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Optimizing Distinctiveness in Global E-Commerce: How Textual Marketing Signals Drive Foreign Customer Engagement on Digital Platforms

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Abstract

This study investigates how new ventures on global e-commerce platforms use textual marketing signals to attract foreign consumers, a critical challenge characterized by information asymmetry. Integrating Signaling Theory and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), we examine how two key creator-controlled textual signals—International Orientation Expression (IOE) intensity (a signal of legitimacy) and Project Genre Atypicality (GA) (a signal of differentiation)—non-linearly and interactively influence foreign customer engagement. Analyzing a large-scale dataset of 17,084 Kickstarter projects using computer-aided text analysis and fixed-effects regression models, we yield several key insights. First, we find a robust inverted U-shaped relationship between IOE intensity and foreign backer engagement, suggesting that while moderate international emphasis enhances legitimacy, excessive claims can undermine credibility. Second, GA exhibits a positive linear relationship with foreign engagement, indicating that novelty-seeking foreign consumers consistently value textual differentiation. Third, and most critically, we uncover a significant negative interaction, termed the “cost of dual extremes,” where simultaneously signaling extreme international ambition and extreme product novelty deters foreign consumers, likely due to perceived strategic incoherence and heightened execution risk. Finally, we confirm that attracting a diverse foreign audience is a strong predictor of overall project funding success. This research extends ODT by identifying a novel interactive boundary condition for distinctiveness in digital markets and advances signaling theory by demonstrating the complex, non-linear effectiveness of textual signals, offering actionable insights for optimizing communication strategy in global e-commerce.



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Keywords: international marketing; Optimal Distinctiveness Theory; signaling theory; digital platforms; crowdfunding expression; Project Genre Atypicality

1. Introduction

The proliferation of global digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped international marketing strategies and global market access, presenting new ventures with unprecedented opportunities to reach foreign consumers directly [1–3]. Platforms like Kickstarter enable ventures to transcend geographical boundaries and solicit contributions from a globally dispersed crowd, thereby mitigating some traditional barriers to internationalization [4]. However, this expanded reach is accompanied by significant international marketing challenges, particularly in overcoming information asymmetry and the inherent liabilities of foreignness and psychic distance when engaging these diverse audiences [5–7].

In such digitally mediated environments, where tangible signals of quality or commitment are often scarce for nascent ventures, the textual narratives presented on project pages become paramount, serving as critical marketing communication tools that shape foreign consumer perceptions and engagement [8]. Indeed, for new ventures lacking established reputations, these textual representations are often the primary interface through which foreign consumers initially assess credibility and appeal. Yet, how specific textual marketing strategies are calibrated to simultaneously convey legitimacy and distinctiveness to a foreign audience, and how these signals interact to influence engagement, remains an underexplored yet critical area in international digital marketing and platform strategy research [9–12].

This study investigates how two key creator-controlled textual marketing signals—International Orientation Expression (IOE) intensity and Project Genre Atypicality (GA)—non-linearly and interactively influence foreign customer engagement (specifically, backer attraction, operationalized as the proportion of foreign backers) on Kickstarter, a prominent global platform. IOE intensity is conceptualized as the explicit textual emphasis on a venture’s international focus, aspirations, and preparedness, a signal aimed at enhancing legitimacy and reducing perceived foreignness [13]. GA captures the degree to which a project’s textual content deviates from the established linguistic norms of its specific platform category, signaling novelty and differentiation. Drawing upon Signaling Theory [14–16] and extending Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) [17–19], we examine the complex challenge new ventures face in balancing conformity for legitimacy with differentiation for competitive appeal when targeting foreign consumers in the digital realm. The pursuit of optimal distinctiveness is particularly nuanced in this context, as digital platforms present unique signaling environments and foreign consumers bring diverse interpretive lenses shaped by their cultural backgrounds and market experiences [20]. While ODT has been explored in various organizational settings, previous research has often focused on firm-level strategies or objective product features. For instance, studies have examined how revenue models [21] or firm-level authenticity signals [19] shape distinctiveness outcomes or how firms balance conformity and differentiation in contexts like CSR [22]. However, the application of ODT to project-level textual communication strategies aimed at foreign customer engagement, and the specific non-linear and interactive mechanisms involved, requires dedicated investigation to understand how ventures might navigate crucial legitimacy thresholds through their marketing narratives [16,23].

Analyzing a large-scale archival dataset of approximately 17,084 Kickstarter projects using computer-aided text analysis and fixed-effects regression models, our research yields several important insights. First, we find that IOE intensity exhibits a robust inverted U-shaped relationship with foreign backer engagement. This suggests that while moderate textual emphasis on international focus can enhance legitimacy and build trust, excessive IOE may trigger negative inferences, potentially due to perceived inauthenticity [19] or strategic ambiguity, thus diminishing appeal beyond an optimal point [23]. Second, GA demonstrates a positive linear association with foreign backer engagement, indicating that in the international crowdfunding context, foreign consumers consistently value textual signals of novelty and differentiation. This contrasts with some ODT applications where extreme atypicality can be penalized [21]. Third, and critically, we uncover a significant negative interaction between IOE Intensity and GA, which we term the “cost of dual extremes”. This suggests that projects attempting to simultaneously signal extreme international ambition and extreme product novelty deter foreign consumers, likely because this combination creates perceived strategic incoherence and heightens perceived execution risk. Finally, we confirm that attracting foreign consumers (operationalized as the count of foreign backer

countries) significantly predicts overall project funding success, underscoring the tangible benefits of international market validation for new ventures on global platforms [8].

This study makes several contributions to marketing theory, particularly at the intersection of international marketing, digital consumer behavior, and e-commerce strategy (see Table 1 for positioning). First, we advance signaling theory in international digital markets by demonstrating the complex, non-linear, and interactive nature of textual signals' effectiveness, moving beyond simpler linear assumptions in cross-cultural marketing communication [22,23]. Second, we extend ODT to the specific context of foreign consumer attraction on global platforms. We identify how the balance between legitimacy-seeking (via IOE intensity) and differentiation-seeking (via GA) textual signals is uniquely calibrated in this environment, with the "cost of dual extremes" representing a novel boundary condition for achieving optimal distinctiveness. As summarized in Table 1, this differentiates our findings from ODT applications focusing on different signals or contexts, such as firm-level authenticity signals [19], CSR strategy configurations [22], or distinctiveness dynamics in app markets [21]. Our focus is on how marketing narratives are perceived by foreign audiences. Third, by quantifying the impact of these textual signals and their interplay, using methods analogous to those analyzing founding narratives [8], we provide a more precise understanding of the micro-foundations of foreign customer engagement on global platforms. This offers a validated conceptual framework (see Figure 1) and actionable insights for new ventures seeking to optimize their textual communication strategies in the competitive international digital marketplace, an environment where audience perception of category fit and novelty is paramount [20].

Table 1. Positioning this Study within the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) Literature.

Study	Context	Level of Analysis	Key Signals/Strategies Examined	Key Findings Relevant to This Study	Our Study's Contribution/Difference
Zhang et al. [22]	CSR activities (China)	Firm	CSR scope (conformity) vs. CSR emphasis (differentiation)	Firms strategically balance conformity on one dimension and differentiation on another.	Highlights multi-dimensional balancing. We examine the interaction between two distinct textual signals (IOE and GA).
Buhr et al. [19]	High-tech industries	Firm/Product	Authenticity (believability and originality)	Authenticity confers a premium; excessive claims can undermine it.	Focuses on authenticity perception. We examine how specific textual content (IOE/GA) influences foreign engagement, where excessive IOE may signal inauthenticity.
van Angeren et al. [21]	Mobile App Market	Product	Product differentiation; Revenue models (free vs. paid)	Optimal distinctiveness is contingent on revenue models (e.g., U-shape for free apps).	Shows context dependency in digital markets. We focus on foreign consumer response on a crowdfunding platform, finding a linear positive effect for differentiation (GA).
This Study	International Crowdfunding	Project/Textual	IOE Intensity (Legitimacy); Genre Atypicality (Differentiation)	Inverted U-shape for IOE; Positive linear for GA; Negative interaction ("Cost of dual extremes").	Examines micro-level textual communication for foreign engagement; Identifies "cost of dual extremes" as a novel interactive ODT boundary condition.



