SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CROWDSOURCING WITH SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE COVID-19 ERA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Dr. Ellen M. Raineri
Penn State University, PA
Dr. Victor S. Sohmen
Colorado State University (Global)

ABSTRACT

Crowdsourcing involves soliciting information, knowledge, and ideas from the public by entities seeking to change the status quo or to advance their agenda in a competitive environment. These extra-organizational intellectual resources from the crowd are accessed inexpensively, which is advantageous to small businesses because crowdsourcing attracts additional funding, insights, innovation, and problem-solving. Crowdsourcing is manifested through five essential practices—Crowdfunding, Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowdvoting, and Co-creation. Although Crowdsourcing can occur in these five practices, the extent to which the teaching of Crowdsourcing occurs within undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses is unknown. Accordingly, an exploratory study was conducted to examine the current incorporation of Crowdsourcing within undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses in the United States. Based upon an analysis of the results, two issues are highlighted in this paper: (1) Instructors are not incorporating all the above types of Crowdsourcing within Entrepreneurship courses, and (2) Limited opportunities exist to augment curricula with more Crowdsourcing content within Entrepreneurship courses. These issues are addressed and exemplified through the development of a Crowdsourcing Case Study as well as a Framework for Crowd Wisdom for Small Businesses that can supplement the current Entrepreneurship curricula. Additionally, both the Case Study and the Framework incorporate internal Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and COVID-19 issues to ensure the relevancy of Crowdsourcing with respect to the business environment in the real world.

Keywords: Crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, crowd creation, crowd wisdom, crowdvoting, co-creation, CSR, small businesses, entrepreneurship, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Crowdsourcing is a term that was coined by Jeff Howe who was a contributing editor to the magazine *Wired* (Howe, 2006). This was seen as an opportunistic move to tap into the "latent talent" of the public and as a significantly less expensive alternative to "outsourcing." Crowdsourcing thus combines "crowds" and "outsourcing," and is simply a means of attracting both intangible and tangible resources from a large group ("crowd") of people who are essentially unknown to the solicitor. Thus, work, information, ideas, goods and services, and data can be collected from the public (Bloomberg Cities, 2019).

With modern technology, this has become a highly effective means of garnering knowledge and resources from the ambient community using the Internet, social media, and computer apps. Most of the contributors are freelancers, a few are paid, and many are volunteers. An example of voluntary crowdsourcing is that of public motorists reporting traffic accidents to a local government entity through an app on their mobile phones. A crowdsourcing example that involves payments could be that of an electric car designer inviting ideas with incentives paid for the best design among the most promising designs accepted. Yet another example would be that of freelancers such as writers who choose to be part of the crowdsourcing pool and contribute freelance articles for publication in a variety of news and magazine outlets.

Historically, crowdsourcing has existed informally for centuries. For instance, the "Longitude Prize" was offered in 1714 by the British government to encourage distributed problem-solving among the public to find a practical means to compute the longitude(s) of the globe; later, King Louis IV of France offered a prize for making alkali from sea salt (Chrum, 2013). Furthermore, from 1884, the Oxford English Dictionary relied upon readers across the British population to catalog words; by the time the first edition was published in 1928, more than 2,000 volunteers from the public had assisted the editors in its completion (Reilly, 2019). Today, crowdsourcing has spread across the globe, fueled by the Internet and digital technology.

Crowdsourcing is composed of several constituents that may be employed individually or together. Howe (2006), the progenitor of the term, categorizes Crowdsourcing into five types of practices: Crowdfunding, Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowdvoting, and Co-creation. Businesses have benefited from each of these types in numerous ways. For example, Oculus VR utilized *Crowdfunding* to raise $2,400,000 (Haslip, 2021). Similarly, Lego has an ongoing invitation to individuals visiting their website to submit new ideas (Fournier, 2019). *Crowd Creation* is used by iStockphoto that collects creative pictures from amateur photographers. Great Britain used *Crowd Wisdom* to solicit strategies to solve the problem of red tape associated with existing rules and regulations (Welbers, 2020). Toyota used *Crowdvoting* to determine the preferred plural word for its Prius model. BMW used *Co-creation* by soliciting ideas from customers through an innovation contest.

Crowdsourcing can be integrated with other strategic initiatives. For example, Spanos (2016) advocates pairing crowdsourcing with an organization's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives such that opportunities exist for the public to interact constructively with the community. CSR initiatives extend "beyond the law in incorporating social, environmental,

ethical, and consumer concerns into their business operations to create shareholder and stakeholder value." (Newman, Rand, Tarp, & Trifkovic, 2020, para. 12). CSR is also viewed as an organization's social conscience (Bierema & D'Abundo, 2004). Additionally, Jia, Yan, Liu, and Huang (2019) differentiate between external and internal types of CSR applicable to crowdsourcing. External CSR impacts issues important to consumers, the environment, and community. Internal CSR impacts employees within the firm, and can focus upon areas such as fair decision-making, work safety, training, working conditions, and fair pay (Hameed, Riaz, Arain, & Farooq, 2016; Shen, & Zhu, 2011).

