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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Crowdsourcing innovation challenges: How participants react when their ideas are rejected

Cyrielle Vellera¹ | Elodie Jouny-Rivier² | Aurélie Hemonnet-Goujot³ 

¹Toulouse School of Management, Toulouse 1 University Capitole, Toulouse, France

²ESSCA School of Management, Angers, France

³IAE Aix-en-Provence, Aix en Provence, France

Correspondence

Aurélie Hemonnet-Goujot, IAE Aix-en-Provence, Aix en Provence, France.

Email: aurelie.hemonnet@iae-aix.com

Although crowdsourcing challenges as tools for generating high levels of innovation have received much attention, little research has investigated the impact on participants when their submissions are rejected. This research is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the consequences of rejection for participants' relationships with the brand engaged in the crowdsourcing activity. To investigate these issues, two quantitative studies were carried out with participants whose challenge proposals had not been selected. The results highlight positive effects on participant–brand relationships, especially on brand attachment, proselytism, brand commitment and brand loyalty. A confirmatory, interview-based qualitative study then identifies managerial perspectives and marketing strategies for brands and crowdsourcing platforms following the announcement of challenge results. This paper contributes to both the co-creation and crowdsourcing literature by extending academic knowledge and provides opportunities for further research.

KEYWORDS

brand relationship, crowdsourcing challenges for innovation, crowdsourcing platforms, participants' rejection

1 | INTRODUCTION

Dear participants, the [name of the crowdsourcing platform] team would like to thank you for your participation and your involvement in this challenge. Making a choice between the different propositions was difficult and, after a careful examination of your proposal by the jury, we are sorry to inform you that your proposition has not been chosen for the next step of the challenge. We know this answer will be disappointing, but we would like to thank you for your work. We hope you had fun, and we would be happy to see you again on another challenge on [name of the crowdsourcing platform].

This is a standard email response that hundreds of participants receive when they do not win a challenge on a crowdsourcing platform.

Crowdsourcing is defined as a way 'to publicly invite a large group of people to take on a task that was traditionally performed by an employee or contractor in the form of an open call' (Howe, 2008, p. 1). As an emerging topic, crowdsourcing has received much attention from scholars and practitioners. After a blanket search for articles about crowdsourcing, Ghezzi et al. (2018) found 74,000 results on Google Scholar and 972 articles in the field of social sciences and humanities, including 798 published since 2012. Moreover, an eYeka report (2015) stated that 85% of the world's most valuable brands in 2014 had used crowdsourcing in the previous 10 years.¹ A 2017 eYeka report indicated that the crowdsourcing activities of

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fast-moving consumer goods brands had grown by 40% in 2015.² Through open calls, many crowdsourcing platforms offer a way to engage users (students, professional designers, start-ups, etc.) in the generation of innovative ideas (OpenIDEO, Hyve and InnoCentive), graphic and product design (99designs and Cad Crowd) or creative challenges (eYeka, Agorize and Spigit).

Based on free participation, 'where members of the crowd compete with each other to generate the best outcome to an innovation problem' (Acar, 2019), crowdsourcing innovation challenges (also commonly called innovation contests or tournament-based crowdsourcing) are very beneficial for both the firms and participants. For example, a De Falco et al. (2017) study showed that, thanks to digital innovation platforms, companies benefit from the participants' creativity efforts and knowledge, new opportunities to create value and reduced costs. Troise et al. (2021) showed that managers of open innovation platforms (which differ from crowdsourcing platforms by the type of communities involved) must support community members in acquiring more knowledge and experience. Indeed, most of the existing studies tend to take a positive view of these innovation practices for the development of new products (Füller, 2010; Jeppesen & Lakhani, 2010; Kumar et al., 2018; Lakhani et al., 2007; Leimeister et al., 2009), and 'research has already examined how the particular characteristics of the problems, the design of the challenge, the level of competition, and the expertise of crowd members can affect the solutions generated by the crowd' (Acar, 2019). However, scholars have neglected possible downsides (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Heidenreich et al., 2015). Although participating in crowdsourcing challenges (even if based on free participation) is time-consuming and requires cognitive effort, only a small minority of the crowd—the winners—are rewarded for their commitment and outcomes.

Interacting with consumers and utilizing their creativity directly without choosing their proposal can be a risky strategy for the partners involved (such as the brand and the crowdsourcing platform). Bloodgood (2013) found that using crowdsourcing for problem-solving can be disadvantageous for crowdsourcing companies as it can create little substantive value and poorer performance in comparison with competitors. Crowdsourcing challenges also often enable the collection of a high quantity of ideas at the expense of quality. That quantity makes it difficult for managers to select the best idea (Wang et al., 2018).

Moreover, according to Gebauer et al. (2013, p. 1516), participants' disappointment at not winning a crowdsourcing challenge may 'create frustration and evoke angry reactions', which may impact behaviours toward community members, especially through negative word of mouth (WOM).

Scholars have also identified negative customer behaviour toward the brand if the customer is particularly attached to it, including brand dissatisfaction, negative WOM (Anderson, 1998; Singh, 1990), brand detachment (Heilbrunn, 2001; Perrin-Martineq, 2002) and brand boycott (Hirschman, 1970; Richins, 1987). Given the possible relationships between crowdsourcing challenges and behavioural consequences for brands, there is a

surprising scarcity of studies investigating the impact on participants of not winning (Zheng et al., 2017). In particular, and to the best of our knowledge, no studies examine the possible negative impacts on future customer–brand relationships following a negative response to a contest submission. From the mentioned literature on customer–brand relationships, it would seem that participants' disappointed by not winning a crowdsourcing contest would adopt negative behaviour (e.g., negative WOM and brand boycott) toward the brand initiating the contest.

Due to the lack of research into the possible downsides of participants' proposals being rejected in crowdsourcing contests, this study proposes investigating how brands and crowdsourcing platforms manage such participants. Thus, we ask the following questions:

- Does not winning a crowdsourcing challenge for innovation have consequences for participants' responses to the brand and the platform?
- What are the managerial recommendations for strategies for improving customer–brand relationships after competition results have been announced?

Our research is aimed at addressing these issues directly by identifying the impact of a contribution not being selected. Specifically, this study identifies unsuccessful participants' behaviour toward the brand after different stages of rejection (ideation vs. expansion stages).

This study is based on a mixed-method approach. First, a quantitative study (Study 1) built on two longitudinal surveys (a and b) deals with repeated measures before and after the ideation phase with two different crowdsourcing challenges for innovation. The goal of Study 1a (conducted with 44 participants) and Study 1b (conducted with 32 participants) is to analyse the impact of the rejection of participants' submissions on a set of variables such as brand attachment, proselytism, brand commitment, brand trust, brand loyalty and finally on the intention to diffuse positive or negative WOM about the brand. The second study was conducted with two groups of 30 participants doing the same crowdsourcing challenge whose ideas were rejected by the brand. One group was rejected at the ideation phase and the other at the expansion phase (which is the same as the development phase). The variables measured and procedures used were the same. Finally, a confirmatory qualitative study (Study 3) based on 10 semi-structured interviews was conducted to identify managerial perspectives and marketing strategies for the brand, and the crowdsourcing platforms after the results have been announced. Our studies are aimed at improving theoretical knowledge of customer–brand relationship management in crowdsourcing innovation challenges. Overall, the research analyses the consequences of rejection for the participant–brand relationship. Specifically, this research substantiates counterintuitive results by reporting the positive effects of not winning a crowdsourcing challenge.

