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PII: S0959-6526(16)30951-9
DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.07.063
Reference: JCLP 7635

To appear in: Journal of Cleaner Production

Received Date: 26 June 2015
Revised Date: 17 May 2016
Accepted Date: 11 July 2016


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Sustainable business models as an innovation strategy in the water sector: an empirical investigation of a sustainable product-service system

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Abstract

The complexity of the challenges in the water sector means that innovative solutions are required. These solutions include not only new sustainable technologies for water treatment, but also complementary innovation in business models to support the adoption of these technologies in urban areas. This paper aims to explore the role of sustainable business models in supporting technological innovations such as decentralized approaches for water quality and quantity improvements in urban areas. The private sector involvement can be valuable in overcoming the barriers and challenges to implementation of those approaches as well as to achieve the sustainability. A case study of the product-service system as a sustainable business model in an emerging economy was conducted to deliver insights into the role of new ways of value proposition, value creation, and value capture in supporting innovative technologies in the water sector and in contributing to sustainability. The results demonstrated that consumers’ acceptance, risk perception, and confidence in decentralized approaches can be improved with the support of business models through a close integration with customers. The close integration among the actors can also lead to better management of the system. Further research can focus on how different types of sustainable business models could contribute to supporting water technologies in urban areas and increase social acceptability.

**Keywords:** Product-service systems, water sector, sustainable business models, business model innovation.
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