During the challenging times of COVID-19, numerous businesses have engaged in internal CSR activities using crowdsourcing to better assist their employees during the pandemic. For example, some employers paid partial salaries to their employees while they were in quarantine and gave small reimbursements for stress relief aid, including childcare reimbursements (Ladika, 2020). Additionally, some firms continued to pay hourly workers for the first two weeks of a COVID-19 lockdown and developed an employee portal for wellness resources; they also provided online education activities for children, offered permanent remote work, and arranged for virtual therapy sessions (Epperson, 2011; Kramer, 2020; Sarkis, 2021).

The topic of COVID-19 is occurring not only in the real world of business, but also in pedagogy. For example, teachers are incorporating the relevancy of the pandemic topic into their courses. In some instances, lesson plans have already been created and are available for free access from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (2020) as well as National Geographic Learning (Cengage, 2020). Additionally, teachers in numerous disciplines have created their own lesson plans including the impact of the pandemic. For example, in science classes, students study the topic of social distancing, examine COVID-19 vaccines for animals, and compare this deadly viral infection with the seasonal flu. In history classes, students create ongoing journal entries of COVID-19 observations, as well as compare local and federal guidelines for COVID-19 protection. In math classes, students analyze statistical data published on COVID-19 occurrences (Flannery, 2020).

Incorporating the relevancy of COVID-19 can also occur within Entrepreneurship courses. Recognizing the challenges encountered by employees during COVID-19, as well as the examples of CSR Crowdsourcing for employees, a Small-Business COVID-19 Crowdsourcing Case Study (with CSR incorporated), as well as a CSR COVID-19 Organic Crowd Framework were developed. Both the Case Study and the Framework can engage undergraduate Entrepreneurship students without adequate exposure to the subject of Crowdsourcing in its various dimensions and manifestations within their Entrepreneurship courses.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The rapid adoption of crowdsourcing by a variety of entities in multiple industries and governments can be attributed to its mass appeal and pragmatism (Howe, 2006). The potentially actionable information derived from crowdsourcing informs, enriches, and empowers organizational strategy and decision-making. Similarly, small businesses continue to benefit from external resources through crowdsourcing to inform and scale up their viability and

continued growth. The deliberate practice of CSR underscores the benefits of crowdsourcing while minimizing the problems that may accrue from its unfettered practice.

Benefits of Crowdsourcing

The benefits of crowdsourcing are numerous. Problem-solving with the help of diverse individuals in the public domain has tremendous merit. The generation of innovative ideas that can be harnessed to produce creative outputs, as well as ideas for process improvements for the efficiency of operational systems, would constitute some of the beneficial aspects of crowdsourcing (Howe, 2006). Diversity of thinking and action from a variety of largely anonymous contributors makes for a rich tapestry of ideas that can be marshalled and crystallized for focused action (Fournier, 2019). The enormous leverage gained from the multiplying effects of creative solutions through crowdsourcing in a volatile, competitive arena can easily be imagined. Additional benefits from crowdsourcing include: unexpected solutions to tough problems; greater diversity of thinking; reduced management burden; more marketing buzz; faster problem-solving; and, a rich source of customer-data-focused action (Schenk & Guittard, 2011). This can also result in unexpected solutions to complex issues from the public at large.

Problems with Crowdsourcing

Not surprisingly, as with most social phenomena, downsides exist with crowdsourcing, stemming largely from accountability, reliability, and ethical issues (Arora, 2020). The public sources of crowdsourcing information may knowingly or unwittingly provide incorrect information, evidence bias, or even outright misinformation, thereby rendering the information unreliable. Additionally, the users of crowdsourcing may deliberately distort the data and adopt other unethical practices. Some of the most creative ideas from crowdsourcing may be utilized for personal gain by entities without benefit of copyright; also, intellectual property rights may be at stake through open and unregulated forums (Beer, McCarthy, Soliman, & Treen, 2017).

