

Designing Business Models for Social Enterprises: A Proposed Framework

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ABSTRACT

Key Words: Social Enterprises, Business Model, Livelihood sector, Social enterprise business models

Social enterprises practice inclusive business models that create an opportunity to the marginalized sections of the society to participate economically. They initiate enterprises that aim at production or supply of goods and services that are affordable to the Base of the Pyramid, like affordable water, healthcare, energy, sanitation and housing. According to the surveys done by the Intellectap, the business models in India are hybrid models combining the welfare objective (social value logic of not for profit) and business objective (commercial logic) of the for-profit business, which make them self-sustainable. The business model of such enterprises is taken as a central unit of analysis for understanding the functioning of such hybrid organizations. However, in the pursuit of financial sustainability they may drift from their mission, while a rigid adherence to the social mission may prevent hybrid organizations from reaching financial sustainability. To understand the alignment of profit with impact, a review on the current literature on business models is done and through this review, a framework with a set of elements for social enterprise business models are proposed. The second part of the paper explains the application of the proposed business model on two case studies of social enterprises in the livelihood sector. Consequently, the study aims to understand the social enterprises working for livelihood sector with a business model perspective.

1. Introduction

Social Entrepreneurship is an emerging and an attractive field of study (Austin et.al, 2006). The concept means different things to different people and researchers (Dees, 1998). Non-Profit sector (Austin et.al., 2003), Community Entrepreneurship (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), Hybrid organisation (Alter, 2007) or Institutional Entrepreneurship (Mair & Marti, 2009) are some of the phenomena discussed under the umbrella of Social Entrepreneurship. Social enterprises may also be identified as institutions building a local capacity,

disseminating a package and building a movement (Alvord, et al. 2004) and what distinguishes social enterprises from commercial enterprises is a predominant focus on value creation as against the value appropriation (Santos, 2009). This value creation in-turn is delivered in their business model. Just like commercial entrepreneurs. social entrepreneurs also should clearly define how will they create and deliver a product or service of social value and also build a sustaining income model. Consequently, they design business models to develop solutions to the most challenging societal problems like

poverty alleviation, fighting unemployment & climate change, providing medical care & education, integration of disabled etc. SELCO India, Enable India, SEWA, BRAC, Grameen Bank, Teach for America etc are some social enterprises heading towards the challenge of fixing social problems. But when the opportunity space for Social Entrepreneurship is defined by local, social, economic and political arrangements, then this phenomenon manifests itself differently in different contexts (Mair, 2010).

2. Literature Review

India is still a home for 176 million poor people (www.Worldbank.org) and poverty alleviation has always been one in the agenda of development planning process. Attack on poverty through different methods has been a practice in India since Independence and its eradication is considered to be integral for the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDG's). Though there are various Govt programs and measures working in this direction, providing sustainable livelihood to every citizen is a gigantic task. Due to govt and market failure in this arena, the social enterprises identified a plethora of ways to attain the objectives of providing livelihood for the marginalized group. This paper discusses the social enterprises using business models to provide livelihood to the marginalised section of the society.

2.1 Social Entrepreneurship / Social Enterprises

A comprehensive definition is proposed by Dees (1998) as social entrepreneurs act as change agents in social sector by adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value), recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission, engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand,

and exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created (Dees, 1998). In community organizations, these enterprises play a vital role in elevating the living conditions of the marginalised and contribute to community development. The idea is to build up a self-sustaining instead of profit maximizing businesses, creating opportunities to entrepreneurs to design their business models based on social issues (Boons et.al., 2012). This reveals that social benefit and economic benefit, both become necessary for social enterprises and the basic structure to design a social enterprise business model should include both. It is a recurring process which starts from the formation of idea, going through a social value creation and that leads to social impact and sustainable development.

