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"KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF REPLICATED SOCIAL BUSINESSES"

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Abstract

Nowadays, social business ventures are still a relatively unknown kind of organization in our society and does not exist a lot of research about them (Lampking, 2009). By combining a social purpose with a for-profit mindset, these initiatives become an effective way to respond to previously unsatisfied social needs (Seelos and Mair, 2005) which contrasts to a traditional view as inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive organizations (Dees, 2001). Thus, taking advantage of the lack of awareness about how these organizations operate, this work project intends to increase the knowledge about them. To perform it, this work project intends to analyze and understand the key success factors of the business models of successful social business ventures, indentifying their common patterns that allow them to be effective.

Introduction

Social Business, an entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose, has been on the rise during the last decades (Austin, Stevenson and Wei- Skillern, 2006; Dees, 2007) and attracting increased attention from different sectors especially within the academic world (Peredo and McLean, 2006). This work project studies the business models of successful social business ventures, identifying their key success factors, analyzing the relationship with their scaling up processes and identifying common patterns in their approaches. To identify the social business ventures, I based my research in Hartigan and Elkington's model 3 – social business ventures. To analyze the business models of social business ventures and identifying their key success factors, I based my research in Bloom and Smith (2010), which divides the business models in

four different components: core strategy, strategic resources, and customer interface and value network.

Literature Review

Regarding the literature review and theoretical definitions, in order to perform my research, I had to use an extensive literature resource. The theoretical concepts that I explain in my thesis are the following: social business, business model explained by Hartigan and Elkington's model, key success factors and scaling up. My research about the Social Business concept, the type of organization studied in this project, was based on the work developed by Yunus (2007). Moreover, I based my research about the definition of Business Model, which is what I intend to study in each organization, in Mair and Schoen (2007). To explain the characteristics and what social business ventures are, I studied the model three of Hartigan and Elkington Model. Regarding the key success factors, which are the characteristics and reasons for the success of an organization, I based my research in McClelland (2011). Finally, one of the characteristics of success of an organization is its scaling up concept, which is the venture's replication in other areas. For this concept, I studied Hartmann and Linn (2008).

- Defining Social Business

The concept of social entrepreneurship means different things to different people and researchers (Dees, 1998). For my work project, that is mostly based on social businesses, I adopted the definition of social business. Firstly, it is important to

distinguish social business from charity because when one is running a business he thinks differently and works differently than when he is running a charity.

Entrepreneurs implement social businesses with the aim of achieving particular social goals and not personal gains. On the other hand, usually, in order to achieve its social goal, social business has to recover its full costs. This makes all the difference in distinguishing social business from the charity business model. Usually nonprofit organizations and nongovernmental organizations depend on their daily operations and their existence from charitable donations or government support to recover their costs Yunus (2007). Most of their leaders are committed people that are doing a worthy work. But since they are not capable of recovering their costs from daily operations, they have to spend their time in raising money. The concept of social business is different. Regarding the operations, a social business aims to recover its full costs or even generate profits, creating products or services that provide a social benefit. Usually, this business is associated to the sale of a product or service provided by the venture. Regarding its organizational structure, it operates like a profit company. However, the difference lies in its goals. As other businesses, it employs workers, sells products and services to their customers, charging a certain price knowing that sometimes the user of the service is not that one the paid for it. Though, its underlying objective - and the criterion by which it should be evaluated - is to create social benefits for those whose lives it touches. The company itself may generate a profit, but the investors who support it do not take any profits out of the company except recovering an amount equivalent to their original investment over the taxes generated. A social business is a company that is cause-driven rather than profit-driven, with the potential to act as a change agent for the world Yunus (2007).

To sum up, a new type of business emerged and it pursues other goals rather than making personal profit - a business that is totally dedicated to solving social and environmental problems.