Furthermore, a firm's confidentiality and proprietary information may be compromised by public participants in the process of crowdsourcing to cross-pollinate ideas. If not managed well therefore, crowdsourcing can in general cause confusion, overload of information, or misinformation. In a city government's efforts to create equality and inclusiveness in policymaking, a study found that the civic data overload and the restricting hierarchy complicated the adoption of crowdsourcing as a democratic innovation in governance (Chen & Aitamurto, 2019). Despite these deleterious issues, crowdsourcing must not detract from the tremendous potential inherent in this popular 21st-century socioeconomic phenomenon that is fueled by rapidly evolving communication technology.

Crowdsourcing in the COVID-19 Era

Crowdsourcing has served as a useful tool during periods of crises—for crisis monitoring, emergency planning, social cohesion, crisis management, and research (Conrad,

Becker, Power, & Hall, 2020; Desai, Warner, Thompson, Painter, Lyman, & Lopes, 2020). Crises affect whole communities, and people gain first-hand knowledge of the critical issues involved. After analyzing 16 crowdsourcing initiatives during times of crisis, researchers detected a strong link between tasks related to knowledge management and creative production, as well as corresponding crowdsourcing configurations that were internal, external, or mediated through agents (Vermicelli, Cricelli, & Grimaldi, 2020).

Crowdsourcing involves many stakeholders such as governments, health agencies, transportation firms, and the scientific community. To combat the alarming numbers of COVID-19 infections and well over 3 million fatalities worldwide at present, crowdsourcing has proved to be a boon for projects focusing on emergency healthcare, vaccinations, and recovery programs (WHO, 2021). Overall, crowdsourcing in the current pandemic environment is useful for information-gathering, strategizing, and decision-making, and could enable rapid responses throughout ailing communities to ameliorate the tragic nature of the pandemic.

Constituents of Crowdsourcing

The five constituents or types of crowdsourcing are briefly outlined below:

1. *Crowdfunding:* This type of crowdsourcing is a method of raising capital (mostly online) by appealing to the public, and by including friends, acquaintances, and family members (Johnson, 2021). Many types of crowdfunding exist. These include *donation-based* crowdfunding whereby no returns are expected; *rewards-based* crowdfunding that provides some form of token reward for the funding; and *equity-based* crowdfunding that provides shares or equity interest for participation in the crowdfunding activity (Startups.com, 2021). Crowdfunding thus differs from more traditional fundraising, where companies and institutions seek business capital from one or more major investors (Kurani, 2021; Scholz, 2015).

2. *Crowd creation:* This type is the most common form of crowdsourcing. Activities are focused on creativity and problem-solving, asking individuals and businesses to solve a particular issue to yield a satisfactory solution to the specific problem (Howe, 2006). Individuals or businesses upload their creations to a designated website that is viewable by the public at large, and this in turn attracts further creative ideas. Perhaps, the best-known forms of crowdsourcing are such "creation" activities exemplified by asking multiple individuals to film TV commercials, perform language translations, or solve challenging scientific problems (Bantrr, 2010).

3. *Crowd wisdom:* There has been enduring interest and investigation into the power of collective judgments (Simoiu, Sumanth, Mysore, & Goel, 2019). As the term suggests, "crowd wisdom" represents the collective knowledge derived from a plurality of sources (Bantrr, 2010). It assumes that when information is aggregated in groups, the results obtained are more reliable—and therefore more actionable—than when they are taken from a single source (Kopec & Szopa, 2015; Simoiu et al., 2019; Surowiecki, 2004). Three categories of crowds exist in

crowdsourcing—a "good" crowd that can make fair, unbiased, and rational decisions even in cases with a deficiency of information; a "bad" crowd that may lack some important aspects such as diversity or independence to produce wrong judgments; and, an "ugly" crowd that is likely to react unpredictably to events and information (Kozlov & Radoslav, 2019).

4. *Crowdvoting:* This type of crowdsourcing is a means of receiving votes from the public for specific activities, proposals, events, or products (Bantrr, 2010; Tricider, 2019). In small businesses, its use is to evaluate a product for quality, price, and timeliness through votes received from the public. This in turn can be used to modify the product for wider acceptance by consumers, with the added benefit of gaining goodwill and enhancing the value of the firm (Wagner, 2020). Crowdvoting thus employs multiple users' judgment to evaluate content. This aspect of crowdsourcing is especially appealing to users whose expertise is not high but whose status in the crowdsourcing community is significant (Chen, Xu, & Liu, 2020).

5. *Co-creation:* Co-creation involves businesses or organizations working alongside private or public individuals (usually customers) to develop ideas for new products, services, and systems (Fournier, 2019). This type of crowdsourcing enhances customer engagement by directly involving them in the value creation process of the business and derivatively, in its product development processes (Raines, 2011). As an intensive version of crowdsourcing, co-creation demands more time, resources, and planning than popular crowdsourcing. It requires buy-in from the internal creative team of the business entity and sometimes includes external customer participation within the project team. Thus, co-creation involves an extensive and deep collaboration between small businesses and consumers (Lang, 2017). It thereby enables these businesses to harness and learn from customers' observations, experiences, and creativity.

