

Communication practices in the diffusion of social-business innovation: Insights from B-Corporations

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Abstract

Companies innovate the value proposition by integrating social and business issues to balance value across multiple actors, thus ensuring the creation of social-business value. Social-business innovation requires that multiple actors come together to align perceptions and expectations and create shared meaning for the development and diffusion of innovation. The debate on the diffusion of social-business innovation is still in its infancy. This paper focuses on the communication practices of social-business innovation, aiming to analyse this participative process through three main issues: 1) the actors to be involved; 2) the goals to be achieved; 3) the actions to be performed. Specifically, we investigate the efforts of B-Corps to address social challenges by adopting a practice-based approach.

Keyword: B-Corporations, communication practices, Innovation diffusion, Social-business innovation, Social innovation

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Introduction

Social entrepreneurs are no longer working in isolation – the Schwab Foundation recognizes the champions of social innovation in the social sector, but also in business, government and academia. We see social innovation as an ecosystem of pioneering actors with a common purpose.

Hilde Schwab, Co-Founder of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship (September, 2019)

Social innovation is a strategic resource to the development of society in a new way: fresh ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships, and form new collaborations (European Commission, 2013). For a long time, the topic has been of significant interest in the governance and policy domains; more recently, business scholars have called for broader research on the social features of the innovation process (Rubalcaba, 2016; Schumacher and Wasieleski, 2013). Mele et al. (2019) address a process of social-business innovation to create an understanding of how the interplay between social and business perspectives fosters social changes by linking governments, markets, and private initiatives.

Companies innovate the value proposition by integrating social and business issues to balance value across multiple actors, thus ensuring the creation of social-business value. This is the case with B-Corporations – a new kind of organisation that joins a social or environmental mission with business performance. These companies are neither for-profit nor no-profit; they are “for-benefit enterprises” (Sabeti, 2011), prompting the slogan ‘Doing well by doing good’. They aim to diffuse a new way of building a sustainable and inclusive economy. It is a process of innovation diffusion that moves beyond the individual as the principal change agent to include the social context and the learning conditions (MacVaugh and Schiavone, 2010; Wenger, 1998).

The mainstream conceptualisation of innovation diffusion is given by Rogers’ theory (1962, 2010), which is described as a particular type of communication “in that the messages are concerned with new ideas” (Rogers, 1995: 5). By overcoming the view of innovation as a linear multistage development process within the main innovator actor (Mele et al., 2014), service scholars have addressed that innovation comes from an evolutionary, non-

linear, contextual process of multiple actors integrating resources (Edwards-son and Tronvoll, 2013; Lusch and Nambisan, 2015). The focus shifts from the output to the social mechanisms affecting innovation development.

Innovation diffusion practices have acquired relevance in recent literature (e.g., Corsaro et al., 2017) as they represent how actors co-construct new service provisions to satisfy the needs of multiple beneficiaries through resource integration and multiple interactions. These practices emerge through how actors make sense and share understandings about the newness both individually and collectively (Harmaakorpi and Melkas, 2012).

Social-business innovation requires that multiple actors come together to align perceptions and expectations and create shared meaning for the development and diffusion of innovation (Mele et al., 2019; Russo-Spena et al., 2017). The debate on the diffusion of social-business innovation is still in its infancy. This paper focuses on the communication practices of social-business innovation, aiming to analyse this participative process through three main issues: 1) the actors to be involved; 2) the goals to be achieved; 3) the actions to be performed.

Specifically, we investigate the efforts of B-Corps to address social challenges by adopting a practice-based approach. The communication efforts have been analysed using the messages that B-Corporations diffuse through social media from 2011 on. The main contribution is to address the role of communication in the diffusion of social-business innovation as an emergent process of co-construction and sense-making by companies, customers, and other actors.

The paper develops as follows. The next section offers a review of social innovation within service research. Then, an overview of innovation diffusion and communication practice is proposed. The remainder of the paper describes the research process, leading to an analysis of the evidence-based on B-Corporations' communication. The conclusions offer insights into how companies can shape a fruitful context for advancing social-business innovation.

