

Title

Repairability in Austria - Insights into consumer perceptions in the context of the circular economy

Abstract

The lifespan of many devices has decreased in recent decades, while the number of devices used per person has increased. This has led to a rise in electronic waste, largely attributed to planned obsolescence. Planned obsolescence refers to the strategy of intentionally designing products to have a shorter lifespan or to become outdated quicker. To promote a circular economy and extend the life of those devices, repair can be a crucial element. Therefore, to facilitate the transition from a linear to a circular economy, it is essential to promote the growth of the repair industry.

Efforts have been made by policymakers and businesses to establish guidelines, legislation, regulations and financial support to promote repairs. At the same time, consumers themselves are encouraged to question their consumption and switch to more sustainable alternatives. Whether these measures are successful and whether they are positively accepted by consumers depends on a variety of factors. It is necessary to understand the behavior during the purchase as well as the barriers and motivators that are critical in the decision whether to repair a defect product or not.

The aim of this thesis was to provide an overview of repairability from an economic and legal point of view and to gain insights into Austrian households' knowledge, perceptions and drivers regarding repairability. Furthermore, it was analyzed whether different measures have the potential to motivate customers to buy durable and repairable products. Based on these findings, a quantitative online survey was designed and conducted in Austria. It was evident from the results, that while respondents have a high willingness to engage in circular consumption patterns such as repair, infrastructural conditions and a lack of technical requirements and financial incentives often prevent consumers from choosing the more sustainable option of repairing and prefer to buy new.

Keywords: circular economy, planned obsolescence, repair, sustainable decision-making