

# **Communication of co-creational efforts to non-participants: mechanisms and conditions impacting their affective reactions and brand relationship.**

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## **1. Introduction**

In a context of recent technology development, like web 2.0, user-generated content and mobile scholars and practitioners alike now increasingly refer to the “Empowered Consumer”, i.e. the highly informed consumer, willing to have a greater role in exchanges with companies, to promote products/services and brands to other consumers as well as to be more active to share opinions explicitly. According to an InSites Consulting recent global study (2012), eighty percent of the consumers surveyed even declare they would be willing to help brands they like in shaping their product offering and half of them explicitly expects their brands to solicit them on social networks for co-creating new products and services.

Besides, more and more firms develop various tools and platforms allowing them reach a larger number of consumers and engage with them into interactive and dialog-based relationships (Payne, Storbacka, Frow *et al.*, 2009) as well as into initiatives for idea generation for new products or advertisements, for instance. Threadless, McDonald’s, PepsiCo, Danone and Starbucks are examples of firms that have recently developed strategies to massively empower their customers in their new product development (NPD). Those Customer Empowerment Strategies (CES), as so-called by Fuchs and Schreier (2011), allow consumers’ participation in the firm’s new product development process. A famous example is Mystarbucksidea.com, an online permanent platform where everyone can help co-shape the future of Starbucks, by sharing ideas and voting on those they like best (Ramaswamy, 2009).

Research on innovation challenges and platforms has mostly focused so far on customers actively participating to those customer empowerment strategies. Yet, another influential and bigger group might be studied: the brand audience as a whole, not participating to the initiatives. In 2011, Fuchs and Schreier pioneered empirical research with focus on those non-participants. They showed that labelling innovation as being designed/selected by consumers has a positive impact on perceptions related to customer orientation, attitudes toward the brand and behavioural intentions. This group will constitute the focus of this doctoral research

Given the growing keen interest and the apparent success of consumer empowerment strategies (CES), one might conclude that firms can always expect positive impacts when labelling innovation as user-designed/selected. One can thus expect a growing number of these initiatives and more and more brands, like Lacoste or Lay's, that advertise their efforts to their broader target audience. Unilever has for instance declared that, through its new hub to centrally organize all customer empowerment briefs, they target increase the effective use of customer-generated ideas tenfold by 2020<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, marketers need to understand that developing such innovation challenges and mediatizing them may actually be risky for the brand's reputation among the brand audience, not-participating to the CES developed. Other recent quantitative studies highlighted indeed that effects may actually be less positive, for instance in the case of luxury fashion industry (Fuchs, Prandelli, Schreier *et al.*, 2013) and for technological brands (Meissner, Haurand and Stummer, 2015). But those recent studies only brought ad hoc conclusions, with matter to different product categories (Fuchs *et al.*, 2013) or to the level of perceived product complexity (Schreier, Fuchs and Dahl, 2012; Meissner *et al.*, 2015). Besides, in a current context of greater general suspicion toward brands, a thorough understanding about the circumstances under which these (negative) effects occur is needed (Fuchs and Schreier, 2011; Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic *et al.*, 2010; Ind, Iglesias and Schultz, 2013). Our ambition with this doctoral research is therefore to move beyond the "what" and understand why observing, heterogeneous and non-participating individuals would basically mind about customer empowerment strategies put in place and communicated by brands. How do they react as well as when and how it influences the relationship they have with a brand is part of this research too. In so doing, we will develop a thorough understanding about "how" and "when" non-participants' unwanted reactions may occur and we will identify the impacts on their brand relationship, so that we can ultimately tell if it always judicious to communicate about CES.