Finally, we provide a managerial perspective on strategies for brands and crowdsourcing platforms following the announcement of challenge results.

The article is structured as follow. First, the theoretical foundations are presented, followed by the methodology and the results. A discussion is then developed covering the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future research avenues.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Crowdsourcing challenges for innovation and customer motivation

Customer motivation is one of the main antecedents of crowdsourcing challenge success (Füller, 2010; Ind & Coates, 2013). It is thus essential to understand consumers' motivations for engaging in these challenges (Dahl & Moreau, 2007). A challenge can be defined as an event where the participants compete based on a creative brief (creative writing, graphic design, label/package design, video, etc.) to win prizes. Only a small number of participants can be winners. Expectations regarding crowdsourcing challenges vary among participants due to their different motivations (Füller, 2010; Poetz & Schreier, 2012). Research shows that a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors drives users to engage in innovation communities (Salgado et al., 2020). Individual motivation can be influenced by intrinsic factors, internalized extrinsic factors or pure extrinsic factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Von Krogh et al., 2012). Intrinsic motivation consists of doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the experience. It is based on factors such as fun, kinship, altruism or curiosity (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). The internalized extrinsic motives (such as learning, gaining insights and use of one's own ideas and innovations) are known to play a substantial role in the motivation to participate in innovation challenges (Füller, 2010). Pure extrinsic motivation occurs whenever an activity is conducted to attain a separable outcome such as payment, career prospects or reputation (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

In the context of crowdsourcing, although some people seem to be primarily motivated by extrinsic rewards, others are engaged by more intrinsic rewards (Salgado & De Barnier, 2016). Füller (2010) notably identified four types of individuals' motivations (reward driven, need driven, curiosity driven and intrinsically driven). These are shown to affect the crowdsourcing challenge experience, any future participation by the entrants and the company's reputation for innovation (Salgado et al., 2020). When the experience is rewarding and the results are positive, participants are likely to want to take part in future challenges. On the contrary, failure or a bad experience alters consumer motivations and leads customers to avoid future participation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). A positive customer experience during a crowdsourcing challenge for innovation leads to an enhanced company reputation through a positive predisposition toward the sponsoring company (Salgado et al., 2020). Sponsoring companies are viewed as more customer-oriented (Fuchs et al., 2013), and a fun experience has a positive influence on an individual's overall attitude toward the company (Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004).

With those statements in mind, we can make the supposition that if the participants have a positive experience with a crowdsourcing

challenge (they win the challenge), it will positively impact the customer-brand relationship. If participants do not win a crowdsourcing contest, the overall relationships with the brand will be negatively impacted.

We now discuss the literature on the influence of crowdsourcing challenges on customer-brand relationships.

2.2 | Crowdsourcing challenges for innovation and customer-brand relationships

In addition to the impact of various motivations on a crowdsourcing experience and perceptions of the company, the literature outlines the influence of consumer-brand relationships in crowdsourcing ventures. It is thus important to examine how their relationships with brands influence consumers' motivations for and perceptions of the crowdsourcing challenge.

Building on consumer-brand relationship theory (Fournier, 1998), the literature shows that brand is a main driver of participation for intrinsically motivated consumers, besides the purpose of the crowdsourcing challenge (Hajli et al., 2017). The consequences of crowdsourcing ventures for consumer-brand relationships have also been investigated. Fournier's seminal work (1998) on consumer-brand relationships stated that people relate to brands in a similar way to how they relate to people. A positive brand relationship leads to a strong consumer attachment to the brand, with resulting higher intention to continue the relationship with and repurchase the brand. The cognitive, emotional and behavioural attachments to the brand gained by consumers through crowdsourcing challenges for innovation determine the quality of the brand relationship (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). Customer interactions with brands through crowdsourcing challenges help to develop brand relationships (Hajli et al., 2017), and consumer-brand relationships are fuelled by participants' strong commitment to and trust in the brands, thus leading to a high level of brand attachment and brand commitment (Ind et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2012). Such online brand communities foster an increasing feeling of intimacy and create the opportunity for consumers to be more active and equal partners with brands, thus bringing the parties closer together (Ind et al., 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This intimacy is also explained by brands delivering self-expressive benefits to consumers, thus helping them to define their identity and sense of self-identity (Aaker et al., 2004; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Furthermore, because consumers are part of the branding decision process, thus giving them a feeling of control, the digital co-creation experience contributes to strengthening consumer-brand relationships and brand attachment (Fuchs et al., 2013; Kull & Heath, 2016; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

However, although the literature mainly focuses on the positive outcomes of consumer-brand relationships on customer motivations in a crowdsourcing challenge, it has progressively shifted toward exploring negative brand relationships, as we discuss in the following section.

2.3 | Crowdsourcing challenges for innovation and negative customer–brand relationships

Brand misconduct is defined as any action by a company that does not meet the consumers' expectations of a brand (Huber et al., 2010). It can be classified under the following categories: (a) product quality differing from expectation, (b) lack of service orientation, (c) symbolic-psychological misconduct and (d) socially debatable actions. Brand misconduct can have substantial consequences for consumer–brand relationship quality and negatively affect consumer motivations. It can damage brand reputation and alter loyalty toward the brand (Aaker et al., 2004; Huber et al., 2009). This is especially likely for consumers with high self–brand connections; they perceive negative brand information as a personal failure and experience low self-esteem (Cheng et al., 2012). In crowdsourcing innovation challenges, rejection by a brand could be perceived as symbolic-psychological misconduct. Gebauer et al. (2013) revealed that perceived unfairness and dissatisfaction with the outcome can cause negative participant reactions, including adverse WOM. Crowdsourcing challenges for innovation may also trigger unfavourable reactions toward the brand. Dysfunctional behaviour stemming from brands and failure in crowdsourcing activities may result in negative brand perceptions, a loss of reputation and a lower level of brand loyalty (Kull & Heath, 2016). As a result of increased empowerment and the expectations of consumers in crowdsourcing challenges for innovation, negative feelings toward the brand may be strengthened, especially in cases of rejection. Alternative participant–brand relationship strategies based on participant valorization and recognition are thus required from the brand side (Hanine & Steils, 2019). However, such studies are still exploratory, and the specific impact of rejection on consumer–brand relationships during a crowdsourcing challenge for innovation has not yet been clearly identified. We now present the methods used in both the quantitative and qualitative studies, followed by their respective results.

