

The REKO System in Finland: a New Model of a Sustainable Marketing Channel

System REKO w Finlandii: nowy model zrównoważonego kanału marketingowego

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Abstract

The global trend in the development of sustainable consumption favors the creation of new marketing channels, which combine in themselves the sales and distributive functions and respect the integrated principles of sustainable development. The article presents an example of such a channel which has been very successful on the Finnish market of local and organic products. This channel, based on the activities of REKO purchasing groups, self-organized with the use of the social media, can provide an example to follow in other countries.

Key words: marketing channel, Marketing 4.0, sustainable marketing, REKO system

Streszczenie

Globalny trend rozwoju zrównoważonej konsumpcji sprzyja powstawaniu nowych kanałów marketingowych, łączących w sobie funkcje sprzedażowe i dystrybucyjne, i respektujących zintegrowane zasady zrównoważonego rozwoju. W artykule przedstawiono przykład takiego kanału, funkcjonującego z ogromnym powodzeniem na fińskim rynku produktów lokalnych i ekologicznych. Kanał ten, oparty na działalności grup zakupowych REKO, samoorganizujących się z użyciem mediów społecznościowych, może stanowić przykład do naśladowania w innych państwach.

Słowa kluczowe: kanał marketingowy, Marketing 4.0, zrównoważony marketing, system REKO

Introduction

The research into the level of happiness in the countries all over the world, conducted yearly since 2012, demonstrates that these countries' approach to the question of sustainable development goes hand in hand with the sense of happiness of their citizens. According to the *World Happiness Report 2017*, the happiest of the 155 studied nationalities are the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Icelanders, the Swiss and the Finns. The Scandinavians, like the Swiss, have been ascribing great significance to the principles of sustainable development for years, respecting nature and one another. Therefore, the Scandinavian way of life, as well as specific solutions to typical everyday problems, can provide a good example for other na-

tions, taking into account cultural differences and local conditions.

The aggressive marketing practice of great corporations, aimed at generating quick profits to their stakeholders, is often accused of degrading the environment and corrupting people. An antidote to this situation is searching for an alternative in the form of marketing promoting the culture of quality, which is guided by the principles of eco-rationality in selecting the instruments of influence on the consumer (Skowron, Szymoniuk, 2014). Such marketing is a response to the growing presence of the trend of sustainable consumption, which entails: avoiding excessive shopping, limiting all sorts of wastefulness – especially in terms of producing waste material and pollutants, as well as showing preference for these

goods and services which meet specific ethical, social and environmental criteria to the highest extent (Szymoniuk, 2015).

The current article presents an innovative system of direct sales of organic and local products, dynamically developing in Finland and providing an excellent example of implementing the principles of sustainable marketing.

Finland is a fully modern country, friendly to the people and at the same time to the natural environment, particularly attached to its tradition. In its socio-economic policy, it consistently implements the strategy of sustainable development at all decision-making levels, which makes it the leader of such development on a global scale. This country is characterized by:

- material prosperity and high quality of life;
- mature democracy and a well-developed idea of local self-government, firmly established in practice;
- the criterion of social interest, present in development processes and economic decisions;
- discipline and organizational efficiency of human teams;
- one of the best education systems in the world;
- openness to the processes of creating knowledge and searching for changes, and to technological development.

Thanks to the above-mentioned qualities, the idea of sustainable consumption in Finland is perfectly implemented in the form of the REKO system, described below. This system supports the development of organic farming, which minimizes the negative impact on the natural environment and strives to attain sustainable plant and animal production. Organic farming produces food of the highest quality. It is subject to strict controls; the use of genetically modified organisms, synthetic mineral fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, antibiotics and synthetic feed additives is prohibited. Permanent fertility of the soil, the health of the animals and the high quality of agricultural products are assured exclusively through natural means. Moreover, organic, sustainable agricultural production favors small farms, whose income remains in the region.

The development of sustainable consumption and its manifestations

Sustainable consumption is an integral feature of sustainable development – of the global society and economy as well as of local communities and economies. Furthermore, it is an element of the system of sustainable marketing, manifesting itself mainly on the demand side of all markets, having at the same time a cause-effect relationship with their supply side. Without sustainable consumption, sustainable production makes no sense – and *vice versa*.

