A Typology of Crowdsourcing Participation Styles

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ABSTRACT
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In the recent years, numerous attempts have been made to successfully incorporate crowdsourcing into organizational workflow. With crowdsourcing, the lines between producers and consumers have become blurred as consumers actively participate in the value creation process by volunteering their skills for the producer's benefit. While the popularity of this phenomenon increases, guidelines for building a successful crowdsourcing program have yet to be developed. The goal of this thesis is to uncover motivations of those who participate in crowdsourcing and provide recommendations for managers to better implement crowdsourcing projects.

This research builds upon the virtual community literature as well as prosumption. Additionally, the group membership theory is used to explain the interactions between crowdsourcing participants. By conducting in-depth interviews supplemented with netnography, participants in crowdsourcing were clustered into a four-fold typology. Motivations between groups differ. Members of first group, communals, incorporate the crowdsourcing community's group based identity into their social self. Furthermore, they develop cultural and social capital through prosumption. Members of the second group, utilizers, hone their skills through participation, thus creating cultural capital. Members of the third group, aspirers, do not create content, but rather participate in the selection of content. They aspire to be perceived as a "stereotypical" member of the first two groups. The final group, lurkers, is composed of individuals who participate in crowdsourcing solely by browsing. The thesis is concluded with recommendations and guidelines for managers.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Jeff Howe's Wired magazine article titled "The Rise of Crowdsourcing" brought attention to a new type of worker: the crowd. Crowdsourcing, as defined by Kleemann and Gunter (2008), takes place when a profit-oriented firm outsources specific tasks essential for the making or sale of its products to the general public. Having a reputable popular publication, like Wired, run their cover story on a topic is a perfect example of the growing interest in this concept. Although many businesses have begun to look into this process for an alternative to fixed employment, results remain mixed. Moreover, academia has begun producing research on crowdsourcing as well. However, the majority of this research has remained on the effects of this new process from the company's perspective. Much of what has been written compares this process to outsourcing, thus examining the resource effects for a corporation.

From a marketing point of view, crowdsourcing adds value. Brabham (2009) cites many examples where the outcomes of crowdsourcing are far superior to what corporations can achieve. For example, Wikipedia articles are oftentimes more up-to-date then those of Brittanica; Seti@Home produces the same quality analysis of space images as those given by researchers within a fraction of the time, and InnoCentive scientists solve problems that R&D teams from some of the world's biggest corporations cannot. In his book Crowdsourcing, Howe (2008) argues that the collective intelligence is far superior then that of certain specialists. Each individual's knowledge and interests in specific fields can outweigh that of professionals.

Companies such as Threadless.com, InnoCentive and iStockPhoto.com are having enormous success with this new business model. Crowdsourcing is very different from

outsourcing in the sense that tasks are not contracted to other businesses, but to individual volunteers across cyberspace. Thus, the term "working customer" is often used to refer to these volunteer participants. (Franke and Piller 2004, Etgar, 2008, Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009, Beer and Burrows 2010). Worker dynamic is affected as there is rarely monetary compensation and the job is performed voluntarily. Thus, with crowdsourcing, the traditionally defined role of a consumer has changed. This unique phenomenon is what I focus my research on: Why would consumers willingly use their time and efforts with little or no financial compensation in the development and promotion of a product for a company? Moreover, what factors are critical to the success of some and the failures of others when developing such a community? With this thesis, I uncover some of the underlying processes at play in crowdsourcing, create a typology of consumers who participate, uncover consumer perceptions of this process and develop guidelines for companies to incorporate crowdsourcing into their operations.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Crowdsourcing as Virtual Community Practice

With the accessibility of modern technologies, the ubiquity of brands worldwide, and the urbanization of society, the notion of community has evolved. Howe (2008) further states that with the advent of the web 2.0, especially social media, consumers can connect and collaborate with others who share similar interests. In other words, the web has changed how communities interact with each other. Traditionally communities were regionally constrained. The Internet has broken down communication barriers and people are exposed to a multitude of ideas. Finding others who share one's point of view can be done effortlessly. Multitudes of online tools provide individuals with innumerable potential communication channels. Communities are no longer bound by geography or religion. (Howe 2006); shared consumption practices are what bring people together. Online communities have emerged with brands, products and celebrities as their focus. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, 412) call these new types of consumer clusters *brand community* and define it as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand…it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility." Chafkin (2008) further infers that crowdsourcing is a form of brand community. The three components of a brand community are noticeable amongst participants of crowdsourcing, as I will elaborate in my findings. Moreover, virtually all crowdsourcing projects are done online.

Understanding how these communities operate and their influence on individual members is an important stepping-stone to begin exploring the aforementioned phenomenon. Following Schau et al.'s work on how brand communities operate (2009), I suggest that these processes should be similar within a crowdsourced community. Thus, this is crucial to understanding how crowdsourcing affects participation motives. However, crowdsourcing varies from virtual communities in the sense that a commercial intent on the part of a corporation is present. Moreover, oftentimes communities are started and maintained by those profiting from them.

Although various types of virtual communities exist, four common attributes are present in all of them: First, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002, 5) suggest that all communities are "organized around some distinct interest, which to a lesser or greater extent provides its raison d'être." Examples of these include products such as the Apple Newton (Muniz and Schau 2005), topics such as gardening, psychographic elements such as Twilight fans, or demographics, for example, single people over 50. Second, members of the community should feel a connection towards the other members of the group and a sense of separation from non-members (Wellman and Gulia, 1999). Such ties allow users to form interpersonal relations with one another, thus serving as an incentive for one to return often to the community. Muniz and Schau (2011) give the example of Twilight fans sharing fan-fictions with one another on the series' official site. Third, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002, 5) state virtual communities all develop "shared conventions and language, maintain social roles, establish boundaries, show commitment to communal goals, and follow norms of interactions [called Netiquette]." Finally, virtual communities are built and maintained through active participation. Arnould, Price and Malshe (2006)

recommend companies to only marginally use their operant and operand resources in managing virtual communities. In other words, to ensure the individuals begin participation, community members should not have to learn new skills as a pre-requisite to being part of the community.

Several hypotheses exist regarding the working consumer's motivations in participating in such communities. "By actively participating in a community, consumers enhance their social identity through identification with the brand" (Bagozzi and Dholokia 2006, 49). Belonging to a community influences one's behaviour through the incorporation of group membership within one's social identity. Social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), states that individuals define themselves through multiple affiliations with groups they belong to. They incorporate attributes of these groups to enhance their image. Tajfel and Turner (1979) differentiate three levels of self: actual, social and desired. Members include attributes and features of their member community with any definition of themselves (Park et al. 2010). Howe (2006) reinforces this by showcasing that companies with an active community are those who place their members' interest first, rather than their profits. This factor contributes to one's attachment and feeling of belonging with the brand. In an interview, Jake Nickell, CEO and founder of Threadless.com, mentioned how speaking with fans is the aspect of his work he values the most (Howe 2006). Similar thoughts were shared by the founders of iStockPhoto and ModCloth.

Edgar (2008) suggests that consumers have intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for participating in these virtual communities. Both these motivations require one to react to the actions posed by others (Holbrook 2006 cited in Edgar 2008). The importance of the

feedback is paramount. Without community feedback, a community member's

motivation, either intrinsic or extrinsic, cannot be satisfied. In order to measure this

feedback's influence on individuals, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) refer to Kelman's

(1974) theory of social influence. This theory states that one's actions are highly

influenced by the need for external approval. Participants are motivated to form, maintain

and follow subjective group norms. Norms and boundaries define what actions are

appropriate. Acceptance of these norms is called "internalization." Through

internalization, each individual action is performed by one's attempt to fulfill a goal that

is in line with these norms. Hence, the influence a group has on an individual's actions is

proportional to his/her level of internalization.

Through internalization, individuals recognize they share common goals with one

another and may pose actions together to achieve them (O'Hern and Rindfleish 2010).

"Social intentions form the basis of participation in small group brand communities, since

actions sustaining the community are by the group as a whole" (Bagozzi and Dholakia

2006, 48). Tuomela (1995) defines these social intentions as we-intentions. We-intentions

are "a commitment of an individual to participate in joint action and involves an implicit

or explicit agreement between the participants to engage in that joint action" (p.2). By

observing we-intentions, one can identify social behaviour (Bagozzi and Lee 2002,

Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). Essentially, they can be identified in the form of "I intend

that we act jointly" or "I intend that our group performs group activity X."

Accomplishing we-intentions serve multiple purposes. One is sustaining a positive image

towards other group members and strengthening the relationship between group attributes

and one's ideal self. In the case of crowdsourcing, this can be the improvement of one's skills through the performance of a task.

Crowdsourcing as Prosumption

Participants in crowdsourcing projects can be identified as prosumers. Humphreys and Grayson (2008, 964) define prosumption as " the novelty of asking individuals to simultaneously play the role of consumer and producer." Prosumers are motivated by the enjoyment they get from participating in the project. In other words, this type of consumer values the participatory aspect of consumption. Campbell (2005) argues these individuals have a desire to create and use consumption in order to express themselves. Moreover, these consumers have an established sense of identity. The process of exchanging value is radically altered as the consumer performs tasks previously reserved for the producer (Beer and Burrows 2007). This can occur when the consumer is actively engaged in co-production.

"Co-production implies that consumers participate in the performance of the various activities performed in one or more of these stages [stages traditionally reserved for producers]" (Etgar 2008, 98). Humphreys and Grayson (2008) point out that prosumers undertake responsibilities traditionally reserved for producers. Prosumption also exemplifies the growing trend of consumers seeking experiences rather than product performance (Lusch and Vargo 2006).

