

**When the crowd finances: the role of the project, of the project's bearer and the platform in the willingness to participate**

**Marie Beck**

University of Lille - I.A.E. Lille  
L.E.M. U.M.R. C.N.R.S. 9221  
104 Avenue du peuple Belge 59043 Lille Cedex, France  
[mariebeck27@gmail.com](mailto:mariebeck27@gmail.com)

**Oliviane Brodin**

University of Lille – I.A.E. Lille  
R.I.M.E. Lab E.A. 7396  
104 Avenue du peuple Belge 59043 Lille Cedex, France  
[oliviane.brodin@iae.univ-lille1.fr](mailto:oliviane.brodin@iae.univ-lille1.fr)

**Jean-François Mallet**

University of Moncton  
R.I.M.E. Lab E.A. 7396  
18 avenue Antonine-Maillet Moncton, NB, Canada E1A 3E9  
[jean.francois.mallet84@gmail.com](mailto:jean.francois.mallet84@gmail.com)

## **When the crowd finances: the role of the project, of the project's bearer and the platform in the willingness to participate**

### **Abstract:**

Crowdfunding is an innovative way to raise capital from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. The choice to finance a project, in this context, has not been very much studied from the point of view of a potential contributor. This research investigates the role of community and popularity of the project, credibility of the project bearer, and trust in the platform on the willingness to participate in a reward-based crowdfunding project. A quantitative study driven on the KissKissBankBank platform shows that willingness to participate, to finance, and word-of-mouth are linked to these features, and highlights the interactions between the characteristics of the platform, the project bearer and the project.

**Key words:** crowdfunding, credibility, community, popularity, social media.

## Introduction

In 2008, the economic crisis changed the rules of the credit access around the world. Thus, entrepreneurs from different industries searched innovative ways to obtain capital. Seven years later, one of the most known and dynamic way is crowdfunding (e.g. in 2014 it has been growing impressively by a yearly rate of more than 100 % in France).

Literature defines crowdfunding as “the practice of funding a project or venture by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet” (Prive, 2012). Different forms of crowdfunding emerged, based on donation (close to sponsorship), reward, equity and lending (or P2P lending). Crowdfunding raises a number of financial and regulation inquiries and still has little been investigated from a marketing point of view.

Existing research on crowdfunding showed results about the motivations of the project bearer (Gerber, Hui & Kuo, 2012; 2013; Belleflamme, Lambert & Schwienbacher, 2012; Bretschneider, Knaub & Weick, 2014), and of the contributors (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003) and their global satisfaction (Zheng & al., 2014). Some success factors inherent to these types of projects have been studied, like the features of the project bearer, of the project or its presentation: the geographic, cultural and social distance between the project bearer and contributors (Agrawal, Catalini & Goldfarb, 2011; Burtch, Ghose & Wattal, 2013), the social capital of the project bearer (Giudici, Guerini & Rossi- Lamastra, 2013), the quality of the project (Mollick, 2014), its length and visual presentation, its network (Tarteret, 2014), the specific role of social media (Moissejev, 2013) and the role of the crowd in crowdfunding (Onnée & Renault, 2014). With the exception of the latter study, research about crowdfunding thus began with two types of studies: qualitative studies on the motivations of participants and exploratory studies based on data available on the platforms, identifying certain factors of success of a project. However, no research investigates the relevance of community and popularity of the project, credibility of the project bearer and trust in the platform, and it is important to understand the role of these features and their conceptual bases in the choice of a contributor to participate in a crowdfunding project.

The goal of this study is to explore the role of these features in the intentions of a potential contributor to finance a project. Based on the literature on these concepts, this paper expects the direct and positive effect of (1) project community and (2) project popularity, (3) project's bearer credibility and (4) trust in the platform on willingness to participate, willingness to finance and word of mouth.

The first section of this paper is developing the literature review, conceptual framework and hypotheses, the second one is presenting the methodology of the study and the findings. The results are then discussed and a conclusion is proposed in the last section.

### **1. Crowdfunding and the decision to fund a project from the point of view of a potential contributor: the role of community, popularity, credibility and trust**

#### ***1.1. Studies about crowdfunding: motivations of contributors and project bearers, success factors of a project***

Literature about crowdfunding is fairly recent. The participants' motivations have initially been the subject of the qualitative studies conducted. Creators are pursuing several objectives by

appealing to crowdfunding: to finance their project, make it more widely known and legitimized by the platform, create links or network around it, be supported or approved, retain control over the project and acquire knowledge and skills (Gerber, Hui & Kuo, 2012; Gerber & Hui, 2013). The motivations for contributing to a virtual community are already known: they are both about the ease of communication as instrumental motivations, efficacy, quality control, or the result of individual status, involvement or personal expectations (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). Regarding crowdfunding, the motives of supporters are many too, including the desire to obtain a reward, to help others, to be part of a community, support a cause or choose the project that they want to support (Gerber & Hui, 2013). Disincentives are also known: project leaders fearing failure and contributors distrust. These motivations may vary by type of crowdfunding considered: for equity-based crowdfunding of startups, fun, curiosity, altruism, reciprocity, direct, indirect (community) or geographic (local) identification, recognition, profit, need for the product or herding behavior are identified motivations (Bretschneider, Knaub & Wieck, 2014).