This dissertation will be organized around a minimum of three essays. The qualitative approach we first used sheds light on the unexpected and unwanted reactions from non-participants toward brand's co-creation activities for NPD. Using gift-giving as a metaphor, we provide a thorough understanding of those reactions and, extending Sherry's (1983) framework, we propose a single and generalizable theory able to explain, both for participants and non-participants, the mechanism under which affective reactions and brand relationship

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2015/15-02-26-Unilever-launches-crowdsourcing-initiative-to-drive-sustainable-growth-ambition.html>, retrieved on 18/05/2015.

reformulation occur. In a second paper, we study the conditions of CES effectiveness to the non-participating brand audience. More specifically, we examine the potential reasons for non-participants to be sceptical and their impacts on perceived empowerment and on their brand relationship. We suggest that brand trust is a crucial concept when developing and communicating CES, especially in the current context of greater general suspicion toward brands. More specifically, through a set of four studies with experimental designs, we intend to highlight the central roles and interactions of brand trust as well as of initial brand relationship in driving non-participants' brand evaluations, both for fictive and well-known brands.

Finally, in a third paper, we start from the ascertainment that brands advertising their CES do not adopt the same communication strategy, for instance about the winner featuring. Besides, building on results from our qualitative research and theoretically from the non-participants' identification with participants (Lebra, 1975) in triadic reciprocity, we first start by focusing on featuring the winner. We intend to show that the winner's personification might not always be a good communication strategy for brands in case of perceived dissimilarity and, contrary to previous research, of too high expertise perceived. Then, we'll also explore other factors that have an impact on non-participants' perceived empowerment in terms of advertising execution and will study the effectiveness of the different communication strategies.

Overall, our findings will contribute to an emerging stream of research on the solicitation of different types of consumers' input for new product development. We also will extent previous work on consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998) by investigating why, when and how consumers react to brands that solicit input from other, participating, consumers. From a managerial perspective, this dissertation aims at providing companies with an understanding of the mechanisms and conditions influencing their target audience's affective reactions and impact on the brand relationship when they choose to advertise their customer empowerment strategy. Thanks to a focus on the unwanted, negative effects, we will be able to provide them with insights helping them to decide if it's really valuable to advertise their CES and how to best benefit from it and by leveraging which factors, in order to avoid consumers' scepticism and consequently damaged relationship with their brand.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

### **2.1 Customer Empowerment Strategies**

Empowerment is a concept that has already been applied in various contexts, from political studies to research in information systems. For Zimmerman (1995), empowerment is "*the process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over issues of concern*".

Nowadays, empowerment may also be applied to customers. “Customer Empowerment Strategies (CES)” are defined by Fuchs and Schreier (2011) as “*the democratization of innovation by empowering customers to take a much more active stake in corporate NPD*”. For them, the different types of CES for new products include (1) full empowerment, (2) empowerment to create (ideas for) new product designs; and (3) empowerment to vote for the products to be marketed. The “*full empowerment*” scenario are situations in which the product is produced entirely by the customer, with no participation by the firm or its employees, like at Threadless. An illustrative example of “*empowerment-to-create*” refers to the innovation contests organized by Lay’s, where consumers are invited to generate ideas for a new flavour. In a second stage, after a jury-edited shortlist, consumers are invited to vote for their preferred flavour, which is “*empowerment-to-select*”. The flavour gathering the biggest amount of votes is then produced as a limited edition.

## **2.2 Customer Empowerment Strategies and the Non-Participating Consumers**

CES-related research has mostly focused so far on consumers actively participating. Among the participants, one can distinguish two sub-groups: active versus passive participants. The latter are present on the platforms but rather as internal observers, do not to affect the performances (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), have no role in decision-making (Reniou, 2009) and/or in creating the performance or event that yields the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Inversely, active participants are present on the platforms and do submit or select ideas. But another bigger group can also be studied: the brand audience as a whole, not participating to the initiatives. They will be our scope for this PhD research.

In 2011, Fuchs and Schreier pioneered empirical research with focus on the broader set of consumers not participating to CES for new product development, instead of on the participants themselves. They showed that non-participants are sensitive to knowing that their brand appeals to user-design approach for their NPD. Labelling innovation as user-designed has a positive impact on perceptions related to customer orientation. Since, literature is burgeoning but still remains scarce. In 2012, Schreier *et al.* showed that customer empowerment enhances consumers’ perception of innovation ability in low-tech domains. Number argument, background diversity argument, actual user argument and lack of company constraints all contribute to building positive perceptions. Then, Dahl *et al.* (2014) showed through within-subject experiments that, in the case of cereals, software and t-shirts, a firm’s market philosophy (being user-driven versus being designer-driven) may have a positive and indirect impact on brand preference, through the influence of identification with the firm. This effect was

