

Exploring users' practices through the use phase of a television to minimize the environmental impact

Claudia DÉMÉNÉ, Ph.D., Assistante Professor

THE RESEARCH IN FOUR POINTS

- ◆ **Context**

The growing production and consumption of electronic products has become problematic in terms of sustainable development.

- ◆ **Problematic**

The legal framework focuses mainly on the production and disposal phases to manage electronic devices, while the adverse environmental effects related to the use phase have received less attention.

- ◆ **Main objective**

This research aims to explore how the television is actually purchased, used and disposed of by consumers in order to reduce the environmental impact of the TV life cycle.

- ◆ **Methodology**

21 participants were invited to take part in an individual interview, ranging from one hour to an hour and half.

THE FINDINGS

- 1) **The purchase phase:** After acquiring larger televisions, consumers are prompted to buy new goods, including electronic products, furniture and decorative items to harmonize their interior spaces and the electronic equipment, both aesthetically and technologically.

"We always wanted a larger TV. [...]. When you purchase a new TV, you also buy peripheral equipment, because you want to appreciate the TV's full potential in terms of display technology and sound. [...] After the TV acquisition, we decided to redesign the TV corner. We bought a stand and a new sofa."

- 2) **The use phase:** The more multitasking devices there are, the more users tend to buy different ones and the more energy consumption occurs

"I download TV shows on my laptop, then I watch them on my TV screen. [...]. I have connected my laptop and my TV on the same network. [...]. I put a CD in my Blu-ray player and I listen to the music through the television speakers [...] I have a hard drive, which is connected to my television to look at my photos."

- 3) **The disposal phase:** No European and Canadian policies so far deal with physical media end-of-life, representing a recycling challenge, given the diversity of materials they are made of.

"I don't think we're going to throw it out [videocassette recorder] [...] We have a big box with several VHS cassettes [...]. Honestly, we do not know what we can do with our functional unused products. "

THE IMPLICATIONS

a) Horizontal policies for display devices

The horizontal measures define targets covering several product groups and have successfully been implemented for the standby mode for most electronic devices so far. In the case of energy efficiency policies, the main challenge remains on how display devices would be gathered in order to allow the implementation of the horizontal policy?

b) Absolute energy consumption standards for large TVs (> 40")

In Canada, only television standby mode has been subject to Energy Efficiency Regulations. In Europe, the Ecodesign directive defines standards relative to the size of a television.

c) Recycling programs for all media end-of-life need to be developed, since they are excluded from the WEEE directive

In the context of non-physical media, like video-on-demand, there is a need to develop a more sustainable way for VHS cassettes, DVDs and Blu-rays, which have already end up in landfills.