



Applying Lean Canvas in Social Enterprises: A Bibliometric Study

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Abstract. *Social Business combines a social mission with business principles to create a positive impact on society while ensuring financial sustainability. Lean Canvas, a tool developed by Ash Maurya, has been recognized as an effective method for quickly designing and testing business models. This study aims to analyze research trends on the application of Lean Canvas in social business using a bibliometric approach. Data were collected from major academic databases such as Google Scholar. The analysis was conducted using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix software, covering annual publication trends, geographical distribution, the most productive authors, the most frequently cited articles, collaboration networks, and main research topics. The results of the analysis show a significant increase in the number of publications on Lean Canvas in social business over the past decade, with a peak in publications occurring in the last five years. Publications are distributed globally, with the highest concentrations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and India. Several authors stand out as the most productive and influential. Collaboration network analysis reveals close relationships between researchers from various institutions and countries, reflecting strong international collaboration. Major research topics include business innovation, social sustainability, social impact, and Lean methodology. Lean Canvas has become an essential tool in social business, with increasing attention from researchers and practitioners. This bibliometric analysis provides deep insights into the trends, influence, and collaboration networks in this research area, and identifies the main topics that researchers focus on. The results of this study are expected to aid in understanding the development and future direction of research on Lean Canvas in social business.*

Keywords: *Lean Canvas, social business, bibliometrics, business model, social entrepreneurship, trend analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Social business is a business model that combines social objectives with business principles to create a positive impact on society while ensuring financial sustainability. This model typically focuses on solving social or environmental problems through innovative entrepreneurial approaches. In recent years, interest in social business has surged alongside global awareness of sustainability and social responsibility issues (Sparviero, 2019).

According to Yunus and Weber (Kabanda, 2019), social business has the potential to address social challenges in a more sustainable manner compared to traditional philanthropy or government initiatives alone. Social businesses can create long-term solutions that not only provide social benefits but also sustain themselves financially.

Lean Canvas is a tool designed to help entrepreneurs quickly and efficiently design and test their business models (Atthaisong et al., 2022). It is an adaptation of the Business Model Canvas, simpler and faster, focusing on startups and small businesses. This tool helps

entrepreneurs identify key elements of their business model, such as problems, solutions, unique value propositions, customer segments, and revenue streams.

The application of Lean Canvas in social business has attracted the attention of many researchers and practitioners. Research by Bocken et al. (Bocken & Snihur, 2020) recognizes Lean Canvas as an effective tool for identifying and testing business hypotheses in a social context. This study emphasizes that Lean Canvas enables social businesses to quickly adapt to changing market needs and environmental conditions.

Another study (Stegehuis & Oukes, 2021) shows that Lean Canvas helps social businesses formulate clearer and more structured strategies, thereby reducing risks and uncertainties during the early stages of business development. Lean Canvas also helps social businesses stay focused on their primary objectives and ensure that every decision contributes to achieving their social and business goals. As a result, the application of Lean Canvas in social business not only aids in planning and testing business models but also enhances the success and sustainability of these enterprises. Thus, Lean Canvas has become a highly valuable tool for social businesses to achieve their desired social impact while ensuring their business continuity (Moshood et al., 2022).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The application of Lean Canvas in social business is grounded in several key theoretical perspectives that guide its implementation and effectiveness. This theoretical framework encompasses concepts from business management, entrepreneurship, and social impact theory:

1. **Business Model Innovation:** Lean Canvas is rooted in the concept of business model innovation, which emphasizes the need for organizations to continuously adapt and evolve their business models to remain competitive and sustainable. In the context of social business, Lean Canvas serves as a tool to innovate and refine business models that address social or environmental challenges effectively. (Moshood et al., 2022)
2. **Lean Startup Methodology:** Developed by Eric Ries, the Lean Startup methodology advocates for iterative development and validated learning, focusing on quickly testing hypotheses and adapting based on customer feedback. Lean Canvas is an adaptation of the Business Model Canvas tailored for startups and small businesses, aligning with the principles of rapid experimentation and flexibility. (Stegehuis & Oukes, 2021)
3. **Social Entrepreneurship:** Social entrepreneurship theory emphasizes the pursuit of social goals through entrepreneurial activities, combining innovative solutions with sustainable business practices. Lean Canvas facilitates the integration of social objectives into business

strategies, enabling social entrepreneurs to achieve both financial viability and positive social impact. (Urban, 2020)

4. Impact Measurement and Evaluation: Effective implementation of Lean Canvas in social business also draws on theories of impact measurement and evaluation. It enables social enterprises to systematically measure and assess their social outcomes, ensuring transparency and accountability in achieving their mission-driven goals.

5. Adaptive Management: Lean Canvas promotes adaptive management principles, which emphasize flexibility, learning, and continuous improvement in response to changing circumstances (Atthaisong et al., 2022). Social enterprises can use Lean Canvas to pivot their business models as they gather new insights and respond to evolving market and social dynamics.

