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Summary:
Reward-based crowdfunding is not just about raising money to produce goods and services but also about finding supporters for a good cause. The initiators of crowdfunding cam-paigns thus are economic actors and advocates of something worth committing to at the same time. The contradictions between these two roles are particularly evident when it comes to the question of whether initiators should pay themselves with crowdfunding mon-ey. This paper asks how the initiators of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns address this topic and how they justify paying themselves. The research is based on a data set with 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns on the German crowdfunding platform 'Startnext' and sev-eral subsets thereof we analyzed by combining computer-aided text analysis with qualitative content analysis. A main finding is that initiators avoid to be explicit about payments to themselves but rather resort to a 'third-person pattern' by which they introduce themselves as the experts for the work to be done.

Inhalt

1.   Introduction

Reward-based crowdfunding is the first of a number of new ways of online fundraising mediated by internet platforms that have evolved over the last 20 years (Belleflamme et al., 2014; Mollick, 2014; Schulz-Schaeffer, 2017). It 'covers transactions where backers provide funding to individuals or organizations in exchange for non-monetary rewards' (Shneor & Vik, 2020, p. 150). Individuals or organizations who are seeking funding for their projects set up campaign pages on internet platforms for reward-based crowdfunding such as Kickstarter or Startnext where they describe the goals of their projects and give reasons why the project is worth being supported. It is very common that projects aim at realizing products or services that represent a good cause of some sorts. What counts as a good cause can be as diverse as the audiences addressed. It can be about helping a songwriter to produce her first album or about supporting an author to produce a book about vegan food for dogs. Usually, these products or services are the main non-monetary rewards the initiators promise as rewards for financial support. For example, a crowdfunding project for producing a music album will offer the CD as the main reward.

Usually, the financial support for which a particular reward is promised is roughly equal to the market value of the reward. Therefore, it has been argued that reward-based crowdfunding is just a new way of pre-selling or pre-ordering products or services (Crosetto & Regner, 2014; Hemer, 2011). Previous research has shown, however, that supporters are often not just motivated by getting the product or service but also or even primarily by their commitment to the good cause it represents (see section 2). In many respects, reward-based crowdfunding is thus more about finding supporters of a good cause than about finding buyers for a product. The initiators are well aware of their potential supporters' expectations. The vast majority of them refer to good causes of one or another kind when they describe on their campaign pages why their proposed projects deserve being supported (see table 3 below).

However, while acting as the advocates of something meaningful, the initiators of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns also are economic actors. They aim at realizing particular products or services. Campaigns that ask for donations for charity are an exception in reward-based crowdfunding. On their campaign pages, the initiators describe the costs of the resources required for realizing the project and explain how they intend to spend the money. But how about the work, the initiators themselves are planning to put into the project? Should it be treated as part of the project costs? From an economic perspective, all work required translates into labor costs including the initiator's work. From the perspective of the initiators as advocates of a good

cause, however, this could be viewed differently. In this role, initiators are expected to be motivated by their commitment to the cause and not by self-interest. An indicator of commitment is the willingness to make personal sacrifices. Accordingly, initiators would show their commitment by working unpaid for their projects. In contrast, initiators would risk to be viewed as lacking commitment if they announce to use crowdfunding money for paying themselves. Do the initiators of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns share this view? Does the way they present their projects on their campaign pages reflect the assumption that being committed to a good cause and being paid for the work could be perceived as a contradiction?

To answer this question, the paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 provides a short overview of related work. Section 3 describes the research design of our study. Section 4 provides evidence that initiators present themselves as advocates of a good cause rather than as economic actors. Section 5 analyzes the intended expenses listed in the crowdfunding campaigns according to different cost categories and investigates how often initiators announce payment for their own work. Section 6 investigates how initiators introduce themselves when stating their intention to pay themselves or their willingness to work unpaid. Section 7 identifies several patterns of meaning representing the initiators attitudes, beliefs, and intentions with respect to the topic of paying themselves. Section 8 shortly summarizes the main findings and concludes.

2.   Being committed to a cause and asking for a pay – a contradiction?

There is substantial evidence that reward-based crowdfunding is not just a way of pre-selling or pre-ordering products. Research has shown that 'projects with a social or non-profit oriented background have a higher probability of receiving crowdfunding' (cf. Belleflamme et al., 2013; Moritz & Block, 2016, p. 32). Computer-aided text analyses of project descriptions reveal how using words that signal a pro-social orientation enhances a project's chances of getting funded (Defazio et al., 2020; Pietraszkiewicz et al., 2017). It has also been shown that supporters of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns are motivated by their attachment to the project, by their wish to contribute to a good cause, to be part of meaningful action, and to be part of a community of like-minded people (Calic & Mosakowski, 2016; Gerber & Hui, 2013, pp. 15-16; Herrero et al., 2020; Sherman & Axelrad, 2021).

Previous research indicates that supporters expect the initiators of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns to be motivated by their commitment to a good cause rather than by an interest in money. Too much money-orientation casts doubts on the initiators' commitment and

discourages people from supporting them. As Chan and co-authors put it, 'an overemphasis on money by the project creator may indicate self-interest and reduce public generosity' (Chan et al., 2019, p. 4). In the context of reward-based crowdfunding, 'which attracts intrinsically motivated people, such behavior is even more likely to be punished' (Chan et al., 2019, p. 4). Analyzing the relation between the language used in the project descriptions of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns and the campaigns' successes, Chan et al. show 'that money saliency (i.e., the use of money-related terms in the project description) has a negative effect on both the funding amount raised and the number of contributors' (Chan et al., 2019, p. 6). Gorbatai and Nelson find that using money-related language 'is negatively correlated with money raised, while positive emotion and inclusive language are positively correlated with fundraising success' (Gorbatai & Nelson, 2015, p. 17). These findings suggest that the supporters' attachment to a crowdfunding campaign is influenced by their perception of the funders' attachment to the project. People who want to be part of something meaningful will avoid projects whose funders seem to be not truly committed to its cause. The assumption that funder credibility matters is also supported by the findings of Defazio et al. (2020) that 'while a moderate emphasis on pro-social framing is beneficial, too much emphasis on pro-social framing backfires' because it is perceived as not credible.

