SPIRITUALITY, A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY

Onete Bogdan Cristian[1], Budz Sonia[2], Vargas Vanesa[3] and Starosta Kejo[4]
[1] [2] [3][4]The Bucharest University of Economic Studies
E-mail: bogdan.onete@com.ase.ro; E-mail: sonia.budz@yahoo.com;
E-mail: vargas.vanesa13@yahoo.com; E-mail: k@ksfx.de

Abstract
In the last decades, many facets of the society have changed with regards to sustainability and responsibility. The level of awareness is influencing towards more responsibility. Spirituality could have a great impact regarding this aspect. Spiritual individuals are responsible human beings, who take into account their own actions in general. Therefore, it can be assumed that true conscious consumers could be spiritual individuals more or less. The concern regarding the environment and future generations has augmented the number of researches and projects regarding responsible or conscious consumption. More and more companies started to be more conscious regarding their products and services. The concern regarding the environment and future generations has augmented the number of researches and projects regarding responsible or conscious consumption. More and more companies started to be more conscious regarding their products and services. Although, they have reduced some of the damaging and polluting activities, they are still producing harmful materials for the environment. This research will analyze the degree of the online consumers' responsibility towards the environment and their selves, the openness towards sustainability and spirituality and the connection between these concepts. As well, how consumers could influence large companies to refocus their production towards sustainable products and services.

Keywords
Sustainability, responsibility, consumer, social media, conscious, spirituality.

JEL Classification
Q01, Q55

Introduction

The responsible consumers are, first of all, citizens for whom human rights, animal rights, social assistance and the environment are important. Such citizens will always consider the effects of what their choices will have on these things before anything is consumed. When they choose which products to consume or buy, they are taking into consideration more than the personal fulfillment of the product or service, and do not make a comparison with others similar, in terms of technical superiority - for technological products, taste - food products, or appearance - fashion or decorative object etc. In addition to the aspects mentioned before, and the price-to-price ratio, the conscious consumers will always be preoccupied of how the product or service will affect the environment and other beings, through its manufacture effects, along with the company's reputation. For example, between clothing produced by a

company known to have an environmentally detrimental production process and clothing manufactured by a company known for its organic production processes, the conscious consumers will always select the organic product of the clothing company. Responsible or conscious consumers are more aware of the inner and outer worlds. Thus, they have a high degree of sensibility. This sensibility has emerged due to several aspects, such as the development of empathetic capacities, the vast amount of information at their disposal. The instant access to knowledge and interactive communication through the social media platforms has facilitated the evolution of communities, implicitly the society as a whole (Sârbu, Alecu,& Dina, 2018).

The creeds and perceptions of many cultures have merged, therefore, adapting, sharing and accepting different beliefs as one. The term "spirituality" is associated frequently with awareness and consciousness and it is utilized more often nowadays. Spirituality and religion are not necessarily one and the same thing. Religion is the outer form, spirituality is the inner content. Religion is the shell, spirituality is the seed. Religion is a set of beliefs, spirituality is a continuum of experiences. You can be an adept of spirituality without attending a church or temple. You can find your spirituality by sharing it with others in intimacy, in communion with nature, by putting yourself in the service of others. Being a spiritual person is to see without judging - seeing not only with the eyes but also with the heart.

The influence of spirituality and responsibility on the sustainability trend
Spirituality is all about being aware of oneself and everything around. When people rise their level of consciousness, they start to accept and empathize with all aspects of the environment. Progress, quality, innovation, intelligence, self-protection, preservation and conservation of things resulted from spirituality. It is the secret for a healthy society, the driver of sustainability (Schmid, Olaru & Verjel, 2017).