Multiple motivational factors serve as a basis for participation: Co-production put the tools into the consumer's hands in order to customize a product. Etgar (2006)

observes that consumers actively create products that reflect their preferences. Holbrook (2006) lists the psychological benefits one can achieve outside the act of consumption of the final product. These are divided into two sub-segments; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic values in a co-production setting include the "desire for play… a search of aesthetics…, a drive for ethics…, spirituality …, excitement and variety seeking" (Holbrook 2006, 284). As for extrinsic motivations, the search for excellence, defined as learning and perfecting one's skills, and the need for self-expression and uniqueness are fulfilled through co-production (Holbrook 2006). Yet, participating in these activities is not free. Walker et al (2006) point out the advent of the web 2.0 has decreased many costs of participation: economic, time and efforts required to engage the crowd into the process of co-production. Still, consumers engaging in co-production incur costs, the biggest being time (Etgar 2006). Those having more discretionary time are more likely to engage in these sorts of activities

Humphreys and Grayson (2008) categorize tasks leading up to consumption of a good or service by segmenting them on a value creation basis. Those creating primary use value, "e.g. when they [consumers] dispense their own soft drinks at a fast-food restaurant" (p.970) do not alter the traditional roles. Prosumers alter the economic system when they perform tasks adding exchange value to a product or service. Exchange value is defined as "an object's relative worth when placed in a value or exchange relation with a commodity of a different kind" (Marx 1867, cited in Humphreys and Grayson 2008, 967). In other words, individuals are using their time and talents to co-produce an object or service through which a corporation will generate a profit. A key difference lays in the act of consumption; it is implied that prosumers will purchase the good (Franke and Piller

2004, Etgar 2006, Etgar 2008, Humphreys and Grayson 2008, Beer and Burrows 2010),

whereas the firm's relationship with participants in crowdsourcing do not necessarily

include purchase (Howe 2006).

Research Propositions

On a product life-cycle curve, co-creation engages consumers prior to the launch

of the product. Due to the recent rise in this phenomenon, literature on crowdsourcing is

fairly limited and consists mostly of anecdotal evidence (Howe 2006, Chafkin 2008). No

clear link has been made between participants' motivations and perceptions of the final

products and those profiting from their sale.

Proposition 1

As crowdsourcing projects are developed via online communities, it is proposed

that crowdsourcing be a form of brand community. Through observation of participant

interactions, one should uncover similar characteristics between a brand community

(Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) and a crowdsourcing community.

Proposition 2

By observing interactions between users within a crowdsourcing community and

analyzing their narratives about their experiences with the community, one will be able to

uncover individuals' motivation to participate. As involvement within a community is

fostered through communication between its members, it can be predicted that the most

active users will enhance their social identity through incorporation of attributes held by the crowdsourcing project into their own. Furthermore, it is proposed that affective bonds will reinforce the relationship between individuals and the company.

Proposition 3

As crowdsourcing is prosumption, it is proposed that the enjoyment of the crowdsourced task will act as a motivator for participants. Furthermore, according to the service-dominant logic (Lusch and Vargo 2006), although participants do not receive financial compensation for their work, they acknowledge an exchange is being made. It is proposed that participants will note the crowdsourcing firm as providing them with an intangible good other than the final product. It has yet to be determined whether they purchase the final product or not.

Understanding what factors motivate individuals to participate in crowdsourcing has many academic and managerial implications. As crowdsourcing is still in its infant stages, this research looks to expand what is currently known by building on related theories. Moreover, this will give managers who are looking to incorporate crowdsourcing into their business plan some guidelines as to what are the best practices.

METHODOLOGY

When selecting a method to perform the research study, I based my selection on Whetten (1998), which asks the question: "What constitutes a theoretical contribution?" In his paper, three elements serve as the basis for a contribution; the "*what* and *how* describe," the "*why* explains." Through this framework, I knew the *how* of this research

would have to allow me to uncover the process of crowdsourcing and how it is orchestrated, *what* would uncover the activities used when participating in crowdsourcing, and *why* would explain the motivating factors. After reviewing the methodologies of others' doing similar research, it became clear to me that the most effective way to go about addressing these questions would be through a qualitative research program relying heavily on interviews. As many of the incentives offered by companies utilizing crowdsourcing are considered "soft rewards," some participants may not consciously recognize what motivates them (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Thus interviews would provide me with the tools to understand the implicit thought processes people go through when deciding to offer their labour for minimal financial reward. Moreover, as crowdsourcing has yet to be studied in depth from the individual's perspective, interviews would allow me to uncover paths towards any processes my initial propositions may have omitted.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, 33) "the design, like the concepts, must be allowed to emerge during the research process. As concepts and relationships emerge from data through qualitative analysis, the researcher can use this information to further advance his research." In this case, performing qualitative research allowed me to see the "big picture." With consumer behaviour, it is difficult to explain certain actions in a closed and isolated environment such as an experiment (Arnould and Thompson 2005). The advantage of interviewing participants is that it does not attempt to isolate their behaviour in a static relationship, but rather to uncover multiple factors that led to this very behaviour. However, prior to getting in contact with those actively contributing to crowdsourcing, preliminary steps needed to be taken in order to conduct interviews as

effectively as possible. First and foremost, I needed to comprehend the environment and the mindset of these individuals prior to getting in touch with them.

Data Sources

Participant Observation

Through my research supervisor, I was introduced to Mode Locale (name changed to protect the identity of research participants and the company), a local non-profit organization looking to develop a crowdsourcing project for their upcoming clothing collection. I was hired as an intern to oversee this project and was permitted to use my observations in my thesis. This opportunity also allowed me to have access to some participants for my research. Previously, Mode Locale had conducted co-creation sessions with several local designers and broadcasted these sessions online. While some argue that co-creation and crowdsourcing are two distinct processes, the way these co-creation sessions were set up allowed me to gather some participant observation data directly.

The way these co-creation sessions were conducted was as follows: the Mode Locale team selected a designer, who in turn partnered up with a charity in order to make a garment. The proceeds would go to the charity in question. Those present at the physical co-creation session were members of the industry who were selected by the designer and the charity; those present online were not, and can be labeled as prosumers. The online participants were targeted through advertisements on Facebook and Google based on their interest in fashion and design. The designer would guide participants through the process of creating a garment. Online participants were asked to give their

opinions to the designer at every step of this process. The goal of these sessions was to design a final garment issued from the opinions of the crowd. These were the people whom I was interested in meeting. Co-creation, conducted through these sessions, consisted of the same process as crowdsourcing. Both require participants to add value to the end product through the incorporation of their preferences; thus I use the words interchangeably.

Although Mode Locale attempted to create a complete crowdsourcing program for their spring 2012 collection, the efforts were ultimately unsuccessful due to lack of funding to build an infrastructure. Through three months of my participation, we had developed a business plan to have the spring 2012 collection designed in a similar fashion as the garments issued from the co-creation sessions. As the project began to approach a development stage, the main source of funding had decided to withdraw their support. In order to pursue the project at a lower cost, several attempts to conduct crowdsourcing on Facebook and Twitter were made, but did not amount to anything substantial. We proposed various options for clothing to form the collection, but did not get get participants to voice their opinions. In my belief, this was due both to the lack of a critical mass of participants to garner enough participation for the project and due to the nature of Facebook. Essentially, people log onto Facebook not to perform work, but rather to stay in touch with their friends. Although these networks are a cost effective way to reach the target population, they proved to be ineffective in generating deep interest on the project. While I did not get the participant base I hoped through this fieldwork, I had the invaluable experience to work at a crowdsourcing attempt that didn't succeed. Moreover, this experience has allowed me to witness some of the challenges in building a

crowdsourcing program first hand. One of the major pitfalls I had not foreseen was the knowledge level of the participants about the process. After reviewing how the co-creation sessions were conducted, I noticed the need to thoroughly explain the process to those present online. Second, I was able to observe a hierarchy between participants. Although, at that stage, I could not identify precisely what made some users more looked up to then others, but this observation allowed me to better formulate my interview questions.

Through my internship, I also got to witness the production side of crowdsourcing. This fieldwork permitted me to observe not only participants, but crowdsourcing from the producer's stand point. These observations will prove to be valuable in the questionnaire creation process as they allowed me to formulate my questions based on participation styles. Furthermore, they helped me to develop guidelines for better implementation. My participant observation at Mode Locale lasted about three months.

Netnography

As part of my research at Mode Locale to build a crowdsourcing program, I needed to observe how competitors operated. Having purchased on Threadless.com in the past, I decided to include it in the communities I would be observing. I became accustomed to the crowdsourcing community of Threadless users. As progress at Mode Locale came to a halt, Threadless.com became my primary research site.

Threadless.com is defined as an "ongoing open-call for submissions [for graphic t-shirt designs] from a worldwide community of artists and designers. Once submitted,

[a] community of over 1 million members cast votes that help [the company] decide which designs go on Threadless stuff" (Threadless 2011). Threadless is classified by Crowdsourcing.org, the industry's reference site, as part of the "crowd creativity" category (Crowdsourcing.org 2011). The company has been in the public spotlight for the past few years due to its overwhelming success utilizing this particular business model. For example, Inc Magazine ran a piece in 2008 stating, "Threadless gets it. The work they receive from their community is just as good, if not better than anything they could pay for" (Chafkin 2008). Having the mainstream media acknowledge this company's success in utilizing crowdsourcing made it the perfect site to conduct my research. Having been a client of theirs for years, I decided to apply my research to this familiar setting. However, prior to getting in contact with the members of this community, I needed to perform some research to learn their rules and rituals. I needed to understand the dynamics of the community prior to interviewing members of it. Thus I resorted to netnography. Principles of netnography (Kozinets 2010) served as guidance through this process.

Netnography involves the study of "technologically mediated social interaction that occurs through the Internet and related information and communication technologies" (Kozinets 2010 pg. 3). Kozinets defines it as "a form of ethnographic research adapted to include the Internet's influence on contemporary social worlds" (pg. 1). Its goal is to allow a researcher to immerse him/herself in a culture. With the new forms of communication made available through the social web, culture does exist online. I used my existing Threadless profile to log into the community section. I began by reading the blog sections. In Threadless, "Blogs" refer to the message boards on the site.

My goal was to understand the language these users had created. Keeping my participation to an observatory state at first was important in order to fully comprehend some of the rituals of the community. Evernote was used as storage for all my findings as it allows for annotation of web clippings. I would save various posts with "Threadless terminology" or certain patterns of communication I would want to look into for further reference in an Evernote database.

I spent about a month as a "lurker" of the community. The understanding of the dynamics of the community came once I began interacting with the users. This interaction took the form of various submissions. I was invited to co-design a few t-shirts, proposed slogans and critiqued. I established direct participation within the community through interactions with other users on the blogs. This is where I feel I learnt the most. Interacting directly with other users, on both design and non-design related topics, allowed me to uncover a certain profile of the typical "Threadless user." Having been a Threadless customer for the past few years, I was accustomed to the website, but netnography allowed me to act like a "native" of the community By doing this sort of immersive research, I was able to better tailor my interview questions, put my participants at ease, effectively communicate with them and understand their train of thought.