Do the project initiators share this view? Do they believe that their commitment to the cause motivates potential supporters to fund their projects? And do they fear that paying themselves with crowdfunding money may be considered as lack of commitment? As far as we see, there is no previous research that addresses this topic explicitly.

There is some research on meaningful work and on work as a calling that addresses related questions and helps to clarify the relationship between being part of something meaningful, commitment, and the willingness to make sacrifices. According to this literature, people are willing to make personal sacrifices in exchange for engaging in meaningful work. People who view their work as meaningful tend to spend more time at work and they are more willing to work for lower salaries or even without pay (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Hu & Hirsh, 2017). Two main explanations are given for this willingness to make personal sacrifices. One explanation is that meaningful work provides non-material rewards such as the satisfaction of contributing to a good cause (Wrzesniewski, 2003, p. 301) or the gratitude of others for doing good. For these non-material rewards, people are willing to make personal sacrifices (Heyes, 2005; Hu & Hirsh, 2017). An implication of this kind of trade-off between material and non-material rewards is that it tends to turn the personal sacrifices into signs of commitment, into 'badges of honor' (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010, p. 450). Another

explanation is that the commitment to a good cause that renders the work meaningful implies a moral obligation to work more and harder than when a person is motivated only by money. Some research suggests that this moral obligation to sacrifice for one's work is especially strong with people who sense their work as a calling (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 167; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). These findings strongly indicate that that being committed to a good cause, being part of something meaningful, and being ready to make sacrifices are (or entail) orientations that reinforce each other thus making it difficult to pursue material or monetary goals at the same time.

3. Research design

Our investigation is based on a data set with 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns (hereafter referred to as 'the data set') from which we derive several subsets for the purposes of this study. The data set contains the written descriptions of all crowdfunding campaigns that have been launched on Startnext between October 2010 and January 2020 and that are available without being logged-in on the platform. According to Golla and Schönefeld (2019) and RatSWD (2019), it is legally permissible in Germany to use web scraping for research purposes if the data are publicly available. Similar to Kickstarter, Startnext is a platform for reward-based crowdfunding. Since its start in September 2010, it has hosted more than 13,000 successful projects, together raising more than 130 million € (cf. https://www.startnext.com/), making it the largest and most noted platform for reward-based crowdfunding in German-speaking countries. A variety of the metrics that describe the crowdfunding campaigns in the data set are provided below in table 2.

For a better understanding of the data our research is based on, we shortly describe how crowdfunding campaigns are organized on Startnext. The initiators of crowdfunding campaigns present their projects on the platform on pages, which have pre-defined structure. One of the pre-defined elements is the funding goal, the amount of money the initiators want to raise from the crowd. A crowdfunding campaign is successful if the funds raised during the funding phase (usually a period of 30 to 45 days) meet that goal. Only then the initiators get the money from the platform for realizing their projects. Otherwise, the money goes back to the supporters. In addition to a place for a pitch video in which the initiators present their projects and themselves, there are pre-defined text fields for which the initiators are supposed to provide written information. They are entitled: 'What is this project all about?', 'What is the project goal and who is the project for?', 'Why would you support this project?', 'How will we use the money if the

project is successfully funded?', and 'Who are the people behind the project?'. The data set exists as an Excel sheet with these text fields and additional information such as the name of the campaigns, the funding goals, and the campaign starting and ending date as the sheet's columns and the 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns as the sheet's rows.

The research presented in this paper focusses on analyzing the written information from the text fields with a focus on the text field on how the money will be used. This is where the initiators specify the expenses to be paid with the crowdfunding money and where most of the information about the topic of paying themselves is to be found. The handbook advices: 'Avoid lengthy explanations in your project description. Answer the questions briefly and concisely in 2-3 paragraphs so your supporters quickly understand what is most important.' (cf. https://www.startnext.com/help/handbook/how-it-works.html). The initiators mostly follow this advice. In the data set, the descriptions given in the cost specifications text field consist on average of 75 words. The downside of the initiators concise answers is that more advanced text mining techniques such as topic modeling do not provide results useful for answering our research question. We thus employed computer-aided text analyses mainly to automatically identify more basic language patterns such as collocates and had to rely on additional content analyses to make sense of them.

We transformed the cost specifications text fields of the data set into a text corpus (hereafter referred to as 'the text corpus') and used the text analysis software AntConc (https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/). AntConc supports 'KWIC' (keyword-in-context) searches, which allow to analyze the immediate contexts of meaning in which particular search terms of interest occur, and searches for collocates, which allow to identify phrases. While AntConc gives more options in searching for language patterns, the advantage of Excel searches is that they can be conducted using the crowdfunding campaigns as unit of analysis. In this way it is not only possible to identify how often a particular term or phrase occurs but also in how many different campaigns they occur.

