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To cite this article: Alice Demattos Guimarães, Ziaul Haque Munim, Natalia Maehle, Anders Rykkja & Lluís Bonet (20 Jun 2025): Cultural and Creative Crowdfunding: How Project Categories Shape Adoption and Success on Kickstarter, The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, DOI: [10.1080/10632921.2025.2519715](https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2025.2519715)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2025.2519715>

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Cultural and Creative Crowdfunding: How Project Categories Shape Adoption and Success on Kickstarter

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the literature on cultural and creative crowdfunding (CCCF), illustrating the trends and dynamics of crowdfunding adoption amid cultural and creative industries (CCIs) from a longitudinal perspective. This paper explores the development of CCCF by examining all campaigns on Kickstarter from 2009 to 2020, taking into account the variations among CCIs, their respective success rates, and the amounts pledged. Using three different statistical tests, we find support for the hypotheses that there is an association between CCI campaign categories and campaign success, which varies over time. Our main findings reveal distinct dynamics with significant differences in the success rates and pledged amounts when treating the fifteen Kickstarter project categories as proxy for the different CCIs.

KEYWORDS

Cultural-creative crowdfunding; Kickstarter; crowdfunding campaigns; longitudinal analysis; general linear model

Introduction

Research into crowdfunding in the cultural and creative industries has, over the last decade, uncovered a range of heuristic rules that may be used to describe and explain campaign performance and adoption. One heuristic rule is that crowdfunding campaigns “mostly succeed by narrow margins, or else fail by large amounts” (Mollick 2014, 2). Another aspect pertains to the choice of crowdfunding model (investment or non-investment), suggesting that an entrepreneur launching a campaign may prefer the pre-ordering mechanism (i.e., reward-based crowdfunding, as offered by Kickstarter) when the initial capital requirement is relatively small (Belleflamme et al. 2014). These heuristics are examples of what has preoccupied crowdfunding research since the launch of early platforms such as ArtistShare or Sellaband: identifying success factors as such, or explaining how a campaign should present and

communicate the project or venture to potential backers (Dalla Chiesa 2021b) and selecting the service model (investment or non-investment) most likely to result in successful outcomes (Rykkja 2023, 4). In this sense, “success” has been the most researched theme in crowdfunding research thus far, regardless whether the study focuses on crowdfunding in general (Shneor and Vik 2020) or investigates the use of crowdfunding to fund projects in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) (Rykkja et al. 2020). The latter also known as cultural-creative crowdfunding (CCCF) (Tosatto, Cox, and Nguyen 2019).

Besides extensive research into campaign success factors, other notable thematic areas of investigation in CCCF research include value creation, roles of the fan communities, journalism-specific insights, and reflections on crowdfunding experiences (Rykkja et al. 2020). However, there is a lack of research into what Dalla Chiesa (2021a, 23) identifies as the “particular features” of the arts., or what Rykkja (2023) describes as “research insensitive to the context” within which crowdfunding is practiced. Context here means simply the argument that adoption and use of crowdfunding by artists and creators will differ depending on which of the CCIs they belong to: a visual artist, a museum organization, or a film production company will use crowdfunding differently. This aligns with the arguments of Pratt and Jeffcut (2009), who make the point that while the CCIs as a set of industries is “distinguishable from the ‘rest’ of the economy in some important ways,” there is a need to remember the “significant variations” across these industries.

Our study was motivated by the fact that while some researchers (Mollick 2014; Le Béchech et al. 2018; Rykkja 2023) have looked at “industry” as a variable, not much has been done to find out how this variable affects differences in campaign success rates or pledged amounts that can be used to tell them apart. To address these, we will provide an answer to two interrelated research questions. First, we tackle the matter of *how do Kickstarter project categories differ in terms of success rates and pledged amounts over time?* Second, based on question one answers, we address the issue *what can the success rates and pledged amounts of Kickstarter categories reveal about the crowdfunding potential of their respective CCIs?*

Our empirical data is the Kickstarter Global Dataset available at the National Archive of Data on Arts and Culture (NADAC) which comprises all the campaigns launched on the platform between 2009 and 2020. The main variables are categorical adoption (using Kickstarter campaign categories as a proxy to CCIs), success rate (using a nominal scale of successful, unsuccessful, canceled and suspended) and pledged amount (the amount of funding raised by each campaign).

Given the large sample of our database, 506,199 observations, we develop hypotheses that we test using Chi-squared statistical test and find a statistically significant association between these proxy categories and the project status. For example, campaign categories, such as comics and dance have a higher rate of success than publishing and fashion. Yet, overall, we point out that there has been an ongoing trend of more balance between successful and failed projects, along with a decreasing total number of campaigns since 2015. Significantly, the success rate is highest in 2020, the year of the pandemic breakout. This may reflect a stronger involvement of backers driven by altruism and a matured approach to CCCF, warranting further exploration to inform academics, policymakers, and practitioners.

The significant contributions of our study to the CCCF literature is that it is one of the few longitudinal empirical investigations that uses project category as a variable to argue that “success” or “campaign performance” (cf. Kaartemo 2017) are far from generic constructs. We provide evidence highlighting that the efficacy of CCCF varies between the different industries within the CCIs, and that the variation can be modeled and captured using the platform’s categories as a proxy. Besides relating campaign performance to intercategory dynamics, the study is to our knowledge the first to adopt a broader categorization of campaigns’ status: in addition to successful vs. failed projects, we also acknowledge canceled and suspended projects.