Some success factors of the projects have been identified, as well as the overall satisfaction towards the project (Zheng & al., 2014). They are related to the project, its presentation and the project bearer.

Burtch, Ghose and Wattal (2013) studied the role of geographical and cultural distance in the behavior of individual contributors in peer-to-peer crowdfunding. Their results show the effect of proximity in the investment choices, both geographically and culturally. But the geographical proximity effect that seems at first sight checked in the case of crowdfunding, vanishes if one neutralizes the effects of the social network (family or friends). It is important at the beginning of a project, but strongly attenuates thereafter for projects that spread and succeed, at least for equity crowdfunding projects (Agrawal, Catalini & Goldfarb, 2011). That these findings can be generalized to other types of crowdfunding is not certain.

Belleflamme, Lambert and Schwienbacher (2012; 2013) emphasized the importance of a community around the project. Peer effects are essential for success: the greater the number of contributors and the amount already collected, the higher the contributor is encouraged to increase its offer (Hardy, 2013). Contributors as project bearer share the same objective: to communicate widely about the project to ensure its success. The social capital of the holder proved to be an important success factor to reach the amount set for a project in the study of Giudici, Guerini and Rossi-Lamastra (2013) that distinguished between personal social capital (exclusive, measured by the number of Facebook contacts) and territorial (or locally shared, as measured by the municipality of residence of the contributor). Only personal social capital is involved in the success.

Other studies show the role of the social network around the project. Tarteret (2014) presents interesting results: increasing amount and duration are factors of failure, while the network (its quality more than its size) and the dynamism of the project bearer are success factors. In this study on the French platform KissKissBankBank, the visual presentation of the project does not appear to play any role.

The study by Mollick (2014) on Kickstarter (a crowdfunding platform that is based on either reward or investment) shows on one hand, that projects that fail do it by a wide margin and on the other hand, projects that succeed barely do. It highlights a number of success factors: the quality of the project (measured by the presence of a video presentation of the project, by updating information on the project and the spelling mistakes in the presentation), the social network (the

number of Facebook friends of the project bearer) as well as cultural and geographical proximity between the project bearer and contributors (for example, a country music project in Nashville, Tennessee).

Another study by Moissejev (2013) specifically focuses on the role of social media in the success of a crowdfunding project (speed of financing, amount obtained and support of contributors to the project, measured by the number of Facebook "Like"). His study, conducted on several crowdfunding platforms, shows that it is the number of "Like" and not the number of Facebook friends that is associated with the project's success.

Most of these studies are exploratory (analysis of the figures presented on the platforms) or qualitative (for the studies of motivations). A recent case study by Onnée and Renault (2014) on Ulule and KissKissBankBank platforms presents a deeper knowledge of the role played by the crowd. It doesn't only provide funds but also intelligence, opinion, and sometimes creative talent; it exerts a driving pressure on projects, promoting their dissemination and offering moral support.

If the success factors seem to have been identified, the role of the community, social media and social capital appearing essential to the success, most results so far remain unclear and sometimes contradictory (this is the case for the effects of presentation of the project or geographic proximity, for example). In addition, the conceptual foundations of these effects have not been clearly defined.

The present study remains exploratory. It aims a better understanding of the decision of a potential contributor to fund a crowdfunding project. Specifically, the research questions concern the role of popularity and community around the project, the role of source credibility (the credibility of the project bearer), and the role of trust in the platform. These concepts are to be specified in the context of crowdfunding.

### ***1.2. The role of community and popularity around the project, of the project bearer's credibility, and trust in the crowdfunding platform in the intentions of a potential contributor to participate***

Several theories may be relevant to explain the behavior of potential crowdfunding contributors. Some have already been cited in the studies presented above, as social influence theory and credibility of the source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kelman, 1961; McGuire, 1969), or social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1973). They may be useful to clarify the factors involved in the behavior of the contributors. Other conceptual basis may enrich this understanding, clarify the role of certain factors in their choice and lead us to distinguish the role of project, project bearer and crowdfunding platform characteristics.

#### ***1.2.1. The role of community and popularity around the project***

Crowdfunding is part of crowdsourcing (Chua, Roth & Lemoine, 2015), collaborative consumption, co-creation and sharing economy. The study of Onnée and Renault (2014) confirms this anchoring. The existence of a community around the project and its presence in social media have been identified as success factors. But the results remain still partial and the studies confuse several characters that may relate to the community, the popularity of the project and the credibility of the project bearer (for example, personal social capital).

