IT AFFORDANCES AND DONOR MOTIVATIONS IN CHARITABLE CROWDFUNDING: THE “EARTHSHIP KAPITA” CASE

Complete Research

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Abstract

Crowdfunding is an information technology (IT)-enabled, online model for raising funds for charity that can be used as an alternative to traditional, offline charity models (e.g., bake sales, door-knocking or society events). Over the past three years, more and more charity organizations have turned to crowdfunding in addition to, or instead of, traditional fundraising. Why is that? In this paper, we explore one case of charitable crowdfunding, the 2014 “Earthship Kapita” campaign, with particular attention to the critical role of IT. Building on the theory of IT affordances and motivation theory, we find that crowdfunding supports particular types of donor motivation (e.g., to be part of a community, to show one’s social engagement) that are not supported by traditional charity models. The analysis allows us to propose an initial model linking IT affordances and motivation in the context of charitable crowdfunding. The paper informs future research by theorizing the link between IT affordances and motivation. It informs practitioners in the charity space about why they should consider, and how they could implement, charitable crowdfunding.

Keywords: Crowdsourcing, Crowdfunding, Charity, IT Affordances, Motivation, Case Study.

1 Introduction

“Crowdfunding” refers to an information technology (IT)-enabled model of collecting relatively small contributions or donations from a large number of people online (Bradford, 2012; Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2013). It provides a convenient mechanism to reach out to online “crowds” via the Internet. Scholars have begun to analyse how new commercial ventures and projects are successfully financed through crowdfunding (Bradford, 2012; Bretschneider, Knaub and Wieck, 2014; Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2013; Schenk and Guittard, 2011). Crowdfunding for commercial ventures (i.e., contributors buying future products or equity) has certainly grown quickly. On Kickstarter, a leading crowdfunding platform, more than 80,000 crowdfunding initiatives were successful as of March 2015 (Kickstarter, 2015).

However, over the past three years, crowdfunding has increasingly been used for non-commercial, charitable purposes. Charitable crowdfunding intermediary platforms such as Kiva, Chuffed, Pledgie and StartSomeGood have emerged, indicating the growing use of charitable crowdfunding in practice. Currently, published research available on charitable crowdfunding campaigns has focused on one specific mode of charitable crowdfunding, peer-to-peer lending (e.g., Kiva) (Knudsen and Nielsen, 2013; Ly and Mason, 2012; McKinnon, Dickinson, Carr and Chávez, 2013), but not on the distinct (Bradford, 2012) and prominent donation-based crowdfunding model. Donations are the most common and the most typical version of charity.

Charitable crowdfunding presents a unique context (Gerber and Hui, 2013). Firstly, the role of IT is pronounced. The IT-enabled nature of crowdfunding, specifically the new affordances (a concept we explain
below) of the underlying IT platforms, make charitable crowdfunding distinct from traditional, offline charity models (e.g., bake sales, doorknocking or society events). Despite the enabling effect of IT, little attention has been paid to the role of IT and its affordances in the existing literature. Secondly, the motivations of donors are unclear. The literature on commercial crowdfunding suggests largely extrinsic motivations for crowdfunding donors (e.g., Bretschneider et al., 2014; Kaufmann, Schulze and Veit, 2011; Leimeister, Huber, Bretschneider and Krmar, 2009). In contrast, the literature on offline charity models suggests that altruistic and intrinsic motivations are most important for charitable donors (Andreoni, 1990). Certainly, neither the literature on commercial crowdfunding nor that on offline charity models can be assumed to fully explain the motivations of donors in charitable crowdfunding.

“How do IT affordances support donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding campaigns?” We set out to investigate this question in a field study because, based on the existing literature, we were unable to confidently answer this question for the unique context of charitable crowdfunding. We explored the relationship between IT affordances and donor motivations in an exemplary case of a charitable crowdfunding campaign. The case was the Third World aid project, “Earthship Kapita”. This successful campaign ran in March 2014 via the leading charitable crowdfunding platform, Chuffed. The findings of our field study are reported and discussed in this paper.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we discuss the theoretical background (i.e., IT affordance theory and motivation theory) of the analysis. In section 3, we present how we conducted the case study. In section 4, the empirical findings are presented. In section 4, the empirical data are analysed, leading to the formulation of the initial theoretical claims that respond to the research question. We conclude the paper with a brief summary of the implications of our analysis.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 (IT) affordance theory

