

## FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION IN THE PRODUCT RECYCLING PROCESS

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**Abstract.** As a contemporary economic system, the circular economy aims to maximize resources efficiency and minimize waste generation. The transition from the linear economy to the circular economy is a need to protect the environment through minimizing waste. This process involves the participation of government, businesses and individuals, who face challenges to achieve the objectives of circular economy. It is important to recognize the awareness of individuals to know the factors that affect the transition from linear economy to circular economy. In this study, these factors were analyzed by surveying 377 participants in Kosovo. Data analysis includes the Structural Equation Modeling method. According to the results, there is a significant impact of attitude, knowledge, behavior and willingness of individuals to participate in product recycling process.

**Keywords:** *Recycling, circular economy, SEM.*

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, many countries in the world are moving from linear economy to circular economy system. Circular economy aims the reuse of limited resources with the purpose of protecting environment. Circular economy can help reduce the impact of climate change by reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions. It also mitigates the effects of climate change by replacing the non-renewable resources with renewable resources.

The transition to circular economy, in addition to environmental benefits, can also lead to stable economic growth and social well-being. However, this transition faces challenges. Challenges include the commitment of government, businesses and individuals. Governments must implement policies to adopt circular economy, enable educational programs, legal regulation and adequate infrastructure to support the development of the circular economy and invest in research and development for innovations in circular economy. Businesses should change their business models to prevent environmental pollution, use renewable energy sources and design recyclable products to offer. Individuals, on the other hand, should be aware of the benefits of circular economy and trust that their commitment has a significant impact on the progress of circular economy. They should recycle, reduce waste and buy only recycle products, when possible, thus supporting companies who participate in circular economy.

Recycling is a phase in circular economy where materials are collected, sorted and processed to create new products. Benefits of recycling include waste reduction, reuse of resources and creating new jobs. Disadvantages of recycling may include the cost of

collection and reproduction, and the potential contamination. Recycling is not a perfect solution, but it can help environment and support economy.

Understanding the attitude and willingness of individuals to participate in the circular economy is the focus of this study. Knowing the factors that push this process forward helps the effectiveness of engagement in the circular economy and encourages its improvement.

## 2. Literature overview

Circular economy has many meanings under its umbrella, but it can be defined as cyclical use of resources (Moraga *et al.*, 2019). Circular economy is characterized as a regenerative economy and more like a restorative economy (Morseletto, 2020). For the successful implementation of the circular economy, it is important to study eco-innovation (Sandoval *et al.*, 2018). The setting of objectives, known as R-strategy, helps the transition from the linear economy to the circular economy, although it is difficult for all objectives to be fulfilled at the same time (Morseletto, 2020).

Governments should plant in developing countries the promotion of the circular economy through education and infrastructure. However, the objectives of the circular economy can not be achieved without changing the behavior of individuals (Patwa *et al.*, 2021). When the circular economy is implemented by cities, the transition of the country from the linear economy to the circular economy is facilitated. The transition can be helped by innovation, recycling and political strategy. The authors further propose a model, through which they explain how much influence innovations can have in the development of the circular economy (Lakatos *et al.*, 2021).

In the literature, the impact of the circular economy is studied more in the environmental aspect and much less in the economic and social aspects (Bjornbet *et al.*, 2021). Individuals are influenced by each other and the determination to participate in the circular economy has a significant impact on the willingness to act. This also applies to the approach to environmental protection. Countries should promote policies that encourage people and businesses to commit to the circular economy (Tran *et al.*, 2022). On average, individuals prefer recyclable products more and are willing to pay more for them up to a certain level (Boyer *et al.*, 2020). Authors suggest further exploration on the acceptance of the circular economy by individuals during consumption (Otero *et al.*, 2018).

The circular economy is also followed by critics who claim that the circular economy has unclear theoretical foundations and brings uncertain contributions to economic sustainability (Corvellec *et al.*, 2022). The lack of awareness of the environmental benefits of the circular economy hinders the implementation of the circular economy in the construction industry (Eberhardt *et al.*, 2020).

The commitment to the implementation of the circular economy is also welcomed by the United Nations. The industry has a significant impact on the environment and the implementation of the circular economy on their part requires investment. As help in this case, the support and commitment of the government is presented. The circular economy helps in the development of innovation and thus has a positive effect on economic growth (Espindola *et al.*, 2022).