Figure 1. Research Framework.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

To understand how firms navigate the complexities of international digital markets, it is crucial to examine the communication strategies they employ to attract foreign consumers. Global digital marketplaces like Kickstarter are characterized by significant information asymmetry [24,25]. Potential foreign consumers often perceive higher risks due to the geographical distance and inherent uncertainties associated with cross-border transactions, often discussed as liabilities of foreignness [6] and psychic distance [5]. This study integrates Signaling Theory [14,15] and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory [16,17] to explain how specific, creator-controlled textual signals embedded in online campaigns influence this engagement.

Signaling Theory provides the foundation for understanding how ventures use observable cues—signals—to convey unobservable qualities such as credibility, competence, and value proposition [8,24,26]. In the initial digital discovery phase, the textual content of a campaign represents a critical, low-cost, and scalable marketing communication mechanism [27,28]. However, merely sending signals is insufficient; the configuration of these signals determines their effectiveness.

This is where ODT becomes essential. ODT posits that organizations strive for a balance between the opposing needs for legitimacy (achieved through conformity to norms) and differentiation (achieved through uniqueness to gain attention) [17,18]. Achieving this “optimal distinctiveness” is crucial for performance, yet its manifestation is highly context-dependent [16,29]. For instance, the optimal level of product distinctiveness in digital app markets can be contingent on revenue models [21]. Similarly, firms might strategically orchestrate conformity on one dimension while pursuing differentiation on another [22]. Perceptions of authenticity can also confer a premium [19], and new ventures must often surpass “legitimacy thresholds” before differentiation efforts become effective [23,30].

The challenge for new ventures on global digital platforms is therefore to craft textual marketing narratives that resonate with a diverse foreign audience, whose interpretations might be shaped by their understanding of market categories [20], balancing the need to appear legitimate with the imperative to offer something novel. We propose that ventures utilize two primary textual levers to navigate this balance (Figure 1). IOE intensity serves as a key textual lever to signal legitimacy and conformity to international expectations, while GA represents a deliberate textual strategy to signal differentiation and novelty. The structure of textual communication itself can also influence message effectiveness, often in non-linear ways [23]. This study focuses on these two specific textual signals, IOE intensity and GA, to understand how ventures navigate this complex international marketing landscape.

2.1. International Orientation Expression Intensity

Ventures strategically utilize International Orientation Expression (IOE) Intensity—the deliberate and proactive use of textual cues within the project narrative—to signal their international focus, capabilities, and commitment to foreign consumers on global digital platforms. Distinct from objective firm-level internationalization metrics, IOE is a creator-controlled textual artifact designed to reduce perceived foreignness and informa-

tion asymmetry during initial digital discovery by foreign audiences [6]. From a Signaling Theory perspective [14], IOE acts as an early-stage signal of unobservable qualities like international preparedness, particularly vital for new ventures lacking established international reputations [31,32]. By explicitly addressing an international audience and demonstrating preparedness for cross-border operations, ventures can reduce psychic distance [17] and enhance perceived trustworthiness [33], making the venture appear more legitimate [32,33]. A moderate level of IOE intensity may therefore signal that the venture is aware of and prepared for international complexities, contributing to the “believability” aspect crucial for perceived authenticity [19].

However, the relationship between IOE Intensity and foreign backer engagement is unlikely to be monotonically positive. While moderate IOE Intensity can enhance legitimacy [30], excessive intensity might trigger negative inferences. If global claims seem overly ambitious for a nascent venture, they could be dismissed as “cheap talk” [15] or undermine perceived authenticity if claims seem disproportionate to actual capabilities [19]. Furthermore, a very high density of international cues might overwhelm foreign consumers, leading to information overload [34] or perceived ambiguity and reducing cognitive fluency and appeal (akin to the effects of overly complex syntax; Atalay et al. [23]). Therefore, we argue that an optimal point exists—a “legitimacy threshold” for credible international posturing. Beyond this point, additional IOE Intensity may yield diminishing or even negative returns as skepticism or perceived lack of focus outweighs benefits.

H1. *IOE Intensity in a project’s text will exhibit an inverted U-shaped relationship with the Proportion of Foreign Backers.*

2.2. Genre Atypicality

To signal differentiation and novelty, ventures employ Project Genre Atypicality (GA). GA captures the degree to which a project’s textual content deviates from the linguistic norms of its specific Kickstarter main category [8,24,32]. Rooted in ODT [17], GA reflects a venture’s strategic choice to position itself as unique. GA specifically measures textual non-conformity relative to self-declared category peers on the platform, rather than spanning multiple market categories [20]. While high atypicality can risk illegitimacy [35], it can also attract attention and signal unique value [18], particularly for audiences seeking novel solutions [36].

When targeting foreign consumers on global digital platforms like Kickstarter, the benefits of differentiation via GA may be particularly salient. Foreign consumers, often exploring products unavailable domestically, inherently tend towards novelty-seeking [37,38]. For this international segment looking for unique offerings, GA serves as a powerful heuristic for innovation. This aligns strongly with recent optimal distinctiveness research; Mochkabadi et al. [39], for instance, demonstrate that ‘novelty-seeking audiences’—a category that aptly describes many foreign Kickstarter backers—perceive high innovativeness (a form of distinctiveness akin to GA) positively, even as a source of legitimacy, and show greater tolerance for radical departures from norms compared to return-seeking audiences. The observed positive linear effect of GA on foreign backer engagement can thus be understood as these consumers’ novelty-seeking drive translating distinctiveness into perceived value and legitimacy. This contrasts with some ODT predictions or findings in other digital contexts where conformity may be more critical for legitimacy [21]. In summary, the inherent novelty-seeking behavior of foreign consumers on discovery-oriented platforms like Kickstarter likely outweighs the potential risks of illegitimacy associated with high GA. Unlike contexts where conformity is prioritized, this specific environment favors differentiation. The Kickstarter platform, by its nature attracting an international

audience keen on discovering unique items, therefore likely sees textual atypicality (GA) function as a consistently positive signal for initial foreign backer attraction.

H2. *Genre Atypicality will exhibit a positive linear relationship with the Proportion of Foreign Backers.*

2.3. The Interactive Effect of IOE and GA

Ventures deploy multiple signals, whose combined effect can be interactive [15,32,40]. We propose that IOE Intensity and Genre Atypicality interact negatively in their association with the Proportion of Foreign Backers, leading to a “cost of dual extremes”. This occurs when a project textually signals both very high international orientation and very high uniqueness. Such a configuration may represent a failure to achieve balanced optimal distinctiveness [22,23] or a coherent, authentic profile [19].

For foreign consumers, this combination can be problematic. It may lead to perceived strategic incoherence and impaired cognitive fluency. When extreme global reach signals conflict with radical atypicality signals (high Genre Atypicality), consumers are faced with what Drover et al. [41] describe as an ‘incongruent signal set’. Processing such sets is cognitively demanding and can make it difficult to form clear project understanding or achieve desired judgmental confidence [41,42]. If these strong, dual extreme signals create a state of ‘balanced incongruence’ [41], consumers might struggle to reconcile the conflicting information, potentially leading to disengagement, a simplified negative evaluation, or even the temporary abandonment of systematic cognitive processing. This difficulty in processing conflicting high-level signals is analogous to the challenges posed by syntactically complex messages [23], potentially more so for audiences lacking deep category expertise [20]. Furthermore, this combination can heighten perceived risk regarding execution capability and undermine authenticity. For a new venture, the simultaneous claim of extreme global scope and extreme product novelty creates an incongruent signal set. This can appear overly ambitious, heightening perceived execution risk, undermining perceived authenticity and credibility [19], and potentially signaling a failure to meet a basic “legitimacy threshold” for operational feasibility. We therefore argue that this perceived incoherence will lead to disengagement among foreign consumers.