The study is structured into five sections, including this introduction. Next, we present our theoretical background arguing for the dimensions of our analysis, i.e., the CCIs and project status, while developing our hypotheses. After that, we present the methodology and then discuss the findings in the fourth section. Lastly, we elaborate on some final considerations pointing out promising topics for future research agenda.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

The practice of collecting small amounts of money from multiple micro-investors or supporters through an online platform, aka, crowdfunding, was first adopted by artists at the beginning of the twenty first century (Agrawal, Catalini, and Goldfarb 2015; Rykkja, Munim, and Bonet 2020; Dalla Chiesa and Dekker 2021). Yet, the artists’ role as pioneers of crowdfunding has not translated into a greater adoption rate (Munim, Franken, and Rykkja 2023; Rykkja et al. 2023). On the contrary, CCCF per se represents only a relatively small share of this alternative finance market (Lazzaro and Noonan 2021; Shneor, Zhao, and Flåten 2020). From this perspective, crowdfunding research has an extensive scope and reaches multiple domains (Shneor, Zhao, and Flåten 2020), but there is still room for and need to explore how the dynamics of crowdfunding differ across the CCIs (Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022; Rykkja, 2023).

Nonetheless, most of the CCCF literature does not consider that there is substantial diversity in terms of utilization and outcomes that is conditioned by the category and types of projects sought funded (Rykkja and Bonet 2023). The aim of our study is to describe and explain some of these categorical dynamics through an analysis of differences in success rates and pledged amounts across the CCIs as this remains an under researched topic (Mollick 2014; Rykkja et al. 2020; Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022; Rykkja 2023). We will do this through an empirical study of campaign performance using the “project category” definition of the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter as a proxy variable for “industry” within the CCIs. In other words, when we discuss the adoption of CCCF, empirically we are dealing with Kickstarter categories in the best interests of data analysis.

Before elaborating on the development of our hypotheses, it is relevant to point out that CCCF is comprehended as a far-reaching practice that goes beyond the raising-money mechanism (Rykkja et al. 2020; Demattos Guimarães and Maehle 2023). Even though it is a supplementary and/or alternative source of financial capital, it also configures a distribution channel for artists and creative workers, as well as increases their professional reputations, market visibility, and recognition (Rykkja et al. 2020;

Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). Nonetheless, as Dalla Chiesa and Dekker (2021b) observes, many artist-entrepreneurs primarily see crowdfunding as a contingent funding mechanism that is primarily used when other funding sources are unavailable as the personal costs and investments in time to succeed are quite high. Whether or not this applies broadly depends ultimately on project category and industry affiliation (Benghozi, Salvador, and Simon 2017; Rykkja 2023). Accordingly, a central objective of this study is to advocate for the adoption of the variable category, as a proxy for the various “industries” (e.g., theater and dance as a proxy for “performing arts,” Film & Video as a proxy for Film and TV, cf. Throsby, 2001, 2008), in empirical research on crowdfunding within the CCIs—or particularly CCCF.

The cultural and creative industries

The CCIs constitutes a set of heterogenous industries whose objective is to commercialize goods and services (Jones, Lorenzen, and Sapsed 2015) that have in common outputs characterized by higher symbolic, esthetic, and experiential value, rather than utilitarian and commercial one. Moreover, there is intense use of creativity in the production process alongside the adoption of network-based forms of creation, production, and distribution, and with potential result of intellectual property (Throsby 2001, 2008; Potts et al. 2008; Pratt and Jeffcut 2009). The aspect of network-based production chain aligns well with the platform infrastructure and mediation provided through crowdfunding (Benghozi, Salvador, and Simon 2017).

Indeed, the CCIs are difficult to define. A reason is that they may (or not) encompass core artistic disciplines (e.g., visual and performing arts, music, and literature), media production and publishing activities (e.g. Film & TV, Video Games, Book Publishing and the Music Industries), and peripheral (to the arts) creative activities (e.g., design, fashion, and architecture) (Jones, Lorenzen, and Sapsed 2015; Throsby 2008). An investigation accounting for differences related to cultural policy models and funding options across the globe (Mulcahy 2006), as well as the cost structures of the diverse types of cultural productions (Caves 2001), are beyond the scope of this research. However, overall artists and creative workers primary goal is not always moneymaking (Mulcahy 2003). Instead, as “artist-entrepreneurs” (Feder and Woronkowicz 2023), they strive for achieving intrinsic goals and objectives, such as professional recognition, autonomy, and work preferences (Throsby 1994). From this perspective, financial struggles and reliance on self-employment are generally part of the livelihoods of artists and cultural-creative workers (Galligan and Cherbo 2004; Feder and Woronkowicz 2023). The reasons for this include high demand uncertainty (Bille and Jensen, 2018) and symmetrical ignorance regarding venture evaluation and funder provider vs. receiver (Caves 2001; Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). This explains why markets for cultural and creative goods and services are characterized by oversupply and strong competition for funding from public institutions and private companies (Hirsch 1972; Caves 2001). As a result, artist-entrepreneurs are constantly engaged in writing proposals, preparing customized presentations, and to some extent finding ways to fund or commercialize their work (Dalla Chiesa 2021a; Rykkja et al. 2020).

CCCF, thus, becomes a mechanism and tool to be pursued because it can provide access to funding, and alleviate uncertainties by advancing the market selection

processes (Alemany and Andreoli 2018; Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). From this perspective, CCCF also becomes a mechanism that can be used as a leverage to break into the “mainstream” cultural production system (Galuszka and Brzozowska 2017), creating new opportunities, and increasing diversity, while promoting consumer/audience engagement (Rykkja et al. 2020). However, some of these arguments have thus far not been substantiated by systemic empirical evidence (Chen and Noonan 2023). In this sense, despite the advances in the CCCF research, scholars still call for additional exploration on these dynamics given the differences between CCIIs (Demattos Guimarães 2024; Rykkja et al. 2023). Perhaps in understanding the different dynamics of CCCF adoption across CCIIs, future studies can explore such patterns in relation to, for instance, cost structures of the diverse types of cultural productions.

