

**ACADEMY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES OF BUCHAREST
DOCTORAL SCHOOL: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF BIODEGRADABLE
AND COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING USED BY THE HORECA
INDUSTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR A SUSTAINABLE
BIOECONOMY IN EUROPE**

GABRIELA IULIANA I.G. PARASCHIV (married GANEA)

Doctoral supervisor: PhD Professor Elena CONDREA

Bucharest, 2024

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

THANKS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. ARGUING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC AND THE RATIONALE FOR ADDRESSING IT

1.1.1 The transition to a sustainable bioeconomy in Europe - economic, environmental and social impacts

1.1.2. Circular economy - a concept for the long-term sustainable development of mankind

1.1.3. Circular economy strategies, instruments and public policies

1.1.4. Transition towards a circular economy in Romania - initiatives towards the development of the circular economy

1.1.5. Biodegradable and compostable packaging - Quality management systems

1.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH

1.3. RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

2. CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

2.1. INTEGRATED QUALITY - ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF PACKAGING

2.1.1. Integrated management system methodology

2.1.2. Integrated Management System implementation approach

2.1.3. Packaging and packaging waste management

2.1.4. The food packaging industry and the COVID-19 pandemic

2.2. THE LIFE CYCLE OF BIODEGRADABLE AND COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE BIO-ECONOMY

2.2.1. Life cycle definition

2.2.2. Applications of life cycle analysis

2.3. BIODEGRADABLE AND COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS - ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE BIO-ECONOMY

- 2.3.1. Plastics, indispensable in the modern economy but with negative consequences for the environment and human health
- 2.3.2. The transition from plastic products to biodegradable and compostable products, an alternative in the context of developing a sustainable bio-economy
 - 2.3.2.1. Bioplastics - from origins to end-of-life
 - 2.3.2.2. What is biodegradability?
 - 2.3.2.3. Categories of biodegradable plastics
- 2.3.3. Areas of use of biodegradable and compostable products
- 2.3.4. The need to switch to biodegradable bioplastics

2.4. RECOVERY OF BIODEGRADABLE AND COMPOSTABLE WASTE THROUGH COMPOSTING AS A SOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

- 2.4.1. European and national regulations on organic waste
- 2.4.2. Organic waste management

2.5. OPTIMIZING THE RECYCLING VALUE CHAIN OF BIODEGRADABLE AND COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- 2.5.1. End-of-life management of biodegradable and compostable packaging
- 2.5.2. The regulatory framework for the recovery and recycling of biodegradable and compostable packaging in Romania

2.6. THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

2.7. CONTRASTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN HORECA SECTOR IN ROMANIA

3. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. THEORETICAL ARGUMENTATION FOR THE CHOSEN RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
- 4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE STATISTICAL POPULATION INVESTIGATED

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 5.1. THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF COLLECTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION IN HORECA SECTOR
 - 5.1.1. Research methodology

5.1.2. Findings and discussions

5.1.2.1 Attitudes towards different aspects of environmental protection and perceptions of gender differences

5.1.2.2. Attitudes towards different aspects of environmental protection among different age groups

5.1.2.3. Dominant beliefs of HoReCa economic actors on environmental issues

5.1.2.4. Attitudes towards the environment at different hierarchical levels within the HoReCa sector

5.1.2.5. Urban vs. rural: Diverging environmental concerns and sustainable practices in the HoReCa sector

5.2. THE LINK BETWEEN COMPANY PROFILES AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES IN THE HORECA SECTOR

5.2.1. Respondents' perception of the importance of environmental protection, differentiated by gender

5.2.2. Respondents' perception of the importance of environmental protection, stratified by age group

5.2.3. Perception of the importance of environmental protection among respondents from different divisions of the HoReCa sector

5.2.4. Perception of the importance of environmental protection among respondents in different positions within the HoReCa sector

5.2.5. Respondents' perception of the importance of environmental protection according to the type of locality in which they operate

6. CONCLUSIONS

7. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

8. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. Questionnaire

9. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

10. LIST OF TABLES

11. LIST OF FIGURES

Keywords: sustainable bio-economy, circular economy, biodegradable and compostable packaging management, integrated quality-environment management system for packaging

THESIS SUMMARY

Based on an extensive literature review, this paper provides a reflection on the concept of circular economy, an overview of the main circular economy processes, their applications in different sectors and their economic, environmental and social impacts.

