

The Economic and Social Impact Evaluation of The Association of Voluntary Italian Blood Donors



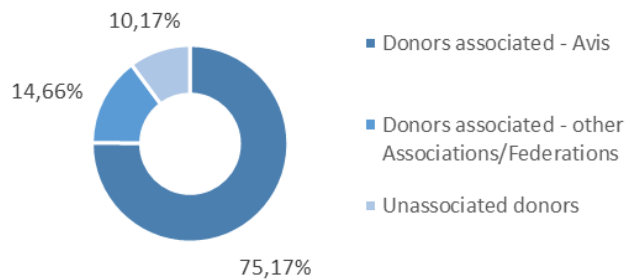
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Introduction

The volume is the result of the effort of the **Association of Voluntary Italian Blood Donors (known as “Avis”)** to define an impact evaluation model, explicitly designed to measure, quantify and, thus, account for the **social and economic impacts** of its activities. Equally important, the study represents a valuable contribution – both from a theoretical and practical point of view – to the national and international debate around the controversial issue of **Social Impact Evaluation (SIE)**.

Avis is a key player of the Italian transfusion system: with 3.411 local branches, Avis is involved – in different ways – in the experience of 1.287.291 blood donors (about 75% of the total blood donors in the country), with significant spill-overs in terms of the socio-economic value generated to the benefit of both, the blood donors themselves and the community at large.

Italian blood donors by affiliation (2014)



The Social Impact Evaluation of Avis has been carried out by using a specific methodology: the **Social Return on Investment (SROI)** analysis. The SROI consists of a ratio through which we divide the economic, social and environmental benefits brought by the activity (net of the inputs) and the investments required in order to reach them. The information returned is the amount of value generated for each euro invested in the social-purpose activities, programme or organization. The study calculated the SROI index of the activities carried out by Avis in 2014 aimed at increasing the **health, knowledge, awareness and social cohesion** of its donors and volunteers.

Methods

Research steps

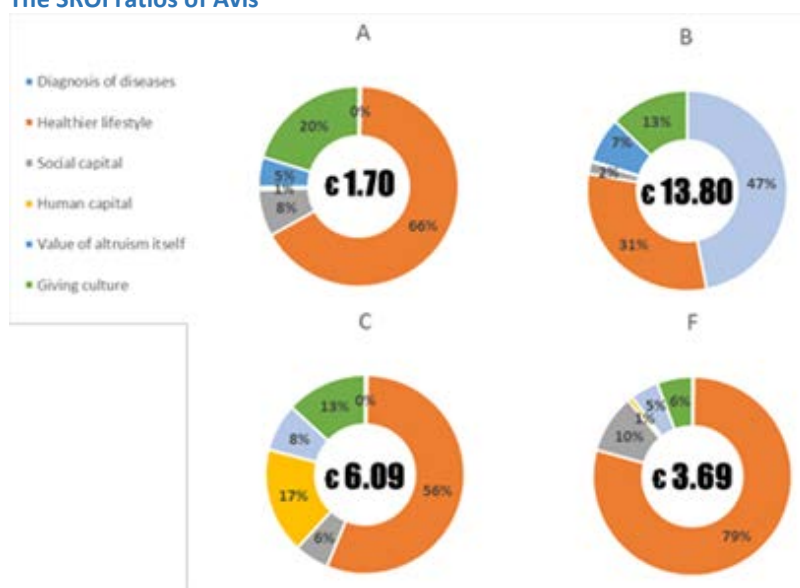
STEPS	METHODS
Background and exploration	Focus Group with Avis members
	Literature review
Defining the object of investigation	Sampling of Avis branches
Data collection	Cost analysis
	Benefit analysis
Data analysis	SROI analysis

The research includes multiple steps and a mixed-method approach. Data collection has included two lines of action, consistently with the nature of the SROI index: the calculation of costs, and the calculation of benefits.