1. Social innovation and service research

The term social innovation has been defined as a pragmatic approach to social problems (Dawson and Daniel, 2010; Drucker, 1987; Mulgan, 2006), one which applies managerial techniques to solving difficulties in today's society, or as the use of new technologies and new structures in which the bottom-up organisation coexists with social networking (Cajaiba-Santana,

2014). There are distinctive features of social innovation (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012; Viñals, 2013; Westley, 2008). First of all, more than being a new service or business model, social innovation includes new organisational forms that change relationships of power, as well as change how people think and see (Viñals, 2013). Then, while the company is the crucial agent of innovation in business, in the social field, the drive is likely to come from a more extensive network (Westley, 2008). Social innovation arises through a participative process by a broader spectrum of actors, including individual, public, private and third-sector organisations, and any others interested in solving a societal problem (Rubalcaba et al., 2013). The process of collective creation emerges around the idea of multi-empowering agents who act and think jointly in the development of new ideas to promote social change (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Haugh and O’Carroll, 2019; Rubalcaba et al., 2013). Social innovation works towards a systemic social transformation, including changes in values, power, beliefs, capabilities, practices, and policies (Neumeier, 2012), as it conveys a new vision more than the simple creation of new artefacts. It can involve a renewal of resources, practices, and schemas with the power to transform society (Hochgermer, 2013). The changes regard the social context in which these actions take place through the creation of new social systems (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; Franz et al., 2013).

Scholars within service research have recently defined the combination of business and social innovation. According to Rubalcaba (2016), social innovation is not only complementary to business innovation but also entirely performed by businesses. Social needs can become part of business goals by addressing the role of social actors to spur firms towards social interests (Candi et al., 2018; Mele et al., 2019; Russo-Spena et al., 2017).

Mainly, studies within S-D logic and the practice-based approach have provided a conceptual framework that better relates business innovation with social innovation. Business is acknowledged to be social embedded (Ostrom et al., 2010) practice-based (Russo-Spena and Mele, 2018; Russo-Spena et al., 2017), and institutional sensitive (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). In such a view innovation consists of integrating resources to provide “service” (Lusch and Vargo, 2014, p. 122) in an ecosystem approach, which encompasses more than just business and economics, to include both the intricacy of sociocultural and structural changes (Russo-Spena et al., 2017). The collaborative and interactive nature of both social and business innovation represents one more way in which to merge them in a unique perspective supported by the participation of multiple actors in a dynamic process (Hsu et al., 2019, Mele et al., 2019). Such process need to be better understood; particularly, the focus is on how the social-business innovation diffuses in the market, how the

different actors are involved in such a process (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012), and how social-business innovation conveys the application of practices at a collective level (Corsaro et al., 2017; Go Jefferies et al., 2019).

2. Innovation diffusion and communication practices

In mainstream literature, innovation spread rapidly through the market launch by big economic actors (i.e., Richter et al., 2018; Rosen, 1994). However, there are several examples where the diffusion of innovation (DOI) occurs as a slower process influenced by many factors that are either endogenous or exogenous to the company. DOI is a non-linear, complex and articulated process (Malerba, 2000; Wani and Ali, 2015). Scholars agree on the multiplicity of actors contributing to DOI (e.g., Garud et al., 2016), as different perspectives, resource integration, and a set of interactions represent some of the main drivers of the spread of innovation.

Recently, by adopting a practice-based approach, scholars have offered a view of service innovation diffusion practices based on actors who “interact and integrate resources to co-construct a new service provision for multiple beneficiaries” (Corsaro et al., 2017, p. 166). Three main actions are proposed to assign meaning to innovation: 1) enabling confidence, that is, actors who are willing to trust in interaction with others; 2) creating shared meanings, in which the actors’ goal is to frame innovation through sense-giving and sense-making; and 3) leveraging actors’ competencies, as a network expansion is necessary to favour proper resource integration.

In addressing the conceptualisation of DOI, studies have striven to no longer consider only the individual as the primary agent of change in the communication process but to also include the social context and the learning conditions that facilitate change (MacVaugh and Schiavone, 2010). In details, in the diffusion of innovation, the communication practice has a crucial role (Harmaakorpi and Melkas, 2012), enabling the creation of shared meanings (Corsaro et al., 2017). However, straightforward communication is not always sufficient to be considered a practice that is a coherent and significant set of activities (Craig, 2006). Communication practice incorporates a social transformation depending on both human and social actions (Crestani, 2016) and performed by interactions among the individual, social, and objective sphere as well as subjective perspectives. It is a process of social contagion in which “learning, imitation and feedback take place during the innovation diffusion process and improve technological innovation” (Hall, 2006: 460). The continuous exchange between the knowledge and skills of various actors

interacting and integrating resources represents a push towards making the spread of innovations more performative (Mele et al., 2018).