3 | METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

To have a thorough understanding of this phenomenon and to allow for the development of a theory, a mixed-method approach was used. Qualitative and quantitative data were integrated to increase confidence in interpretation and provide strong insights (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). The research is based on three studies: two quantitative studies (Study 1a and 1b and Study 2) and one qualitative (Study 3). For the quantitative studies, the sample size is in line with the average number of participants in the innovation contests (Hemonnet-Goujot et al., 2016).

3.1 | Study 1a and Study 1b research design and results

Based on repeated measures, the purpose of Study 1a is to analyse the impact of the rejection of participants' submissions on (1) a set of

behavioural variables, such as brand attachment (Lacoeuilhe, 2000), proselytism (Cristau, 2006), brand commitment (Cissé-Depardon & N'Goala, 2009), brand trust (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002) and brand loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005) and (2) on the intention to diffuse negative WOM about the brand (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002).

The objective is to establish whether (mean) differences exist before and after the rejection announcement (ideation stage). Forty-four French undergraduate management students (16 men, 28 women, mean age 22.43 and $SD = 1.95$) participated in the study. That our sample size is composed of students is not a problem, as the target market of the competition was a population of young adults (as with the other studies). All were participants in a crowdsourcing challenge for innovation on a leading open innovation challenge platform.³ They were invited to imagine a smart and innovative sports product for one of the world's largest sporting goods retailers (crowdsourcing challenge for innovation brief: Decathlon *Les Coéquipiers* [Teammates] 2017, Season 6).⁴ All 44 students' submissions were rejected at the ideation stage. Through a repeated measures design, each subject completed a short questionnaire twice (pairs of observations), on the same scale of continuous dependent variables. A first set of measurements was made at the beginning of the challenge (immediately following the call for participation presentation, during the application phase) and a second set following the results announcement (after the voting phase of the ideation stage). Participants completed the study individually under the observation of one of the authors. Appendix A lists all the measures, and item sources applied.

To investigate the results, we performed the following analysis. A first set of *t*-tests reveals no significant difference concerning brand attachment, brand trust and brand loyalty, thus suggesting that the rejection has neither a positive nor negative impact. However, a second set of paired samples *t*-tests shows a significant difference in the proselytism variable [$t(43) = -2.877$; $p = 0.006$ ($M_{\text{Before the rejection}} = 2.78$; $M_{\text{After the rejection}} = 3.27$)] and brand commitment [$t(43) = -2.030$; $p = 0.049$ ($M_{\text{Before the rejection}} = 3.66$; $M_{\text{After the rejection}} = 3.97$)].

The findings affirm that rejection does not have any impact (negative or positive) on brand attachment, brand trust or brand loyalty. However, participants exhibited significantly higher scores on proselytism and brand commitment after being informed that their proposals had not been selected. The results do not reveal any intention to diffuse negative WOM. To enhance this initial study's generalizability and provide greater external validity of the findings, we undertook a follow-up study (Study 1b) to assess the effects of rejection by a different brand type.

The methodology and procedure for Study 1b were identical to that of Study 1a. We used the same questionnaire as in Study 1a to measure the customer–brand relationship and behavioural intentions. The same scales were used. However, the crowdsourcing challenge for innovation and the brand were different this time. Thirty-two newly recruited participants were invited to submit a proposal. They were all volunteers and graduate students from a French university. Just over half (56.3%) of the sample were female, and the participants averaged 22 years old ($SD = 1.44$). All were participants in a

crowdsourcing challenge for innovation on the same platform for one of the world leaders in small domestic electrical appliances (crowdsourcing challenge for innovation brief: Groupe SEB).⁵ Participants were invited to imagine future home robots. All 32 participants registered on the platform and submitted their projects in three to five slides (application phase). Following the voting phase and the selection announcement, the 32 participants were informed by the platform that their submissions had not been chosen for the next stage of the innovation challenge. As in Study 1a, through a repeated measures design, each subject was measured twice (before and after the results announcement).

In Study 1a, we ran a first paired samples *t*-test, which revealed no significant difference concerning brand attachment, thus suggesting that the rejection does not impact brand attachment either positively or negatively. Moreover, three further paired samples *t*-tests showed no significant difference in brand trust. However, a fourth paired samples *t*-test showed a significant and negative difference in brand commitment [$t(32) = -1.893$; $p = 0.068^*$ ($M_{\text{Before the rejection}} = 2.33$; $M_{\text{After the rejection}} = 2.72$)]. A fifth paired samples *t*-test also showed a significant difference in the proselytism variable [$t(32) = -3.127$; $p = 0.004$ ($M_{\text{Before the rejection}} = 2.01$; $M_{\text{After the rejection}} = 2.54$)]. Similarly, a sixth paired samples *t*-test revealed a significant difference in brand loyalty [$t(32) = -2.325$; $p = 0.027$ ($M_{\text{Before the rejection}} = 2.77$; $M_{\text{After the rejection}} = 3.07$)].

In summary, the paired samples *t*-tests demonstrated that rejection does not have any impact (negative or positive) on brand attachment or brand trust. However, participation in the innovation challenge, even if the submission is rejected, increases brand commitment, proselytism and brand loyalty. These findings provide an interesting additional set of results, which support those obtained in the earlier study. Importantly, it should be noted that in both Study 1a and Study 1b, proselytism and brand commitment are significantly negative before, between and after ideation stage selection, and brand attachment and brand trust are nonsignificant, thus enabling us to strengthen the generalizability of the results. Study 2 goes further by comparing the same variables at two stages of rejection: ideation phase versus development phase.

3.2 | Study 2 research design and results

Some crowdsourcing challenges for innovation involve two main selection stages. A first stage, called the 'ideation phase' (preselection round), is when participants submit their applications. The most creative and feasible projects then go through to the expansion stage (also called the deepening stage), where participants expand their projects, generally with the support of mentors, and provide any other content that might be useful to support the end result (a video, a prototype, etc.). The best projects progress to the competition final, and the winning participants are rewarded.

In this study, to build on our earlier findings, the objective was to understand the impact of rejection at these two stages: ideation phase versus expansion phase. The methods, variables measured and

procedures were the same as in Study 1a and Study 1b. The participants (undergraduate and graduate students), consisting of 30 newly recruited participants whose proposals were rejected at the ideation phase versus 30 newly recruited participants rejected at the expansion phase, completed a questionnaire individually after receiving an email informing them that their contribution had been rejected. We employed the same crowdsourcing challenge and platform (Decathlon Teammates, Season 7).⁶

From comparing the rejection stages, the results indicate significant and positive effects for the following variables: brand attachment [$t(59) = 3.428$; $p = 0.069^*$] ($M_{\text{Ideation stage rejection}} = 3.37$; $M_{\text{Expansion stage rejection}} = 4.09$); proselytism [$t(59) = 6.512$; $p = 0.013$] ($M_{\text{Ideation stage rejection}} = 2.78$; $M_{\text{Expansion stage rejection}} = 3.84$); brand commitment [$t(59) = 3.954$; $p = 0.051$] ($M_{\text{Ideation stage rejection}} = 3.41$; $M_{\text{Expansion stage rejection}} = 4.20$); and brand loyalty [$t(59) = 6.295$; $p = 0.015$] ($M_{\text{Ideation stage rejection}} = 3.53$; $M_{\text{Expansion stage rejection}} = 4.23$). However, no significant differences were found for brand trust. Thus, the results highlight that participants rejected at the expansion stage rate the brand more highly than those rejected at the ideation stage. Nevertheless, the Study 1 and Study 2 results do not reveal the reasons for the enhanced relationship between participants and the brand engaged in the crowdsourcing activity. Study 3 is designed to provide a more in-depth understanding.