In the literature on the subject, numerous definitions and concepts of sustainable consumption can be found, referring to it as *the new paradigm of development*. According to the definition adopted in 2011 by the Polish Ministry of the Economy, *sustainable consumption amounts to optimal, conscious and responsible use of the available natural resources, goods and services, on the level of individuals, households, communities and local societies, business environments, local governments, national governments and international structures, according to the principles of sustainable development* (Ministry of the Economy, 2011).

Manifestations of sustainable consumption which are worth promoting are (Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska, 2010; Skowron, Szymoniuk, 2014):

- deconsumption, or reducing the consumption of goods obtained by exploiting non-renewable natural resources,
- in purchasing decisions, using the criterion of maximizing the quality and long-term usefulness, taking into account financial resources,
- cultivating a healthy lifestyle based on purchasing and consuming organic products, exercising and keeping the natural environment clean,
- moving from ego-rationality to eco-rationality through economical, efficient management of goods, sorting and recycling waste, using second-hand products and passing them on to others,
- developing knowledge of the protection of the natural environment and becoming involved in environmental initiatives.

The global trend of development of sustainable consumption imposes the so-called ecologization of management on enterprises which offer services and goods they produce, as well as on trading enterprises (Skowron, Szymoniuk, 2014). This idea adopts the paradigm of functioning in harmony with the environment as the foundation for the growth of innovation and building competitive advantage. Such an approach entails submitting the enterprise to the difficult process of re-evaluating its policy and organizational culture, namely:

- cultivating respect for the applicable legal and industry standards, imposing this way of thinking on one's partners as a condition for cooperation,
- optimal management of resources within all value chains, balancing the structure of these chains,
- creating offers of products and services which are more eco-friendly,
- developing new models of business, based on commercializing innovations derived from environmental values, and altering the bases of competition,
- laying the foundations for the practice of implementing the new generation solutions,

both in the area of technology and organization, combining the criteria of quality, resource efficiency and minimizing negative externalities.

Ecologization of management in the area of marketing is manifested in:

- diagnosing consumer behavior and expectations through the prism of the potential of new technologies, but also of respecting their inertial nature in older age groups,
- building effective relationships between the company and other local operators, including suppliers, local authorities and other stakeholders, and seeing in them potential synergistic effects,
- involving the enterprise in the process of marketing communication aimed at promoting the culture of balanced consumption based on the paradigm of quality instead of pushing the customer into excessive consumption.

Characteristics of modern marketing channels in the face of the development of sustainable consumption

A marketing channel is defined in the literature on the subject in a very similar way, as a channel or system of distribution. In common understanding, these two notions are synonymous.

According to Philip Kotler, marketing channels are sets of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption (Kotler et al., 2016, p. 892). The definition of a distribution channel is, according to this author, almost identical; it merely indicates that members of a distribution channel can include both dependent and independent organizations (Kotler et al., 2016, p. 887). A marketing channel is therefore a part of a distribution channel; a part which is composed exclusively of independent organizations. Other authors do not make such a distinction. A distribution channel is defined as:

- an organized network of agencies and organizations whose activity is aimed at relating producers to buyers, users and consumers, as well as providing them with a marketing offer (Baines, Fill, Page, 2008, p. 834), as well as:
- a product's path from the manufacturer to the consumer; during the process of following that path, flow of three streams can be observed:
 - the stream of objects (moving and storing goods),
 - the financial stream (payment for the products, cash flows),
 - the informational stream (orders, reports, comments) (Mruk, 2012).

The aim and challenge for the functioning of distribution channels is to place the optimum amount of

goods and/or services before the maximum number of a target market at the times and locations they want (Baines, Fill, Page, 2008, p. 551).

The participants of distribution channels include three groups of subjects (*Encyclopedia of Management*):

- the sellers and buyers of products, or persons/institutions transferring and taking the ownership of the products moved (manufacturers, wholesale or retail dealers, individual and institutional buyers),
- persons who do not take the ownership of the products moved (agents, brokers, sales representatives),
- institutions which offer services supporting the activities of manufacturers and commercial intermediaries (banks, transport, forwarding and logistic companies; customs agencies, insurance companies).

In the current article, marketing channels will be defined more broadly: as a combination of distribution channels, which perform mainly sales functions, and of communication channels, which perform informative-persuasive functions with respect to target buyers and consumers.

Such an approach is justified by the fact that in the modern marketing channels, especially in those linking the *online* world with the *offline* one, the boundary between sales channels and communication channels is becoming increasingly blurred. For example, in distribution networks and on product packaging, information about the offer is included along with a prompt to buy it, while in image-building communication contents, transmitted via the interconnected *offline* and *online* media, there are options for placing a purchase and delivery order easily.

