

COMPREHENSIVELY ASSESS THE LEVEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF SUPPLIERS IN ENVIRONMENTALLY ORIENTED BUSINESS

Avaliar de forma abrangente o nível de política ambiental, a implementação de estratégias ambientais, o engajamento dos funcionários e o envolvimento dos fornecedores em negócios com orientação ambiental

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to assess the environmental sustainability of a selected retail company. Environmental sustainability is a part of modern business management that focuses on minimizing the negative impacts of business activities on the environment and on supporting a long-term balance between economic growth, social prosperity and the protection of natural resources. The research was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including a guided interview with the company manager, a questionnaire survey among employees and an analysis of internal documents and sustainability reports. The aim was to comprehensively assess the level of environmental policy, implementation of environmental strategies, employee engagement and involvement of suppliers in environmentally oriented business. The results showed that the company systematically applies the principles of environmental management, although it does not yet have formal certification according to ISO 14001 or EMAS standards. The company significantly reduced CO₂ emissions, optimized logistics and energy consumption, introduced packaging and waste recycling, and successfully implemented measures to reduce food waste through cooperation with the Food Bank of Slovakia. It also achieved positive results in the area of environmental product certifications (FSC, PEFC, MSC, RSPO, Fairtrade), which confirm its responsible approach to natural resources. The conclusion of the research points to a high level of environmental sustainability of the company and its contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals. Nevertheless, it is recommended to strengthen internal employee motivation, improve education in the field of ecological behavior, and strive for international certification of the environmental management system.

Keywords: Environmental sustainability, Environmental management, Social responsibility, Retail, Sustainable development

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AVALIAR DE FORMA ABRANGENTE O NÍVEL DE POLÍTICA AMBIENTAL, A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DE ESTRATÉGIAS AMBIENTAIS, O ENGAJAMENTO DOS FUNCIONÁRIOS E O ENVOLVIMENTO DOS FORNECEDORES EM NEGÓCIOS COM ORIENTAÇÃO AMBIENTAL

Comprehensively assess the level of environmental policy, implementation of environmental strategies, employee engagement and involvement of suppliers in environmentally oriented business

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RESUMO

O objetivo do artigo é avaliar a sustentabilidade ambiental de uma empresa varejista selecionada. A sustentabilidade ambiental é parte da gestão empresarial moderna que se concentra em minimizar os impactos negativos das atividades empresariais no meio ambiente e em apoiar um equilíbrio de longo prazo entre crescimento econômico, prosperidade social e proteção dos recursos naturais. A pesquisa foi baseada em uma combinação de métodos qualitativos e quantitativos, incluindo uma entrevista guiada com o gerente da empresa, um questionário entre os funcionários e uma análise de documentos internos e relatórios de sustentabilidade. O objetivo era avaliar de forma abrangente o nível da política ambiental, a implementação de estratégias ambientais, o engajamento dos funcionários e o envolvimento de fornecedores em negócios com foco ambiental. Os resultados mostraram que a empresa aplica sistematicamente os princípios da gestão ambiental, embora ainda não tenha a certificação formal de acordo com as normas ISO 14001 ou EMAS. A empresa reduziu significativamente as emissões de CO₂, otimizou a logística e o consumo de energia, introduziu a reciclagem de embalagens e resíduos e implementou com sucesso medidas para reduzir o desperdício de alimentos por meio da cooperação com o Banco de Alimentos da Eslováquia. A empresa também obteve resultados positivos na área de certificações ambientais de produtos (FSC, PEFC, MSC, RSPO, Fairtrade), o que confirma sua abordagem responsável em relação aos recursos naturais. A conclusão da pesquisa aponta para um alto nível de sustentabilidade ambiental da empresa e sua contribuição para o alcance dos objetivos de desenvolvimento sustentável. No entanto, recomenda-se fortalecer a motivação interna dos funcionários, aprimorar a educação em comportamento ecológico e buscar a certificação internacional do sistema de gestão ambiental.

Palavras-chave: Sustentabilidade ambiental, Gestão ambiental, Responsabilidade social, Varejo, Desenvolvimento sustentável

INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability is one of the key challenges of the current business environment, and its importance is growing due to climate change, growing public pressure and tightening environmental legislation. Businesses are increasingly aware that their economic prosperity is directly dependent on the state of natural resources and the ability to respond to social expectations in the field of environmental protection. In the conditions of a globalized market, environmental sustainability is therefore becoming not only a moral but also an economic necessity.