Crowdsourcing and Small Businesses

Crowdsourcing is advantageous for small businesses as entrepreneurial ventures with limited financial and human resources because it attracts additional funding, insights, innovation, and solutions to intractable problems (Arora, 2020). Through the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has made crowdsourcing both a challenge and an opportunity. Businesses have encountered additional challenges due to the pandemic—such as increased costs, shutdowns, and decreased business; furthermore, employees and customers have faced challenges such as isolation, stress, job losses, childcare issues, and COVID-19 infections and deaths. On the other hand, small businesses have benefited through the pandemic by adapting on the fly and finding creative ways to change their operating models; many of them plan to use innovations developed during the pandemic to drive revenue and to generate new opportunities as the economy recovers (Gurchiek, 2020; Tremblay & Yagoubi, 2017).

Crowdsourcing and CSR

Small businesses can no longer operate with the sole aim of making profits at the expense of the environment, society, economy, consumers, and employees, and need to consider how they can give back to society (Heyward, 2021). CSR extends the mission of small businesses by connecting with their customer base and serving this market by addressing issues that are of interest to these customers. Crowdsourcing can be a way to build relationships with such a wide range of consumers and to provide them unique ways to get involved with the programs launched by these small businesses (Insider Intelligence, 2011). In fact, a study exploring the relationship between CSR and crowdsourcing determined that the essential role of trust is a key moderator between them (Park & Kang, 2020). This underscores the potential for strong relations between small businesses and their customer base through trustworthy crowdsourcing. With such crowdsourced assistance from the Internet community, and with moderate effort, professional crowdsourcing providers can help small-business entrepreneurs to responsibly accelerate the implementation of their projects (Maione, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers sought to explore, through a national survey of undergraduate entrepreneurship professors, the degree to which all five types of crowdsourcing discussed (crowd funding, crowd creation, crowd wisdom, crowdvoting, and co-creation) were prevalent within undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses (Howe, 2006). The various types of teaching methods utilized were also studied. Thus, exploratory empirical research was employed with a targeted sample of educators teaching Entrepreneurship courses.

Sample

The researchers solicited participation from undergraduate professors at US colleges and universities that offered courses in Entrepreneurship. They were sourced from listings in *The Princeton Review* and the *Entrepreneur* magazine's "Top 25 Undergraduate Schools for Entrepreneurship" as well as the *US News and World Report*'s (1) "Best College Rankings: Online Bachelor's Degrees and Programs" & "Best Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Programs"; (2) "Best College Rankings: Online Bachelor's Degrees and Programs"; (3) "Best Undergraduate Business Programs Rankings", and, (4) "Best College Rankings: Online Bachelor's Degrees and Programs (Top 20)." Additionally, the researchers included universities from their own personal knowledge and added universities in the public domain from Internet searches.

Instrument

The instructions for the instrument required the participants to allocate 15 minutes for completion of the survey (Appendix A). The first part of the survey focused on academic background questions. These were designed to capture each participant's academic institutional

affiliation, position type, and title, as well as the names and topics of Entrepreneurship courses that were taught by them, along with any associated research in those areas.

The next part of the survey asked participants if they incorporated Crowdfunding, Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowdvoting, or Co-creation within their Entrepreneurship classes that included Crowdsourcing, and queried about the associated methods of teaching. Participants were encouraged to share both their perspectives and those of their students to evaluate the quality of the Crowdsourcing teaching experience. Additionally, participants were invited to share any recommendations toward incorporating Crowdsourcing in their courses or in courses outside of the Entrepreneurship curriculum. They were also requested to identify any associated challenges of such inclusion. (The complete instrument can be found in Appendix A).

RESULTS

Faculty participating in the study represented five private academic institutions and 10 public institutions. Out of the 209 surveys distributed online, 23 completed surveys were returned for our analysis, representing approximately 11% of completed surveys. Positions were in tenured, tenure-track, and fixed-term statuses.   Ranks included Adjuncts, Lecturers, Instructors, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors who taught undergraduate Entrepreneurship classes. Thirty percent (30%) of the participants had engaged in crowdsourcing research, and 67% of participants included a degree of crowdsourcing within their Entrepreneurship courses. Table 1 below summarizes the participants' Entrepreneurship courses that contained Crowdsourcing.