There are two major characteristics of the project to be considered: the community that is created around and its popularity.

Community can be materialized (and manipulated) by many qualitative and quantitative visible elements on the platform: the existence of a dedicated Facebook page (separate from the creator's personal page), the number and quality of interactions on the platform (number of posts and participants, dynamism of the holder in the animation of social media and type or quality of comments: encouragements, contributions, congratulations, supports, questions, criticisms, evaluations, etc.). For a potential contributor, the development of these indicators may create a sense of community around the project.

Popularity may be directly identified (or handled) by the number of contributors and "Like" around the project. Its role can be understood in terms of rational mimicry or signal theory (Spence, 1974; Riley, 1975). The number of contributors and "Like" can be held as a credible information, a signal on the quality of the project, and a form of mimicry or informational cascades effect (Orlean, 1998). Finally, these two factors can be manipulated in the project presentation. On this basis, we can ask the following assumptions about community and popularity of the project:

**H1: The more sense of community around the project is perceived, the stronger the willingness to participate (H1.1), to finance (H1.2) and spread word-of-mouth on the project (H1.3) are.**

**H2: The more popular a crowdfunding project is (number of contributors and "Like"), the higher the intentions of potential contributors to participate in the project (H2.1), to fund it (H2.2) and to spread a positive word of mouth about it (H2.3) are.**

We distinguish three possible effects as relevant for measuring the intentions of a potential contributor. Indeed, crowdfunding supposes, in addition to funding decision, active participation of contributors and, more specifically, a participation in the dissemination of the project beyond the personal social capital circle of the project bearer.

### *1.2.2. The role of the project bearer credibility*

According to social influence theory, an important factor to consider in persuasion is the source credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Source credibility is involved in the change of attitudes, its effect is moderated by involvement, and a moderately credible source can be more persuasive (Sternthal, Dholakia & Leavitt, 1978).

The credibility of the project bearer is to be specifically considered in the context of crowdfunding. This concept is known and often measured, for celebrities, in three dimensions which are expertise, ability to be trustworthy and physical attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). In the context of crowdfunding, the proponent is not always physically present (video, photo) and it may be appropriate to replace physical attractiveness by social attractiveness. It is usually visible on platforms with the number of Facebook friends and, more generally, with the presence in social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This idea is based on several studies of credibility in the context of impression formation (Goffman, 1959), but more specifically on the Internet and in social media. According to a study by Cardon (2009), a strong personal self-exposure in social media increases the number of contacts. The role of personal social capital has been studied too: it plays a major role at the beginning of a project and can be treated as a source of

trustworthiness. For Tong et al. (2008), there is a nonlinear relationship between the number of "friends" and attractiveness of the source. In their study, physical attractiveness is not affected by the number of friends, and, at first, there is a positive relationship between a growing number of friends (from 102 to 502) and social attractiveness; then, a number of friends considered too large decreases somewhat social attractiveness and perceived extraversion. Similarly, Utz (2010) compares the role of information generated by the individual (his profile), through his contacts and by the system (the number of "friends", "followers" or contacts) in the perception of social attractiveness, defined as the attractiveness of a person to become a friend (McCroskey & McCain, 1974; Hong & al., 2012). Jin and Phua (2014) obtained similar results with the number of followers on Twitter that enhances the credibility of the source. It is therefore possible to manipulate the credibility of the source by the number of friends, followers or contacts, as well as self-exposure of the project bearer in social media. The assumption that we can ask is the following:

**H3: The more the perceived credibility of the project bearer is (i.e. expertise, trustworthiness and social attractiveness), the more the willingness of a potential contributor to join the project (H3.1), to finance it (H3.2), and to generate word-of-mouth about it (H3.3) there are.**

#### *1.2.3. The role of trust in the crowdfunding platform*

Trust plays a major role in interpersonal relations, relationship marketing, in financial decisions and in contacts on the Internet (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Guibert, 1999; Gurviez & Korchia, 2002). Trust building has been studied in the context of web sites (Wakefield, Stock & Wilder, 2004) and interpersonal trust was differentiated from the credibility of a platform in the case of virtual communities (Hung, Li & Tse, 2011). Community trust and trust in the hosting firm has a significant effect on knowledge-sharing intentions (Kosonen & al., 2013). On this basis, we therefore hypothesize that, for crowdfunding:

**H4: The more the contributor trust the platform, the more his willingness to participate (H4.1), to fund the project (H4.2) and to generate word-of-mouth around it (H4.3) there are.**

#### *1.2.4. The research model*

The conceptual model must now be refined by taking into account some mediating variables and controls.