Cultural-creative crowdfunding

In crowdfunding research, it is widely agreed that this alternative finance mechanism operates under two primary logics—investment and non-investment—with four main models: lending and equity (investment logic), and reward-based and donation-based (non-investment logic) (Shneor, Zhao, and Flåten 2020). As pointed out in the Introduction, crowdfunding research has indeed preoccupied with the choice of crowdfunding model (Belleflamme et al. 2014) and in the specific case of CCCF, it is commonly based on the reward model (Rykkja, Munim, and Bonet 2020) even though the donation-(and subscription-) based funding model has historically been at the core of arts and culture development (see patronage systems in Swords 2017). The reward-based crowdfunding model is characterized by an exchange of funding for non-monetary products and/or services—the rewards (Shneor and Munim 2019), and Kickstarter has been pointed out as the incumbent for reward-based crowdfunding (Rykkja et al. 2020). Furthermore, artists and cultural entrepreneurs can use the platform for testing their ideas, sharing ownership, and even engaging in co-creating practices with their backers (Boeuf, Darveau, and Legoux 2014; Rykkja and Hauge 2021; Demattos Guimarães 2024).

As introduced earlier, another dominant area of crowdfunding research is focused on drivers of campaign success (Shneor and Vik 2020; Rykkja, 2023). Although previous studies have identified key patterns influencing success in CCCF adoption (Mollick 2014) and other themes have emerged, e.g., value creation, fan communities, and creators’ experiences (Rykkja et al. 2020), there is limited research on the specific characteristics of how industry-specific contexts shape crowdfunding adoption (Dalla Chiesa 2021a; Rykkja 2023). Therefore, our study addresses this gap by examining how category affiliations impact over time crowdfunding success and pledged amount, as highlighted in our hypotheses.

Hypotheses

Within the CCCF field, the literature has discussed the suitability of CCCF for the CCIIs in general (Handke and Dalla Chiesa, 2022) as well as the likelihood of its adoption vis-à-vis the geographical reach of the platform, i.e., local versus international (Rykkja et al. 2020). Studies show that patterns of adoption are far from homogenous

as they vary from country to country and depend on differences in national culture and cultural policy frameworks (Cicchello, Gallo, and Monferrà 2022a, 2022b). Kickstarter, as a major international platform, offers a wider potential of exposure given a broader scope (geographic/virtual reach) as well as a wider and more diverse audience which can facilitate and benefit from scale. In this regard, Rykkja, Munim, and Bonet (2020) has shown that complex productions (Caves 2001) with a high level of costs, are more likely to be present on international platforms as they can benefit more from network effects. Further, they argue that projects with composite motives (i.e., the cultural barriers for broad diffusion are insignificant compared with the increased reach of an international platform) are also more likely to choose an international platform like Kickstarter for a campaign. The latest study has, though, analyzed successful campaigns only.

The literature indicates that aspects of scale and scope both in terms of reproducibility and commercialization can influence the likelihood of adoption of crowdfunding (Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). Moreover, in recent years productions closer to the core cultural expressions are usually not the first to engage with such a financial channel (Demattos Guimarães and Maehle 2023) and the degree of digitalization can also influence the crowdfunding dynamics (Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). Studies have also pointed out that the most popular reward type used in campaigns regardless of project category is pre-sales (Thürridl and Kamleitner 2016, 101; Steigenberger 2017) albeit with significant variations.

When it comes to use patterns, a longitudinal study of crowdfunding campaigns in the Nordic countries demonstrates that campaign targets, i.e. pledged amount, differ between the CCIIs and this could indicate that the purposes of using crowdfunding vary (Rykkja 2023). Notably, Dalla Chiesa (2021) finds that for creators from the core arts industries (visual arts, performing arts, music, and literature) crowdfunding is seen as a stepping stone in reaching out to markets and starting a career. Conversely, the choice of an international platform for creators making complex cultural goods (Caves 2001) such as video games and feature films indicates that they need to raise higher amounts than similar campaigns from the core arts. These contrasts indicate the possibility of intercategory differences. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: *The success rate of CCCF campaigns differs across categories.*

The three sets of variables that are the most conducive to crowdfunding success for campaigns are, first, aligning the objectives of a campaign with backers' intrinsic motivations (e.g., participation, recognition); the capacity to engage prospective or actual backers to share information about the campaign on social networks; and, finally, having a professional campaign presentation, both in terms of the quality and quantity of information and media content (Rykkja et al. 2020). When aiming to understand the meaning of crowdfunding success as an outcome, is that, on the one side, it serves as a potential tool for increasing visibility, and on the other, a possibility for market testing which mitigates uncertain demand and symmetrical ignorance (Roberge, Nantel, and Rousseau 2017; Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022). Scholars have elaborated on communities as a network of supporters (or patrons in the case of arts) being a success factor (Boeuf, Darveau, and Legoux 2014; Josefy et al. 2017; Dalla Chiesa and Dekker 2021). Even though in our database we do not access the backers' characteristics, we

have used this literature to comprehend some of our findings in regard to success rate, as discussed later. Furthermore, according to Munim, Franken, and Rykkja (2023), there is a correlation between campaign outcomes vis-a-vis funding target or pledged amount. From this perspective, we hypothesize the following:

H2: *The pledged amount in CCCF campaigns differs across categories.*

Concurrently, while a number of studies on reward-based crowdfunding draw upon empirical data from Kickstarter (Meoli, Munari, and Bort 2019; Kuppuswamy and Bayus 2018; Chen and Noonan 2023), few studies have utilized the comprehensive dataset by NADAC (Chen and Noonan, 2023), let alone in a longitudinal perspective. For instance, Barbi and Bigelli (2017) only covers the years 2009–2013. Therefore, the present study advances the literature by presenting a longitudinal analysis of CCCF campaigns in Kickstarter to further expand the comprehension of the dynamics of crowdfunding in the CCIs. We do that by testing the year effect according to the following:

H3: *In CCCF, the effect of category on pledged amounts varies across years.*

Methodology

As aforementioned, we use the database of the NADAC to conduct a longitudinal analysis of the CCCF campaigns. The NADAC is a repository of data on arts and culture acquired from US federal agencies and other organizations. The database is available for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Kickstarter Data, Global, 2009–2020, by Jonathan Leland, constitutes the basis for the analysis in this article. While concurrent research by Chen and Noonan (2023) using the same dataset shows concentration of funding (winner-takes-it-all effects) in Kickstarter largest market, the USA. which points to a shift whereby established artists and organizations seem to have crowded-out less established projects, our analysis will investigate whether other factors or alternative explanations can help explain changes in patterns of use and dynamics of CCCF

We have followed the ICPSR Codebook for Kickstarter Project Public-Use Data. In the dataset, there are 506,199 observations. Hence, all the following tables and figures are based on Leland (2022).¹ Noteworthy, our data analysis ends in 2020 given the availability of data only up to this date at the time when the analysis was conducted. The distribution in terms of Kickstarter industry category and project status, i.e., successful, failed, canceled, and suspended, are as follows:

Project promoters choose a predetermined category for their campaign prior to launch. Kickstarter proposes the following categories (see Table 1): Art, Comics, Craft, Dance, Design, Fashion, Film & Video, Food, Games, Journalism, Music, Photography, Publishing, Technology, and Theater. Further, the projects' status also follows the database variables, and there are four options: successful, meaning that the campaign has at least reached the target amount; failed, the campaigns that did not reach the goal; suspended, the campaigns where Kickstarter Trust & Safety team found evidence of a violation of the platform's rules; or canceled, the ones that project creators have decided to withdraw (Kickstarter 2021). Kickstarter as of now operates in the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece,

Table 1. Pledged amount based on project status and category, 2009–2020 (in USD).

		<i>n</i>	min	max	mean	std
Project Status	Full sample	506,199	0	20,338,986	10,791.95	101,904.55
	canceled	55,755	0	1,076,751	2331.97	12,697.40
	failed	252,798	0	757,353	1306.32	6389.38
	successful	194,458	0	20,338,986	25,574.26	162,701.36
	suspended	3188	0	4,005,111	9253.26	80,149.73
Kickstarter Categories	Art	41,455	0	1,924,018	3525.18	21,546.91
	Comics	17,560	0	1,447,212	7487.51	28,486.42
	Crafts	11,917	0	454,718	1788.77	8276.03
	Dance	4298	0	146,076	3495.80	5779.96
	Design	43,503	0	20,338,986	28,676.06	212,794.85
	Fashion	33,066	0	3,948,547	6024.07	40,462.68
	Film & Video	75,808	0	11385449	6343.45	57,238.91
	Food	30,758	0	5,028,973	5745.25	45,051.76
	Games	56,700	0	12,969,608	25,665.64	185,200.81
	Journalism	5865	0	689,420	3214.47	15,245.76
	Music	63,486	0	1,363,037	4030.79	13,033.85
	Photography	12,646	0	793,267	4068.22	20,298.51
	Publishing	52,082	0	6,788,517	3909.79	33731.09
	Technology	44,706	0	7,850,867	22,645.28	135,297.86
	Theater	12,349	0	547,439	3820.65	10,949.34

Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, projects can be launched from other countries, provided that one of the fundraisers can confirm status of resident with a supported bank account in one of these countries. The number of countries vary over time because they have been gradually added since the launch of the platform. For this reason, the geographical dimension will not be consistent all over the period of time. In addition, the references in the NADAC dataset are not necessarily accurate and/or are missing. For these reasons, we decided to exclude the geographic distribution of campaigns over the years from our analysis.

We have analyzed the 506,199 observations in a longitudinal approach, following through the given period, 2009–2020, in terms of crowdfunding adoption across industry categories, project status and size. To test the hypotheses, we conducted the Chi-squared test to explore if there is any statistically significant association between the individual CCIs categories acting as proxies for CCIs and their status. The Chi-squared test was used since both variables, CCCF category and status, are categorical in nature, and it allows us to statistically test our hypotheses—*the success rate of CCCF campaigns differs across categories*. The chi-square test is used when assessing the association or independence between two categorical variables in a contingency table (McHugh, 2013). It is particularly useful in determining if observed frequencies significantly differ from expected frequencies in categorical data (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019). The Chi-squared test statistic can be expressed as follows:

$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \quad (1)$$

In the Equation (1), x^2 is the chi-squared test statistic, O_i is the observed value, and E_i is the expected value.

To test for the second hypothesis—the pledged amount in CCCF campaigns differs across categories—the one-way ANOVA test was used since the CCCF category has more than two categories. Further, Tukey’s post-hoc test for ANOVA was conducted to explore which categories have a higher pledged amount. To test the third hypothesis—in CCCF, the effect of category on pledged amounts varies across years—a general linear model (GLM) was estimated with category, year, and their interaction term. For data visualization, the ggplot2 package in the r-software was used. The next section presents the test results, and our findings, alongside the theoretical discussion.