The breadth of academic and policy interpretation of the circular economy concept and the wide range of issues and priorities it encompasses are reflected in the diversity of definitions presented in the research.

By developing the scientific research paper on Quality management of biodegradable and compostable packaging used by the HoReCa industry in the context of the implementation of the EU Strategy for a Sustainable Bioeconomy in Europe, the following important aspects are highlighted:

- Presentation of the main aspects of the sustainable bioeconomy, for a theoretical understanding of the issues to be analyzed, clarification of the basic concepts and the links between them;
- Highlighting the importance of product and service quality assurance in the context of the implementation of the EU Strategy for a Sustainable Bioeconomy in Europe;
- Analysis of the effects of implementing quality and environmental management systems or integrated quality-environment systems in firms operating in the biodegradable and compostable packaging industry;
- Comparative analysis between plastic packaging and biodegradable and compostable packaging in the context of the development of a sustainable bio-economy;
- An radiography of the biodegradable and compostable packaging market in Romania and identification of the main players in this sector;
- An analysis and characterization of the HoReCa industry services in Constanța County in terms of biodegradable and compostable packaging quality management and their willingness to adopt.

This doctoral thesis addresses the topic of the transition towards a sustainable bioeconomy and the role of the circular economy in this process, with a focus on biodegradable and compostable packaging. Structured in several chapters, the thesis provides a detailed analysis of

the importance and the economic, social and environmental impact of this process both in Europe and in Romania.

1. Introduction

The first section argues the importance of research on the transition towards a sustainable bioeconomy, highlighting the significant impact of this process at European and national level. It also presents the concepts of the circular economy and how they can contribute to long-term sustainable development. Next, strategies, instruments and public policies supporting the circular economy are analyzed, with a focus on initiatives in Romania. Finally, the aim and objectives of the research are defined, emphasizing its relevance for the development of sustainable solutions in packaging management.

2. Current Research Status

This section reviews the literature and the current state of research on integrated quality-environment management system in the field of packaging. The methodology and approaches to implementing this system, packaging and waste management, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food packaging industry are explored. The life-cycle of biodegradable and compostable packaging and its contribution to the development of a sustainable bio-economy are also detailed, including life-cycle definition, environmental impact assessment methodologies and applications of life-cycle analysis.

3. Research Conceptual Framework

This chapter defines the key research concepts and formulates the main hypotheses. These guide the research direction and establish the theoretical basis for further analysis. Issues related to the transition from plastic to biodegradable and compostable products are discussed, as well as the importance of bioplastics in the context of a sustainable bioeconomy.

4. Research Methodology

This section describes the research methods used to collect and analyze the data. Research instruments such as the evaluation questionnaire are presented and a detailed description of the statistical population investigated is given. The methodology aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the results obtained, providing a solid basis for their interpretation.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of the research are analyzed and discussed in this chapter, with a focus on the role of collective involvement in promoting sustainable development through environmental actions in the HoReCa sector. Findings are presented on the attitudes and perceptions of different groups of economic actors in this sector regarding environmental protection, analyzing differences in

gender, age and hierarchical position. It also explores urban-rural divergences in environmental concerns and sustainable practices.

6. Conclusions

In this final section, the main findings of the research are summarized, highlighting the link between company profiles and their involvement in environmental activities in the HoReCa sector. Implications for the future development of the circular economy and the need for effective public policies to support the transition towards a sustainable bioeconomy are discussed.

7. Bibliographical References

The thesis concludes with an extensive list of bibliographical references reflecting the literature and sources used in the research. This section provides a solid theoretical grounding and gives readers the opportunity to explore the topics discussed in more detail.