Simultaneously, I was taking upon more responsibility at Mode Locale, which helped me to better familiarize myself with the world of fashion. For example, I started to learn what went through the process of designing a garment. Another VIP session was in the works, thus allowing me to participate in its promotion. One of my responsibilities was to speak with those having participated in past sessions to uncover their thoughts

regarding the process. Comparing the hits and misses of Mode Locale's sessions to the interactions on Threadless allowed me to comprehend the "social structure" of a crowdsourcing community and understand what works. The netnography on Threadless took me about a month to complete.

<u>Interviews</u>

After getting accustomed to both companies, I was ready to do interviews. The first three interviews conducted were with staff members at Mode Locale. The purpose of these was twofold: to improve my interview skills and to refine my preliminary interview protocol. An advantage of using interviews as a research technique is the ability to adjust questions based on developing results. In other words, one's research questions are constantly being updated between interviews as a back-and-forth process must take place between each interviews and the data set. For example I was able to find multiple topics that participants pointed me towards but that were not initially covered in my questionnaire.

The initial questionnaire consisted of asking participants two topics: their interest concerning art, design, technology and their browsing habits online and their experience with crowdsourcing. This was done in order to understand what type of person the interviewee is and define the nature of their relationship with computation art. In addition, interviewees were asked to describe their time with their respective crowdsourcing project. The second half of the interviews began with a question that I removed quickly from my initial set of questions. I would ask participants what they knew regarding crowdsourcing. The tone of the interview would change after this point.

Interviewees would attempt to give an "academic" answer, and try to be socially

desirable by giving the "right" answer, which defied the nature of having an in depth

interview. In two cases, I was asked to provide a definition, thus influencing the

interviewees. Holding semi-structured interviews should allow me to uncover processes

participants might not consciously acknowledge. When answers become thought out,

many biases can hinder the results. Thus I removed this question from the interview

protocol for upcoming interviews.

After my initial interviews, I also decided to add more questions regarding one's

background. For example, I found it important to understand at what point art became

important in one's life. Knowing this, combined with how one is able to create art on a

regular basis became essential in putting into context the second half of the interview.

Moreover, an inquiry about one's perceived level of knowledge about the brand and the

process became an important factor that I added to my list of questions. Other changes to

the questionnaire were made throughout the interview iterations. These included

additional probing regarding one's involvement with the crowdsourced community, a

description of the last time the interviewee participated in crowdsourcing and a more in

depth look into one's profession (See Appendix A – Sample Questionnaire).

Once I started getting a clearer direction for interviews, I began interviewing the

past participants in the co-creation sessions of Mode Locale. People were enthusiastic to

speak to me. However, after performing basic analysis on these interviews, I realized I

needed to reach out to members of the Threadless community. Although the motivations

to participate in the co-creation sessions would vary from personal to professional, in this

case, every participant mentioned they were "doing a favour" for someone on the Mode

Locale staff rather than participating for other reasons that are highlighted in this thesis. Thus I realized that the specific context of Mode Locale wasn't the best sample for a broader inquiry on crowdsourcing due to this unique characteristic. To avoid having biased results, I decided to place greater emphasis on the Threadless forums. From then on, I recruited individuals through participating actively on the Threadless.com community.

Since participation was necessary, only active members of the Threadless community forums were contacted. Moreover, as Threadless showcases the amount of "prints" and "subs" one has received, I was able to pre-select members based on their level of involvement. In the Threadless lingo, a "print" refers to one's design that has gone through the selection process of the community. Once the shirt is available for purchase, the designer gets a "print." A "sub" refers to the submission process. Threadless publicly displays the amount of "subs", or the attempts they have made to send one of their designs through the selection process, on one's profile. I attempted to get as varied a group as possible based on their level of activity. I would have access to their contact information through their profile pages. They were contacted by e-mail, directly on the website, through the forums or on Twitter.

Interviews were conducted over Skype or in person. Participants were fully briefed on the scope of this study since knowing the research question would not influence their answers. My goal was to have a conversation with them regarding their experiences on both of these platforms. Participants were told, both through a consent form and verbally prior to the interview, that they were being contacted in order to get a better understanding of their motivations to participate in crowdsourcing. When asked to

provide explanations regarding some of the more technical terms, I referred them to the

Crowdsourcing Wikipedia page and to Crowdsourcing.org, an industry website providing

a brief, but in my opinion, accurate overview of the current developments in the field. I

did not want to provide explanations myself as I may unknowingly influence participants.

The portion of the data collection lasted three months. A total of 13 interviews

were conducted. The total duration of interviews was 318 minutes. Please see Table 1 for

some summary characteristics of the sample. All names are changed to protect the

identity of the participants.

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Location	Age	Occupation
Marc	Montreal	31	Student
Carrie	Toronto	27	Designer
Jessie	Montreal, NewYork	29	Performance artist
Marie	Montreal	28	Editor
Lanette	Calgary	23	Non Profit
Tamisha	Montreal	41	Self employed
Alexandria	Montreal	23	Student
Henri	New Jersey	24	Entrepreneur
Jane	Montreal	25	Student
Ronnie	Connecticut	26	Administrative assistant
Josh	Boston	21	Student
Terry	Oakland	31	Graphic artist
Patricia	Chicago	25	Art director

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The interviews were analysed according to the principles outlined in Case Study Approach (Yin 2008) and Qualitative Research Methods (Berg 2008). The process consists of utilizing a few interviews to uncover general topics called labels. By grouping these, one uncovers the underlying themes of the interview. In other words, after finding all the various topics an interviewee speaks of, the researcher must ask himself/herself, "What is really going on here?" The guidelines provided by the aforementioned authors serve as a basis for conducting analysis of qualitative data in the form of interviews. I began by transcribing one interview from each of the Mode Locale and Threadless groups. Marie and Henri's were chosen for initial analysis due to the broader variety of topics covered. At that time, both interviews were the lengthiest. Moreover, they not only discussed all topics in my original questionnaire, but also brought up aspects to crowdsourcing I had not initially planned for.

I began by coding various labels in both interviews. Labels are the actions and thoughts expressed by the participants in the interview (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Transcribing an interview verbatim has allowed me to compile a detailed list of labels. Then, using these to categorize each question asked was the basis in the development of my list of phenomenon in the data. Classifying labels by phenomenon is done in order to identify the salient trends of the interview. The labels were defined by attempting to observe the intended goal of one's actions.

The interpretation of the interviews was done in an emic approach (Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989). This approach allows for description of lived experiences rather than conceptual terms (etic). In other words, interviews were analysed using the respondents' terms in order to understand the process of crowdsourcing they lived. These

terms were learnt through the netnography stage of the research. Knowing these initial phenomena, I returned to the prosumption and brand community literatures to build upon the background literature and conceptualize the codes into more etic terms. Furthermore, I would utilize the opportunity of performing an in-depth reading of my interviews to write my comments after each section. These allowed me to better conduct the upcoming interviews. For example different questions and cues that I perhaps had missed were identified. My overall questionnaire was modified after each interview as described in the previous section.

For all other interviews, analysis was performed following an iterative approach. A one-page list of idiographic analysis (Fournier 1998) summarizing the commonalities and differences with other interviews was prepared for each participant. Moreover, I reviewed the literature to ensure that the evolution of my questionnaire continued. After 13 interviews, a mind map classifying all participants into different categories based on their common phenomenon was built. A mind map consists of graphical ways to organize ideas and how they relate to each other. This mind map was continuously revised and expanded to include all findings (see Appendix B for the final version). This explained how the results agglomerated and patterned; thus providing me with my initial findings. The final four participants were then purposely selected based on further need for people to confirm the various categories. They were conducted in order to test and revise the initial findings.

FINDINGS

Threadless as a Brand Community

Findings confirm Chafkin's (2008) claim of crowdsourcing being a brand community and my first research proposition. Through the interviews conducted with Threadless members, claims made by interviewees showcase all characteristics of a brand community. Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau (2008) define Threadless participants as a crowd. "This is the term we give to large organized groups who gather or are gathered together specifically to plan, manage, and/or complete particular tractable and well defined projects" (p.345). Threadless community members are focused on the completion of their assigned task. Together, they attempt to elect the next t-shirt to be printed.

Schau et al. (2009) define a brand community as having four characteristics. First, interaction between users on a social platform delimits the space for the community. This space can be both on or offline and sets the stage where ties between members are formed. Members have "similarities across…community members and their normative behavioral expectations of themselves and one another" (Schau et al., 2009, 34). Communities have rituals to welcome new members and operate under self-regulation. The Threadless boards are a perfect example of this. Members have developed their own vernacular. The opinions of the more experienced users, those having multiple prints, weigh more than others in the process of rating, critiquing and co-creation. Moreover, members feel the need to help newcomers familiarize themselves with the community and give honest feedback regarding the process of "subbing" their designs. "I've really become good friends with people on the site and they've really helped me with my art,

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like they'll look at me and give me an honest critique on it" (Josh). Experienced users on Threadless are able to share the benefits of their experience by providing input to more recent users and guiding them towards creating designs which will get green-lighted. Furthermore, blog posts rarely limit themselves to design. They discuss everything from indie music concerts, to street art and current world events. Examples include *Maltzmania*, a user who has scored over 130 000 shirts, asking where to buy prescription glasses online or *Beardfish* inquiring which boots he should buy for his girlfriend. Both posts impart a sense of familiarity which users would have with their Facebook friends rather than a design website. This openness showcases how the community has developed over time. Indeed, long-time members of the community consider themselves a "close-knit" (Henri) group:

> I would check out the forums all the time, check out the comments and respond to them. Some people make threads about nothing related to t-shirts… and it's kind of like a close group of friends, that just joke around about stuff (Ronnie).

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, 418) stipulate the "daily or multi-weekly contact, sustained over several years, enable these friendships to expand beyond brand boundaries."