- <u>Defining Business Model</u>

Being the concept of business model the basis of any organization, it is linked with the social business concept. In this sense, there are many definitions and frameworks which were developed to analyze and present business models. In general, a business model can be understood to be a simplification of a planned or existing business (Mair and Schoen, 2007). However, regarding the role of a business model in social business, there are two different visions about it: there are those who hold, at one hand, that social goal(s) must be the exclusive aim of the social entrepreneur and that any wealth generated is merely a mean to the social end, and, therefore, financial benefit to the (social) entrepreneur does not find opportunity among the goals of the venture, claiming that "social business is about finding new and better ways to create and sustain social value'' (Peredo and McLean, 2006). And there are those who consider combining the pursuit of financial and social returns as less problematic. Not-for-profit organizations taking this route are often described as "hybrids" (Davis, 1997) as they combine non-profit with for-profit organizational features. Thus, through the ambiguity and the lack of consensus about it, this reinforces the goal of this work project where the context of the interviewed (social) entrepreneurs may provide some insights about the role of business models for social business ventures.

For this work project I used a definition that describes a business model as a "business concept that has been put into practice" (Hamel, 2000). More specifically, a business

concept comprises four major components: core strategy, which consists basically the mission of each social business venture, and what differentiates a social business venture from another; strategic resources, which is related to the way these organizations crafted innovative resource strategies to secure critical and scarce resources, and how they incorporated these strategies into their business models; customer interface, which consists how these organizations interact and relate with their customers/target group in order to provide their products or services and value network which consists in the way the founders (social entrepreneurs) proactively developed specific value networks to facilitate the creation of social value and its appropriation by the target group. This definition facilitates our understanding of how a specific business model design, used by social entrepreneurs, helps them to be successful (Mair and Schoen, 2007).

To summarize, table 1 presents the analyzed variables in each business model pattern:

Customer Interface	Core Strategy	Strategic Resources	Value Network
Fulfillment and support Information and insight Relationship dynamics Pricing structure	Business mission Product/market scope Basis for differentiation	Core competencies Strategic assets Core processes	Suppliers Partners Coalitions

Table 1: Analyzed variables in each Business Model Pattern (Hamel, 2000)

- Hartigan and Elkington model

On the other hand, in order to identify the social business ventures, I based my research in Hartigan and Elkington model (2008). It explains through some practical examples, the approaches starting from conventional charity and a decision-making approach to social problems. Thus, it categorizes the business model of an organization into three different categories: Model 1- Leveraged Nonprofit Ventures, Model 2- Hybrid Nonprofit Ventures and Model 3 – Social Business Ventures. In model 1, entrepreneurship tends to distinguish sharply between private and public goods. The second model is the most experimentative from the three business models and the more businesslike aspects of an hybrid venture such this one can make it seem more normal than a model 1 venture, where there is no realistic prospects of profit.

Regarding my work project, I concentrated my research in analyzing social entrepreneurial organizations that fit in model 3 - Social Business Ventures. I concentrated my research in this model because personally I consider the most interesting model between the three, and the model which is closer to a profit company being interesting to understand the similarities and differences between them.

Thus, and according to it, model 3 ventures are distinct from model 1 and 2. They are set up as for-profit businesses from the outset, though they tend to think what to do with their profits. The main characteristics of model 3 are:

- The entrepreneur sets up the venture as a business with the specific mission to drive transformational social and/or environmental change;
- Profits are generated, but the main aim is not to maximize financial returns for shareholders but instead to financially benefit low-income groups and to grow the social venture by reinvestment, enabling is to reach and serve more people;

- The entrepreneur seeks out investors interested in combining financial and social returns;

- The enterprise´s financing – and scaling – opportunities can be significantly greater because social businesses can more easily take on debt and equity.

- <u>Key Success Factors</u>

The key success factors of an organization are commonly a limited number (usually between three and eight) of characteristics, conditions, or variables that have a direct and serious impact on the effectiveness, the quality and viability of an organization, program or project (Grunert, 2000). Organizations or activities associated with these characteristics must be performed at the highest possible level of excellence to achieve the intended overall objectives.