The advent of social media offers a new arena of investigation for communication practices (Gherardi, 2019). The use of new communication tools such as chat and instant messaging promotes new language and meanings (Russo-Spena and Mele, 2018) and fosters new context for innovation diffusion and spreading. As Russo-Spena and Mele (2018: 145) state “the world of digital media is not characterised by a new *unique language*, but by a plurality of styles and forms of expression corresponding to different situations and needs”.

3. Research process

The research adopted a qualitative approach due to the exploratory nature of the investigation (Halinen and Törnroos, 2005). We followed the methodological suggestions on how to perform a practice-based study (Gherardi, 2019). Interpretation efforts were required to obtain insights into what firms do in a social business context. The research context is the community of B-Corporations (also known as B-Corps), including firms that combine business with social impacts to address the challenges of society.

As of October 2019, there are over 2,500 companies listed as B-Corporations, representing 50 countries in 130 industries. The certified B-Corporations envision their aim beyond profit to make a positive impact on the workforce, community, and environment. They strive for social responsibility and use the power of business to solve environmental and social issues.

Data collection

We selected firms that deal with innovation as indicated in the descriptions of their core activities, posted on their websites. The final purposeful sample included 50 companies in 23 countries and 18 industries.

We looked for their online communication to highlight how they frame and describe their activities in the social context. Specifically, we chose to analyse their Twitter profiles, as this represents a method of spreading ideas about how they perform their activities to make a positive impact on society. Twitter, as a context of analysis, has already been used in research on social innovation (Toivonen, 2016).

The dataset derived from the collection of data through Twitter was based on 36 out of the 50 previously identified firms. The remaining 14 either do not have a Twitter account, have an inactive Twitter account, or tweet in a

language other than English. Our final dataset consisted of 38,581 entries posted from November 2011 to September 2019, counting more than 650,000 words.

Data analysis

A content analysis (Weber, 1990) was conducted to analyse the data. We did this by using the software program TextSTAT, which offers the options we needed for the analysis – namely word frequency, analysis of concordance, and the chance to track back every single piece of data – and whose use has already been proposed by services scholars (Jani and Hwang, 2011). First, the analysis included the word frequencies; words such as articles, prepositions, conjunctions, proper nouns, and numbers were filtered out by the lists. Then, a concordance analysis was performed to highlight the most frequent and relevant ties among words. This step sought to achieve a selection that depended on the contextual meaning instead of being focused only on the usage frequency. Finally, the coupling of words and examples promoted an understanding of the underlying meanings of the content of the firms' communication by tracking back single tweets; this third step revealed latent contents (Borkowski et al., 2012).

4. Findings

The communication practices to diffuse social-business innovation emerge through 3 issues: actors, goals, and actions. The analysis focused on the identification of the addressees of communication explicitly recalled by B-Corps, the content of the calls for participation, and how participation is expected to be performed. We named these issues according to the motto of B-Corporation, i.e., “The change we seek”: thus, the first subsection is “The Gamechangers we seek”, the second one is “The changes we seek”, and the third is “How to seek the change”.

4.1. The gamechangers we seek

The B-Corps call for participation of a variety of actors in the social-business innovation process: the community, people, families, and companies. This way of doing is due to the need to cooperate with the entire community as well as to address the same actors as the beneficiaries of the actions. Table 1 summarises the key evidence.

Community is the most recurrent actor sought for action. The act of joining the B-Corps network is a persistent message, as these firms are focusing all of their efforts on creating a sense of mutual support within the community, both locally and online.

A frequent concordant word is the adjective ‘our’ that conveys the idea that communication efforts call for a sense of community and shared goals, thus encouraging the participation of multiple actors.

B-Corps call for people, as everyone can help to share their values. There is a slight difference when one is referring to people instead of community. In the first case, B-Corps wish to stress the responsibility they share with everybody instead of merely calling for support.

A more friendly approach is used when addressing families. The term ‘participation’ is prevalent. It describes the idea of partnership as more than a way to transfer or share responsibilities related to a specific impact. Families are named participants because they join in the B-Corps’ efforts to make a positive impact on society and the environment.

Finally, companies collaborate with B-Corps as providers, partners, or customers. A sense of community permeates the supply chain, as B-Corps envision the impacts other firms have and the potential outcomes to be achieved if these firms collaborate in creating a better world.

