

## Chapter 10

# Digital Social Innovation: Fundamentals and Framework of Action

**Alicia Guerra Guerra**

*University of Extremadura, Spain*

**Lyda Sánchez de Gómez**

*University of Extremadura, Spain*

**Carlos Jurado Rivas**

*University of Extremadura, Spain*

### ABSTRACT

*The fusion of the social economy with the digital economy, together with the essential need for social organizations to innovate in order to face challenges not satisfied by using traditional methods, led to what is known as digital social innovation: the use of digital technologies to allow or help to carry out social innovations. We are facing a developing field of study, in full evolution and with a high and recent level of global activity, which makes it a true global movement. This, together with the fact that DSI practices still lack unanimous and systematized criteria, calls for identifying what DSI is and what should be understood by it. Therefore, this chapter aims to configure and illustrate the conceptual framework of DSI, detail the barriers that are limiting its momentum, and formulate a general scheme of action for good practices in DSI.*

### INTRODUCTION

In a scenario of global economic and regulatory crisis, institutions and researchers in social sciences increasingly highlight the importance of the emerging social economy, a new axis of the economy that unites public and private sectors to create new relationships and social values (Bryer et al., 2012)<sup>1</sup>.

In its midst we are facing an incipient field of study that is the result of the movement that is taking place worldwide and that is evolving at an accelerated and unexpected pace as much due to the number of initiatives—from grassroots community projects to large national companies and global networks that are causing a paradigm shift—as the variety of their approaches: Social Innovation (SI), understood

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7074-5.ch010

synthetically as that which generates new ideas for solving social problems. It is, in short, a sector that is in full expansion around the world (Buckland and Murillo, 2013) for the growing interest it arouses.

The reason for all this can be found in the emergence of new social problems—such as climate change, the scarcity of resources, demographic transformation, massive immigration or high youth unemployment—that coexist with other already chronic ones such as unemployment, social inequalities, an aging population, environmental deterioration and the explosion of certain chronic diseases (Simon et al., 2014), all of them in need of new approaches that make it possible to find solutions that the methods applied in the past have not been able to solve (Murray et al., 2010). On the one hand, and while western governments face these growing social challenges through a wide range of public social services, there is no guarantee that economic growth will allow these public services to continue (Dinant et al., 2017). This is progressively creating budgets that are unaffordable for governments, even more so in undeveloped countries. On the other hand, market solutions are insufficient for solving these growing social needs in today's world.

Faced with this panorama, the world is being forced to find new ways to avoid social exclusion and protect the environment. This is where SI emerges as a new approach that faces this serious deficit through the participation of supporting agents and beneficiaries in the search for new solutions.

This must be so given that there is a growing disconnection between traditional services and new needs. SI is found to be a key vehicle for developing new ways of tackling complex social challenges at local, national and international scales arising from the committed work of individuals and groups in civil society, research groups, academic institutions, companies, governments, NGOs, social movements and the multiple networks created between groups. It is precisely these last groups that have caused a great advance in SI by the appearance of new approaches and ways of managing social changes.

These reasons have instigated a global lift-off of SI in the last decade and, with it, the need for a new paradigm—as in previous technological and social transformations. The nature and global effervescence of this field give rise to a large number of SI definitions, as well as innumerable tools and mechanisms for promoting SI radiating from all types of organizations and governments. In short, we aim to identify a notion of SI which is as widely accepted as possible, as well as the most effective SI mechanisms to find the best types of approaches, and defining and determining the social impact of these innovations and their long-term viability. All this heterogeneity and lack of clarity is reflected in a set of questions that are part of the global debate around SI: What does SI mean? Where are its limits? How is its impact measured? And what are the key success factors of a specific SI initiative?

On this path, SI has found a great ally in ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) with its enormous potential to develop creative and advanced solutions. One example is the digital networks in the service of SI: these allow for the creation of virtual communities as well as new formulas for collaborating, which in turn allow the co-creation of local and global products and solutions that are more economically sustainable and replicable in other contexts. This is what is known as Digital Social Innovation (DSI).

Although in global, national and local environments, ICT has become a powerful tool for social development (Díaz, 2015), DSI goes further by applying a process of appropriation of ICT by social agents, that is to say, they internalize the value of ICT as a reference to enhance social development (Carabaza, 2012).

In short, and already at the beginning of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution, dealing with the world of SI is equivalent to including it within the digital economy. We are dealing with the evolution of

26 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/digital-social-innovation/216580](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/digital-social-innovation/216580)

## Related Content

---

### How Online Video Marketing Can Lead to Consumer Online Purchase Intention of Beauty and Healthcare Products in KSA

Bandar Khalaf Alharthey (2021). *International Journal of Online Marketing* (pp. 14-38).

[www.irma-international.org/article/how-online-video-marketing-can-lead-to-consumer-online-purchase-intention-of-beauty-and-healthcare-products-in-ksa/268404](http://www.irma-international.org/article/how-online-video-marketing-can-lead-to-consumer-online-purchase-intention-of-beauty-and-healthcare-products-in-ksa/268404)

### Service-Dominant Logic: Toward Reframing Business for Enhanced E-Novation

Robert F. Lusch, Stephen L. Vargo and Melissa Archpru Akaka (2012). *E-Marketing: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 970-985).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/service-dominant-logic/66642](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/service-dominant-logic/66642)

### Plowing a Fertile Ground for Transformative Management Education

Sergio A. Castrillon-Orrego (2019). *International Journal of Marketing and Sales Education* (pp. 29-44).

[www.irma-international.org/article/plowing-a-fertile-ground-for-transformative-management-education/251212](http://www.irma-international.org/article/plowing-a-fertile-ground-for-transformative-management-education/251212)

### Evaluation of Social Network Sites: An Empirical Study of 150 Top-Ranked Firms in the World

Francisco J. Miranda, Antonio Chamorro and Sergio Rubio (2013). *International Journal of Online Marketing* (pp. 28-42).

[www.irma-international.org/article/evaluation-of-social-network-sites/109842](http://www.irma-international.org/article/evaluation-of-social-network-sites/109842)

### Social Media Performance Measurement

Goetz Greve (2015). *Trends and Innovations in Marketing Information Systems* (pp. 214-235).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-media-performance-measurement/139917](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-media-performance-measurement/139917)