attenuated if the user-driven firm is selective rather than fully open to participation from all users and when non-participants felt dissimilar in terms of gender compared to firm's majority of consumers/community. At last, other scholars investigated the special cases of luxury fashion industry (Fuchs *et al.*, 2013) and technological brands (Meissner *et al.*, 2015) and demonstrated that consumer-design can have negative effects on behavioural intentions. First, Fuchs *et al.* (2013) highlighted that consumer demand is reduced in the context of luxury fashion brands if the product is labelled as user-designed. This would be due to failure to signal high status. Then, Meissner *et al.* (2015) highlight a direct effect of consumer empowerment on behavioural intentions for a technology brand (Nokia) is negative. Empowerment-to-select is the only scenario found to significantly increase non-participating consumers' behavioural intentions while empowerment to create and full empowerment never had significant positive impact. Thus, for technology brands, caution is required and results suggest that consumers should only be empowered at the rather end of the NPD process (concepts to be designed by the company).

### **2.3 Communication of Customer Empowerment Strategies**

Scholars also provided strong evidence in favour of the incorporation of the customer empowerment in a marketing strategy. Yet, scarce existing research connecting CES, communication and persuasion (Thompson and Malaviya, 2013) discusses how consumer-created advertisements are evaluated versus ads created by professional firms. In that specific context, disclosing user-created ad triggers either scepticism about the competence of the ad creator either identification with the ad creator. Under certain circumstances, attributing an ad message to a consumer can even hinder persuasion, decreasing ad and brand evaluations.

## **3. Methodology and key findings**

### **3.1 Paper 1: Non-participants' growing expectations and triadic gift system.**

Given the keen growing interest in CES and the context of greater general suspicion toward brands, we need a thorough understanding about the circumstances under which (negative) brand audience's reactions occur (Fuchs and Schreier, 2011; Hoyer *et al.*, 2010; Ind *et al.*, 2013). In this first paper, we aim at addressing that call, by adopting a qualitative approach. We highlight here the unexpected and unwanted reactions of non-participants after exposure to CES-related messages. Using gift-giving and reciprocity theory, we provide a thorough understanding of those reactions, as well as a single and generalized theory able to explain the mechanisms behind, both for participants and non-participants.

We conducted three focus groups (five to nine participants, 60% female – 40% male, 2h-duration/group) and interviewed twelve participants (60% female – 40% male, duration: 45-120 minutes). Respondents were aged between twenty and sixty-eight years old, with variety in professional categories, education fields and lifestyle. Data were collected by using semi-directive discussions, on the basis of a guide, made of broad and open-ended questions. Focus groups allow group members to react to and to build upon each other's responses and also allow engage the participants in active comparisons of their opinions and experiences (Morgan, 1997). Individual interviews allow discover depth realities, different from surface appearance and overcome the group effect (Malhotra, 2010). Combining the two allow to overcome disadvantages from each method taken independently. After integrally transcribing the materials collected (the final corpus is about 104.000 words long), we break the transcripts into basic nodes issued from key themes of the interview guide and integrate the new themes emerging from the data. Then, theory emerges from the saturated data, on the principle of constant comparison, i.e. by systematically confronting open coding results to literature (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013).

