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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: BRIDGES AND CROSS-ROADS

This article presents an overview of the work version of the model named "Building a Bridge". Through this model the relationships between particular stakeholders of consumer environment are described and the steps leading to reaching their mutual agreement are outlined. The model is in the initial phase of its creation and development and further elaboration is expected. In the second part of the article a summary of input information for the creation and searching mutual relationships in the model can be found.

Keywords: consumption; consumer; model; building a bridge; stakeholder; sustainability.

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Марі Мікушова

**СТІЙКЕ СПОЖИВАННЯ: "НАВЕДЕННЯ МОСТІВ"
ТА ПЕРЕХРЕЩЕННЯ ІНТЕРЕСІВ СТЕЙКХОЛДЕРІВ**

У статті представлено модель під назвою "наведення мостів". На прикладі даної моделі продемонстровано взаємовідносини різних стейкхолдерів середовища споживання та крок за кроком показано, як саме вони можуть досягти взаємопорозуміння. Авторська модель знаходиться на першій стадії розробки та потребує подальшого розвитку та доопрацювання. У другій частині надано короткий огляд інформації, за допомогою якої стейкхолдери можуть досягти взаємопорозуміння у межах моделі наведення мостів.

Ключові слова: споживання; споживач; модель; наведення мостів; стейкхолдер; стійкість.

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**УСТОЙЧИВОЕ ПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ: "НАВЕДЕНИЕ МОСТОВ"
И ПЕРЕСЕЧЕНИЕ ИНТЕРЕСОВ СТЕЙКХОЛДЕРОВ**

В статье представлена модель под названием "наведение мостов". На примере данной модели показаны взаимоотношения различных стейкхолдеров потребительской среды и пошагово показано, как они могут достичь взаимосогласия. Авторская модель находится на первом этапе разработки и нуждается в развитии и доработке. Во второй части статьи дан краткий обзор информации, при помощи которой стейкхолдеры могут достичь взаимопонимания в рамках модели наведения мостов.

Ключевые слова: потребление; потребитель; модель; наведение мостов; стейкхолдер; устойчивость.

1. Introduction

"Sustainable consumption implies that the consumption of current generations as well as future generations improves in quality. Such concept of consumption requires the optimization of consumption subject to maintain services and quality of resources and the environment over time", Dr. Emil Salim, "The challenge of sustainable consumption as seen from the South". At Symposium: Sustainable Consumption. Oslo, Norway; 19–20, January, 1994.

At present, the integrating environmental sustainability with consumption and economic growth is a great challenge. Consumption induces production. Production transforms environmental possibilities into economic opportunities (Trifonova, Olijni, 2011). The challenge is how to provide better customer satisfaction while ensuring the conditions for sustainable development at same time.

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This paper presents a part of the research. It seeks to contribute to better understanding of the interrelationships between the participants in the field of sustainable consumption. The author systemized the current theories, models, approaches, trends and empirical principles of management models, so that this knowledge could be used for the interpretation of the presented model. Methods applied in the course of the research stages are not clearly determined. All parts used analytical methods, synthetic methods, comparative methods and creative thinking, even though they were used in different ways. For example, the classification analysis was used for differentiation between individual definitions and the concepts of management systems. Intuitive thinking was based on the modified brainstorming principles. Intuition at the creative stage was supplemented with systematic thinking. The synthesis of knowledge is a condition for formulation of a conclusion. The author clarified functional mechanisms of observed phenomena by integrating observations in broader context. The synthesis is not only a sum of individual phenomena but the creation of new concepts and new views.

2. How to build a bridge

2.1. Elements of the model. Having studied the mentioned materials, the author has decided that stakeholders will be the essential elements for developing the model. Most models deal with key stakeholders even though they concentrate on customers and employees only (Mikusova, 2011). It was decided to include all the key stakeholders in the model since all of them, although at a different rate, influence the sustainability consumption.

All stakeholders feel very strongly about the long-term existence of sustainability consumption, but each of them follows his/her own interests. Regarding individual stakeholders, it is obvious that the "value" of consumption is different for them. Each of them judges the "value" of consumption according to what he/she has invested in it in comparison with alternative opportunities. Consumption sustainability in the environment with limited sources and striving for optimizing the process of economic values creation necessarily require a sensible choice in allocating the funds with the aim to meet stakeholders' demands (Voznakova, Janovska, Lampa, 2010). That is why the determination of the key stakeholders is the first step in the development of the model "Building bridges".