However, without additional analyses, the information that can be derived from counting keyword and identifying recurrent phrases is limited. For obtaining this additional information, we manually conducted content analyses of the context of relevant keywords and phrases by coding the content. We conducted the coding as classification work, that is, we derived meaningful categories from the content we analyzed and categorized the content according to these categories (following the method of inductive coding as described by Strauss 1987). All classification work was discussed among the authors in iterative steps. Nevertheless, we are well

aware that not all of the material we classified is unambiguously classifiable – a generally un-reachable ideal for classification systems (Bowker & Star, 1999). For the content analyses we defined the following three subsets from the data set. The sets of data used in this paper are listed in table 1.

Name of the set of data	Description
The data set	The written descriptions of 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns that have been launched on Startnext between October 2010 and January 2020
The text corpus	The contents of the cost specification text fields of all campaigns from the data set
The recipients subset	349 crowdfunding campaigns from the data set that address the recipients of payment for labor in their cost specifications
The my/our/his/her/their work/labor subset	90 crowdfunding campaigns from the data set, in which initiators explicitly assign payment for labor to themselves or to others in their cost specifications
The representative sample	256 crowdfunding campaigns drawn from the data set by extracting every 40th case

Table 1: List of sets of data

(1) The recipients subset: For analyzing how initiators address the topic of paying themselves, we built a subset from the data set consisting of crowdfunding campaigns that specify the recipients of payment in their cost specifications. We will refer to it as the 'recipients subset'. For constructing this subset, we retrieved from the data set all campaigns that use the phrases 'Honorar* für' ('professional fee for') or 'Gage* für' ('artist's fee for') in their cost specifications. We chose these phrases because 'Honorar' and 'Gage' (a term for fees especially in the theater, film and music business we translate as 'artist's fee') are the terms for paid work that occur most often in the cost specifications and mostly with reference to the recipients of the payments. To include a wider range of different kinds of paid work, we also included crowdfunding campaigns using the term 'Bezahlung' ('payment'), a term that is used to refer to payment for work of any kind. We conducted a content analysis of all these campaigns to identify the cases that contain information about the recipients of the payments. This is the case in 226 out of the 237 results from searching for 'professional fee for' or 'artist's fee for' and in 123 out of 153 results from searching for 'payment'. In total, the subset consists of 349 different crowdfunding campaigns.

(2) The my/our/his/her/their work/labor subset: For some further analyses, we included results from searches for the collates 'my work/labor', 'our work/labor', 'your labor', and 'their

labor' ('mein*/unser*/eure*/ihre* Arbeit*'). The search retrieved 144 occurrences of these collocates. Analyzing them, we arrived at 90 crowdfunding campaigns that refer to paid work in their cost specifications. These 90 cases constitute the 'my/our/his/her/their work/labor subset'. This subset is useful for our research because it contains cases in which the initiators directly point at themselves as the recipients of payments.

(3) The representative sample: To put the content analyses of these subsets into context, it is important to determine how relevant labor costs are as expenses for crowdfunding projects in relation to other expenses. Also, it is important to determine how prominently the initiators communicate the support of a good cause as the reasons for supporting their projects in relation to the benefits to be gained by the rewards. These are questions that concern the data set as a whole and cannot be answered based on the subsets. Computer-based search for terms or phrases in the data set is not applicable, however, since it requires substantial classification work to transform the relevant information from the data set's text fields into meaningful categories. Therefore, we drew a sample from the data set, which is large enough to serve as a representative sample but small enough to allow for manual coding of the categories we are interested in. The sample consists of 256 crowdfunding campaigns. We retrieved them by extracting every 40th case after having sorted the data set by the campaign starting date. As shown in Table 2, the sample is representative of the data set with respect to a variety of the metrics that describe the crowdfunding campaigns.

Metrics	Data set with 10,251 campaigns	Representative sample with 256 campaigns
Funding goals and campaign success		
Average sum of the first funding goal	8898 €	8625 €
Average amount of money raised	7717 €	7628 €
Successful campaigns (first funding goal is reached)	7801 (76,1%)	185 (72,27%)
Failed campaigns (first funding goal is not reached)	2450 (23,9%)	71 (27,73%)
Campaigns with a second funding goal	4340 (42,34%)	115 (44,92%)
Campaigns reaching their second funding goal	569 (13,11% of all campaigns with a second funding goal)	15 (13,04% of all campaigns with a second funding goal)
*Distribution of campaigns according to Startnext's project categories**		
Arts and culture projects (music, film, literature, event, theater, art, photography, audio book, comic, journalism)	6.496 (63,37%)	165 (64,45%)

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Projects from categories in which societal, social, political, and environmental issues prevail (education, food, agriculture, community, social business, environment, science)	2.890 (28,19%)	69 (26,95%)
Other projects (design, fashion, invention, games, technology, pharmacy)	865 (8,44%)	22 (8,59%)

Table 2: A comparison of crowdfunding campaign metrics from the data set and the representative sample. *These categories are pre-defined by Startnext to be used by the initiators to self-categorize their projects.

4.   The initiators as advocates of a good cause of some kind

Our research question rests on the assumption that potential supporters of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns want to be part of something meaningful and to support a good cause rather than just pre-ordering a product or service. This implies that they expect the initiators to be advocates of a good cause rather than just economic actors. Are the initiators aware of this expectation and are they responding to it? The answer to this question can be found in the data set. In order to retrieve this information, we categorized and classified the content of the text field titled 'Why would you support this project?' from the campaigns of the representative sample. Our analysis focused on categorizing and classifying two kinds of information: (1) a good cause of some kind as the reason for supporting the campaign and (2) a benefit for the supporter as the reason for supporting the campaign. Table 3 and table 4 show results of the analysis.