3.3 | Study 3 research design and results

The Study 3 goal was to delve further into the results of the quantitative studies by identifying marketing solutions for improving how the crowdsourcing platforms and brands manage unsuccessful contributors. Based on the Study 2 findings, we conducted a confirmatory qualitative study using the semi-structured interview research method. Ten interviews were conducted with rejected contributors. The interviewees were all Study 1a participants (see Table 1) and randomly selected from the 44 participants.

To conduct the interviews, we followed an interview guide built on three main themes (see Appendix B). First, we addressed the

TABLE 1 Respondent details

Participant (code)	Gender*	Interview duration
AD	F	17 min
FD	F	25 min
LD	F	14 min
LR	F	21 min
MA	F	19 min
MM	F	25 min
MR	M	24 min
MP	F	22 min
PUR	F	21 min
RS	M	29 min

*F, female; M, male.

consequences of rejection for the participant–brand relationship by identifying the rejection's consequences for behavioural intentions toward the platform (willingness to participate again, crowdsourcing platform website visit, etc.) and the brand (store and/or brand website visit, differences in behaviours toward the brand before and after the contest, etc.). Second, we asked the respondents to comment on the variables that obtained positive results in Study 1a (proselytism and brand commitment).

Finally, the participants were questioned about their perceptions of the brand after the results announcement (i.e., their rejection) and the subsequent optimization conducted by the brand and the crowdsourcing platform to improve customer–brand relationships.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed through a professional transcription service to generate 61 pages of single-spaced transcribed data. Interviews lasted an average of 22 min.

A thematic data analysis technique was used to explore themes. NVivo 11 software was run for textual content analysis. The interviews were fully transcribed and analysed after the coding. The unit of analysis used was the paragraph of meaning or group of words. The process of progressive conceptualization led us to conduct first-order coding from the verbatim data (first-order concepts). Conceptual abstraction through second-order coding (themes) was then conducted by identifying the similarities and differences among the many concepts. Once the concepts and themes had been determined, we aggregated the dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). From this analysis, we propose a data structure (see Appendix C). To illustrate the results, we provide verbatim extracts translated into English in a way that preserves the meaning and scope of the original French expressions.

3.4 | Consequences of rejection for customers' behavioural intentions

Five of the 10 participants mentioned that they had returned to the crowdsourcing platform after the rejection decision to see the new contest proposals:

Yes, I went back on the platform, to see the candidate who won ... and then to go and see the other projects ... to see the results of the contest, to watch the videos of the concepts and the other teams. (RS)

Yes, I looked a bit on the platform website. (MR)

In fact, I looked at the website to see what the other challenges were. (AD)

In terms of 're-participation' behaviour, almost all the participants were willing to participate again in another contest:

With pleasure ... It [the contest] is something I really enjoy. I love the contest principle, I love it. I think it's really challenging. (PUR)

If I have time in the future, I would be interested in participating in another project. (LR)

If I like the topic, yes, with pleasure. (LD)

However, only three were prepared to participate in a contest with the same brand.

We then asked the participants if their perceptions of and behaviours toward the brand had changed because of the contest.

First, the responses showed that the contest had improved brand knowledge. Thanks to their participation, informants reported that they had a better knowledge of the brand's activities:

I know it [the brand] better, because we learned more things about it through this project. (FD)

So I know more about the brand in fact, it helps me to know the brand better, to know more about its identity. (LD)

It helps me to know the brand a little better. (PUR)

Second, the interviewees mentioned that they did not change their shopping behaviours in relation to the brand after rejection. Those who were already regular shoppers remained shoppers, and those who were not remained:

That [participating in the contest] did not change a lot, I always went to the store, I will always come back if I need something in particular, as I always did. (AD)

The sympathy I had for this brand is still the same. (LR)

If Decathlon can answer a new need I have, I am likely to go there, as was the case before the contest. (MR)

It [the contest] did not make me want to buy more ... It did not provide value to the brand for me, I did not change anything. (FD)

3.5 | Validated constructs

We then asked the participants to comment on the results of Study 1a. Specifically, we asked them to explain why proselytism and brand commitment were still positive despite the rejection.

Following the Study 1a results, the respondents confirmed proselytism concerning the brand even after being rejected by it:

Working on a product for a brand, well, yeah, it's co-creation, so you feel involved, you feel like a brand prescriber. (MM)

I talked about it [the contest] during the project when we were trying to find ideas, it is true that ... let us say that my relatives followed the adventures of the project. (LR).

It was also a way to keep their family and friends informed about what they were working on and why it was exciting: "I talked about the project around me, and my friends told me I was lucky to be involved in all of this."

Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned that they were more committed to the brand because the competition had helped to create a real relationship between them and the brand:

It made me want to go diving again because I had stopped a bit, and having this experience with Decathlon made me want to go straight to Decathlon. (LD)

It [the contest] really helped us to create a connection with Decathlon, we were invested in them, as we would be for our own company. (RS)

Moreover, the respondents added that having a role to play in the brand had an impact on their commitment and their perception when rejected in the contest:

Because when you play a role, as if you were a product manager ... you are impregnated by the brand throughout the challenge, so there is an emotional aspect, even a sense of belonging. (MR)

It is as if we have adopted the brand that is so ... meaningful, so dynamic. If we had not liked it, we would not have been disappointed, it would not have mattered to us to lose or not. (MM)

Study 1a's three constructs, which Study 3 also confirmed, are presented in Appendix D.

We now present marketing recommendations which the brand and the platform might consider when making rejections.

3.6 | The platform and brand marketing recommendations regarding unsuccessful contributors

Several marketing propositions were highlighted by the respondents concerning the role the brand and the platform could play after the rejection decision.