H3. *There will be a negative interaction effect between IOE Intensity and Genre Atypicality on the Proportion of Foreign Backers.*

2.4. Foreign Backer Attraction and Overall Funding Success

Attracting foreign consumers, operationalized as Foreign Backer Country Count, can itself serve as a powerful market signal [14,43,44]. Support from a geographically diverse audience can indicate broader appeal, higher project quality, and greater market potential, thereby enhancing the project’s overall legitimacy and perceived value among a wider set of potential stakeholders, including domestic backers [45,46]. This international validation can reduce perceived risk for subsequent potential backers and create a positive momentum or bandwagon effect [47,48], thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving the overall funding goal. For ventures operating on global platforms, early international traction is a key indicator of global viability [49,50].

H4. *A higher Foreign Backer Country Count will be positively associated with overall project Funding Success.*

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative, archival approach to investigate the non-linear and interactive effects of textual signals on foreign customer engagement within the global crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. Table 2 summarizes the definitions and operationalizations of our key constructs.

Table 2. Definitions and Operationalization of Key Constructs.

Construct	Definition	Operationalization
International Orientation Expression (IOE) Intensity	The explicit textual emphasis placed on a venture's international focus, aspirations, and preparedness within the project narrative.	Computer-Aided Text Analysis (CATA) using a specialized dictionary (Appendix A.1). Score is the normalized keyword count (standardized).
Project Genre Atypicality (GA)	The degree to which a project's textual content deviates from the established linguistic norms of its specific platform category.	Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling ($k = 50$; Appendix A.2). Calculated as the distance between a project's topic vector and its category's average (standardized).
Foreign Customer Engagement	The extent to which a project attracts support from consumers located outside the creator's home country.	Proportion of Foreign Backers: The ratio of backers from foreign countries (based on top country data) to the total number of backers.
Funding Success	The achievement of the predefined monetary goal within the campaign timeframe.	Dichotomous variable (1 = successful, 0 = failed).

Kickstarter is the largest global reward-based crowdfunding platform, making it superior to regionally focused platforms for studying international engagement. Unlike equity or donation platforms, its reward-based model closely mirrors international e-commerce transactions, focusing on consumer market responses to new offerings [51]. It provides a rich empirical setting due to the inherent information asymmetry between project creators (signalers) and potential backers (signal receivers), the public availability of detailed project information, including extensive textual narratives, and observable funding outcomes [4]. Furthermore, Kickstarter's narrative-centric design makes it an established context in the marketing literature for examining digital signaling, customer engagement, and communication strategies [11]. The platform's global reach also makes it an ideal context for studying international consumer behavior in response to venture signaling.

3.1. Data and Sample

The core dataset was constructed using publicly accessible Kickstarter project pages. We systematically collected data for projects launched across a wide array of categories, with project deadlines spanning from 2009 to 2022. A key category included in our sample was 'Technology,' encompassing subcategories such as Camera Equipment, DIY Electronics, Fabrication Tools, Flight, Gadgets, Hardware, Makerspaces, Robots, Software, Sound, Space Exploration, Wearables, and Web. Initial data scraping and processing involved establishing unique project identifiers (based on project URLs) and removing duplicate entries. To ensure the quality and suitability of the data for our textual analysis and research questions, we applied several filtering criteria. Projects with missing critical information (e.g., textual descriptions necessary for our key independent variables, funding outcomes, etc.) were excluded. As our primary textual analysis tools are optimized for

English, projects not launched in English were also removed from the sample. This rigorous filtering process resulted in a final analytical sample of 17,084 unique Kickstarter projects for analyses predicting the Proportion of Foreign Backers and 17,010 projects for analyses predicting Funding Success.

3.2. Variable Measurement

To facilitate the interpretation of coefficients, particularly for interaction terms and non-linear effects, all continuous independent and control variables used in the regression models were standardized (mean ≈ 0 , standard deviation ≈ 1) prior to their inclusion [52]. Variables exhibiting high skewness, such as count or monetary variables (e.g., Funding Goal, Creator Experience (launched projects), Number of Images, and Number of Videos), were log-transformed (specifically, using $\log(1 + x)$ to accommodate zero values) before standardization. This transformation mitigates the influence of outliers and improves the distributional properties of these variables for regression analysis [53].

3.2.1. Dependent Variables

Proportion of Foreign Backers: This is our primary measure of foreign customer engagement. It is calculated using publicly available data on the top countries of backers for each project. First, the creator's country of origin is identified. Then, for each project, we sum the number of backers from these listed top countries whose country differs from the creator's country. This sum is divided by the total number of backers for the project. The resulting proportion ranges from 0 to 1. We acknowledge this is a proxy based on aggregated top-country data due to public data limitations [54].

Funding Success: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if a project's publicly reported status was "successful" (i.e., met or exceeded its funding goal by the campaign deadline), and 0 otherwise (e.g., "failed"). This is a standard measure of crowdfunding success [4].

3.2.2. Key Independent Variables

IOE Intensity: This variable captures the intensity of international orientation signaled in a project's textual narrative. To measure this, we employed Computer-Aided Text Analysis (CATA), drawing on established methodologies [55,56]. Our CATA application also followed the guidance from Belderbos et al. [13] concerning its use in international business research. We developed the specialized IOE dictionary through a rigorous multi-stage process combining deductive (literature-driven) and inductive (corpus-driven) approaches, followed by Keyword-In-Context (KWIC) analysis and inter-rater validation to ensure precision and content validity (Details in Appendix A.1). The raw IOE score (keyword count normalized by total text word count) is standardized.

Genre Atypicality This measures the extent to which a project's textual content deviates from its Kickstarter main category's prototypical textual content. It is operationalized using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling [57] (see Appendix A.2 for details, including the rationale for $k = 50$ topics based on topic coherence and interpretability, and Appendix A.3 for topics). GA is calculated as the Manhattan distance between a project's topic proportion vector and its category's average topic proportion vector and then standardized. This approach aligns with contemporary uses of LDA for measuring textual differentiation [8,21].

In addition to the primary measure of International Orientation Expression, two alternative variables were utilized to ensure the robustness of our findings and for specific hypothesis testing. First, High IOE Presence (dummy) is coded 1 if a project's text contains two or more distinct pre-defined global keywords and 0 otherwise. Second, IOE Keyword Count was employed as an alternative continuous measure of IOE intensity in supplementary analyses (see Appendix B).

3.2.3. Other Key Variable

Foreign Backer Country Count: This is used as the primary independent variable for predicting Funding Success (dummy) in H4. This variable represents the count of unique overseas countries from which backers originate for a project. For testing H4, this measure was selected over the Proportion of Foreign Backers to mitigate potential endogeneity issues when predicting funding outcomes. Importantly, supplementary analyses—the detailed results of which are omitted here due to space limitations—showed that using the Proportion of Foreign Backers as the predictor yielded qualitatively similar results regarding funding success, supporting the robustness of this relationship.

3.2.4. Control Variables

We include a comprehensive set of control variables identified in prior crowdfunding, entrepreneurship, and digital marketing literature [4].

Project and Creator Characteristics: We control for the Creator Experience (launched projects), Funding Goal, and Campaign Duration. These reflect project preparedness [51] and creator reputation/credibility [58].

Marketing Communication and Social Efforts: We control for the Number of Images and Number of Videos. In digital and international marketing contexts, these are critical visual cues influencing consumer perception and engagement [11]. We also include Staff Pick (platform endorsement) and Facebook Connected. Social connectedness is a key driver of digital word-of-mouth and network effects, influencing consumer adoption in online markets [59].

3.3. Analytical Strategy

To test our hypotheses, we employ regression models using the fixest package in R [60], which efficiently estimates models with multiple high-dimensional fixed effects. For the continuous Proportion of Foreign Backers, we use Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. For the dichotomous Funding Success, we use logistic regression.

All regression models include three-way fixed effects for Project Main Category, Creator's Country of Origin, and Year of Project Launch to rigorously control for unobserved heterogeneity [61,62]. This specification (13 project categories, 98 creator countries, 15 years) robustly mitigates omitted variable bias from stable unobservables at these levels. Standard errors are clustered at the project_category level, providing conservative and robust inferences [63].