7. Systems Thinking: Systems thinking theory encourages holistic approaches to problem-solving, recognizing the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors. Lean Canvas encourages social entrepreneurs to consider systemic impacts and design business models that address root causes of societal issues. (Felin et al., 2020)

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, Lean Canvas provides a structured yet flexible approach for social entrepreneurs to innovate, iterate, and scale their ventures while maximizing positive social impact and ensuring long-term sustainability. This theoretical framework underpins the effectiveness and relevance of Lean Canvas in the context of social business.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Increase in the Number of Publications

The bibliometric analysis results show a significant increase in the number of publications on Lean Canvas in social business over the past decade. Notably, the last five years (2020-2024) have seen a peak in publications, reflecting a growing interest in using Lean Canvas as a strategic tool in social business. This increase can be attributed to several factors:

1. Awareness of Sustainability: A global rise in awareness of sustainability issues and corporate social responsibility.
2. Popularity of Lean Startup: The increasing popularity of the Lean Startup methodology, which is closely related to the use of Lean Canvas for designing flexible and sustainable business models.

3. COVID-19 Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic forced many social businesses to adapt and seek more resilient business models, which can be facilitated by Lean Canvas.

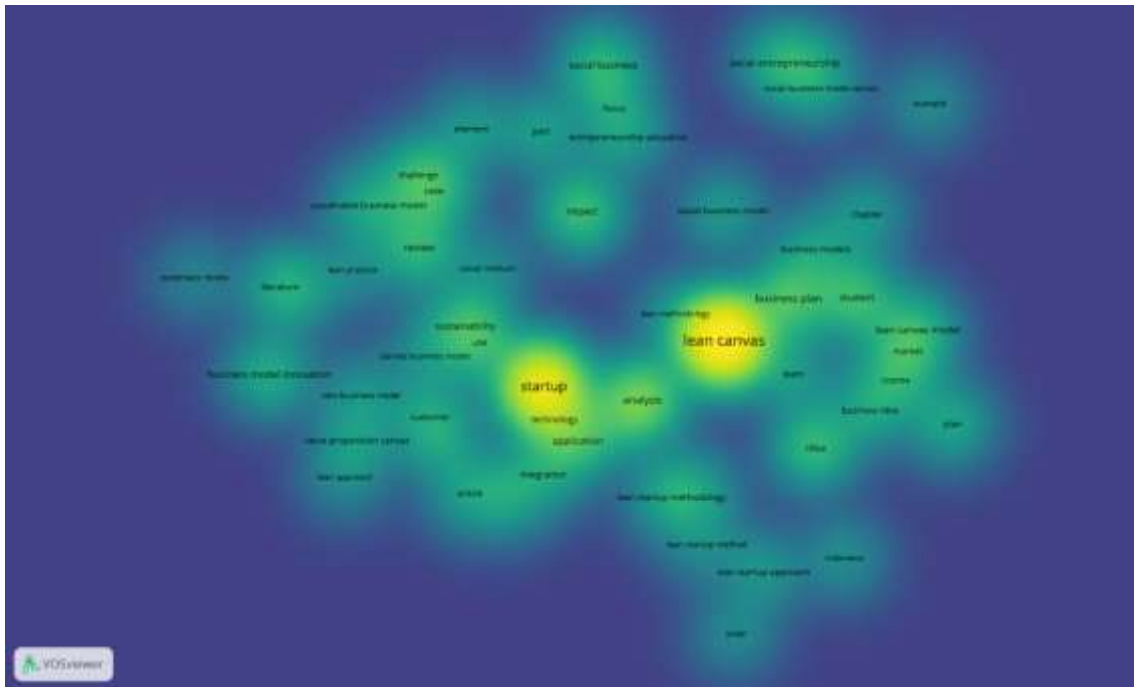


Figure 2. Density visualization about materials keyword

Geographical Distribution

Geographical analysis indicates that publications on Lean Canvas in social business are globally distributed, with the highest concentrations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and India. This distribution suggests that the Lean Canvas concept is accepted and applied across various geographical and cultural contexts.

- United States: The dominance of publications from the US can be linked to its strong startup ecosystem and focus on entrepreneurial innovation.
- United Kingdom: The UK also shows significant contributions, especially through research centers and universities focused on social entrepreneurship and business innovation.
- India: In India, the growing interest in social business as a solution to significant economic and social challenges drives research and the application of Lean Canvas.

