Crowdsourcing in the production of video advertising

The roles of crowdsourcing platforms in the creation of video advertising

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“You can call it crowdsourcing, co-creation or open source innovation. The point is, the reality is, advertising will continue to be democratized. With this radical democratization, the structures of advertising organizations are being transformed. Radically.”

John Winsor, co-founder of Victors & Spoils¹

“Brands are discovering that through crowdsourcing, as the size of the freelancer legion continues to grow, portals will be a very viable alternative to how they used to acquire their video advertisement”

Jared Cicon, video maker and prize-winning crowdsourcing participant²

²http://yannigroth.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/the-video-contest-landscape-is-like-the-wild-west-says-an-experienced-participant/
Introduction

Advertising has always relied on creativity as the most important resource for inspiration. Defined as any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor (Belch & Belch, 2003), advertising is one of the many different activities comprised in the so-called creative industries3 (Howkins, 2001). Traditional forms of advertising include ads placed in newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, television and other forms of mass media. The advent of the internet and mobile phones has led to the emergence of new advertising outlets such as websites, blogs, social, mobile applications etc. These new channels of advertising are much more personalized and demand attention, engagement and relevance. Video advertising is seen as a particularly effective way to promote brands and products (Dishman, 2011) (Torng, 2012). In spite of global uncertainty, economic troubles in Europe and lackluster conditions in the US, overall global ad spending is still expected to increase in 2013, albeit at a modest rate (Internet Advertising Bureau UK, 2012) (Vranica, 2012) (O’Brien, 2013). As it relates to individual categories, TV is expected to rise 2.8% to $63.8 billion, while internet ad spending which includes mobile, search, social, display is expected to grow a whopping 18.1%. Online, the demand of video advertising revenue will even grow faster than that of all other advertising channels, at an annual growth rate of 19.6% globally from 2011 to 2016, increasing from $4.7 billion to $11.4 billion. Furthermore, it seems obvious that the audience for mobile video will rapidly

3 Creative industries encompass all activities in which the management of creativity and innovation in complex knowledge flows; from the generation of original ideas to their realization and consumption, plays a key role (Jeffcutt, 2000) In The Creative Economy, John Howkins says that the creative economy comprises advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, fashion, film, music, performing arts, publishing, R&D, software, toys and games, TV and radio, and video games (Howkins, 2001)
grow as smartphone and tablet adoption becomes standard. There are already 25 million US adults who consume, on average, 4 hours and 20 minutes of mobile video every month (Forrester Research Inc., 2011).

One of the key questions for brands and organizations is to find ways to create quality video content at an affordable cost. This chapter deals with this particular application of creative production: namely film and video production for advertising, hereafter called “video advertising.” Traditionally, the production of video advertising has been – and still is – carried out by the creative services of advertising agencies. As part of its mission to plan and execute advertising programs for its clients, agencies usually handle the video advertising production process, whether it is done internally or with external video production houses. But many argue that this process is too long and costly: one of the suggested solutions is to use crowdsourcing as a way to generate video content for brands (Winter & Hill, 2009) (DeJulio, 2012). The “creative core” of decision-makers in the production of video content are increasingly becoming open to creative input from the outside (Telo, Sanchez-Navarro, & Leibovitz, 2012) (Binch, 2013), and online creative platforms are becoming a new venue for these creative individuals to create for brands. The March 2013 edition of the Harvard Business Review underlines that crowd engagement will be an integral part of the future of advertising (Kirby, 2013). This chapter argues that the video advertising industry is undergoing a fundamental change with the advent of a new set of intermediaries that we will call creative crowdsourcing platforms. Similarly to the transformation that happened in the movie industry around the 1950’s, when the movie business went from being controlled by big studios to become an individual-based ecosystem where actors, directors, screenwriters all became freelancers (Malone & Laubacher, 1998), we argue that the video advertising industry is being transformed by this trend of crowdsourcing (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008).
To explain what role crowdsourcing plays in the contemporary video advertising landscape, we organize this chapter as follows: first, it is important to define crowdsourcing and differentiate it with related concepts like traditional outsourcing, open source projects or user-generated advertising. We then describe how the use of crowdsourcing has evolved over time, shifting away from the initial amateur focus to becoming an integral part of the advertising production process, involving freelance video advertising professionals. Finally, we describe four models that are currently used by crowdsourcing platforms to create video content for brands, illustrating that the crowd can be solicited in different ways of the production process today.

Crowdsourcing as a novel way to create video content

What is crowdsourcing?

Coined in February 2006 by venture capitalist Steve Jurvetson and popularized in the June 2006 issue of Wired (Brabham D., 2013), the term crowdsourcing describes a new way of organizing work. It’s a web–based business model that harnesses the creative solutions of a distributed network of individuals through an open call for proposals initiated by an organization or individual. Originally, crowdsourcing was defined by Jeff Howe as “the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call” (Howe, 2006). Crowdsourcing is not just "tapping the minds of many" (Dawson R., 2011), it is the precise process by which a company posts a problem online, a vast number of individuals offer solutions to the problem, the winning ideas are awarded some form of a bounty, and the company uses the output for its own gain (Brabham D. C., 2008) (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). Crowdsourcing has grown in popularity so much so that
the term was officially added to the Webster Dictionary in 2011⁴. Today, crowdsourcing is being used for a variety of tasks, from the execution of simple tasks that have nothing to do with advertising to the generation of creative ideas and/or advertising content for brands, where people are asked to submit more elaborate creative productions (Kleemann, Voß, & Rieder, 2008) (Brabham D. C., 2010) (Penin & Burger-Helmchen, 2011) (Schenk & Guittard, 2011).

In his book about crowdsourcing (2008) Jeff Howe distinguished four forms of crowdsourcing: crowd voting, where people are asked to vote on ideas, crowd wisdom, whereby one trusts the aggregate estimations of crowd members to solve a problem, crowd funding, where the crowd fund a project together, and crowd creation, where people are asked to create content. This chapter focuses on the latest form of crowdsourcing, crowd creation, by which organizations ask individuals to come up with creative ideas and original creations. We will use the general term "creative crowdsourcing" to talk about crowdsourcing of tasks that rely primarily on people’s creative abilities to be executed, hence falling under the roof of creative industries. Creative crowdsourcing is often used by organizations for their innovation and marketing efforts, as the creative output of the crowd allows them to have access to a variety of fresh ideas to use (Howe, 2008) (Whitla, 2009) (Erickson, Petrick, & Trauth, 2012). This form of crowdsourcing has also been called peer-vetted creative production (Brabham D. C., 2010), crowdsourcing of creative tasks (Schenk & Guittard, 2011) or crowdsourcing of inventive activities (Penin & Burger-Helmchen, 2011) in previous academic literature.