In the newest concept of the philosophy of marketing in the digital era, the so-called Marketing 4.0, its founders and popularizers stress the importance of eliminating the wastefulness of the measures of market influence, both in sales and communication channels (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 90, 154-155). Continuous effort to avoid all sorts of wastefulness, taking into account the principles of sustainable development, can be recognized as a manifestation of a pro-environmental attitude, friendly towards humans and nature. The future belongs to manufacturing and trading companies which will best adapt themselves to such a concept of operations.

Marketing 4.0 and the sustainable marketing channels of the future

An analysis of the main assumptions of Marketing 4.0 (Kotler et al., 2017) will help to better understand the phenomenon of the Finnish REKO system described below.

The changes occurring in the attitude of contemporary consumers, including the increasingly sustainable consumption, bring about specific implications

for the marketing of the digital era. The boundaries between the producer and the consumer as well as between B2B and B2C markets are becoming blurred. New elements of the market are emerging, such as:

- prosumers – or customers who are active in co-creating the offer and promoting its brand (in place of traditional consumers),
- social networks which support traditional advertising and build the transparency of an enterprise,
- cooperation platforms, which are a place where the product is created and relationships with customers are established.

Marketing 4.0 suggests the ways of transforming informed consumers into the advocates of the brand. The traditional path leading to purchase, or the AIDA model: raising the consumer's awareness (Awareness/Attention), making them interested (Interest), causing them to desire the product (Desire) and making them act (Action), has been modified and extended to include the stage of advocacy, as the opinions of other people (relatives, friends, experienced and influential Internet users) have a major impact on customers' purchasing decisions.

The new purchasing path of the customer (5A) along which an enterprise guides its customer, suggested by Marketing 4.0, is composed of the following stages: Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act and Advocate. The role of marketers is to guide customers throughout their journey from awareness and ultimately to advocacy.

Contemporary businesses can raise their sales and communication effectiveness and, as a consequence, their competitiveness on the market, by involving the customers *online* and *offline* at every stage of their path to purchase. It is achieved through:

- using human-centered marketing, which allows the customers to fulfill themselves in the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions,
- creating consumer conversations (content marketing) and
- the strategies of reaching the consumer with information and offer via numerous channels.

All the above-mentioned assumptions and recommendations of Marketing 4.0 have been implemented in the innovative marketing channel described below, which was developed in Finland.

History of the Finnish REKO system

In Finland, the interest in local and organic food and small-size food enterprises has grown significantly over the last few years. Consumers are concerned about what they want to eat and what kind of products they want to put on the dining table. As a result, they opt for local products due to their traceability as well as clear information about their origins and producers. Demand for these products has arisen both

from consumers and from professional food market actors (Government of Finland, 2013).

Consumers are interested in the origin of food and would like to have more information about e.g. production methods and safety. A short supply chain *from farm to fork* has an additional advantage due to the fact that food is fresh and is easy to trace back to the producer. The privilege of a short supply chain also lies in the fact that consumers have an opportunity to talk directly to the producers. At the same time, consumers can offer their feedback and new ideas about how producers should develop their products or what kind of new products consumers may be interested in (European Network for Rural Development, 2012).

The first REKO local food group in Finland was founded in Pietarsaari in October 2012. The idea was first developed in France, and a private farmer Thomas Snellman found out about this system when he was visiting a friend there. It made a big impact on Snellman, and he decided that he would try to launch something similar when he returned to Finland. In Finland, Snellman talked about his idea in the organic project group he was involved in, and got the other members keen on the idea too. Together with a couple of colleagues, they created the REKO model, which at the beginning worked along the same lines as the French system.

Snellman was concerned with developing a model in which it would be easy both for a producer to sell his or her produce and for a consumer to buy products from nearby farmers and other producers. Primarily, he planned it as a local activity for himself and the neighboring organic producers. He did not envisage it would grow to such significant proportions in the upcoming years.

At the beginning, it was challenging to get in touch with the producers. There was nothing similar around and they just had to trust the model and the idea Snellman talked about. It meant that, to begin with, it was important to sign written two-month contracts. Once things started rolling, Snellman and other activators were able to give up the contracts and the producers could be confident that consumers would buy their produce.

Characteristic of the REKO direct sale system

The REKO retail and distribution model offers consumers a way of ordering products directly from the producer, without the need for middlemen. The REKO networks operate via Facebook as closed groups in which orders and deliveries are agreed on. The producers who wish to participate in a given delivery announce their intention and offer on Facebook. They also include information about the preferred payment method: in cash, by credit card or on account. Subsequently, consumers publish their orders in the form of comments below the post.