We examined Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs), which were below common thresholds (10), indicating multicollinearity was not a significant concern.

4. Results

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients for the primary variables employed in this study.

We tested our hypotheses using fixed-effects OLS regression for predicting the Proportion of Foreign Backers (Table 4) and fixed-effects logistic regression for predicting Funding Success (Table 5). First, an inverted U-shaped relationship was predicted between IOE Intensity and the Proportion of Foreign Backers (H1). The analysis showed that the linear term for IOE Intensity (std.) was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.0065, p < 0.001$), and the quadratic term for IOE Intensity² (std.) was negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.0004, p < 0.01$; see Figure 2).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations.

No.	Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Funding Success (dummy)	0.48	0.5	1										
2	Proportion of Foreign Backers	0.1	0.15	0.272 **	1									
3	Foreign Backer Country Count	2.73	3.89	0.415 **	0.843 **	1								
4	IOE Intensity (std.)	0	1	0.093 **	0.042 **	0.046 **	1							
5	Genre Atypicality (std.)	0	1	0.193 **	0.085 **	0.123 **	0.145 **	1						
6	Creator Experience (launched projects)	2.14	3.95	0.176 **	0.083 **	0.074 **	−0.015 *	0.070 **	1					
7	Funding Goal	115,633.9	1,861,160	−0.039 **	−0.027 **	−0.030 **	−0.004	−0.006	−0.012	1				
8	Campaign Duration (days)	35.65	11.77	−0.093 **	−0.006	−0.025 **	0.013	0.029 **	−0.071 **	0.044 **	1			
9	Number of Images	16.38	19.51	0.428 **	0.217 **	0.257 **	0.196 **	0.269 **	0	−0.017 *	0.042 **	1		
10	Number of Videos	0.64	1.54	0.147 **	0.083 **	0.080 **	0.081 **	0.126 **	−0.020 **	−0.002	0.039 **	0.342 **	1	
11	Staff Pick (dummy)	0.15	0.36	0.261 **	0.154 **	0.249 **	0.080 **	0.083 **	0.017 *	−0.005	−0.017 *	0.220 **	0.081 **	1
12	Facebook Connected (dummy)	0.33	0.47	−0.030 **	0.002	0.013	−0.005	−0.029 **	0.061 **	−0.002	−0.034 **	−0.096 **	−0.053 **	0.011

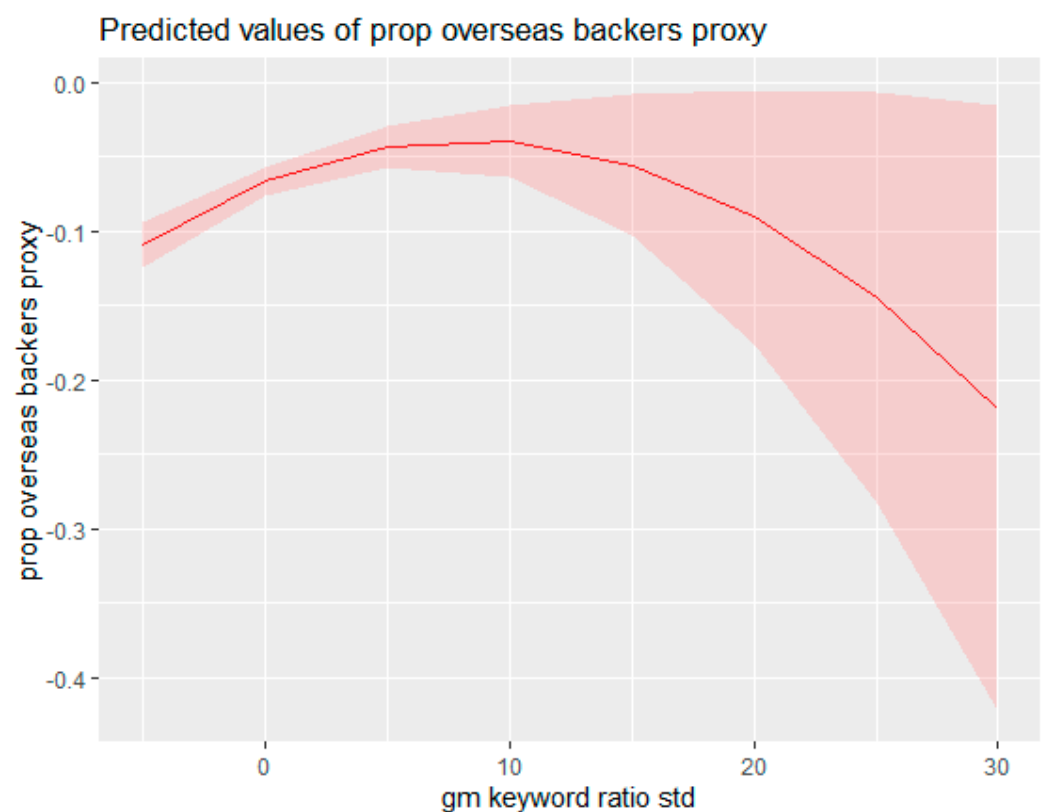
Notes: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**Table 4.** Fixed-Effects OLS Regressions Predicting Proportion of Foreign Backers.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
IOE Intensity (std.)	0.0065 *** (0.0010)	0.0034 ** (0.0009)	0.0031 ** (0.0008)
IOE Intensity ² (std.)	−0.0004 ** (0.0001)		
Genre Atypicality (std.)	0.0085 *** (0.0018)	0.0089 *** (0.0018)	0.0083 *** (0.0019)
Genre Atypicality ² (std.)		−0.0007 (0.0005)	
IOE Intensity × Genre Atypicality			−0.0042 * (0.0016)
Creator Experience (launched projects, log, std.)	0.0023 *** (0.0005)	0.0023 *** (0.0005)	0.0023 *** (0.0005)
Funding Goal (log, std.)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)
Campaign Duration (days, std.)	0.0002 (0.0001)	0.0002 (0.0001)	0.0002 (0.0001)
Number of Images (log, std.)	0.0015 *** (0.0002)	0.0015 *** (0.0002)	0.0015 *** (0.0002)
Number of Videos (log, std.)	0.0023 ** (0.0006)	0.0023 ** (0.0006)	0.0024 ** (0.0006)
Staff Pick (dummy)	0.0242 ** (0.0076)	0.0240 ** (0.0076)	0.0241 ** (0.0076)
Facebook Connected (dummy)	−0.0046 (0.0034)	−0.0045 (0.0034)	−0.0045 (0.0034)
Model Statistics			
Observations	17,084	17,084	17,084
Within R ²	0.074005	0.073559	0.073701
Fixed Effects (Project Category, Creator Country, Year)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 5. Fixed-Effects Logistic Regressions Predicting Funding Success.

Variable	Model 1
Foreign Backer Country Count	0.2781 *** (0.0192)
Creator Experience (launched projects, log, std.)	0.1425 *** (0.0308)
Funding Goal (log, std.)	−0.0000 (0.0000)
Campaign Duration (days, std.)	−0.0240 *** (0.0028)
Number of Images (log, std.)	0.0303 *** (0.0040)
Number of Videos (log, std.)	−0.0056 (0.0241)
Staff Pick (dummy)	0.7153 (0.4414)
Facebook Connected (dummy)	0.0022 (0.0567)
Model Statistics	
Observations	17,010
Adj. Pseudo R ²	0.415893
Fixed Effects (Project Category, Creator Country, Year)	Yes

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$.**Figure 2.** The Non-Linear Relationship Between International Orientation Expression Intensity and Proportion of Foreign Backers.

Second, a positive linear relationship was proposed between Genre Atypicality and the Proportion of Foreign Backers (H2). The coefficient for Genre Atypicality (std.) was positive and highly statistically significant ($\beta = 0.0085$, $p < 0.001$; see Figure 3), while a test for a quadratic term was non-significant. Thus, H2 was supported.