2.2 Business Model

The Business Model is a bundle of specific activities that are conducted to satisfy the perceived needs of the market, including the specifications of the parties that conduct these activities and how these activities are linked to each other (Zott et.al., 2010). The business model—defined as the combination of resources and activities that allow an organization to create, deliver, and capture value Social business hybrids are likely to be superior to commercial firms in situations of market or government failure created by the specific transaction characteristics of the societal problem that is being addressed.

Santos (2017) classifies business models as Market hybrids, blending hybrids, bridging hybrids and coupling hybrids. Where the beneficiaries are clients that pay for the product or service where value spill overs happen without requiring additional interventions are Market hybrids. Blending hybrids blends commercial offerings with additional interventions like training or community

outreach upon which positive social spill overs are contingent. Bridging hybrids tend to bridge the needs and resources between the clients and the beneficiaries. Coupling Hybrids also have clients and the beneficiaries that are different but most value spill overs happen only when appropriate social interventions are introduced, alongside the commercial operations. All these types of models are contextual as they purely depend on the social issue addressed and sustainability of the enterprises.

Business Models actually describes the value offered by a company to one or more segments of customers and its association with partners involved in creating, marketing and reaching its value through maintaining a customer relationship for an economical gainful and a sustainable returns stream. It is a blueprint of an offer, service and information flows which includes a flowchart of various business actors and their roles that explain the latent benefits for the business actors and describing the source of earnings (Trimmers, 1998). As understood from the literature, the Business model can be well understood with the elements- customer interface, infrastructure management and financial aspects' (Osterwalder, 2004) or stated as 'the content, arrangement and governance of transactions designed to generate value through the utilization of business opportunities' (Zott et.al., 2002). The four interconnecting elements- proposition, income formula, key resources and the processes, (Johnson et.al, 2002) or the three elements- Value proposition, value constellation, economic profit equation (Schoett et.al., 2011) when taken together create and deliver value to the customers (Johnson et.al, 2002). They explain stories in a structured manner describing the work of the enterprises. A business model also answers Peter F. Ducker's questions as to who is the customer? And what does he value? It also answers the basic

questions that every entrepreneur must ask; how do we make profit in business? What is the fundamental logic that explains on delivering value to customers at a minimum cost that will also attain the economic objective of the enterprise? It also means a brief depiction of how organized set of decision variables in the areas of business plan, framework and economics that are met to create a sustainable competitive advantage in specific markets and may include the six components -value proposition, customer internal processes, external positioning, economic model and investor factors (Morris et.al., 2005). We adopt the concept of the business model as a central unit of analysis for understanding the functioning of social enterprises.

2.3 Livelihood

The perception of Livelihood begins with how different people live in different places. Livelihood is a means of gaining a living (Chambers, 1995) or means of earning money in order to live¹. The term sustainable means the ability to remain constantly. A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. It becomes sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the long and short term (Chambers et.al.,, 1992; DFID, 2000).

3. Objectives of The Study

The present paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To understand the concept of Business models and related concepts.
2. To identify the common elements from the literature to propose the Business Model.

¹ Meaning of livelihood in the Oxford dictionary.

3. To propose a Business model for social enterprises
4. To demonstrate the proposed business model with two case studies of social enterprises in the livelihood sector
5. To propose some suggestions on the applicability of the Business model

4. Methodology

Secondary sources of information in print and soft form was used for the Review of literature. Based on the literature review, the elements of the proposed model was designed. For the case studies, primary data was collected through interview method. Interview guide based on the literature review was prepared for the purpose. The Assistant Director of Namma Bhoomi, Kundapura and General Manager of SELCO India Pvt Ltd, Manipal were approached for the study. The sample cases of social enterprises were selected based on the following criteria.

- Successful examples among the marginalized communities
- Working on the livelihood sector

- Have exhibited at least some potential for catalyzing transformations in the social contexts within which they have been implemented and fulfil the criteria for a social enterprise.
- Level of willingness and co-operation in participating in the research
- This study intends to study the literature on business models and propose a model for social enterprises.