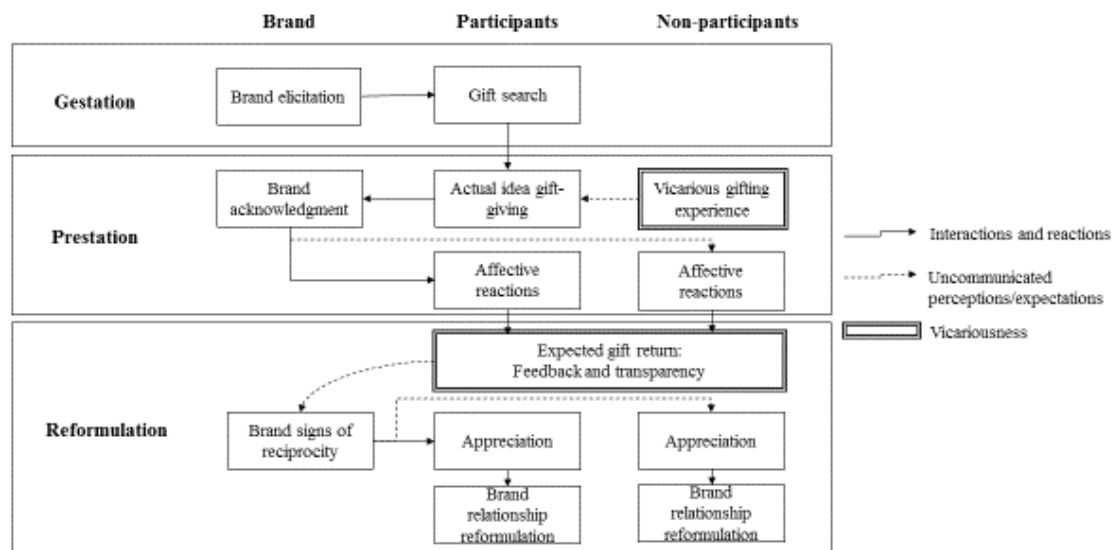
Our findings reveal that non-participants develop expectations after exposure to CES-related communications from the brands. They consistently report that non-participants want to ensure that the empowering brands listened to the participants, respecting their voice and their ideas. The verbatim collected explicitly reflect that the respondents expect tangible proofs of this from the brand, namely feedback about the ideas submitted, transparency regarding the rules and the process and finally, concrete changes in the brand offering. To explain these reactions, we mobilize gift-giving and reciprocity theories and more specifically, Sherry's (1983) model of dyadic gift-giving behaviour and Lebra's (1975) triadization of reciprocity. First, in the co-creation literature, we find that after giving their ideas, the participants need to feel that they've been listened by the brand and that they are taken seriously (Ind *et al.*, 2013). Fair reciprocity, expressed by transparency and feedback is key to achieve this. Transparency facilitates collaborative dialogue (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) between the brands and the participants and allows set up the rules of the game. Feedback is key for them to feel they are valued (Füller, 2010; Ind *et al.*, 2013; Nambisan and Baron, 2009). That is, we suggest that the brand explicitly elicits the idea generation thereby initiating a gift system (Giesler, 2006). Sherry defines a gift as “*virtually, any resource, whether tangible or intangible, can be transformed into a gift*”, (1983; p. 160) and in turn, we propose to see participants' ideas as actual gifts they offer to the brand. Relying on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) we see feedback and transparency as the symbolic gift return participants explicitly expect from the

brand. Their gift return appreciation will result into a relationship reformulation (Sherry, 1983; Ruth, Otnes and Brunel, 1999) with the brand. Doing that, we suggest another, new situation of gift exchange between a corporate recipient and an individual donor: the now popular CES initiated by firms. These are characterized by consumers' expectations of balanced reciprocity in exchange whereas so far, commercial exchanges have usually been imbued either by generalized reciprocity (e.g. charity-giving) or by negative reciprocity (e.g. exchanges, aimed at making profit) (Sahlins, 1974; Akerlof, 1982; Marcoux, 2009). In order to include the non-participants, we extend this dyadic gift system to a triad (Giesler 2006; Lebra 1975). Lebra (1975) describes seven cases of triadic reciprocity, among which the "triadic sanction". Here, non-participants may be seen as the "*vicarious participants [sanctioning] the dyadic reciprocity between A and B*" (p. 77). In the triadic sanction, A reciprocates B in expectations of, or in sanction by C, endorsing the role of judge/audience. The brand's gift return can be converted into "reputation" and his hoarding and exploitation into "gossip" among the brand audience, she says. That is, we loop and propose that observing consumers, who made no gift to the brand themselves, may feel vicariously empowered. This explains their growing expectations toward the brand, like participants. In addition, Lebra (1975) specifies that the level of identification with the participants, contributes to the non-participants' appreciation toward the brand.

