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SHARING ECONOMY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY. HOW TECHNOLOGY AND COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION INNOVATIONS BOOST CLOSING THE LOOP STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Sharing economy business experiences are rapidly rising worldwide and deeply changing structures and models of customers purchasing attitudes and needs. Inspired by principles of sustainable consumption, its starting point is the idea that every underutilized resource is a wasted resource. Beyond the digital services implemented by sharing platform, there are also social and physical places where communities are experimenting the potential of collaborative and innovative solutions: purchasing groups, time banking, social street, co-working spaces. Goods and services access promoted by sharing business models are emerging in the place of older model based on private propriety and a consumerist view of society. This is strongly connected with circular economy strategies, particularly referred to waste prevention, reduction and resources valorisation European goals. This paper gives an overview of sharing economy including drivers and barriers which can affect its effective expansion. Moreover, collaborative models in the most strategic and critical sectors (such as mobility, agro-food, buildings and goods production and consumption) by a resources perspective, will be analysed to show how sharing economy can contribute to circular economy. At this end, this paper explores the circularity approach and in particular it identifies the role of sharing economy in products and services from a life cycle thinking (LCT) approach. The focus will be the benefits of the sharing economy models considering mainly two aspects; a) the length of the product's use phase (lifetime) and b) the intensity of use. A review of available data considering the most strategic sectors in terms of environmental impacts, will also be presented from a sharing economy point of view.

Key words: circular economy, life cycle thinking, sharing economy, waste prevention

Received: February, 2017; Revised final: July, 2017; Accepted: August, 2017

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