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Abstract

Purpose

This paper uses the proximity approach of economic geography with its spatial dimension (geographic) and their non spatial dimensions (social, institutional, cognitive and organizational) to shed light on the determinants of business cooperation with other organizations. It is also examined if this cooperation is a determining factor for business innovation (innovation networks), drawing a distinction between technological and non-technological innovations.

Design/methodology/approach

The study has a quantitative approach; it analyzes the case of 312 companies in a cluster of agribusinesses in an emerging economy (Chile). The proposal model and its interrelations are tested with exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings

The results show that cognitive-organizational proximity is a positive determinant of business cooperation with other organizations while social and institutional proximity are negative determinants. It is also established that business cooperation is a positive determinant of business innovation. It is more relevant in the case of technological innovation unlike non-technological innovations. In addition, it is noted that business cooperation levels are lower in micro-enterprises, a result that differs from developed countries.

Practical implications

For business managers, it is best to cooperate with companies that are similar in terms of cognitive and organizational levels for innovation. At the same time, it is necessary develop strategies to reduce the social and institutional barriers to cooperation, especially in the agribusiness sector.

Originality/value

The contributions of the study are: i) An in-depth quantitative examination of the relationships of various non-spatial proximities as determinants of business cooperation ii) An analysis of whether business cooperation with other organizations is a determining factor for business innovation, distinguishing between technological and non-technological innovation, and iii) Testing these relationships in the context of agribusiness in an emerging economy such as Chile's, because most of studies are related to high tech sector and developed economies.

Key words: proximity, innovation, business cooperation, cluster, innovation network.

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