Reasons for supporting the campaign (good causes)	Number of campaigns
Support for specific works of artistic or cultural merit (music recordings: 42, films: 22, books: 12, theater productions: 11, concerts: 4)	89
Arts and culture support more general (e.g., support of arts and culture events, institutions, or locations)	27
Support for artists	12
Commitment for values regarding art and culture (independence: 16, craft: 16, authenticity: 6, tradition: 6)	36
Societal goals (e.g., social cohesion, intercultural exchange, tolerance, diversity, making the world a better place)	35
Social goals (support for people in need)	25
Political goals (e.g., regarding peace, education, work-life balance)	9
Ecological goals (sustainability, environmentalism, animal protection, waste avoidance)	38
Support for works of alternative journalism (reports, documentations, blogs etc.)	15

Support for sports-related and hobby-related non-profit associations and communities	21
Support for religious or spiritual activities	3
at least one of the above reasons	227 (89,69%)

Table 3: Reasons related to good causes for supporting crowdfunding campaigns given by their initiators on their campaign pages (n = 256, representative sample from 10.251 crowdfunding campaigns on Startnext)

Reasons for supporting the campaign (benefit-oriented)	Number of campaigns
Purchase of the product or service	14
Pre-selling or pre-ordering	3
Non-monetary rewards are promised	27
at least one of the above reasons	43 (16,80%)

Table 4: Benefit-oriented reasons for supporting crowdfunding campaigns given by their initiators on their campaign pages (n = 256, representative sample from 10.251 crowdfunding campaigns on Startnext)

As table 4 shows, benefits for potential supporters are rather rarely the reasons initiators provide for winning support. Only a few campaigns address the financial support as a purchase or a pre-selling or pre-ordering of the product or service. Some more initiators mention the non-monetary rewards as reasons for supporting their campaigns. In these cases, the monetary rewards are, however, often only the last mentioned in a list of reasons. To give an example: "You are the people who can make this book in all its beauty possible and therefore I need your support and you also get a great thank you!" (At Startnext 'thank you' is the term for non-monetary rewards) In contrast, the vast majority of the initiators argue that their campaigns should be supported because of the good causes they represent (see table 3). We categorized statements as referring to a good cause that claim that the project is valuable beyond the use-value of the products or services to be developed and realized. Thus, we categorized it as reference to good causes when initiators address the artistic or cultural merits of their music or theater productions or emphasize their projects' contributions to artistic or cultural values. We also categorized it as reference to good causes when initiators argue that their projects serve societal, social, or political goals or when they describe how their products are produced ecologically and with organic materials. Table 3 shows a variety of good causes. The majority of them fall under two broad categories: good causes that are related arts and culture and good causes that are related to society. In about 90% of the campaigns, the initiators refer to a good cause as the reason for supporting them. This strongly suggests that the initiators are well aware of their role as advocates of a good cause. The fact that purchase or pre-ordering of the product rarely occurs as

reason for supporting a campaign indicates that the initiators are also aware that emphasizing economic motives is not a good idea in reward-based crowdfunding.

5. 'How will we use the money if the project is successfully funded?'

For assessing the relevance of payments for the initiators' work, it is useful to know how important labor costs are as a cost category in reward-based crowdfunding. This information is also necessary for estimating the share of labor payments the initiators intend to grant themselves. To retrieve this information, we categorized and classified the content of the text fields 'How will we use the money if the project is successfully funded?' in the campaigns from the representative sample.

Cost category	Number of campaigns
Production costs	158 (61,72%)
- Unspecified production costs (described only by mentioning the projects result, e.g., 'costs for producing the CD')	109 (42,58%)
- Specified production costs (often specified by mentioning typical production stages, e.g. 'costs for printing')	85 (33,20%)
Labor costs	127 (49,61%)
- Labor costs specified by work activity	92 (35,94%)
- Labor costs specified by profession or job title	52 (20,31%)
Costs for means of production (physical devices, materials, and infrastructures)	126 (49,22%)
Travel costs (including food, accommodation, and transport)	46 (17,97%)
Advertising expenses	40 (15,63%)
Fees for licenses, insurances etc.	35 (13,67%)
Other expenses	84 (32,81%)
Sum of all instances of cost types listed in the campaigns	581 (on average 2,27 cost types per campaign)

Table 5: Costs for which the initiators intend to spend the funding (n = 256, representative sample from 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns on Startnext)

Table 5 shows that there are costs from a variety of cost categories in the cost specifications of the campaigns. On average, initiators list costs from about 2.3 different cost categories. In nearly half of all cases labor costs are among the types of costs the initiators plan to spend funding money on. The initiators address the labor costs in two different ways. The more common way is by referring to the professional activity to be performed (writing, editing, educating,

programming, recording, etc.). The less common way is by referring to the respective profession or job title (writer, editor, sound engineer, journalist, cutter, etc.).[1]

The difference in how labor costs are addressed is important with respect to our research question. Often, the same statement about labor costs can be stated in both ways. For instance, the alternative to the statement that the money will be spent 'for mastering' would be that it will be spent 'for a fee for the sound engineer'. The first kind of phrases are often shorter and more convenient. When labor costs are addressed this way, the recipients of the payment remain unspecified most of the times. We assume that project initiators will prefer this way of addressing labor costs unless they already consider particular recipients of the labor payments. In contrast, addressing the labor costs by naming the respective profession or job title implies the existence of a person who will receive the payment. Often, the respective statements indicate that these are specific people the initiators already know about ('the author', 'my editor', 'a well-known headliner', 'an experienced graphic designer', etc.). Thus, when initiators specify labor costs by referring to the profession or job title, which occurs in about 20% of the crowdfunding campaigns of the sample, it is likely that they have the intended recipients of the payments already in mind.