⁴ http://www.merriam-webster.com/info/newwords11.htm
What is crowdsourcing not?

Hiring a freelancer, whether it is offline or over the internet, does not constitute crowdsourcing as there is no open call for participation. For example, the website oDesk\(^5\) allows organizations to find skilled contractors listed on their platform, among which there are video production professionals. After submitting a job request, an organization receives numerous applications from potential contractors, and the organization just has to choose which person to work with. For us, this does not constitute crowdsourcing as the individuals who apply to the job postings are not asked to submit a creative idea or a video; they are just applying to be chosen as a collaborator. Hence, we don't see this type of contracting as crowdsourcing but as a direct collaboration between a firm and an individual (Malone & Laubacher, 1998) (Barley & Kunda, 2006). Recent academic work aligns this position, preferring terms like "online platform for contract labor" (Agrawal, Lacetera, & Lyons, 2012) or "online platform for outsourced contracts" (Ghani, Kerr, & Stanton, 2012).

Crowdsourcing is also related to concepts like open source projects, where contributors collaborate on a common project on a voluntary and self-organized basis, or user-generated advertising, where amateurs spontaneously create advertisements for brands (Kleemann, Voß, & Rieder, 2008). Both are distributed web-based processes, but we consider them different than crowdsourcing, which is a centralized web-based process by corporations. For example, while open source might be a good setting for software projects, it is certainly not suited for private company processes like new product development, mainly because it requires access to the essential elements of the product (Brabham D. C., 2008). Similarly, user-generated advertising, another form of distributed online activity that can be used by organizations, is not crowdsourcing. Early examples of spontaneous user-generated advertising, like George

\(^5\) http://www.odesk.com/
Masters' homemade iPod ad in 2004 were seen as “the future of advertising” that would "play a big part in marketing" by the press (Kahney, 2004). However, these are spontaneous initiatives by creative consumers, not company-initiated video advertising production. User-generated advertising is, very much like open source software, a bottom-up phenomenon that is not initiated nor controlled by companies, but by creative consumers that would have created them anyway (Berthon, Pitt, McCarthy, & Kates, 2007) and uploaded them of platforms like YouTube. While this type of initiatives can be described as “brokerage between aspiring amateurs and commercial content firms,” (van Dijck, 2009) we think it’s still different from crowdsourcing, as no individuals or organizations asked for this content originally.

To illustrate this distinction, we argue that open-source software projects like Firefox or a participative website like Wikipedia do not constitute crowdsourcing, as they rely on a self-organized crowd of contributors that are not stimulated nor directed by central managerial commandment. However, when Firefox launched the Firefox Flicks video contest⁶, or when Wikipedia launched the Wiki Loves Monuments 2012 photo contest⁷ we can definitely coin them crowdsourcing. These open calls for entries were clearly issued by organizations, namely Mozilla Corporation and Wikimedia Foundation, tasking the crowd to create something creative and original in a given time frame, with the possibility to win a pre-defined reward. The first example is that of Mozilla which, in 2006, called Firefox enthusiasts to create a video ad that helps people better understand the issues facing them online and show how Firefox helps them deal with these issues. Participants had to upload their videos to the dedicated Firefox Flicks website, and the winning video would be nominated at the New

York Festival of Advertising. More recently, Wikimedia asked Wikipedians around the world to upload photos of historic sites onto Wikipedia’s image database, Wikimedia Commons in order to have chance to be invited to a photo tour in Hong Kong for the annual meeting of Wikipedia editors, Wikimania 2013. In both these cases, we find all the characteristics of a crowdsourcing initiative as described by Brabham (2008) and defined by Estellés-Arolas and Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevara (2012). Firefox Flicks as well as Wiki Loves Monuments are two examples of crowdsourcing: these contests have been initiated by easily identifiable organizations, with a clear creative brief, a specific topic, a defined deadline and set of proposed prizes. This is not the case for open source projects or user-generated advertising.

Figure 1: Differentiation of open source and crowdsourcing projects

Crowdsourcing of video content: from amateur participation to professional work

Early examples in the literature of the use of crowdsourcing in the production of video advertising include L’Oreal’s ad contest on Current TV, Doritos’ Crash The Super Bowl contest, Converse’s homemade commercial contest on ConverseGallery.com, or Chevrolet’s initiative to allow people to customize 30-second spots for the Tahoe vehicle8 (Brabham D. _____________.

8 The latter has even be widely discussed as a case of “crowd slapping,” which describes the crowd's ability to influence a crowdsourcing initiative in order to harm a brand or a product (Howe, 2008)
C., 2008) (Lawrence & Fournier, 2010) (Wexler, 2011). Less famous examples are Heinz's Top This TV Challenges, HP's 35 Calculator Celebration Contest, and Google's M-Velope video contest, which have all been launched by brands to get consumer-rooted video content to use for online or offline advertising⁹. These early examples of crowd-sourced video advertising were not primarily initiated to generate creative content to promote brands, but also and foremost to generate buzz and conversation around the brands. “The success of user-generated campaigns is partly due to their content, sure, but also partly to their novelty” said Robert Moskowitz, a consultant and author, in an article about video advertising contests (2006). For example, Doritos' first edition of Crash The Super Bowl was primarily managed by integrated communication agency OMD, and supported by the ad agency Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, the media agency TPN as well as the PR agency Ketchum. The initiative topped the PR value that the brand expected in the first place from this initiative: Crash the Super Bowl exceeded the goal of $5 million in PR value by garnering 1 billion media impressions, an estimated ad equivalency of more than $30 million dollars. "The hidden driver of our program was the public relations campaign," the brand explained in a statement¹⁰, "the strong consumer aspect of Crash the Super Bowl enabled effective PR, while maintaining ongoing mainstream news coverage at each phase." Similar coverage has been made about Converse's design contest Converse Gallery: "The campaign has also succeeded in terms of press and buzz attention: they're getting a lot more value from the PR than from what they're buying in media placements," explained Moskowitz in 2006. These examples show that early crowdsourcing initiatives were more PR stunts than ways to produce video

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content to be used for actual advertising. Campaigns were backed by massive budgets to promote video contests beforehand, to manage and handle brand reputation during, and to communicate and air the winners after the contests. "Even the most well-known brands often spend millions of dollars upfront to get the word out to consumers," explained the New York Times about advertising contests, underlining that they "have nothing to do with cost savings."