TABLE 1
Percentage of Crowdsourcing Content in Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship (7%)
Entrepreneurial mindset (8%)
Entrepreneurship and innovation (10%)
Entrepreneurial finance (6%)
New venture development (23%)
New product development (8%)
Social enterprise practicum (6%)
Business planning for technology growth ventures (7%)
All entrepreneurship courses (25%)

After sharing the five types of crowdsourcing with participants as categorized by Howe (2006), participants were asked to list the types that were specifically taught in their Entrepreneurship classes. Table 2 summarizes the types of crowdsourcing used by participants. Some of these types align with those identified by Howe (2006) in formalizing the concept of Crowdsourcing, while others are new types that have been defined by the participants.

TABLE 2
Aspects of Crowdsourcing within Entrepreneurship Courses

Funding a social enterprise (7%)	Market feasibility and capitalization (6%)
Crowdfunding (20%)	Co-creation (4%)
Crowdfunding platforms (5%)	Crowd wisdom (8%)
Rewards-based funding for new product development (8%)	Crowdfunding statistics (7%)
Funding marking (4%)	Crowdfunding models (6%)
Test marketing (5%)	Basic information (20%)

The various teaching methods faculty used for Crowdsourcing to provide diverse students with a spectrum of learning methods are summarized in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3
Teaching Methods Used to Teach About Crowdsourcing

Research (5%)	Lectures (35 %)	Videos (5%)
Cases (6%)	Real-life examples (6%)	Assignments (8%)
Hands-on work (10%)	Guest speakers (4%)	Analysis of Kickstarter categories (4%)
Group discussions (8%)	Storytelling (5%)	Website analysis (4%)

DISCUSSION

Two key issues were identified for the discussion incorporating Crowdsourcing within the context of courses in Entrepreneurship:

1. The Issue of Not Including All Five Types of Crowdsourcing

Participants tended to incorporate the Crowdfunding type of Crowdsourcing within their Entrepreneurship courses more often than they did the other types of Crowdsourcing: Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowd Voting, and Co-creation. These 92% of participants prioritizing Crowdfunding worked solo and with Crowdfunding as part-and-parcel of the general Crowdsourcing topic. They also incorporated Crowdfunding into testing the market using diverse technology platforms such as Kickstarter, RocketHub, GoFundMe, and Indego. Only 1% of the participants used other types of Crowdsourcing such as Co-creation and Crowd Wisdom.

2. The Issue of Time

We analyzed common themes for the questions, "What could be improved from your perspective?", "What could be improved from the students' perspectives?", and, "What challenges do you anticipate if Crowdsourcing were added to more of the Entrepreneurship program?". The only common recurring theme for all three questions was the issue of time. Participants observed that their current Entrepreneurship classes were already filled with various

topics. Therefore, even though they wished to include more Crowdsourcing exercises or additional types of Crowdsourcing types, there was not sufficient time to do so. Smith, Collins, and Hannon (2006) also confirm the time challenge that exist within such courses.

New Pedagogic Exercises to Address the Two Issues

To assist Entrepreneurship faculty with the issue of not teaching students all types of crowdsourcing, and to address the issue of not having sufficient classroom time to cover expanded types of Crowdsourcing, the authors have proposed both a case study on Crowdsourcing during the COVID-19 pandemic era, and a framework for Crowd Wisdom for small businesses as supplements. These Crowdsourcing supplements were integrated with the topic of CSR. Almaz (2011) asserts that CSR is a powerful instrument for leveraging the ideas and perspectives of crowds. Furthermore, this combination produces a positive social change in the community because crowds that contribute creative ideas have a self-motivated interest to be involved with problem-solving (Park & Kang, 2020). Lastly, these CSR-infused Crowdsourcing exercises are relevant because they are framed within the COVID-19 era, thereby highlighting the real challenges of pandemic issues experienced by small businesses.

CROWDSOURCING CASE STUDY SUPPLEMENT

A case study is a narrative of real events with sufficient depth and complexity to enable problem analysis, discussion, looking at alternative solutions, and decision-making. An effective case study harvests actionable facts and knowledge by enabling the student or other participant to think through choices faced by decision-makers in real-life situations; by confronting these actual scenarios, participants develop and refine analytical skills for solving similar problems in their own decision-making environments and projects (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 2008).

Instead of assigning a Crowdsourcing case study within an Entrepreneurship class that may already be filled with basic Entrepreneurship concepts and essential Crowdsourcing topics, an external case study is proposed. This would be open to undergraduate students from any major. The case study is presented in Appendix B.

FRAMEWORK FOR CROWD WISDOM FOR SMALL BUSINESSES SUPPLEMENT

To further assist with the issue of time, a new framework is proposed as a supplement to provide students with the opportunity to practice outside of the classroom. This framework reflects a type of Crowdsourcing that is not typically taught in the Entrepreneurship classroom—Crowd Wisdom.