In the retail sector, the issue of sustainability manifests itself in many dimensions – from efficient energy use and waste reduction to the creation of environmentally friendly supply chains. Retail businesses, as key connectors between production and consumers, have a unique position to influence the environmental behavior of customers and partners. Their responsible approach can significantly contribute to reducing the ecological footprint of the entire economy.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the environmental sustainability of a selected retail business - from the perspective of applying the principles of environmental management, social responsibility and sustainable development. The paper analyses how the company implements ecological strategies, manages its environmental risks, involves employees in environmental protection and communicates its sustainable goals to the public.

The significance of this research lies in demonstrating that environmental responsibility can be a source of innovation, competitive advantage and long-term stability of the company. Retail, as a dynamically developing sector, plays a fundamental role in promoting the principles of the "green economy", where economic goals intersect with environmental and social aspects of business.

Based on the research results, it will be possible to formulate recommendations that can contribute to improving environmental management and strengthening sustainable development in the conditions of Slovak retail.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental sustainability is a part of modern business management, which focuses on minimizing the negative impacts of business activities on the environment and on supporting the long-term balance between economic growth, social prosperity and the protection of natural resources. According to Sujová (2013), environmental management is a company management system focused on the creation and protection of the environment in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. In retail terms, environmental sustainability is understood as a strategic approach that affects not only internal processes, but also supply chains, consumer behavior and social perception of the brand (Das ET AL., 2025). The basis of sustainable business is environmental policy, which represents a set of activities and tools that eliminate adverse impacts on nature and people. In retail companies, such as multinational chains, environmental policy includes logistics optimization, waste minimization, efficient use of energy and communication with suppliers in the spirit of ecological responsibility (Filčák, 2012, Garbarova et al., 2017). Hreusík (2011) emphasizes that effective policy must influence consumer and production decisions, thereby reducing the environmental burden of the market.

Environmental policies include environmental strategies that specify the goals and tools of the company. Furdová (2014) considers environmental strategies to be a source of competitiveness – through them, companies adapt to social expectations and at the same time improve their image and customer trust. In practice, this means introducing environmentally friendly technologies, ecological packaging and applying the principles of the circular economy. In retail, the optimization of transport and storage, where high CO₂ emissions occur, is also important; ecological innovations, such as shipment consolidation or the use of renewable energy sources, are therefore key (Štofová, et al. 2015).

A key element of environmental sustainability is the implementation of an environmental management system (EMS), which increases environmental performance while also bringing legal, financial and competitive advantages (Pašek et al., 2014; Cannistrà et al., 2022; Cannistrà ET AL., 2024). The most widely used frameworks are ISO 14001 and the European EMAS system, which help companies systematically manage their environmental aspects (Majerník et al., 2023). ISO 14001 provides a strategic framework for planning, implementing and

evaluating environmental policy, while allowing organizations to adapt objectives to their industry and local conditions (Lackóová, 2015; Dentch, 2016).

Sustainable development, as defined by Zikic (2018), represents a model of meeting socio-economic needs in a way that also reduces negative impacts on natural resources. Demmerling (2014) understands it as a system based on three pillars – environmental, economic and social – whose balance is the basis of sustainable development. In retail, this principle is applied mainly in the Triple Bottom Line concept, which, according to Bláh and Černek (2015) and Pícha (2012), emphasizes the balance between profit, planet, and people.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is closely linked to environmental sustainability (Jankalova & Vartiak, 2017). Bowen (2013) defined it as a commitment of companies to act in accordance with the values of the company, with the aim of benefiting not only shareholders, but also society and nature. CSR represents a voluntary and long-term approach, which includes measures for environmental protection, social justice, and ethical business (Slávik, 2016; Jaseckova et al., 2022; Kopac et al., 2025). Kuldová (2012) and Kunz (2012) add that companies that responsibly integrate ecological principles into their operations gain a competitive advantage, a higher reputation, and customer loyalty.

In the retail environment, environmental sustainability is manifested in practice in various ways - through the introduction of certifications (e.g. FSC, PEFC, Fairtrade), the reduction of plastic waste, recycling, the use of renewable energy sources and the support of local suppliers. The implementation of environmental strategies in retail is not only a matter of image, but also of economic rationality, as it leads to more efficient use of resources and long-term prosperity.

2 METHODOLOGIES

The aim of the research was to assess the environmental sustainability of TESCO STORES SR, a. s. in the retail sector. A combined approach was chosen - theoretical interpretation supplemented by empirical research, which allowed connecting knowledge from the literature with the real practice of the company.