To encapsulate our findings and logic, we build on Sherry's (1983) model of gift-giving behavior, consisting of three stages of dyadic exchanges, and extend it to a triad including the non-participants. The first stage is the gestation that incorporates all the antecedents to the actual gift exchange, including the potential recipient's elicitation, the donor's and recipient's motives and the actual gift search. Then comes the prestation stage, where the actual gift exchange occurs. From the donor's perspective, this stage is characterized by giving the gift, receiving a donor's response and evaluating it, according to intentions and goals (Sherry, 1983). This will lead to affective reactions, going from satisfaction to disappointment and will influence behaviours in the next stage. Eventually comes the reformulation stage where the donor pays attention at the disposition of the gift, whether it is consumed, displayed or stored by the recipient. Role reversal in the gift exchange, with recipient becoming the donor and reciprocal behaviour will then become the key tool through which the relationship between the donor and the recipient is realigned (Sherry, 1983). We extend this model to a triad, as shown in Figure 1, and suggest that non-participants also go through the prestation and reformulation stages by virtue of vicariousness, which their own perceptions in the two stages.

This research advances extant literature in two main ways. First, our study reveals that non-participants get the same expectations as participants, i.e. fair reciprocity in exchanges. Second,

using gift-giving as a metaphor, we extend Sherry’s (1983) model and develop a single theory to explain, both for participants and non-participants, the circumstances under which affective reactions and brand relationship reformulation may occur. We also contribute to the gift-giving literature by suggesting a new type of exchange between individual donors and corporate recipients: the co-creational exchanges, characterized by balanced reciprocity. Fair exchanges, representing new consumers’ expectations toward the brand (Ind et al., 2013) have already materialized and therefore are to be included in the repertoire of the individual donor/corporate recipient gift-giving exchanges. With this research, we also show to managers that communicating CES may result into unwanted brand audience’s appreciations. We suggest them that CES should then be seen as a gift system and that the norms characterizing it should be fulfilled in order to avoid negative reactions. Practically, the respect and the publicity of the consumer-brand fair reciprocity are critical, both for participants and non-participants.



**Figure 1: Triadic gift-giving framework in a CES context.**

### **3.2 Paper 2: Conditions of effectiveness to influence non-participants’ brand relationship – A matter of trust.**

Our qualitative research taught us that non-participants may be sceptical and expect brand reciprocity, which they assess through perceived feedback and transparency, like participants. Underlying the norm of reciprocity is the agreement in trust that accepting a gift implies to repay at a later date (Joy, 2001). Reciprocity is therefore an echo of trust from the party that was trusted (Kanagaretnam, Mestelman, Nainar *et al.*, 2010), i.e. here the brand receiving the gifted idea. Trust also constitutes the main ingredient of a long-term relationship between consumers and companies (Morgan and Hunt 1994). In Paper 2, we link non-participants’ expectations of reciprocity with brand trust, suggesting that the latter is also a central concept



in CES-related communication, especially in the current context of greater general suspicion toward brands. Through a set of four studies, we intend to show the central roles of perceived brand trust in driving non-participants' brand evaluations and to shed light on an important boundary condition: their initial relationship with the empowering brand. Trust relates to brands acting with the customers' best interest in mind (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić *et al.*, 2011); trust exists when one exchange partner believes in the other's reliability and integrity (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Scholars showed that perceived empowerment helps foster brand trust (Füller *et al.* 2009), if participants are simultaneously provided with the needed resources (Tzafrir, Baruch, and Dolan 2004). Fostering trust may be hard in case of information asymmetry. Decreasing information asymmetry may result in increased trust. Thus, one way brands can make their customers trust them is to give them the necessary information (Gefen, Karahanna and Straub, 2003), namely here feedback and transparency (Ind *et al.*, 2013). If the organization fails to be transparent about the rules, to listen and to give feedback, participants quickly become irritated. Drawing on non-participant's capacity to vicariously feel empowerment even if they did not participate themselves (Dahl, Fuchs and Schreier, 2014), we postulate that a message highlighting that a brand gave feedback and was transparent all along the process improves non-participants' perceived empowerment (H1). And in turn, (H2) feedback and transparency in CES-communication fosters non-participants' trust in the empowering brand through the indirect and positive influence of perceived empowerment. As trust is reassessed over time, through assessment of previous encounters (Mayer and Davis 1999), we suggest that for well-known brands, brand trust is a moderator. In case of low brand trust, acquired through previous encounters with the brand, non-participants perceive lower empowerment from the brand (H3).