Another way to determine how often initiators address the intended recipients of payments is to search for terms used to denote paid work. Using KWIC and collocate searches with the text corpus, we found that statements containing these terms are likely to refer to the recipients of the labor payments. For instance, out of 487 sentences in the text corpus containing the search string 'Honorar*'[2] ('professional fee'), the term is followed by 'for', 'of', 'to', or 'pay' in about 300 cases, constituting phrases that are mostly used to specify the recipients of the payments. We searched the data set for the most common terms denoting paid work. The results of this search presented in table 6 indicate that the initiators rarely plan to have employees working for them but rather intend to work with contractors. Only about 1% of the campaigns refer to 'wage' or 'salary', while about 9% of them use the terms 'professional fee', 'artist's fee', or 'payment', which are denoting payment for commissioned work. About 10% of the campaigns refer at least to one of these terms in their cost specifications.

Terms denoting paid work	Number of campaigns
Terms denoting payment for paid employment	*116 (1,13%)*
- Wage ('Lohn*', 'Löhne*', and 'Entlohnung*')	72 (0,70%)
- Salary ('Gehalt*' or 'Gehälter*')	47 (0,46%)
Terms denoting payment for commissioned work	*945 (9,22%)*
- Professional fee ('Honorar*')	428 (4,18%)
- Artist's fee ('Gage*')	405 (3,95%)
- Payment ('Bezahlung')	153 (1,49%)

At least one of the five terms denoting paid work	1,050 (10,24%
Terms referring to payment for work to some extent	
- Work/labor ('Arbeit*')	944 (9,21%)
- to pay ('bezahl*')	1,284 (12,53%)

Table 6: Terms denoting paid work retrieved from the data set of 10,251 crowdfunding campaigns by searching in the cost specification text fields for the search strings listed in the brackets

There are other terms that also denote paid work though they are used less exclusively for this purpose. The most common of these are the noun 'Arbeit' (which translates as 'work' or 'labor') and the verb 'bezahlen' ('to pay'). Based on additional analyses, we estimate that about 60% of the statements that include 'Arbeit*' and about 40% of the statements that include 'bezahl*' actually refer to paid work. Taking into account that there will be some overlaps between the terms listed in table 6 but that there are ways to refer to paid work without using any of these terms, we estimate that there are not much more than 2,500 campaigns that refer to paid labor in their cost specifications. Since most of these campaigns also refer to the recipients of the payments, we arrive at a result that is consistent with the findings from the cost category analysis of the representative sample, where we concluded that about 20% of the campaigns address the recipients of paid work.

It should be noted that when initiators refer to the recipients of funding money, they not only do so to refer to intended payments but also to announce intended non-payments. That is, they also use the cost specification text field to declare their willingness or the willingness of other persons to work unpaid for the project. Statements about intended non-payment occur as explicit or as implicit statements. Explicit statements announce directly that no funding money will be used for paying the work ('No fees for our artistic work are paid'). In addition, initiators sometimes announce payments but only if particular conditions are met. Mostly, it is, however, quite unlikely for the campaigns to meet these conditions. Reaching the second funding goal is often mentioned. Yet only about 13% of the campaigns with a second funding goal (which is optional at Startnext; cf. https://www.startnext.com/help/handbook/fundinggoal.html) do indeed reach it (see table 2). Actually, these conditional statements therefore also express the initiators willingness to forgo payment. Thus, we treat them as implicit statements about intended non-payment.

How often do the initiators refer to themselves as the recipients of payments or as willing to work without payment? To answer this question, we conducted a content analysis of the 349 campaigns of the recipients subset. We categorized and classified the content of the cost specification text field as follows: We treated everybody as a project initiator who is characterized

as standing behind the project in the 'Who are the people behind the project?' text field. If one or more of these persons are listed as a (non-)recipient of payment in the cost specification, we applied the category '(non-)payment to initiators'. If only (non-)payments to other persons are announced, we applied the category '(non-)payment to others'. Sometimes, the initiators describe the recipients of (non-)payments with collective terms such as 'all artists' or 'all involved' that leave it open to which extent initiators and/or others are addressed. We categorized these cases 'payment to project initiators and/or others'.

Recipients of payment, subjects of non-payment	Number of campaigns
(Non-)payment to initiators	*137 (39,26%)*
- intended payment	93 (26,63%)
- intended non-payment	47 (13,75%)
- explicit	29 (8,31%)
- implicit	19 (5,44%)
(Non-)payment to initiators and/or others	*64 (18,34%)*
- intended payment	60 (17,19%)
- intended non-payment	12 (3,44%)
- explicit	2 (0,57%)
- implicit	9 (2,58%)
(Non-)payment to others	*147 (42,41%)*
- artists	77 (22,06%)
- other professionals	71 (20,34%)

Table 7: Statements about intended payments or non-payments to initiators or others in the cost specifications of 349 crowdfunding campaigns included in the recipients' subset of the data set. Note that '(non-)payment to initiators', '(non-)payment to initiators and others', and '(non-)payment to others' are mutually exclusive categories. 'Intended payment' and 'intended non-payment', however, are not completely mutually exclusive because in some cases conditional payments (which we treat as implicit non-payments) are announced in addition to intended payments.