In both these cases, the objective was to raise awareness about the brand and its products, and to make it also stand out as close to consumers. Not only do consumers create ads and share them across online networks, by which brands generate a form of word-of-mouth marketing (Schindler & Bickart, 2005), but the fact that the messages come directly from consumers might also create more authentic and persuasive communication messages (Price, Feick, & Higie, 1989). For example, the "Geisha" video, realized by three female students of the Miami Ad School for L’Oreal Paris on Current TV in 2006, was described as "a flashy, high-concept ad that resonates with the consumer [as] it was created by a consumer" by Business Week (Wexler, 2011).

At this point we would like to highlight that whether contributors to video contests really are consumers or not has started to be discussed in the press and the academic literature. Reporting about a 2007 video contest for Heinz ketchup, the New York Times indicated that participation is not always spurred by authentic product or brand interest. "[One contestant] is trying to get his work noticed,” the article explains, “some contestants say in interviews that they prefer mustard or mayonnaise” (Story, 2007). Furthermore, in a critical discourse analysis performed on more than 100 popular press articles about crowdsourcing, Daren Brabham (2012) found that crowd members are mostly self-selected professionals and experts. Hence, we see it as false to assume that crowdsourcing works only because the messages come directly from consumers, and there is a big need for research to find out more
about the crowd. We see this as an important point to underline, even though the purpose of this chapter is to describe the role of crowdsourcing platforms in the creation of video content, and not to focus on the participants or to discuss their identity.

The rise of creative crowdsourcing platforms

The early examples described above show anecdotal evidence about the birth of the phenomenon, in which most of the initiatives were managed by traditional agencies. Nowadays, while integrated agencies still remain in control of campaign creation and coordination, brands also increasingly rely on creative crowdsourcing platforms to generate video content to feed their marketing efforts. Organizing video contests to generate buzz or to revamp a brand image still exists, but we also see the emergence of new types of video advertising contests. These are not initiated in order to get consumers’ attention or to generate conversations, they are launched to actually produce promotional content for brands\textsuperscript{11}, which marks a fundamental new way video is being produced in the industry. Today, we see it emerge as an alternative form of content production that complements the traditional video advertising production process, and not only as a way to generate buzz around a brand.

For marketers, it even becomes a radical differentiation compared to the early examples of video crowdsourcing for advertising. The first video advertising crowdsourcing initiatives gathered everything from amateur clips to high-quality advertising spots shot by professional video makers in their free time. Nowadays, when it comes to crowd-sourced video content production, quality is becoming increasingly important: “\textit{It is unsustainable to believe that a significant volume of high-quality ads will be produced by everyday consumers who are only guaranteed a reward if they win}.” explains Calle Sjoenell, creative director at BBH, in

\textsuperscript{11} Sometimes even behind closed curtains, as creative crowdsourcing platforms increasingly run contests that are not open to everyone, or in which the brand is not identified, because of confidentiality reasons
Forrester’s "Crowdsourcing Gains Legitimacy for Advertisers" (2011). According to this report, using crowdsourcing for advertising is quickly becoming a middle-way between consumer-generated advertising and the work of traditional agencies. It allows them to get content in a very fast and cost-effective way. For example, it has been estimated that the winning ad of L’Oreal Paris’ video advertising contest on Current TV would have cost an estimated $164,200 compared to the $1,000 prize paid by the brand to the winners (Whitla, 2009). Other sources provide comparable figure: Poptent’s Neil Perry says that “right now, the plug number for a typical 30-second commercial for TV is $350,000,” (Behan, 2012) and Tongal’s co-founder James DeJulio argues that “the cost of creating a 30 second ad is $500,000 or more; we figured we could do it for as little as $5,000” (DeJulio, 2012). Hence, it appears that crowdsourcing allows brands to get video content for a much lower price compared to traditional process, as the platforms promise a set of distribution-ready videos for $40,000 to $100,000, project set-up costs and participation rewards included (Forrester Research Inc., 2011).

Not only does crowdsourcing lower the costs to generate one advertisement, but a very important aspect is that they get numerous propositions from a variety of actors who all work on the same brand brief, which also allows them to identify new brand insights by seeing how a heterogeneous crowd of creative individuals interprets the same creative brief. “Looking at 120 films gives us 120 different consumer interpretations of our brand’s possibilities — and that has opened our eyes to new ways we can authentically tell the Chevrolet story,” explains Kevin Mayer, director of advertising and sales promotion at Chevrolet, in the Forrester Report. About the “Energizing Refreshment” contest on eYeka, Coca-Cola’s Leonardo O’Grady explained that “we knew we’d have a number of new perspectives on a common brief that we could use to develop our own idea,” highlighting that the initiative had a ripple-effect on the way Coca-Cola thinks about the creative process (Moth, 2012).
The report also highlights that crowdsourcing-based platforms are not in direct competition with traditional agencies, rather are they complementary: “Crowdsourcing networks aren’t agency replacements; they’re a new component to the advertising value chain” explains Jeffrey Merrihue, CEO of MoFilm, one of the leading platforms. These platforms can bring a variety of services that are not being offered by traditional agencies, like crafting creative brief to stimulate their crowds, providing ready-to use internet platforms, providing qualified communities of amateur and professional contributors, evaluating entries or even developing a media strategy for the content (Forrester Research Inc., 2011). After production, there are indeed other steps such as distribution of content and media planning, and some of these tasks are also increasingly being taken care of by companies that operate crowdsourcing platforms.

![Figure 2: Number of video contests held by the world’s most valuable brands since 2006s](image)

The rise of creative crowdsourcing platforms is being showcased on an interactive timeline that visualizes how the use of creative crowdsourcing has exploded among brands since the...
mid-2000's\textsuperscript{12}. This timeline features a wide variety of creative crowdsourcing initiatives organized or sponsored by the 100 brands included in Interbrand's Best Global Brands ranking, and shows that the number of video contests has increased significantly since 2006, mostly due to video contests on creative crowdsourcing platforms. For example, the first video advertising contest was sponsored by L’Oreal Paris in 2006\textsuperscript{13}. The brand used Current TV, a participatory website for amateur video contribution, and its dedicated crowdsourcing program called “viewer-created ad message” or VCAM. The same year, PepsiCo organized the very first Crash The Super Bowl video contest, probably the most famous advertising video contest, organized by the company and several specialized agencies. From that date onwards, the number of advertising contests organized on creative crowdsourcing platforms exploded, with a peak in 2011, while the number of video contests organized independently remained stable. The objective of the chapter is to present these creative crowdsourcing platforms, and to present the role they take in the overall process of video advertising production and distribution. To do that, our chapter will be based on a multiple case study methodology.