We find support for our hypotheses H1 and H2 in Study 1. In a simple experiment, participants were randomly shown three new product development scenarios for a fictive brand making domestic appliances (here an alarm clock): empowerment with feedback/transparency (CES-FT), empowerment with no feedback/transparency (CES-NOFT) and no empowerment (CONTROL). Perceived empowerment ( $\alpha=0.941$ ) and brand trust ( $\alpha=0.910$ ) were measured on seven-item existing scales (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings *et al.*, 1989; Mayer and Davis, 1999). The final dataset consists of answers from 213 respondents (54% female-46% male, aged 33 years average). Results support H1: non-participants significantly perceive higher empowerment in the CES-FT condition ( $M_{CES-FT}=4.99$ ) than in both other conditions ( $M_{CES-NOFT}=3.96$ ,  $p_{CES-FT}<0.001$  and  $M_{CONTROL}=3.68$ ,  $p_{CES-FT}<0.001$ ). There is no difference in perceived empowerment between the no-empowerment condition and the empowerment

condition with no feedback/transparency ( $p=0.52$ ). Regarding H2 and using Hayes macro (2013, PROCESS Model 4), with 5000 bootstrap and percentile confidence interval estimates, we confirm the mediating role of perceived empowerment in the relation between CES and brand trust, only when comparing the empowerment with feedback/transparency condition to no-empowerment condition. Non-participants start developing brand trust via the stronger empowerment perceived only when a brand publicly gives feedback and cues transparency.

In a second experimental study, we manipulate brand trust, using well-known high-rotation food brands: famous with low reliability expected (BLoR), famous with higher reliability intended (BHiR) and existing but unknown brand, with neutral perceived reliability intended (BNeR). First, each randomly allocated respondent saw one of the three brand logos. After a few questions about it, he/she receives the treatment. We used identical online press article layouts for all groups, with brand name and brand picture as sole differences. Content informed about a brand's customer empowerment strategy and included feedback and transparency cues. Initial brand trust ( $\alpha=0.883$ ) and perceived empowerment ( $\alpha=0.915$ ) and were again measured on 7-item existing scales. The final dataset consists of 2471 respondents (58,8% female - 41,2% male, aged 38,2 years average). Main effects on perceived empowerment are significant:  $F(2,2374)=17.87$  ( $p<0.001$ ).  $M_{BLoR}$  is significantly lower than each other two means ( $p<0.001$ ); there is no significant differences between  $M_{BHiR}$  and  $M_{BNeR}$  ( $p=1.00$ ). After finding a significant interaction between brand and initial trust on perceived empowerment, we run a floodlight analysis using Johnson-Neyman technique. For individuals with initial brand trust inferior to 4.03 ( $\beta=-0.11$ ;  $s.e.=0.06$ ;  $p=0.05$ ), the effect of the brand on perceived empowerment is significant and negative: individuals perceive lower empowerment from the famous food brand with low reliability than for the famous brand with higher reliability. This effect is not significant when brand trust is  $>4.03$ . 70.8% of the respondents have moderator value below that significance threshold and 29.2% of respondents above. These support H3. A third study, still to be conducted, will aim at showing the interactions between feedback/transparency and brand trust on well-known brands. Our hypothesis is that the positive effect of feedback and transparency on perceived empowerment is lost when non-participants perceive the (well-known) brand as with low brand trust. We plan to manipulate brand trust and feedback/transparency with a well-known brand, through a between-subject 2 (brand trust: low vs high) x 3 (feedback/transparency, no feedback/no transparency, control) experiment.