Second, brand community members preach the brand to the non-members in a favourable manner. Kozinets (2001) observed fans of Star Trek justifying their decision to be community members by defending their dedication to the series. Community members also attempt to correct the misconceptions outsiders may have of them. For example in Kozinets' research, Star Trek devotees who were labeled as geeks would

attempt to downplay these stereotypes. Amongst themselves, they would also share

stories of how they converted others towards the cult show. Similar findings were found

in the context of this research. For example, Henri speaks highly about how "no one at

work really knew what Threadless was, but now I've pretty much brought a bunch of

people to the site." Similarly, Ronnie recalls: "yeah the second I mention 250$ [gift-card]

for a t-shirt design, everyone is like woo." Threadless members are both expressive

regarding their membership and are keen to converting others to the forums. They act as

"altruistic emissaries and ambassadors of good will" (Schau et al. 2009, 34). They speak

about the website to their peers. "I would have my designer friends, my mother, my

cousin. Really anyone come and vote." (Patricia). It is noteworthy to mention Threadless

only recently began to invest in advertising. Traditionally, it relied on word of mouth as

its main vehicle for attracting new clients. Whether intentional or not, this has proven to

be its most effective marketing strategy. Moreover, Threadless benefits from a spillover

of posts from its members on other social networks through sharing of its pages. Both

"The Art of Jonah Block" (Block 2011) and "Made with Awesome's" Facebook fan

pages (Ferstenfeld and Lagin 2011) are examples of such. The artists regularly update

fans through their creative process and with their subs and prints. They are seeking

judgements on their latest pieces. In other words, both artists are directing their fans

towards Threadless. Jonah Block posts "This [a design] really needs more votes" on

December 8th 2011 linking back to one of his posts on Threadless. He is inviting others to

experience the community (scoring) at the same time as promoting himself. This is very

common amongst the artists within the community.

The third defining characteristic of brand communities involves the creation of social capital. Social capital is built through an affiliation with a group. It is developed through bonds and relationships with other individuals (Bourdieu 1986). In other words, social capital is the "credit" one holds by being a member of a group. Social capital is developed within the group when competitive practices are put in place. They allow for members to be ranked as to their engagement with the brand. Schau et al.'s (2009) research outlines the various steps through which community members acknowledge and distribute this capital. There is a four-step process one must undergo when approaching a community. First, users stalk, second they milestone, third they badge, and fourth they document. When a user begins his/her involvement with the brand community, s/he will start by focusing his/her actions and interactions on a specific sub-community. It is unrealistic to presume that newcomers to the community will instantly begin to interact with the community at large. Multiple specialized groups exist within a community. When beginning interaction, one will normally be drawn towards one of these sub-groups. On Threadless, this type of approach can easily be observed. For instance, the "pop-culture reference" group, the "abstract art" group or the "slogan adepts" represent some of the sub-groups new users begin by interacting in. Interviewee Alexandria mentions enjoying the "art on accessories from Society 6", one of Threadless' spin-off websites, more than any other forums, while Henri speaks about the "slogans [group] as being the black sheep of Threadless." Although users will inevitably hover between rating, designing, blogs and co-designing, they will make their first connections in a certain sub-groups. Threadless provides their own sub-categories such as "staff picks, critics, products and blogs" but community members subdivide them even more. Under

the products page, design posts can be filtered by a variety of topics including zombies, pop culture, and abstract. Stalking occurs once a user begins returning to the community. Members arrive to the community through different paths, but as they repeat their visits, they are building relationships with others.

Milestoning, the second stage, occurs when a community member experiences an important moment in his/her relationship with the brand. In other words, when an individual is creating memories with the community or the brand, these moments are called milestones. Patricia recalls her first memory with Threadless:

I created this one of a kind, hand-made portfolio and just sent it to Threadless… and *all of a sudden* [emphasis added] I get an e-mail, or call or tweet… he wanted to know if I wanted to come out and visit, just hang out and meet the people.

The third stage, badging, is closely related to the second as peer recognition of these milestones occur. One's actions within the community are recognized by other members and are publically acknowledged. In these instances, cultural capital is created. Cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986) consists of the tastes, skills and knowledge that one acquires and is socially recognizable. Members are ranked in order of their achievements. In the case of Threadless, having a design printed is the primary goal of community members. Once a member's design has been chosen to be sold, s/he receives a crest on his profile page. Moreover, the shirt in question becomes part of the "new arrivals of the week." As mentioned by Ronnie and Henri, new members seem to think it is very easy to have one's design printed. In reality, only a very small percentage of the shirts submitted ever make the cut. In order to get selected, a design must pass a

screening process by receiving a high enough score from the community. For the artist, this represents the approval from his peers. In this case, one's cultural capital is reflected through the set of design skills, the understanding of the Threadless brand and the community's taste. Ronnie who made several attempts at winning a contest before adjusting his art to the Threadless community's taste. He explains his feelings when he finally gets the recognition he desires:

> I got the e-mail [of winning the contest] and like… I was jumping around,
> I was really excited… I was like I won, I get to have a t-shirt printed, I had
> been sub'ing t-shirts for a while now, and it hadn't happened yet.

Thus, one of the ways badging is represented at Threadless is through the print crest on one's profile. Non-artists can also receive recognition from their peers. One's profile on Threadless is filled with how many t-shirts one owns, how many designs one has rated, date of entry into the community and various other statistics regarding activities on the site, all of which can act as a basis of comparison between members. The final stage is documenting. At this stage, the member will share his/her memories about the brand with others. S/he also actively participates in the badging process of others. At this stage, one's cultural capital is showcased. Through sharing stories, a participant is highlighting the experiences s/he has had with the brand to others.

The fourth characteristic of a brand community is the customization of the brand. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) highlight members of the Apple Newton community's ability to modify the device's code to allow it to perform functions it was not intended to do. They also note Lomo fans that share tips with others to distort their camera lens in order to create better special effects. As for Threadless, control of the brand is given to its

members. By allowing the community to both create and select which design will get sold, customization is made mandatory. Crowdsourcing actually enhances the fourth characteristic of Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) brand communities. Members are encouraged to find new uses for the product since they are invited into its production stages. The designers are consistently using the t-shirt as a mouldable canvas for their art. It is also through the community that the idea for laptop sleeves, iPad cases and printable wall art has become available in the web site. Threadless' has also recently begun promoting co-creation. Co-creation was also something users were doing and the company noticed and decided to offer officially.

Yet, a paradox exists in this personalization process. As community members are given an increased control of the product, one would think they would want to disregard some of the attributes that the producer has designed for the product and replace them with their own. Participants seek to add value to the products by placing emphasis on attributes that showcase the community's involvement with the brand. One would think they would ignore the producer to do as they please. As the individuals are given some control of the product and interpretation, logically they should elect to ignore the producer's guidelines. The paradox exists in that they value the grassroots movement grown out of the community but disregard the establishment of the multinationals governing these communities. Examples of such are Garmin GPS fans modifying the maps to better display reality but rushing to update their devices with the company patch, or Jones Soda fans looking down at the mass distribution of Coke but praising Starbucks for carrying the brand. As for Threadless, Henri spoke about this paradox: "I just feel I want to help them [Threadless] because they've given so much back to me. They're just

cool guys, they stayed down to earth" (Henri interview). Henri chooses to disregard the corporate giant Threadless has become over the past few years. He speaks about the corporation's owners as regular members of the community.

> Yeah just about the community and Threadless itself, Threadless is a amazing to me, to have their own company that the CEO, you make a blog, a random person makes a blog about something, about Threadless and the CEO answers you like 20 minutes later on the blog. And they're like "that's a really cool idea, we'll use it."

Simultaneously, community members go beyond what the Threadless boards intended by discussing private matters, by co-creating and using their designs to print on other objects. And as the company integrates these ideas into their business model, the community praises them for doing so. Moreover, as Threadless partners up with major retailers, such as Gap, to sell their products, the community rushes to purchase them (Quinton 2009, Glassman 2012).

Motivations to be Part of the Brand Community

Consumer empowerment

By becoming an active member in a brand community, participants gain control over their favourite brands. Brand communities, as described by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) give control to consumers and shift the balance of power from the corporation to the individual. Consumers assert a claim of ownership over their brands. "These

impassioned and empowered consumer collectives assert more channel power and make claims on core competencies formerly reserved for the marketer" (O'Guinn and Muniz 2005, 256). More precisely, brand communities allow consumers to distort and share their own interpretation of brands. The control of the base product remains in the hands of the producer (Cova and Pace 2006). With crowdsourcing, consumer empowerment not only occurs, but it is encouraged as control of the product is given away by the producer. Thus, consumers are now in a position to create both the brand and the desired interpretation they wish others to have of it. Online consumers are appropriating their favourite brands. This is in line with Holt (2004, 15), who asserts consumer views have evolved from brands as "privately owned intellectual property" to "shared cultural capital."

A clear shift in the consumer mindset has occurred over the past few years. Alexandria speaks about the process a shirt must go through in order to be printed: "It's fun to know that people are putting their designs out there, not every one of them are getting chosen." She then speaks about the brand as belonging to the people rather than a commercial entity: "Yeah, it's something unique that you wouldn't find anywhere else, although I'm seeing more and more, but it's cool, there is this kind of community feeling, like we're insiders." Then, she goes on to speak about how the design contests bring out higher quality designs than those issued by the company itself. She enjoys the Threadless brand due to the fact that she cannot find such unique designs anywhere else.

On the designer side, Tamisha, who was part of Mode Locale's crowdsourcing efforts, wished she had been given more room to express herself with the product. "I would have liked to gone up to Quebec City, to see the factory, it's like I was never

involved with my own project." Tamisha's experience also demonstrates how consumer empowerment threatens the traditional position of the designer. The power is taken away from the designer and placed into the hands of the working consumer. What engaged consumers enjoy about this process is the ability to tailor the end product as they wish and have an input. They come to feel they can dictate the brand to represent what they want it too. They are given the power to create product attributes. The attributes they choose for the product are based on their desired interpretation of the product. This is how crowdsourcing places power in the hands of the consumers.

Moreover, as collective creativity requires considerable voluntary effort, it is inferred that every participant is interested by the tasks at hand. It is assumed the same will be reproduced with crowdsourcing as participants have great interest in the tasks at hand. For both the Mode Locale and the Threadless groups, all participants have shown a passion for fashion and art respectively.

Cova and Pace (2006) studied the shift in consumer's mindset as Ferrero, the makers of Nutella, developed an official forum for fans to showcase their love of the chocolate spread. Prior to this, fan pages were shut down by the company in order that bonds only are built between members and the official page. After the launch of the company owned page that provided fans with hosting for their own fansites, an increase in the feeling of ownership of the brand was observed. Participants felt empowered as the company allowed them to express their passion. As will be discussed in the next section, the most involved types of participants (communals and utilizers) would declare their passion for the crowdsourced task.