The results presented in table 7 show that in about 27% of the campaigns in the recipients subset, the initiators are definitely among those who are intended to be paid for their work. In addition, there are about 17% of the campaigns, in which the initiators are probably part of the intended recipients of payments. Taken together, in about 54% of the campaigns the initiators definitely or probably intend to pay themselves. If this result is representative for the whole data set, this would mean that about 10 % of all crowdfunding campaigns contain statements about the initiators' intention to pay themselves (about half of the estimated 20% of the campaigns, which refer to recipients of intended payments). A substantial number of statements about intended non-payments occurs only in the category '(non-)payment to initiators', especially when it comes to explicit statements. There are nearly no such statements in the '(non-)payment to others' category.

In the categories '(non-)payment to initiators' and '(non-)payment to initiators and/or others', together there are explicit or implicit statements about intended non-payments in about 17% of the campaigns. If we assume that the estimated 20% of all campaigns in the data set, which refer to recipients of intended payments, include statements about intended non-payment in the same way as this is the case in the recipients subset, this would mean that less than 5% (17% of 20%) of the campaigns in the data set contain such statements in their cost specifications.

6. The third person pattern

How do initiators introduce themselves when stating their intention to grant themselves payments from crowdfunding money? Based on our content analyses, we distinguish between three direct and two indirect ways. The most direct way language provides to point at oneself is to use the possessive pronoun. The respective statements announce a payment 'for us' or 'for my work'. Initiators do also refer directly to themselves by mentioning their names, as in 'a professional fee for Tom', where Tom is known to the reader of the campaign page as one of the initiators. Sometimes, 'the team' or 'our team' or somebody who is part of the team are mentioned. We consider this also a direct way though it not always as obvious as with the two other direct ways that initiators are referred to. One of the two indirect ways is that initiators refer to themselves by profession, job title or work description. They announce a payment to 'the artist', 'the web designer', or 'the author'. Yet they themselves are these professionals. The other indirect way is to name a group of persons as the payments' recipients, such as 'all involved' while this group is identical with the group of initiators or a part of it. Table 8 presents the results from applying the resulting five categories of how the recipients are referred to the cost specifications of the campaigns from the recipients subset.

How recipients are addressed	Payment to initiators (n=93)	Non-payment to initiators (n=48)	(Non-)Payment to others (n=148)	(Non-)Payment in all campaigns (n=349)
Recipients are indirectly addressed	*72 (77,42%)*	*27 (56,25%)*	*144 (97,30%*	*294 (84,24%)*
- by profession, job title or work description	61 (65,59%)	22 (45,83%)	138 (93,24%)	267 (76,50%)
- by group description	11 (11,83%)	5 (14,42%)	6 (4,05%)	27 (7,74%)
Recipients are directly addressed	*21 (22,58%)*	*21 (43,75%)*	*4 (2,70%)*	*55 (15,76%)*
- by possessive pronoun	4 (4,30%)	9 (18,75%)	0 (0%)	14 (4,01%)
- by name	10 (10,75%)	5 (10,42%)	3 (2,03%)	21 (6,02%)
- by membership of the initiator's team	7 (7,53%)	7 (14,58%)	1 (0,68%)	20 (5,73%)

Table 8: How the intended recipients of payments are addressed. Comparison of direct and indirect forms of addressing the payments' recipients in the cost specifications of 349 crowd-funding campaigns included in the recipients' subset of the data set.

When contractors or employees are the intended recipients of payment, we would expect them to be introduced by profession, job title or work description. This is the most plausible way to do so because it refers to these persons' particular expertise for realizing the project thus providing a sound explanation and a good justification for the need to pay them. Indeed, this is far the most common way to address external workers. Together with group descriptions such as 'the helpers' or 'the contributors' more than 97% of the statements categorized as '(non-)payment to others' use these indirect ways of addressing the recipients of payment.

We did not expect, however, to find these two indirect ways also in more than 77% of the cases of intended payments to initiators. Initiators avoid to be really explicit about their intention to pay themselves. Very few of them point directly at themselves by using the possessive pronoun. They prefer to introduce themselves in the same way they introduce their contractors: preferably by profession, job title or work description. And as with external workers, they do so grammatically by using the third person, though they are actually referring to themselves. This is what we call the 'third person pattern' in our data.

A search in the entire text corpus for phrases initiators could use to make their intention to pay themselves explicit confirms their reluctance to do so. In the entire text corpus, the phrases 'professional fee(s) for myself', '… for us', '… for my work/time/efforts etc.', and '… for our work/time/efforts etc.' occur only four times. The same phrases with 'artist's fee(s)' or 'payment(s)' as the noun occur only twice each in the entire text corpus. A larger but still low number of 33 hits result from searching for 'for my work/labor' and 'for our work/labor'. Taken together, there are only 41 statements using one of these phrases in all cost specifications of the 10,251 campaigns of the data set.

As a result of the third person pattern, is often impossible to deduce from the information provided in the cost specifications whether the experts mentioned there belong to the initiators or are external workers. To determine whether the respective statements are addressing payments to initiators or for others we had to include information from other text fields. For instance, when a 'fee for the composer' is listed in the cost specification and one of the initiators listed in the 'Who are the people behind the project?' text field is introduced as a composer, we can be pretty sure that this initiator is meant in the cost specification.