The groups are run by volunteers, called administrators (or moderators), who do not receive payment for their contribution. The network moderator has the right to set other criteria for the selection of producers for the REKO network. The volunteers are mainly producers, also selling their products via REKO. The particular roles in the REKO system are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Different roles in the REKO system

Name of the role	Implementing the roles described in the guidelines
REKO network	A closed Facebook group in which orders and deliveries are agreed on
REKO administrator	The person responsible for the technical administration of a REKO Facebook group
REKO operator	A company or individual selling products via the REKO network
REKO delivery	An event where REKO operators sell or deliver products ordered via the REKO network to customers, with the orders handled via Facebook in advance

The system described above functions on the local produce market according to the principles identified in the market triple model (Walukiewicz, 2014). The role of the market organizer is played by REKO administrators (moderators), the demand side is made up of the consumers concentrated in REKO networks, while the supply side – of the producers (REKO operators), See Figure 1.

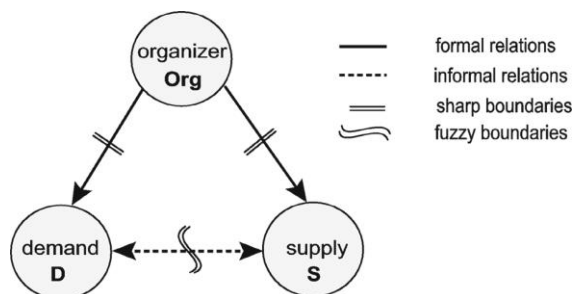


Figure 1. The market triple (Walukiewicz, 2014).

REKO deliveries usually take place once a week, every other week, but may also be organized at a different suitable interval. Each REKO network decides on the schedule independently. The place of delivery is a public space, usually a school pitch or a square within school grounds. Deliveries usually take place on weekdays, after working hours. They are organized to be convenient for the farmers, so that, setting out from their farms, they can have a number of trade meetings in local towns.

The size of groups also varies a lot. The biggest groups are composed of 50 producers and 10,000 consumers. Some very big groups were divided e.g. into two separate groups in order to better manage orders and the delivery situation.

At the beginning, the system included two groups: in Pietarsaari and Vaasa. The popularity of REKO local food groups exploded in the space of a few months. The numbers sound almost unimaginably high. At the beginning of the year 2018, there are almost 200 groups and 330,000-340,000 consumers (National local food co-ordination project, 2018). The number of people involved in REKO amounts to 7-8 % of the inhabitants of Finland (Snellman, 2018).

The producers benefit from the fact that their produce is ordered in advance and sold quickly. There is less waste and they feel that their work is valued. Snellman believes this is one of the reasons for success, not to mention the fact that consumers easily obtain products that have been produced locally. One main reason for REKO’s popularity is the fact that access is free for everyone. Joining a local food group does not cost the producer or the consumer anything. As a result, the initiative is not perceived as a money-making machine. REKO local food groups bring producers and consumers together and offer consumers an opportunity to obtain locally produced food at regular intervals. On the other hand, consumers do not have to make any binding agreements or follow strict timetables. The program offers flexibility much desired in daily life by many, e.g. young families and working people, as they are able to order products when they find it suitable. As far as the producers’ interest is concerned, the size of the group guarantees enough orders from consumers per delivery to make the trip profitable for a given producer.

Anyone can set up a REKO group and there are clear instructions for doing so on the website (REKO system website). In the future, groups will be set up in more places than before. The name of the network should include the word REKO. Each group’s description includes information on the operation principles for the group.

The popularity of REKO food groups has grown considerably. At the beginning, Thomas Snellman believed in the idea, but he did not think it would spread all over Finland and also abroad to Europe. Today, there are active REKO groups in Sweden. The rumor has spread and Snellman was invited to several countries to talk about the system, e.g. in Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands and Italy. Thomas Snellman does not take all the credit for the popularity of the system, however, but praises his great background team such as regional actors and National local food development project (Snellman, 2018).

So far, the demand in REKO groups has maintained a level which has made it possible for REKO operators to set the prices on quite a high level. The REKO administrators or the REKO model do not control the price level anyway. If some producers’ price level is too high, one can recognize it in the lack of orders. Snellman’s estimation is that producers always get a

better added value for the products sold via REKO than via other market channels (Snellman, 2018).