Traditionally, non-crowd wisdom to a small business owner came from an individual who worked at an established organization that was designed to help entrepreneurs as depicted in Figure 1 below:

FIGURE 1
Traditional Non-crowd Wisdom Resources
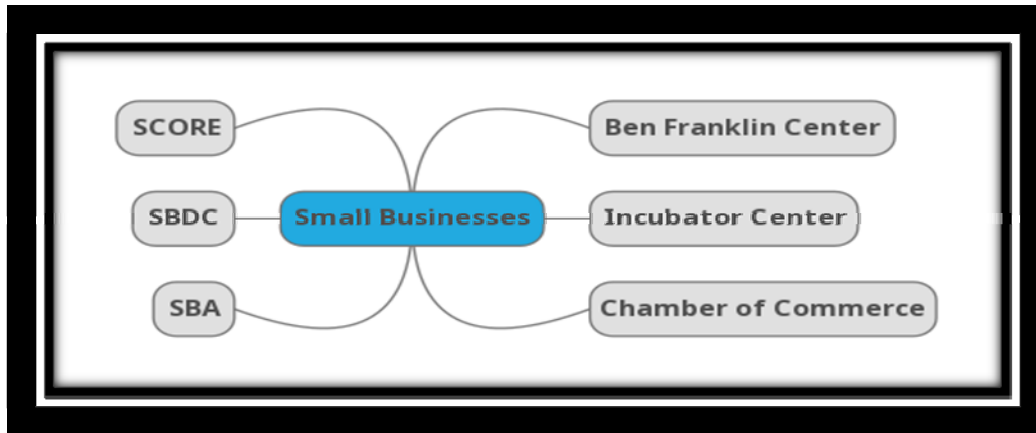
Note: **SCORE**: Service Corps of Retired Executives; **SBDC**: Small Business Development Centers; **SBA**: Small Business Administration

The COVID-19 era calls for a new framework of organic crowds that can assist small businesses. Some of the reasons for this change are due to many small businesses needing assistance that may overwhelm the single employee at the traditional centers listed in Figure 1. Also, innovative, diverse, and expert solutions can arise from crowds.   Therefore, a new framework is proposed in Figure 2 below that incorporates crowds that are of an organic nature to create solutions to key CSR issues. When engaged in the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model, the stem, "In What Ways Might I" is often used for constructively exploring solutions. This stem is adopted and used in Figure 2 with the acronym "IWWMI".

FIGURE 2
CSR COVID-19 Organic Crowd Framework
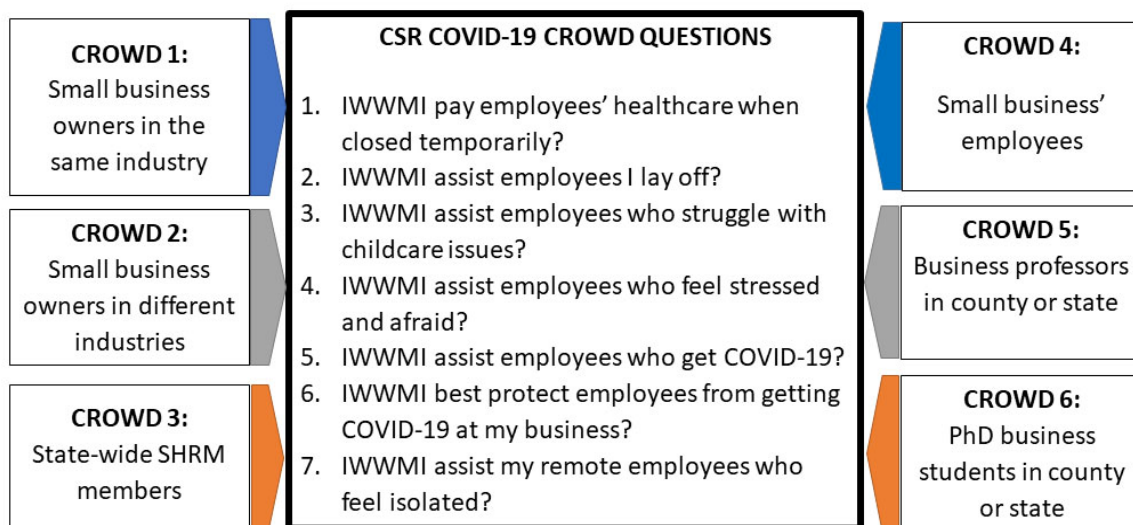
If students were working on this framework outside of the time-packed Entrepreneurship classroom (perhaps in an Entrepreneurship club), they could select the small business, form one or more of the crowds, determine the crowd wisdom technology to utilize, solicit solutions from the crowd, and analyze the solutions for the small-business owner.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation to this study is that not much research has been done on this topic geared to the COVID-19 pandemic era. Therefore, the scope and applicability of the research may be deemed as rudimentary. Another limitation is that of time constraints (Single, 2010). The study was completed in a Fall academic semester. If the research were extended contiguously into the Spring semester, the likelihood of more time availability would have encouraged additional participants to join the study. Also, during the Fall semester, competing time activities may have prevented some faculty from participating. The time limitation may have also caused participants to provide brief and sketchy—rather than detailed and thoughtful—responses to the exploratory study (USC Libraries, 2021). The limited amount of funds allocated for this study could have been another limitation (Dudovskiy, 2019). The researchers used financial incentives in the form of five $20 gift cards to raffle winners to encourage faculty participation across a wider, diverse range of academic institutions. If increased funding were available, potentially more faculty members may have participated from the same or additional academic institutions. Also, more funding could have been useful in purchasing professional services from marketing firms to target and solicit a wider pool of faculty participants.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The future of crowdsourcing will be driven by the insightfulness, creativity, and innovation of businesses, governments, and academia. In a world where the challenges we face become increasingly complex, finding methods of bringing together crowds, experts, and technology in ways that facilitate creative and beneficial solutions presents exciting opportunities to solve real-world challenges (Cancialosi, 2019). As this study was conducted with a small sample of faculty from the USA who taught undergraduate Entrepreneurship classes, a similar study could be conducted with larger samples, both from the USA, and from other countries where undergraduate Entrepreneurship classes are taught. Additionally, a new, rigorous study could be launched by analyzing and incorporating the results of the current case study and to inform, refine, and implement the organic crowd framework proposed in this paper.