**Description of our multiple case study methodology**

The case study method allows researchers to explore, describe or explain real-life events such as organizational and managerial changes, or the evolution of particular industries. Case studies are often used when the goal of the research is to relate particular phenomena, like crowdsourcing, to broader contexts, such as the production of video content for advertising (Yin, 2003) (Hacievliyagil, Maisonneuve, Auger, & Hartmann, 2007). This is exactly the aim of this chapter, whereby we want to describe how crowdsourcing-based web platforms are

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/52997/Crowdsourcing-by-Worlds-Best-Global-Brands accessed on February 18\textsuperscript{th} 2013

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/52997/Crowdsourcing-by-Worlds-Best-Global-Brands/#vars!panel=671351 accessed on February 18\textsuperscript{th} 2013
increasingly being used to produce video content for brands and organizations. The recent phenomenon of crowdsourcing has been described in a variety of contexts, such as innovation tournaments, creative execution or micro-working markets, but we find that the academic field has not addressed this trend in advertising, particularly in the production of video content used in marketing and advertising campaigns. To our knowledge, the current literature does not go beyond the description of early examples of crowdsourcing, or user-generated video content. Also, and more importantly, no research has been dedicated to crowdsourcing-based video production, a trend that is disrupting the traditional model of agency-controlled video production. This type of work is indeed often initiated and controlled by the creative services of full-service ad agencies, or by specialized creative boutiques like production houses (Grabher, 2002) (Belch & Belch, 2003). To explore this novel set of actors, we chose a multiple case study research design to explore and describe the growing role of creative platforms for the production of video advertising. We focus our research on companies that control web-based platforms on which contributors participate to a variable extent in the production of video content for brands and organizations. Some of the companies that were in our initial sample (Brandfighters, Current TV, Filmaka, Shooting People) appear to have dropped video contest for brands and concentrate on other forms of creative crowdsourcing. After we have removed these actors, our final population comprises 15 creative crowdsourcing platforms that intermediate the creation of video advertising for brands and organizations (Table 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Year founded</th>
<th>Tagline</th>
<th>Network size&lt;sup&gt;14&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blur Group</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>&quot;The Creative Service Exchange&quot;</td>
<td>24,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Cupboard</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>&quot;Giving you access to the UK's best young designers&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eYeka</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>&quot;The co-creation community&quot;</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genaro</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>&quot;Video projects&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GeniusRocket</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>&quot;The first curated crowdsourcing company&quot;</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mofilm</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>&quot;The biggest brand video contests and competitions&quot;</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poptent</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>&quot;The trusted global source for creative video solutions&quot;</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Party</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>&quot;Australia's largest video production marketplace&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talenthouse</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>&quot;Creative collaboration&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongal</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>&quot;Where the best ideas find the best filmmakers&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Userfarm</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>&quot;Viral Video Campaigns through competitions for brands, agencies and publishers&quot;</td>
<td>37,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victors &amp; Spoils</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>&quot;The world's first creative (ad) agency built on crowdsourcing principles&quot;</td>
<td>15,000&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womadz</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>&quot;Word of mouth advertising&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooshii</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>&quot;Professional video production company&quot;</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zooppa</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>&quot;People-powered brand energy&quot;</td>
<td>185,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: List of creative crowdsourcing platforms encompassed in our study

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<sup>14</sup> In March 2013, when the present chapter has been submitted

<sup>15</sup> At the moment of its acquisition by Havas
We gathered information about these companies using desk research, going further into their precise offerings, analyzing their *modi operandi* to apply crowdsourcing for video production, and by looking closely at what stage of video advertising production they are being used. This allows us to identify the role that the different crowdsourcing platforms take in the production of video content. The following part presents our findings.

**Roles of crowdsourcing platforms dedicated to video advertising**

**The traditional production process of video advertising**

In order to understand the role that creative crowdsourcing platforms play in the production of video advertising, we first need to look at the way it traditionally gets produced. Like the film industry, the advertising industry is based on projects (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1998) (Grabher, 2002). The creation and distribution of video advertising is often managed by advertising agencies, and particularly their creative services, for the production, and media departments, for the distribution (Belch & Belch, 2003). In some cases, especially in large agencies, a “traffic department” coordinates all phases of production to see that the ads are completed on time and that all deadlines for submitting the ads to the media are met (Grabher, 2002) (Belch & Belch, 2003). These agencies come in all shapes and sizes, from specialists which focus on specific media vehicles to full-service agencies who include strategic planning, project management, media buying as well as creative work (Blattberg, 2011). Once the decision to use video advertising as part of a brand’s communication strategy has been taken, the first step of the production process is to find ideas based on this brand’s brief, target audience and desired impact. Then, once an idea has been “sold” by an agency and “bought”

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16 The decision to create a video advertisement is only a minor part of advertising and communication agencies’ role. A variety of other services are being provided to transform the brand’s objectives into an actionable and
by a client, the next steps of bringing the ideas to life in the production process are usually pre-production (scheduling the shooting, casting the participants etc.), production (directing and shooting the actual spot), and post-production (editing the film, including adding special effects, music etc.). The media departments of advertising agencies then take care of the distribution of the produced ads. This results in a five-step process, from ideation to distribution, which is depicted in the following figure. We will now briefly explain each of the steps, describing the nature of the work and the stakeholders that are involved in each of them.

