

Social innovation

Innovación Social

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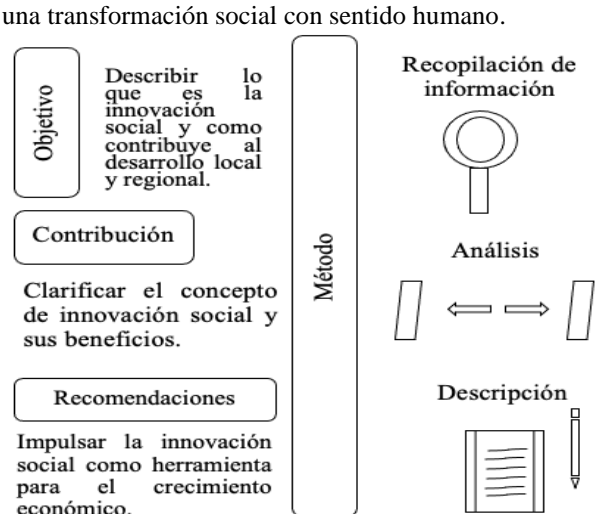
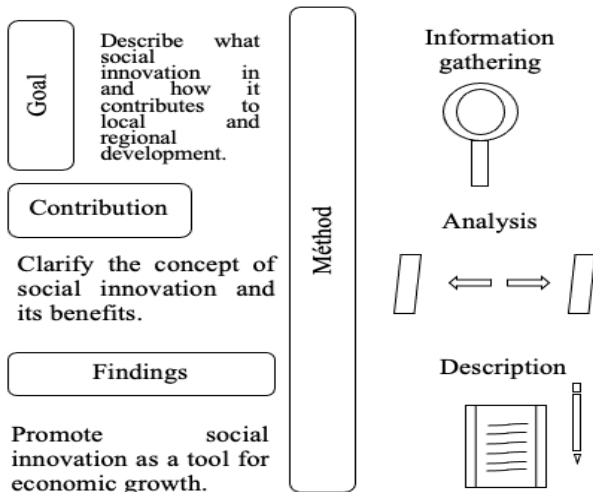
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Abstract

Social Innovation is the strategy that allows solutions to the problems experienced in a community, with a sustainable approach that is financially viable, that strengthens the social fabric, and is friendly to the environment. In the present theoretical analysis, it was found that given population growth, it is required today more than ever that social innovation be channeled towards the solution of problems that contribute to the provision of physical and mental health of people, providing them with resources, that allow them a sense of responsibility with the society and the environment where they live. Social innovation offers a new way of envisioning economic growth, where people are the axis of a social transformation with a human meaning.

Resumen

La innovación social, es la estrategia que permite dar solución a las problemáticas que se viven en una comunidad, con un enfoque sostenible, que sea viable financieramente, que fortalezca el tejido social, y sea amigable con el medio ambiente. En el presente análisis teórico, se encontró, que dado el crecimiento poblacional, se requiere hoy más que nunca que la innovación social se canalice hacia la solución de problemas que contribuyan a la procuración de la salud física y mental de las personas, dotándolas de recursos que les permitan salir de la pobreza, creando en ellos, un sentido de responsabilidad con la sociedad y el medio ambiente en donde viven. La innovación social ofrece una nueva manera de visionar el crecimiento económico, donde las personas sean el eje de una transformación social con sentido humano.



Innovation, Sustainable, Economy

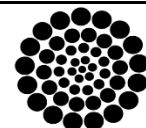
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Introduction

The growth of the world's population is an issue that has given rise to many questions and expectations. The countries of the world have realised that on the one hand, life expectancy has been extended, allowing people to live longer, and on the other hand, there has been an increase in the number of births, which means that more resources are required every day in order to survive.

Human survival depends on the quality of life, in the understanding that the higher the level of well-being, the healthier and therefore more active and productive people are expected to be. This gives rise to the imperative need to plan strategies focused on meeting the demands of present generations, without sacrificing the resources of future generations. This is how sustainability originally arose, focused mainly on the care of natural resources and the environment, with a view to implementing strategies aimed at their preservation, allowing their renewal and permanence.

Sustainability is followed by a broader term, sustainability, which not only contemplates strategies focused on the protection of the environment, but also promotes actions aimed at fostering economic growth and social development, the latter term being the origin of social innovation.

Social innovation is a strategic tool that seeks to gradually improve the quality of life of the population through the implementation of actions that provide people with mechanisms that allow them to obtain material and economic resources to preserve their health and their lives, because when people are healthy, they become economically active and can contribute to the economy of their country.

Social innovation is even allowing entrepreneurs to rethink the way they make wealth, replacing traditional business models with new business models that focus on an inclusive, social and, above all, environmentally responsible economy.

The commitment to the environment goes beyond the good intentions of a society, as it must be materialised in concrete actions that contribute to its responsible conservation, in which government, private initiative and the community must be co-participants in its preservation.