Findings & discussion

First, we look at the evolution of CCCF campaigns on Kickstarter. From the beginning of Kickstarter’s operation till 2015, there is an expressive growth in the total number of campaigns, with an average of 4.537% growth per year. However, in 2016 the number of campaigns launched decreased by 25% in comparison to the previous year, 2015—year with the highest number of projects but lowest success rate (although 2014 is the year of the highest growth rate, 7.871%), and, since then, the decreasing trend has been kept, with the numbers from 2020 being relatively similar to 2013/2014. Further, Figure 1 shows this development considering the campaign’s status. In relation to success rate, and regardless of category affiliation, Kickstarter’s overall success rate was 39% between 2009 and 2020 (Kickstarter 2021). This self-reported success rate is aligned with findings of previous studies which indicates that 30–40% is usual within crowdfunding (Mollick 2014; Shneur and Munim 2019). By comparing the current rate to the baseline rate, we can determine if a category or a unit of time (e.g., a year as a period) is “more” or “less” successful, as is attempted in the concluding section. From 2009 to 2013, the success rate has been on average around 43.3%, while in the following four years, 2014–2017, it decreased to ca. 32.7%. Noteworthy, in the two last years of the analyzed period, 2019 and 2020, there was not only an increase in the number of campaigns, but they also represent the highest success rate, with 2020 being the year of relatively more successful projects, 48.9%, which could be related to

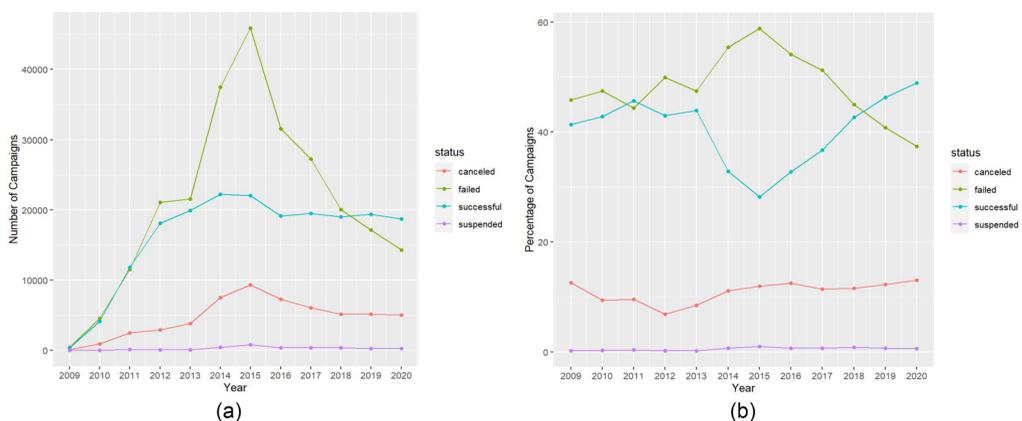


Figure 1. Development of Kickstarter campaigns in terms of project status, 2009–2020.

the effects of Covid-19 pandemic. Please see the [Supplemental Appendices 1 and 2](#) for more details.

Even though the number of campaigns has been on the decline since 2015, the total amount of money raised through campaigns has increased steadily. While there was a peak of 22,243 successfully funded campaigns in 2014, [Supplemental Appendix 1](#) shows that number has dropped to 18,743 by 2020. The total amount raised by campaigns increased by more than fifty percent, or about 274 million dollars, but the number of successful campaigns decreased by slightly more than fifteen percent, or 3500. This may indicate that policy and rule changes may have influenced rates of success and campaign volume. The number of campaigns decreases, but Kickstarter benefits from having fewer campaigns raising more funding (see [Table 2](#)).

Considering the findings, there are a few discussion points to be highlighted. First of all, the growth witnessed in the initial years of Kickstarter can be explained by the diffusion of information leading to more creators getting familiar with and willing to test the adoption of crowdfunding, combined with the constant and fast-paced digitalization worldwide (Galuszka and Brzozowska 2017; Benghozi, Salvador, and Simon 2017; Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022) The first 5 years were crucial to both platform consolidation and market maturation (Rykkja et al., 2020). Second, two major updates to Kickstarter's project review process were introduced in June of 2014 (Wessel, Thies, and Benlian 2017). Before that time, there was (1) a lengthy list of requirements that campaigns had to meet in order to be accepted by Kickstarter's staff, and (2) a lengthy list of requirements that projects had to meet in order to be promoted. Projects submitted after July 2014 were automatically approved if they met

Table 2. Total amount pledged by Kickstarter campaigns, 2009–2020.