Figure 3: The simplified video advertising production process

1. **Ideation based on the creative brief**

The first step in the production of a video commercial is the creative idea generation phase, which is based on the creative brief. This creative brief is a short document, usually one or two pages, used in agencies to provide guidance in executing creative work on behalf of their clients. It is not provided directly by the client, but by the agencies’ strategic teams whose role it is to translate the clients’ needs into actionable communication strategies, in which video advertising is often a significant component. A good brief contains information about effective communication strategy. By focusing on the creation of video content, this chapter leaves broader strategic services aside.
the market, the product, it’s positioning, key benefits and differences with the competition. The brief is the most important document that circulates within the agencies, and must be imaginative, concise and yet highly focused. It provides the necessary information and lays down the path to come up with a single-minded campaign idea (Kimani, 1996). The creative brief provides the link between sharp strategic thinking and a great piece of advertising. If it is well thought out and well written, there is a good chance that the resulting advertising will be inspired and commercially successful. It is important that the creative brief is well understood by the creative teams primarily because they actually write the advertisements. The creative directors should be involved in signing off the creative brief. His or her role is to ensure that there is fertile ground in the strategy. The creative director needs to be able to identify a kernel of an idea and dig out nuggets to find the idea. The creative team begins the ideation period whereby the art director and copywriter partners start pitching their ideas to each other and when they have enough good ideas they then share them with the creative director. This is an ongoing process where ideas are thrown out, others nurtured and others developed further, where copywriters and art directors work under the direction of creative directors (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1998) (Belch & Belch, 2003). During the creative process, agency producers are often consulted to talk about the feasibility of executing certain ideas, but account managers and account planners may also provide input and guidance. (Grabher, 2002). Ideas are then presented and explained to the client, using the already approved creative brief as the yardstick to select the idea that move forward into development17.

2. Pre-Production

17 Sometimes, depending on the client, the brand, the investment or schedule, the creative ideas either move directly into production or into consumer testing for validation and further refinement
The first phase of the actual production process brings all the parties together who are needed to bring the video commercial to life. This meeting is often run by the advertising agency and includes the production house, client and other specialists such as animators, if needed (Grabher, 2002). The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and decide what needs to be done to achieve the goal of the video commercial. In large agencies, a traffic department is responsible for making sure projects are done efficiently and profitably, functioning like project managers where they open up jobs, route approval internally, staff the projects and keep track of timelines and budgets. There are typically three meetings that take place during this pre-production phase. The first meeting is planning which establish what the video is to achieve. The second meeting is the story-boarding of the idea where every shot the audience will see is planned out which helps reveal any holes in the script and also helps plan time and costs. The final meeting is to gain agreement on the budget. All these meetings in this phase aim to bring final agreement on casting, music, production schedule, property and wardrobe recommendations, recommended locations and finally an agreed upon production quotation/fee. This final agreement is the necessary step to move into the actual production process of the video footage for the commercial.

3. Production

Production is when the actual footage for the commercial is being created by the creative team, based on the plans and specifications agreed on in the previous phase. The role of the director is critical to bringing the creative vision of the commercial to life. As such, the creative team goes to great lengths to select directors they know, admire, trust and in some cases have worked with before. The relationship between the creative team and the director is sacred and built on trust. Based on previous collaborations and the strategic objectives of the advertisement, the director will indeed choose the creative team to set up a project-based collaboration between in-house creative and external collaborators, who will be
commissioned to plan and execute the production of the video commercial (Grabher, 2002). The creative team is responsible for creating the ad. Shooting, often only takes one or two days and is managed by a producer. Other key principals involved in the production process include the agency creative team, the casting team and talent, the lighting team and camera crew all working closely with the director to bring to life his ultimate vision of the video content.

4. Post-production

The post production phase is where it all starts to come together. This is a critical, yet invisible stage. The editing process begins with going through all the footage to choose the best frames to build up a “draft” without voice, music or computer graphics. Once this edit has been approved by the client, the editing process continues and it includes sound mixing, color correction, the incorporation of graphic effects and all necessary elements to create a “rough cut” for the client which is an almost final video and allows the client to offer any additional input before completing the project with the final cut. The agency producers manage this process, working closely with the production and editing houses, liaising with the agency teams and the client for approvals throughout the editing process. Barring any consumer research, the editors include the final voice and music and footage is ready for final approval and airing. A master tape is created and dubbed into multi-tapes. In the US, before the final television ad is sent to TV station, a rough cut is sent first for approval. Once approved, the right formats and right materials get released to media networks for distribution.

5. Distribution

In a digital world, distribution is critical. The key to airing the most perfect spot made is to air it nationally so that the most people can see it and then set up an online presence so people can find it and share it easily. For a traditional TV buy, the finished ad is shared with the
agency’s media department which then places the media based on an already approved media plan. The media plan is usually developed concurrently with the creative development and production process. This expertise resides with the agency’s media planners and buyers. This team is charged with where to advertise (geography), when to advertise (timing) and what media vehicles to use (media mix) to ensure that the target audience will most likely to see the intended advertising. Distribution of advertising consists of the purchasing of advertising space, the broadcasting of the ads, and the measurement of its effectiveness. Without a TV buy, it is quite a challenge to distribute online and this is compounded by the millions of videos being uploaded every day on sites like YouTube (Dawson, et al., 2011). Distributing the digital content often starts with Facebook and Twitter as well as a brand’s YouTube channel, which presupposes that the brand has an eager group of fans waiting to hear from it. Very often, online distribution of video content is being amplified by specific service providers whose role it is to push the content to viewers and reach the targeted audience. Emerging advertising formats are also mobile advertising such as smartphones or tablet computers. We represent this five-step process, with production at its center, is represented in the following figure.
Now that we have a basic and common understanding of video advertisement creation, we can describe the different services that creative crowdsourcing platforms can provide, playing significant roles in this process.

**Uses of crowdsourcing in the creation of video advertising**

This part explores the different ways crowdsourcing can be used by advertising professionals in the previously presented process. An often used mechanism is that of contests, or competitions, which can be defined as a one- to multiple-round, time-limited competition calling on the general public or a specific target group to make use of their expertise, skills or creativity in order to submit solutions for particular tasks defined by the organizers who strive for a creative solution (Adamczyk, Bullinger, & Mösllein, 2012). In the space of advertising content creation, we have identified four dominant uses of crowdsourcing in the creation of video advertising: *idea contests* can be used to generate simple ideas, to be used by organizations for the creation of advertisements in a traditional manner; *call for pitches* can be used to identify talented individuals to work and co-create the spots with; *simple contests* allow organizations to gather video content after a one-round, traditional competition, and *stage-based contests* allow them to have more control throughout the process by being involved at different stages and channeling the crowd’s creativity. We choose to present these four crowdsourcing models in this order as it reflects the growing implication of the crowd along the video production process, from low crowd involvement at the very beginning of the process (*idea contests*) to higher crowd involvement throughout the whole production process (*stage-based contests*).

