

Title: You'll never buy alone: Collective consumption and Co-creation in a crowdfunding community.

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Purpose

Collective consumption studies how the co-presence of multiple consumers affects the experience of each other (Bruce et al., 2019). This paper studies the role of peers in online communities, with the goal of understanding how resources are integrated to co-create value in a service ecosystem. We chose rewards-based crowdfunding as the context of the research due to its interactive, participative, and informal nature.

Research Design and Methods

We conducted a qualitative study to gauge the informal exchanges among the members of communities. The first step was a netnographic analysis of an important online forum built around the crowdfunding of collectibles, gathering messages referring to potential integration of resources. We then analyzed these messages as recommended by the Gioia Methodology (Corley and Gioia, 2011), by aggregating the data according to theory- and researcher-centered concepts and later developing a grounded theoretical model.

Findings and Results

We found that crowdfunding communities can be interpreted as collective actors since they share a collective identity. This result was achieved by applying the definition of actor in Service Dominant Logic, as a resource-integrator and value co-creator (Koskela-Huotari and Siltaloppi, 2020). We analyzed the resources that were shared by the community, as well as the value co-creation that would not happen without them. Besides the eight kinds of co-creation that were known to happen in crowdfunding (Quero and Ventura, 2019), we identified a ninth type that is unique to communities, co-inspiration: “the value co-created by a community that allows the formation of a shared set of opinions. These practices can instruct the ideal behavior for new and old actors of the ecosystem and inspire them to try different roles”.

Originality and Contribution

This paper is part of the growing corpus of literature focused on collective consumption. This is the first time, to our knowledge, that the concept of collective actors was applied to crowdfunding and its communities, where they were traditionally considered as simple collectives *of* actors. The inclusion of communities among actors was made possible by researching the kinds of resources that it integrates, and the value that it co-creates, adding to both research fields. Furthermore, this paper offers the evaluation of a specific sample community that can be taken as a blueprint for further study.

Implications

From a managerial standpoint, the main implication is that communities are more than meeting halls: they have their own identity and culture. As such, targeting communities has a deeper impact -positive or negative- than the sum of the actors that meet there. Platforms, creators, and other actors of the crowdfunding ecosystem should invest energy to help grow these communities. Creators should also tap these communities carefully: they can be reservoirs of value and inspiration, but also quickly become adversarial and punish bad behaviors.

References

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