethical and anti-corruption principles indicator is reported to the highest extent among all indicators of sustainability management in business, which reaches an average reporting level of 59.26% in the examined companies. The indicators of diversity in company management (55.56%) and sustainability reporting (48.15%) also reach a high level of reporting. Companies declare compliance with ethical and anti-corruption principles through the *Compliance Management System (CMS)*, focusing primarily on the competition law, the fight against corruption, the legalization of income from criminal activity and fraud, the prevention of violations of applicable laws and internal guidelines (e.g. to the handling of donations, to data protection), providing training, monitoring and detecting violations and responding to detected violations (“zero tolerance policy”). One of the tools analyzed in more detail for social criteria is the Code of Ethics, which describes the most important legal obligations and principles that companies must follow, the establishment of ethical lines for reporting unethical or other anti-social activities. As part of the indicator of diversity in management, companies report on gender equality at all levels of management. Lidl started reporting on the position of women in management in 2019. In 2020, women represented 50% of the total employees in the company’s management and 20% in executive management. In 2021, the share of women in executive management dropped to 18.8%. From the above figures, we can see that companies must also report facts that are not positive and may mean failure to meet specific goals or quotas.

Table 4: Correlation analysis of the relationship between governance indicators of sustainability and the number of likes

Spearman’s rho		Ethical and anti-corruption principles	Diversity in company management	Sustainability reporting	
Spearman’s rho	likeFcb	Correlatio Coeff.	0,452	0,346	,685*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,222	0,361	0,042
		N	9	9	9

Source: own processing, 2023

All researched companies report on sustainability to provide information to all interested parties, i.e., customers, employees, the media, business partners, representatives of the public sector, representatives of the non-profit sector, the media and other public members. Four companies from the researched sample use international GRI standards for reporting and reporting on sustainability every two years. Other businesses have determined their priority areas to focus on. By the procedure according to standard methodologies, companies regularly review reporting to reflect current requirements in the retail sector, valid legislative frameworks, values and trends, and at the same time, offer the opportunity to regularly evaluate

the positive and negative impacts of the company in the framework of sustainable development. The reporting summarizes all strategic goals, measures, projects and activities with significant social, economic and environmental impacts.

4 Discussion

Research on procedures and standards of non-financial reporting has grown significantly over the past decade. It has gradually evolved from the publication of annual reports on social responsibility and sustainable development goals through various methodological frameworks to integrated reporting covering environmental, social and government) criteria (influences), also known as ESG factors.

Based on the table, we can conclude a positive, very strong statistically significant relationship between the level of reporting of environmental, social and management sustainability indicators and the number of likes and followers. Since all values of Pearson’s indicators have a positive value, we can state that the higher the rating in the particular reporting area, the more likes and followers there are.

Table 5: Correlation analysis of the relationship between indicators of sustainability and the number of likes and followers

Pearson’s coefficient		LikeFcb	Followers	Environ. indicators	Social indicators	Governance indicators
LikeFcb	Pearson Correlation	1	1,000**	0,636	0,622	0,649
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,066	0,074	0,059
	N	9	9	9	9	9
Followers	Pearson Correlation	1,000**	1	0,634	0,619	0,648
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,067	0,076	0,059
	N	9	9	9	9	9

Source: own processing, 2023

At the 10% level of significance, we reject independence and conclude that there is a moderately strong direct dependence between the indicators in question and likes/followers. Within the research sample of companies, but also in general within the retail sector (p is less than 0.1 in all cases), we can state that the number of likes and followers depends on the level of reporting of the relevant environmental, social and management indicators, i.e. j. the higher the level of reporting, the more followers and likes the businesses have.

Because we consider the systematic publication of the reporting of business sustainability indicators as part of the company’s marketing communication, it is necessary to emphasize several vital aspects. If the annual sustainability report is part of the conceptual marketing communication, it can contribute directly to optimizing the activity and the optimization. reducing costs and indirect benefits related to communicating specific information to stakeholders (Korená & Pártlová, 2023) that create brand value (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014).