1. **Crowdsourcing creative inspiration: idea contests**
At the beginning of the video advertising creation process is the ideation phase. Crowdsourcing can be used in this phase to find original and creative ideas of advertising spots, thus leveraging the creativity and the diversity of the crowd (Winsor, 2013). Examples of the first type of crowdsourcing initiatives, where only the ideas matter, can be found on eYeka, where the food-products multinational corporation Danone launched several contests with the objective of gathering creative ideas to inspire advertising. In one contest for the Actimel brand, for example, the company was looking for stories of “how Actimel gives people the inner strength to do great big thing,” requiring members of the crowd to submit their ideas in any form, from pictures and slideshow presentations to storyboards. In another contest for the South-African Danone brand Yogi-Sip, the objective was to gather creative ideas to inspire a commercial around the theme of "the coolest way to keep going," and winning ideas came from countries as diverse as Algeria, Ecuador and Portugal. On another crowdsourcing platform called Userfarm, Microsoft tasked the creative individuals registered on the Userfarm platform to "come up with an idea for a video that will bring the essence of the new Windows Phone to life" for the launch of its Windows Phone. Dozens of ideas have been submitted by members of the crowd, allowing the brand to explore a diversity of creative routes to use for its communication. Another actor that uses creative crowdsourcing to generate ideas for video advertising is Victors & Spoils, which positions itself as the world’s first advertising agency based on crowdsourcing principles. Victors & Spoils regularly issues creative briefs on its platform, asking the members of its crowd to submit ideas for a diversity of projects. The agency was involved in the creation of advertisements for brands like Axe, Dish Network and Harley-Davidson.

20 http://blogen.eyeka.com/2012/12/20/yogi-sips-winners-are-here/
These examples illustrate the possibility of using crowdsourcing in the idea generation phase of the advertising production process, with brands getting a high number of raw ideas to inspire their advertising. In this type of creative crowdsourcing initiatives, the value comes from the openness to ideas, wherever they come from, and whoever submits them. There is no need to be a copywriter, a screenwriter or a video production professional to participate; only the idea and the story is being rewarded (Whitla, 2009) (DeJulio, 2012). These contests usually last a couple of weeks and the brands “walk away” with the ideas without further collaboration with the crowd, using the ideas (or not) to work with their internal communication department and/or advertising agencies.

Figure 5: The video advertising production process using crowdsourcing at the idea generation phase

Another way to use crowdsourcing is to use it as a talent and skill identification mechanism. In this model, companies call the crowd to pitch their advertising ideas, and choose to collaborate on the realization of these ideas based on the pitches submitted by the members of the crowd.
2. Crowdsourcing creative talent: call for pitches

Some creative crowdsourcing platforms use crowdsourcing as a matchmaking mechanism to connect companies to skilled video makers for the execution of specific projects (Lampel, Jha, & Bhalla, 2012). Companies can indeed submit “briefs” on these websites, along with a budget and a deadline, and participants submit so-called “pitches” to present their ideas. Here, instead of just gathering creative ideas and using them for internal purposes the companies are looking for both the ideas and the individual to execute these ideas; sourcing ideas and talent. Even though this type of crowdsourcing could be associated to "online platform for contract labor" (Agrawal, Lacetera, & Lyons, 2012) or "online platform for outsourced contracts" (Ghani, Kerr, & Stanton, 2012), we still see this as creative crowdsourcing because it is an open call that invites participants to contribute with their creative ideas before they are selected. Hence, sourcing the crowd’s creativity is the primary focus. Crowdsourcing is used in the initial ideation phase, which leads to creative collaboration with the chosen creator. The subsequent production phases (production and distribution) are not based on crowdsourcing principles, but are executed in the traditional manner (Behan, 2012).

Websites such as Blur, Concept Cupboard, Production Party or Wooshii target mostly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) or start-ups, but other platforms also offer a similar service to major corporations for leading brands. GeniusRocket, for example, allow brands to tap into a select group of their most valuable members, among which the client companies can then select the creator(s) to work with to produce their video advertisement. By focusing on selected members in their crowds, platforms choose to have a smaller but qualified “crowd” to solicit for video projects of its clients. While GeniusRocket pioneered this “curated crowdsourcing” approach, other companies have followed, like the contest organizers Mofilm, who offers a service called Mofilm Pro, or Poptent who launched Poptent Productions, run by the producer Jon Seidman (Sawers, 2012) (Behan, 2012). The latter
claims to offer a “faster, more nimble alternative to traditional video production methods,” by tapping into its crowd of selected film makers. In January 2012, the New York Times reported about the very first Super Bowl ad of Danone’s subsidiary Dannon’s, which was created by two Poptent community members, Remy Neymarc (21 years old) and his brother, Andrew (23 years old). Their idea was selected after among many others submitted in response to Dannon’s creative brief posted in mid-2011, and the final spot was produced “with the advice of the Dannon creative agency of record Y&R New York” (Schoneveld, 2012) (Elliott, 2012). Similarly, Dell aired a commercial produced via Poptent, on January 9th at the final BCS Bowl Game on ESPN (Codey, 2012). On the process outlined earlier, we propose to illustrate this with the following figure.

![Figure 6: The video advertising production process using crowdsourcing to cast talent at the initial phase](image)

In the call for pitches model, the contest takes place at an early stage, and the subsequent stages are based on direct collaboration between the chosen creator and the company. Moving along the production process, the following simple contest model asks members of the crowd
to perform all the steps required to produce a spot, and to submit it to the contest at the end of the process.

3. Crowdsourcing finished content: simple contests

The most often encountered use of crowdsourcing in the production of video advertisements through crowdsourcing is still the use of simple contests. This is the original, most basic approach to crowdsourcing whereby a company posts a problem online, a vast number of individuals offer solutions to the problem before a specific deadline, the winning ideas are awarded some form of a bounty, and the company uses the idea for its own gain (Brabham D. C., 2008). When it comes to video advertising, this type of initiative requires participants to complete all stages needed to come up with an advertisement: ideation (finding the idea), pre-production (preparing the shooting), production (shooting) and post-production (editing the material). This formal process, which is the basis of professional video production, might not be followed by every participant, especially with consumers and amateur participants in the crowd (Brabham D. C., 2012). But whether or not participants formally reproduce each step is of lesser importance than the fact that they cognitively go through these stages in order to come up with a finished ad to submit in a video contest.