Does the initiators' reluctance to directly point at themselves as the intended recipients of crowdfunding money and the prevalence of the third person pattern indicate that initiators perceive paying themselves as a taboo topic? If so, we should see a different pattern in the initiators' statements about intended non-payment. There are, indeed, twice as much direct statements when initiators state their willingness to forgo payment (about 44% of the cases categorized as 'non-payment to initiators' in the recipients subset). And there are about four times as much direct statements using the possessive pronoun (about 19%). However, even here many of the statements follow the third person pattern. About 46% of them refer to the initiators by profession, job title, or work description. On the one hand, these findings suggest that the third person pattern indeed reflects the initiators' reluctance to be explicit about payments to themselves. On the other hand, the high number of indirect statements about intended non-payments, thus in cases where initiators have no reason to be cautious about their intentions, indicates that there are also other reasons for the third person pattern.

7.   The reasons initiators give for paying or not paying themselves

In this section we take a closer look at the reasons initiators give for paying or not paying themselves. The lines of argument we identify in the two following subsections express competing normative positions. The third person pattern turns out to be one of the ways to deal with this situation.

7.1   'Needless to say, my working hours of course are and remain unpaid'

How do initiators explain their willingness to work unpaid? To answer this question, we analyzed those 59 campaigns of the recipients subset we categorized as intended non-payment to initiators (47 cases) and to initiators and/or others (12 cases, see table 7). The analysis reveals one dominant line of argument: In 23 (about 40%) of the campaigns, the initiators emphasize that the money will be spend only on the production, often stating this explicitly. This is a typical example: 'A hundred percent of the money goes into production costs, with no fees being paid to the musicians'. As in this example, stating the intention to forgo payment often is added to underscore that assertion. Further findings confirm the dominance of this pattern: The phrase 'a hundred percent of' ('zu 100%' or 'zu hundert Prozent') occurs about 600 times in our text corpus. Moreover, 59 (16,9%) of the campaigns of the representative sample contain explicit statements saying that all the funding money will be used for the project in their cost specifications.

In another 13 (about 22%) of the 59 campaigns of the recipients subset, initiators explain their willingness to forgo payment with the necessity to pay for other expenses. Implicit in both of these patterns is the notion that there are unavoidable costs, the production costs and other unavoidable expenses but that payment for the work of the initiators somehow does not belong in this category. Consider, for instance, this statement: 'Although all 25 or so participants in this non-commercial project forgo any payment, there are unavoidable expenses …'. In all the 36 campaigns above, it is obvious that the projects rely heavily on their respective initiators' work. Thus, when initiators concur with the view that payment for their work is an avoidable expense, they also concur with the view that they should work unpaid if the project cannot be realized otherwise.

In only about a quarter (14) of the 59 campaigns, the initiators explicitly give motivational reasons (mostly short hints) for their willingness to work unpaid. The term 'ehrenamtlich', which describes the work as a volunteer for the public good, is used five times to characterize the initiators' motivation. The term 'freiwillig' ('voluntarily'), which has a similar meaning in this context, appears twice. In addition, there are two statements about initiators donating their time. With these and other short hints, project initiators refer to their commitment to the project as the reason why they are willing to work unpaid. Only in two of the 14 cost specifications do project initiators elaborate on their commitment. This is one of the respective statements: 'All participants, because they are completely convinced of the project, work without pay'. In one way or another, all of these 14 cases refer to a line of argument that is typical for volunteer work, stating that because people are committed to a good cause, they support it with volunteer work. Or vice versa: Volunteer work is a sign that people are committed to the respective good cause.

The first and second pattern express the initiators obligation to work unpaid if the project cannot be realized otherwise. The last pattern provides a normative underpinning for this obligation: the initiators' commitment to the good causes their projects represent. However, there is obviously not much elaboration on this normative stance in the cost specifications. This is not too surprising given the characteristics of this text field described above (in section 3). Other parts of the project description, namely the text fields where initiators are asked to present their idea and themselves, are more natural contexts for initiators to express their commitment and are indeed extensively used accordingly. Thus, the initiators do not have to confirm their commitment again at this point. The short hints we find here, mostly consisting of only one word, rather serve as short reminders.

7.2   'Even if we do much of it for the fun of it, we cannot live off love and air alone'

How do project initiators justify their intention to pay themselves from the funding money? To answer this question, we analyzed the campaigns of the recipients subset we classified as payment to initiator (93 cases, see tables 7 and 8). To increase the sample size, we also included 23 campaigns from the 'my/our/his/her/their work/labor' subset we classified likewise. We classified and categorized resulting 116 cases according to whether the initiators describe the payments to themselves as essential or important for realizing the project or only as one of several expenses and according to whether or not justifications for these payments are provided. Here we distinguish between explicit and short or implicit justifications. An example of a short or implicit justification is 'reasonable fees for all musicians involved', which consists of only one word ('reasonable') and argues only by implication that the musicians deserve reasonable payment.

The results presented in table 9 show that initiators mostly do not feel the need to justify their intended payment to themselves when it is only one in a list of expenses. This is not surprising because judging from these campaigns' lists of expenses in relation to their funding goals, it can be concluded that, in most of these cases, the initiators do not intend significant payments to themselves. However, even about 40% of the cases in which these payments are characterized as essential or important go without further justification.

Payments to are described as	just one of several expenses	essential or important
Number of campaigns	75	41
- explicit justifications are provided	7 (9,33%)	9 (21,95%)
- very short or implicit justifications	16 (21,33%)	16 (39,02%)
- no further justification	52 (69,33%)	16 (39,02%)

Table 9: Justifications provided for intended payments to initiators in relation the claimed relevance of their work for realizing the project (n = 116 cases categorized as 'payment to initiators' in the recipients subset and the 'my/our/his/her/their work/labor' subset)

The analysis of the 48 cases that contain justifications also reveals a dominant pattern. In 10 out of 16 explicit justifications, the initiators refer to the need to make a living as the reason why they intend to pay themselves. Often, they argue that the work they intend to invest in the project is the same kind of work they would otherwise do for making a living. Thus, to be able to put their work into the project it must be paid. The following is an elaborate example: 'The money serves as payment for my work as a programmer and thus gives me a period of time to develop MM Interactive. Without this financial support, I would have to take customer orders and would therefore not be able to begin at all with the development of MM Interactive.' This pattern of justification is reinforced by references to 'adequate', 'fair', or 'customary' payments

that appear 14 times and implicitly express the initiators' claims to deserve reasonable payment for their work.