The role of the University of Turku in supporting a new sustainable marketing channel

The University of Turku has had an active role in supporting and promoting food systems in Finland. National local food co-ordination project run by Brahea Centre at the University of Turku has played a role in organizing meetings and seminars concerning REKO, which made it possible for REKO administrators to meet, discuss and share their experiences (Hyvönen, 2014).

Each REKO group works independently on Facebook as a closed group. The groups can be found on Facebook by searching their name. When a consumer wants to find a group, it is more or less difficult, e.g. if he or she does not know the exact name. This was one of the topics of discussion at the national meeting of REKO administrators. To solve the question of finding groups, the actors decided to make REKO groups visible in the form of a map, and the University of Turku created the map and published it on the website www.aitojamakuja.fi (in English: www.trueflavours.fi). Also, at the same time there was general demand from the public and the media to publish overall information about REKO. National local food development project maintains information concerning local food on the website www.aitojamakuja.fi. It is very natural that a part of the website also includes information about REKO and active REKO networks indicated on a map can be found there.

The University of Turku also gathered a working group to prepare the so-called REKO guidelines concerning food-related legislative requirements and other statutes that must be taken into account in the sale of products via the REKO network. This effort involved a working group with representatives from Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK), the Swedish-language organization for agricultural producers (SLC), and the Rural Women's Advisory Organization.

The guidelines are available on the above-mentioned website www.aitojamakuja.fi, under the 'REKO' tab. Guidelines instruct REKO operators how to learn about REKO's procedures and legal regulations on food that are relevant for REKO operators. In REKO groups, they are responsible for providing all the necessary food information, such as the list of ingredients, identification of substances which may affect those with allergies, and shelf life. The guidelines include advice for packaged and non-packaged food products, as well as advice concerning all direct sales of primary products and the rules concerning the situation when the annual direct sales exceed the set limits. In addition to food legislative issues, the

guidelines show the requirements for REKO operators who transport primary products from other producers. A REKO operator must obtain a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence, except of those who deliver their products in passenger cars.

The University working group's role was also to point out the responsibilities a REKO operator has, e.g. the form of notification about the place of primary production available on the relevant municipality's website. If food business operators also sell products via REKO delivery (without an order in advance), in this case they must register mobile food premises and submit a notification of sales to the food authorities of the municipality where the products are to be sold, at least four days prior to REKO delivery. As all food business operators must have an up-to-date plan for internal checks, this is also relevant to REKO operators. All income from the REKO sales is of course taxable according to common rules. If the sale is very small, e.g. of home-prepared food products, the income is taxable and must be declared to the Tax Administration with the pre-completed tax card. If the income exceeds 10,000 euros, the operations are regarded as business operations, for which value added tax is due. In this case, a notification of food premises must be submitted to report the manufacturing and sale of food products. Private individuals are not obliged to submit a notification of food premises.

Because REKO administrators are not retailers, they are not responsible for food products sold via a REKO network: it is the REKO operator's responsibility to ensure that the product information is accurate, adequate, and compliant with regulations in all other ways.

In the future, some powerful body could want to restrict the system, but whether or not they would succeed is a different matter. REKO groups meet all the criteria required of producers, production and at the moment they are not breaking the law in any respect. The government Program on Local Food (Government of Finland Resolution, 2013) has set priorities for the development of the local food sector. Improving the opportunities of small-scale food processing and sale through legislation and counselling is a priority. Counselling can be obtained e.g. through the Guidelines for REKO operators, including detailed information on the network's practices and procedures.

There are local and regional short supply chain development projects all over Finland. Many of them have been active in helping with practical issues when establishing REKO groups. The role of the projects is often educational and also concerns sharing information and knowhow as well as networking. REKO administrators can find producers e.g. on www.aitojamakuja.fi. The role of University of Turku is also to maintain a nationwide Finnish website dedicated to helping people find small and medium-sized food enterprises in their local area. The

Table 2. Implementing the principles of sustainable development in the REKO system

