

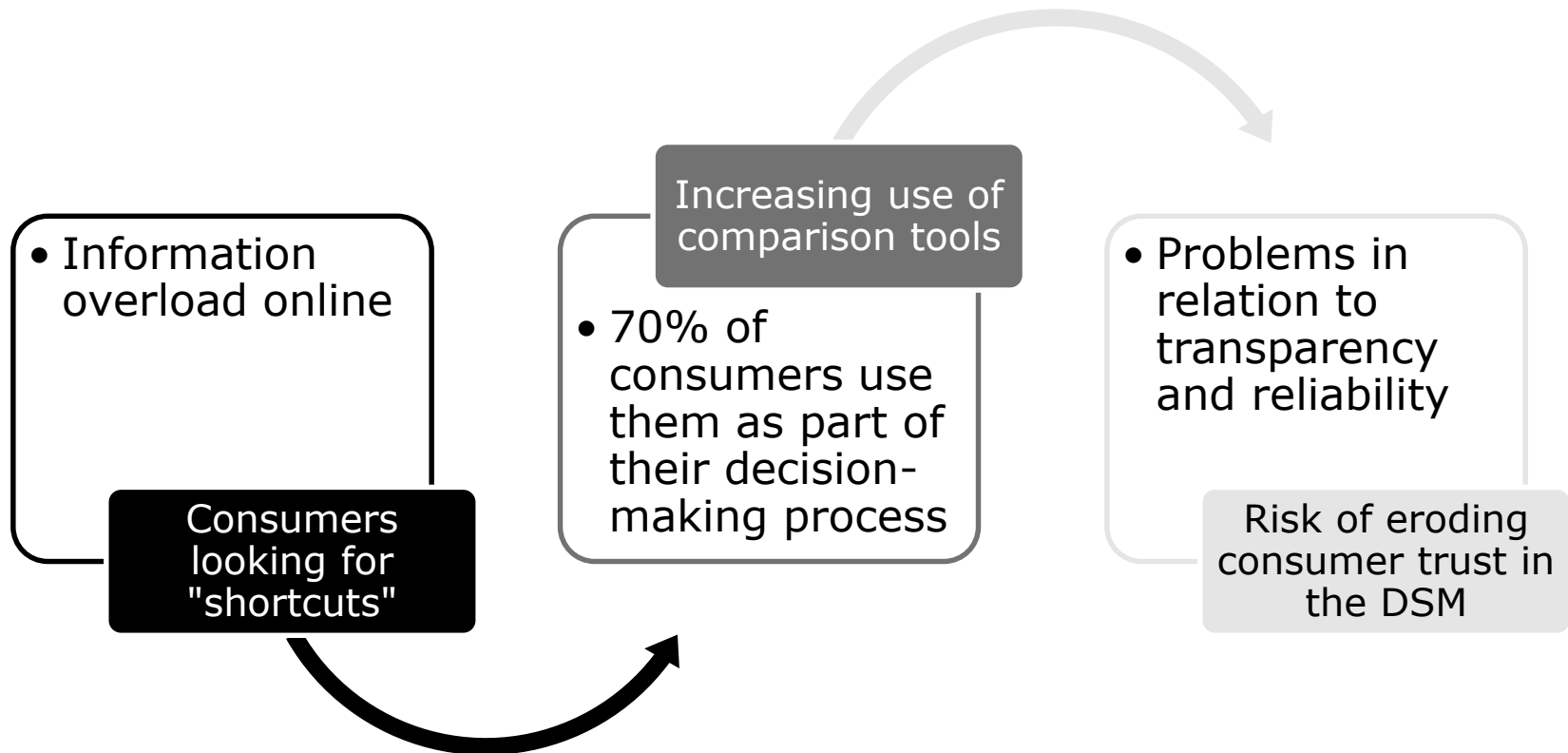


Presentation of the work of the Multi-stakeholder Group on Comparison Tools

UCPD Workshop, 9 September 2015

**Unit E6 - Consumer strategy,
Representation & International Relations
DG Justice and Consumers
European Commission**

Why a focus on Comparison Tools?



Our work so far

June 2012: Set up of Stakeholder Group

March 2013: Report and recommendation presented at 2013 Consumer Summit

March 2015: Publication of in-depth consumer market study

UCPD Guidance + Principles and best practices

Comparison tools: definition

"Comparison tools" include all digital content and applications developed to be used by consumers primarily to compare products and services online, irrespective of the device used or the parameter(s) on which the comparison is based. To the extent that operators of search engines, travel or tickets booking sites, e-commerce platforms acting as a market place for several traders develop functions or applications dedicated to the comparison of products and services, these functions or applications are also covered by the term "comparison tools".