Product recycling is a method that helps environmental sustainability. According to a study by surveying 256 micro-level organizations, the findings suggest that the orientation towards recycling is greater than the full inclusion of the circular economy

within the organization. To achieve a successful circular economy, the gap of circular economy practices that exists in micro-level organizations must be closed (Gen & Lozano, 2020). In response to the limitation of resources for production and consumption, the circular economy comes as a helpful alternative. There is a need for awareness among producers and individuals to implement methods that reduce waste that harms the environment (Hamam *et al.*, 2021).

According to a study, the authors interviewed 47 circular economy experts from the EU. The study aimed to find the expectation regarding political strategies towards the circular economy in the future. Expectations include setting production standards, lower taxation for recyclable products, supporting the waste market and raising awareness of the circular economy (Hartley *et al.*, 2020).

In another paper, the authors have compiled an empirical measure of the environmental value preserved through the reuse, reproduction, repair or recycling of products. This indicator helps to promote the development of the circular economy both in the environmental aspect, as well as in the economic and social aspects. Unlike the recycling rate, this measure manages to cover the environmental perspective (Haupt & Hellweg, 2019). Other authors mentioned a model developed by them, which helps in the classification and planning of the circular economy investigation, and to increase the contribution of the circular economy (Korhonen *et al.*, 2018).

The innovation of business models is necessary to move from the linear economy to the circular economy. The necessary changes include production with less pollution, waste management and ecological design (Suchek *et al.*, 2021). Circular economy strategies can help the transition to clean energy using industrial surplus heat for heating buildings, the electrification of transport vehicles and the reuse of batteries (Su & Urban, 2021). According to a study where circular economy design practitioners were interviewed, the authors found the methods to achieve the appropriate competencies to implement the circular economy are still missing (Sumter *et al.*, 2020).

### 3. Data and Methodology

The study uses the questionnaire method for data collection and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as a model to analyze the data. The questionnaire and SEM model are based on the paper of Tran *et al.*, (2022), for the case of Vietnam\*. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part includes questions about gender and residence. The second part includes questions on the attitude, knowledge, behavior and willingness of individuals to participate in product recycling. To measure the answers to these questions, the Likert scale is offered. The distribution of the questionnaire was done through Google Forms. Data collection was done in a period of approximately 35 days, during which 377 surveys were collected. The entire questionnaire is presented in the Appendix.

To evaluate the factors that affect participation in the product recycling process, a model was created from the observed variables. Included in the model are the following questions:

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\*Tran, T., Phan, T., Le, A., Tran, T., (2022). Evaluation of Factors Affecting the Transition to a Circular Economy (CE) in Vietnam by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Sustainability. DOI: 10.3390/su14020613

**Table 1.** Research variables and questionnaire items

Variable	Code	Question
Attitude (AT)	AT1	1. I would like to learn more about recyclable products and environmentally friendly products.
	AT2	2. I feel good that in Kosovo there are recyclable products that we can buy.
	AT3	3. I enjoy every time I buy recyclable products and products that are not harmful to the environment.
Subjective limits (SL)	SL1	4. I would only buy recyclable products if my family only bought these products.
	SL2	5. The opinions of experts and famous people can help my decision to buy recyclable products and classify them after use in special containers for recycling.
	SL3	6. I would only buy recyclable products if my friends also bought only these products.
Behavioral choice (BC)	BC1	7. I have the income needed to buy only recyclable and environmentally friendly products.
	BC2	8. I have enough knowledge to identify which products are recyclable and do not harm the environment, and how they should be separated after use into recycling containers.
	BC3	9. I am willing to overcome the barriers to buy recyclable products and after use divide them into containers for recycling.
Economic benefits (EB)	EB1	10. I would classify the products after use in containers if the municipality would equip the neighborhoods with special containers for recycling.
	EB2	11. I buy recyclable products only if they are priced lower than non-recyclable products.
	EB3	12. I would separate the products after use into the recycling bins if it would help lower the prices of the products.
Commitment to the environment (CE)	CE1	13. I am willing to avoid buying non-recyclable products knowing that they are harmful to nature.
	CE2	14. I am willing for activities for the benefit of the environment even without anyone knowing and without expecting anyone's thanks.
	CE3	15. I am willing for activities for the benefit of the environment even if this requires investment of time and money.
	CE4	16. I often try to check when buying whether the product is recyclable or not.
	CE5	17. I try to avoid products that help emit carbon dioxide.
	CE6	18. I often try to buy only bio-based products.
Willingness to participate (WP)	WP1	19. I will try to buy only recyclable products and after use divide them into containers for recycling.
	WP2	20. I will support activities for product recycling and environmental protection in Kosovo.
	WP3	21. I will recommend to others the purchase of recyclable products and classify them in special containers for recycling after use.