Furthermore, the theory of stakeholders was considered. The conclusion is that, a position of consumers will be preferred, since they bear the biggest risk, while their remuneration is not frequently adequate. Other groups of stakeholders will be considered: consumer organizations, state (institutions), manufacturers, service providers, natural resources, environment and others. Although other stakeholders in the environment are various and their influence cannot be underestimated, since this environment fosters the features that influence further consumption.

The model is based on the concept of the so-called "psychological agreement" from the beginning of the 1960s: a stakeholder wants something from an other subject and offers something for it. Through the model it is possible to find a way of how to mutually satisfy both streams of requirements.

2.2. Steps in the model. The first step is to clarify who the key stakeholders are: former, current and the potential ones.

The second step is to formulate their requirements concerning the consumption: for example, consumers want information, rights, confidence etc.

The third step is to confront requirements and offers. Sustainable consumption expects permanent loyalty, responsibility etc. from consumers. After defining the requirements of both parties it is necessary to find a strategy that would ensure their meeting. Such strategies can be as follows: cut in costs, reduction in investments, growth of investments, looking for optimum capital costs etc. Strategies are implemented by means of processes such as the development of new products and services, optimization of operation costs, strategic plans implementation. These can be evaluated by means of the following indicators: the sales of newly introduced products, returns from new projects, the processes meeting ISO standards. The steps are presented in Appendix 1.

2.3. Interconnection of strategies, processes and resources. The precondition of the model's functionality is ensuring and accepting mutual relationships between 3 aspects: strategies, processes and resources. Only then it is possible to understand how the needs of sustainable consumption can be met along with the needs of stakeholders.

Strategies create a framework for considering how to ensure meeting the both parties' needs. The purpose is not to define accurately in which way sustainable consumption will reach its goals. Unfortunately, it can happen that there is a number of partial goals that are not compatible and may lead to conflicts.

There are various types of processes among which it is necessary to identify those having the key significance. The main subject matter of activity is ensured by primary processes. They produce outputs required by primary customers, both the internal and external ones. Secondary processes ensure supplementary activities. The existence of primary and secondary processes is enabled by supporting processes.

Resources in the mentioned model are understood as a combination of human potential (basic immovable assets), methods and technologies, technical equipment (basic tangible potential) and infrastructure that altogether represent the ability of stakeholders to create by means of processes the value for other stakeholders. Each process requires various sources in various volume. Acquiring sufficient and quality sources from every component for every key process is the initial precondition for sustainable consumption's successful existence.

The fulfillment of the model for the chosen key stakeholders is the first stage in the model development. The next step should concentrate on particular stakeholders within other stakeholders perspectives. It can be found that some offers and requirements are equal (but they can draw from different bases) and, on the contrary, can evoke an undesirable response in some limit case in the system model of another stakeholder. To put in compliance particular requirements, processes, strategies and resources while keeping causal relationships shall mean another stage in the development of the whole system, which is already a completely individual matter. Commonly, it can be indicated as a simple flow chart. This issue will be addressed in the next part of the research project.

3. Development of relationships between particular stakeholders

Attention has been paid to some priorities significantly concerning all the stakeholders involved. Then the requirements and offers have been assigned to particular

stakeholders. After that an attempt is made that these requirements and offers would advantageously cross.

Furthermore, in the following text the author will try to find out under what conditions and in which way it is possible to create a bridge between them.

3.1. The protection of consumer rights. In terms of the protection of consumer rights related to dangerous and harmful products, it is necessary to provide rigorous and effective enforcement of the law via market watchdogs, and to cooperate in this field at national level, with the European Commission and its warning systems, and with supervisory bodies of other member states (Borbás, 2011). This cooperation can be manifested in various ways, from specific cooperation in the investigation of a case to participation in the organizations or associations that specialize in the harmonization of procedures and methodology for risk assessment, in the creation of a database of screened products etc. One such organization is the European PROSAFE (Product Safety Enforcement Forum). At the same time, it is advisable to support the creation of codes of ethics connected with manufacturing and sale of products and services provision (Bielikova, Paliderova, 2011).

With regard to new legislation and the recodification of the Civil Code, it would be expedient to review the current Consumer Protection Act and adapt it to new conditions.

Behaviour among enterprises that harms the economic interests of consumers is re-emerging in the wake of the liberalization of certain network sectors, such as energy and telecommunications. A rise in consumer complaints can be expected in services, especially financial and travel services, and in connection with advancing e-commerce. As new digital technologies are developed, the need to protect consumers in relation to the use of these technologies has also surfaced (Miklosik, Hvizdova, 2012).

