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BEG, BORROW, OR JUST STEAL: PLAGIARISM IN CROWDFUNDING (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

BEG, BORROW, OR JUST STEAL: PLAGIARISM IN CROWDFUNDING

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Principal Topic

A unique aspect of crowdfunding that has received limited scholarly attention is the social comparison and learning that occurs among project creators. Given that crowdfunding has surpassed $16 billion (Massolution, 2015) and there are now more than six years of archived Kickstarter activity, it is reasonable to expect that social comparison will take place in order to minimize ambiguity and perceived risk of the endeavor (Festinger, 1954; Wooten & Reed, 1998). Through this act of comparison a tendency to behave similarly will occur (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), and that this tendency will manifest in the form of plagiarism. We explore the direct and indirect relationships of community engagement, plagiarism and funding outcomes.

Method

We used a random set of Kickstarter campaigns (n=876), 51% of which were funded. Data was analyzed using regression analysis (OLS and logistical) where dependent variables were funding outcomes. We operationalized funding outcomes in three different ways: dichotomous variable “funded”, “total amount” raised (using the log of the amount the Kickstarter campaign raised plus one), and “percent of campaign goal.” The independent variable of community engagement is a composite including the number of projects backed, comments made, and tenure within the platform of the entrepreneur. The independent variable of plagiarism was calculated by submitting the verbatim text files to a top plagiarism software (www.turnitin.com) to determine the originality of content and to identify common areas for duplication.

Results and Contributions

As predicted, results show that plagiarism is significantly related to funding outcomes regardless of how the dependent variable is operationalized (funded (B = .026, p <.01), total amount raised (β = .14, p <.01), funding percent (β = .012, p <.01)). These findings contribute to our scholarly understanding and practical knowledge of entrepreneurial behavior and the crowdfunding phenomena. We speak directly to recent calls for a greater understanding of the community context and the dyadic relationships necessary for nascent entrepreneurial activity (Shepherd, 2015). The work expands our understanding of social learning theory (Scherer, Adams, & Wiebe, 1989; Rae, 2000) to pre-nascent stage activity, capturing individuals who have chosen to engage in entrepreneurship but not yet taken formal action.

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