However, it should be noted that today, the world's audiences are increasingly observant and demanding, and digital communication has become a double-edged sword, as it can catapult a company, strengthening its prestige when it acts responsibly, but it can also be sabotaged by making decisions that go against the interests of society.

This article seeks to describe what social innovation is and how it contributes to local and regional economic development. The study is relevant because it exposes the relevance of innovation as a transforming agent of society.

Companies that do not commit themselves to responsible actions in favour of society are easily labelled and even attacked by the digital community, which not only affects their operational stability, but also their economic value in the markets, putting their position and prestige at risk, a situation that is aggravated when they try to defend themselves without serious and convincing actions in favour of the markets they serve and the community in which they are inserted.

The article consists of a review of the literature related to the topic addressed, followed by an analysis of the findings found, to conclude by explaining how social innovation impacts the economic development of society, seeking to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants and contributing directly to the sustainable development goals of the UN's 2030 agenda.

Literature review.

Innovation implies the existence of new ways of doing things, represented between people and organisations, with the aim of improving existing relationships for better functioning (López, 2015, p.181).

For Rodríguez and Alvarado (2008), innovations in the social field arise when markets have not been able to offer alternatives to the population to solve their problems, and neither has the public sector been able to meet their needs and demands (p.20).

For Vega (2017) 'Science, technology and innovation are nowadays presented as three key elements for the development of contemporary societies' (p.7). Innovation is one of the main elements that contribute to the reconfiguration of economic activity in a country.

Innovation presents new ways to achieve economic goals, with disruptive and novel actions.

For Villa (2014, p.200), the difficult problems faced by society at a global level, put on the table the need to reflect on the way in which a country is governed, the way in which government institutions and private initiative should work, but above all the urgency of resuming education with human values that promote civic-mindedness and solidarity. Villa's statements support the need to innovate with a high social sense, which not only seeks economic growth, but also goes hand in hand with respect and care for the environment and community development, translated into well-being for the population and conditions that ensure their health and life, since only in this way will we have a healthy community that is ready to work, which will directly contribute to sustained social growth.

In Mexico there are social innovations that have gone unnoticed, but their impact has not only been permanent, but has also been very lucrative for the private company that promoted it, this is the case of the clinics and laboratories of the BEST Foundation, better known as Dr. SIMI. SIMI, this business model, serves the third goal of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), called: Health and Wellbeing, promoted by the United Nations (UN), promoting social innovation by offering generic medicines at low cost, accompanied by medical consultation at an affordable price. The business model is profitable because profits are generated by volume sales, and doctors earn from the consultations they charge, with the condition that they must prescribe medicines from the BEST Foundation.

The social innovation revolved around creating a business model that brings health to the community at a cost they can afford, and that serves an increasing number of users who, whether or not they have social security, come to use its services and buy medicines.

Methodology

The research study was carried out in three stages: in the first stage, a review of the literature on the subject was carried out; in the second stage, a theoretical analysis of the information gathered was carried out; and in the third stage, the findings on social innovation and its impact on local development were presented.

Results

One of the differences between the traditional way of resolving conflicts and conflict transformation is that in the first case a solution to the problem is sought in the short term, while the second proposes a set of actions in the medium and long term, seeking to build something positive from a given concrete situation (Baytelman and Cabezas, 2024, p.14).

For Martínez-Celorrio (2017, p.61) social innovation are new ideas, models and services that seek to meet social and welfare requirements, among the agents involved, in a collaborative culture. Social innovation is the result of the demand of a proactive and critical citizenry, which provides new forms of intervention and linkages, and which complements the action of the State.

Social innovation promotes the existence of an accessible and inclusive society, through the creation of goods and services that improve the quality of life of citizens, seeking their autonomy (Sanpedro-Palacios and Pérez-Villar, 2019, p. 116). The aforementioned authors confirm the relevance of the well-being that social innovation should foster, as an agent of permanent change.

For Lévesque (2012), the main objective of innovation is to contribute with new solutions to unsolved social problems. The author shows that in all societies around the world there are social problems that, if not addressed in a timely manner, can worsen, increasing their negative effects.

Leal-Rodríguez, Leal-Millán and Ariza-Montes (2016) point out that customers recognise companies that strive to carry out efficient environmental management and that treat the environment in a responsible manner (p. 182). According to the aforementioned authors, the big task for entrepreneurs will be to find a balance between short-term profitability and long-term sustainability. Some of the world's most recognised social innovations are

1) Action for happiness: It is a movement of people, who seek to train participants in a culture that prioritizes happiness and kindness, teaching them skills to have a happier life, foster a sense of belonging and commit to generate happiness for themselves and others. This organization promotes 10 keys to a happier life, which are:

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- a. To be giving, performing actions for others.
- b. Relating, referring to the importance of making contact with people.
- c. Exercising.
- d. Being fully aware of the decisions made.
- e. Learning new things.
- f. Setting goals and working towards them.
- g. Resilience, always looking for ways to bounce back from difficult events.
- h. Always look for what you know is good.
- i. Acceptance, that the person feels good about him/herself.
- j. Meaning, being part of something bigger (Action for happiness, s.f.)