<u>Need for recognition – symbolic capital</u>

The need for recognition has been shown to influence people to participate in virtual communities. Virtual communities are set up in such ways to allow users to be "self-exposed", thus utilizing this existential need for recognition (Cauquelin 2003). By allowing users to set up personal pages, they can showcase their brand moments. This still holds with collective creativity as one's products are showcased on these pages. By allowing users to showcase themselves through participation in crowdsourcing, virtual communities are given fuel to enforce this self-exposure. This need for recognition can be satisfied through both gaining cultural and social capital:

> Social life can be conceived as a multidimensional status game in which people draw on three different types of resources (economic, cultural and social capital) to compete for status (Bourdieu 1984 cited in Holt 2004, 3)

Crowdsourcing is centered on a community of people showcasing their work. Through this exposure, participants gain both social and cultural capital. Cultural capital stems from the recognition one receives for their work. Social capital is developed through friendships formed through membership within the community. Patricia speaks about how impressed she was when going to a Threadless meet-up. "Those people who have 20-30 [printed] shirts up there, I got to meet all these people who are basically Threadless legends." The community pays attention to how many prints one has received. The capital stems from the amount of prints one has been able to achieve. Ronnie speaks of how he was approached by some influential community members in order to collaborate. "It was by Biotwist, which I think he won a Best-Tee award for most

collaboration." The majority of the interviewees speak positively of influential members of the community. They also acknowledge other's accomplishments throughout their blogs.

Incorporation of the brand into one's self

Participants in crowdsourcing who act as community members are building their social identities. Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn (1995) find group identity, a form of identity, to act as "belonging" as opposed to other forms of identity building activities which help individuals define themselves as unique. Furthermore, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) provide greater insight by dividing collective social identity into both a cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component refers to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) first characteristic of a brand community: consciousness of kind. "Shared consciousness, a way of thinking about things that is more than shared attitudes or perceived similarity. It is a shared knowing of belonging" (Weber [1922] 1978). Striving for common goals plays a key factor when defining this characteristic. In the case of Threadless, the common goal of the community is to print the best t-shirt. Henri speaks about how he will help other members with their designs. Through this process, he is actively participating in the survival of Threadless. Without new content, the company cannot continue:

> I have a couple ideas I think would be great for you, check these out, if
> they like any of them, they tell me, like I said I'm very open to adding
> something to the idea that they have or if they're like "I like this, but not

so much this." I always "may the best idea win and it doesn't matter who's idea it is, its just the best idea wins.

The affective component is developed through member interactions. Participating members receive their motivation through the emotional bonds they form. "Members feel an important connection to the brand, but more importantly, they feel a stronger connection towards one another" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Fournier and Lee 2009). This is a timely process developed through recurring actions. For completely committed members, the friendships they build become more important than the brand. "I made contacts, ended up becoming friends. Turns out they were friends with some of my friends, so we just had mutual friends" (Patricia).

The community's influence on one's actions is defined as engagement. Or in other words, engagement is the strength of the identification one has with the community. Thus, the higher one's level of engagement, the more overlap between one's perceived self-identity and the group-based identity (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). In effect, the level of engagement is inversely proportional to the difference between one's self-perception and identification with the group. Thus, the actions posed within the group are also seen as an expression of one's personal values (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann 2005). In the context of crowdsourcing, these actions are the tasks being submitted to the crowd. Completing these tasks and self-exposing within the community acts as a way to entertain friendships but to also reinforce one's group based identity. Thus, those who have formed friendships with other community members, and who identify themselves as active community members, will be amongst those who actively accomplish the tasks at hand.

<u>**A Typology of Participation**</u>

A typology of the different roles participants hold was created based on two criteria: level of engagement and actions posed as part of crowdsourcing. Table 2 summarizes participants' crowdsourcing project, roles and a representative quote for each participant's engagement style taken from their interviews.

<u>Category 1: Communals</u>

Out of all participants, the most committed type of Threadless user displays all of the characteristics outlined above: consumer empowerment, need for recognition, incorporation of the brand into one's self. They are the core members of the Threadless brand community. As demonstrated earlier, Threadless displays all three characteristics of a brand community. Nevertheless, only a certain group of participants are motivated by the community engagement of the site. Although communication with one another is not mandatory, some choose to do so. Within the study, four participants; Henri, Patricia, Josh and Marie were identified as members of this group (see Table 2). All characteristics of brand communities have been found to motivate participants of this study. First, all four participants acknowledge being part of the Threadless community, which is consistent with Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) consciousness of kind. Josh mentions:

Table 2: Participation Styles

Pseudonym	Community	Duration of Participation	Participation Style	Purchased co-created Products	Summary Quote for Participation Style
Marc	Mode Locale	5 months	Lurker	3 shirts	Everybody wants to interact with their keyboards and their laptops. They just want to say something.
Carrie	Mode Locale	2 years	Utilizer	Fur Accessory	The designs were brainstormed, but in the end, I did everything in my living room
Jessie	Mode Locale	6 months	Aspirer	None	I could say something, and people would listen to it. I don't think it would mean a lot.
Marie	Mode Locale	1 month	Communal	None	You get to build relationships
Lanette	Mode Locale	1 year	Lurker	None	I had forgotten I had done it
Tamisha	Mode Locale	3 months	Utilizer	Bag and clutch	I felt I wasn't involved in my own project
Alexandria	Threadless	2 years	Aspirer	5-10 shirts. Tote bag, laptop and ipod cover	I'm not the type of person that wears t-shirts that have a message or logo. It's part of why I go to Threadless
Henri	Threadless	5 years	Communal	500+ shirts	That's how I can help, that's the least I can do for people putting so much effort into all their work on Threadless

Jane	Threadless	3 years	Lurker	About 30 shirts	Once in a while when I have nothing to do [I rate shirts]
Ronnie	Theadless	2 years	Utilizer	200 + shirts	I just felt the way Threadless is built, it's a lot easier for people to get your stuff out there for people to see
Josh	Threadless	4 years	Communal	300 + shirts	If you ask, well all my friends, and you talk about Threadless, you are talking about me.
Terry	Threadless	2 years	Utilizer	10 – 50 shirts	It's not an exceptional design, but it's not the same type of t-shirt you normally see on Threadless
Patricia	Threadless	3 years	Communal	200+ shirts	We kept in touch on Twitter, Facebook… everyone has their outlets

First I just came for the shirts, and I realized there's this little community on it,

and I just joined a couple blogs … you get hooked to it. You meet all these cool

people, both artists and bloggers, and I started designing a little bit, and then

met people which who are really cool.

Common characteristics are shared between community members. All active participants in the Threadless community share a passion for art and design. As the task at hand requires one to have an interest in art, all interviewees had the commonality of sharing this passion, although those in this category share the ability to design electronically. As Patricia describes it, she cannot remember a time in her life when art was absent: "I've always been lucky in the sense I've always known that I was going to do something in art, ever since I've been able to hold a pencil." This common characteristic is usually one of the first topics of conversation on the blogs. Furthermore, users mention the blogs as a place to "just fool around" (Josh). Even though they cannot exactly describe it, they speak about a very particular humour shared by all. As most of the shirts are designed to be funny, sarcastic and make reference to pop culture, those making them have similar understanding of this humour. Josh explains, "we would just talk about random stuff. It was just people who had the same humour as me and like as stupid as we were, I enjoyed it." Members are also conscious of differences relative to other t-shirt websites. Henri explains it:

There are countless other websites who have taken the idea of Threadless or

become a "once a day" t-shirt place. You know, Shirtwoove, Tee-fury you know

all these places. And you know a lot of them print a lot of, especially tee fury, is

just a pop culture wasteland, its just really simple obvious ideas where the pop

culture is really doing all the heavy lifting. Like you are drawing something but
you are not creating anything new, you are just creating a re-run, something that
has been done. Threadless, for the most part, is away from that. I think when
they print you know, show me something new.

Community members also acknowledge their talent. They differentiate themselves from
non-community members through their art skills. One of the first things both Josh and Henri
spoke about when describing the people who were "heavy users," or "Threadless legends" as
they call them, is both creativity and talent for designing wearable art. "Like, there are so many
talented artists on the site" (Josh). "... but with what I had, you know working with so many
talented people and improving my skills" (Henri). Although they cannot precisely describe the
type of person that is a Threadless member, they recognize each other through wearing the shirts.
Even though outsiders have some sort of knowledge about these shirts due to the growing
popularity of the site, very few can precisely pinpoint them offline. A key element of participants
who are part of the communal group is that they can identify other members in public space:

Oh definitely! It's funny because even though the site has grown, and a lot of
creative know about it, they might not know it's a specific Threadless T-shirt, but
if you mention Threadless, they'll go "oh yeah", I know, maybe I'll go look. It's
funny, you know, walking around here, and probably anywhere, you recognize it,
because you just know what the artwork looks like (Patricia).

Community members also hold rituals and traditions, the second characteristics of a
community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). They develop a language used solely on the blogs.
Traditionally, a blog is defined as a "reverse chronological online diary. Blogs are progressively

created personal narratives with textual and/or visual content about a variety of topics such as one's everyday life, consumption experiences, political punditry, news, fan culture, and other interests" (Arsel and Xhao, forthcoming). On Threadless, a blog acts as a web forum where participants interact. In the rating system, they add a $ to the comments, meaning, "I would buy it." Furthermore, they have expressions proper to them. "Sub'ing" a tee refers to placing a design up for submission Offline, Threadless organizes multiple meetings called "Meet-ups."

"Threadless have all these events planned for the Saturdays. There are a lot of artists that get printed that go to these meet-ups and they give presentations. It's pretty cool, you get to see a lot of people you idolize" (Josh). Meet-ups allow community members to interact with each other. Friendships are highly reinforced through these meet-ups. The affective component described by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) is developed here. "We kept in touch [after a Threadless meetup] on Twitter, Facebook… everyone has their outlets" (Patricia). Moreover, for the old-time Threadless community members; those who have developed the eye as to what gets printed on the site, they stop and talk to each other offline. Henri mentions the mixed reaction he gets out of this.

> Sometimes I go, 'hey, that's a nice shirt.' I've learned that when you go 'hey
> Threadless shirt' most people are like 'huh what?' they're just a little freak out.
> People either know what they are wearing, or sometimes they were just given it,
> or sometimes they are more of an occasional buyer.

Patricia, who is currently working as an art director, speaks of how she frequently gets stopped by other communals due to the shirts she wears.

Seeing a Threadless t-shirt on TV, you recognize it, because you just know what

the art work looks like… you just know they're from Threadless, and you'll be

walking down the street and you'll hear "Threadless," and you're like "Yeah." It's

just cool.

The sense of moral responsibility, the third characteristic of community (Muniz and

O'Guinn 2001), is very high towards other community members. Members have a sense of debt

towards Threadless and others for the opportunity and critiques they have received on their work.