All campaigns					
Year	<i>n</i>	min	max	mean	std
2009	979	0	84,614	1946.87	4452.88
2010	9582	0	942,578	2655.32	11,619.34
2011	25,918	0	830,828	3627.39	11,795.61
2012	42,171	0	10,266,846	7468.07	84,367.53
2013	45,394	0	5,702,153	10,490.52	69,690.32
2014	67,705	0	13,285,226	7814.24	76,161.12
2015	78,035	0	20,338,986	8796.74	113,485.77
2016	58,359	0	12,779,843	11,132.65	100,250.35
2017	53,223	0	12,393,140	12,414.67	108,524.23
2018	44,582	0	6,256,244	13,592.91	92,258.90
2019	41,946	0	12,143,436	15,607.91	131,136.77
2020	38,305	0	12,969,608	19,937.97	162,475.84
Only successful campaigns					
Year	<i>n</i>	min	max	mean	std
2009	405	19	84,614	4140.31	6147.01
2010	4101	17	942,578	5466.87	17,301.71
2011	11,840	1	830,828	7001.58	16,610.55
2012	18,108	1	10,266,846	15,428.75	128,119.87
2013	19,919	9	5,702,153	20,965.57	103,464.89
2014	22,243	1	13,285,226	20,542.54	131,318.56
2015	22,035	1	20,338,986	27,621.70	210,295.09
2016	19,120	1	12,779,843	30,637.29	172,961.43
2017	19,531	1	12,393,140	31,100.57	177,021.84
2018	19,005	1	6,256,244	29624.96	139387.68
2019	19,408	1	12,143,436	31,742.59	191,313.02
2020	18,743	0	12,969,608	39,015.26	230,617.42

three criteria: they had to be easily shareable, they had to be honest, and they had to adhere to the principles of reward-based crowdfunding (Strickler, 2014, in Wessel, Thies, and Benlian 2017). The latter aimed to discourage fundraising efforts that catered to specific desires or needs. According to their investigations (which analyzed 232,000 campaigns launched between June 2012 and 2016), the daily average of campaigns increased by 71%. On the other hand, fewer people supported the project and, more importantly, the overall success rate was lower. This may help to explain the subsequent decline that began in 2015. Thus, without accounting for the effect of changes to Kickstarter's onboarding policy in June 2014, we need to be cautious about drawing conclusions about the evolution of success rates at the category level. What we may infer is that 2015 represents an early phase of expansion before the market starts to adapt itself, with other platforms emerging, market consolidation, and cultural policies influencing differently the funding choices (Cicchello, Gallo, and Monferrà 2022a, 2022b; Dushnitsky et al. 2016; Bonet, Sastre and Ripoll 2016). Lastly, the increase in success during the first year of Covid-19 might be related to the aspect of solidarity and people coming together (Tomasini 2021) meaning that more people were joining the community of backers and supporting more projects. However, other studies using a similar dataset, such as Chen and Noonan's (2023), find that Covid-19 led to more inequity in relation to access, with larger institutions crowding out smaller initiatives.

By using the chi-squared test, Tukey's post-hoc test for ANOVA, and the GLM we find support for the three hypotheses. As Table 3 shows, p -value is smaller than 0.001 in the three hypotheses, meaning that indeed (H1) *the success rate of CCCF campaigns differs across categories*, (H2) *the pledged amount in CCCF campaigns differs across categories* and (H3) *in CCCF, the effect of category on pledged amounts varies across years*. Before explaining what such findings represent and visualizing them, Table 4 displays the chi-squared crosstabulation with the Kickstarter category in relation to its status, during the analyzed period. The Turkey post-hoc analysis indicating if the mean difference in comparing each category with one another is significant can be found in the Supplemental Appendix 3.

To further explore the dataset, we employ data visualization using the ggplot2 package in the r-software. Accordingly, the following figures illustrate the differences in dynamics in terms of campaign status. Figure 2 includes 4 images, one for each status, namely (a) failed, (b) successful, (c) canceled, and (d) suspended. For each image, all the 15 categories are represented by a line graph demonstrating the evolution throughout the analyzed years and in percentage of campaigns. Figure 3, in its turn, presents the status of every campaign in the given category in a longitudinal perspective, thus there are 15 images with 4 different bullet colors (failed, successful,

Table 3. Summary of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Test	p -value (2-tailed)	Summary
H1: The success rate of CCCF campaigns differs across categories	Pearson Chi-Square	<.001	Supported
H2: The pledged amount in CCCF campaigns differs across categories	One-way ANOVA	<.001	Supported
H3: In CCCF, the effect of CCI category on pledged amounts varies across years	General Linear Model	<.001	Supported

*Since all p -values are less than 0.05, all hypotheses are supported.

Table 4. Crosstabulation of campaign category and status, 2009–2020.

		STATE				Total
		Canceled	Failed	Successful	Suspended	
<i>CATEGORY</i>	Art	3600	18,710	18,955	190	41,455
	Comics	1316	5529	10,666	49	17,560
	Crafts	1201	7527	3061	128	11,917
	Dance	204	1427	2650	17	4298
	Design	6102	19,949	17,000	452	43,503
	Fashion	3993	19,223	9615	235	33,066
	Film & Video	7789	39,219	28,597	203	75,808
	Food	2922	19,744	7844	248	30,758
	Games	9686	22,565	24,028	421	56,700
	Journalism	670	3765	1351	79	5865
	Music	4598	26,805	31,854	229	63,486
	Photography	1167	7227	4175	77	12,646
	Publishing	5062	29,066	17,831	123	52,082
	Technology	6725	27,855	9423	703	44,706
	Theater	720	4187	7408	34	12,349
<i>Total</i>		55,755	252,798	194,458	3188	506,199

canceled, and suspended), where the bullet size varies according to the number of campaigns.