5. Proposed Social Enterprise Business Model

Based on the above discussions, this paper highlights on the most relevant and highly noted elements for a business model construct. The proposed Business Model for social enterprises basically includes- the operating model and the financial model. But the operating model becomes successful when there is an effective interaction between the value proposition and the networking of the enterprise.

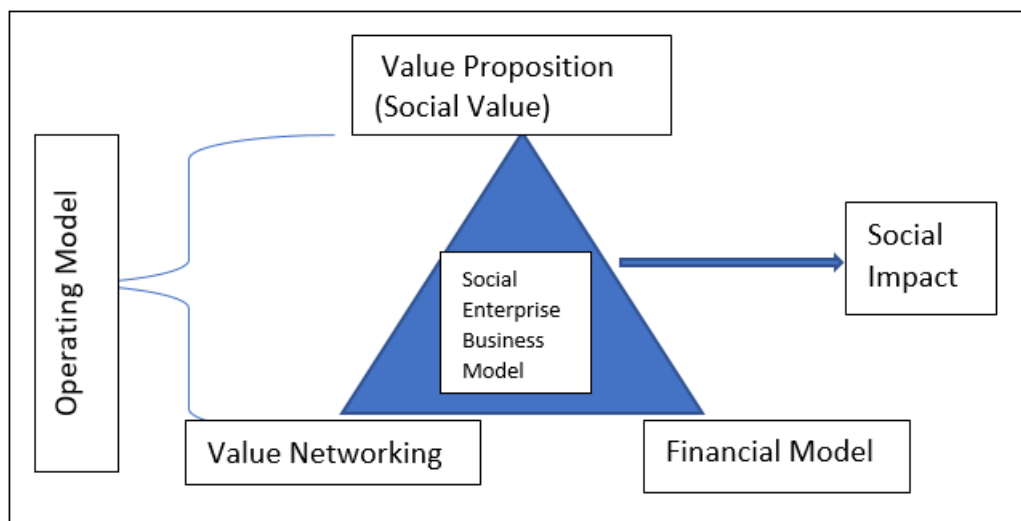


Fig no 1: Proposed Social Enterprise Business Model (authors own)

An effective interaction and intervention of the elements of the business model will create the desired social impact. When the desired social impact is created, the business model seems to be successful. The above elements are explained

as follows.

5.1 Value Proposition:

There can be no business model without a well-defined value proposition (Teece,2010). Value

proposition will explain the value embedded in the product or service offered by the enterprise (Boons et.al, 2013). The emphasis is always on the Value creation for all business model participants as opposed to an exclusive focus on value capture (Zott et.al., 2010). There can be no business without a well-defined value proposition and the creation of value provides a justification for business entity (Morris et al. , 2005). The very first dimension to be evaluated to understand the Bottom of Pyramid (BoP) business model is to identify the need to be addressed and decide upon the value proposition to be offered (Goyal et al., 2014). In the context of social enterprises also, the question of what is the enterprise offering to its target group, is it building a local capacity, disseminating a package or building a movement (Alvord et al, 2004) is answered through a strong value proposition. Consequently, Value proposition includes the offering, target group and the process of developing a solution to the social problem.

5.2 Value Networking:

As social enterprises operate in a resource constrained environment, their success also depends upon the networking capability of the social entrepreneur (Satar et.al., 2016). For resource strategy and planning, there is a need for building partnership alliances, attracting donations and paying for the resources, while some partnerships may be desirable as part of the operating model, others are driven more by resource considerations (Guclu et al., 2002). Hence some of the collaborators are for the internal resource planning / implementation and some for external resource strategies. For the success of the enterprise, their effectiveness to collaborate with the networks is essential. Value network as one of the components to the model that also gives answers to the questions like what kind of collaborations and partnerships are put in place and will assist in competition in the market (S. Goyal et al., 2014). It is important to

understand the structural dimension of social capital on how it can be built, increased and maintained as it is one of the important factors that will determine the extent of social entrepreneurs' ability to alleviate social problems and raise them to the public sphere (Mair et al. , 2006). Networking is essential because social entrepreneurs alone cannot solve the most challenging social problems on their own, they need meaningful interactions with the NGO's, Government, other social entrepreneurs and sometimes even international organisations.