In the preparation of legislative measures, the established trend of involving consumers (via nongovernmental civic associations) and representatives of enterprises in the legislative process will be continued.

3.2. The dialogue between state institutions and consumers, and the dialogue between enterprises and consumers. The main areas here will be:

- the support for the establishment of codes of ethics and other activities by business entities, including the creation of instruments to ensure the practical implementation of these codes and their thorough application by enterprises;
- intensification of the dialogue between consumers and state institutions, mainly by fostering the conditions for consumers, or their representatives, to take part in the discussions of the matters that affect them; the opportunity to put forward comments in the legislative process, involvement in various working parties on specific areas, such as the creation of standards;
- promotion and capacity building of consumer organizations, reinforcement of consumer organizations and their capacities in areas and regions;
- representation of consumer interests in European and international forums, in particular, greater participation of consumer representatives in the field of standardization;
- support for comprehensive planning (design for all) so that the proposed solutions are satisfactory for all consumers, including those of limited movement or orientation;

— intensification of dialogue between consumer representatives and enterprises.

Dialogue can be viewed as a means of preventing irresponsible and manipulative behaviour by enterprises in relation to economically weaker consumers (Voznakova, Janovska, Vilamova, 2011). In order for the dialogue not to remain as mere declarations, they must have transparent instruments for obligations enforcement (Horvathova, Mikusova, 2012).

3.3. Market overview. The effectiveness of market supervision needs to be enhanced in the following areas:

- the safety of products and services at the market (Buzin, 2011), including involvement in warning information systems on the occurrence of dangerous products on the Community's internal market (see methanol affair in September 2012 with 30 deaths);
- the protection of consumers' economic interests (see usurious loans);
- financial and travel services (see bankruptcy and the resumption of the same activity in another company);
- e-commerce;
- reactions and searches for appropriate instruments to handle damage to consumers in the light of new problems, such as sales over mobile telephone, limited possibilities for using new technologies;
- effective cooperation of market oversight bodies within the Community's common internal market;
- education of the persons responsible for law enforcement;
- creation of a user-friendly interconnected system of information run by supervisory bodies and accessible to general consumer public.

3.4. Out-of-court settlements of consumer disputes. All over the world, out-of-court settlements of consumer disputes are considered to be a fast, cheap and expedient way of resolving consumer claims. Mediation or arbitration can be successful in resolving disputes between consumers and enterprises that would otherwise have to be brought to court.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods are not yet particularly widespread in the Czech Republic. However, the need for ADRs is constantly rising, and it will be important to select and legally enshrine a model that can handle consumer disputes efficiently without placing an excessive burden on any of the parties involved (Copikova, Bartuskova, 2012).

3.5. Development of information and educational activities:

- support for consumer education;
- support for the activities focusing on greater consumer awareness;
- support for the implementation of specific projects on sustainable consumption;
- media coverage, including Internet.

Communication with citizens needs to be reinforced and improved in order to provide them with the information important for the protection of their consumer interests, especially for qualified decisions on goods or services they purchase, inter alia, in relation to the sustainability of their consumer choice (Horvathova, Davidova, 2011).

Support for active law enforcement by consumers is an important element in safeguarding the high level of consumer protection. Therefore, consumer interest in education and information about relevant areas of law etc. needs to be supported.

3.6. Support for the activities and development of consumer organizations.

Consumer organizations play an indispensable role in the general concept of consumer protection; therefore, it is necessary to continue support for the development of their activities and to make their operations more efficient, including education of their members and representatives (Vokounova, 2008). The main aims of this support will be integration and improvements in consulting and information services provided to consumers, involvement in educational and awareness activities, the implementation of collective cases protecting consumer interests, increases in membership and sponsors of consumer organizations, improvements in the ability of consumer organizations to help consumers, monitoring of unfair trade, consumer warnings, and representation of consumers interests at national and international levels.

At the same time, essential requirements need to be placed on these consumer organizations based on the discussions at European level (the creation of a binding code of ethics for consumer organizations), especially concerning full independence of business entities.

4. Conclusions

With regard to the cross-section character of consumers' protection and education, the role of state is irreplaceable. But it is not good, however, to rely solely on it. All stakeholders are involved in the issues described above. With their role as well as with the role of state we would like to deal in processing our model further. We are aware that considerable efforts will have to be made if we want to finish a work draft of our model. At the same time it is obvious that the model in question is not static but it will be dynamically developed along with its surroundings.