They feel they must give back to the community by giving their honest opinion of one another's

work. Henri explains:

I was like "that's great, you don't have to approve anything I say, that's fine, but

I'm going to be perfectly honest with you so that's how I can help, that's the least

I can do for people putting so much effort into all their work on Threadless…"

And that's what I mean by the least I can do, I've gotten so much out of

Threadless that I feel that's the best way I can pay Threadless back and the

community of ours.

Josh also mentions how he will be honest, but never give a "0" as a rating, since "I mean,

they still put the effort into doing it." What Threadless gives to its members is a platform to

expose their art. "Since I took art out of my life, this is like the only thing I really have art wise."

These types of community members are passionate about design. As for Montreal Couture,

Marie acknowledges the benefits for both parties to get involved.

But usually they're very open, because that's what they want, they want to hear

from the customer's perspective, whether they act on it or not, they got that

information or answer. So I feel it's a win-win.

This is in line with Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) who stipulate virtual communities are

built with a central topic. Part of the required tasks outsourced by the company is to pick which

designs will get printed. This is consistent with Tuomela's (1995) we-intentions where members

will work together towards a common goal. In this case the common goal is that of selecting the

designs. In the context of crowdsourcing, those we-intentions are the guidelines provided by the

company.

The affective component discussed in Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and in O'Guinn and

Muniz (2005) is observable in these cases. Participants develop friendships with one another. "I

ended up [after being invited to Threadless to visit] making a bunch of contacts there, art

directors, creative directors, and now we're friends, and we have mutual friends" (Patricia).

"There are a couple people that I started talking too since I came there, and they've become some

of my best friends" (Josh). The participants bond on a deeper level than solely designing shirts.

They know about each other's lives, they stay updated through various social networks and they

plan trips to visit each other in various cities:

We now talk outside of co-creation, we try to make cool sites. We now e-mail

each other, you know Facebook, outside Threadless projects. I probably have

friends on every continent now all thanks to Threadless, I know about their

personal life, it's more than just designing. (Henri)

These friendships are what keep community members engaged with Threadless. It is the reason why they return to the site as often as they do. One aspect Mode Locale omitted and Threadless capitalized on is the possibility of connecting with others on a constant basis. Lanette needed to use her other social networks to stay in touch with her recent connections.

Out of all the types of participants in Crowdsourcing, communals are the most engaged and the ones whose members spend the most time on the site. This specific type of participant is fully engaged within the community. They participate by rating, designing, collaborating with others and act as ambassadors to the brand. According to Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), "a person achieves social identity [in a community] through self-awareness of one's membership." These community members identify with Threadless. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue it is common for people to define themselves through various group associations:

> Yeah [in response to whether he brought someone to the site that didn't know of],
>
> a lot of people ask where my shirts are from. Threadless designs are pretty unique,
>
> and I always like doodles and funny designs. If you ask, well all my friends, and
>
> you talk about Threadless, you are talking about me (Josh).

This is in line with Chafkin's (2008) claim that crowdsourcing is a form of brand community with one important distinction: the brand connection does not consist solely of the consumption of the brand, but rather of prosumption. Traditionally, brand use would consist of using products as intended. Communities may enhance this through sharing tips on new features for the product (Muniz and Schau 2005), tricks to preserve the product or brand stories (Fournier 1998). With crowdsourcing, this relationship with the product is altered. Consumers are asked to design the product (Humphreys and Grayson 2008). The act of prosuming replaces conversations

communities would normally have around brand use. The user now has control of the product. "Like there are so many talented artists on that site… and they've just really helped me with my art" (Josh). Moreover, as users help each other become better at creating products, in the case of Threadless, at designing, this reinforces their identification with the brand. The increased participation within the community has been proven to allow individuals to enhance their feeling of identification with the brand (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). Participation is defined here both in terms of interaction and design. Thus, the more a user submits designs and helps others with their art, the higher the engagement and by extension the more he should build his identity through identification with the brand. This supports the second research proposition. Since communals have the highest level of engagement, they are the group that utilizes the crowdsourcing project to incorporate into their social identity.

Category 2: Utilizers

Getting some material or symbolic benefits through the task being crowdsourced is what motivates the second group of participants. Performing a task is done with the intent of self-expression or improving one's craft. Professionals participating in crowdsourcing are also grouped under this category. Four interviewees were classified in this group; Tamisha, Carrie, Ronnie and Terry (see Table 2).

Self-Expression

The act of participating in crowdsourcing yields benefits for participants through self-expression. Etgar (2008, 102) finds that participation in co-creation "can yield potential benefits independently of the nature of the good or services created in the process." In other words, those participating in co-creation gain benefits out of the process rather than the end product. As crowdsourcing implies one to perform a creative task, in can be inferred his/her actions are expressive. Campbell (2005) named this type of consumer "Craft Consumer." Just as those involved in arts as a hobby, personal opinions are sought after in the production stages. The term craft was chosen to emphasize the amount of control the consumer has over the end product. "One may say the craft producer is one who invests his or her personality or self into the object produced" (27). As for crowdsourcing, generic guidelines instruct participants regarding the tasks to be performed, and much room is left for interpretation, thus it can be inferred that the end result is highly expressive.

Tamisha, from the Mode Locale group, who is a designer by profession, participated in the first co-creation session, but she was disappointed by the amount of control she was allowed to put into the product. Findings are contrary to what one would hypothesize: "I wanted him to include me more, like in finding the factory … I wasn't involved in my own project." As for the case for Threadless, the guidelines were more binding than Mode Locale's. When Paul expresses his feelings about his latest submission, he acknowledges that there were differences between his shirt and other shirts currently being rated:

> It's not an exceptional design or anything, but it's not the same type of t-shirt and
> design you normally see on Threadless, it's much more basic, a bit more… a bit
> less… elaborate, it's not full poster sized like most of the other ones.

The key takeaway is Threadless members embrace the fact they have been constrained in their designs. Members of this group acknowledge that there exists a "Threadless style," but still choose to disregard it when submitting their designs, thus insisting on self-expression:

All the hours I've spent, and then getting not that great response, where I personally thought they were my best work. I think comedy is kind of what rules on Threadless, and it's ok, because some people have some very funny t-shirts on there (Ronnie).

Ronnie then mentions how he still submits his own work to receive comments from others. His major in graphic design has brought him to seek out critics.

Participants feel Threadless' platform enables them to fully express themselves, as this is in line with the company's values. Ipeirotis and Horton (2011) highlight the need for standardization in crowdsourcing. They foresee benefits of a mobile workforce performing various tasks. They praise the benefits of having a proprietary platform to perform crowdsourcing as being able to remedy externalities. In other words, hosting the crowdsourcing project on a single platform encourages the various members to give feedback, hence increasing the perception of self-expression. Humphreys and Grayson (2008) link one's need for expression and their motivation to participate in prosumption. Threadless has managed to strike a balance between the standardization of the process and the participant's desire to engage in acts of self-expression. Allowing one solely to submit designs that can be printed on the front or back of a shirt has standardized the process. "Elaborate artistic renderings that basically take up the entire t-shirt, and that's just… ahh, I call them walking art prints, you know" (Terry). Essentially, Terry

speaks about how the t-shirt has become the canvas and how participants will vary in their approach to use it. Some will fully exploit the space provided while others will submit smaller centered designs. As for Mode Locale, the garments did not have a fixed set of standards nor was the crowdsourcing done on a single platform. Designers and participants were free to design any type of accessory. "The designs [for the accessories an upcoming Mode Locale line] were brainstormed, but in the end, I did everything by hand in my living room" (Carrie). One would think the greater flexibility would lead to an increase feeling of self-expression, but Humphreys and Grayson (2008) found just the opposite. When asked about the impact of the community on her accessory's design, Tamisha responded: "It changed it considerably, … the elements of the bag were there, but completely different then how I pictured it, the straps, handles." The guidelines allowed for one to be more expressive within the set boundaries. Although few felt constrained by this enhanced freedom, the majority will benefit from having clearly defined guidelines. This is slightly different than what was predicted in the second research proposition. The enjoyment of the process was predicted to act as a motivator, but it was highly affected by the level of constraints to self-expression and the expertise of the participants. More expert participants seemed to prefer fewer constraints, while less professional ones preferred more. Due to limited sample and exploratory nature of the study, these are just qualitative observations. I suggest researchers to conduct further controlled studies to investigate on the optimal level of constraints to maximise the enjoyment.

Cultural Capital

A key component of this group is their lack of interest towards community. They participate in crowdsourcing primarily to practice and hone their skills. They do not interact with the community; they participate on an individual basis:

> I don't do it regularly, I'm not a very active community member… I think I've maybe rated 20, it's not a lot, it's just something that I'm looking at T-shirts anyways, so I just pop in and rate (Paul).

De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp (2000) define cultural capital as shared status-symbols, such as taste, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, one can exhibit. In other words, cultural capital involves intangible assets owned by individuals, such as knowledge in a specific field, which can be showcased and acknowledged by others. Bourdieu (1986) defines this as one's embodied state, a subset of cultural capital.

> The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment, above all of time, but also of that socially constituted form of libido with all the privation, renunciation and sacrifice that it may entail (p.18).

Members of this group have a passion for design: "Illustration is my passion" says Ronnie. Since crowdsourcing does not provide financial reward, the enjoyment of the process and improving one's craft acts as motivators to be an active member. "I've worked on many things, but I never pushed hard to get them on Threadless, it was all just designs that I made for fun" (Terry). Some also participate to move forward in their career. From the Mode Locale group, Tamisha decided to get involved with the project as a way to gain exposure for her career. "I met Janet through an event, and she wanted to help me advance, so she got into contact with Jonathan

and he got into contact with me." This also is congruent with the self-expression motivators of this group. By acknowledging the community's taste but still creating art for themselves, members of this group are working to improve their skills. This finding was not predicted in the research propositions but rather emerged from the interviews.

Category 3: Aspirers

The third category of crowdsourcing participants are all less engaged than the first two groups. Their participation is limited to small tasks that extend to giving their opinions or ratings in order to shape the final product. A key characteristic of this group, as opposed to others, is the consumption of the end product. Members of the communals and utilizers groups view consumption of the end product as detached from the crowdsourcing project. Those in this group use both their participation within the project and the consumption of the product as a way to shape their self-concept. Ownership of a product can act as a way for a consumer to express himself or herself. Brands offer individuals the means to reinforce their self-identity through differentiation from others (Escalas and Bettman 2003). This being said, as the end product and the act of prosuming are both represented by the same brand, both allow consumers to develop their self-concept.