2) Zero Waste: It is a movement that seeks to reduce the generation of waste and its impact on the environment as much as possible. This innovation allows waste to be reduced to a minimum, and the waste generated to be valued and reused as resources, thus not only contributing to the preservation of the environment, but also reducing manufacturing costs. Zero waste is based on the seven Rs:

- a. Redesign
- b. Reject
- c. Reduce
- d. Repair
- e. Reuse
- f. Recycle
- g. Reincorporate (Zero waste mx, n.d.)

3) The green Valleys: A community interest company that has developed successful renewable energy, energy efficiency and biodiversity improvement projects. Current projects include: Local Energy which seeks to help communities generate small-scale renewable energy, Forests which advises people to improve their forestry habits, in the generation of firewood and other products, contributing to the physical and mental health of the population and Horizon, which trains the community to manage the landscape surrounding their town or village, creating jobs in forestry and caring for wildlife (The green valleys, n.d.).

4) Enda Inter Arabe: A non-governmental organization focused on financial empowerment of low-income populations, including youth and women, through quality financial services. This organization promotes inclusive microfinance through socially responsible financing.

The organization leads its products with the utmost transparency to build trust, and by tailoring its offerings to clients' needs. Social innovation revolves around inclusive finance that caters to sectors that by their nature are not a commercial banking market (Enda Inter Arabe, n.d.).

5) Tiyatien Health: A social justice organisation that promotes the health and human rights of people living in poverty. It has a group of health workers who accompany patients during their illnesses, link indigent patients to employment and economic empowerment programmes. (Tiyatien Health, s.f.).

The social innovation ecosystem is raising concerns among public agencies in charge of promoting these activities, as well as among companies interested in positioning themselves and financial institutions that are betting on shared value, both social and financial (Buckland and Murillo, 2014, p.12).

The increased interest in social innovation is the result of growing social inequalities, which give rise to the need for new solutions and adjustments, which are not necessarily a definitive solution to existing problems (Blanco, Cruz, Martínez and Parés, 2015, p. 260).

Social innovation practices and innovations in public policies arise in response to the challenges posed by the problems detected (Navarro, 2015, p. 22).

The local and regional development of a country depends on the creation of capacities, knowledge and innovation. This leads to the implementation of actions for the creation of innovation capacities among individual and collective actors, which generate added and public value, capable of satisfying the needs of the population in a sustainable manner, aligned with development plans (González, Carballo and Carballo, 2024, p. 5).

For Carl (2020) social innovation is a key element in the path towards a sustainable society, so researchers have the relevant task of driving technological innovation towards social innovation, in search of solutions that benefit society and the environment.

Conclusions

The world's population is constantly growing, with the result that only one part of the world's population can meet its needs without complications, while the other part does not have sufficient resources to survive. This gap is widening, which is why world leaders through the UN have promoted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity around the world.

Social innovation seeks to design impact and transformation projects that contribute to the sustainable development of the planet, which by their nature and results can be replicated at local, national and international levels.

Social innovation should not only be promoted by the governments of the countries of the world, but can also be promoted by the private sector, which will find it attractive to the extent that it generates profits, and even more so if these profits are in the short term, seeking long-term sustainability.

Social innovation not only seeks to strengthen society through projects that ensure its well-being, but also to create a sense of belonging and responsibility for the planet, as this is the only way to ensure decent living conditions for future generations, and scalable ideas of value.

Social innovation favours local and regional development, by virtue of the fact that it provides society with tools to transform their lifestyles, creating conditions that favour their quality of life, in terms of health and well-being.

A population with resources and conditions that allow them to improve their physical and mental health is much more likely to grow economically and develop in the long term.

Digital communication is being an ally in the promotion of social innovation, as projects of this nature are disseminated through digital media, facilitating communication between their creators and above all, cooperation links with their peers around the world, to share know-how, and identify best practices implemented, and even the mistakes made in order not to repeat them.

Social innovation is allowing governments, private initiative and non-governmental organisations around the world to bet on a gradual change in the way they generate wealth, with a more inclusive, fraternal and responsible modality, in which absolute respect for human life and the environment must be rewarded.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that might have appeared to influence the article being reported.

Contribution of the authors

Zapata-Aguilar, José Apolinar: He contributed to defining the idea of the research study, taking into account the importance of the topic at a global level. He carried out the documentary research and the theoretical analysis, from which the conclusions included in this article were generated.

Availability of data and materials

The data are available in the repositories consulted and the websites of the economic entities that have carried out social innovation in the world, and which are presented as examples in this research article.

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Abbreviations

List abbreviations in alphabetical order.

ONU	United Nations
ODS	Sustainable Development Goals
CONAHCYT	National Council for the Humanities, Sciences and Technologies.

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