First, the interviewees mentioned the importance of communicating with the participants:

I would have liked (name of the brand) to join (name of the crowdsourcing platform) [...] for example in a common message at least. (AD)

An email to thank us for having participated in this challenge, to thank us for our involvement. (LD)

Organizing a special event or sending an email to all participants confirming the selected teams and the reasons for this choice could be a way to develop a sense of community:

They should communicate more about the winners by sending an email to all students saying, 'here are the three teams or the five teams selected and here is the teams' work.' (MM)

Second, some participants suggested that a questionnaire could be sent to improve respondents' understanding and to propose contests that match their profiles, preferences and expectations:

They could send us a questionnaire, or something like that, to identify what we are interested in, basically our areas of interest ... and to send us challenges in accordance with our expectations. (AD)

In the same vein, the interviewees suggested that the platform should continue to thank them for their participation, to inform them about the contest and to send them other challenge propositions:

I would even like ... a month later, to show they have not forgotten us, a general email to thank us for our participation ... 'We appreciate your interest in this project, do not hesitate to come back.' (FD)

A personalized email ... with our name and a message: "Unfortunately, due to the volume of applications, you could not be chosen for this contest, but based on your fields of interest, we suggest that you try ... these two or three challenges, the deadline for which is in five months. Do not hesitate to give it a go!" for example. (MM)

No invitations, in fact, they are not aggressive enough ... we have to go on the website to look for other challenges. I think they could make improvements on this. (MA)

An important aspect mentioned by the participants was the lack of feedback from the brand regarding, for example, the selection criteria. Almost all the interviewees mentioned that feedback from the brand could help them to understand the reasons for their rejection,

highlight their proposals' strengths and weaknesses, reduce potential feelings of disappointment and generally improve learning and capitalize on their experiences for future challenges:

An explanation. I think it was part of the disappointment too, the fact of having a lack of [explanation] ... we were not selected, but we did not know why, whereas we had provided work and everything, it would have been good to have the positive, the negative ... a constructive element for us to improve on. (MA)

I would have liked a personalized message saying 'your idea was not bad, but it was missing this, that ...' [...] Feedback would have been interesting. (FD)

We do not really know about the selection criteria, we cannot compare ourselves with the other teams ... just [so that we could] be aware of what was put forward, what the criticisms were, and why our project was not selected. (MP)

This finding resonates with the respondents' desire to know the winners (mentioned above) and the reasons for the winning team being selected.

The participants mentioned the importance of providing compensation (gifts, vouchers, etc.) to encourage future participation:

I would recommend that they give us a small compensation as a gift, honestly, but even a discount, in other words, something that encourages us to buy, and I think that it could be a consolation prize (AD)

I was thinking of a rewarding system. (LR)

MR even suggested a points-based reward scheme to encourage participants to become actively involved in the contest.

Overall, the interviewees felt that the level of interaction with the brand was poor. They suggested that the brand increase its interactions with the contributors of rejected proposals. As mentioned in the introduction, they receive an email from the crowdsourcing platform indicating that their proposal has not been selected. According to nine of the 10 interviewees, this message should be sent by the brand directly (or in collaboration with the crowdsourcing platform) to thank the participants for their involvement:

It is worth getting an answer from Decathlon. And they could thank us for the work we did ... so I think it would be nice if Decathlon communicates. (PUR)

I think receiving an email from Decathlon, it would have been more fun ... I think that if I had received an email from it ... it would have been nice. (MA)

It could strengthen the brand commitment if the brand said to us directly, 'well, you have not been selected, but the project was interesting.' (MR)

The results are summarized in Appendix E.

4 | DISCUSSION

The first two studies shed light on the impact on consumer–brand relationships when participants' submissions are rejected. The final study suggests ways in which managers can optimize the contributors' rejection experience. The studies contribute to the body of theoretical knowledge about crowdsourcing challenges for innovation. According to Kumar et al. (2018), past research on crowdsourcing focused mainly on the perspective of perceived or received benefits and contributors' motivational factors for participating. However, little research has focused on 'nonpositive' crowdsourcing experiences, and a deeper understanding of this question remains highly relevant for managers and researchers. From this perspective, our insights reinforce the existing crowdsourcing literature by specifically revealing that even when participants are unsuccessful, crowdsourcing challenges positively affect the customer–brand relationship and can even encourage entrants to participate in another contest on the same crowdsourcing platform. We present in the following sections the theoretical and managerial implications arising from our results. We then discuss the limitations of this research.

4.1 | Theoretical implications

The objective of this research was to identify the customer–brand relationship and participants' behaviour toward brands and platforms after unsuccessful participation in crowdsourcing challenges for innovation.

First, our results reveal that, despite receiving a rejection notification, participants have positive reactions and intentions toward the brand. The results show that participants whose proposals are rejected at an early stage still feel positive proselytism toward the brand. Proselytism means to convince people to make a specific choice and to influence opinions (Cristau, 2006). Our results contrast with previous works such as that by Gebauer et al. (2013) reporting that participants' behaviour in online innovation communities can sometimes 'harm the brand in focus'. However, our results resonate with those of Kumar et al. (2018) and Djelassi and Decoopman (2013), who postulated that consumers are more aware of the brand after participating in a crowdsourcing campaign. One possible explanation could be that a consumer with an already high self–brand connection is reluctant to lower their brand evaluation (Cheng et al., 2012). Thus, we can suggest that even when rejected, participants are ready to proselytize the brand positively, as they have developed brand awareness.

Second, our research shows how intrinsic motivations and innovation contest experience positively affects consumer–brand relationships. By explaining the positive influence of innovation contest experience and, especially, intrinsic motivations on the consumer–brand relationship, these results extend Salgado et al.' (2020) work, which showed that a positive innovation challenge experience leads to a better perception of the company and a willingness to participate in future contests. This positive influence could be explained by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which shows that motivation is based on three pillars: autonomy, competence and relatedness. From this perspective, rejected participants may have benefited from a certain creative freedom, which satisfied their need for autonomy. They may also have increased their competences and skills by working on a new project. Finally, they may have benefited from social interactions with the brand, thus increasing their motivation and counterbalancing their feelings of rejection resentment. Our unexpected results also consolidate the idea that failing in a crowdsourcing challenge for innovation positively impacts brand attachment. These findings are in contrast with original research by Aaker et al. (2004) and Huber et al. (2009), who stated that brand misconduct substantially impacts the quality of consumer–brand relationships and may damage both reputation and brand loyalty.

Attachment to the goods or the brand likely explains how not winning a crowdsourcing contest can moderate negative customer–brand relationships. This resonates with the Fournier (1998) finding that customers can develop attachment to marketplace entities such as product brands. Our results indicate that when people participate in a crowdsourcing challenge, they develop affection toward the brand as they search for information, spend time understanding the brand values, develop strategies to align with the creative brief provided and so on.