What is an “affordance”? An affordance describes the interrelation of an artefact or environment (e.g., a landscape or an IT platform) and an organism (e.g., a human being). The artefact “affords” (and constrains) the possible actions of that particular organism in relation to that particular artefact. An affordance is relational: it is not an attribute of either the artefact or the organism in isolation. A doorknob affords people the action of pulling; a peer-to-peer program affords people the action of sharing files, etc. Affordance theory helps us to explain the interaction of an actor within their environment as a result of how that actor perceives the nature of that environment (Norman, 2013). Based on the ideas of Gestalt (German for “shape”) theory, affordance theory was developed primarily by James J. Gibson in the 1970s (Gibson, 1977).

Affordance theory has recently garnered a large amount of attention in the information systems (IS) field and has been used to theorize how users interact with IT (Markus and Silver, 2008; Pozzi, Pigni and Vitari, 2014; Zammuto, Griffith, Majchrzak, Dougherty and Faraj, 2007). The reason is that affordance theory is a useful and important lens through which to understand the user’s perception of what he/she can do with IT (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012). The uniqueness of IT affordances lies in the characteristic that they can be consciously created. Information technology (IT) artefacts are designed.

In this paper, we focus on IT affordances that are realized and actualized by donors (actual existing affordances) as opposed to unrealized potential (theoretically possible affordances) (Pozzi et al., 2014).

2.2 Motivation theory

Motivation describes the degree to which people feel moved to perform a particular action (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan, 1991). It has been extensively studied in psychology and many other fields, including information systems (IS). Many different motivation theories and classifications have been proposed.

The particular motivation theory upon which we build in this paper is Ryan and Deci’s (2000) “intrinsic vs. extrinsic” model (the motivation theory most commonly used in information systems [IS]). Intrinsic motivation refers to “doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable”, while extrinsic motivation refers to “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan and Deci, 2000).
In the context of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, studies typically find that extrinsic motivations dominate (e.g., Bretschneider et al., 2014; Kaufmann et al., 2011; Leimeister et al., 2009). For example, contributors are motivated by their desire for recognition, to make money, to use a product or for some other immediate or future pay-off (Gerber and Hui, 2013). However, intrinsic motivations are certainly also present in crowdfunding (Bretschneider et al., 2014; Gerber and Hui, 2013). For example, contributors may have fun investing or might be satisfying their curiosity by trying crowdfunding (Bretschneider et al., 2014). Primarily, however, contributing to commercial crowdfunding is based on extrinsic motivations.

In the context of (offline) charitable giving, studies generally find intrinsic motivations to be dominant in the form of altruism.\(^1\) Donors typically experience positive feelings when helping others (Andreoni, 1990). These positive feelings are based on forms of motivation such as empathy, sympathy, nostalgia, reciprocity or commemoration (Batson, 1990; Eisenberg and Miller, 1987; Fultz, Batson, Fortenbach, McCarthy and Varney, 1986; Mount, 1996; Sargeant, 1999). However, motivations towards charitable giving can also be intrinsic-selfish or extrinsic in nature. For example, charitable giving is a way of stimulating the feeling of heroism (Piliavin and Charm, 1990) or of seeking “atonement for sins” (Schwartz, 1973) (e.g., in religious belief systems such as Christianity or Islam). As an example of another extrinsic motive, donors might be interested in contributing to causes that benefit their interests (Odendahl, 1990). Primarily, however, charity is based on intrinsic, altruistic motivations.

Extrinsic vs. intrinsic is not the only dimension along which motivations can be characterized. Individual vs. social is another important dimension to consider in our analysis. Individual motivations are those existing regardless of the existence of a community, while social motivations are only present in, and refer to, a social community (this is our definition). For example, regarding social motivation, it has been found that, in the context of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, social interaction and peer recognition are important factors (Alam and Campbell, 2012; Kaufmann et al., 2011). In a community, people are motivated by their desire to win prestige, respect, friendship and other social objectives, that is, they are socially motivated (Akerlof, 2008).

