Call for Papers

Sustainability in business models in the network economy

Guest Editors
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Theme

The network economy is shaping many new business models. The dynamic development of networking is influenced by the fast-paced evolution, some might say revolution, of digital technologies. These digital technologies have also generated innovative business models. In recent years, digitally-enabled business models are being designed in the context of institutional and social change posed by the circular economy and the sharing economy. A key issue for digital business model design in this dynamic socio-economic and ecological environment is achieving sustainability.

In theory and practice, at least three approaches to sustainability may be distinguished.

1. First is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). TBL is often used by organizations who create a sustainability strategy using stakeholder analysis, corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and seeking win-win-win opportunities. Their business model seeks a balance of ecological, social and economic factors. TBL can be a differentiator providing a competitive advantage for companies. For example, organizations can build a business case by including ecologically friendly products in their product portfolios, undertaking activities for positive impact on environmental protection, and striking a balance amongst stakeholder interests. The business case can be seen by also improving image and reputation of organizations. The circular economy is a policy adopted by many countries throughout the world, seeking to balance sustainability at a broader regional and national level. The circular economy is a driver for innovation in the areas of material-, component- and product reuse, as well as for new business models to provide solutions and services. In a circular economy, waste is 'food' and can be utilized in creative ways meaning there are significant opportunities for new business and social entrepreneurship.

2. The second approach is based on assumptions of business model for sustainability. In this holistic approach ‘no sustainable value can be created for customers without creating value to a broader range of stakeholders’. This also includes a management approach which aims at achieving success in a fair manner for employees. This topic is widely developed in the literature; and focuses strongly on the social dimensions of sustainability.

3. The third approach addresses the specific aspect of economic sustainability in combination with the emerging shared economy business models that are enabled by a networked economy. Very important for the sustained continuity of these business models is to consider issues such as social, ecological, and labor rules, which may be captured in legal requirements but also in social norms and values. The concept of the shared economy is more prevalent due to the networked society and the “internet of things”. The sharing economy is a socio-economic ecosystem built around the sharing of human, physical and
intellectual resources. It includes the shared creation, production, distribution, trade and consumption of goods and services by different people and organizations.

Sustainability for building competitive advantage is an ethical approach for building markets, supporting innovative solutions that have a positive impact on society, creating social value and social profit. Essentially it relates to the mantra of ‘doing well, by doing good’.

The subject of this special issue is then to analyze how to incorporate sustainability into business and e-business models. A basic question is whether this integration will allow companies to gain competitive advantage in a just way while helping organizations thrive. Part of this long-term competitive perspective includes increase organizational market valuations and creation of strong brands. In modern business models, classical economics provides only a partial answer; with the emergence of the sharing economy and the circular economy, these classical non-cooperative rent-seeking economic pressures will need to be reconsidered.

**Central issues and themes**

Possible topics of submissions include, but are not limited to:

* Features of ‘sustainability’ in business models and companies in the networked economy.
* Rules and business models for incorporating the concept of sustainability into circular and sharing economies.
* Connections between agility, flexibility, scalability and sustainability of e-business models.
* Green and sustainable supply chains and their relationships to business model innovation and reinvention.
* Business trends like open data, open government, digital platforms, electronic markets, social media, the internet of things, blockchain technology, and Industry 4.0, and their influence on supply chain sustainability and sustainable business models.
* Broader social, governmental, stakeholder sustainability trends such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and their relationship to the networked economy.

We encourage contributions with a broad range of methodological approaches, including conceptual, qualitative and quantitative research. All papers should fit the scope of Electronic Markets (for more information see [http://www.electronicmarkets.org/about-em/scope/](http://www.electronicmarkets.org/about-em/scope/)) and will undergo a double-blind peer review process. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the special issue, please contact the guest editors.

**Submission**

Electronic Markets is a SSCI-listed journal (IF 1.864) and requires that all papers must be original and not published or under review elsewhere. Papers must be submitted via our electronic submission system at [http://elma.edmgr.com](http://elma.edmgr.com) and conform to Electronic Markets publication standards (see instructions and templates at [http://www.electronicmarkets.org/authors](http://www.electronicmarkets.org/authors)). Please note that the preferred article length is around 8,000 words.

**Important deadline**

* Submission Deadline: April 30, 2018