CONCLUSION

Businesses have begun to integrate crowdsourcing with CSR projects (Maione, 2015). For example, Blurna (2011) shares the results of a study in which 44% of business leaders utilized crowdsourcing. In fact, 95% of those leaders reported that some of their crowdsourcing was geared towards external projects actuated by CSR. Businesses have also engaged in internal

CSR-infused COVID-19 activities to assist employees and their families during crisis periods such as the prevailing pandemic era. Additionally, as educators have recognized the value of teachable moments during the pandemic, the development of COVID-19 pedagogic learning activities for Entrepreneurship courses can be deemed appropriate. Therefore, a CSR-infused COVID-19 case study, as well as a COVID-19 organic crowd framework, would bolster purposeful and relevant learning. Finally, the instruments proposed in this research may serve to resolve the issue of Entrepreneurship educators not currently teaching all five types of Crowdsourcing as subtopics—and that of their not having sufficient time to add more Crowdsourcing activities to their courses.

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APPENDIX A

Crowdsourcing and Entrepreneurship Survey

Purpose: This study seeks to explore the ways Crowdsourcing is or is not integrated within the undergraduate Entrepreneurship curriculum at institutions throughout the United States. To that end, this study seeks to answer the following research question: ***How can Crowdsourcing practices inform the pedagogy in Entrepreneurship curricula?***

Q1. Tell us about yourself: affiliation and undergraduate entrepreneurship courses taught.
- University affiliation
- Title: Adjunct, visiting professor, fixed-term, tenure-track, tenured, other
- Names of undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses you taught at any university

Q2. What topics that were undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses did you teach at any university?

Q3. Do you have any experience in Crowdsourcing research?

Q4. Have you included Crowdsourcing in undergraduate Entrepreneurship courses taught at any university?

- Which course(s)?
- Which aspect of Crowdsourcing?
- What teaching methods were used?
- What went well, from your perspective?
- What went well, from your students' perspectives?
- What could be improved from your perspective?
- What could be improved from the students' perspectives?

Q5. Are there any Entrepreneurship courses/topics in your university's curriculum that could benefit from the inclusion of Crowdsourcing?

Q6. Does your university have any Crowdsourcing-related courses in the undergraduate non- Entrepreneur curriculum?

Q7. What benefits do you think will be achieved in applying Crowdsourcing practices into the undergraduate Entrepreneurship curriculum?

Q8. What challenges or drawbacks would you anticipate from making this change in the undergraduate Entrepreneurship curriculum?

Q9. How do you think these changes in the undergraduate Entrepreneurship curriculum can be received by the course committee in your department?

APPENDIX B

CASE STUDY

Socially Responsible Crowdsourcing by Small Businesses During the COVID-19 Era

Important background information

Read the background information below regarding crowdsourcing and internal CSR. Both topics will be utilized in your responses to the case study.

