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IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS KNOW TO EFFECTIVE CIRCULAR DESIGN

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Abstract

Circular Economy, as the counterargument to the ‘take-make-dispose’ linear model, is an approach that includes a variety of schools of thoughts looking at environmental, economic, and social sustainability. In turn, it leads to a variety of strategies and often confusion when it comes to choosing the right action to implement efficient circular economy (CE) strategies, especially by companies. In particular, due to the close interplay of circular product design, business model and social responsibility, companies often struggle to develop strategies that comply with all three triple-bottom-line criteria. An analysis of a case study conducted with the University of Bayreuth and the ISPO correlating aspects of material choice in product design, labelling and technological innovation with customer preferences and education about specific material and technology features, revealed those attributes of the consumers’ environmental awareness that directly translate into an increase of purchase power - primarily connected with individual preferences regarding the sport activity and technical knowledge. Continuing from the results achieved in this latter case study, the authors of this paper researched on the potential value of a questionnaire reserved for manufacturing companies that considers inherent company assets, as well as, subjective parameters, such as customer awareness, focused on CE and sustainability. The suggested output is a tool that provides a score guiding companies to material and technology choices for circular product design, while considering business model and communication strategy to the attentive customers. Current research highlights the importance of consumers’ WTP and purchase power, therefore, such a questionnaire could underline the knowledge about the company’s and employees’ awareness about CE, as well their awareness of their customers. Resolving potential concerns highlighted in result of the questionnaire would support the development of more effective circular design strategies, while simultaneously increasing customers’ trust and loyalty. In fact, while this paper primarily carries out an analysis of gaps, limitations, and future research needed in this field, it looks to potentially develop a tool as support for companies to identify their limitations, while improving communication to their consumers who have purchase power and can lead demand towards more ecologically pronounced products.

Key words: awareness, circular design, circular economy, sports, sustainability, willingness to pay

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