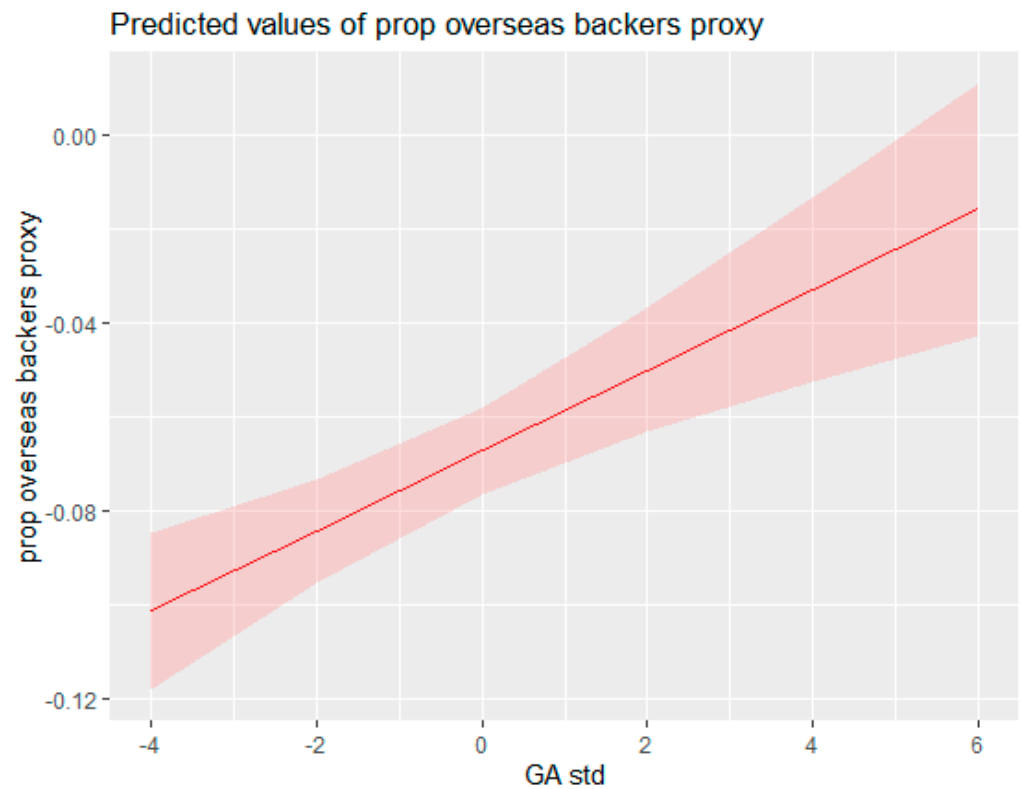


Figure 3. The Linear Relationship Between Project Genre Atypicality and Proportion of Foreign Backers.

Third, a negative interaction effect between IOE Intensity and Genre Atypicality on the Proportion of Foreign Backers was predicted (H3). The coefficient for the interaction term, IOE Intensity $\times$ Genre Atypicality (std., interaction), was negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.0042$, $p < 0.05$; see Figure 4). Thus, H3 was supported.

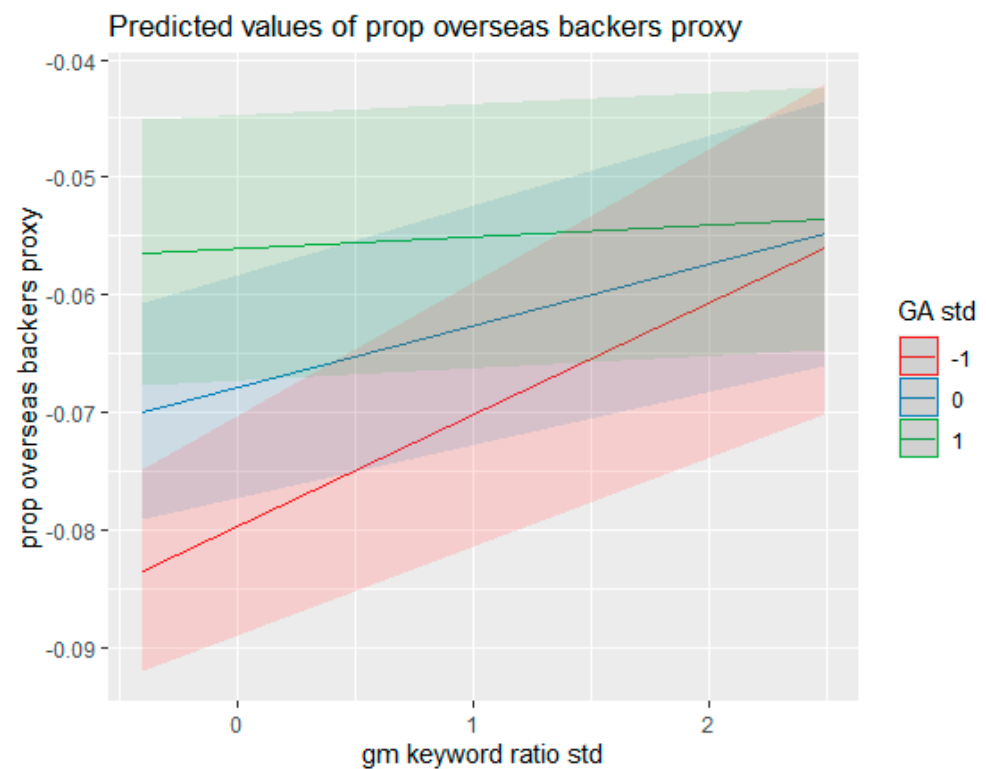


Figure 4. The Interaction Effect of International Orientation Expression and Genre Atypicality on Proportion of Foreign Backers.

Fourth, it was stated that a higher measure of foreign backer attraction would be positively associated with overall project funding success (H4). The logit coefficient for Foreign Backer Country Count predicting Funding Success (dummy) was positive and highly statistically significant (Coefficient = 0.2781, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H4 was strongly supported.

5. Discussion

This research examined how new ventures utilize textual marketing signals—IOE intensity and Project GA—to engage foreign consumers on global digital platforms. Integrating Signaling and Optimal Distinctiveness Theories, our analysis reveals a complex landscape where the calibration and interaction of these signals significantly impact foreign engagement and subsequent funding success.

A key finding is the nuanced role of legitimacy signaling through IOE intensity, which exhibits an inverted U-shaped relationship with foreign engagement (H1). This challenges the often-implicit assumption in international marketing that greater emphasis on global readiness is always beneficial. While moderate IOE enhances legitimacy, our results suggest that excessive international claims by nascent ventures can trigger skepticism. This aligns with recent marketing research on authenticity [19], indicating that foreign consumers may perceive overly ambitious global narratives as “cheap talk,” undermining credibility rather than reinforcing it. It highlights a critical tension: ventures must signal enough international orientation to overcome liabilities of foreignness [6], but not so much that they surpass the threshold of believable capability.

In contrast, differentiation signaling through GA shows a robust positive linear relationship with foreign engagement (H2). This finding is significant as it contrasts with some ODT applications where extreme atypicality is penalized [21]. Our results support the view that the context—specifically the audience—dictates the value of distinctiveness [39]. Foreign consumers on discovery platforms like Kickstarter are inherently novelty-seeking [37]. In this environment, textual differentiation is consistently rewarded, suggesting that for this audience, novelty itself confers legitimacy and appeal.

The most critical insight emerges from the negative interaction between IOE and GA (H3), which we term the “cost of dual extremes.” Simultaneously signaling high international ambition and high novelty deters foreign consumers. This finding underscores that optimal distinctiveness is not about maximizing both legitimacy and differentiation independently but about achieving a coherent strategic position [18]. When extreme global claims conflict with radical novelty, it creates an ‘incongruent signal set’ [41]. This strategic incoherence likely heightens perceived execution risk and impairs cognitive fluency for foreign consumers, leading to disengagement.

Finally, the strong positive association between foreign consumer attraction and overall funding success (H4) reaffirms the critical role of international market validation in the digital economy. It demonstrates that effectively calibrated textual marketing strategies targeting foreign audiences are not just about initial engagement but are instrumental in driving overall venture success through mechanisms of social proof [45].