Source: Authors

#### 4. Findings and discussion

In the following, basic statistics, descriptive statistics, SEM test results and model fit summary are presented.

**Table 2.** Basic statistics

Variable	Total number of responses	Responses	Number of responses	%
Gender	377	Female	206	54.6 %
		Male	171	45.4 %
Residence	377	Rural	43	11.4 %
		Urban	334	88.6 %

Source: Authors

A total of 377 respondents participated in the questionnaire. According to gender, 54.6% of respondents are female, while 45.4% are male. According to residence, 11.4% of respondents live in rural areas, while 88.6% in urban areas.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
AT1	377	3.954907	1.231494	1	5
AT2	377	4.087533	1.153292	1	5
AT3	377	4.106101	1.182492	1	5
SL1	377	3.493369	1.374379	1	5
SL2	377	3.718833	1.306893	1	5
SL3	377	3.047745	1.403965	1	5
BC1	377	3.710875	1.241445	1	5
BC2	377	3.777188	1.206458	1	5
BC3	377	3.172414	1.458461	1	5
EB1	377	4.137931	1.199321	1	5
EB2	377	3.106101	1.483738	1	5
EB3	377	3.774536	1.288075	1	5
CE1	377	3.771883	1.305045	1	5
CE2	377	4.03183	1.177829	1	5
CE3	377	3.790451	1.229562	1	5
CE4	377	3.275862	1.353984	1	5
CE5	377	3.403183	1.284851	1	5
CE6	377	3.70557	1.242336	1	5
WP1	377	3.657825	1.212588	1	5
WP2	377	4.161804	1.088052	1	5
WP3	377	4.047745	1.219457	1	5

Source: Authors

According to the average value, the most frequent answer from the Likert scale for this questionnaire is Partially agree, followed by Agree. The number of observations shows that all questions were completed by all respondents (377). The minimum and maximum values confirm that the lowest and highest Likert scale has been applied and chosen as an answer for each variable by at least one respondent.