When consuming a public good, consumers create an image of themselves to showcase to others. Belk (1988) has uncovered it is common for individuals to view some of their possessions as being part of their identity. Furthermore, McCracken (1988) explains this as consumers hope the qualities possessed by a certain brand will transfer to their self-image. Consumption of public

goods becomes a self-defining activity as selection of brands is done in order to build one's

identity. Consumers choose products on the willingness of being perceived as a stereotypical

person of the reference group they wish to become. Niedenthal, Cantor and Kihlstrom (1985)

have found that people base their selection of an item that is viewed as being consumed by a

prototypical user of a reference group. "They select products by matching themselves to

prototypical users, a heuristic labeled *prototype matching*" (341) Consumption, as described by

Holbrook (2006), includes not only the purchase of a product, but also the experience

surrounding the purchase. In the case of crowdsourcing, the experiential side of the product

includes the tasks that must be performed. In other words, actions posed by individuals in the

process of prosumption are equivalent in their minds to consumption. By applying this to

crowdsourcing, one builds his/her ideal self by matching the activities of typical participants

within the crowdsourcing project.

In the case of Threadless, Alexandria mentions how she purchases the shirts as they

represent who she is. "I'm not the type of person that wears t-shirts that have a message or a

logo… It's part of why [I go on Threadless]." With Threadless, a key characteristic of the shirts

is their uniqueness. They are original and described by all interviewees as artistic. As the

submission of a shirt requires some knowledge of design software, participants' actions are

limited compared to both prior groups.

> I've never commented, if I rate 5, to me, it means I like it, and the same with a 1, I
>
> guess I don't find myself prepared or educated enough to … to make constructive
>
> criticism, like who am I to say to (Alexandria).

In the case of Mode Locale, the same occurs. Jessie, who participated online in one of their co-creation sessions, mentions how she would feel she could voice her opinion, but it would be taken into consideration to a smaller extent than those who had technical knowledge about production of fashion accessories: "I mean, I could say something, and people would listen to it. I don't think it would mean a lot, but it was an interesting collaborative project."

Although participation is restricted due to lack of knowledge, both interviewees publicly announce their participation in the project. "I've said to a few people on the street like Hey Threadless, so it's like… hey you know, [interpreted by interviewer as "you are wearing one too, so you are aware of Threadless"]…so we're kind of insiders" (Alexandria). While perhaps not being true insiders, members of this group model their actions to those in the communals and utilizer groups. Etgar (2006) finds the biggest cost for individuals to be the time commitment required in order to participate. Furthermore, in the case of crowdsourcing, specialized knowledge is a necessity. A minimum amount of cultural capital is needed. In the case of Threadless, operating computerized design software acts as a barrier of entry for many. Members of the aspirers group don't hold the cultural capital necessary to ascend to the communal or utilizer groups. In accordance with Etgar (2006), they do not invest the time to either participate in prosumption or learn the skills required to do so. They consume the end product as a way to enhance their self-concepts and mimic both communals and utilizers. In other words, members of this group attempt to incorporate the common characteristics shared by the brand and the prosumers who help create the brand into the image they project of themselves to others.

This group was not included in the research proposition. As the first proposition states the most active members will be the ones who enhance their self-concept through crowdsourcing,

this group comes to contradict the prediction. Members of the aspirers are not the most engaged with the crowdsourcing project; yet still enhance their social identity through identification with the group. These emergent findings were not predicted; however provide interesting insights as members of this group actually purchase the firm's products unlike the first two groups. These will be further discussed in the managerial implications.

Category 4: Lurkers

The final group of participants ranks the lowest in terms of involvement compared to all others. They enjoy taking part in the crowdsourcing project without investing many resources into it. They follow online trends and do not keep the crowdsourcing project as top-of-mind. They already have established online behaviours where some crowdsourcing activities might occasionally fit, such as the Facebook voting page of Mode Locale. They purchase the final product without paying much attention to the process surrounding its production. The crowdsourcing activity is not recognized as such. Members of this group do not see themselves as participating in the creation of a product. Etgar (2006) finds prosumers go through a thought process regarding the benefits and costs associated with participation. Members of this group value their time more then the benefits of participation. On the opposite side, Humphreys and Grayson (2008) found the biggest motivator for prosumers to be the enjoyment of the process and these participants do not enjoy the process much. Members of this group qualify their participation as "killing time" (Jane) thus crowdsourcing is performed in downtime online.

As for Threadless, Jane only visit the site when she receives the monthly e-newsletter regarding sales. She needs to be constantly reminded to return to the site, as she does not think of it on her own. Moreover, when asked regarding her thoughts on the process a shirt needs to go through prior to being sold, she stated that she was unfamiliar with it. When it comes to her participation, it is limited to rating shirts: "Well once in a while, when I have nothing to do. Especially when they have a sale, I'll just log on and then end up staying for a few hours rating shirts." As for the Mode Locale group, when contacted, Lanette did not remember much about her involvement with the project: "I had kind of forgotten I had done it, and before we chatted, I didn't even realize I was part of co-creation." Although she had posted a few comments throughout one of Mode Locale's co-creation sessions regarding, she did not inquire about the outcome of this project until the time of the interview: "To be honest, I haven't [followed up] I haven't had a chance, which sounds crazy." The Mode Locale co-creation session Lanette attended was on Facebook, which is part of her online browsing schedule. Mode Locale was able to insert themselves into her habits, thus reaching her in an efficient manner. On the downside, she confused the co-creation with regular Facebook comments, thus not realizing what her participation entailed and contributed to. Neither interviewees interacted with others in the community nor acknowledged their actions as participating in crowdsourcing. Like the aspirers, this group was not included in any of the research propositions. It emerged throughout the research process.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Contributions

This research helps develop the literature on the still infant field of crowdsourcing. Although much of the current literature on this phenomenon lies in the fields of computer science and management, my research is one of the first to look at the crowdsourcing phenomenon from the consumer's point of view. This exploratory research has created a typology of individuals who participate in crowdsourcing. Motivations to participate in these projects serve as delimitations between the different groups in this typology. This research builds upon concepts in the fields of marketing and social psychology such as prosumption, self-expression, and brand communities.

Crowdsourcing extends our knowledge on prosumption. While crowdsourcing implies prosumption, my research distinguishes the benefits individuals derive both these activities. The typology provided showcases that not every participant is motivated by the act of prosuming. Furthermore, my findings advance Humphreys and Grayson's (2008) work on self-expression through prosumption. Although one would presume that greater flexibility should allow participants to express their creativity, I found one's feeling of freedom of self-expression increases when stricter guidelines are provided. Participants find it easier to work with a fixed canvas. Placing a limitation, contrary to general assumptions, proved to be positive encouragement as submitters were invited to maximize the potential of a limited canvas. Inversely, having too many variables, as it was the case for Mode Locale, hinders one's creative spirits as ideas collide and contradict themselves. Moreover, my research updates Campbell's (2005) definition of the "craft consumer" by linking it Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural

capital. Participants in crowdsourcing gain their motivation through a quest for symbolic capital. Cultural capital stems from the practice of one's design skills and social capital from the friendships that are developed as a result of being part of the community. As showcased by the communal and utilizer groups, I suggest that participation of craft consumption, through crowdsourcing, enables individuals to generate more cultural and social capital.

This research utilizes Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) theory of brand community to explain part of the typology of crowdsourcing. My research places this theory in a different context: crowdsourcing implies a more structured community than those formed organically. Furthermore, several concepts from Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) original publication have been adapted to today's working customer communities. First, brand usage in a crowdsourced context is altered. Traditionally, individuals would share tips and tricks to enhance their usage of a brand. In this context, prosumption promotes co-creation of the brand as well. Second, the context through which a brand connection is established, as defined by Chafkin (2008), needs to be updated. Participants form connections with the brand whilst still participating in its creation, not post-production. Although all these changes affect the context in which interactions between participants take place, the motivations to be part of a self-regulated community and its effects on participants remain the same.

Managerial Implications

Results from my research can be of great use to companies looking to successfully implement crowdsourcing programs. By developing a typology of participants' motivations for

taking part in these projects, businesses will be able to tailor their own crowdsourced projects and to better attract and retain the right types of participants. By understanding that communals and utilizers are the only two categories that generate content, one can then tailor a targeted marketing campaign to focus on these types of participants. Geiger et al (2011) found that increasing the payout increases the amount of participants in a microtask crowdsourcing setting. Crowdsourcing is also effective for asking the crowds to perform a series of mundane, repetitive tasks for a small financial reward. In the case of collective creativity, increasing the payout would mean an increase in the number of contest winners or the gift-card amount the individual would receive. This would motivate individuals to perform tasks. Moreover, through the typology, it was found that the third group, aspirers purchase the end product in order to resemble both the communals and utilizers. Therefore by having the first two groups actively participate, aspirers will have the motivation to purchase the final product.

Below are a series of recommendations to tailor one's crowdsourcing project to appeal to communals and utilizers. Building on my typology of crowdsourcing participants, these guidelines can help managers to integrate crowdsourcing into their business process. As a result, companies will be better equipped to put those who are involved with their brand to work for them within their brand community. In addition, having two fields of data collection; both Threadless and Mode Locale, allowed me to uncover the reasoning behind the success of one project, and the failure of the other.

Traditionally, marketers would think of consumers as gaining value from the consumption of a good. However, it is more useful to view consumers as basing their consumption on experience and no longer solely on ownership of the final product. Consumers

value experiential consumption while making their decision. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000, Caru and Cova 2002, Vargo and Lusch 2004). Thus, they create additional value from the company's product or service. Firat and Dholakia (1998) find consumption to be an "immersion in an experiential context". Cova and Dalli (2008) also state that consumers are on the highest level of experiential consumption when they construct value (cultural, symbolic or functional) out of ordinary objects. Threadless is a prime example: participants must customize an ordinary object, a t-shirt. Through customization, they are able to construct all three types of value. As such, the Threadless experience is created. Value creation is built out of the participants themselves, through the co-creation of a good. Two theories have come to explain this phenomenon.

Value co-creation highlights the importance of each individual's willingness to express himself/herself through production. The co-creation process is highly dependent on one's uniqueness and level of engagement; the company provides tools that facilitate collaboration between unique and differentiated consumers:

It [producer] must build a flexible 'experience network' that allows individuals to co-construct and personalize their experiences. Eventually, the roles of the company and the consumer converge towards a unique co-creation experience, or an "experience of one" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, 6).