4.2. The changes we seek

In the analysis of the changes that B-Corps seek, verbs describing actions and the word ‘tomorrow’ describe the participation. Table 2 synthesises the most relevant evidence.

The use of ‘love’ as a verb describing goals, relationships, and actions is widespread; it is among the ten most-cited in the dataset. B-Corps use this verb to stimulate further a sense of belonging to a community and make an effort to show how much these firms believe.

Table 1 – The Gamechangers

Most frequent words	Frequently concordant words	Exemplifying Tweets
Community	Join Benefits Involved Local Our - Your	<p>"We're proud of the youth who have activated this movement and that so many in our community are joining today and through the week to take action" (<i>BCorporation n. 16</i>)</p> <p>"Thank you for supporting us so we can continue to support our #community and #environment" (<i>BCorporation n. 46</i>)</p> <p>[Our company] "sure knows how to get the community involved!" (<i>BCorporation n. 37</i>)</p>
People	Do – make Our Help Join Thank	<p>"It's about people making the active choice to do good in your community." (<i>BCorporation n. 45</i>)</p> <p>"Do the right thing for our planet, our people, and our community!" (<i>BCorporation n. 37</i>)</p> <p>"Tough people doing tough things" (<i>BCorporation n. 50</i>)</p> <p>"We are constantly looking at ways to help people realize their ambitions and fulfil their dreams" (<i>BCorporation n. 22</i>)</p> <p>"Join people using business as a force for good." (<i>BCorporation n. 50</i>)</p>
Families	Participant Our Teach Help Need Partner	<p>"We hope [...] a quick return to social and political stability." (<i>BCorporation n. 38</i>)</p> <p>"Teach families to farm sustainably!" (<i>BCorporation n. 50</i>)</p> <p>[Our company] "helps families to help themselves." (<i>BCorporation n. 38</i>)</p> <p>"You win, we win, families who need training and support [...] win". (<i>BCorporation n. 38</i>)</p> <p>"We would like to thank our students, families, and a few other things that make us smile" (<i>BCorporation n. 22</i>)</p>
Companies	Responsible Stand (up/against) Sustainable Our Join Increasing number	<p>"These 100 companies are responsible for most of the World's carbon emissions." (<i>BCorporation n. 27</i>)</p> <p>"It's time for companies to stand up for health care. We're joining" (<i>BCorporation n. 38</i>)</p> <p>"We're joining with 175 other companies to stand against policies that hinder people's health" (<i>BCorporation n. 36</i>)</p> <p>"High sustainability companies outperform their counterparts long-term" (<i>BCorporation n. 30</i>)</p>

Another verb is ‘made’, together with its other declensions, such as make, makes, and making. This term shows the need for all actors to be active. Specifically, ‘make the change possible’ is an expected result, which summarises the notion that a challenge can be resolved, but only if all actors collaborate to achieve the established goals. ‘Make better’ and ‘make good’ are two other ways to express the orientation of B-Corps towards a better world, as well as to encourage actors to behave appropriately.

In a similar vein, ‘impact’ is a term used concerning the expected impacts of the planned actions and the impacts that should be counteracted if the concrete goal is to achieve a better world. Thus, most of the evidence can be distinguished as having either a positive meaning or a negative one, as there are achieved impacts to be proud of as well as to be reduced; as in the case

of the climate. Companies communicate about which impacts should be expected from specific actions, to stimulate a higher level of awareness of certain issues.

Messages that deal with the term ‘reduce’ are offering insights into what should be reduced. More concretely, the term ‘reduce’ applies to statements about which negative impacts should be reduced; therefore, it only partially overlaps with the previous results. The key aspects describing reduction are related mostly to environmental issues; thus, water use, carbon emissions, waste, and generally negative and social impacts, such as poverty.

The last term is very different from the previous one, but it has high relevance. The word ‘tomorrow’ describes the essence of B-Corps’ efforts – namely, establishing a better tomorrow for the entire world. Such word is frequently coupled with ‘better’ and ‘together’ to stress that a better future can be created if actors collaborate (i.e., if they act together). These actions are called for ‘today’, so the juxtaposition of two temporal terms serves as a way to describe the urgent need to act for a better tomorrow.

4.3. How to seek the change

The investigation also allowed to detect how actions should be performed to create changes. Table 3 summarises the most relevant evidence.