- **Cost analysis** has been performed through a budget reclassification and the assignment of a financial value to the so called “*non-monetary inputs*”, both connected to the activities related to **blood collection** (ie. blood donor reception, blood samples, blood storage and transportation) and to the **associative activities** (ie. activities aimed at giving information, promoting the practice of blood donation, attracting and recruiting blood donors).
- **Benefit analysis** has been performed through a survey submitted to the members of the local branches included in the sample. The areas of impact identified through the exploration stage are: **health related-impacts** (diagnosis of diseases; promotion of healthier life styles), **social and relational related-impacts** (social capital, human capital, self-realization coming from the accomplishment of an act of altruism, enhancement of a giving culture).

From the conjunction of the costs analysis results and the monetization of the impacts illustrated above, we calculated the **SROI ratio** of four municipal-level branch. In all cases, the index is positive, from €1.70 (branch A) to €13.80 (branch B). This, in other words, means that 1 euro invested in the activities of branch A is able to generate a social value of €1.70; while in the case of branch B this value reaches the threshold of €13.80.

The SROI ratios of Avis

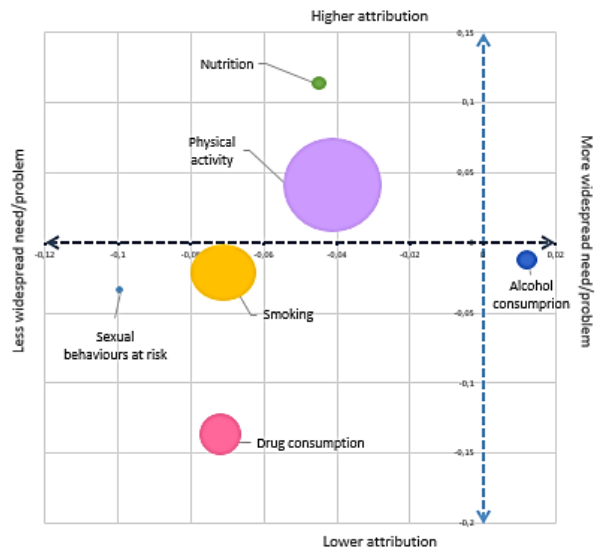


Main findings

1. Healthier lifestyle

Regardless of the specificities that characterize the organization B (where a significant share of value comes from the early detection of some diseases), the most relevant part of impact is the ability to solicit the adoption of a healthier lifestyle (or the abandon of detrimental habits and behaviours that represent a source of risk). The systematic comparison between associated donors or volunteers and unassociated donors also highlighted the areas where Avis should reinforce its interventions (first of all, the reduction of alcohol consumption, followed by the reduction of smoking, the cessation of any drug consumption and the abandonment of sexual behaviours at risk).

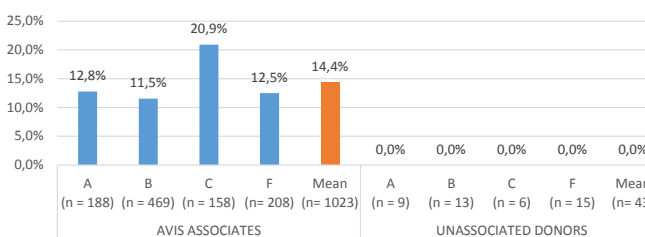
Adoption of a healthier lifestyle



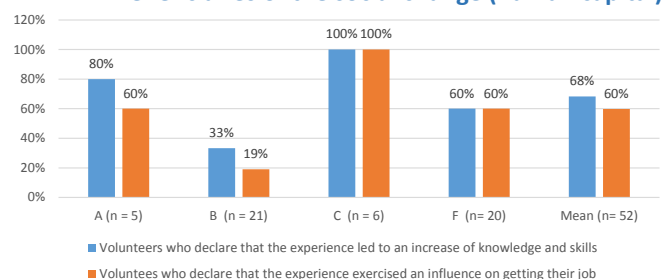
2. Social and human capital

Moving to the impacts related to the **social dimension** involved in the activities of Avis, an economic value was attributed to the function carried out by the Association in terms of promotion of a higher level of cohesion and social interaction within the community (the so called **social capital**). This aspect definitively made clear the difference between the members of the Association and unassociated donors: the frequency or intensity of participation to social gathering events, as well as the ability to establish relevant and durable relationships during the donation experience show a significant decrease in the experience of the latter group. Equally relevant are the impacts generated through the provision of free training initiatives and activities, aimed at promoting the professional and personal growth of volunteers (the so called **human capital**). The majority of respondents recognize not only that the participation to these initiatives expanded their knowledge and enhanced their skills (68%), but also that it played a role in getting their actual job (60%).