### 2.3 IT affordances and motivation?

The link between IT affordances and motivation is (surprisingly) poorly theorized. The closest to a theoretical examination of the relationship between affordances and motivation is Zhang’s (2008) concept of “motivational affordances”, which suggests that IT affordances should be designed to support the psychological, social, cognitive and emotional sources of motivation. Some authors have implied, although not empirically shown, that IT platforms provide particular affordances to make crowdfunding campaigns effective (Gerber and Hui, 2013; Zhang, 2008).

These considerations further support the relevance of our research question (“How do IT affordances support donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding campaigns?”). Answering this question may eventually lead to a full theory of the relationship of affordances and motivations that extends beyond this study’s context and may be an important theory for the IS field.

### 3 Research Method

We conducted an exploratory empirical study to respond to the research question. Due to the newness and context-dependent nature of crowdfunding, we considered that a revelatory case study with inductive theory development was the most appropriate research approach (Sarker, Xiao and Beaulieu, 2013; Yin, 2013).\(^2\)

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\(^1\) That is, we consider altruism to be primarily intrinsic in the sense that the person being altruistic perceives an “intrinsic reward”. For example, a person might feel good to give and feel bad not to give to another person in need. The grouping of altruism under intrinsic is in line with the common consensus in psychology (e.g., theory of egoism) but other groupings are possible.

\(^2\) For the benefit of the reader, we have structured the paper using the common structure: “literature review first, method and findings second”. In our actual research, these two steps were interwoven. We followed a hermeneutic research approach. Our theory building was inductive and hence we reviewed the literature during, not prior to, the data analysis. The fact that affordance theory and
This meant that although our findings and analysis were driven by the empirical data, our analysis was supported through the literature (and thus not a grounded theory in the narrow sense).

We studied the charitable crowdfunding campaign that supported the Third World aid project, Earthship Kapita. Our selection of the Earthship Kapita campaign for the case study was based on the intention to examine an exemplary and “information-rich” case within the phenomenon of interest for exploratory research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011). We studied the Earthship Kapita case over time: before, during and after the live campaign (Mar 1, 2014 to Mar 30, 2014). This allowed us to gather data that represented “a moving picture” (Saunders et al., 2011) and provided us with a rich understanding of the case over time.

Following best practices in case study research, we collected interview data, which we generated through our research activity, as well as documents and other data which occurred naturally in the field independent of our research activity (e.g., Silverman, 2011). Table 2 provides an overview of the data collected and analysed for this case study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Data</th>
<th>Documents and Other Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Platform staff (one interview, participant 1, nine pages of transcript)</td>
<td>• Contents, posts, updates of the crowdfunding campaign page (tracked continuously)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Campaign creators (two interviews, participants 2 and 3, 64 pages)</td>
<td>• Trade press coverage (six articles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Campaign donors (seven interviews, participants 4–10, 150 pages)</td>
<td>• Blog posts and other social media content (tracked continuously, about 50 posts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notes from interviews (31 pages)</td>
<td>• Campaign development content (especially on group Facebook page) (tracked continuously)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Data collected and analysed for this case study

We conducted 10 formal (recorded, transcribed and coded) interviews, and had approximately 15 informal talks in relation to the study. To incorporate different perspectives and to triangulate findings, we conducted interviews with three stakeholder groups: the crowdfunding platform staff (the people running the Chuffed platform); the crowdfunding campaign creators (the people creating the campaign and running the corresponding funded project “on the ground” in Malawi); and the crowdfunding campaign donors (the people donating to the campaign). Interviewees were selected on the basis that they would be able to provide new and theoretically relevant information (a purposive sampling strategy) and, in practical terms, based on their availability to contribute to the research. We used several iterations of an interview guide over time, increasingly focusing on uncovering IT affordances, donor motivations and the relationships between the two.

We collected documents, online content and other natural data from both public and non-public sources. A focus on natural, broad, field data allowed us to study the charitable crowdfunding phenomenon in its rich context, avoiding the manipulation of data collection with its risk of pre-imposing particular findings through the research instrument’s structure (e.g., one-off, single point of observation survey) or the restricted type of data (e.g., only numeric data) considered (e.g., Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls and Ormston, 2013). These natural data were used to complement the interview data.