At last, we will complete our research, with a fourth study, where we will show the moderating effect of initial brand relationship. Individuals' relationships with the market are usually characterized at first by suspicion and exploitation (Sahlins, 1974). Actually, the less

closely related the people involved in an exchange are, the more the obligation to reciprocate tends to increase and the more the time period for reciprocating tends to diminish (Marcoux, 2009). Following the logic behind this continuum of estrangement, our hypothesis is that failure from giving feedback and being transparent has more negative effects on perceived empowerment when the non-participating targeted audience is actually still non-users of the brand.

This research offers noteworthy theoretical insights and practical implications. First, literature is still scarce about the CES impacts and mechanisms in case of well-known brands and conclusions remain category-related (Meissner *et al.*, 2015; Fuchs *et al.*, 2013). Our research shows that initiating and communicating customer empowerment may help foster brand trust, if the brand publicly shows they gave feedback and observed transparency all along the process. Our result, suggesting that initial brand trust modulates empowerment, allow us alert managers that communicating CES to non-participants may not be a good strategy if they suspect issues with their brand audience's trust. We also want to alert managers on the importance of giving feedback and being transparent afterwards to the brand audience, who are also non-users yet.

### **3.3 Paper 3: Exploring CES-related communication strategies and their moderating role on perceived empowerment and on brand relationship.**

Numerous brands already started massively advertising their CES but they did not adopt the same communication strategy. Lay's and Danette featured the winner in their advertisements, even promoting his/her name, picture, provenance, age, background details, and so on. Others, like Starbucks and Dell do not at all but focus instead on the permanency and number of inputs of their platforms. From there, this third paper will explore factors that have an impact on non-participants' perceived empowerment in terms of advertising execution. It will also study the effectiveness of the different communication strategies. We first start by focusing on featuring the winner. Indeed, from our qualitative research, we noticed that non-participants' reactions toward the CES-winner personified in the brand communication might be negative when his/her profile was seen as somewhat more special than lambda consumers like themselves, in terms of his/her job in creative sectors, for instance. From this, we induce that featuring the winner may also be risky though and we suggest that the winner's personification might not always be a good communication strategy for brands. Our two main hypothesis here are that first, the featured winner's lifestyle, attitudes and beliefs, and more specifically, his/her perceived dissimilarity with non-participants, lowers identification and therefore deters perceived

empowerment. Second, perceived winner's special expertise may also have negative impacts. Through experimental designs, we aim here at empirically showing the moderating roles of advertising execution, e.g. the winner's personification in a CES-communication context. We also contradict previous findings (Thompson and Malaviya, 2013) and show that perceived expertise of the winner may actually deter the persuasiveness of the ad. Answering the question related to the judiciousness of featuring the CES winner will help brands effectively increase (or avoid to damage) the non-participants' perceived empowerment and in turn, affective reactions and the brand relationship. But our qualitative research was also rich in results regarding differences of perceptions according to the type of empowerment (i.e. to select, to create vs full) communicated, as well as to the permanent/temporary platforms. These results have not been touched yet in other research. Other studies might then be conducted to strengthen the current contributions of this paper.