Crowdsourcing follows these guidelines since a dedicated online system is put into place as a two-way communication channel between participant and company. For example, Threadless built an entire online platform allowing users to vote, rate, post, discuss and create. In the case of Mode Locale, as they attempted to implement a crowdsourcing project through other

means of communication, most prominently on Facebook and Tumblr, participants did not differentiate between the leisure aspects of the social network and the crowdsourcing tasks at hand: "I just felt the way Threadless is built, it's a lot easier for people to get your stuff out there for people to see" (Ronnie). Managers looking to implement crowdsourcing within their workflow should consider developing a proprietary platform to allow interactions to occur. Some members of the lurkers and aspirers of the Mode Locale group mentioned not recalling having participated in co-creation, thus emphasizing the need for a separate location for crowdsourcing to take place, differentiating crowdsourcing practices from other online leisure activities.

One of the objectives of this thesis is to provide a set of guidelines for managers who are looking to implement crowdsourcing as part of their workflow. A key factor in the success of Threadless has been the continuous influx of user-generated content. As both the communals and utilizers produce this content, understanding their motivations and tailoring one's crowdsourcing platform to meet their needs increases the chances of developing a strong prosumption community. Building on Schau et al.'s (2009) work on brand communities, below in table 3, I provide suggestions to successfully implement a crowdsourcing program.

Table 3: Guidelines to Manage Crowdsourcing Communities

Practice	Source	Targeted group	Recommandation
Stalking	Schau et al. 2009	Communals	Separate the community into several sub-sections to encourage "stalking"
Milestoning	Schau et al 2009	Communals	Set individual goals for members to obtain throughout the community
Common goals	Tuomela 1995	Communals	Set the sum of the individual goals to reach a common goal
Badging	Schau et al 2009	Communals	Have the achievement of goals be publically displayed
Documenting	Schau et al 2009	Communals	Have a platform through which members can communicate with one another

Customization of the brand	Muniz and O'Guinn 2001	All	Have some loose definition of the brand to allow multiple interpretations by members who are actively creating within it
Showcase cultural capital	From this thesis	Communals / Utilizers	Clearly link the work performed with the participant
Brand community paradox	Muniz and Schau 2011	Communals	Remain close to the grassroots movement of the community
Have clearly defined guidelines	From this thesis	Utilizers	Perceived freedom and creativity increases when tasks and guidelines are clearly defined.
User generated content	Howe 2008	Communals / Utilizers	Have a crowdsourcing project through which user generated content can be created easily

By applying these guidelines when implementing crowdsourcing as an alternative management style, managers facilitate the retention of talent within their program. The fuel that powers collective creativity is user-generated content. These guidelines serve as a basis to facilitate interactions between members, thus enticing the self-regulation and assuring a constant flow of user-generated content. The majority of the guidelines are tailored towards attracting and entertaining the communal and utilizer groups. The community aspect of crowdsourcing motivates the communals. These guidelines are made to enhance the creation of symbolic capital amongst members and increase their feeling of empowerment. The utilizer group will be attracted by the creation of cultural capital. The reasoning behind catering solely to these two groups is as follows. Both the aspirer and lurker groups do not actively participate in the survival of crowdsourcing project. They do not perform the crowdsourced tasks and engage with the community. They play a more passive role in production, while in fact purchasing the end product. As discussed earlier, both these groups need the actions of the former two in order to be motivated to take on these roles. If communals and utilizers exist, aspirers and lurkers will follow.

As this typology discusses the roles participants can hold, the implication is that one can change roles over time. These roles are based on one's actions and level of engagement and are not binding. By catering to communals and utilizers, managers are encouraging aspirers and lurkers to ascend to one of the more active groups. Fournier and Lee (2009) give recommendations to leveraging a brand community. Their findings support that most individuals participate within a brand community primarily not to help a corporation, but for the social links that are created through participation. Moreover,

they suggest managers should build the tools to entertain the community which will in turn build the brand. This is contrary to standard marking practices where the corporation is in control. Managers should remember that loyalty towards a brand is not built through sales, but rather by helping community members meet their needs. This typology helps managers achieve this by providing them a roadmap to motivations of the different roles crowdsourcing participants can hold.

Limitations

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, limitations to the applicability of these results exist. Additional research would need to confirm the generalizability of the typology. Both Threadless and Mode Locale's projects attracted people who were passionate about art and design. This study should be replicated with other collective creativity projects involving different types of media in order to confirm the generalizability of this typology. Moreover, the Threadless community is one that has been active for over five years. Since social capital develops over time, the communal group should not be present at the beginning of a crowdsourced project. This typology would then not hold true for crowdsourcing projects in their early stages, which was the case of Mode Locale. Moreover, a key difference between Mode Locale, Threadless and other crowdsourcing projects is the perceived "small business" characteristics of both companies. Even though large multinationals have previously been successful in implementing crowdsourcing throughout their business model, many of the participants included in this study have mentioned having a sense of moral responsibility toward not

only the community, but also towards the company. This would perhaps not hold true for companies such as Doritos, who have successfully crowdsourced some of their advertisement in similar fashions as Threadless.

This study encountered a sampling challenge. As members were approached to participate based on their online footprints, it became natural that the two most active groups within the typology; the communals and utilizers, were overrepresented. The two less engaged groups proven to be harder to reach as their contributions can be considered passive. Sampling techniques to find these participants differed slightly as I used those who expressed their interest on Facebook and Twitter for Threadless and personal connections. As a result, perhaps not every motivation to be present on these crowdsourcing sites have been discovered.

Future Directions

Research on crowdsourcing is still in its early stages, therefore there is much to discover. The typology provided in this research has been tested on a single type of crowdsourcing; collective creativity. Using the existing taxonomy of crowdsourcing (Geiger et al. 2011), future research can begin by evaluating the validity of this typology against the other types. My typology will surely change as payout methods change. Threadless consists of a contest type of crowdsourcing, where only the winning shirt receives financial compensation. Other types of crowdsourcing exists; such as micro-tasks, where every participant receives a small monetary sum to perform a mundane tasks requiring human intelligence. One of the main assumptions of this thesis, that participants

receive no financial compensation, would not apply in that context. Future research would be required to verify whether this typology would hold valid for communities with monetary compensation.

This research started at a stage that participants already were members of both the Threadless and Mode Locale communities and didn't inquire about their history. Understanding how they began their commitment in either project would add to the brand community literature, and be of great use to managers.

Additionally future research is needed to understand the link between constraints and creativity in crowdsourcing. As discovered through this research, more constraints seem to make the participants express more creativity. Designers felt unhappy with the excess freedom they received, but due to its scope, this research did not uncover the factors influencing this feeling. Those looking to implement crowdsourcing for professionals may also be interested in knowing what criteria act as deterrents or enhancers of creativity.

This research has few participants who were professional designers and artists. A few mentioned participating in crowdsourcing but having resentment towards the phenomenon. This is understandable, as crowdsourcing has disrupted many industries. Further research is needed to be performed amongst communities of professionals that been affected by crowdsourcing to reveal what factors have influenced some to participate and to refrain. Using the typology, one can predict that some utilizers most probably would use crowdsourcing to either advance their careers. Other underlying factors that might be at play in professional participation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Sample questionnaire

Sample interview questions and potential probes

1. Name, age, occupation:
2. Can you give me a biographical sketch about yourself? Where are you from, your family status, any other thing you'd like to tell about yourself?
3. Can you talk to me a bit about what sites do you go when browsing online?
    1. If talks about social networks:
        * Can you talk to me a bit more which sites and why you go on them?
    2. If don't talk about social networks:
        * Are you interested in social networks? Why/ why not?
4. Are you into fashion?
    1. If so
        * Can you explain to me how so?
5. Are you into design?
    1. If so
        * Can you explain to me how so?
6. Are you into technology?
    1. If so
        * Can you explain to me how so?

7. Can you tell me about the first time you heard of the [insert company name here]?
    1. If participates in crowdsourcing:
        * Can you explain what your participation in this company
        * How do you feel about this involvement?
        * What else do you wish you could have done with this process?
    2. If not:
        * Can you explain to me how you feel regarding this collection and your reasons for not participating?

8. Can you tell me if you are familiar with the concept of crowdsourcing? What have you heard about this trend and what are your feelings towards it? (omitted after a few interviews due to the reasons described in the methodology section)

9. Can you think of any projects involving an online community collaborating creatively that you are familiar with?
    1. Do you participate in any?
    2. If yes:
        * What made you choose to part take in?
        * Do you communicate with others participating in these projects?
        * How do you feel towards the final product?
        * Can you talk about how you feel your contribution affected the final product?

-
  - Do you feel like your input was well received? What could have been done better?
  - How would you compare the final product to other similar products having gone through a traditional creation process?
  - Did you end up buying the product?
    1. If yes
        a. What made you decide to purchase the product?
        b. Can you explain to me how you would present this product to your friends?
  3. If no
      - What made you choose to not part take in such projects?
      - Do you still buy this type of product?

10. Can you talk about the choice to have the entire fashion collection be picked by a community?
    1. Do you feel this makes for a better/worst collection than a collection assembled by a design team?
    2. How do you feel about people that are not professional designers having a thing to say about the product?

11. Where do you work, what does your job require you to do?
    1. (If in design) Do you feel your line of work has been affected by crowdsourcing?

12. Anything else you would like to add regarding your experience with crowdsourcing?

Goal: perceptions of products – company. Motivations to participate. Reasons of not buying the end product. Perceived satisfaction with the process. Perceptions of their "voice" being heard.

Appendix B – A Mindmap of Findings

Typology of crowdsourcing

Communals
- Participates within the brand community
  - Consumer Empowerment — Marie
  - Creation of symbolic capital — Patricia
  - Identification with the brand — Josh
  - Henri
- Consciousness of kind
- Affective component
- Sense of moral responsibility
  - Achievement of common goals
- High levels of engagement
  - Helping other members of the community
  - Identification with group based identity
  - Active participation

Utilizer
- Desire for self-expression
  - Need balance between guidelines and perceived freedom — Ronnie
  - Tamisha
- Creation of cultural capital
  - Practice skills — Carrie
  - Showcasing talent to others — Terry

Peripherals
- Consumption of the product — Alexandria
  - Jessie
- Enhance self-concept
  - Possessions as identity
  - Desire to be perceived as stereotype of other groups
- Limited participation
  - Lack of cultural capital
  - Lack of time to build cultural capital

Lurker
- Follow online trends — Lanette
  - Marc
  - Jane
- Do not acknowledge prosumption