A second pattern, which is presented more implicitly most of the times (it occurs in 15 of the short or implicit justifications and in 3 of the explicit justifications) refers to the time, money, and energy initiators already have or are willing to put into the project. Here the initiators basically claim that their previous and continuing efforts justify being paid with crowdfunding money. The payment would allow them to go on: 'Up to now I have worked on it with private means, part-time and from my own strength. These are now exhausted. Without your support I cannot continue'. It would compensate for efforts: 'financial compensation for the preparation and research work, which was previously done free of charge'. Or it should be seen as a reward for the initiators' commitment: 'payment for my wonderful musicians, who put all their time and energy into every day in the studio'.

The normative underpinning of both of these patterns of justification is the notion that initiators, like everybody else, need to earn money to make a living, so that it is wrong to require them to work unpaid. This is most obvious for the first pattern. But the second pattern in emphasizing the limits of the initiators' sacrifices carries the same message. Also, it carries the message that the time and energy initiators are willing to put into their projects anyway proves their commitment.

7.3   Two competing normative positions and ways to deal with them

There is the notion that initiators should show their commitment to their projects by working unpaid. Also, there is the notion that it is wrong to require from initiators to work unpaid because, like everybody else, they have to make a living. How do initiators deal with these competing normative positions?

One way of dealing with this problem is already part of the patterns of justification for paying themselves. It consists of pointing at other sacrifices apart from forgoing payment as proof of the initiators' commitment to their projects: The time, money, and energy they already have put into the project or that they state to be willing to invest in the future.

Another way to reconcile the competing normative positions makes use of the fact that, though the initiators of crowdfunding campaigns usually present themselves as teams (which is strongly recommended in Startnext's handbook), sometimes one person is clearly the main initiator. In such a constellation, the main initiator often addresses only the other members of the team as recipients of intended payments. An example is a singer/songwriter with her accompa-

nying musicians who, as a team, start a crowdfunding campaign to finance the singer/song-writer's new CD. After stating that the drummer and the sound engineer of her team should be paid, she continues that she herself will get 'ZERO EURO. For weeks of practicing, days of recording and hours of designing this site, the CD cover, CD printing and booklet', adding: 'Your joy in my music, to hold my CD in your hands and to pass it on: this is my payment.' This pattern deals nicely with the problem of the competing normative positions in that it provides a way to account for both of them at the same time.

Most often, however, initiators do not address the normative implications of payment or non-payment and thus do not have to deal with the normative conflict. The third-person pattern, the pattern that occurs most often when initiators address the topic of paying themselves, has the effect of allowing initiators to avoid the normative conflict. Using this pattern, initiators introduce themselves as professionals with the particular expertise required to realize the project goal. Thereby, they refer to the same kind of reason that justifies expenses for the work of third parties. Making the topic of payments to initiators explicit raises the question whether it is a necessary expense and evokes the conflicting normative positions associated with that question. The third-person pattern, however, allows this question and its normative implications to be avoided in that it turns the paid work of project initiators into a necessary expense.

8. Conclusion

Is paying themselves a taboo topic for the initiators of reward-based crowdfunding campaigns? The research presented in this paper suggests that it is at least to some extent. Our findings indicate that initiators are rarely really explicit about their intention to pay themselves and rarely point directly at themselves as the intended recipients of crowdfunding money. In accordance with the literature on meaningful work, we find that project initiators show their commitment to their projects' goals by their willingness to work unpaid and by other personal sacrifices. The positive relationship between the commitment to the project goals and the willingness to work unpaid is obvious in the many cases in which project initiators characterized payments for their work as not being part of the projects' necessary expenses. However, project initiators do not necessarily comply with the expectation that their commitment should imply their willingness to work unpaid. The normative obligation to sacrifice for the good cause is opposed by the normative stance that people who dedicate their work to a good cause are nevertheless entitled to be paid fairly for their work, just as anybody else. Thus, to the extent that paying themselves is a taboo topic for initiators, the taboo is contested by this normative stance. Many initiators

seem to adhere to both normative orientations simultaneously. They state their belief that everybody should get a fair payment but set their funding goals so low that their willingness to work unpaid or barely paid is already implied. The third-person pattern used so frequently in the cost specifications does not only reflect the initiators' reluctance to be explicit about payments to themselves. It is also a way to avoid that the conflict between these two normative orientations becomes explicit.

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[1] Further inquiries confirmed that it is more common to specify labor costs by referring to the respective activity than by referring to profession or job title. The term 'mastering', for example, occurs 793 times in the text corpus, while the term 'sound engineer ('Tonmeister') occurs only 94 times; the term 'editing' ('Lektorat') occurs 203 times, while the term 'editor' ('Lektor' or 'Lektorin') occurs only 32 times.

[2] The asterisk stands for a truncated search that returns all words and word combinations starting with the letters preceding the asterisk. Thus, the search covers the different declinations (or conjugations) of the word expressed by the respective suffix. When searching German texts, using word capitalization limits the search to nouns.