Because four of the nine investigated companies present annual reports per the GRI guidelines, it is necessary to emphasize their positive impact on increasing the company’s market value (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Calu, 2015). There are also studies (Hahn & Lülfs, 2014), according to which positive information was emphasized in annual reports at the expense of negative ones, but also studies that refute these claims by evaluating the relevance of published information by an independent auditor (Calu, 2015).

The influence on the interested groups, which we analyzed in the investigated companies on the social network Facebook by the number of likes and followers, is undeniable

and was proven by various test statistics. This is also confirmed by research (Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Jones et al., 2014), according to which socially and environmentally responsible companies are often considered prestigious and, as such, external stakeholders distinguish them from non-socially and environmentally irresponsible companies (Brammer et al., 2014). In this context, even a company that is perceived as unique provides employees, as one of the key interest groups, with a sense of their uniqueness because being employed in such a company promotes feelings of pride increases employees' self-confidence (Brammer et al., 2014), their self-esteem (Jones et al., 2014). Many private sector investors target investments in specific social, environmental or economic projects (Lesáková et al., 2022), including those outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (OECD, 2019). These include foundations and philanthropists that have traditionally focused on using grants and now include investment models (Musová et al., 2023) that aim to achieve financial sustainability alongside social returns (OECD, 2015). At the other end of the capital spectrum, mainstream investors are increasingly shifting from a sole focus on financial returns to seeking to mitigate environmental and social risks and for the growing number of investment opportunities aimed at achieving concrete positive results.

To get a positive response from interested groups, it is not enough to only actively implement, implement and report sustainable business but also to build networks of relationships and contacts with your partners, promote them and try to make them noticed and positively perceived by the customer (Hroncová Vicianová et al., 2019) and appreciated by their purchasing behavior (Koch & Zerbacka, 2013; Kotler & Lee, 2005).

5 Conclusion

Various factors connected to stakeholders, legislative bodies, institutional and market groups influence non-financial information disclosure. Companies' non-financial reporting is an opportunity to improve their economic and financial performance and motivates them to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage through ESG practices and mandatory/voluntary disclosure of non-financial information in the context of corporate sustainability, and therefore is currently becoming a subject of interest. Annual sustainability reports are no longer just mandatory documents available on websites but are becoming a crucial part of a company's identity that affects all interested groups.

There are several guidelines through which it is possible to report on sustainability socially responsible business and which represent certain voluntary principles and standards (e.g., OECD Initiative, GRI) for businesses. The GRI guidelines (Sustainability Reporting Guidelines) are the most widely used reporting framework, which helps organizations publish activities that serve the public, auditors, customers and other interested parties.

The presented article aimed to analyze annual reports declaring sustainability in the business activity of selected retail chains, taking into account the specifics of published environmental, social and management criteria, and to assess their impact on interested groups based on quantitative indicators (number of likes and followers) on the selected social network.

By the aim of the study, we analyzed in detail the published annual reports of the investigated companies in the context of environmental, social and management (economic) criteria, using several test statistical methods, which confirmed a statistically significant relationship between the level of reporting of individual environmental, social and management indicators and selected quantitative indicators (number of likes, followers). Moderately strong direct dependence was confirmed within environmental indicators for biodiversity, energy and resource consumption, sustainable mobility, but also CO₂ emissions, within social indicators for health promotion and remuneration and employee benefits, and management criteria for sustainability reporting and ethical and anti-corruption principles. We conclude that not only

within the research sample of companies but also in general within the retail sector, the number of likes and followers depends on the level of reporting of the relevant environmental, social and management indicators, i.e., the higher the level of reporting, the more followers and likes the companies have.

These facts confirm the importance of reporting annual sustainability reports and also confirm that it is required for companies to develop innovative approaches to reporting non-financial information because next year, it will not only be a legal obligation, but reporting also has a positive impact on interested groups such as customers, investors, employees, suppliers, but also the general public.

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