Furthermore, supplementary analyses using an alternative measure for IOE (IOE Keyword Count) and predicting the Foreign Backer Country Count (see Appendix B Table A2) provided broadly consistent support for these key findings.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research offers several significant contributions to marketing theory, specifically by integrating Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, signaling theory, and international digital marketing literature within the context of e-commerce communication.

First, we extend Optimal Distinctiveness Theory by identifying novel, interactive boundary conditions for achieving distinctiveness in international digital markets. Prior ODT research often examines legitimacy and differentiation strategies in isolation or in different contexts [21,22]. Our identification of the “cost of dual extremes” provides a crucial extension. It demonstrates that achieving optimal distinctiveness requires managing the combined perception (signal congruence) of textual signals, not just balancing them independently. For foreign consumers, the coherence between legitimacy signals (IOE) and differentiation signals (GA) is paramount. Attempting to maximize both leads to perceived strategic incoherence, establishing a new interactive boundary condition for ODT in digital communication. Furthermore, the contrasting effects of IOE (inverted U-shape) and GA (positive linear) highlight the context-dependency of ODT. We show that for novelty-seeking foreign audiences [39], differentiation is consistently valued, while legitimacy signals must be carefully calibrated to maintain authenticity [19].

Second, we advance the application of Signaling Theory in digital marketing communication by demonstrating the complex, non-linear, and interactive nature of textual signals. Much of the traditional signaling literature in marketing assumes monotonic effects [26]. We move beyond this by showing that for readily available textual cues (often considered “cheap talk”), “more is not always better” (the inverted U-shape for IOE). Critically, we emphasize that signals do not operate in isolation. Drawing on concepts of signal congruence [41], our findings illustrate that the combined interpretation of signals determines consumer response. This resonates with emerging marketing research highlighting the nuanced impact of linguistic elements on consumer behavior [23] and underscores the strategic importance of coherent textual presentation.

Third, this study contributes to the international digital marketing literature by illuminating the micro-foundations of foreign customer engagement on global e-commerce platforms [64]. We provide an empirical framework demonstrating how creator-controlled textual content—a fundamental marketing tool—can be strategically deployed to overcome the challenges of information asymmetry and psychic distance inherent in international digital markets [10]. By quantifying the impact of IOE and GA, we offer actionable communication levers for new ventures seeking international market validation in the global digital economy [2].

5.2. Managerial Implications

This study’s findings offer significant and actionable insights for managers, entrepreneurs, and e-commerce strategists navigating the complexities of global digital platforms. Our research moves beyond generic advice and provides a nuanced perspective on how the strategic calibration and combination of textual signals can influence foreign consumer engagement and, ultimately, venture success.

A primary implication stems from our finding of an inverted U-shaped relationship between International Orientation Expression (IOE) intensity and foreign backer engagement. This suggests that a simplistic strategy of maximizing generic international keywords is likely to be counterproductive. For managers, the focus should shift from the quantity of global claims to the quality and credibility of the signals sent. Our results indicate that while a moderate emphasis on international readiness is beneficial for establishing legitimacy, excessive claims may trigger skepticism and be perceived as inauthentic or overly ambitious for a nascent venture. Therefore, a more effective strategy would be to embed credible commitments within the project narrative that genuinely reduce perceived risk for foreign consumers. For instance, providing concrete details regarding international logistics, such as “EU-friendly shipping” or clear customs handling procedures, likely

serves as a more powerful and authentic signal of international preparedness than merely repeating abstract aspirations of “global reach”.

Furthermore, our findings on Project Genre Atypicality (GA) and its interaction with IOE provide crucial guidance on balancing differentiation with strategic coherence. The positive linear effect of GA confirms that textual differentiation is a powerful tool for attracting novelty-seeking foreign consumers on discovery-oriented platforms. Managers should not shy away from using atypical language to articulate a unique value proposition. However, this pursuit of distinctiveness is not without bounds. Our research uncovers a “cost of dual extremes”, where simultaneously signaling extreme product novelty and extreme international ambition deters foreign consumers. This suggests that such a combination may be perceived as strategically incoherent, heightening perceived executional risk. A venture launching a radically innovative product, for example, might build more trust by tempering its immediate global distribution claims. The key is to present a balanced and believable narrative where the scope of international ambition is congruent with the level of product innovation.

Finally, the strong positive association between attracting a diverse foreign audience and overall funding success highlights the strategic value of international engagement as a form of market validation and social proof. Entrepreneurs should thus view early international backers not merely as a source of revenue but as a crucial asset that can be leveraged to build momentum and attract subsequent domestic and international support. These insights also have implications for the managers of e-commerce platforms themselves. To enhance creator success rates, platforms such as Kickstarter or Amazon Launchpad could consider developing educational resources or data-driven analytical tools. Such tools could help creators optimize their textual narratives by providing feedback on the balance between legitimacy signals like IOE and differentiation signals like GA, thereby empowering them to communicate more effectively with a global audience.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers significant insights, its limitations highlight several promising avenues for future research, primarily concerning measurement, context, and underlying mechanisms. First, our textual measures, while robust, primarily capture the volume of signals rather than their qualitative nuance. Future research could employ advanced natural language processing (NLP) techniques to explore dimensions such as the perceived authenticity of international claims or the specific nature of textual atypicality. Similarly, our proxy for foreign engagement was based on aggregated data; future work using more granular, individual-level backer data would allow for a deeper analysis of factors like cultural distance and specific foreign market responses.

Second, the generalizability of our findings is shaped by the specific empirical context. The study relies exclusively on data from Kickstarter, a reward-based platform known for attracting novelty-seeking consumers, a characteristic that likely amplifies the positive valuation of genre atypicality. A crucial next step is to investigate whether these dynamics of optimal distinctiveness hold on other types of digital platforms, such as equity crowdfunding sites or mainstream e-commerce marketplaces, where signals of legitimacy and conformity might play a more critical role. Furthermore, our analysis was confined to English-language projects. Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural research is essential to understand how these textual signals are deployed and interpreted in different cultural and linguistic settings.

Finally, although we theorize the psychological mechanisms driving our results, such as the “cost of dual extremes”, they were not directly tested. Future research could utilize experimental designs to directly measure potential mediators like perceived

execution risk, strategic coherence, and cognitive fluency. Such studies would provide stronger causal evidence and a more profound understanding of the micro-foundations of how textual marketing strategies shape consumer perceptions and behavior in the global digital marketplace.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Operationalization of Key Textual Independent Variables

Appendix A.1. International Orientation Expression (IOE) Intensity Dictionary Development and Keyword List

The International Orientation Expression (IOE) Intensity dictionary was developed through a multi-stage, iterative process designed to ensure content validity and capture the nuanced ways project creators textually signal their international focus on Kickstarter. This process drew upon established Computer-Aided Text Analysis (CATA) methodologies [13].

Initial Keyword Generation (Deductive Approach): A preliminary list of keywords and phrases was generated based on a comprehensive review of international marketing, global strategy, international business, and international entrepreneurship literature [13]

1. Keywords focused on terms explicitly indicating the following:
 - International Scope: e.g., “global,” “worldwide,” “international,” “nation(s),” “country/countries,” “world,” “earth”.
 - Target Markets/Regions: e.g., “Europe,” “Asia,” “North America,” “EU,” “UK,” specific country names if frequently used in an international context.
 - International Operations & Logistics: e.g., “shipping,” “customs,” “VAT,” “currency,” “freight,” “distribute/distribution” (when paired with international terms).
 - Language & Communication: e.g., “language(s),” “translate/translation,” “multilingual”.
 - Appeals to an International Audience: e.g., “overseas,” “foreign,” “abroad,” “international backers,” “global community,” “worldwide audience”.
2. Corpus-Based Keyword Refinement and Expansion (Inductive Approach): A random sample of approximately 1000 Kickstarter project descriptions (from various categories, drawn from projects outside our final analytical sample to avoid contamination) was manually reviewed and analyzed to identify context-specific terms and phrases used by creators to signal international orientation. This inductive step was crucial for capturing expressions unique to the crowdfunding context (e.g., “EU-friendly shipping,” “worldwide delivery,” “ships to [Region/Country X]”, “international pledges,” “global launch”).