B-Corps stress how to perform actions in collaborations among actors to reach the common goals synthesised under the motto ‘The Change we seek’. A program is needed to establish a shared path to change. It favours training among actors so that they can join actions.

Support is a feature describing the relationships between other actors related to B-Corps and the B-Corps themselves. It is a virtuous cycle, as B-Corps calls for support as a means of performing actions that support communities.

In terms of relationships, another word is ‘sharing’. B-Corps use it with different meanings as a way to share common interests concerning change as well as to share the actions performed in order to increase interest in change and encourage other actors to join and act.

The term ‘hear’ is used like ‘sharing’, as it represents the action of listening to the thoughts and ideas of the other actors with whom B-Corps act. It is often coupled with positive expressions such as “love to” and “glad to” to state appreciation of what other actors did.

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Table 2 – The changes we seek

Most frequent words	Frequently concordant words	Exemplifying Tweets
Love	Do Show Life Clean You Spread Suggestion	<p>"We love what we do, and it shows. We're happy to report [...]" (BCorporation n. 27)</p> <p>"It's as simple as this. love life!" (BCorporation n. 37)</p> <p>[They] "showed their love for their fave spots, and spent \$15.4 billion." (BCorporation n. 25)</p> <p>"We also love suggestions so we will definitely relay to our design [...]" (BCorporation n. 15)</p> <p>"We love that you want to help us out! You can email us" (BCorporation n. 25)</p>
Make	Change Possible Better World Good Sure	<p>"Measure what works in your business and make changes as needed." (BCorporation n. 29)</p> <p>"We don't take our success for granted – or the people who make that possible." (BCorporation n. 27)</p> <p>"You can make good use out of seasonal produce." (BCorporation n. 48)</p> <p>"We'e all in this together, trying to make the world a better place" (BCorporation n. 27)</p>
Impact	Climate Big Positive Improvement Share Reduce Investment - investing	<p>"Work hard to make measurable, positive impact improvement." (BCorporation n. 37)</p> <p>[Our company] "will be presenting on opportunities in impact investing." (BCorporation n. 30)</p> <p>"Share impact stories so donors can see the difference" (BCorporation n. 45)</p> <p>"The ways companies use their business to impact their communities positively" (BCorporation n. 36)</p> <p>"Proving small everyday choices add up to a big impact with regards to health & sustainability." (BCorporation n. 30)</p>
Reduce	Use (water use) Carbon/fossil Poverty Waste (food waste) Reuse Money Impacts	<p>"Collaborating to reduce poverty." (BCorporation n. 46)</p> <p>"Here are 100 tips to reduce your waste at home. These tips are pretty amazing!" (BCorporation n. 37)</p> <p>"we focus on health, organization, & saving money, but also reduce waste!" (BCorporation n. 48)</p> <p>"Here's how to save money and reduce your carbon footprint while you're away for the holidays" (BCorporation n. 37)</p> <p>"So we can help everyone to #recycle right and reduce waste." (BCorporation n. 48)</p>
Tomorrow	Today Better Join Together	<p>"We build tomorrow today!" (BCorporation n. 29)</p> <p>"We need #ClimateAction now – tomorrow will be too late." (BCorporation n. 10)</p> <p>[...] "preparedness looking towards a better tomorrow together." (BCorporation n. 27)</p> <p>[We partner] "business, innovators and regulators to create a better tomorrow, today." (BCorporation n. 29)</p>

Finally, learning is a key action in understanding how to act towards the change. B-Corps create events that focus on the need to communicate how to perform concrete actions. Other actors learn how to act, and B-Corps learn

from other actors what changes to be achieved and the ways these results emerged.