Respondents who took part to social gathering events



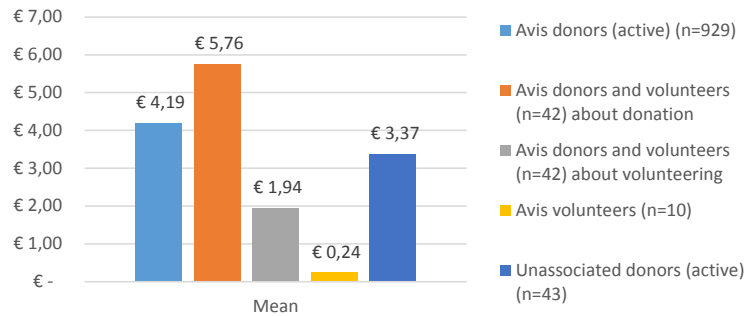
Beneficiaries of the social change (human capital)



3. Altruism, blood donation and volunteering

The study also attempted to test the hypothesis that the very opportunity to be altruistic – in particular, through blood donation and volunteering – represents a benefit itself, to the extent that these behaviours lead to a sort of ‘return’ (albeit intangible) for those who engage in them. The latter assumption became the starting point for determining the value implicitly attributed to these acts, with the consequent exploration of the possibility that there is a “willingness to pay” related to the engagement in such actions, complemented by the entire series of indirect costs incurred by those who perform those actions.

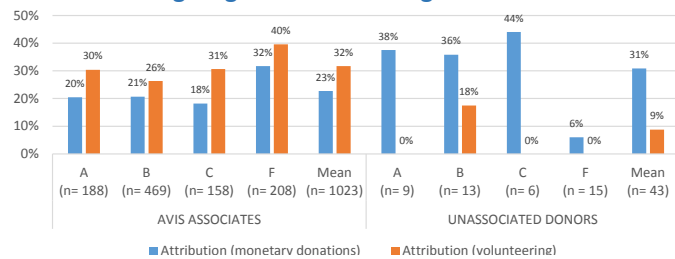
Willingness to pay related to blood donation or volunteering



4. Reinforcement of the culture of giving and volunteering

Eventually, it is worthwhile noting the evidence gathered around the assumption that the experience as blood donor and volunteer within Avis may have determined a higher propensity to make charitable contributions or to further volunteer to the benefit of other NPOs. Indeed, Avis’s members believe that their previous

The culture of giving and volunteering



experience within the Association explains at 32% the fact that they engaged in volunteering for other NPOs and at 23% their monetary giving in favour of other charities. Conversely, unassociated donors mainly recognize (31%) the effect of their blood donation experience as a cause of their inclination to make money donations to other NPOs, while identifying a scarce attribution (9%) of their volunteering to the fact that they are blood donors.

Conclusions: SIE and learning

There is a substantial lack of Social Impact Evaluation studies on the Italian Third Sector and specifically designed to give full recognition to the activities performed by Blood Donors Associations, both in Italy and in other countries. The research confirms the claims and statements of a large part of the literature devoted to SIE, according to which one of the most powerful aspects of evaluation, regardless of the methods used, is exactly its ability to sustain **organizational learning**. Indeed, SIE leads to a clear identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the model adopted, in order to engage in any necessary corrective action and to contribute to the enhancement of the generated impacts. The findings as well as the methodological design of the study contribute to the attempt to define a **series of standards and evaluative common practices**, to the benefit not only of other branches belonging to the Avis network, but also of a wide range of NPOs and Social Enterprises (SEs) that – albeit operating in completely different sectors – promote programmes and activities able to determine social impacts that are similar by nature to those considered in this study.