##### *Mediating variables*

Two variables mediating the effects of the community around the project, its popularity and credibility of the holder may intervene in their supposed effects: the experiential value of the project and its attractiveness. We assume that the sense of community around the project may act either directly on contributor's intentions or by the effect of a partial mediating variable: the experiential value of the project.

**H5: The experiential value of the project is a partial mediator of the effect of sense of community around the project on contributors willingness to participate (H5.1), finance (H5.2) and word of mouth (H5.3).**

As for the attractiveness of the project, we will assume that it operates in a similar way as a partial mediator variable of the three factors studied: community and popularity around the project and the credibility of the project bearer.

**H6: The attractiveness of the project is a partial mediator of the effect of: the sense of community around the project (H6.1), the popularity of the project (H6.2) and the credibility of the holder (H6.3) on: the intentions to participate (1) finance (2) and word of mouth (3).**

#### Personal traits variables

Some other variables can intervene in the intentions of a potential contributor that are more specifically related to the project (project presentation modalities are not considered here: storytelling around the project (Herzenstein, Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2011) or the presentation of a video, for example). However, one might think, in general, to product involvement (for the product created as a result of the project):

**H7: The more the involvement with the product category is, the more intentions to participate (H7.1), to fund (H7.2) and disseminate word of mouth on the project (H7.3) there are.**

Other factors are more specific: cultural proximity is sometimes cited as a success factor in crowdfunding; in the case studied, a project of clothing creation by a French designer, one can think of the potential effect of the “made in France”. So we posed the following hypothesis on the sensitivity to the “made in France” or ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), a topical issue that is beginning to be studied in marketing:

**H8: The more the contributor is sensitive to the “Made in France”, the more he will participate (H8.1), fund (H8.2) and disseminate word-of-mouth about the project (H8.3).**

Finally, we specify the link between the experiential value and attractiveness of the project:

**H9: The experiential value of the project may affect its attractiveness.**

## 2. Methodology

A quantitative study empirically allows us to investigate these hypotheses. 404 participants (51.1% Male,  $M_{age}=35$  years old) were assigned to a webpage, which presented a “Made in France Project” on the KissKissBankBank platform. After reading the webpage, they were asked to answer the questionnaire including independent variables scales related to the community of the project (Blanchard, 2007) (Cronbach  $\alpha=.949$ ), popularity of the project (mono-scale item), credibility of the project’s bearer (Ohanian, 1990; Hong & al. 2012) ( $\alpha_{attractiveness}=.911$ ,  $\alpha_{trust}=.946$ ,  $\alpha_{expertise}=.950$  and  $\alpha_{social\_credibility}=.923$ ), and trust on the platform (adapted from Gurviez & Korchia, 2002) ( $\alpha_{credibility}=.913$ ,  $\alpha_{integrity}=.928$  and  $\alpha_{benevolence}=.895$ ). The questionnaire also includes mediator and dependent variables scales such as experiential value (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994) ( $\alpha=.854$ ), project attractiveness (adapted from Roberson & al., 2005) ( $\alpha=.954$ ), willingness to participate (Parent & al., 2011) ( $\alpha=.943$ ), to finance (adapted from Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991) ( $\alpha=.846$ ) and word of mouth (adapted from Charfi, 2012) ( $\alpha=.941$ ). Other



scales related to personal traits were included to measure involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1985) ( $\alpha_{\text{affective}}=.887$  and  $\alpha_{\text{cognitive}}=.875$ ) and sensibility for the made in (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) ( $\alpha=.959$ ). Scales were measured with a 7-point Likert scales from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), except the involvement scale which is a semantic differential scale. Participation was voluntary. The study was conducted online during one month, through Qualtrics software.

### 3. Findings

#### *3.1. Direct effects of project, projects bearer and platform characteristics on dependent variables*

To test hypotheses H1 and H2 related to the effects of project characteristics on the dependent variables, we ran three multiple linear regressions. Statistical analyses showed that the more the project is popular and the more it generates community, the more consumers are likely to participate ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.455$ ;  $D=169.16$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{popularity}}=.147$ ;  $\beta_{\text{community}}=.632$ ), to finance ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.405$ ;  $D=138.13$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{popularity}}=.180$ ;  $\beta_{\text{community}}=.519$ ) and disseminate word of mouth ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.505$ ;  $D=209.50$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{popularity}}=.153$ ;  $\beta_{\text{community}}=.616$ ). Thus, projects characteristics have significant effects on dependent variables. Hypotheses H1 and H2 are validated.