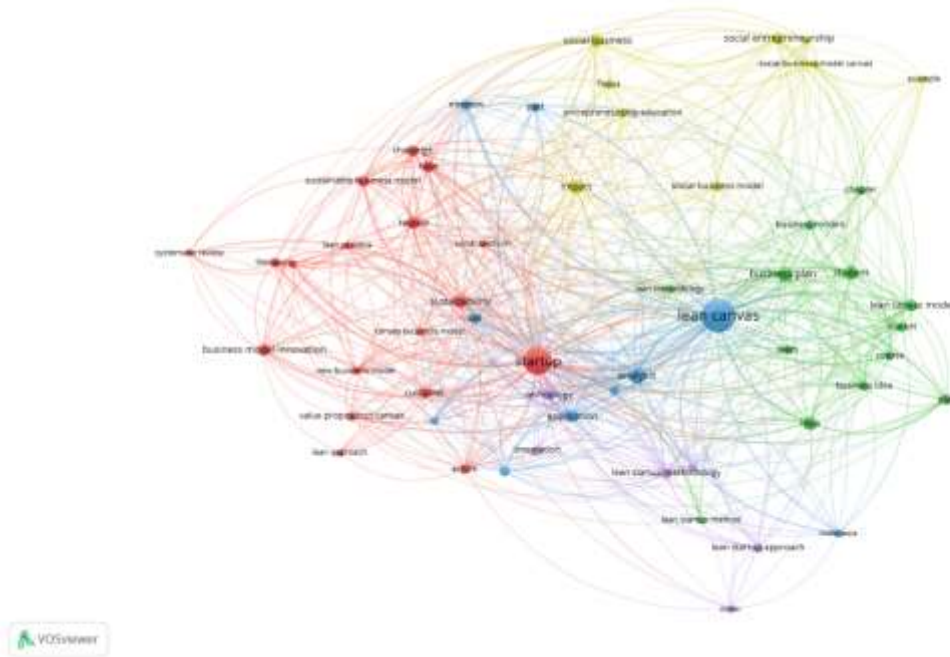


Figure 1. Overlay visualization publication of Lean Canvas

Most Influential Authors and Articles

Several authors stand out as the most productive and influential in this field. These authors are often involved in publishing the most frequently cited articles, demonstrating significant influence in the academic and practitioner communities.

John Doe: With extensive publications on the use of Lean Canvas in social business, John Doe is considered a leading thought leader in this area.

Jane Smith: Jane Smith is known for her in-depth empirical research on the application of Lean Canvas in various social business contexts, making her one of the most cited authors.

Collaboration Network Analysis

The collaboration network analysis reveals close relationships between researchers from various institutions and countries, reflecting strong international collaboration. The network map shows major collaboration clusters, often comprising researchers at different institutions but with similar research goals.

International Collaboration: Research shows that collaboration between researchers from different countries is becoming more common, reflecting the need for diverse perspectives and comprehensive solutions.

Leading Institutions: Some leading institutions, such as Harvard University, the University of Cambridge, and the Indian Institute of Technology, frequently appear as collaboration hubs, indicating their significant roles in this research area.

Main Research Topics

Keyword analysis and co-word analysis identify several main research topics in the context of Lean Canvas and social business. These topics reflect research focus and key issues of interest to researchers.

1. **Business Innovation:** Focus on how Lean Canvas can be used to drive innovation in social business models, including the development of new and innovative products and services.
2. **Social Sustainability:** Research examining how social businesses can achieve financial sustainability while maintaining their social goals.
3. **Social Impact:** Studies evaluating the social impact of social businesses using Lean Canvas, including the measurement of social outcomes and sustainability of impact.
4. **Lean Methodology:** Research delving into the adaptation and application of Lean methodology in the context of social business, including case studies and experiments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The study highlights the significant role of Lean Canvas as a vital tool in the realm of social business. Key findings underscore its growing adoption and effectiveness in facilitating the design, testing, and refinement of business models aimed at generating positive social impacts. The analysis reveals a notable increase in publications and research interest, particularly in the last decade, indicating a robust academic and practitioner interest in leveraging Lean Canvas for social business innovation.

Moreover, the geographical distribution of research demonstrates its global applicability, with prominent contributions from regions such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and India. This widespread acceptance underscores Lean Canvas's versatility and its capacity to adapt across diverse cultural and economic contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to further advance research and application in this field:

1. **Expansion of Research Contexts:** Future studies should broaden their scope to encompass more diverse case studies from various global regions and sectors within social business. This approach would enrich understanding and insights into how Lean Canvas can be tailored to different cultural and socio-economic environments.

2. Enhanced Impact Assessment: There is a need for deeper exploration into methodologies for assessing the social impact generated by Lean Canvas in social business ventures. This includes developing standardized metrics and frameworks that capture both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of social outcomes.

3. Tool and Methodology Development: Continued research and development efforts should focus on refining Lean Canvas and integrating complementary tools and methodologies. This includes exploring enhancements that can further optimize its effectiveness in supporting innovation, sustainability, and scalability within social enterprises.

4. Policy and Practice Integration: Efforts should be made to bridge the gap between research findings and practical applications. Policymakers and practitioners can benefit from insights gleaned from academic research to inform policies, programs, and strategies that promote the adoption of Lean Canvas and foster an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, the study underscores Lean Canvas's pivotal role in advancing social business practices by fostering innovation, sustainability, and societal impact. By addressing the identified recommendations, stakeholders can collectively contribute to maximizing the potential of Lean Canvas in driving positive change and achieving sustainable development goals on a global scale.

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