

Digital social ventures should ‘contribute’ not ‘disrupt’ – new research

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Entrepreneurs running digital social ventures should tone down their intentions from looking to ‘disrupt’ to ‘contribute’, research from Trinity Business School finds, as the new study reveals that such entities are all too often treated like regular tech start-ups.

The new research paper, *The Emergence and Evolution of Digital Social Ventures in Dublin, Ireland*, provides insights into the growth and impact of digital social ventures in the city.

The research, conducted by Dr Sheila Cannon, Assistant Professor in Social Entrepreneurship at Trinity Business School, alongside Dr Raymond Dart from Trent University, explores the factors that have contributed to the rise of digital social ventures in Dublin and the challenges they face in achieving their social and environmental goals.

The study found that digital social ventures in Dublin use technology to address a wide range of social and environmental issues, including poverty, education, and climate change. These ventures begin with high expectations that a complex social issue can be ‘solved’ with digital technology. There is, however, a gap between this expectation and reality.

The study shows the journey of these social entrepreneurs from the excitement of pitching a new idea, to disappointment in hitting reality, to innovation as they figure out the real value in their idea, which tends to be much more modest than initially pitched. Despite facing a number of challenges, such as limited access to funding and experienced talent, the study also highlights the significant progress that has been made in terms of support structures, collaborations, and partnerships.

According to Cannon, Assistant Professor in Social Entrepreneurship at Trinity Business School and author of the study:

“Dublin has the potential to become a leading hub for digital social ventures. The findings of this study, I hope, will make sure that the growth of this sector is realistic. We recommend that new digital social innovators work closely with those people and groups already working with the social issue to avoid making the same mistakes and to ensure that they are able to realise the full potential of any new digital initiative.”

The Emergence and Evolution of Digital Social Ventures in Dublin, Ireland, provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing digital social ventures in Dublin and it will be of interest to anyone looking to understand the impact of technology on society and the environment.

The authors hope that their research will help to encourage further investment and support for this important sector.

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