Regarding the social business context, we can identify three essential characteristics of a highly successful social enterprise: impact, where the scaling up is included and which is related with the amount of people that are benefiting from it and the extent to which their lives are changed for the better; sustainability, which is a function of its mission-related services and if an organization has sufficient strength to handle with periodic downturns and/or occasional external shocks and; adaptability, which is largely a function of the organization's culture and if it can respond quickly and effectively as new needs, opportunities or threats arise and the external environment changes (McClelland, 2011) .

- Defining Scaling Up

The literature on scaling up is growing rapidly but continues to be characterized by relatively little agreement on definitions or models, and relatively few well documented case studies (Kohl and Cooley, 2009). A further complicating matter is the fact that the term "scaling up" is applied to include several distinct strategies including: the dissemination of a new technique, prototype product, or process innovation; "growing" an organization to a new level; and translating a small scale initiative into a government policy. Furthermore, any scaling up strategy can be characterized in terms of four distinct choices or aspects:

- the model, innovation or project to be scaled up – what is being scaled up;

- the methods of going to scale – the how of scaling up;

- the organizational roles involved in scaling up – the who of scaling up;

- the dimension(s) along which scaling up occurs – loosely speaking, the "where" of scaling up

For my work project, I based my research mainly in the dimension along which scaling up occurs. Moreover, in this research, scaling up is taken to mean, "...expanding, adapting and sustaining successful policies, programs or projects in different places and over time to reach a greater number of people" (Hartmann and Linn, 2008).

To sum up the literature review part and to link to the methodology, in order to analyze the business models of social business and identify their key success factors, I based my research mainly in Hartigan and Elkington model 3 – Social Business and Mair and Schoen article. In this sense, the methodology adopted in this work project followed the variables and the components explained in the literature review.

Methodology

Motivations of research methods

This work project intends to analyze and understand the key success factors of the business models of successful social business ventures, indentifying the patterns that they have in common to achieve their success.

To identify them, I performed interviews in selected social business ventures with the main goal of understanding their business models and if they scaled up their initiative in other geographic areas. Thus, for my work project I based my research in the following four components of a business model: customer interface, core strategy, strategic resources and value network.

The selection of the organizations was based on the following criteria. First, the social entrepreneurial organization had already scaled up its initiatives in other geographic areas, had to fit in the characteristics of the model 3 of Hartigan and Elkington Model (Social Business Venture) and had to be recognized as a successful one and should have successfully made the transition from the venture stage to a self-sustained organization. Second, the cases had to reflect diverse regional needs. Finally, priority was given to organizations which had been previously described, documented and was open for additional data gathering via interviews. The sample is composed by organizations that showed availability to contribute to this project and at the same time were aligned with the previous criteria. With these interviews, I intended to obtain as much data as possible regarding the business models of social business ventures and their scaling up processes. The interviews were divided into two parts of questions: 1 - general questions and 2 - business model questions. By examining these organizations, we

aimed to understand their business models and to identify common patterns in their approaches and to derive propositions on how the organizational set-up and the business model can facilitate the creation and appropriation of social value. So after this analysis I decided to choose the following organizations: Prove, Escolinhas.pt and Histórias da Ajudaris.

Procedure

Interviews

The objective of the semi-structured interviews was to carry out an in-depth analysis to assess and understand the business model of the social businesses under analysis, identifying some common patterns that explain their success. These interviews were performed being transcribed at the same time. They were performed to the entrepreneurs of the analyzed organizations.

In this sense, a set of 3 organizations was interviewed. They were performed in a semi-structured way making it possible to have a focused and, at the same time, an open form of dialog and discussion in a more informal interview style. The question format was open and the interviewees covered the same data analysis in an ongoing process.