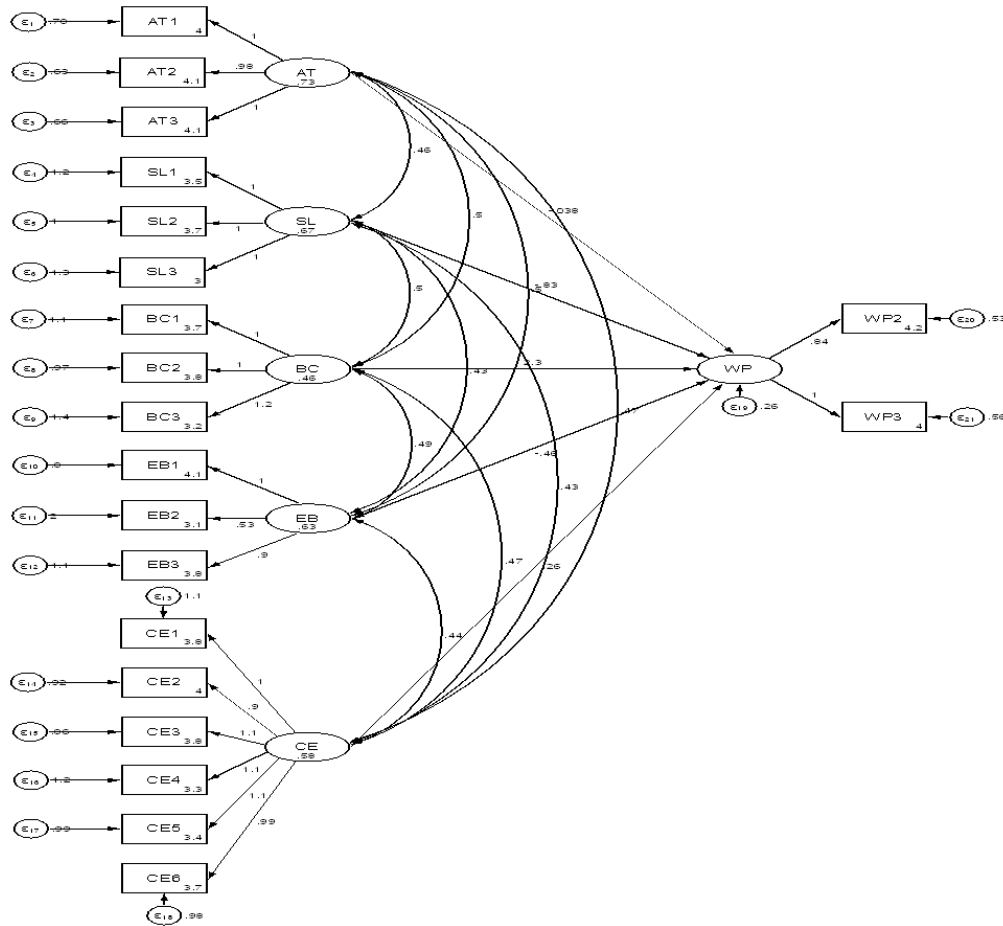


Figure 1. SEM model results

The figure shows the diagram of the SEM model used for the study. The diagram consists of observed variables and latent variables. The following table presents the results of the SEM analysis.

Table 4. SEM test results

Standardized	Coef.	OIM Std. Err.	z	P >  z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
AT1						
AT	1	(constrained)				
cons	3.954907	.063341	62.44	0.000	3.830761	4.079053
AT2						
AT	.9759924	.0816238	11.96	0.000	.8160126	1.135972
cons	4.087533	.0593188	68.91	0.000	3.971271	4.203796

AT3						
AT	.9986497	.0879435	11.36	0.000	.8262836	1.171016
cons	4.106101	.0608206	67.51	0.000	3.986895	4.225307
SL1						
SL	1	(constrained)				
cons	3.493369	.0706902	49.42	0.000	3.354818	3.631919
SL2						
SL	.996864	.1300196	7.67	0.000	.7420302	1.251698
cons	3.718833	.0672191	55.32	0.000	3.587086	3.85058
SL3						
SL	1.031212	.1211633	8.51	0.000	.7937361	1.268687
cons	3.047745	.0722119	42.21	0.000	2.906213	3.189278
BC1						
BC	1	(constrained)				
cons	3.710875	.0638528	58.12	0.000	3.585726	3.836024
BC2						
BC	1.023177	.1153088	8.87	0.000	.7971763	1.249179
cons	3.777188	.0620533	60.87	0.000	3.655566	3.898811
BC3						
BC	1.206224	.1411537	8.55	0.000	.9295678	1.48288
cons	3.172414	.0750149	42.29	0.000	3.025387	3.31944
EB1						
EB	1	(constrained)				
cons	4.137931	.0616862	67.08	0.000	4.017028	4.258834
EB2						
EB	.5348731	.1213043	4.41	0.000	.297121	.7726252
cons	3.106101	.076315	40.70	0.000	2.956526	3.255675
EB3						
EB	.897317	.1129853	7.94	0.000	.67587	1.118764
cons	3.774536	.0662512	56.97	0.000	3.644686	3.904386
CE1						
CE	1	(constrained)				
cons	3.771883	.067124	56.19	0.000	3.640323	3.903444
CE2						
CE	.8971614	.0995864	9.01	0.000	.7019756	1.092347
cons	4.03183	.0605808	66.55	0.000	3.913094	4.150566
CE3						
CE	1.052668	.1072192	9.82	0.000	.8425222	1.262814
cons	3.790451	.0632416	59.94	0.000	3.6665	3.914402
CE4						
CE	1.050425	.1149924	9.13	0.000	.8250436	1.275806
cons	3.275862	.0696412	47.04	0.000	3.139368	3.412356
CE5						
CE	1.062858	.1130199	9.40	0.000	.8413436	1.284373
cons	3.403183	.0660853	51.50	0.000	3.273658	3.532708

CE6						
CE	.9851137	.1068822	9.22	0.000	.7756285	1.194599
cons	3.70557	.0638987	57.99	0.000	3.580331	3.830809
WP2						
WP	.8427829	.0634489	13.28	0.000	.7184253	.9671404
cons	4.161804	.0559632	74.37	0.000	4.052118	4.27149
WP3						
WP	1	(constrained)				
cons	4.047745	.062722	64.53	0.000	3.924813	4.170678

Source: Authors

Presented in the table above are the results from the estimation of SEM analysis. According to the findings, the p-value is 0.000 for each of the variables, indicating that all variables are significant and have impact on the latent variable (WP1). The coefficients of each of the variables have positive signs, which explains that the growth of each of the variables has a positive impact on the latent variable (WP1).