#### **4. Status and next steps**

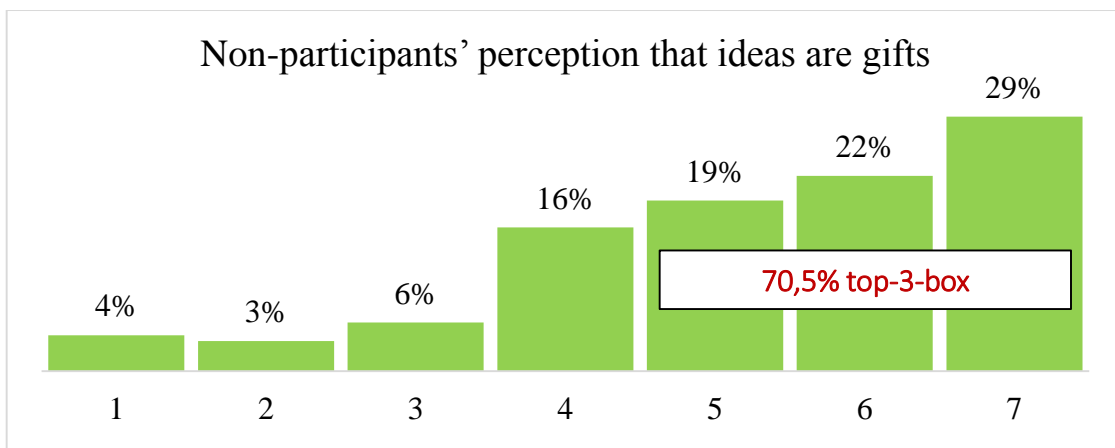
At this stage, key questions are related to articulation into papers. The paper 1 is a qualitative paper, with results coming from field observation. Confronting our key finding to literature allowed the emergence of a solid conceptual framework based on gift-giving and reciprocity theories and extended to a triad to include non-participants. How to present the paper? How sufficient and well-presented is the contribution? Paper 2 examines CES-effectiveness conditions, linking reciprocity expected and brand trust. Is the conceptual framework developed here sufficiently justified theoretically? Do you agree with the content of the different studies and about their articulation to tell a compelling story? We will only rely on experiments; using different methods would be an asset to strengthen the paper. What type of actual data should we try to get to make the story more powerful? For paper 3, we wonder how to be really truly original when tackling winner's presentation. Source attractiveness (Wilson and Sherrell, 1993; Erdogan, 1999) and social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) have already been mobilized in slightly different contexts: Thompson and Malaviya (2013) used ad-creator's background information (e.g. students) in their user-created ad research; Dahl *et al.* (2014) tested the moderating effect of the predominant gender of the firm's active community. Would there be another conceptual framework to use? Besides, during our focus groups, we asked respondents to make collages about their mental representation of the winner. The participants were expected to be very much stereotyped, which decreased perceived similarity - until non-participants saw the real winner. Could this result be further exploited? Any suggestion about how?

## 5. Appendix

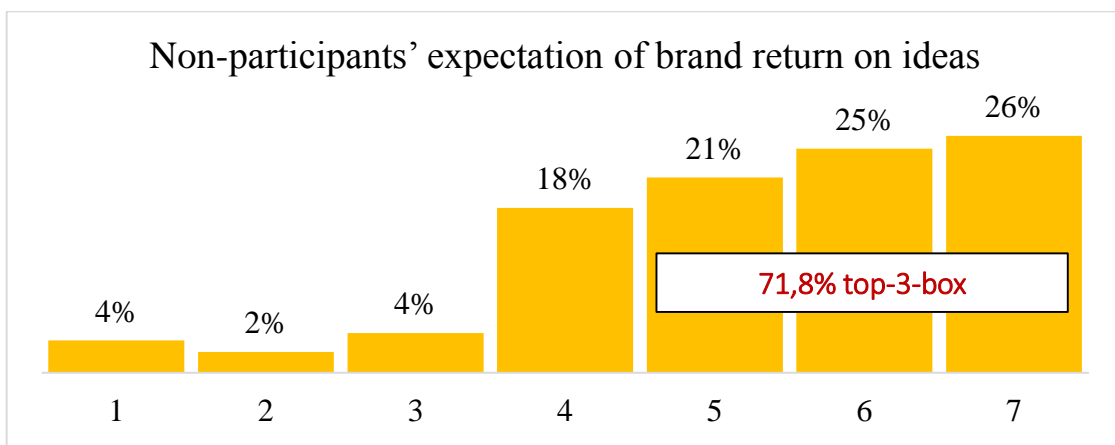
In Paper 2/ Study 2, we took the opportunity of the experiment to also survey non-participants about their perception of participants gifting their ideas to the brand. Our goal was to have some quantitative reassurance about the theory we developed in Paper 1. 70.5% does agree that the ideas submitted by participants are gift given to the brand and up to 71.8% reckons that the brand must give a return on the ideas submitted.

*(Data collected: n = 2471, 58,8% female - 41,2% male, Aged 38,2y average)*

*Q1: To which extent do you agree with the following : « The ideas submitted by consumers are gifts given to the brand » where 1 = Do not agree at all and 7 = Totally agree.*



*Q2: To which extent do you agree with the following « I reckon that the brand must give a return on the ideas submitted by consumers », where 1 = do not agree at all and 7 = totally agree*



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