Analyzed Organizations

Prove

Prove is a project that promotes small-scale agriculture, the consumption of local products, the proximity between the consumer and the producer and the fair trade. Making a centralized promotion through the site, consumers can order a basket of

agricultural products indicating only the products they do not appreciate. Through the website, the order is sent to the corresponding group of farmers that belongs geographically to the consumer's area. Moreover, small farmers often with difficulty in disposing of products and without dimension for selling them to large distributors, constitute regional centers that meet weekly and fill the baskets complementing them with their products. The producers also deliver the baskets to the consumers when the sale is local and at a fair price to the producer, also representing a guarantee for the consumer who can even visit the land where the vegetables are produced.

Escolinhas.pt

Escolinhas is an online community of schools. It is a virtual representation of real schools where all members of the school community are present at each school, such as students, teachers and parents. It works as a restricted social network which aims to develop the proximity between the parties of the school community, increase the learning methods and computer knowledge of students, allowing even a more modern education. It is based on the potential of Web 2.0 and allows students to write, paint, draw, and think with their usual network of colleagues, teachers and parents. Escolinhas is available for any educational institutions, private or public, for children with ages between 4 and 12 years old.

Histórias da Ajudaris

Histórias da Ajudaris was created in 2008 at Porto and it is a book written by children. Teachers from different schools guide their classes to develop together in a participatory manner a different story about a global subject in each year. These tales from over 40 schools are then edited by the partner Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto and

illustrated by some of the best national illustrators. The book and its illustrations are then presented in a ceremony involving hundreds of people, including children, their families and teachers, and where children are recognized as authors, giving autographs and even where it is celebrated reading and writing. The stories of Ajudaris are then sold in school communities as well as in the latest edition of Jornal de Noticias. This project aims to increase the closeness between children and books making them the authors, but also arousing their curiosity to read the stories of their co-authors colleagues.

Empirical results

Core Strategy

Prove

Prove is an organization that intends to contribute to the local development of populations, enhancing the economy of proximity more cohesive and balanced. Moreover, it aims to encourage the consumption and sharing of varieties of local goods through a marketing of proximity. Its public target is the small farmers that have difficulties in selling their goods. This organization shows already a complex structure, employing more than twenty workers. Its workers are paid and full-time workers. Regarding their age, they are under 40 years old.

Escolinhas.pt

Escolinhas is an online community of schools. Each school in Escolinhas is an official representation in the Internet of a real school. As in real school, each school can only access students, teachers and parents authorized by it, creating a safe and a closed space.

Escolinhas is available to any educational institutions, private or public, for children ages 4 to 12 years. Thus, its public target is all of the school community. This organization employs six full-time workers and they are paid. Regarding their age, they are until 35 years old.

Histórias da Ajudaris

The Histórias da Ajudaris organization divides mainly in two different projects. In one hand, "4 Projectos" is a project for children which their goal is to fight the social exclusion. On the other hand, there is also "The Idade de Ouro", which is a project for elderly people and their goal is to fight their loneliness. Thus, the public target of this organization divides in two completely different public: children and elderly. This organization is a small organization, with just three full-time workers and they are paid. Regarding the age of its workers, they are until 35 years old.

Strategic Resources

Prove

Prove obtains the majority of its resources through partnerships. Regarding the revenues component, this organization obtains their revenues only from the baskets that they can sell to the consumers. At an initial stage, Prove received a financial support from the state, specifically from the European funds. Moreover, their revenues cover more than 100% of their costs, which means that this organization generates profit.

Escolinhas.pt

Prove obtains the majority of its resources through themselves. Regarding the revenues component, this organization obtains their revenues through the usage of the platform. Moreover, their revenues cover more than 100% of their costs, which means that this organization generates profit.

Histórias da Ajudaris

The Historias de Ajudaris obtains their resources through their partnerships. Regarding the revenues component, this organization has two different sources of revenues: one from selling the books made by the children, which is their main source of revenue and the second one came from the events that they organize for a while, not receiving any revenue from the state. On the other hand, their revenues cover more than 100% of their costs, which means that this organization generates profit.

Customer Interface

Prove

Prove has a satisfaction survey for consumers and other for farmers, assessing if the goods keep their quality and gathering suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the organization. In terms of disclosure, this organization promotes their services among local farmers, and they also use their partnerships to promote and disclose their project.