Table 5. Model fit summary

Fit statistic	Value	Description
Likelihood ratio		
chi2_ms (155)	350.975	model vs. saturated
p > chi2	0.000	
chi2_bs (190)	2541.082	baseline vs. saturated
p > chi2	0.000	
Population error		
RMSEA	0.058	Root mean squared error of approximation
90% CI, lower bound	0.050	
upper bound	0.066	
pclose	0.052	Probability RMSEA <= 0.05
Information criteria		
AIC	22914.658	Akaike's information criterion
BIC	23209.577	Bayesian information criterion
Baseline comparison		
CFI	0.917	Comparative fit index
TLI	0.898	Tucker-Lewis index
Size of residuals		
SRMR	0.050	Standardized root mean squared residual
CD	0.980	Coefficient of determination

Source: Authors

The technique of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to know how well the statistical model fits the observed data. After conducting the CFA, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) resulted 0.917 and the RMSEA resulted 0.058, with close of 0.052, indicating an acceptable model fit.



## 5. Conclusion

Product recycling is part of the transition process towards the circular economy. The environment benefits from recycling as it reduces waste and enables the reuse of resources.

Circular economy can also be considered as the economy of the future since many businesses and governments know the importance of resource efficiency and environmental protection. The circular economy leads to a waste-free economy and encourages economic agents to work together towards common objectives. Each economic agent (individuals, businesses, governments) has their own responsibility of contribution to the development of the circular economy and without their participation, the progress of this system is impossible.

In this paper, the factors that promote the participation towards the circular economy by individuals have been studied. The findings suggest that attitude, knowledge, behavior and willingness are significant factors that affect the participation of individuals in the product recycling process. The findings are supported by the adequate results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

The study was conducted through questionnaires and the number of total respondents was 377. As limitation of the study, it may be considered the non-inclusion of different ages of the respondents since the questionnaire was mainly conducted among students. In the future, it is recommended to analyze the factors that affect the participation of businesses in the circular economy.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE PARTICIPATION IN THE RECYCLING PROCESS OF PRODUCTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate the factors that affect participation in the product recycling process. The questionnaire takes about 10 minutes to complete. Your information remains completely confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

#### Part I:

Gender:       Female       Male

Residence:    Rural       Urban

#### Part II:

How much do you agree with the following statements?

(1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Partially agree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I would like to learn more about recyclable products and environmentally friendly products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel good that in Kosovo there are recyclable products that we can buy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I enjoy every time I buy recyclable products and products that are not harmful to the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I would only buy recyclable products if my family only bought these products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The opinions of experts and famous people can help my decision to buy recyclable products and classify them after use in special containers for recycling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I would only buy recyclable products if my friends also bought only these products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I have the income needed to buy only recyclable and environmentally friendly products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have enough knowledge to identify which products are recyclable and do not harm the environment, and how they should be separated after use into recycling containers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I am willing to overcome the barriers to buy recyclable products and after use divide them into containers for recycling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I would classify the products after use in containers if the municipality will equip the neighborhoods with special containers for recycling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I buy recyclable products only if they are priced lower than non-recyclable products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I would separate the products after use into the recycling bins if it would help lower the prices of the products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I am willing to avoid buying non-recyclable products knowing that they are harmful to nature.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I am willing for activities for the benefit of the environment even without anyone knowing and without expecting anyone's thanks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I am willing for activities for the benefit of the environment even if this requires investment of time and money.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. I often try to check when buying whether the product is recyclable or not.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I try to avoid products that help emit carbon dioxide.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I often try to buy only bio-based products.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I will try to buy only recyclable products and after use divide them into containers for recycling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I will support activities for product recycling and environmental protection in Kosovo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I will recommend to others the purchase of recyclable products and classify them in special containers for recycling after use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>