



Chapter 17

Gender Differences and Generation of Ideas on Civic Crowdsourcing

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ABSTRACT

Crowdsourcing platforms are being used to increase citizen engagement with the development and implementation of new projects that can improve the community's wellbeing. The use of civic crowdsourcing has also been extended to the younger segments of the population, such as the Youth Participatory Budgeting in Portugal. This research aims to study the ideas developed by young citizens in order to understand whether gender is able or not to influence the ideas generated by the applicants. The study uses a quantitative approach to explore the database of proposals made to this crowdsourcing program. The results show that young men are more involved in the submission of new ideas than women. Also, some differences were found concerning the territory where the opportunities are seized, in accordance with gender. No other significant differences were found in the ideas generated, such as the number of proponents, geographical scope, theme, or budget involved.

INTRODUCTION

Opportunities are critical for entrepreneurship, and its identification is a precondition to the existence of entrepreneurs (Drucker, 1985). Identifying opportunities capable of addressing an unsolved problem or need is the very first step towards social entrepreneurship (Dees, 1998; Brouard & Larivet, 2010; Okpara & Halkias, 2011). Searching for new opportunities is a very contextual-dependent activity, as

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opportunities are shaped by external circumstances and by the characteristics of a community (Corner & Ho, 2010; Guclu *et al.*, 2002). Further, under the presence of the same concrete circumstances, different people can perceive opportunities differently (Austin *et al.*, 2006). The ability to seize opportunities is influenced by several personal factors, such as previous education, past experiences, values and attitudes (Cajaiba-Santana, 2010). Although largely unexplored in empirical studies, gender has been referred as one of these possible variables that could impact the ideas identification process.

The identification and generation of new ideas require individuals a permanent state of alertness (Kirzner, 1979), but also demand creative thinking. Once again, cultural, social and personal contexts play an important role in foster or neutralize idea generation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

A recent trend observed in many European countries is the use of new technologies to attract and bring people together to generate new ideas or mobilize resources. Herein, we are dealing with the concept of ‘crowdsourcing’, that refers to several practices in which an open call is made for anybody (the crowd), to participate in a task open online by submitting information, knowledge, or talent (Aitamurto, 2012; Brabham, 2008; Howe, 2008). Civic crowdsourcing is a sub-type of crowdfunding through which citizens, in collaboration with government, voluntarily participate in projects providing ideas or other kinds of community services that could then be implemented by public entities. Further, the concept of civic crowdsourcing has been applied in different geographical contexts, including either developed or developing countries (Sumra & Bing, 2019).

A particular case of civic crowdfunding is the participatory budgeting that is an alternative political process that involves the citizens in the distribution of a small part of the public funds. Through the implementation of participatory budgeting, governments are fostering citizens (any “ordinary citizen”) to be involved in the design of the proposal, the planning process, and the evaluation of the public policies (Sala, 2014).

Crowdsourcing could be open to all the overall population, or restricted to specific segments, in accordance with the purposes of the crowdsourcing programs. The young participatory budgeting is one of this application, where the call is made to a very specific segment, the young population of a country.

Using civic crowdsourcing platforms to generate ideas for public investment is a promising area for both research and application due to its potential impact on citizen’s engagement, well-being and empowerment. However, academic research remains scarce, and the knowledge about successful civic projects posted to crowdsourcing platforms are relatively ignored. Moreover, understanding gender differences have been a major focus in the entrepreneurship literature (Tsai *et al.*, 2016).

In this scenario, the purpose of this study is to investigate the projects presented by young citizens in the crowdsourcing platform created by the Portuguese government (The Youth Participatory Budgeting Portugal) and to analyse whether gender is able to impact on opportunities identification.

As specific objectives, the study intends to: (i) understand the characteristics of the projects presented through this specific public crowdsourcing platform, and (ii) analyse the characteristics of opportunities found by gender.

Through this analysis, we can infer the ideas generated by young people that can be useful for public entities to invest in or if the implemented ideas have an impact on the quality of life of communities. Also, the role of gender is discerned by evaluating how the ideas generated by females and males differ.

The chapter will be organised into three main sections. In the first part, a literature review will be developed. Specifically, the chapter will analyse the processes of opportunity identification and idea generation regarding gender. The chapter will also analyse the concepts of youth entrepreneurship, civic crowdsourcing and participatory budgeting. Then, the methodology used in the chapter is explained. The

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