The plane of sustainable development	Implementing the principles in general (Pawłowski, 2008)	Implementing the principles in the REKO system
Moral	Human responsibility for nature; respecting the <i>imperative of responsibility, or acting so that the effects of one's deeds do not adversely affect future human existence on Earth.</i>	Respect for nature and other people, supporting local producers, caring for one's own and one's family's health.
Environmental	Protecting nature and the landscape: creating protected areas, shaping spatial order, keeping the air, water and soil clean. Using <i>green</i> energy.	Supporting local and eco-farming, keeping the natural environment clean. A no-waste system: the products are sold quickly (no waste of time), and, thanks to the individual ordering system, there is no waste of products.
Technological	Development of: 1) the <i>cleaner production</i> , e.g. eliminating the use and production of toxic materials, reducing the emission of contaminants; 2) environmental engineering and its pro-environmental technologies which make it possible to save resources, energy, or to manage waste more efficiently; 3) industrial ecology, calling for the creation of closed production systems in which waste is used as a source of energy or raw materials and components to make other products.	Using the social media and other available technological means which support the real-life network of cooperation, with the functioning of the system not being completely paralyzed in the case of a potential breakdown of technological means.
Legal	Environmental legislation, consistently obeying the law.	Complying with the rules of the commercial law, transparency of transactions and taxation issues.
Economic	Fees (including taxes), penalties, subsidies and other economic instruments supporting observance of the law: penalties for polluting the environment and fees/taxes for exploiting its resources; environmental project subsidies, tax exemptions for environmental investments, <i>environmental pledges</i> (money deposited for the future recultivation of the environment).	Consensus on the price levels of eco-products. They are high enough to satisfy the producers, but low enough to make eco-food available to a wider group of buyers.
Social	Relationships between people and the relationship between man and nature. Social environment should secure the livelihood of an individual in the material and spiritual dimension through preventing social conflicts, eliminating the attitudes of mutual hostility and aggression, as well as terrorism tendencies. Encouraging people to give up the high-consumption lifestyle as well as individualistic and extremely egoistic attitudes.	Integration of consumers, involving them in the logistic and advertising process as well as in co-creating environmental and local offer. Raising environmental awareness, improving the quality of and increasing the number of favorable relationships in the local environment. Shaping the attitudes of local patriotism. The producers feel their work is valued
Political	Formulating the strategy of sustainable development at various levels, consulting it in local environments, implementation and control. Environmental education.	The system is apolitical in relation to the domestic or external policy, but is consistent with the policy of regional development.

website currently has up-to-date information on about 2,200 enterprises, and more are being added all the time. In 2017, there were there 2,859 food companies in Finland, with the majority of food processing companies in rural areas.

When creating the REKO model, Thomas Snellman pointed out that it is important for the producer to talk about his production e.g. methods, place of production, and to be open to discussion and contact. The University of Turku has been involved, in connection with the development processes of the food

sector, in the process of creating the so-called *product card*. It is a tool helping the producer to specify in a written or digital form all the facts concerning a product. A product card helps producers to market the product; to offer detailed product-specific facts; to recognize the added value of the product, its selling points and stand-out qualities; and, finally, to analyze how the product may be used.

It is also important to show and highlight the story behind the product. With the product card, it is also possible to tell customers how the product is made,

e.g. whether it is made according to a traditional recipe or it is a new product, and whether it is based on the culinary culture of a certain region. The role of stories is growing and the story also helps to explain the price set for the product. Storytelling is a way to distinguish the product or the producer. (Väre, 2014).

The REKO system and the principles of sustainable development

Sustainable development requires the integration and interpenetration of various planes of human activity, as contemporary environmental problems cannot be solved by using solely technological or legal measures, ignoring moral, economic and social issues (Pawłowski, 2008). This argument also concerns the sphere of management and marketing (Szymoniuk, 2004).

The table 2 presents an integrated plan of sustainable development according to A. Pawłowski (Pawłowski, 2008), its implementation in general terms and its implementation in the case of the REKO system.

Conclusions

Sustainable marketing channels of the future will have to meet the requirements of eco-rationality on all the sustainable development planes (moral, environmental, technological, legal, economic, social and political), just as the REKO system described in the present article.

This system developed dynamically in Finland and is currently being implemented in other Scandinavian countries, in the Netherlands and in Italy. Due to its values, it should also be implemented in a number of other countries; however, it may face numerous barriers there. Finland is a country with a particularly high level of education, social digitalization and lawfulness. A condition for the implementation of the REKO system in the technological aspect is widespread internet access and the equally widespread high-level social network skills, while in the social aspect – on the side of the producers, honesty in operating an attractive local business according to the principles of Marketing 4.0, and on the side of the consumers, both a high level of environmental awareness and local patriotism (*What is REKO?* Video). It seems, however, that at least some of the elements of this system can be implemented on a global scale, according to the conditions in specific countries.

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