Keyword-In-Context (KWIC) Analysis and Pruning: The combined list of keywords was subjected to KWIC analysis using a larger development corpus of Kickstarter texts [13]

3. This involved examining the textual context in which each potential IOE keyword appeared to ensure it was used in a manner consistent with signaling international orientation. Keywords that were frequently used in irrelevant contexts or were

highly ambiguous were removed or refined. The goal was to maximize precision and minimize the inclusion of irrelevant terms.

4. Normalization and Final Illustrative Keyword List: Keywords were stemmed using the Porter stemmer (e.g., “international”, “internationally” both count towards an “international” stem) or grouped by synonyms. The final dictionary used for calculating the IOE Intensity score comprises approximately 80 distinct keyword stems or phrases.
 - Illustrative Examples of Final IOE Keyword Stems/Phrases (not exhaustive): global*, worldwid*, internation*, nation*, countr* (often contextualized), ship* (e.g., shipping available to, ships globally), deliver* (e.g., worldwide delivery), oversea*, foreign*, abroad, export*, import*, custom* (related to duties), vat, translat*, multilingu*, eur* (as in Europe, EU), asia*, north america*, [other continent/major region names], backer* around the world, global market*, international communit*.
5. Calculation of IOE Intensity Score: The raw IOE score for each project was calculated as the total count of occurrences of the dictionary keywords in the combined project description and story text. This raw count was then divided by the total number of words in the same combined text to create a ratio, controlling for text length. This ratio was subsequently standardized (mean = 0, SD = 1) to create the IOE Intensity (std.) variable.

Appendix A.2. Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) Procedure for Project Genre Atypicality (GA) Measurement

Project Genre Atypicality (GA) was operationalized using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling [57] to measure the extent to which a project’s textual content deviates from the prototypical textual content of its specific Kickstarter main category. This approach is consistent with recent applications of LDA in marketing and strategy for analyzing textual differentiation and market structure.

1. Corpus Preparation:
 - The corpus consisted of the combined project description and story text for all $N \approx 17,084$ projects in the analytical sample.
 - Standard text pre-processing steps were applied: conversion to lowercase, removal of punctuation, removal of numbers, and removal of a standard list of English stopwords augmented with common Kickstarter-specific terms (e.g., “kickstarter”, “project”, “pledge”, “backer”, “reward”, “campaign”, “funding”, “goal”).
 - Stemming (Porter stemmer) was applied to reduce words to their root form.
2. LDA Model Estimation:
 - The LDA model was estimated using the topicmodels package in R version 4.4.1.
 - The number of topics (k) was set to 50. This was chosen based on preliminary analyses evaluating topic coherence scores and the qualitative assessment of topic interpretability across a range of k values, balancing thematic granularity with distinctiveness.
 - The model was run using Gibbs sampling with standard hyperparameter settings (e.g., $\alpha = 50/k$, $\beta = 0.1$) for 2000 iterations, with the first 500 iterations discarded as burn-in.
3. GA Score Calculation:

- For each project i , the LDA model outputs a document–topic distribution ($\theta_i = \{\theta_{i1}, \dots, \theta_{ik}\}$), representing the project’s alignment with each of the $k = 50$ topics.
- For each Kickstarter main category c , an average topic proportion vector ($\theta^-_c = \{\theta^-_{c1}, \dots, \theta^-_{ck}\}$) was calculated by averaging the θ_i vectors of all projects in that category.
- The raw GA score for project i in category c was then calculated as the Manhattan distance (L_1 norm) between its topic proportion vector and its category’s average topic proportion vector: $GA_i = \sum_{j=1}^k |\theta_{ij} - \theta^-_{cj}|$
- This raw GA score was subsequently standardized (mean = 0, SD = 1) to create the Genre Atypicality (std.) variable

Appendix A.3. Supplementary Details for LDA Topic Modeling

This appendix provides supplementary information to enhance the transparency of the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling process used to calculate Project Genre Atypicality (GA), addressing requests for methodological clarity from our reviewers.

As mentioned in Appendix A.2, the selection of $k = 50$ topics for our LDA model was based on a comprehensive evaluation balancing quantitative model fit metrics with the qualitative interpretability of the resulting topics. To determine the optimal number of topics, we calculated topic coherence scores for a range of k values. The plot below shows the “Deveaud2014” metric, a common measure where higher values indicate better-defined and more coherent topics [65].

The analysis shows a clear peak at $k = 50$, providing strong quantitative support for our choice. This value offered the most thematically distinct and interpretable topics, avoiding the redundancy often found with higher k -values and the overly broad categories associated with lower k -values.

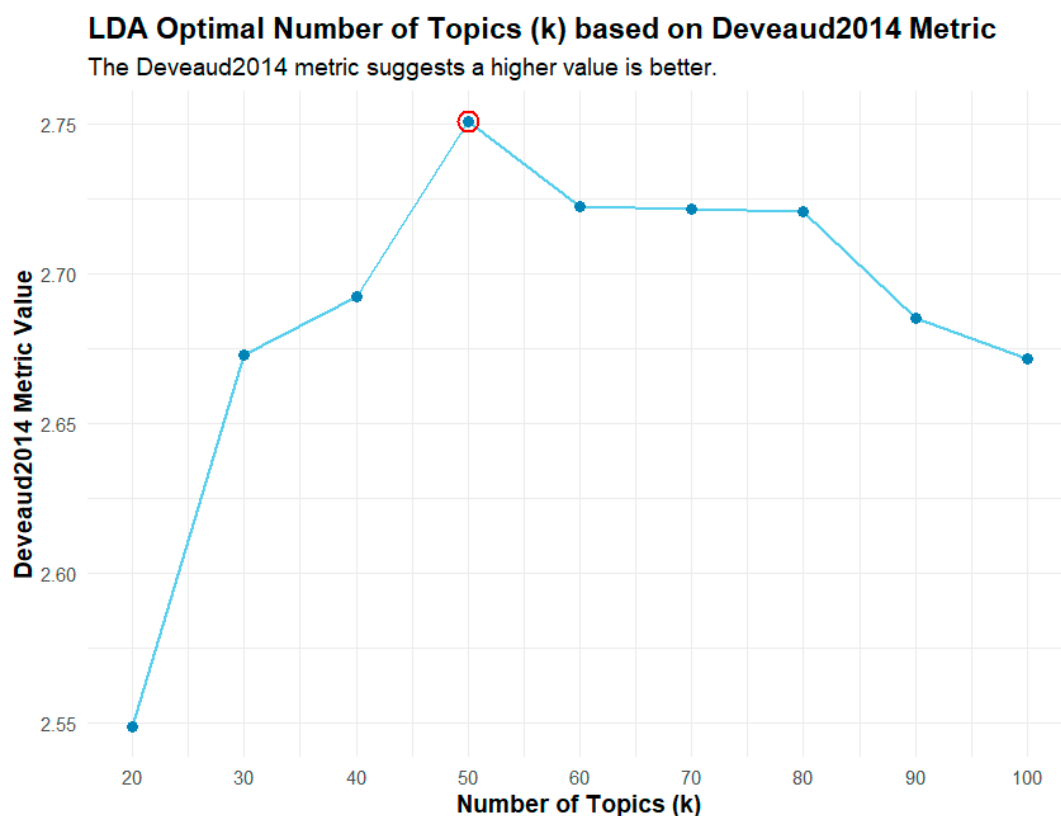


Figure A1. LDA Optimal Number of Topics (k) based on the Deveaud2014 Metric.

The graph shows that the Deveaud2014 coherence metric is maximized at $k = 50$, supporting this as the optimal number of topics for the given corpus.

To provide a concrete example of the LDA model's output, the table below presents a selection of 10 illustrative topics out of the 50 identified. For each topic, we list the top 10 most probable keywords. This table demonstrates the model's ability to capture distinct and coherent themes within the Kickstarter project corpus, ranging from specific technologies (e.g., Mobile Technology, Audio/Speakers) to business concepts (e.g., Funding/Costs, Business/Services) and even non-English languages.