We iteratively gathered and analysed the data (e.g., interview and natural data) and further investigated the literature and theory. All interview data (254 pages) were coded: we continuously imported both interview data and natural data (where it was in textual form) into the NVivo software (a package for qualitative coding analysis). We defined and refined open codes. Relevant open codes were then aggregated into higher-level abstract codes (concepts), reflecting on groups and patterns in the open codes where we iteratively

motivation theory are presented first in the paper is not to be misread as indicating that we have pre-imposed a theory. The order is purely due to the necessarily linear structure of a paper.
refined both the grouping and definition (Ezzy, 2002). For the coding process, we used existing theory as a sensitising device (to identify concepts already developed and named in academic discourse). This iterative and ongoing data analysis helped us to refine the interview guideline (e.g., asking different questions) and to select and approach future interviewees (i.e., to find out about particular aspects not sufficiently covered in prior data).

The data collection and analysis were concluded when no additional insights would be revealed through additional data collection, and the findings and their analysis had stabilized (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

4 Empirical Findings

The purpose of the Earthship Kapita project was to build a community centre in a developing village in the Kapita region in Malawi. The project was run by a charity called Empower (Australia) and an architecture organization called Earthship Biotecture (based in the USA). The community centre was to be built to help people in the Kapita region work towards their aim of becoming independent of foreign aid, and was to include a hospital, a school and a bank. In 2013, the project had run out of funding with all conventional funding sources completely exhausted.

The project team decided to turn to charitable crowdfunding to raise the necessary funds to complete the project ($17,500). The project team and supporting volunteers created a campaign on the platform Chuffed (a platform that specialised in charitable crowdfunding). Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the main campaign page.

![Screenshot of the charitable crowdfunding campaign page for Earthship Kapita](image)

Figure 1. Screenshot of the charitable crowdfunding campaign page for Earthship Kapita
Three key Earthship Kapita project team members led the preparation of the campaign. A group of supporters also helped with the development and marketing of the campaign. The campaigners coordinated through a group Facebook page. Many ideas that arose on this page were actually implemented on the campaign page. For example, on the Facebook page, supporters suggested using photos of the project group together with Kapita locals to visually demonstrate personal involvement with the project.

The Earthship Kapita campaign was launched on the crowdfunding platform, Chuffed, at the beginning of March 2014.

Donors said that the carefully developed campaign page played a substantial role in the campaign’s success. They reflected upon how the campaign page cleverly and effectively used visuals to increase their understanding about both the crowdfunding platform and the supported project (on the ground in Malawi).

In one example of the first aspect (increasing understanding of the platform), one donor found that the “clean and minimalistic (user interface) made things easy to read [and] easy to navigate.” Another donor said that she liked the fundraising process being online because it was “just so much more convenient and required much less effort” from her.

In an example of the second aspect (increasing understanding of the project on the ground), one donor told us that she was touched by the video on the campaign page showing how the people of Kapita were using a part of the community centre that had already been completed. Another donor said that he liked the visual elements (videos, photos) because it “proved” to him that the Earthship Kapita community was “a real-life project and not just an abstract concept”. The campaign creators said that they had created such elements to trigger donors’ motivation to support the project.

Donors told us that the platform on which the campaign was run supported them in taking action. All donors to whom we spoke had actually donated money to the Earthship Kapita project via the platform’s payment function. One donor said he believed that a ratio of 90% “overhead costs” and 10% reaching the ground was common in offline charity models, but the use of IT-enabled crowdfunding reversed this ratio to only 10% overhead costs and 90% reaching the ground. Donors also took other actions to support the campaign. Another donor used the platform’s share function to post a link to the campaign on social media.

Donors had various backgrounds and came through a variety of ways to the campaign page on Chuffed. Some donors were regular supporters of Empower and Earthship Biotecture projects (e.g., participants 4 and 5). Other donors, however, only became aware of Empower and Earthship Biotecture through seeing the crowdfunding campaign online (e.g., participants 6 and 7).

Most donors said they were primarily motivated to donate by their interest in the cause. For example, one donor felt compelled to donate to a cause about which she was passionate in general (i.e., sustainability projects). She believed that the Earthship Kapita project was important and this was her primary reason for donating.