Table 3 – How to seek the changes

Most frequent words	Frequently concordant words	Exemplifying Tweets
Program	New Training Help Reward Launch Our Participants	[Our] "training program offers the best of both worlds!" (BCorporation n. 27) "A community event tonight to launch [our] rewards program." (BCorporation n. 48) [Our] "program is helping thousands of cast members and employees across the world" (BCorporation n. 22) "One note: Our program can make sure a user is recycling. We reward members with points." (BCorporation n. 48) "This awesome group of program participants recently received training." (BCorporation n. 38)
Support	You Proud Customer Work People Community	"Super proud to support your fantastic work" (BCorporation n. 29) "Shop small next Saturday the 25th to support the communities that support us!" (BCorporation n. 37) "You guys are so inspiring and we are proud to support you!" (BCorporation n. 29) "Choose the right people to support you." (BCorporation n. 45) [He] "is responsible for training and support of our communities" (BCorporation n. 45)
Sharing	Thanks Passion-interests Story-video Posts-articles Concern	"We love sharing a passion for the environment." (BCorporation n. 37) "Thank you for sharing your concern with us." (BCorporation n. 21) "We're so excited to be sharing with you incredible folks" (BCorporation n. 15) "Thanks for sharing your expertise and passion!" (BCorporation n. 46) "Branch managers and mentors are sharing their inspirational personal stories." (BCorporation n. 25)
Hear	Thoughts Love to Glad to News You	"Glad to hear you're loving them!" (BCorporation n. 15) "We're excited to hear your thoughts about that." (BCorporation n. 25) "Did you hear the news? We're honored to have received the diamond award." (BCorporation n. 37) "Love to hear it, thank you for sharing!" (BCorporation n. 15) "Totally hear you, we will definitely relay this to our team." (BCorporation n. 15)
Learn	How to About More Future	"Join us for a free webinar to learn about going solar!" (BCorporation n. 27) "Follow the link to learn about how resilience is built on the importance of a deeper connection with our producers" (BCorporation n. 37) "Register here to learn about the future of mobility!" (BCorporation n. 27) "Want to learn more about how students like Ana have the opportunity to go to university" (BCorporation n. 22) "If you'd like to learn how to keep up to date on them visit us." (BCorporation n. 49)

5. Conclusion

This paper addresses how social-business innovation diffuses through communication practices. Social-business innovation prompts the emergence of new practices enabling social transformation and collective value co-creation processes (Mele et al., 2019).

The B-Corporations' sample offers proper evidence of how organisations jointly accomplish social and business aims. These companies overcome the traditional boundaries distinguishing social and business concepts by integrating societal, ecological, and economic impacts into their innovation strategies. B-Corps promote, diffuse, and communicate social-business innovation by affecting three main aspects of the communication practices: 1) "The Gamechangers we seek" i.e., actors to be involved; 2) "The changes we seek" the goals to be achieved, and 3) "How to seek the change", the actions to be performed.

Concerning the first aspect, the communication practices involve a complex network of actors and interactions (Corsaro et al., 2017; Mele et al., 2019). The Gamechangers include multiple actors (community, families, people, and other actors) the companies call to participate in the process. These actors take specific roles, and they are partnered in favouring social-business innovation.

Communication practices deploy through the diffusion and enactment of information, meanings, and values, promoting common and shared goals. B-Corps' communication actions aim at creating a shared set of knowledge, meanings, and values that make actors feel as they are an integral part of the changes the companies promote. Such actions favour an increased awareness of what actors have to do to address the changes. An increase in sense-making enables to improving of confidence in social-business innovation (Corsaro et al., 2017; Mele et al., 2019) and promote its diffusion. The creation of shared meanings in a collective context is the result of the proper alignment of actors' goals through interactions (Corsaro et al., 2017; Mele et al., 2018). Communication operates in two ways, namely favouring the alignment mentioned above and supporting actors' participation through sense-making.

Additionally, communication serves as a call for action instead of being merely a message that provides information about something. There are many ways in which changes can be achieved, and they all deal with verbs and actions. Learning, hearing, and sharing are clear examples of what B-Corps are trying to establish as proper methods of favouring higher participation in changes and a higher level of awareness about the changes achieved

and those that are foreseen (Mele et al., 2018). B-corporations make communications concrete by performing actions in order to impact on the way they do business. They participate in shaping social and business contexts through the translation of ideas, values, actions into practice (Mele et al., 2018). The communication practices emerge as a co-construction and sense-making process involving companies, customers, communities, employees, and other actors (Corsaro et al., 2017; Russo-Spena et al., 2017) to promote and address changes at the individual and collective levels.

From a practitioner's view perspective, the focus on communication practices addresses the power of business in enabling social innovation. Managers may understand how to set initiatives in promoting new ideas, values, and actions benefiting both businesses and the society. The achievement of such results is possible if multiple actors participate in the communication process, through which actors make sense and share understandings about the newness both individually and collectively.

Finally, further research can explore the interplay among actors in the use of social media to advance ideas and thoughts related to the performing of social innovation in a business domain. In details, future investigations can highlight the role of cultural issues to provide more detailed insights about how to perform social-business innovation in different contexts.

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