The value proposition is the proposed social value to be achieved by the social enterprise which includes the target group and the process of addressing the social issue. For the successful operations of the social enterprise, networking becomes an essential element. Hence, the value proposition and the networking together form the operating model of the enterprise.

5.3 Financial Model:

For a commercial enterprise, the core of the business model is its economic model (Linder et.al., 2000), but for a social enterprise, economic model is only an element to determine its financial sustainability. A sound business model is one in which a firm can translate its value proposition into a range of revenue streams from its customers and the revenue model may need to be elucidated since this can have significant implications for organizational and resourcing decisions (Lambert, 2011). The social entrepreneurs have to develop a resource strategy to implement the operating model and identifying the requirements is a primary concern (Gulcu et al, 2002). Value capture is also the word used that answers to the questions like what kind of cost structure and revenue streams are in place; what is the social impact and outreach? (S. Goyal et al., 2014). As social enterprises give priority to the social value creation, their financial model will project the

economic independence of the enterprise. But for social enterprises, the fundamental idea behind the financial sustainability depends on the efforts of its members to acquire sufficient resources to support the intended social mission, but these resources may be hybrid in nature and come from trading activities, from Government subsidies and from voluntary resources obtained. (Defourny, 2006).

Hence the Business models are explained well by many authors by explaining the elements/components of the model. But this paper focuses on two dimensions of the business models of social enterprises – the operating aspect / value creation dimension and the Economic aspect/ financing dimension. The Value creation highlights on the social mission over the profit motive and the networking component. Social innovations play an important role to design the operating model for sustainable social enterprises. The financial model describes the revenue generation capacity of the enterprises through internal and external funding. The level of integration between the social mission and the economic objective decides the type of Business model. Social enterprises can be classified by their mission orientation, by the level of integration between non-profit social programs and for-profit business, and by their intended target markets (Alter 2006).

6. Application of The Proposed Business Model

In the Business Model- Operating model answers the 'who' is the target group? and 'how to create value' by configuration of the activities and resources between the firm and the partners? The financial model discusses on the 'How much' – that is the financial aspect of the enterprise. The interconnections and interventions of the elements decides the success and the replication of the model.

6.1 CASE I: Namma Bhoomi & Namma Angadi-

6.1.1 Social Value Proposition

In Kundapura, out of the total population of 368027, 357798 were rural population and the remaining urban (Census, 2011).

Around 40 years back, Centre for Working Children (CWC), a Non-profit organization in Bangalore witnessed the migration of the rural youth population to the urban areas. The basic question that arose was the reason for the migration of children. It was also observed that majority of the migrants were the children of the artisans. This induced CWC to conduct a survey which included 13,000 children. A survey conducted by CWC revealed that the parents found no scope for their skill in rural areas and hence sent their children for jobs in factories, garages and hotels in the cities. But the unfortunate part was the children were equipped with their traditional skills and were not meant for jobs in the cities. When it was further inquired on what would make them stay back in their home towns, they surprisingly answered that they were not interested in formal education in schools but instead would stay back in their hometowns if their conventional artisan skills were upgraded and that would also enhance their income generating capacity. Most of the migrants were from Kundapura and close by villages. With an objective of upgrading their artisan's skills, Namma Bhoomi emerged in Kundapura as a blessing to these artisans. In the year 1992, Namma Bhoomi, a rural programme of the CWC was formed to provide need-based training to the children in rural areas. Namma Bhoomi trained the children on their skills and also put confidence in them as to their skills would empower them economically. But the rural folks wanted something more than that, hence they provided them with legal awareness, training on life skills, developmental skills and so on. This empowered them mentally, physically and in turn prepared them to be