Moreover, we are interested in the effect of projects bearer characteristics on dependent variables. Results of three linear regressions demonstrate significant and positive effect of expertise and social attractiveness on willingness to participate ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.376$ ;  $D=61.80$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{expertise}}=.222$ ;  $\beta_{\text{social\_attractivity}}=.506$ ), willingness to finance ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.328$ ;  $D=50.20$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{expertise}}=.358$ ;  $\beta_{\text{social\_attractivity}}=.371$ ) and word of mouth ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.347$ ;  $D=54.50$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{expertise}}=.381$ ;  $\beta_{\text{social\_attractivity}}=.271$ ). Physical attractiveness and trustworthiness have no significant effect, thus only two of the four dimensions significantly affect the third dependent variables. H3 is partially validated.

By three other linear regressions our results revealed the significant and positive effect of trust of the platform on willingness to participate ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.173$ ;  $\beta=.407$ ;  $p<.01$ ), to finance ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.149$ ;  $\beta=.383$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and to word of mouth ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.237$ ;  $\beta=.474$ ;  $p<.01$ ). H4 is validated.

These analyses allow us to distinguish three types of antecedents of the contributor behavior in case of a crowdfunding project: the project, the project bearer and the platform. Moreover, tests of interactions effects between these three dimensions revealed significant and positive effects of interaction on the willingness to participate ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.389$ ;  $\beta=.624$ ;  $p<.01$ ), to finance ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.360$ ;  $\beta=.600$ ;  $p<.01$ ), and word of mouth ( $R^2_{\text{adj}}=.340$ ;  $\beta=.583$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Thus, if the project is consistent with the project bearer and the platform, the effects on the dependent variables are increased.

The analyses already conducted showed the direct effects of project, projects bearer and platform characteristics on the dependent variables. However, hypotheses based on literature suppose a mediation effect by experiential value and project attractiveness. The next paragraph tests these effects.

### 3.2. Indirect effects mediated by experiential value and project attractiveness

To understand the mechanism engaged in a crowdfunding experience, three multiple mediation tests were ran using the model 4 of the macro PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) (Bootstrap 5000). Results showed that experiential value and project attractiveness partially mediated the effect of community on the willingness to participate, to finance and to word of mouth. Results are presented in table 1. H5 and H6 are validated. The more contributors perceive a high sense of community around the project, the more the experiential value increase as well as the project attractiveness and the more the willingness to participate, to fund and to word of mouth on the project are important. Thus, it's important to propose an experience to the contributor while he looks at the webpage.

Boostrapped Sample Test for Mediation on willingness to participate				
	Value	SE	LLCI <sup>1</sup>	ULCI <sup>2</sup>
Total Effect	.779	.043	.695	.863
Direct Effect <i>c' : community → willingness to participate</i>	.460	.056	.350	.570
Indirect Effects	.319	.043	.238	.408
<i>a1 : community → experiential value</i>	.775	.046	.685	.864
<i>a2 : community → project attractiveness</i>	.728	.044	.643	.814
<i>b1 : experiential value → willingness to participate</i>	.111	.047	.019	.203
<i>b2 : project attractiveness → willingness to participate</i>	.320	.049	.224	.416
Boostrapped Sample Test for Mediation on willingness to finance				
Total Effect	.739	.047	.648	.831
Direct Effect <i>c' : community → willingness to finance</i>	.342	.059	.226	.459
Indirect Effects	.397	.046	.314	.487
<i>a1 : community → experiential value</i>	.775	.046	.685	.864
<i>a2 : community → project attractiveness</i>	.728	.044	.643	.814
<i>b1 : experiential value → willingness to finance</i>	.138	.050	.040	.235
<i>b2 : project attractiveness → willingness to finance</i>	.398	.052	.296	.500
Boostrapped Sample Test for Mediation on word of mouth				
Total Effect	.946	.048	.853	1.040
Direct Effect <i>c' : community → word of mouth</i>	.446	.058	.332	.560
Indirect Effects	.500	.053	.394	.601
<i>a1 : community → experiential value</i>	.775	.046	.685	.864
<i>a2 : community → project attractiveness</i>	.728	.044	.643	.814
<i>b1 : experiential value → word of mouth</i>	.307	.049	.212	.402
<i>b2 : project attractiveness → word of mouth</i>	.360	.507	.260	.460

Table 1: Mediation tests results

<sup>1</sup> Lower Limit for 95% Confidence Interval

<sup>2</sup> Upper Limit for 95% Confidence Interval

In order to deeply understand this mechanism and according to the literature, we test the hypothesis 9 which supposes the effect of experiential value on the project attractiveness. The result of regression highlights the significant and positive effect of experiential value on the project attractiveness ( $R^2_{adj}=.411$ ;  $\beta=.642$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Thus, we used the model 6 of the macro PROCESS to test the mediation in serial. Results revealed the underlying mechanism illustrated in figure 1. These results reinforce the above results. Experiential value is a central determinant of the contributors behavior. Project bearer needs to propose a webpage which induces the experience.

