



Representation of Consumer Attitudes and Behaviour

as a Means for Better Regulation

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Background

- Research project: „Simulating and Evaluating a Better Regulation of Converging Technologies“ (SEBEROC)
- SKEP Network
 - partnership of government ministries, environmental protection agencies and research councils/
independent network
 - funding environmental research

Background

- SEBEROC research consortium

- Researchers from

- IFZ
Austria



- SYKE
Finland



- sofia
Germany

sofia

- University of Amsterdam
The Netherlands



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

- Cardiff University
United Kingdom





Agenda

1. Converging Technologies
2. Better Regulation
in the field of product information
3. Simulation and Evaluation
4. Conclusions
5. Further research questions



1. Converging Technologies

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1. Converging Technologies

Currently not available

Two case studies:

- Products containing nanosilver
and
- Products „related“ to GM-soy



1. Converging Technologies

Nanosilver products

- Many applications
- Unintended/ unforeseeable effects
 - Environmental, health, and economic impacts
- Long term effects
- Basic question:
 - Do we adequately understand cause-effect relations?



1. Converging Technologies

Products related to GM soy

- Food and feed
- Not directly existent in products (there are exceptions: NL)
- No direct health effects observed, but not accepted by most consumers
- Indirect environmental effects



2. Better Regulation in the field of product information



2. Better Regulation in the field of product information

Basic tool of “Better Regulation” (COM)

- Impact Assessment (IA)
 - Prospective (SEBEROC: Nano)
 - Retrospective (SEBEROC: GMO)

What should be considered?

- Economic, social, environmental impacts
- Consultation procedure
 - Today: „Smart Regulation“ (period 12 weeks)
 - Better understand impacts of regulatory options (especially social and environmental)



2. Better Regulation in the field of product information

Responsive regulation

- Less using “command and control”-options
- Take into regard the background situation of actors

Aim of product information regulation

- Give the consumer the possibility to choose
- Guarantee adequate guidance on how to use and dispose products
- Monitor products to understand their effects

Labelling/ product information

- Addressees are consumers (no control option)
- Place incentives to make him contribute to the regulatory aim



2. Better Regulation in the field of product information

Regulatory challenges (EU)

- What do consumers think and how do they – therefore – act?
 - Does the consumer use the products according to the instruction / information available?
- Are there national differences to be considered?
 - Information background
 - Labelling/ information practice
 - Debates/ media coverage
 - Educational background



3. Simulation and Evaluation

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3. Simulation and Evaluation

Purpose of SEBEROC - 1

- Experimental Design
 - Representation of consumer attitudes in the regulation process
 - Detection of knowledge gaps
 - Telephone interviews on national level
 - Workshop with stakeholders on European level
 - Generation of knowledge
 - Focus groups with consumers in 5 countries
 - Feedback of knowledge
 - Workshop on European level (Evaluation)



3. Simulation and Evaluation

Purpose of SEBEROC - 2

- Analysis of cooperation issues between national stakeholders and their European dependencies
 - How is information played back into regulatory processes ?
 - Is the experimental design of the project a suitable approach to improve participation ?



3. Simulation and Evaluation

Assessment of consumer behaviour has to take into consideration:

- (National) attitudes/behaviour of consumers
- (National) Information practices
- (National) Educational background



4. Conclusions

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4. Conclusions

- NGOs are interested to participate
- Generally, consumers are interested in product information
 - Information has to be easily accessible
 - Information has to be understandable
 - Safety instructions have to be applicable
- Risk awareness



5. Further research questions



5. Further research questions

- How can stakeholder consultation be improved ?
 - Resources
 - Design of procedure
 - Balanced representation of interests
- How is an adequate risk management on the level of the civil society possible ?
 - risk awareness
 - trust



Thank you!

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For more information please visit:

www.sofia-research.com

www.seberoc.info