Local products of the Kapita community were offered on the campaign page as recognition for making donations at certain levels. Some donors were motivated by the prospect of receiving such rewards; however, donors’ opinions were divided on this point. Some donors said rewards were an extra incentive for them to donate more money (e.g., to reach a threshold) in addition to the primary motivation (to help). Other donors said they did not want to receive any reward and actually rejected rewards they were entitled to receive.

Donors often made positive references to the online community (the “crowd” of donors). One donor said that she wanted to be “a team player”. Another donor said he had made a large donation because he wanted to show others (i.e., potential future members of the crowd) that he had contributed to the Earthship Kapita campaign. Interestingly, he said he had donated because he wanted to promote his own organization as one that supports similar causes: “I have to put my money where my mouth is ... I’m going to give to organizations that are doing the kind of things that my organization believes in.”

Donors talked about how they felt good after making donations. One such donor said he felt good as he had done the right thing; he believed that his large donation would give a boost to the campaign, and hoped that others might also feel encouraged to donate based on the visibility of his donation. He said, “[If] that’s sometimes what you need; you need a nice big injection and that also helps to stimulate the team.”
Donors usually spread awareness of the online campaign with their families and friends (online via social media and word-of-mouth). The campaign page supported easy sharing of the campaign on social media. Several donors who were not really looking for projects to which to donate, had stumbled upon the online campaign based on social media sharing (by other donors) of the link to the Chuffed page.

The charitable crowdfunding campaign page on the Chuffed platform allowed user-generated content to be posted (e.g., comments). This also became a measure to engage potential donors with the campaign. Donors revisited the campaign page after their donation process was completed. One donor explained that he came back to the campaign page due to the comment function as he was interested in what other donors were posting.

Donors often left short messages on the campaign page, generally to show their support for the campaign. For example, one comment read: “Great project—for the people, by the people—with direct community impact. Fights against poverty and tackles inequalities endured by women and children.” Asked about his motivation to post the comment, the donor said he posted this message because he wanted to show the project creator and other donors that he was as passionate about supporting the cause as they were.

The campaign ended on March 30, 2014, finishing successfully by raising $17,840 (slightly above the target). In all, 193 donors contributed between $1 and $1,700.

5 Discussion

Based on the above overview of the empirical material, we can now discuss the meaning of these findings in relation to the research question: “How do technology affordances support donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding campaigns?”

5.1 IT affordances in charitable crowdfunding

Several affordance types emerged from our analysis of the data. The affordance types can be usefully explained through the cross-section of two dimensions.

The first dimension concerns cognition vs. action (for a generic discussion of the difference see Weiner, 1980). Cognition affordances refer to properties of the charitable crowdfunding platform (i.e., the IT artefact) that support donors in their knowing and thinking. Action affordances, in contrast, refer to properties of the IT artefact crowdfunding platform that support donors in executing tasks and taking action.

The second dimension concerns project vs. platform. While this dimension is specific to our context (one might consider offline world vs. online artefact more generically), we found it useful to introduce this distinction. Project affordances are specific to the crowdfunding project and refer to the project “on the ground” (i.e., affordances in relation to the “real-life” project of the Earthship Kapita community centre actually being built in Malawi). Platform affordances are specific to the mediating IT artefact, the crowdfunding platform itself (i.e., affordances in relation to the online crowdfunding campaign page hosted on Chuffed).

The four IT affordance types identified in our analysis of the case are:

**Project-related cognition IT affordances.** In charitable crowdfunding, these are affordances that support a donor’s cognitive processes regarding the crowdfunding project. Examples of this type of affordance are statements by donors that the video explaining the purpose of the Earthship Kapita community centre helped them to understand and empathize with the project. These affordances (for donors) are provided by the IT artefact (the crowdfunding platform) but refer to the project on the ground (in Malawi).

**Platform-related cognition IT affordances.** These are affordances that support a donor’s cognitive processes regarding the crowdfunding platform. Examples of this type of affordance are statements by donors that the platform design had a clear and helpful user interface that helped them to easily navigate the platform. These affordances are provided by the IT artefact and are self-referential (supporting donors’ cognitive efforts to understand the platform, not donors’ cognitive efforts to understand the project on the ground).
**Project-related action IT affordances.** These are affordances that support a donor’s actions regarding the crowdfunding project. The main example is that donors were actually able to transfer money to the ongoing building work in Malawi and support the completion of the Earthship Kapita community centre. The IT artefact provides these affordances but they refer to the project on the ground.