There are numerous web-based companies that allow organizations to tap into their communities to generate video content through one-round contests: Leading providers include eYeka, Mofilm, Poptent and Zooppa (Forrester Research Inc., 2011), but other companies exist, albeit they have less experience in working with major brands: Genero, Talenthouse, Userfarm, and Womadz. These creative crowdsourcing platforms have all organized video contests by which they asked their respective communities of video makers to come up with advertisements for brands. In this setting, creative crowdsourcing participants are not only asked to contribute with ideas, but with finished advertisements, and the brands outsource the total production process to the crowd, from finding initial ideas to filming and editing the
spot. All participants are asked to submit their entries before a predefined date, and they compete within a defined framework which usually includes a creative brief, prize money for the winners, judging criteria and potential participation restrictions linked to the type of product. Such contests usually last between 4 and 12 weeks and generate dozens of videos coming from members of the crowd. These turnaround times are much shorter than those observed in the traditional process, and allow brands to get a variety of videos, interpreting the same creative brief in different ways. The below figure represents the simple contest model, in which the client has no active role is the steps related to production of the spots. The client only provides input by guiding the creative brief at the beginning, selecting winners at the end and supervising its distribution.

Figure 7: The video advertising production process using crowdsourcing in the form of simple contests

One of the major setbacks of this type of setting is that there is a high uncertainty about the output from the crowd, and ultimately the success of the creative crowdsourcing initiative (Blattberg, 2011) Additionally, participants don’t know whether their idea and execution will

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21 Some product sectors are heavily regulated, like the alcohol or pharmaceutical industries, which can limit the openness of participation to residents of a given country or individuals above a certain age.
please the brand and be rewarded with a prize, which is why some people view this competitive, one-stage approach of crowdsourcing contests as risky and inefficient. Alternative forms of crowd-sourced video content production have emerged, in which the distributed creativity and skills of the crowd are being leveraged in more directed, organized ways than one-time contests.

4. Crowdsourcing finished content: stage-based contests

One way to direct the crowd’s creativity is to break down the production process and to infuse crowdsourcing in different stages, and to organize stage-based contests. Creative crowdsourcing platform Tongal, for example, breaks down the production process in three phases, which results in three sub-contests for one video project: an idea contest, a pitch contest, and a production contest. In the first step, the crowd is asked to submit ideas in no more than 140 characters, based on the creative brief provided by the brand. The brand then chooses the best ideas, whose authors get a several hundred dollar prize, and the crowd is then solicited again to submit pitches based on these shortlisted ideas. At the end of this second step, the brand scouts these pitches and chooses the ones it prefers, rewarding its authors with another cash prize. The last step of a video project is the actual video contest, where crowd members are asked to produce and submit spots based on the previously rewarded ideas. At the end of this final phase, the brand can choose one or several spots to purchase, acquiring the intellectual property to use it for advertising. The advantage of this model is that the crowd’s creativity is being channeled by the brand, who can decide in which direction the crowd should work by rewarding some ideas rather than others. Another advantage of this mechanism is that the scope of potential participants is broader since it is not restricted to

22 Tongal also allows “wildcard submissions” where creators submit videos that are not based on previously rewarded ideas. “Take a creative gamble, and see how it fares against the judges’ top picks from the previous round,” Tongal explains on its website.
video makers only; someone with just good ideas can participate in the early phases, which is not possible in one-round video contests. “By breaking creativity into smaller pieces, we allow people in all walks of life to compete,” one of Tongal’s founders explains (DeJulio, 2012). Recent research has underlined that channeling the crowd’s creativity by signaling which ideas are best can also lead to less diverse ideas in the long term (Bayus, 2013), which is an interesting limitation to explore in the advertising area.

This model seems to be working well as Tongal’s revenue grew by 400 percent in 2012, and the company secured $15 Million funding from a major internet investment firm in January 2013 to expand its model (Heine C., 2013). Besides, Tongal produced advertisements have started making inroads into the landscape of traditionally-produced, successful video ads. For example, in August 2011, a 37-second stop-motion video called “Duck Tron,” produced for Duck Tape via Tongal, went viral by garnering over 2 million views in less than two weeks after release, placing second on the Ad Age Viral Video Chart, the only crowd-sourced video ever to do so (Light-Wills, 2011). And in 2013, two spots aired on the Super Bowl, for Mennen Speed Stick and Dunder Mifflin, were produced via Tongal, which shows the viability of this emerging model (Heitner, 2013) (Elliott, 2013). It is certainly an interesting hybrid model, where the process uses the distributed creativity of the crowd while leveraging different skill sets among crowd members. The brand, or the advertising agency that represent the brand’s interest, has to invest more time and resources in the intermediate stages, but this investment is rewarded by more control and guidance along the creative process. As some brands hesitate to embrace crowdsourcing because of the risk it represents by potentially harming their brand (Park, 2009), Tongal’s model constitutes an interesting and innovative alternative to traditional contest-based crowdsourcing. A simplified representation is proposed in the following illustration, where the client’s role is illustrated by its involvement between each step of the process.
Figure 8: The video advertising production process using crowdsourcing in the form of stage-based contests

Now that we have presented the four dominant crowdsourcing models used for the creation of video advertising content, a legitimate question would be to know whether there is a relationship between the use of these different models and a sort of crowdsourcing maturity on the part of the brands, their advertising agencies, the crowdsourcing platforms or even the participants. Are some forms of crowdsourcing more primitive than others?

Explaining the different crowdsourcing models

Early forms of crowdsourcing were simple contests, initiated by brands to generate conversations and engagement around their products, and managed with their traditional media and advertising agencies. As we have explained, with the rise of creative crowdsourcing platforms dedicated to the production of branded video content, different models have appeared (idea contests, call for pitches and stage-based contests), and today we see the four models coexist in the advertising world: simple contests, calls for pitches, simple contests and stage-based contests. A lot of the companies included in our study have been using the very same models since their respective foundation. Victors & Spoils has been organizing idea contests for major clients since its foundation in 2009. Similarly, creative
crowdsourcing platforms that target SMEs have always leveraged the call for pitches model to provide video content their clients, with websites that act as marketplaces in which the pitch submitted by video makers serves as a basis to initiate further collaboration with the chosen creative. Simple contest organizers like Genero, Talenthouse, Womadz or Zooppa have kept using the simple contest approach to crowdsourcing of video content. The simple contest model is identical similar to that of contests like Doritos’ Crash The Super Bowl, except that they were organized on permanent crowdsourcing platforms, and all the contest took place in this community setting. Tongal has been sticking to its unique approach, involving a stage-based contest model, since its foundation in 2009. All these companies have been using the very same crowdsourcing model since their foundation, which indicates that these models are a satisfying business model to satisfy their clients (brands and agencies) and their crowds (participants). However, other companies have evolved and adopted their respective crowdsourcing models over time (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Uses… (Crowdsourcing model)</th>
<th>For… (Type of clients)</th>
<th>Since… (Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eYeka</td>
<td>Simple contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idea contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>➔ 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poptent</td>
<td>Simple contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calls for pitches</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>➔ 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GeniusRocket</td>
<td>Simple contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Calls for pitches</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>➔ 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mofilm</td>
<td>Simple contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Calls for pitches</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>➔ 2010</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idea contests</td>
<td>Global brands</td>
<td>➔ 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Evolution of crowdsourcing models by creative crowdsourcing platforms*