Main results of our study



Landscape

- 1042 CTs mapped
- Most represented sectors: travel/hotels and financial services
- 84% operated by businesses, 3% by regulators and 2% by cons. org. (and 10% unknown)
- Very few comparison tools displaying cross-border offers



Consumers' use

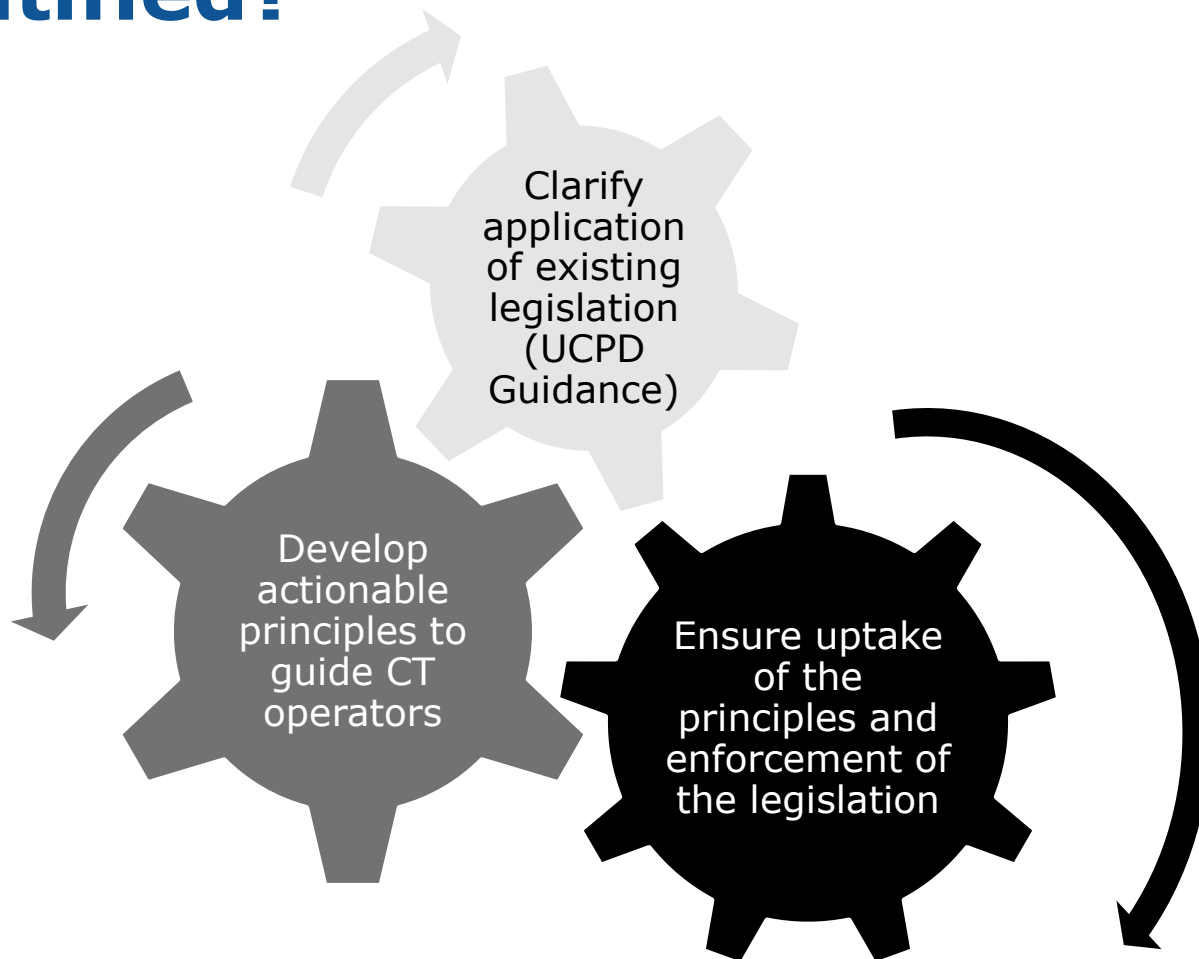
- 74% of EU consumers have used CTs in the past 12 months (37% at least once a month)
- 91% of consumers use CTs to compare price but believe that unbiased info can better be found on search engines (66% vs. 34%)
- Consumers' decision influenced by link position and ranking criteria



Problems identified

- 65% of consumers had experienced a problem with CTs
- Lack of transparent information on business model, relationship with retailers, source of revenue, market coverage or frequency of update.
- Missing information on contact details, access to redress

How to address the shortcomings identified?



1- *Ensuring compliance with the legislation*

Impartiality of the comparison and identification of advertising

Transparency about the business model

Accurate information, including price and availability

Data collection, criteria for ranking, methodology used and coverage

Authenticity of user reviews and user ratings

Display of contact details

2- Further improve transparency and user-friendliness



Complaint handling and access to redress mechanisms

Relevance of the information, comparability and display

User-friendliness and accessibility

Thank you for your attention

Links:

- Study on comparison tools:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_evidence/market_studies/comparison_tools/index_en.htm

- Study on user reviews in the hotel sector:

<http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-on-online-consumer-reviews-in-the-hotel-sector-pbND0414464/>