Acknowledgments

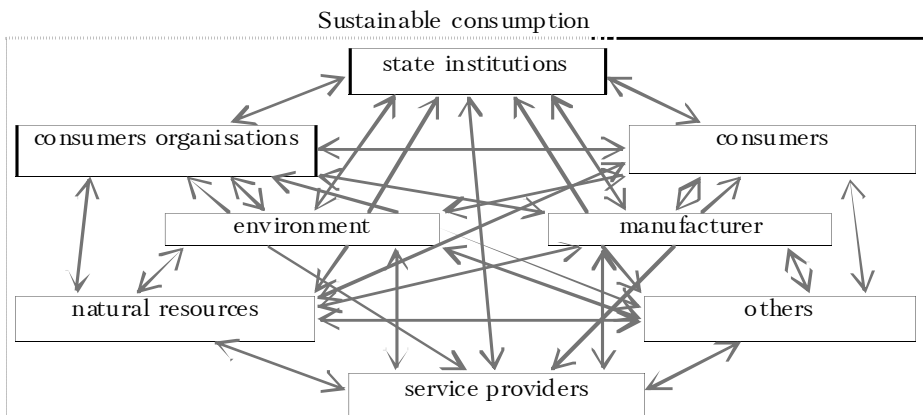
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Appendix 1

How to Build a Bridge

1st step:

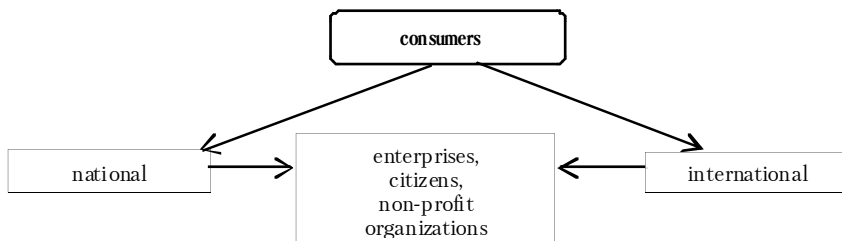
Basic groups of stakeholders and their relationship



Example of the procedure for the stakeholder: Consumers:

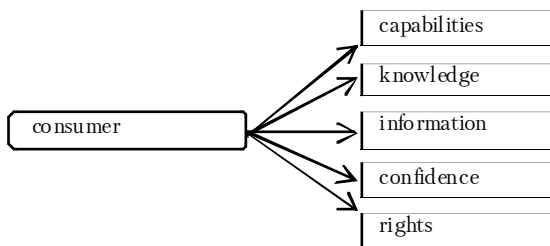
2nd step:

Who is usually included in each defined group? (National and international environment should be taken into account).



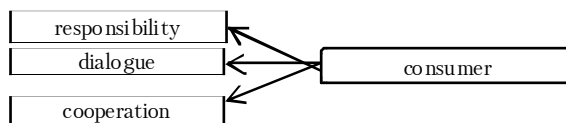
3rd step:

What particular groups of stakeholders are required?



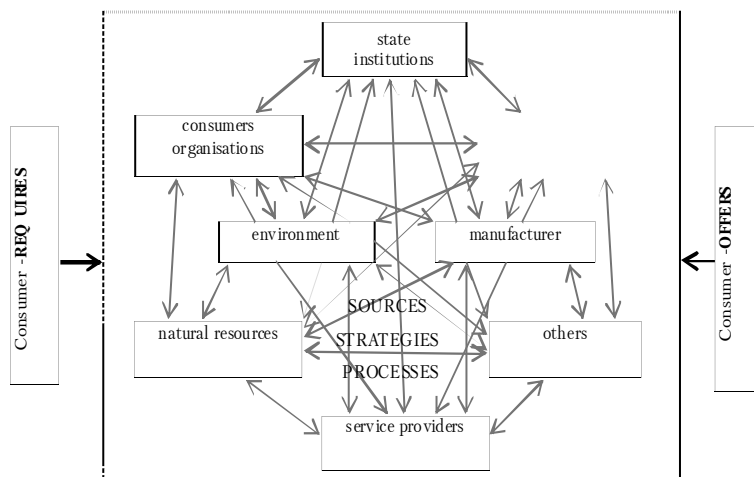
4th step:

What particular groups of stakeholders can offer?



5th step:

How to find a consensus between requirements and offers, i.e. how to build a bridge?



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