2.1 Research approach and methods

The research consisted of three main tools:

- A guided interview with the company manager (March 2022, online form) contained 15 questions focused on environmental policy, energy efficiency, recycling, waste reduction and cooperation with WWF. The answers were evaluated using qualitative content analysis.
- A questionnaire survey among 52 employees of selected operations (February - March 2022) surveyed their attitudes towards environmental policy, motivation and education. The questionnaire contained 16 mostly closed questions and was processed using descriptive statistics and graphs.
- Document analysis – annual reports, company environmental policy and data from the Finstat database were used to supplement and verify the information obtained through interviews and questionnaires.

2.2 Data processing

Qualitative data were processed using the thematic categorization method, quantitative data using percentages and graphics. The subsequent synthesis allowed assessing the level of environmental sustainability in three dimensions – strategic, operational and social.

2.3 Limitations and research ethics

Data collection took place during the pandemic, which limited personal contact. Validity was strengthened by triangulation of methods, which allowed verifying the data obtained from different sources. Respondents' participation was voluntary and anonymous.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The company selected for the environmental sustainability assessment is TESCO STORES SR, a. s., a multinational retail chain operating on the Slovak market since 1996. The company operates more than 160 stores of various formats (hypermarkets, supermarkets, express stores) and is one of the largest employers in the country. Its activities include not only the sale of food and consumer goods, but also the provision of additional services - gas stations, pharmacies and mobile services.

TESCO profiles itself as a company that has long been committed to the principles of sustainable and socially responsible business, with the environmental dimension forming one of its key pillars (Sujová, 2013).

3.1 Environmental management and its implementation

TESCO applies an environmental management system that is in accordance with the principles of environmental management (EMS) and the principle of continuous improvement according to the PDCA model – Plan, Do, Check, Act (Socha, 2015). This model ensures cyclical evaluation of processes and enables effective planning of environmental measures.

The main goal of implementing EMS in retail is to reduce the negative impact of business activities on the environment, use resources efficiently and minimize waste.

As part of the implementation of the environmental system, the company uses several internal tools:

- monitoring of energy and water consumption,
- regular environmental audits of stores and distribution centers,
- a packaging and plastic recycling system,
- cooperation with suppliers in creating sustainable product chains.

Although the company has not yet obtained ISO 14001 certification or EMAS registration, according to findings from an interview with a manager, it implements several principles of these systems in practice. In the future, it is considering formal certification, which would confirm its long-term commitment to environmental responsibility.

3.2 The company's environmental policy

According to Filčák (2012), the environmental policy is a basic tool of environmental management. In the case of TESCO, this policy has clearly defined priorities:

- reducing the carbon footprint - the company has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2035,
- protecting natural resources - especially water, soil and forests,
- supporting biodiversity and the circular economy,
- responsible waste management,
- cooperating with partners and suppliers on sustainable sourcing of raw materials.

All activities are governed by the internal document Tesco Group Environment Policy, which applies to all branches within Central Europe. The policy is supplemented by requirements for suppliers, who must guarantee that their products meet environmental standards and have certification (e.g. FSC, PEFC, MSC).

The company also actively communicates environmental goals through its sustainability reports and internal campaigns. The aim is to create a “green culture” within the organization, where every employee understands the importance of environmental measures and actively participates in them.

3.3 Environmental strategies and their implementation

According to Furdová (2014), environmental strategy is becoming part of competitive advantage. TESCO is developing it in three key areas:

1. Reducing CO₂ emissions and energy efficiency

- Since 2015, the company has reduced its carbon emissions by 67% by switching to electricity from renewable sources in all operations.
- Distribution centers use LED lighting, recuperation systems and heat pumps.
- In logistics, routes are optimized and shipment consolidation is used - in 2020, the company saved 2.1 million kilometers and reduced emissions by 1.6 million kg of CO₂.