Analyzing the longitudinal characteristics of Kickstarter campaigns category-wise, we see that Film & Video have had the highest number of projects (over 75,800), followed by music (63,400), and games (56,700). Publishing also presents more than 50 k projects, and art, design, and technology are above 40 k. The categories with the lowest number of campaigns are journalism (5865) and dance (4298). Those numbers can be found in [Table 1](#) in the methodology section. However, those absolute numbers do not translate into either the dynamics over time or the trends of the projects' status, as can be seen in [Figures 2](#) and [3](#). For instance, when considering the first years of Kickstarter's operation, the category of Arts has a success rate exceeding the number of failed projects, while Film & Video has the opposite dynamic, and so does Fashion. Still, we can observe that overall, there has been an ongoing trend of balancing successful and failed projects, with categories like Games and Publishing presenting a growth of success rate. This is particularly evident from 2015 onwards and, as aforementioned, can be explained by platform consolidation and market maturation (Handke and Dalla Chiesa 2022; Rykkja et al. 2020). [Supplemental Appendix 2](#) provides more details on the average success rates for different categories. Overall, in the period of 2009–2020, Dance, Comics and Theater demonstrate the highest success rates (above 59%). Art, Games and Music also have the success rates exceeding the average Kickstarter's success rate of 39% (Kickstarter 2021). Design has a success rate of 39.08%, while the rest lies below 39%. The lowest success rates are observed for Technology (21.08%), Journalism (23.03%) and Food (25.5%).

These findings also substantiate and corroborate that CCCF should be considered a heterogenous practice because the funding requirements and ambitions of campaigns vary substantially depending on category (Rykkja 2023; Demattos Guimarães 2024). First, it validates the tripartite proposition of Rykkja (2023) in that adoption of CCCF in the context of a given industry within the CCIs may be explained by either necessity, complementarity or substitution. The rationales for necessity and substitution is the inability to access public funding, which in practice means that some categories

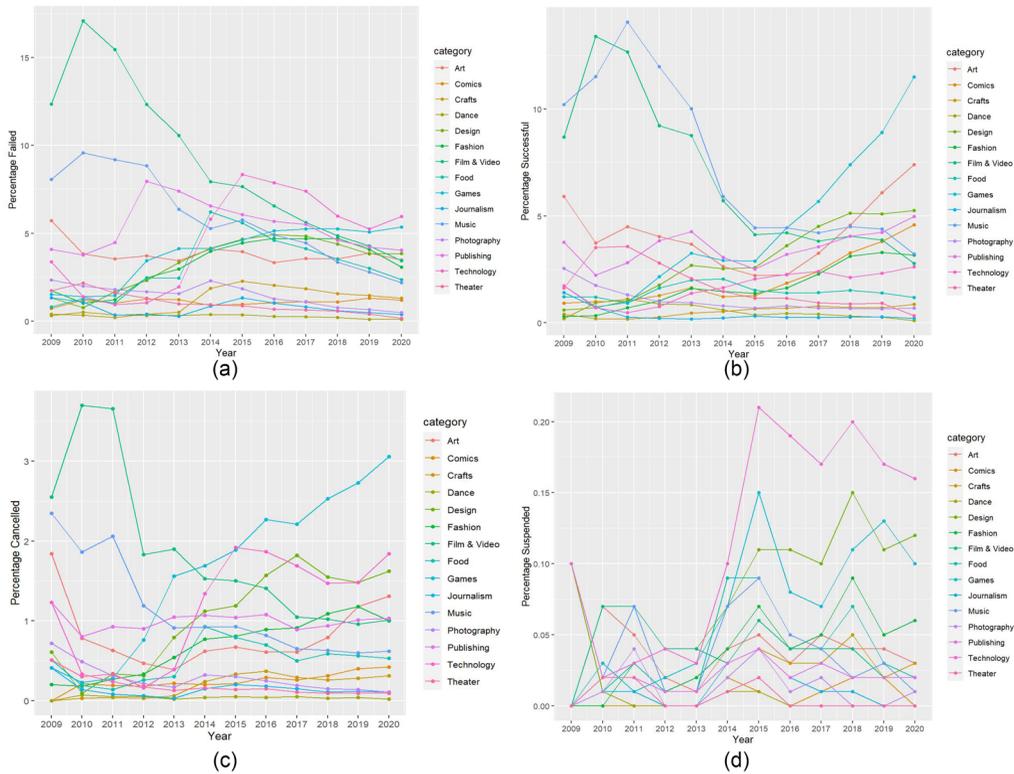


Figure 2. Category-wise longitudinal development of CCCF campaigns on Kickstarter according to campaign status, 2009–2020 *percentages are based on yearly total.

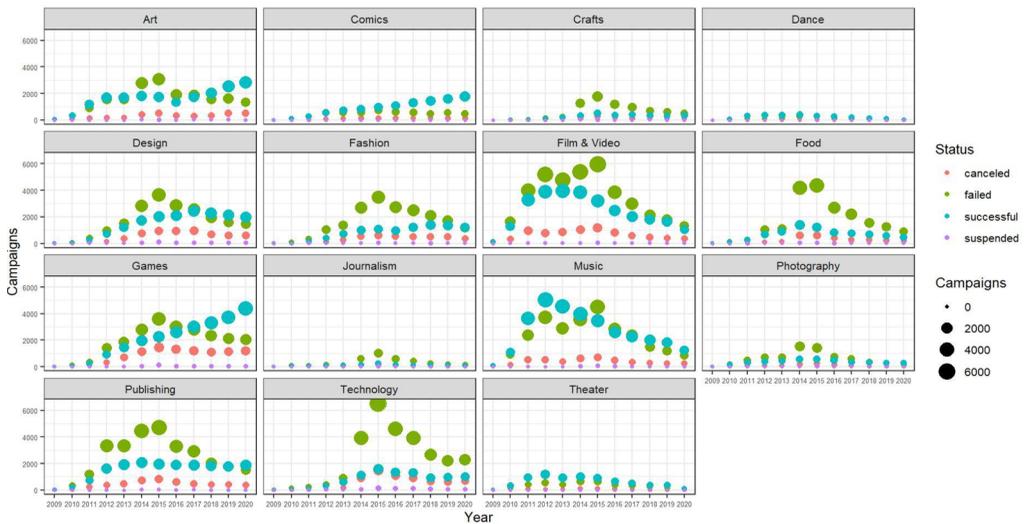


Figure 3. Longitudinal development of CCCF campaigns on Kickstarter across categories, 2009–2020.

in the core arts (e.g., arts, dance, theater or music) try CCCF because of not obtaining a project grant, while creative categories such as fashion, design goods, or technology do so because they are usually exempt from even trying to apply for public funding.

