

Making Innovation Legible in Digital Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: A Pilot Empirical Study of Kickstarter Campaign Framing and Funding Outcomes

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Abstract

This paper examines how innovation is made legible to potential backers in a digital entrepreneurial ecosystem and asks whether campaign framing is associated with better funding outcomes on Kickstarter. Drawing on signaling theory, legitimacy theory, and research on entrepreneurial narratives, it argues that novelty language alone is unlikely to persuade; what matters is whether founders translate novelty into concrete, understandable claims about mechanism, functionality, or use case. To test this argument empirically, the study assembles a purposive pilot sample of 23 closed Kickstarter campaigns in technology-adjacent categories (Hardware, Gadgets, Gaming Hardware, Product Design, and Software) with end dates in 2025-2026. Public campaign information was extracted from Kicktraq pages reporting campaign status, pledged amount, funding goal, backers, and dates. Each campaign was manually coded for concrete innovation framing and hype-only language using the title and short pitch visible on the public page. The main dependent variables are final funding success and funding ratio. Campaigns coded as using concrete innovation framing were substantially more likely to finish successfully (64.3% versus 11.1%), and Fisher's exact test indicates that this difference is statistically meaningful (odds ratio = 14.4, $p = .029$). In heteroskedasticity-robust OLS models predicting log funding ratio, concrete innovation framing remains positive ($b = 2.23$, $p = .038$), whereas hype-only language is not significant. The findings position crowdfunding pages as part of a broader digital entrepreneurial ecosystem in which entrepreneurs must make innovation both exciting and believable.

Keywords

Crowdfunding, Kickstarter, entrepreneurship, innovation, digital entrepreneurial ecosystems, campaign framing, pilot study.