

9 Conclusion

A key challenge for open initiatives is to attract participants (Healy and Schussman 2003; Chesbrough and Appleyard 2007). This challenge grows with the increase in comparative opportunities and creates competition among initiatives for talented contributors (Dahlander and Gann 2010; Bonaccorsi and Rossi 2003). In this realm, a contributor will not volunteer within an uncomfortable environment (Shah 2006). Currently, the influence of contextual changes on volunteering is unclear (Boudreau 2010), especially within open collaborative initiatives (Fang and Neufeld 2009). The interaction between individual user traits and institutional settings is a research challenge (von Krogh et al. 2012, Crowston et al. 2012).

I target this realm with the question: How do contextual factors influence the decisions of participants to join open communities? I scrutinize access, usage and organizational involvement as contextual factors in order to understand participation in open collaborative innovation communities. My research approach draws on a discrete choice method controlling for turned-down alternatives (Kuk 2006), psychological bias (Kahneman and Tversky 1979), and socialization (Lave and Wenger 1991; Fang and Neufeld 2009). Triangulation (Jick 1979; Mathison 1988) and explorative questions increase study reliability and validity but also reveal key factors beyond openness to closely reflect real world settings. My findings move the frontiers in strategy and innovation research (Ahuja 2012) with four claims: (1) First time measurement with a discrete choice experiment and integrating user heterogeneity enables the evaluation of trade-offs without distortive factors. (2) New combination of social, business and psychology factors revealing a interlinkage of hitherto isolated research areas of organizational governance, participation behavior, and competitive dynamics. Differences within access, usage and sponsorship affect users' joining decisions. (3) An extended phenomenological scope with sampling content, software, as well as entertainment and business communities, reflects for the first time the "highly stratified nature" of open source (Healy and Schussman 2003; Boudreau 2010) and details the open collaborative community landscape. (4) Novel abstractions in open collaborative institutional settings through revealing a relationship between self-selection behavior and organizational arrangements, impact individual behavior, e.g. volunteering, and organizational management, e.g. sourcing dispersed knowledge. Participation is contingent on motivation as well as on governance factors. Moreover, this individual specific model of openness trade-offs solves the dispute of seemingly contrary perspectives and creates coherence in research. These contributions also lessen "non-trivial managerial headaches" (Chesbrough and Appleyard 2007, p. 73). I answer the open questions: How can open initiatives be strategically designed to foster self-selection of users? and What is the impact on the attraction of volunteers by varying the degree of openness and firm sponsorship? Finally, I open opportunities for future research. I discover surprising effects like the role of institutional involvement, or the impact of community member attitude, e.g. fairness, and the community outcome, e.g. the product quality. These findings need further research but their understanding could lead to prolific firm-community-user collaborations.