

The concept of sustainability in retail in Poland - the example of shopping centres

Retail is undergoing an unprecedented transition. The internet has led to new sales channels and new opportunities to reach out to customers, and globalization has opened markets and introduced new competitors.

Then COVID-19 happened, a stores around the world closed and consumers had no choice but to order online. Simultaneously, sustainability has moved up the agenda for retail players. The COVID-19 accelerated this trend, with two-thirds of consumers in Poland saying it has now become even more important to them to limit the impact of climate change.

Any company that wants to stay relevant in the future should think about sustainable behaviour. The questions remain on the path forward.

Will the 2030s be the decade when sustainability breaks through? How should retailers combine operational excellence with social and environmental responsibility?

Across the world, retail players are pressured to reduce their impact on the environment, with a special focus on climate change, biodiversity, and scarce resources. Fashion alone accounts for 4 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, consumers are paying increasing attention. Firms are also taking action to improve their impact on society.

Pandemic COVID-19 has increased the urgency of pursuing sustainability in retail. Many retail players experienced a significant shift in customer preferences and expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic: 65 percent of German and UK consumers, 58% consumers in Poland say they will buy more high-quality items that last longer, and 64 percent of Chinese consumers will consider more environmentally friendly products. For our first ten years, sustainability was not even in the top five reasons why customers chose our company.

Now it is one of the top two reasons. Customers want to see data on the environmental impact. Many of the technologies to realize a green recovery already exist, and now is a good time to invest in them.

Customers are demanding to be part of the sustainability conversation, and they are increasingly using their wallets to make their voices heard. Retail players should offer customers the option to choose sustainability. The leaders in sustainable retail are taking actions that could make retail more environmentally friendly, socially caring, and economically responsible.