The German author, sociologist and founder of the Denken der Zukunft (Future Thinking), Bernard Mutius, said that "people need a second enlightenment", and must learn to think and feel in new ways. In the past decades, spirituality was primarily related to religion. It was generally defined as the connection with the divinity. From another perspective, it has been theorized in fields like philosophy, psychology, business, and sociology. Beginning from the basic feeling of the bond with God and the church, its meaning has been extended to what means the human spirit, being associated with human intelligence. The word "spirituality" has its origin from the Latin word "spiritus", which means "to breath" - the breath of life. After exhaustive reviews on defining spirituality, Kumara
described spirituality as, "an individual's endeavors to explore and, deeply and meaningfully connect one's inner self to the known world and beyond" (Kumara, 2013). This definition revealed that every individual desires two things, in a conscious or unconscious manner. Firstly, to feel a connection to something greater than oneself and secondly, to be able to benefit other people and the world around him. Sometimes, it is believed that spirituality and religion are the same thing, but it should be noted that spirituality and religion are two different terms and treated as two different constructs in studies carried out in past (Kumara et al., 2013). Spirituality is equivalent with the soul, the immaterial, ideal, and intellectual. The Director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, Christina Puchalski, contends that „spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred."
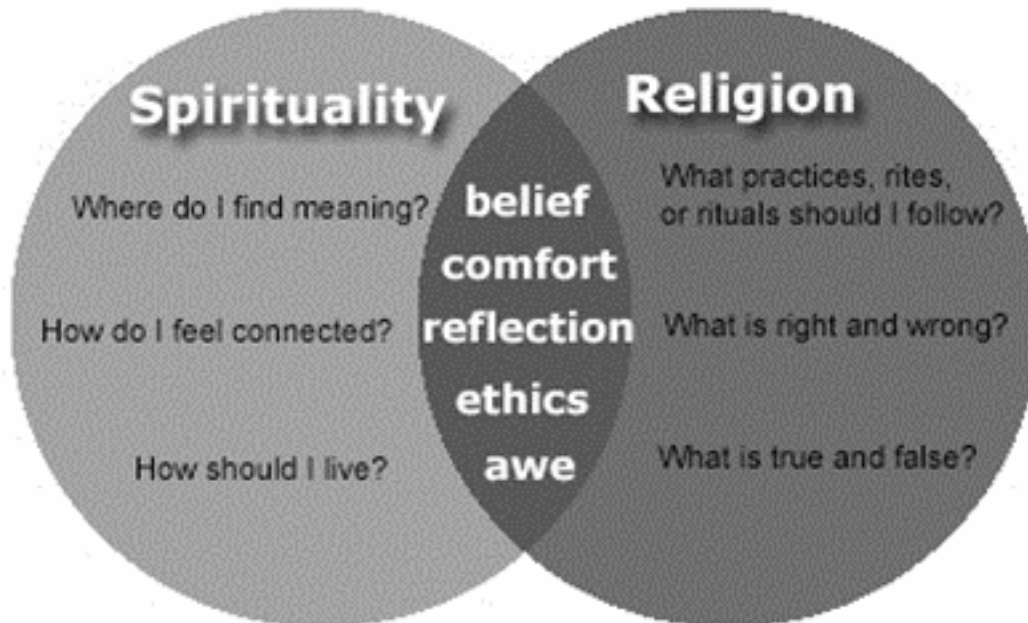
Fig. no. 1. Spirituality and religion
Source: https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality

Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) declare that spirituality within the workplace can be either active or passive, and that these assumed contradictory factors must be mixed together in order to determine it. Their definition, which follows, attempts to integrate these conditions: "Workplace spirituality is a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy". Spirituality is considered to improve organizational learning (Emmons, 2000), to unify and elevate communities (Choi, 2008), to please the necessity for connecting with others during work, and even to work itself (Khanna and Srinivas, 2000), and is the root of a harmonizing and healing expression of wisdom, compassion, and connectedness that transcends all socio-centric, anthropocentric, or egocentric forms (Maxwell, 2003). Leaders have an essential part in the passage of incorporating spirituality at work, as well as instill a sense and direction of the spiritual realm at every level, such as, individuals, teams, departments, and organization (Borges et al., 2000). Spirituality maintains the sustainable part and balance of every system.

Statistical data

This section contains statistical data regarding the online traffic for topics such as spirituality, and sustainability.
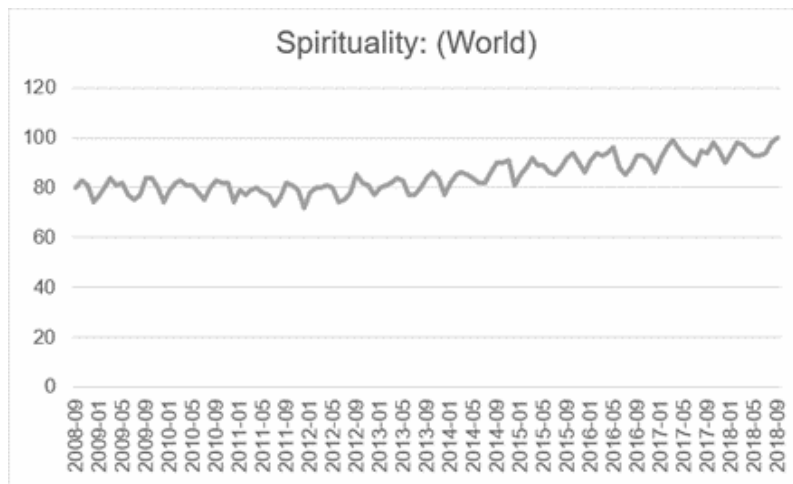
Fig. no. 2 Online international traffic with regards to spirituality
Source: Google Trends

