

# CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY RESEARCH CONFERENCE CRRC 2019

Rethinking Value Creation for Sustainability

11 – 13 September 2019, Scandic Hotel Rosendahl,  
Tampere, Finland

**Book of abstracts**



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# The Goal-Framing Theory for the Study of Consumer Behaviour in the Circular Economy

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The Circular Economy (CE) is a new paradigm that has been gaining prominence among scholars, governments and businesses. Nevertheless, a successful transition to the CE involves the acceptance of improved and innovative products and services by consumers. Therefore, the present work focuses specifically on consumers, one of the most cited gaps in CE studies. We aim to analyze the potential contribution of the Goal-Framing Theory (GFT) towards the CE. The GFT focuses on the motivational dynamics of a behaviour, with the idea that a person's behaviour is often affected by multiple goals simultaneously (Bargh, 2006; Kopetz, Kruglanski, Arens, Etkin, & Johnson, 2012). Lindenberg and Steg (2007) propose three main overarching goals: the hedonic goal (to feel better right now), the gain goal (to maintain and improve one's resources), and the normative goal (to do the appropriate and right thing). The focal goal in a given situation influences the most a person's thoughts, sensibility to information, consideration of alternatives and actions (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Steg et al., 2016). In general, there is a perceived trade-off for consumers between sustainability at the expense of the gratification of the hedonic and gain goals (van Trijp, 2014).

In this regard, in which aspects can the GFT be considered better or more appropriate for the study of consumers in the CE compared to other theories and models consolidated in the literature? How can the GFT help to explain the different goals of consumers' decisions and behaviours in the CE? What are the implications for facilitating circular transitions in different consumption contexts/situations? The methodology to achieve our goals consists of a literature review, in which theories and models to behavioural changes are compared to the GFT, and previous studies applying the theory are reviewed, stressing the theory's support to the understanding of consumer behaviour and potential contributions to the CE.

We conclude that the challenges in the multifaceted behaviours in the CE can be widely explored by the GFT, since it simultaneously investigates multiple angles of the same phenomenon. It incorporates different theories, while established theories and models usually consider a more unilateral view. With this approach, it is possible to present strategies appropriate for consumers with different profiles, goals and values, contributing to a behavioural change in different situations

and bringing a series of practical implications for the transition to the CE. Besides, the GFT is not restricted to a vision that brings a unique result to be applied overall; it allows the understanding of specific contexts. The change towards a sustainable behaviour requires a new mentality, which can happen for different reasons depending on the individual and situation being considered. A person in a given situation may have gain, normative, or hedonic motivations, or even a combination of these. Thus, the transition towards the CE can benefit from the GFT, an integrative theory, which can provide a broad view of this complex phenomenon and present strategies to this new model.