Table A1. Illustrative Sample of LDA Topics and Top Keywords.

Rank	Topic ID	Prevalence	Top Words
1	49	0.0299	dont, really, weve, things, youre, youll, thats, going, something, right, lot, good, think. . .
2	38	0.0276	idea, started, wanted, find, something, decided, found, came, day, problem, good, lot. . .
3	12	0.0276	website, social, platform, media, site, content, online, facebook, live, page, find, search. . .
4	41	0.0256	money, funding, funds, cost, costs, website, plan, raise, year, amount, pay, future. . .
5	48	0.0254	prototype, manufacturing, testing, final, prototypes, ready, test, components, order, tested. . .
6	9	0.0252	business, platform, service, services, online, marketing, companies, job, company, businesses. . .
7	5	0.0252	may, however, possible, must, due, number, example, means, problem, order, often. . .
8	50	0.0248	're, 've, 'll, don't, tech, never, always, bring, perfect, ready, ever, love, right. . .
9	16	0.0244	provide, performance, user, market, solution, developed, provides, innovative, industry, solutions. . .
10	39	0.0241	community, local, event, events, travel, city, public, members, access, change, organizations. . .
11	19	0.0240	arduino, raspberry, hardware, module, boards, projects, shield, open, pins, source, compatible. . .
12	32	0.0234	charging, charge, cable, pro, charger, wireless, port, portable, fast, usbc, cables, iphone. . .
13	30	0.0228	students, school, learning, education, learn, science, skills, student, program, schools. . .
14	40	0.0226	weight, case, aluminum, magnetic, surface, stand, top, hold, size, holder, side, mount. . .
15	7	0.0223	circuit, voltage, kit, output, supply, components, controller, input, pcb, current, boards. . .
16	35	0.0223	open, code, source, web, application, developers, applications, api, developer, tools, version. . .
17	31	0.0210	delivery, receive, may, ship, order, add, price, additional, countries, note, country, send. . .
18	33	0.0208	sleep, health, body, training, fitness, heart, medical, rate, activity, exercise, day. . .
19	37	0.0206	user, add, text, file, images, feature, image, tool, page, version, application, files. . .
20	6	0.0199	engineering, university, company, engineer, business, worked, industry, founder, research. . .
21	18	0.0197	mobile, android, smartphone, bluetooth, ios, apps, iphone, phones, via, tablet, gps, google. . .
22	44	0.0195	robot, kit, robots, robotics, programming, kits, fun, parts, electronics, motors, robotic. . .
23	22	0.0195	camera, cameras, lens, capture, photos, image, film, videos, mount, photo, photography. . .
24	43	0.0194	bag, pocket, wear, body, heat, fabric, comfort, size, comfortable, fit, materials, cold. . .
25	24	0.0192	internet, network, access, cloud, security, secure, user, information, email, service, server. . .
26	15	0.0192	kids, children, family, child, parents, friends, fun, love, story, loved, play, age, little. . .
27	3	0.0191	air, clean, filter, mask, cleaning, face, skin, filters, water, masks, protection, hair. . .
28	45	0.0191	learn, course, book, language, learning, programming, online, python, books, languages, words. . .
29	20	0.0188	led, color, lights, lighting, mode, leds, button, clock, red, colors, blue, display, white. . .
30	28	0.0188	machine, laser, parts, cnc, tool, cut, machines, cutting, materials, tools, printer, printing. . .
31	14	0.0187	research, brain, information, human, based, vision, analysis, results, intelligence, focus. . .
32	34	0.0186	remote, alarm, door, security, alert, button, room, emergency, lock, house, turn, wifi. . .
33	47	0.0184	art, creative, artists, paper, limited, unique, digital, original, special, pen, edition. . .
34	36	0.0181	audio, speaker, speakers, bluetooth, stereo, digital, amplifier, play, volume, output. . .
35	25	0.0180	screen, keyboard, virtual, touch, mouse, key, reality, display, switch, keys, gaming, hand. . .
36	42	0.0180	watch, black, case, band, ring, wallet, color, colors, look, leather, wrist, style, apple
37	10	0.0178	audio, headphones, voice, noise, ear, earbuds, bluetooth, wireless, hear, listening, hearing. . .
38	23	0.0176	guitar, midi, instrument, play, effects, sounds, instruments, audio, musical, musicians. . .

Table A1. *Cont.*

Rank	Topic ID	Prevalence	Top Words
39	11	0.0174	energy, solar, batteries, panel, cell, heat, charge, panels, electricity, temperature, hours. . .
40	27	0.0171	sensor, sensors, temperature, monitor, measure, motion, range, weather, accurate, monitoring. . .
41	8	0.0168	car, bike, ride, vehicle, electric, road, speed, driving, safety, helmet, cars, riding. . .
42	13	0.0168	computer, card, mini, drive, storage, hardware, case, memory, windows, files, operating. . .
43	46	0.0168	space, launch, earth, mission, rocket, satellite, science, star, moon, research, exploration. . .
44	17	0.0161	drone, flight, fly, flying, aircraft, drones, pilot, ground, air, speed, aerial, engine. . .
45	21	0.0158	food, pet, coffee, dog, pets, cat, bottle, beer, dogs, cooking, drink, cats, animal, cup. . .
46	1	0.0152	water, plants, pump, plant, grow, garden, pool, underwater, tank, fish, tree, shower. . .
47	2	0.0144	game, games, play, players, sports, gaming, per, playing, ball, player, golf, fun, arcade. . .
48	4	0.0139	que, para, los, con, una, las, del, por, como, más, este, proyecto, esta, todo, nos, sin
49	29	0.0119	les, des, pour, une, vous, est, nous, plus, sur, que, dans, qui, votre, avec, par
50	26	0.0109	und, die, der, mit, das, für, ist, wir, den, von, auf, ein, eine, werden, sie

Appendix B. Supplementary Regression Tables

Table A2. OLS Regressions Predicting Foreign Backer Country Count.

Variables	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model
IOE Keyword Count (log, std.)	0.1245 *** (0.0224)	0.0922 *** (0.0205)	0.1329 *** (0.0230)	0.1710 *** (0.0364)	0.0881 *** (0.0204)
Genre Atypicality (std.)		0.2944 *** (0.0425)	0.2617 *** (0.0440)	0.2947 *** (0.0426)	0.3050 *** (0.0441)
IOE Keyword Count (log, std.) × Genre Atypicality (std., interaction)			−0.1976 *** (0.0427)		
IOE Keyword Count ² (log, std.)				−0.0430 † (0.0203)	
Genre Atypicality ² (std.)					−0.0246 (0.0150)
Creator Experience (launched projects, log, std.)	0.0507 * (0.0174)	0.0448 * (0.0163)	0.0449 * (0.0165)	0.0446 * (0.0162)	0.0447 * (0.0162)
Funding Goal (log, std.)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)	−0.0000 (0.0000)
Campaign Duration (days, std.)	0.0008 (0.0027)	0.0004 (0.0026)	0.0007 (0.0026)	0.0005 (0.0026)	0.0005 (0.0026)
Number of Images (log, std.)	0.0424 *** (0.0051)	0.0398 *** (0.0047)	0.0399 *** (0.0047)	0.0396 *** (0.0047)	0.0397 *** (0.0047)
Number of Videos (log, std.)	0.0301. (0.0153)	0.0246 (0.0156)	0.0256 (0.0153)	0.0253 (0.0157)	0.0246 (0.0156)
Staff Pick (dummy)	1.4993 *** (0.3460)	1.4764 *** (0.3451)	1.4639 ** (0.3445)	1.4725 ** (0.3444)	1.4702 ** (0.3444)
Facebook Connected (dummy)	−0.0426 (0.0819)	−0.0452 (0.0806)	−0.0452 (0.0789)	−0.0469 (0.0804)	−0.0450 (0.0807)
Model Statistics					
Observations	17,084	17,084	17,084	17,084	17,084
Within R ²	0.127545	0.136138	0.138346	0.136578	0.136346
Fixed Effects (Project Category, Creator Country, Year)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

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