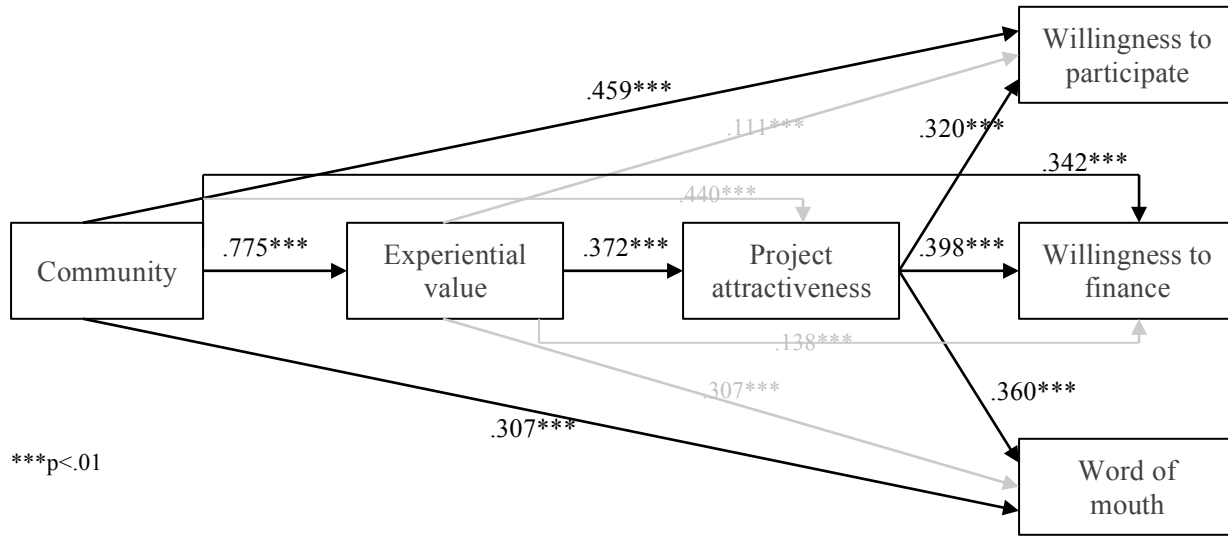


Figure 1: Mechanism highlights

### 3.3. Direct effects of personal traits

In the first paragraph of findings we found three categories of antecedents which are all contextual. However, according to the literature, we think personal traits could affect the dependent variables considered in this paper. We search to evaluate the effects of involvement and “made in” sensibility. Results indicated significant ( $p<.01$ ) and positive impacts of involvement and made in sensibility on the willingness to participate ( $\beta_{involvement}=.421$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{made\_in}=.145$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and on the willingness to finance ( $\beta_{involvement}=.482$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{made\_in}=.091$ ,  $p<.05$ ). However, only involvement influences significantly word of mouth ( $\beta_{involvement}=.509$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_{made\_in}=.01$ ,  $p=.741$ ). Thus, H7 is validated while H8 is partially validated.

To conclude, our findings point out four categories of antecedent to the decision: characteristics of the project, projects bearer, projects platform and personal traits of contributors. The mechanism engaged in a crowdfunding experience also indicates the relevance of experiential value and projects attractiveness. The following section allows us to discuss and conclude on these findings.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

This research highlights the role of social media in potential contributors behavior towards reward-based crowdfunding projects. If social media had already been identified as project success factors (Moissejev, 2013; Tarteret, 2014), their roles and their effects have been accurate in our study. It is important to promote participation of contributors to create a sense of community around the project; in this sense, this research also extends the qualitative study of Onnée and Renault (2014). Indeed, the sense of community is proving to be a factor favoring intends to finance the project, but it also increases the willingness to participate and to spread a positive word-of-mouth. The popularity of the project, whose effect can also be explained in terms of herding behavior or signal, is another factor to consider in its presentation, since it causes similar positive effects on potential contributors. Similarly, the theory of source credibility is relevant in the context of crowdfunding, since the credibility of the project bearer is a third important factor in the willingness to participate. This study also confirms the role of trust in the platform. Finally, our results showed the significant effect of interaction between these three dimensions about the project, the projects bearer and the platform.

Despite some limitations, these results are important to know: the study was only conducted in French culture, on a unique project (a project for a young designer to create clothing), and one specific crowdfunding platform, KissKissBankBank, yet close enough in presentation to the basics of collaborative consumption. Obviously, these boundaries define avenues for direct further research on other types of crowdfunding. Then the presentation of the project has not been studied in depth: this project does not present video and does not develop any particular storytelling. It does not specifically staged humanitarian, political, symbolic or aesthetic grounds, or associated values that the contributors could share.

Conceptually, this exploratory research mobilized known theories: source credibility and social influence, rational mimicry and signal theory, with a simple adaptation to the context of crowdfunding, but did not attempt to explore its deeper potential changes with the context of collaborative consumption.