Escolinhas.pt

Escolinhas has a satisfaction survey for the school community registered in the platform in order to obtain feedback from them. In terms of disclosure, this organization

promotes its project among schools, and they also use their partnerships to promote and disclose their project.

Histórias da Ajudaris

Histórias da Ajudaris has a satisfaction survey for the people they support, mainly in the "Idade de Ouro" project. Their objectives are to understand how the project is going on, and take some suggestions to improve it. In terms of disclosure, this organization promotes their services among schools and universities, by sending emails to different organizations, and they also use their partnerships to promote and disclose their initiatives.

Value Network

Prove

Prove has a significant number of partners (more than 10) being mainly municipalities, cooperatives and public organizations. These partnerships have the goal to provide the resources that Prove do not has itself, and legal facilities by the municipalities to support the project. In terms of funders, besides the contribution of the state at the initial stage, this organization does not have any more funders, so their budget is only managed by the revenues they can generate.

Escolinhas.pt

Escolinhas has a significant number of partners (more than 10) being them schools and companies (mainly from the IT area). These partnerships have the goal of providing the resources that Escolinhas do not have itself, mainly IT support and advisory. Finally, in

terms of funders, this organization does not have any funder, so their budget is only managed by the revenues they can generate.

Histórias da Ajudaris

Histórias da Ajudaris has a significant set of partners (more than 10) being mainly composed by schools, universities, and Jornal de Noticias. These partnerships have the goal of providing the resources that Histórias da Ajudaris do not have and helping the organization to promote and disclose itself in the community. However, in terms of funders, this organization does not have any funder, so their budget is only managed by the revenues they can generate.

To sum up, in table 2, it is presented the summary of the business model of each organization.

Table 2: Data collection

	Ajudaris	Prove	Escolinhas.pt
General			
Area of implementation:	Porto	Porto	Porto
Started year:	2008	2004	2008
Mission:	Fighting persistent poverty and new forms of exclusion, fostering autonomy and active participation of the consumer	To increase the flow of products from small farmers relying on mechanisms of fair trade and local consumption.	Develop an educational space for collaboration, communication and sharing involving students, parents and teachers.
Core Strategy			
Target group:	Children and elderly	Local producers	School Community

Goals:	Fighting the poverty and the loneliness	To increase the flow of products from small farmers promoting the local economy	Develop an educational space for collaboration, communication and sharing involving students, parents and teachers.
Number of workers:	3	+20	6
Type of workers:	Paid and Full-Time workers	Paid and Full-Time workers	Paid and Full-Time workers
Age:	Until 35 years old	Until 40 years old	Until 35 years old
Strategic Resources			
Revenues:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Type of revenues:	Sale of books	Sale of a basket of goods	Use of the web platform
Revenues/costs relationship:	Revenues cover more than 100% of the costs (profit)	Revenues cover more than 100% of the costs (profit)	Revenues cover more than 100% of the costs (profit)
	They do not receive money from the state	They received money from the state in a initial stage	They do not receive money from the state
Value Network			
Funders:	0	1	0
Partnerships:	>10 Universities, Schools, Jornal de Noticias	>10 Municipalities, cooperatives, companies	>10 Schools, companies, IT companies
Partnerships Goals:	Disclosure,communication and obtaining of resources	Obtaining of resources, promoting, legal facilities	Obtaining resources

Customer Interface			
Customers feedback:	Satisfaction Survey	Satisfaction Survey	Satisfaction Survey
Disclosure:	Emails, at schools, through partnerships	Through partnerships	At schools and through partnerships

Discussion

The results of this study allowed me to conclude that there are similarities between the analyzed organizations in the four components of the studied business model: core strategy, strategic resources, value network and customer interface. Regarding the core strategy component, in terms of human resources, all of the three organizations employ full-time workers and in all of them the workers are paid. This means these workers spend a lot of their time in their organizations being completely focused and committed with the mission and daily life of their organizations. Furthermore, in terms of the size of these organizations, in spite of the fact that "Prove" employs more than twenty workers, the other two can be considered small organizations, having few costs in terms of human resources. In terms of target group, in all of these three organizations, their target group is a niche market, showing that these organizations preferred to focus in a market segment instead of the general market. In terms of the age of the workers of these organizations, in all of them, they have less than forty years old, showing youth in the labor force.