Second, these mechanisms affects not just success rates, but more importantly pledged amounts per campaign, as substitution motivations are usually campaigns for creative consumer goods that raise far higher amounts in average per campaign compared with the ones promoted out of necessity by artists and creative workers.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that the onboarding rules of platforms (Wessel, Thies, and Benlian 2017) is a condition that affects the relation between campaign volume, success rates and pledged amounts. As an example, [Supplemental Appendix 3](#) demonstrates several significant mean differences, indicating that the average pledged amounts in those CCI categories are not statistically similar. For instance, significant differences were observed between Art and Design, Dance and Technology, Crafts and Games, Music and Film & Video, Photography and Design, and between Publishing and Technology, highlighting that these CCI categories exhibit distinct characteristics. These findings align with the descriptive statistics from [Table 1](#), which show notable differences in mean pledged amounts across CCI categories. For example, the mean pledged amount for Design projects (USD 28,676.06) is significantly higher compared to Art (USD 3525.18), and Technology (USD 22,645.28) shows substantial differences compared to categories like Dance (USD 3495.80) and Crafts (USD 1788.77). Moreover, non-significant differences, such as between Art and Dance, suggest that some categories do share overlapping characteristics or distributions. The presence of both significant and non-significant pairwise differences underline the complexity of relationships between categories. To comprehend this different dynamics of CCCF adoption across CCI and its complexity, future studies can connect such patterns in relation to, for instance, cost structures of the diverse types of cultural productions.

Conclusion and agenda for future research

This paper investigates the development of cultural-creative crowdfunding by investigating the Kickstarter platform from its very begging, in 2009, up to 2020, the year of the COVID-19 outbreak. In this sense, the current research pioneers a longitudinal approach to CCCF by analyzing the distinct dynamics between platform internal project categories as a proxy for individual CCI and the patterns of success rate. We elaborate our findings through data visualization discussing them in line with the theoretical background. Furthermore, we find support for the three hypotheses, indicating that there is a statistically significant association between the variable “category” and their crowdfunding campaign status as well as pledged amount. Moreover, the effect of CCI category on pledged amounts varies across years. The CCI categories based on the Kickstarter typology allow us to observe distinct dynamics among them, both in absolute numbers of campaigns and in success rate patterns.

Overall, there was an expressive growth of projects throughout the first 5 years of the platform operation. However, from 2015 onwards, there is a decreasing trend. In terms of success rate, from 2009 to 2013, the success rate was over 40% but during 2014–2017, it decreases to 32%, on average. In 2019, the success rate goes back to over 40% and 2020 represents the year with the highest success rate of 48.9%, which might be a COVID-19 effect. Furthermore, we observe a trend of balancing successful and failed projects, along with a decreasing total number of campaigns since 2015, in almost every category. However, we do find the differences

across the categories as also demonstrated by the Kickstarter's annual statement from 2021 (Kickstarter 2022) reporting successful campaigns and funding raised per category. The categories that pertain to the core creative arts and cultural industries (Cf., Throsby 2008) are at a standstill: Theater, Crafts, Art, Music and Dance. Standstill equates that the number of campaigns is declining, and the average amount raised in funding is the same as reported in earlier studies (Barbi and Bigelli 2017; De Voldere and Zeqo 2017): around 10,000 USD/Euros. Conversely, the "creative end" sees a substantial increase in campaigns, with the category of Games, Design and Technology representing 40% of the successful campaigns (7925 out of 19,560).

Despite its merits, our study has a few limitations. First of all, we did not break down our variables in terms of the geographical scope (as explained in the Methodology section). While some see Kickstarter as a global platform, the reality remains that even though the number of non-USA based campaigns may have increased over time, the majority of campaigns are still promoted by USA based campaign creators. Second, the use of the platform's typology of categories as a proxy for industry or cultural sector do not necessarily corresponds to or reflects established definitions and operationalizations of the CCIs (Rykkja et al. 2020). Third, we did not have access to data from 2021 onwards when we carried out the analysis, which limits our comprehension of the use of CCCF in the post-pandemic period. Future studies considering these aspects can offer a deeper understanding of CCCF's maturation from the perspective of the geography of innovation literature, which will further inform academics, policymakers, and practitioners. Moreover, future research can further explore how cost structures of the diverse types of cultural productions can explain the CCCF dynamics demonstrated in this study. We trust that our paper contributes to a comprehensive overview of CCCF development over time and across CCIs, and therefore enhances its position as a promising mechanism for the funding ecosystem of the CCIs. From this perspective, the distinct dynamics of CCCF evidenced in this study emphasizes the importance of industry-specific crowdfunding strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach as well as more context-sensitive research in the CCCF field. Therefore, exploring the longitudinal patterns of crowdfunding adoption across CCIs can advance CCCF research and inform both practitioners and policymakers.

Note

1. Leland, Jonathan. Kickstarter Data, Global, 2009-2020. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2022-09-13. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR38050.v2>.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Norges Forskningsråd (301291).

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