economically empowered. The trainees started manufacturing items for which adequate infrastructural facilities were provided by Namma Bhoomi. Now the next question on marketing their products arose. They were prepared to manufacture but how to market their products was a serious question because unless the manufactured goods are sold, there is would be no economic empowerment. So Namma Bhoomi assisted the artisans to form a co-operative by the name Namma Angadi, which started in the year 1993. Namma Angadi sells the products of these artisans under one umbrella and share the profits among the members. They sell the products through the networking with panchayath, educational institutions and society members. Namma Bhoomi follows a Market Intermediary Model² through Namma Angadi.

6.1.2 Financial Model-

Namma Bhoomi is an NGO and the funding is from external sources. Namma Angadi is a registered co-operative society that provided a platform to these artisans to sell their products and also share the profits among themselves. So Namma Angadi is financially self sustainable. It practices a Market intermediary model. The employees in Namma Angadi are appointed and paid by Namma Bhoomi. Hence, Namma Bhoomi charges 10% administrative cost on the products for the salaries to be paid to the employees of Namma Angadi. The organisation tries to reduce its operating cost to the maximum by having its own sources of food, water and electricity.

Food- by growing vegetables and spices required for making food, milk from its own source
 Water- by conserving water through water resource management techniques,
 Electricity- through solar energy.

The organisation has plans of being sustainable by selling the agricultural products grown in the campus and finding different other sources of generating income in the long run.

6.1.3 Networking

Namma Bhoomi has collaborated with the neighbouring colleges to sell their products and also provides internship to the students for their projects. It has joined hands with the government and the local bodies to identify the abandoned children for training. Its understanding with the police department assists in providing education to the children of the remand room. It has taken assistance from SELCO India Pvt. Ltd. for installing solar panels in the campus. Networking with funding agencies in India and abroad has facilitated in attaining its social mission of providing free education and economic empowerment to the rural artisans.

Namma Bhoomi is also a movement that has its wing in Udupi by the name Grama Panchayath Hakottaya andholana which works for the rights of the migrants. They are empowering the migrants and facilitating them build their capacities to negotiate their rights. In association with the Panchayath, Namma Bhoomi is providing them with the basic amenities like housing, water and sanitary facilities in their area.

6.1.4 Social Impact

As of today, Namma Bhoomi has provided free training to around 2000 students, of which 95% of them are either placed well or have become entrepreneurs and are able to generate employment in the local area. The organisation has provided livelihood in the form of placement and self employment to the rural artisans in Kundapura.

²Market intermediary model is the concept introduced by Kim Alter(2007) in his Social Enterprise Typology. In this model the Social enterprises provide services like production and marketing assistance to the target group.

6.2 CASE II- Selco India Pvt. Ltd.-

SELCO India Ltd is a Socio commercial enterprise with a philosophy to provide affordable solar lighting to the underprivileged or the marginalized sector. Their thrust areas are Technology, Finance and product innovations targeting the base of the pyramid. In the process, they developed the ability to not only sell and service solar lighting systems, but other energy services to improve and empower their customers' lives. The challenge for them was to change the mindset of the people towards Solar energy because the poor couldn't afford to buy a solar product and the rich did not want one as they had enough money to buy electricity. SELCO has concentrated on building the necessary parts for a sustainable and scalable model for energy services delivery through its bottom top approach. Hence, they set their target group to be the underprivileged and the low-income group.