The trend regarding the international traffic on spiritual topics had an easy growth. People are more and more interested in these kind of topics because they perceive them as beneficial from many points of view, like, personal development, some kind of connection, positive feelings, and self-confidence.
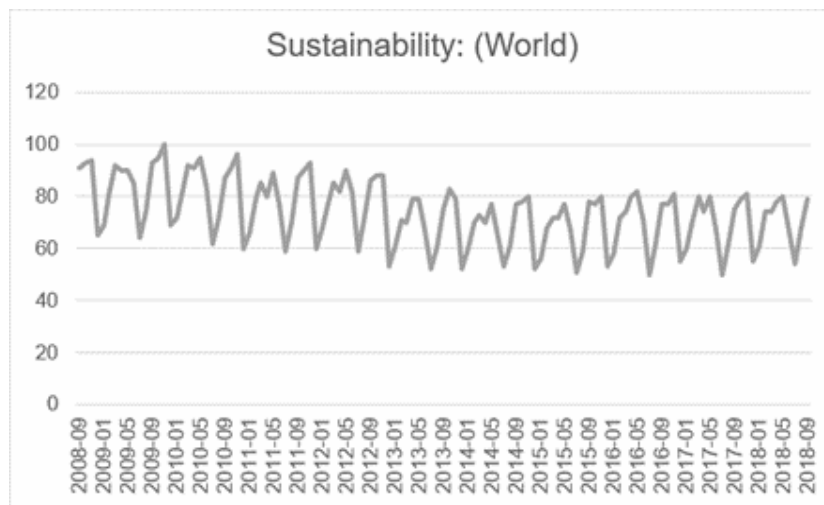

Fig. no. 3 Online international traffic with regards to sustainability
Source: Google Trends

Seasonality with lows around May and September, maybe because of the summer holidays. Unfortunately, the general trend recorded an easy decrease with regards to the sustainability topic. There is the possibility that in many countries to be an increased traffic, but to be covered up by those with low traffic.

Questionnaire analysis

This research analyzes the degree of responsibility that online consumers have towards the environment and their selves, and the openness towards sustainability, responsibility, spirituality and the connection between these concepts. As well, how consumers could influence large companies to refocus their production towards sustainable products and services through awareness. The number of addressed questions was 11. The questionnaire

has at the same time a quantitative and a qualitative pattern. The quantitative questions have been used to establish several indicators related to the social responsibility presence, on Facebook. The qualitative approach is reflected in the correlations that can be established between the independent variables on the Internet: social media, conscious behavior and spiritual information. The questionnaire has been auto administrated and it was sent on Facebook and on What's App groups.

Description of the used dataset

Table no. 1 General information about the respondents

Answers			113	
Residence			Professional Status	
Romanian	69%		Students	17%
Other Countries	31%		Employees	61%
			Entrepreneurs	19%
			Unemployed	2%
			Retired	1%
Gender			Average Income	
Female	57%		<500 Euros	21%
Male	43%		501-2000 Euros	66%
Unknown	0%		>2001 Euros	13%

Source: Authors

Results

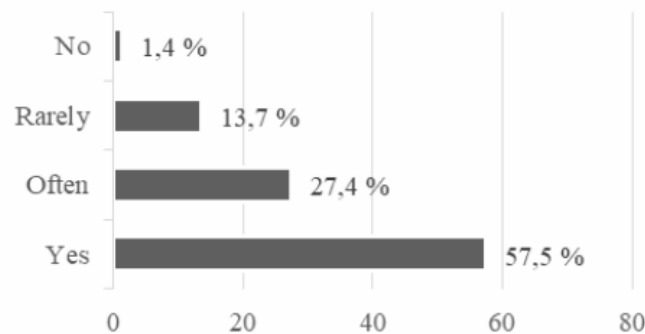In the charts below, we can find information with regards to the respondents' answers.

Fig. no. 4 Consumers' concern on the effects of their choices on the environment and/ or other beings when purchasing
Source: Authors

According to the chart above, most of the respondents take into consideration the effects of their choices, totally or partially. The consequences of their actions are related to investing in the future. When thinking about the consequences of actions, many of the respondents

have created for themselves a point of view towards ecology and other areas of life. Specifically they like to think about future generations.
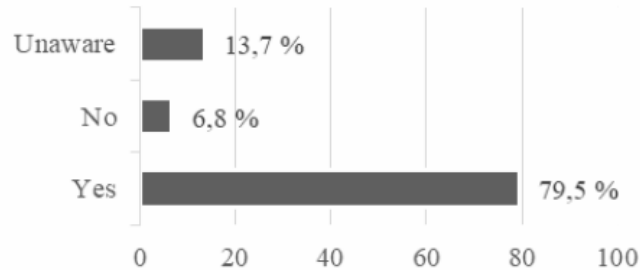

Fig. no. 5 Consumers' beliefs regarding the healthy contribution of spirituality on the environment
Source: Authors