At the managerial level, these results can be directly useful both for platforms and project bearers. They may be included in the advice given on crowdfunding sites to project bearers. Indeed, factors that have an effect on the willingness to participate can be easily handled by known indicators.

Sense of community can be generated by the presence of a Facebook page dedicated to the project and by the quantitative presence and positive comments on the platform. The popularity of the project is directly related to the number of contributors and the displayed number of "Like" received. The credibility of the carrier is to highlight, which can easily be done by exposing himself personally in social media and being present in a personal way on the platform. Biographical elements can serve expertise, but above all, with perceived sincerity and spontaneity, create a feeling that the creator is a socially attractive (friendly, which we would willingly make a friend) and trustworthy person. The number of contacts ("friends," "followers" and others) calculated by the systems, is an element not to be overlooked. Self-exposure favors the contacts, but beyond a threshold of about 500, too many "friends" would be seen as instrumental and undermine the credibility of the source (Tong & al., 2008).

To conclude, it seems, according to this exploratory research, that the known bases of credibility and trust can be applied to the context of collaborative consumption, at least in the case of the type of reward-based crowdfunding. Our results in this direction confirm the importance of the presentation of a project in two ways: first it requires the presence of the project, not only the creator, in social media and on the other hand, need for the latter to expose himself personally, not just in terms of professional expertise. He must be dynamic there to generate enough contacts to create a community around the project, present it as popular and indicate that he is a socially attractive and sincere person by revealing some personal twigs, biographical, emotional or other.

## Bibliography

- Agrawal A.K., Catalini C. & Goldfarb A. (2011), The geography of crowdfunding. NBER Working Paper 16820. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16820>
- Babin B.J., Darden W.R. et Griffin M (1994), Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Values, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 4, 644-656.
- Belleflamme P., Lambert T. & Schwienbacher A. (2012, April, 25th), Crowdfunding: tapping the right crowd, [http://innovation-regulation2.telecom-paristech.fr/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Belleflamme-CROWD-2012-06-20\\_SMJ.pdf](http://innovation-regulation2.telecom-paristech.fr/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Belleflamme-CROWD-2012-06-20_SMJ.pdf)
- Belleflamme P., Lambert T. & Schwienbacher A. (2013), Individual crowdfunding practices. *Venture Capital*, 15, 313-333.
- Blanchard A. L. (2007), Developing a sense of virtual community measure, *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10, 6, 827-830.
- Bourdieu P. (1980), Le capital social, Notes provisoires, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 31, 2-3.
- Bretschneider U., Knaub K. & Wieck E. (2014), Motivations for crowdfunding : what drives the crowd to invest in start-ups ? *Twenty second conference on information systems*, Tel Aviv.
- Burtch G., Ghose A. & Wattal S. (2013), Cultural differences and geography as determinants of online pro-social lending, November 21th, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2271298>
- Cardon D. (2009), Does showing off help to make friends ? Experimenting a sociological game on self-exhibition and social networks, *Proceedings of ICWSM*.
- Charfi A.A. (2012), L'immersion en ligne : l'effet conjoint de l'agent virtuel et des environnements en 3D, 11ème Journée du e-marketing, Paris, France, Septembre.
- Chua R.Y.J., Roth Y. & Lemoine J.F. (2015), The impact of culture on creativity : how cultural tightness and cultural distance affect global innovation crowdsourcing work, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60, 2, 189-227.
- Coleman J.S. (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.
- Dodds W.B., Monroe K.B. et Grewal D. (1991), Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28, 3, 307-319.