**Platform-related action IT affordances.** These are affordances that support a donor’s actions regarding the crowdfunding platform. For example, donors said that they posted comments and used the share function to post the link to the campaign to friends, family and social networks. The IT artefact provides these affordances which refer to the platform, the IT artefact itself.

### 5.2 Donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding

Several motivation types emerged from our analysis of the data. The motivation types can also be usefully explained through the cross-section of two dimensions.

The first dimension concerns individual vs. social motivations (for similar conclusions, see Alam and Campbell, 2012; Kaufmann et al., 2011). As described in section 2, individual motivation refers to motivation stemming from the desire of an individual, regardless of the presence of a social group. Social motivation, in contrast, is a result of the presence of a social group (a crowd in our case). Motivation is not a purely individual phenomenon (Akerlof 2008).

The second dimension concerns intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivations as developed in self-determination theory (Deci et al., 1991). As described in section 2, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation stemming from an individual’s inherent enjoyment. Extrinsic motivation is based on the expectation of realizing a separable outcome.

The four motivation types identified in our analysis of the case are:

**Individual-intrinsic motivation.** In charitable crowdfunding, this refers to motivation related to a donor’s self-enjoyment or personal satisfaction in supporting the campaign, regardless of the presence of the crowd. For example, one donor said she donated because she was “passionate” about the Earthship Kapita project.

**Social-intrinsic motivation.** This refers to motivation related to a donor’s self-enjoyment or personal satisfaction in supporting the campaign in the presence of a crowd or community. For example, another donor said she donated in part because she wanted to be “a team player” and to be part of a “community of like-minded people”.

**Individual-extrinsic motivation.** This refers to motivation related to a donor’s desire to realize a particular outcome as a result of supporting the campaign. For example, some donors said they were motivated by and donated specific amounts because they would receive a tangible reward (e.g., Kapita-made products).

**Social-extrinsic motivation.** This refers to motivation related to a donor’s desire to realize a particular outcome as a result of supporting the campaign in the presence of a crowd or community. For example, one donor said he hoped to raise awareness and gain credibility for his own organization.

### 5.3 Relationship between IT affordances and donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding

The Earthship Kapita campaign allowed us to explore how these different IT affordance types support the different donor motivation types in charitable crowdfunding. Based on our analysis of the case data, we propose an initial tentative model (further research is certainly required) as an answer to the research question of this study:

**How do IT affordances support donor motivations in charitable crowdfunding campaigns?**

According to our analysis of the case, **project-related cognition IT affordances support donors’ individual-intrinsic motivation.** For example, charitable crowdfunding platforms afford donors the ability to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of the project, which supports a donor’s belief in the project’s value. One donor trusted the Earthship Kapita campaign because the visual elements of the platform convinced him that he was dealing with a “real-life project and not just an abstract concept”. This corresponds to findings of other studies that suggest the importance of trust in commercial crowdfunding.
(Gerber and Hui, 2013) and the persuasive power of online visual elements such as videos (Slattery, Finnegan, Vidgen and Land, 2014).

**Project-related action IT affordances support donors’ individual-intrinsic motivation.** Charitable crowdfunding platforms support and trigger the altruistic motivations of donors. In the Earthship Kapita campaign, donors said they liked the fact that the information about the project and the ability to make a difference in that project were co-located, making their empathy “actionable”.

**Project-related action IT affordances support donors’ individual-extrinsic motivation.** Charitable crowdfunding platforms afford donors the opportunity to make financial contributions to projects to which they have already established a desire to donate (external to the crowdfunding campaign) and now simply wish to execute this desire. One donor said she had no particular opinion about the platform: she saw it as an effective and “convenient tool” for executing her pre-formed donation wish. Another donor said he believed that crowdfunding provided a more effective way to fund projects compared to the alternatives (less overhead costs, thus more of his money reaching the charity project on the ground).