Almost 80% of the respondents believe that spirituality could contribute to the protection of the environment and quality of life. The environment represents the natural surroundings, being an important part of our way of living. It affects our life, existence and activities, directly and entirely, in every corner of the planet.
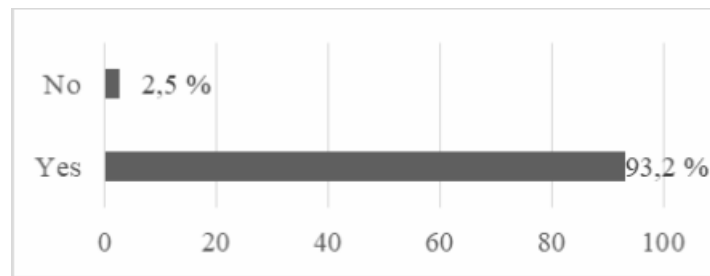

Fig. no. 3 Respondents' opinion with regards to the contribution of the world's population in maintaining a faulty system by purchasing environmental unfriendly services and products
Source: Authors

Most of the respondents recognized that the world's population is currently supporting a faulty system by purchasing environmental unfriendly services and products. Due to this aspect, the transition towards a sustainable society is harder. People are not aware that certain aspects are necessary, as reducing the waste of resources, and are hooked up by various needs.

Conclusions
According to the questionnaire answers, most of the respondents consider themselves to be responsible/ conscious consumers and pro regarding the environment protection. The respondents consider that spirituality contributes to the preservation of the environment and quality of life. They think that companies could reorient towards the production and sale of sustainable, clean, healthy products and services, if they would no longer purchase such environmentally harmful products. The empathy and connectedness resulted by a spiritual approach could easily change consumers and providers' perception regarding the environment. More companies, corporations and institutions have to implement spirituality in their cultures and teachings in order to become more aware, conserve the environment and be more competitive, simultaneously. As well, be an example for consumers and other

stakeholders, due to their power of influence. This denotes that they are interested in sustainability and health to a certain degree.

The statistical data collected from Google Trends matches at some degree the questionnaire answers. The trend tends for spirituality. Which could be very well implemented in sustainability, in order to be more attractive.

By implementing spirituality on a global scale, the world will change naturally, without much effort.

References/Bibliography

Borges, M.S., Santos, M.B.C. and Pinheiro, T.G., 2015. Social representations about religion and spirituality. *Rev Bras Enferm*, [e-journal] 68(4), pp.524-531 http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167.2015680406i

Choi, D.Y. and Gry, E.R., 2008. The venture development processes of "sustainable" entrepreneurs. *Management Research News,* [e-journal] 31(8), pp.558-569. https://doi.org/10.1108/01409170810892127

Dispenza, J., 2012. *Breaking the habit of being yourself.* U.S.A: Hay House Inc.

Emmons, R.A., 2000. Is Spirituality an Intelligence? Motivation, Cognition, and the Psychology of Ultimate Concern. *Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10(1), pp. 3-26.

Google Trends, 2018. *Google trends.* [online] Available at: <https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US> [Accessed 2 March 2019]

Helberger, N., 2016. Standardizing consumers' expectations in digital content. *Info*, [e-journal] 13(6), pp.69-79 http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14636691111174270

Krentzman, A.R., 2017. *What is Spirituality?* [online] Available at: <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality> [Accessed 11 February 2019]

Lacy, A., 2018. *From Spirituality to Strategies: A Chaplain's Guide to Improve Employee Satisfaction and Workplace Positivity* [online] Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2018.03.005> [Accessed 11 February 2019]

Manju, M. and Sheena, S., 2019. Workplace spirituality and subjective happiness among high school teachers: gratitude as a moderator. *EXPLORE*, [e-journal] 15(2) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2018.07.002

Montes, J. and Bhattarai, S.R., 2018. Buddhist biopower? – Variegated governmentality in Bhutan's Gross National Happiness agenda. *Geoforum,* 96, pp.207–216.

Puchalski, C., Ferrell, B., Virani, R. and Otis-Green, S., 2009. Improving the quality of spiritual care as a dimension of palliative care: The report of the consensus conference. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 12(10), pp.886-904.

Sârbu, R., Alecu, F. and Dina, R., 2018. Social Media Advertising Trends in Tourism. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 20(Special No. 12), pp. 1016-1028.

Schmid, J., Olaru, M. and Verjel, A.M., 2017. The Effect of Sustainable Investments to the Economic Objectives of the Company in Relation to the Total Quality Management. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 19(Special No. 11), pp. 939-950.

Tiggemann, M. and HageSchool, K., 2019. Religion and spirituality: Pathways to positive body image. *Body Image,* [e-journal] 28, pp.135–141 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.01.004

You, S., Yoo, J.E. and Koh, Y., 2019. Religious practices and mental health outcomes among Korean adults. *Personality and Individual Differences,* [e-journal] 142, pp.7–12 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.01.026