6.2.1 Social Value Proposition

Their target group were the migrant families with temporary hutments who resided in Manipal and couldn't afford electricity. The migrants working for construction companies lived in temporary hutment without light as they couldn't afford electricity and were not aware of the benefits of solar energy. The major challenge here was convincing them with relevance of solar products. In 2008, after a seven-month long persuasion and demonstration on solar energy, only four out of 300 families agreed for its installation. The next challenge for Selco India was providing them with financial assistance for its purchase and installation. When none of the banks agreed for providing loans to these migrant families, a registered trust named Hamsachethana trust came to the rescue of SELCO India and agreed to open bank accounts and provide loan for installation of solar panels at their homes. They also took the responsibility to collect back the amount through weekly instalments. In this process, the

bank educated them on deposits and loan system. Gradually all the migrant families in the area installed solar energy equipment at low cost from SELCO India Pvt. Ltd and enjoyed its benefits. They also borrowed loans for purchasing other household appliances. This enhanced the standard of living of the migrant families. They also used solar equipped machines like tailoring machines, roti making machines, milking machines etc. Social innovations have always been a priority for SELCO. Here SELCO provides solar energy to the marginalised at a concession and the remaining cost is recovered through voluntary financial assistance from local social clubs or from like-minded people.

6.2.2 Financial Model:

SELCO is private limited company and earns sufficient profits to meet their expenses, but it is not enough to meet their research and development (R&D) expenses. Hence the R&D is financed by SELCO foundation which is registered NGO. SELCO foundation runs on donations from different parts of the country and also abroad. The company also seeks help from donors like some local associations, clubs, some like-minded people to finance some of its projects especially when the need arises.

6.2.3 Networking

To educate on the relevance of environmental protection and inclusive growth, they have built their network with Gram Panchayath, district Officials, Academicians, Like minded individuals, Govt. departments, Clubs and Associations. They have collaboration with schools to create awareness on the benefits of solar operated machines. Collaboration with like minded people and some corporate is assisting them in achieving their objective of reaching the solar equipment prices to the marginalised sections at affordable prices.

6.2.4 Social Impact

Solar panels are installed in the temporary hutments of migrants which is helping them in their household chores and their children for education. Some solar operated machines like tailoring machines, roti making machines have provided livelihood to several women in Kundapura and Manipal. It has generated employment and also facilitated self-employment. Solar operated stoves have replaced the conventional open fire places which has reduced the cutting down of trees for firewood. SELCO has not only created social and economic impact but also has a favourable environmental impact.

7. Suggestions

Social enterprises focus on social value creation rather than income generation. But in the process, financial sustainability becomes a challenge to these enterprises. Consequently, the operational model and the financial model together form the business model of social enterprises. Based on the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

- Every social enterprise should design its business model keeping in mind the hybrid nature of the organization.
- The proposed Business model in this paper includes the important elements to design the model, but the business models may change according the context and the nature of the social problem. Therefore, the elements of the model can be modified according to social issue identified.
- There is no legal status for social enterprises in India. Some of them may be registered as Private limited companies (financially sustainable) or as Co-operative society/ trust or some as NGO/ Non profit organizations (financially dependent). Though the core of every social enterprise business model is the social impact, the extent of

financial sustainability depends on its legal status and will affect the other elements of the model.

- The above proposed model will hold good for social enterprises creating socio economic impact in the livelihood sector. But in case of social enterprises working in the environment sustainability sector, the elements of the model would change accordingly.

8. Conclusion

In order to determine whether a promising idea can be transformed into an opportunity, social enterprises have to design a plausible business model. If the opportunity space is defined by the local, social, economic and political arrangements then social enterprise models manifests itself differently in different situations. Moreover, the success of the model purely depends on the interaction and intervention of the elements of the model. Business model components are not perfectly modular, of course, because a change in one will generally entail changes in one or more of the others (Teece, 2018). Again, the elements decided will be based on the social issue that the enterprise intends to address. The social value proposition should be clearly defined to understand the social enterprise and its impact. In fact in situations where the ability of the target group to pay becomes a hurdle, social enterprises may also access financial resources through patrons (Mair, 2010). Financial sustainability is a great challenge for the social enterprises because if they focus on the financial sustainability, there are high possibilities for a mission drift by the enterprise. The above-mentioned elements cover the operating and the financial model of social enterprises which facilitate in replication of the concept in different underserved areas to resolve the most challenging social issues.

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