Regarding the strategic resources component, all of these three organizations can generate revenues by selling goods or services, showing they do not need to be financial

dependent on others. Moreover, although in an initial stage "Prove" organization, received European funds, all of the three organizations do not receive financial support from the state. Regarding the relationship between the revenues and costs of these organizations, in all of them, they can recover all of the costs and even generate profit. This statement shows clearly that these organizations are already in a sustainable stage and they are financially self-sufficient.

Regarding the value network component, these organizations also showed similarities in terms of funders, partnerships and their goals. In terms of funders, although "Prove" received an initial investment in its implementation stage, these organizations are characterized for not having any funder. This finding can be linked to the fact that the organizations have the ability to generate their revenues. In terms of partnerships, they present a significant number of partners, allowing them to have a diversity of organizations behind and supporting them. This fact can be also interpreted as being considered trustful organizations and, therefore, having so many partners supporting them. In terms of the goals of their partnerships, all of the organizations use them to get the resources that they do not have ability to get by themselves, and to promote their organizations in the community.

Finally, regarding the value network component, these organizations presented a constant concern about the users/customers opinions about their organizations having all of them a satisfaction survey.

After this analysis, I concluded that regarding key success factors that can explain the success of these organizations, there are some patterns that we can take into account. First of all, the ability of generating their own revenues which, in turn, generating profit,

shows that these organizations are already in a sustainable stage. Furthermore, these organizations show a youth labor force, usually associated with passion, enthusiasm, proactivity and very committed people towards their objectives. Moreover, these organizations having full-time workers, allow them to be completely focus and committed towards their objectives. Regarding the partnerships of the organizations, they are associated with the lack of their own resources, thus, having a significant number of partnerships also shows that these organizations are trustful and have a consolidated structure supporting them. Regarding the age of these organizations, being implemented between four and eight years, we can consider that they are already in a sustainable stage. Finally, these organizations also show a concerned about their customer's opinion, through their satisfaction survey.

Limitations and future research directions

In spite of the relevance of this study's results, several limitations should be acknowledged. First of all, despite the fact that the set of three analyzed organizations gave me the insights for what I wanted to study and analyze, it could be extended to a higher group. Moreover, my analysis focused in organizations that were implemented in the same area, which could have biased this research. Furthermore, I focused in one of the Hartigan and Elkington models, social business ventures, and in one of the characteristics of success of an organization, which is its replication in other areas. For future research, this type of analysis, or a similar one, could be performed for the other models, either for leveraged nonprofit ventures or hybrid nonprofit ventures. This research also covered the customer interface, core strategy, strategic resources and value

network patterns of a business model, which was divided in human resources, partnerships, funders, revenues, target public. Future research could also focus in other variables of a business model. Finally, the interviews were performed only with the entrepreneurs of those organizations, but for future researches, the interviews could be extended to the stakeholders from these organizations, in order to decrease research bias and present more completed insights.

Conclusions

This work project intended to analyze and understand the key success factors of the business models of successful social business ventures, indentifying the patterns they have in common to achieve success. Through literature review related with the topic and to analyze the business models, I used semi-structured interviews to collect data into three different organizations that were implemented in the same area and had replicated their project in other geographically areas.

By analyzing the business model of these three different organizations, I identified some common patterns that justified their sustainable stage and their success: ability to generate profit, youth of labor force, full-time workers, significant number of partnerships and the constant concern about their customer's opinion.

Personally, this work project allowed me to understand how this type of organizations works, mainly in terms of their business model. It also allowed me to realize that this sector is growing and presenting an increasing of level of professionalization. Finally I realized that this type of organizations already covers a broad sector of the society.

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