Third, we found that rejection in a crowdsourcing contest can also positively affect brand commitment, contrary to the Kull and Heath (2016) findings that failure in crowdsourcing activities and brands' dysfunctional behaviours has negative consequences for customers' brand perceptions, brand reputation, and brand loyalty. These results are also somewhat surprising, but it should be noted that product development (product innovation, graphic design, naming, etc.) participants feel that they are being listened to because the brands allocate more importance to their ideas and the image customers have of them. Those participants are also more involved in the brand marketing strategy. They are likely to feel closer to the brand and develop more positive feelings toward it as they collate information about it (brand strategy, culture, products, engagement, etc.). According to our findings, they sometimes even go to a store and engage in dialogue with sales staff to better understand the brand requirements. This may contribute to strengthening social bonds with the brand. These results resonate with research by Fuchs et al. (2013), Kull and Heath (2016) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), who showed that digital co-creation experiences contribute to encouraging consumer–brand relationships. They also resonate with the Mathwick and Rigdon (2004) postulation that the individual's overall attitude toward a brand is influenced by the fun experienced with it. We also found that the

positive impact variables—proselytism, brand commitment and brand attachment—were higher after the expansion stage than after the early ideation stage. The effect on the customer–brand relationship is thus greater at a higher level of rejection (expansion versus ideation). Thus, rejected participants feel closer to the brand at the expansion stage because they had succeeded in completing several steps of the challenge.

Fourth, our results also indicate that, despite not winning a crowdsourcing challenge, participants are generally ready to take part in another challenge on the same crowdsourcing platform. These results may seem counterintuitive. Indeed, according to Ryan and Deci (2000a), customers reject future participation after failure or unpleasant experiences with the brand. However, Fournier (1998) postulated that, in cases of positive brand relationships, the consumer will develop a strong brand attachment, which strengthens the repurchase intention. If we draw a parallel with our results, we posit that in a non-positive situation, such as participants' propositions in a crowdsourcing innovation challenge not being chosen by the brand, there are no negative impacts on the future behavioural intention to participate in another challenge.

Finally, our results reveal that, even in the case of rejection, consumers and brands can benefit from the innovation contest experience. These results extend the literature dedicated to two-sided platforms by considering the dual influence that the sides (consumers and brands) have on the platform provider role. These interactions, even those involving rejection, show that interactions and exchanges create an ecosystem that leads to value creation through trust and engagement mechanisms (Muzellec et al., 2015; Trabucchi & Buganza, 2021). The crowdsourcing platform thus appears to be a resource integrator (Trabucchi et al., 2021). Although the literature on two-sided platforms has so far adopted a strategic perspective, our research extends this perspective by adopting a consumer–brand relationship strategy and revealing the influence of these interactions on brand perception.

4.2 | Managerial implications

The results suggest interesting managerial implications and perspectives for third parties engaged in crowdsourcing challenges for innovation, that is, brands, crowdsourcing platforms and participants.

a. Practical implications for brands

First, in addition to unlocking creativity, providing new insights through the 'customers' eyes', finding talents, promoting innovative identity through new channels and proposing empowered experiences, this research shows that launching crowdsourcing innovation challenges gives brands the opportunity to establish and sustain valuable relationships with existing and potential customers. The counterintuitive positive impacts identified by the research indicate that the brand has nothing to lose when engaging in a crowdsourcing initiative. Indeed, the participants have no intention of harming the brand. On

the contrary, they feel closer to and more engaged with it (brand attachment and brand commitment), they intend to talk positively about it (proselytism) and they even intend to participate in another challenge. These findings could encourage reluctant brands to engage in crowdsourcing challenges. In addition, the close relationships developed during and after challenges mean that failing in a challenge does not necessarily affect participants' willingness to change brands. This is in line with the Huber et al. (2010) finding that the emotional attachment long-term consumers may develop toward the brand impacts their willingness to change brands, even if the brand behaves contrary to their expectations.

Second, our results offer suggestions for improving brand behaviour after the rejection stage. Further to our findings, customers reported negatively on the lack of interaction with the brand after their proposals were rejected. Participants received a standard email telling them that their proposal had not been selected. Managers could improve the feedback to participants by going a little further than such simple acknowledgements. It is understood and agreed that personalized feedback could be provided after the expansion stage, as the number of participants and contributions is much smaller than at the ideation stage. For example, personalized thanks could be sent to contributors with explanations of the reasons for projects not being selected (e.g., strengths and weaknesses). This could also strengthen positive proselytism based on the way the brand listens to and thanks the participants, thus leading to positive WOM on social networks and a positive impact on the brand image for nonparticipants. Moreover, an informative email could be sent to all participants about the winning team and project. In this way, the participants would better understand the possible gaps between their proposals, the selection criteria and the brand expectations.

Finally, even when unsuccessful, participants should be compensated by the brand with a coupon, a gift voucher or even participation points to encourage them to sign up to another challenge on the same platform. Indeed, according to Hanine and Steils (2019), enhancement and compensation strategies are crucial in reducing the negative feelings toward the brand. It may also reduce the risk of participants feeling as though they are considered simply as 'working consumers' (Cova & Dalli, 2009), that is, part-time workers who interact with the company by proposing ideas in line with the brand strategy but who are generally not rewarded for their work.

b. Practical implications for crowdsourcing platforms

The research has interesting implications for crowdsourcing platforms in terms of participant–brand relationship management. First, participants' increased intentions to engage in future crowdsourcing contests lead to a reduction in dropout rates and instances of 'lurking', as identified by Frey et al. (2011) and Hanine and Steils (2019). Such lack of active participation would limit the success of crowdsourcing and creative contests. From this perspective, the crowdsourcing platform could offer participants the chance to take part in new challenges based on their past experiences and areas of interest. A questionnaire could be used to identify personalized challenges in accordance with

participants' preferences (topic of the challenge, type of skill required, length of contest, brand category, industries, etc.) to continue engaging them over the long run. Through such information provided voluntarily by the participants, the platform could create a database of crowdsourcers who become more expert through regular participation in contests and personalized feedback provided by the brands (as seen above). This network of free participants could also be a commercial argument for the crowdsourcing platform to attract new brands. This proposal is in line with the conclusions of Troise et al. (2021), who found in the context of open innovation online platforms that company decisions regarding platforms should consider the communities' characteristics and experience. Thus, any potential negative side effects of rejected proposals on participants' intentions toward the brand could be transformed into real opportunities for companies. Second, the results obtained could be used by the platforms as sales arguments to refute brands' potential objections to engaging in this type of initiative.

c. Practical implications for participants

The results could have interesting implications for participants by helping them to better understand their mistakes and learn from their failures. A learning process established through feedback and details of winning projects could improve participants' skills, creativity and knowledge for future projects. They could capitalize on their participation and even be 'trained' to become 'better' participants, thus maximizing the chances of participating in new challenges on the same crowdsourcing platform.

To summarize, the brand or crowdsourcing platform can maintain a strong relationship with the participants even in cases of rejection, thus turning disappointment into real opportunities for the brand. This is explained by a former marketing manager at eYeka, one of the world's leading creative crowdsourcing platforms:

Rejection of creative ideas submitted to brand challenges, when accompanied with constructive and fair feedback or explanations, may have a positive effect on the consumer perception toward the platform and the sponsoring brand. In many cases, consumers are honoured to have been considered, and grateful to have had their idea reviewed by the brand's and the platform's teams, and that can have a positive effect on attitude toward both. This is a reassuring finding for brand marketers and innovation managers, who sometimes fear to expose their brand to hostile consumer backlash when exposed to crowd reactions, or to turn away disappointed consumers whose idea have not been retained. For platform owners, this finding suggests that providing a selective and respectful contest mechanism with considerate feedback can actually nurture or enforce community relationships, keeping the mass of creative consumers engaged and keen to participate more in future challenges.