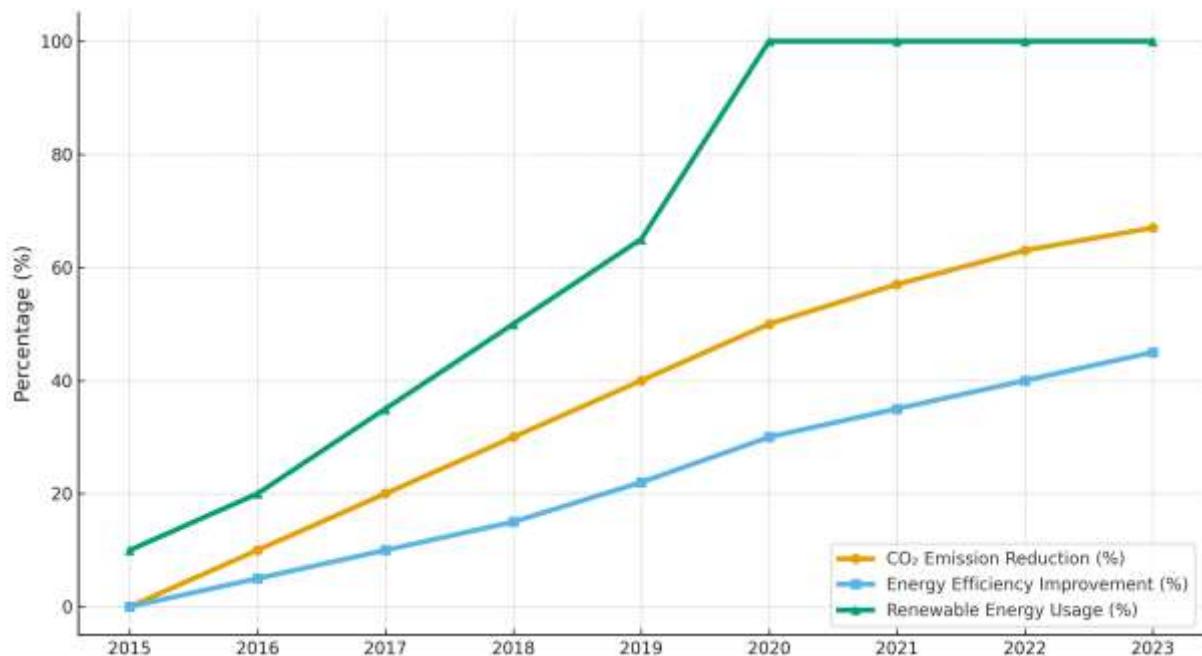
2. Waste management and recycling

- The goal is for all private label packaging to be 100% recyclable by 2025.
- Since 2020, TESCO has removed all difficult-to-recycle materials such as PVC and polystyrene from private label products.
- In 2021, the company recycled more than 13,000 tons of materials, mainly foil and cardboard.
- There are collection points for plastic bags and batteries in stores.

3. Reducing food waste

- The company cooperates with the Food Bank of Slovakia, through which it redistributes food after the best-before date.
- Since 2017, it has reduced food waste by almost 70%, with more than 2,000 tons of food donated to charities every year.
- In 2020, the share of food waste was only 0.55% of total turnover, which is significantly below the sector average.

Figure 1 –Reduction of CO₂ emissions and energy consumption (2015-2023)



3.4 Supply chain management

Retail companies have a significant impact on the environment through their supply networks. TESCO has therefore introduced the principles of responsible sourcing of raw materials, ensuring that all own-brand products come from verified and certified sources.

- FSC and PEFC certifications guarantee that wood products come from sustainably managed forests.
- RSPO certifies sustainable palm oil, which TESCO uses in all its own-brand products from 2020.
- MSC and Fairtrade guarantee sustainable fishing and ethical crop cultivation.

Suppliers are required to undergo regular audits and sign environmental commitments. In this way, the company strengthens its ecosystem of responsible partners, which extends environmental principles throughout the entire supply chain (Majerník et al., 2009).