**Platform-related cognition affordances support donors’ individual-extrinsic motivation.** For example, charitable crowdfunding platforms afford donors the opportunity to find the charity projects for which they are searching. One donor explained how the platform’s online nature (digital, global, 24/7) helped him to much more effectively complete his search for a charity project. Crowdfunding platforms are an effective method through which campaign creators can attract donors and donors can find and exchange the information for which they are looking (see also Gerber and Hui, 2013).

**Platform-related cognition affordances support donors’ social-intrinsic motivation.** Charitable crowdfunding platforms afford donors the sense of an online community to which some donors experienced a desire to belong. For example, one donor said one of the attractions of the platform, and his reason for regularly coming back, was to read new comments of like-minded people. This finding highlights the importance of social motivation. Crowdfunding communities can provide encouragement, feedback and inspiration to fellow members of their community (Gerber and Hui, 2013). People are motivated by the actions and opinions expressed in online communities (Slattery et al., 2014).

**Platform-related action affordances support donors’ social-intrinsic motivation.** Charitable crowdfunding platforms, through the nature of being online and featuring “share” functions, afford donors the ability to widely promote the platform on their social network (e.g., through social media). Many donors used the comment function to generate content and actively contribute to the community on the core platform because they enjoyed the interaction. It can be concluded that crowdfunding supports and triggers people’s desire to be involved with a community (Gerber and Hui, 2013).

Finally, **platform-related action affordances support donors’ social-extrinsic motivation.** Charitable crowdfunding campaigns afford donors the mechanisms by which to signal to others that they have supported these causes. Donations are made publicly visible by default, and it is common to share that donations have been made via one’s Facebook page. For example, one donor said the expected positive reactions of the crowd and his social circles (peer recognition) provide one aspect of his motivation to donate. Another donor said he wanted to draw attention and gain credibility for his own organization through the donation.

Overall, what does this analysis mean in relation to the study’s research question? In short, the analysis provided above suggests that IT-enabled crowdfunding campaigns can be more effective (e.g., cost reduction, community support) than traditional “doorknocking” charity models. In particular, this study shows that the IT affordances of crowdfunding platforms support the social motivations of donors (e.g., the desire to be part of a community, the wish to show others that one has contributed). The affordances to support social motivation are salient in crowdfunding: such affordances are not typically present in offline charity models.

**Conclusion**

In the description above, we have provided a summary of the findings and the analysis of our field study of an exemplary case of the recent phenomenon of charitable crowdfunding. Based on a field study of Earthship...
Kapita, we have developed an enhanced conceptualization of IT affordances and donor motivation types in the context of charitable crowdfunding. In relation to motivations, we added a distinction between individual vs. social motivations to the common distinction between intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivations. In relation to IT affordances, we added a distinction between platform (IT artefact) vs. project (on the ground) to the common distinction between cognition vs. action. These enhanced conceptualizations then allowed a fine-grained theoretical discussion of the link between IT affordances and donor motivations in the context of charitable crowdfunding. The discussion empirically developed and extended conceptual suggestions that had been partly made in prior papers (Gerber and Hui, 2013; Zhang, 2008).

For scholars, the theoretical model developed in this paper provides an initial abstract model that will be helpful for further theorizing. We believe there is great potential to extend and refine the analysis of the link between IT affordances and motivation that is suggested in this paper (both in the context of charitable crowdfunding and more broadly). While we did not make use of statistical generalization techniques (this not being the nature of case study research), the model provided here is general in its nature and hence provides a starting point for the analysis of cases other than Earthship Kapita. To refine the model, it would be fruitful to collect and analyse data from other cases. In fact, we, the authors, are in the process of doing so and invite interested colleagues to consider this relevant research space.

For practitioners, the paper and the Earthship Kapita case provide the initial justification for why people in the charity space should consider taking advantage of IT-enabled crowdfunding in addition to, or as an alternative to, traditional fundraising. Charitable crowdfunding platforms provide affordances that are not typically present in offline charity models (e.g., in relation to donors’ social motivation) or are more effective than in offline charity models (e.g., in relation to donors’ perception of crowdfunding being more cost-effective). The case also illustrates how this can be done (e.g., using a crowdfunding platform such as Chuffed, creating an online community, organizing volunteers through Facebook). Based on our analysis, IT affordances provide the opportunity to make charitable giving both more effective and more social.

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References