4.3 | Limitations and future research avenues

Although our results tap into an interesting but relatively unexplored research stream, they also have limitations that offer clear opportunities for future research. First, to add robustness and external validity to our results, it would be interesting to replicate our protocol with other forms of crowdsourcing challenges, other types of industries and brands, other crowdsourcing platforms and other product categories. Moreover, our studies exclusively focused on 'ordinary' participants (i.e., students in management). It would be interesting to open the investigation up to subjects recognized as being particularly creative and participants who exercise their creativity in various domains, such as designers and artistic directors in advertising agencies, product managers, illustrators and so on, to see whether any significant differences exist between professional and nonprofessional contributors in investigating the role of domain expertise. As crowdsourcing platforms propose open calls in which a plethora of diverse people from different cultural contexts participate, our sample being exclusively French also raises the potential problem of results generalizability.

Future research should include more varied populations and cultural identities. It would also be interesting to provide a deeper understanding of the perceived rejection and its impacts when the outputs have been generated collectively versus individually, or during in-person idea generation contexts and conditions such as offline workshops and focus groups. A longitudinal study could follow unsuccessful participants from their first to their fourth or fifth participation, for example, to capture their perception of progress and knowledge acquisition.

It could also be interesting to study the type of participant responses to a crowdsourcing contest related to the pandemic context (e.g., type of solution, product material or tagline).

Finally, as a mixed-method research approach was chosen to allow for theory development, further research would benefit from larger scale replication to confirm this emerging theory.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request from the authors. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Aurélien Hemonnet-Goujot  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6684-2257>

ENDNOTES

¹ eYeka (<https://en.eyeka.com/>) is an online crowdsourcing and co-creation platform with a global community of 392,242 highly creative people (designers, students, etc.) that connects brands and agencies through challenges.

² <https://fr.eyeka.com/resources/reports> (available for download on request).

³ Agorize is a French open innovation platform that connects businesses and organizations with a global community of 5 million innovators (students, developers, start-ups and employees). <https://www.agorize.com/en>.

⁴ Decathlon Teammates 2017, Season 6 contest: <https://www.agorize.com/fr/challenges/les-coequipiers-2016>. Participants had to upload a file of about 10 slides presenting the team and the project. At the end of this stage, 20 teams (out of 400) were selected by the brand's judges.

⁵ Groupe SEB Tech challenge contest: <https://www.agorize.com/fr/challenges/groupeseb-techchallenge?lang=en>. As a first step, the participants had to upload to their participation area a folder with a maximum of 10 slides presenting their project. At the end of this first stage (the ideation stage), judges from the brand studied all the files and selected 20 teams to be given access to the in-depth phase. To qualify for the final, the 20 selected teams then had to produce a promotional video of maximum 3 min. Finally, at the end of this in-depth phase, the 20 videos were available to the judges, who selected five teams to advance to the final.

⁶ Decathlon Teammates 2018, Season 7 contest: <https://www.agorize.com/fr/challenges/les-coequipiers-saison-7>.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Cyrielle Vellera is an Associate Professor at Toulouse School of Management and a Researcher at TSM Research. Her teaching, research and publications focus on the following topics: innovation marketing, user innovation, crowdsourcing/user co-creation and user entrepreneurship. Her doctoral thesis, awarded at Université de Grenoble, was awarded in 2014 with the thesis prize from the French Association of Marketing (AFM). She wrote a piece entitled, 'Des consommateurs inventifs' ('Inventive Consumers') published in *Le Monde* and was the author of several scientific articles and book chapters. She has been a visiting scholar at several foreign universities: University of British Columbia

(Canada), HEC Montreal (Canada), Kobe University (Japan), Aalto University (Finland) and collaborates with a number of organizations (fablabs and incubators) for teaching and research. She has presented her work at several conferences, including the Open and User Innovation Conference at Harvard Business School (USA).

Elodie Jouny-Rivier is a Professor of Marketing at ESSCA School of Management. She defended her PhD in Management Science in the field of co-creation. During her PhD, she worked as Service Research Fellow within the Nekoé cluster, the first French cluster of service innovation. Her articles have been published in scientific journals (*Information & Management*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, etc.), professional journals (*Survey Magazine*, *Solutions Numériques*, etc.) and in collective book (*Customer Relationship Management*, Pearson). In 2018, she obtained the Highly Commended Paper Award with Javier Reynoso and Bo Edvardsson from the *Journal of Services Marketing* with the article 'Determinants of services co-creation with business customers'.

Aurélie Hemonnet-Goujot is a Full Professor in Marketing and Innovation at Aix-Marseille University, Graduate School of Management–IAE-CERGAM. She holds a PhD in business administration from ESCP Europe and Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. Before starting an academic career, she previously worked as innovation marketing manager in leading worldwide FMCG and luxury groups (Johnson & Johnson and LVMH). Her research interests include marketing and innovation with a specific focus on new product development (NPD), creativity, product design and design management. Her papers have been published in *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Creativity and Innovation Management* and *Strategic Change*, among others. She was awarded with the prize of best paper in management Syntec-FNEGE for her publication in *Journal of Product Innovation Management*. She is the co-author of the French edition of *Marketing Management* with P. Kotler, K. Keller and D. Manceau (16th edition, 2019, Pearson Education).

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APPENDIX A: MEASUREMENT SCALES