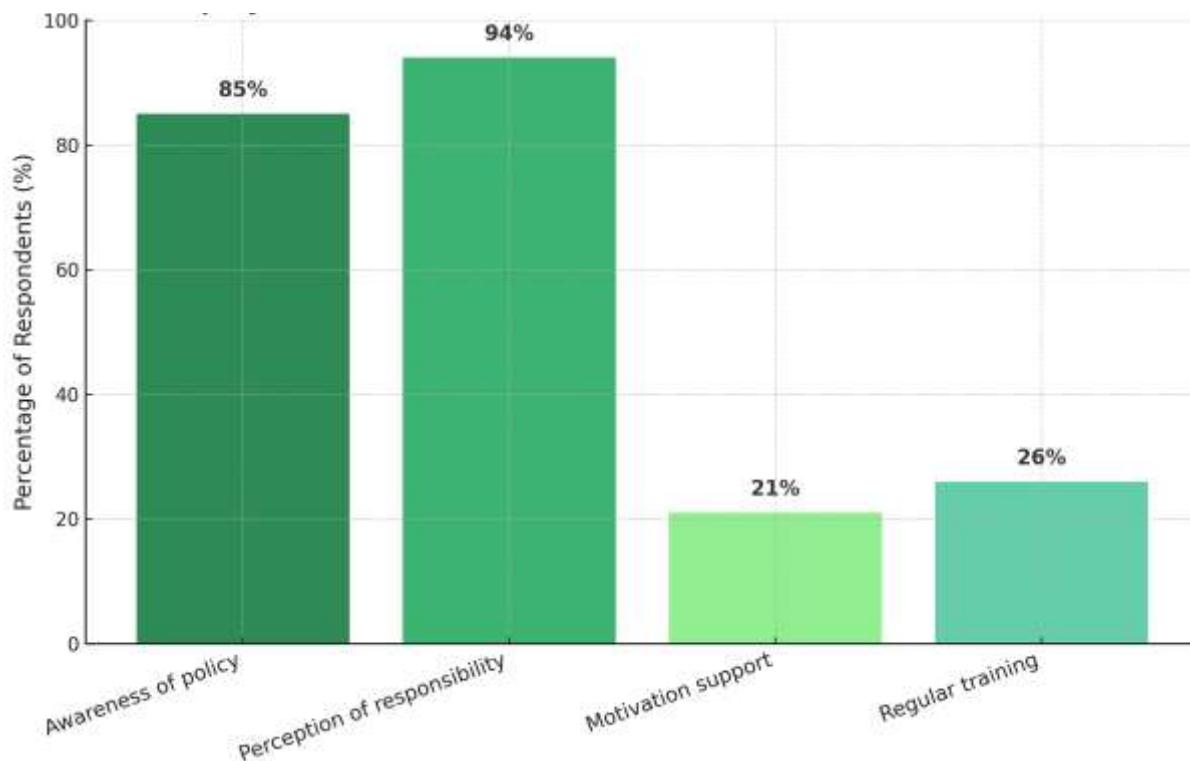
3.5 Employee involvement and internal culture

A survey among 52 TESCO employees showed that up to 85% of respondents are aware of the existence of the company's environmental policy and 94% consider its environmental behavior to be responsible. Most employees identify waste separation, reducing food waste and energy saving as the main environmental activities.

Despite the positive assessment, a low level of employee motivation to protect the environment was found – up to 79% of respondents stated that there is insufficient support from management in this area. Similarly, according to the majority of respondents, training on environmental responsibility is not carried out regularly.

These findings point to the need for more intensive internal communication of environmental values and the creation of a system of incentives (e.g. internal competitions, employee programs for reducing energy consumption, rewards for ecological innovations).