Background information on crowdsourcing

Howe (2006) explains that the five types of Crowdsourcing include Crowdfunding, Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowdvoting, and Co-creation. It may be beneficial to see how specifically each type has been used. For example, Materson (2017) reports that Cornell University used Crowdfunding to reach the audience of young donors to raise $900,000. Analysis of successful crowdfunding campaigns shows that the average campaign raises around $7,000 (Heaslip, 2021). Fournier (2019) explains that IKEA incorporates Co-creation for new furniture and product design by soliciting ideas from customers, boot camps for entrepreneurs, world-wide innovation labs, and academic institutions. Dupin (2019) highlights the use of Crowd Wisdom by SeaFreight Labs that helps firms in the shipping industry solve environmental issues. Huizen (2015) speaks of the National Audubon Society's efforts to use Crowdfunding to raise public awareness and funds from well over 1,000 donors to combat the imminent extinction of three endangered species of Australian birds.

Background on what some firms have done regarding CSR for employees

Businesses have ethical and moral obligations to employees (Carroll, 2016). During times of COVID-19, Walmart, Microsoft, Apple, and Lyft have all made commitments to continue payments to hourly workers for at least the first two weeks of lockdown (Kramer, 2020). JLL developed a website portal for employees to access resources that could have a positive impact on their health and/or finances. The *New York Times* created a virtual pet parade for employees to participate in, with their pets. HP (Singapore) offered parents online educational activities created by academic experts. Goodway Group created "Family Fun Fridays" such that employees with children could attend online sessions that included magic and music (Court, 2020). Additionally, Ford Motor Company permitted 30,000 of its worldwide employees to work remotely on a permanent basis (Sarkis, 2021). Also, due to the additional stress and mental health issues of employees during the COVID-19 era, Starbucks offered virtual therapy sessions to their employees (Epperson, 2011).

Instructions

Select one of the two cases. Answer all questions as part of the case.

Small Business 1

A restaurant has been in business for 12 years and is characterized by casual dining and American cuisine in a leased space. The hours of operation are from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm. The small-business owner maintains a staff of 20 waitresses, waiters, hostesses, and four cooks in a combination of full-time and part-time capacities. The small-business owner contracts out for bookkeeping, IT services, and marketing support.

Challenges During COVID-19

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the small business owner experienced the following challenges:

- For some time, the company closed, so it had no revenue
- For some time, employees had no work
- Revenue has still fallen during reopening
- Increased costs were incurred for safety precautions
- Some employees got COVID-19 and needed medical assistance and are off from work
- Some employees are struggling with childcare since schools are closed
- The restaurant had reopened with limited seating
- Some employees are afraid of catching COVID-19 at work
- Some employees' spouses are laid off from their jobs
- Some other employees are laid off while some employees remain working

Small Business 2

This is an office-type company that had been in business for eight years. The hours of operation are from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. The small-business owner maintains a staff of 15 customer service representatives in a mortgaged structure. This small-business owner contracts out (outsources) for bookkeeping, IT services, and marketing support. Prior to COVID-19, all employees reported to the office.

Challenges During COVID-19

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the small-business owner experienced the following challenges:

- For some time, the company closed, so there was no revenue
- For some time, employees had no work
- The office-type company reopened with most of the employees working from home
    - Some employees needed laptops with printer/scanner/fax
    - Some employees did not have quiet office spaces
    - Some employees felt isolated, depressed, and stressed
- The small business owner incurred additional costs for safety precautions
- Some employees are afraid of catching COVID-19 if they return to work
- Some employees got COVID-19, needed medical assistance, and could not work
- Some employees are struggling with childcare issues since schools are closed
- Some employees' spouses are laid off from their jobs
- Some other employees of the office-type company are laid off, while some employees remain working

Questions

1. Create socially responsible crowdsourcing solutions for each of the Crowdsourcing types: Crowdfunding, Crowd Creation, Crowd Wisdom, Crowdvoting, and Co-creation (Howe, 2006) that would address one or more of the COVID-19 challenges experienced by the small business in this case. One or more Crowdsourcing types can be combined to address one or more issues. All types of Crowdsourcing must be used when creating socially responsible solutions reflecting CSR.
2. Which type of Crowdsourcing would have the most social impact on employees?
3. What type of technology would you recommend for any of the Crowdsourcing initiatives you listed?
4. Identify who/what might assist any of the Crowdsourcing initiatives you listed.
5. Identify who/what might resist any of the Crowdsourcing initiatives you listed.
6. Some companies' CSR initiatives create customer loyalty and/or create marketing buzz.
   Identify and explain one of your Crowdsourcing initiatives that would create either issue.