Construct	Definition and references	Items
Brand attachment	Lacoeuilhe (2000) 'Psychological variable that expresses a lasting and unalterable affective relationship with the brand and a close relationship with it' (p. 66)	'I have a lot of affection for this brand' (Item 1) 'The purchase of this brand gives me much joy/pleasure' (Item 2) 'I find some comfort when buying or owning this brand' (Item 3) 'I am very bonded to this brand' (Item 4) 'I am greatly attracted to this brand' (Item 5) 'I am connected to this brand' (Item 6) [On a scale of 1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> to 7 = <i>strongly agree</i>]
Proselytism	Cristau (2006) 'Tendency to try to make others adhere to one's choice' (p. 12)	'I like talking about this brand with others' (Item 1) 'I told stories about this brand to other people' (Item 2) 'I explain to others why they should buy this brand' (Item 3) [On a scale of 1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> to 7 = <i>strongly agree</i>]
Brand commitment	Garbarino and Johnson (1999) 'Consumer's sense of affiliation and identification with the brand as well as their involvement in the commercial relationship' (quoted in Cissé-Depardon & N'Goala, 2009, p. 48)	'I am happy to remain a customer of this brand' (Item 1) 'I am attached to this brand' (Item 2) 'I would find it difficult to change from this brand' (Item 3) [On a scale of 1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> to 7 = <i>strongly agree</i>]
Brand trust	Gurviez and Korchia (2002) 'Trust in a brand, from the consumer's point of view, is a psychological variable that reflects a set of accumulated assumptions about the credibility, integrity, and benevolence that the consumer attributes to the brand' (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002, p. 7)	'This brand's products make me feel safe' (Item 1) 'I trust the quality of this brand's products' (Item 2) 'Buying this brand's products is a guarantee' (Item 3) 'This brand is sincere with its consumers' (Item 4) 'This brand is honest with its customers' (Item 5) 'This brand expresses an interest in its customers' (Item 6) 'I think this brand renews its products to take into account advances in research' (Item 7) 'I think that this brand is always looking to improve its response to consumer needs' (Item 8) [On a scale of 1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> to 7 = <i>strongly agree</i>]
Brand loyalty	Thomson et al. (2005) 'A deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior' (Oliver, 1999)	'How often have you bought this brand in the past?' (Item 1) [On a scale of 1 = <i>never</i> to 7 = <i>always</i>] 'How would you characterize your loyalty toward this brand?' (Item 2) [On a scale of 1 = <i>very weak</i> to 7 = <i>very strong</i>] 'How does this brand compare to your 'ideal' brand?' (Item 3) [On a scale of 1 = <i>it is very far from my ideal brand</i> to 7 = <i>it is very close to my ideal brand</i>]
Negative WOM	Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) 'Word-of-mouth communication is oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as noncommercial, regarding a brand, a product or a service' (Arndt, 1967)	'How likely are you to spread negative WOM about [brand name]?' (Item 1) 'I would not recommend [brand name] to my friends' (Item 2) 'If my friends were looking for [brand area], I would tell them not to try [brand name]' (Item 3) [On a scale of 1 = <i>strongly disagree</i> , to 7 = <i>strongly agree</i>]

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDY 3

Theme 1: Behavioural consequences of rejection

1. Behavioural intentions toward the platform

- Did you recently connect to the Agorize website to watch the competitions?

- Have you participated again or are you planning to participate in a contest on the platform? Or in a contest on another crowd-sourcing platform?

2. Behavioural intentions toward the brand

- Did you go back to a Decathlon store? Why?
- Did you buy any of the brand's products (for yourself or others)? Why?
- Did you visit the brand's website?

- d. Do you plan to participate in another contest with Decathlon? Why?

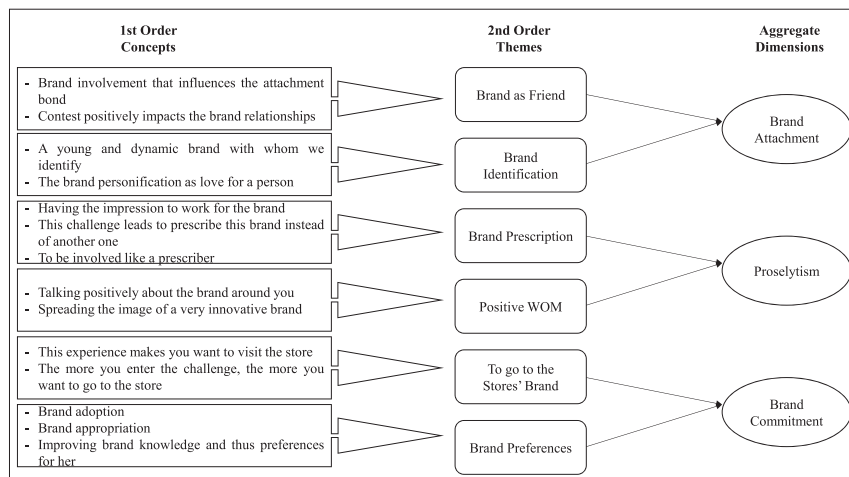
Theme 2: The relationships with the Decathlon brand

1. Before participating in the challenge, what was your relationship with the Decathlon brand?
2. Do you think your relationship with the Decathlon brand has changed during the challenge? And after the announcement of the results? Why? Please comment.
3. Presentation of the Study 2 findings. Ask for comments.

Theme 3: Marketing improvements to manage unsuccessful contributors

1. What do you think Agorize should do to inform the unsuccessful participants of the results?
2. What communication strategy should the platform adopt in terms of:
 - a. Strategy for announcing results announcement? What would ideal feedback look like? How would you want to be informed of the results by the platform?
 - b. How could you be encouraged to participate/submit again?
 - c. Continuing the relationship with the platform?
3. Should the brand (i.e., the sponsor of the creative challenge. In this case, Decathlon) also play a role after the results have been announced?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why?

APPENDIX C: DATA STRUCTURE



APPENDIX D: BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSES TOWARD THE BRAND AFTER REJECTION

Behavioural responses	Occurrences	Verbatim
Brand attachment	7	<p>'Unconsciously, the fact of having been rejected by this brand, I said to myself, I ... well I would like to please the brand, that it is interested in me, so I still longer want to ... to be closer to it' (RS)</p> <p>'Having discovered this brand is also for young people in the end, and that it [the brand] is quite young, I think we identified with it somewhere' (MA)</p> <p>'I would explain it as the fact of having really wanted to please them. In fact, it is really that which makes that somewhere we were ... we were ... a little bit under the spell ... I do not want to compare too much with human relationships but ... it may look like' (RS)</p>
Proselytism	4	<p>'Being close with a brand, if the concept actually appeals to the consumer, I think it's ... I think it really influences ... the fact that we can prescribe it rather than another one' (MM)</p> <p>'I talked about it around me and some friends who are students told me I was lucky to participate to it' (LD)</p> <p>'I talked about it during the project when we were trying to find ideas, [...] let us say that in my close circle, we were following all the project's adventures' (LR)</p>
Brand commitment	4	<p>'It made me want to go scuba diving because I had stopped a bit, and having this experience with Decathlon, it made me want and I went directly to Decathlon' (LD)</p> <p>'I do prefer to go to this shop whereas another one' (MM)</p> <p>'It really helped to create a connection with it [the brand] ... we were committed, as we would have been for our company' (RS)</p>

APPENDIX E: MARKETING STRATEGIES IN CASES OF REJECTION

Crowdsourcing platform and brand roles	Marketing strategies	Description
The platform	The winners	Communicate about the winning team's project and the selection criteria used.
	Web-based survey	Send a survey asking the participants about their areas of interest to address them specifically and direct them to more targeted contests.
	Contest proposals	Send regular contest proposals relevant to participants' preferences following their first entry.
	Reward	Reward the participants in each project using a points system or a discount coupon to spend with partner brands.
The brand	Acknowledgement	Thank the contributors for their participation (recognition of the work done) in a personalized email.
	Feedback	Provide detailed pros and cons for the proposal.
	Reward	Reward the participants with a discount coupon to spend in store or on the website.
The platform and the brand	Acknowledgement	Thank the contributors, cosigning the rejection email.
	Event organization	Organize a special event for the first round of contributors selected.