Figure 2 - Employee awareness and motivation in environmental initiatives



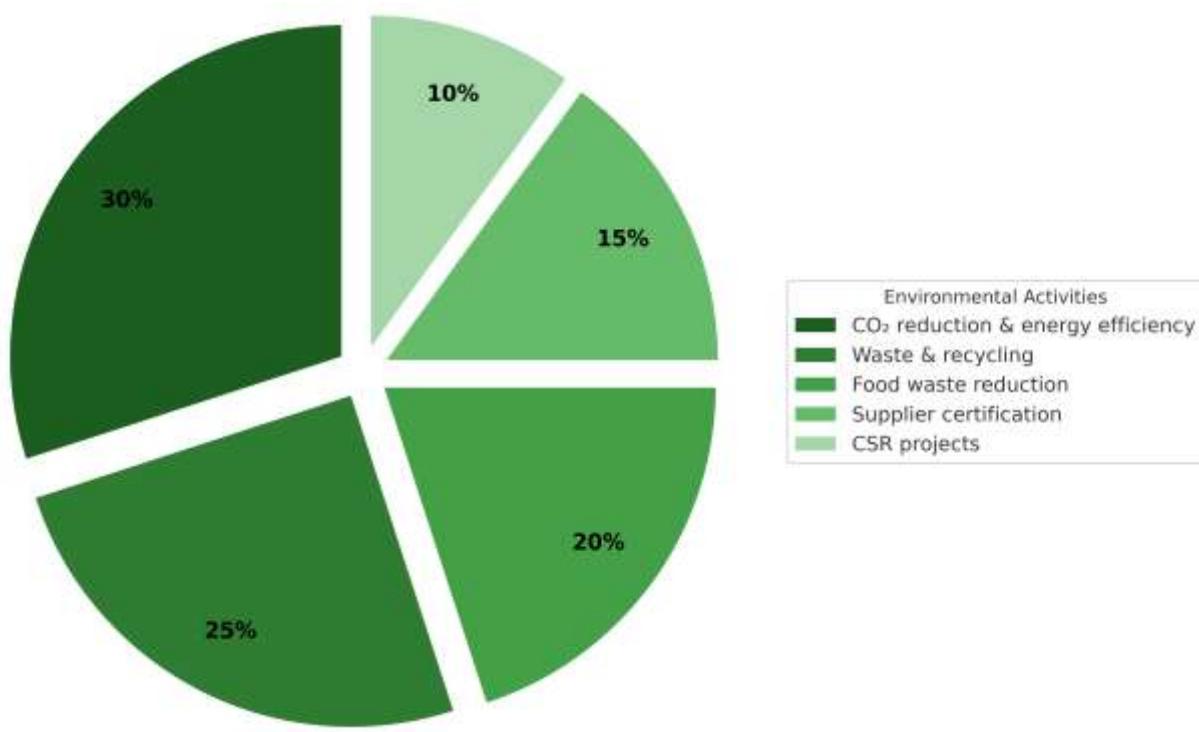
3.6 CSR projects

TESCO has been involved in areas that combine environmental sustainability with a social dimension for a long time. The most significant initiatives include:

- “You decide, we help” – a grant program supporting local environmental and social projects,
- “TESCO Food Collection” – an annual initiative in which customers donate food to the socially disadvantaged,
- “Food Rescuers” – a grant scheme of the TESCO Foundation to support projects that reduce food waste.

These activities contribute not only to reducing the ecological footprint, but also to strengthening relationships with customers and communities, thereby fulfilling the Triple Bottom Line principles of the company (Bláha and Černek, 2015).

Figure 3. Distribution of environmental activities implemented by TESCO



4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Based on the analysis, the following results can be summarized:

- TESCO has a developed environmental management system, although not formally certified.
- The company systematically reduces CO₂ emissions, waste and energy consumption, thereby contributing to the fulfillment of the global sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- The supply chain is fully integrated into environmental processes through certifications and inspections.
- Employees are positive about environmental activities, but they lack motivation and training.
- Corporate social responsibility projects have a strong environmental dimension and contribute to improving the company's public image.

Based on the synthesis of data, the level of environmental sustainability of TESCO STORES SR, a. s. can be assessed as high. The company applies most of the principles of sustainable development (Demmerling, 2014; Zikic, 2018) and demonstrably achieves improvements in the areas of emissions, waste and energy efficiency.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement - especially in the area of internal employee training and formal certification according to ISO 14001 or EMAS standards, which would strengthen the transparency and international credibility of the environmental strategy.

The research confirmed that environmental sustainability is not just a marketing topic for the retail sector, but is becoming a key factor in long-term competitiveness. TESCO STORES SR, a. s. is an example of a company that successfully integrates environmental principles into all aspects of its business – from logistics, through product design, to community projects.

According to the Triple Bottom Line principles (Elkington, 1997), the company strikes a balance between profit, people and the planet. Its approach can be described as a model of sustainable retailing, which could be followed by other entities on the Slovak market.

CONCLUSION

The research confirmed that environmental sustainability is becoming an integral part of strategic business management in today's retail. The company under study, TESCO STORES SR, a. s., demonstrated that a

responsible approach to the environment can go hand in hand with economic efficiency and social responsibility. The company systematically implements environmental management principles, reduces CO₂ emissions, manages energy efficiently and actively fights food waste through cooperation with charitable organizations.

The assessment showed that TESCO applies most of the principles of sustainable development - it protects natural resources, supports biodiversity and strives for carbon neutrality by 2035. It also achieves positive results in the area of certifications that guarantee environmental transparency within supply chains. Nevertheless, the research also pointed to certain reserves – in particular the need for more intensive training and motivation of employees, as well as formal certification according to ISO 14001 or EMAS standards, which would increase the credibility of the environmental policy. Overall, it can be stated that TESCO represents an example of good practice in the field of environmentally oriented retail in Slovakia. Its experience proves that sustainability is not just a marketing trend, but an investment in the future, which brings economic and social benefits. The integration of environmental principles into everyday operations strengthens the reputation of the company, increases its competitiveness and creates the conditions for long-term development in accordance with the needs of society and the planet.

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