- Gerber E.M., Hui J. S. & Kuo P.Y. (2012), Crowdfunding: why people are motivated to post and fund projects on crowdfunding platforms. In *proceedings of the ACM SIGCHI Conference on computer supported cooperative work and social computing (CSCW) workshop on design, influence and social technologies*, Seattle, WA.
- Gerber E. & Hui J. (2013), Crowdfunding: motivations and deterrents for participation, *ACM transactions on computer-human interaction (TOCHI)*, 20, 34.
- Giudici G., Guerini M. & Rossi-Lamastra C. (2013), Why crowdfunding projects can succeed : the role of proponents' individual and territorial social capital, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2255944>
- Goffman E. (1959), *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Anchor Books.
- Granovetter M.S. (1973), the strength of weak ties, *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 6, 1360-1380.
- Guibert N. (1999), La confiance en marketing : fondements et applications, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 14, 1, 1-19.
- Gurvies P. & Korchia M. (2002), Proposition d'une échelle de mesure multidimensionnelle de la confiance dans la marque, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 17, 3, 1-19.
- Hardy W. (2013), How to perfectly discriminate in a crowd? A theoretical model of crowdfunding, University of Warsaw, Working Papers n° 16/2013 (101).
- Preacher, K. J., Hayes, A.F., 2004. SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models, *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 36 (4) 717-731.
- Herzenstein M., Sonenshein S. & Dholakia U.M. (2011), Tell me a good story and I may lend you money: the role of narratives in peer-to-peer lending decisions, *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol XLVIII (Special issue 2011), S138-S149.
- Hong S., Tandoc jr E., Kim E.A., Kim B. & Wise K. (2012), The real you ? The role of visual cues and comment congruence in perceptions of social attractiveness from facebook profiles, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15, 7, 339-344.
- Hovland C.I. & Weiss W. (1951), The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness, *Public Opinion Quaterly*, 15, 635-50.
- Hung K., Li S.Y. & Tse D.K. (2011), Interpersonal trust and platform credibility in a chinese multibrand online community, *Journal of Advertising*, 40, 3, 99-112.
- Jin S-A.A. & Phua J. (2014), Following celebrities' tweets about brands: the impact of twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities, *Journal of Advertising*, 43, 2, 181- 195.
- Kaplan A.M. & Haenlein M. (2010), « Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media », *Business Horizons*, 53, 1, 59-68.
- Kelman H.C. (1961), Process of opinion change, *Public Opinion Quaterly*, 25, 57-58.
- Kosonen M., Gan C., Olander H. & Blomqvist K. (2013), My idea is your idea! Supporting user-driven innovation activities in crowdsourcing communities, *International Journal of Innovation Management* , 17, 3, 1-19.

- McCroskey J.C. & McCain T.A. (1974), The measurement of interpersonal attraction, *Speech Monographs*, 41, 261-266.
- McGuire W.J. (1969), The nature of attitudes and attitudes changes, in: Lindzey & Aronson: *The handbook of social psychology*, Reading, Massachusets.
- Mollick E. (2014), The dynamics of crowdfunding : an exploratory study, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29, 1-16.
- Moisseyev A. (2013), Effects of social media on crowdfunding project results, Dissertations and theses from the College of Business Administration, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, paper 39, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/businessdiss/39>
- Morgan R.M. & Hunt S.D. (1994), the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 3, 20-38.
- Ohanian R. (1990), Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness, *Journal of Advertising*, 19, 3, 39-52.
- Onnée S. & Renault S. (2014), Crowdfunding : vers une compréhension du rôle joué par la foule, *Management & Avenir*, 74, Décembre, 117-133.
- Orlean A. (1998), Informational influences and the ambivalence of imitation, in Lesourne J. eds., *Advances in self-organizational and evolutionary economics*, Londres/Paris/genève, Econométrica, 39-56.
- Parent M., Plangger K. & Bal A. (2011), The new WTP: Willingness to participate, *Business horizons*, 54, 3, 219-229.
- Prive, T. (2012, November 27). What is crowdfunding and how does it benefit the economy?. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/tanyaprive/2012/11/27/what-is-crowdfunding-and-how-does-it-benefit-the-economy/>
- Riley J. (1975), Competitive signaling, *Journal of Economic Theory*, April, vol 10, 175-186.
- Roberson Q. M., Collins C. J. & Oreg S. (2005), The effects of recruitment message specificity on applicant attraction to organizations, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 19, 3, 319-339.
- Shimp T.A. & Sharma S. (1987), Consumer ethnocentrism: construction and validation of the CETSCALE, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24, August, 280-289.
- Spence M. (1974), Competitive and optimal responses to signals : an analysis of efficiency and distribution, *Journal of Economic Theory*, March, 296-332.
- Sternthal B., Dholakia R. & Leavitt C. (1978), The persuasive effect of source credibility : tests of cognitive response, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4, 252-60.
- Tarteret O. (2014), la dynamique du crowdfunding : revue critique de la littérature et facteurs de succès d'une collecte. *Economies and finances*. HAL Id: <dumas-01092302> <http://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-01092302>, submitted on 8 Dec 2014.
- Tong S.T., Van Der Heide B., Langwell L. and Walther J.B. (2008), Too much of a good thing? The relationship between number of friends and interpersonal impressions on Facebook, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13, 531-549.
- Utz S. (2010), Show me your friends and I will tell you what type of person you are: How one's profile, number of friends, and type of friends influence impression formation on social

network sites, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 15, 314-335.

Wakefield R.L., Stocks M.H. & Wilder W.M. (2004), The role of web site characteristics in initial trust formation, *Journal of Computer Information System*, Fall, 94-103.

Wang Y. & Fesenmaier D. R. (2003), Assessing motivation of contribution in online communities : an empirical investigation of an online travel community, *Electronic Markets*, 13, 33-45.

Zaichowsky J.L. (1985), Measuring the involvement construct, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12, 3, 341-352.

Zheng H., Wan N., Chen D. & Wang T. (2014), Antecedents of project implementation success in crowdfunding, PACIS Proceedings, paper 318. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2014/318>