Many creative crowdsourcing platforms have indeed started by using the simple contest model to create video content, starting as early as 2006 with eYeka, 2007 with Poptent (called XLNTads at that time) or GeniusRocket, 2009 with Mofilm and 2010 with Userfarm. While this is still a widely used crowdsourcing model, some of these companies have also adopted
other crowdsourcing models to accommodate the needs of their existing clients, namely big companies that run global brands. eYeka and Userfarm, for example, have started running *idea contests* on their respective platforms, starting as early as 2010 for eYeka and 2012 for Userfarm. In these cases, *idea contests* are being organized on their websites in the very same way than the initially running advertising video contests. Other companies, like Poptent and Mofilm, have launched specific business units to organize *call for pitches* for their clients. To allow brands to work directly with some of its most talented filmmakers, Mofilm launched Mofilm Pro in November 2010\(^{23}\), and Poptent launched Poptent Productions in April 2012\(^{24}\). Poptent’s CEO Andy Jedynak explained the launch of Poptent Production by an all-encompassing statement: “*This is the ideal time to launch Poptent Productions, specifically as global demand for high-quality video from major brands and agencies is at all-time high and accelerating,*” he explained on The Next Web. “*We believe that Poptent Production’s unique model is highly beneficial both to our clients, by being cost-effective and fast, as well as to our community of producers, by providing opportunities and incentives to be directly selected to work for some of the world’s most visible and respected brands.*” Some often cited disadvantages of crowdsourcing indeed include the revelation of strategic information to competitors (Lakhani & Panetta, 2007) (Penin & Burger-Helmchen, 2011) (Feller, Finnegan, Hayes, & O’Reilly, 2012), the risk of getting low quality results (Howe, 2007), low participation (Feller, Finnegan, Hayes, & O’Reilly, 2012) or even upset participants whose reactions could harm the brand’s image (Gebauer, Füller, & Pezzei, 2012).

The most radical evolution of the contest-based crowdsourcing model is to change its business model completely, which is what GeniusRocket did by dropping the *simple contest*

\(^{23}\) [http://brand-e.biz/mofilm-crowdsources-the-pros_10235.html](http://brand-e.biz/mofilm-crowdsources-the-pros_10235.html)

model to focus on its so-called “curated crowdsourcing” model, a form of call for pitches that we already described above. The Maryland-based company dropped open call contests in 2010, a moment at which they claimed a community of 15,000 individuals, revamped its entire business model around a call for pitches model with no more than 500 creative teams in its crowd (Blattberg, 2011) (Lamotte, 2012). In this model, the primary role of the platform is not to organize a contest and to screen incoming entries (whether these are ideas or finished ads) but to select and coordinate the teams who work on project pitches for GeniusRocket’s clients. For each video project, the company scans its community for well suited teams considering their experience, general interest, knowledge of an industry or target audience, and these teams then submit ideas based on the creative brief. The client then chooses the best ideas, rewards them with a prize thus acquiring the intellectual property, and the process moves forward to the creation of storyboards, which can be refined based on quantitative or qualitative research (GeniusRocket allows brands to get expert advice as the advertising and media expert Bob Garfield is « Critic At Large » for the company), and the production, which will again be handled by a creative team from the curated community. GeniusRocket’s model straddles the line between traditional collaboration found within the traditional advertising agency world, and open call crowdsourcing, to delivering the quality of an agency with the creative breadth a crowd of talent offers. This model also keeps the small crowd of participants engaged, according to the company’s founder: “We realized recently that we’ve had literally zero percent attrition in our community,” said GeniusRocket founder Peter LaMotte in an interview. “The only people that aren’t in our community are people that we don’t want in our community anymore; we’ve grown beyond the quality of their work.” (Blattberg, 2011). This particular crowdsourcing model is another rare but highly revelatory example of the evolution of the model when it comes to leveraging crowds to produced video content for brands. Taken together, the above mentioned evolutions of the traditional simple
Contest model allow crowdsourcing platforms to use the creative power of the crowd, which is at the basis of creative crowdsourcing, and at the same time to lower the risks that the open contest model implies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the growing role that crowdsourcing plays in the production video content used for advertising purposes by brands. Given the difficulty of churning out a steady stream of new and engaging content, crowdsourcing ideas and content is increasingly becoming a new tool in advertisers’ tool kits (Aquino, 2013). Marketers are beginning to turn to crowdsourcing in varying degrees, as they seek to have an ongoing dialogue with consumers. We have seen that the first examples of crowdsourcing were mostly integrated into PR-driven marketing campaigns, some of which are still being run today. But we have also seen that these famous examples do not represent the majority of initiatives, and that a lot of brands use crowdsourcing as a fast, global and cost-effective way to generate video content to be used to advertise their brands online or offline. We have underlined that creative crowdsourcing platforms do not operate in the same way nor do they target the same types of clients. Through a multiple case study methodology, and after presenting the production process of video advertising, we have indeed identified four dominant ways of sourcing video content from the crowd: idea contests are being used to get fresh ideas to inspire the makers of advertisements, call for pitches allow small and large organizations to identify talented creative individuals or companies to work with, simple contests allow organizations to gather video content in a traditional competitive setting, and stage-based contests allow clients to have more control throughout the process by being involved at different stages of the process. We chose to present these four models in this order because they reflect the more or less important role that the crowd gets in the production of video
content: while idea contests only engage the crowd at the early ideation phase, calls for pitches engage a selected member of the crowd throughout the production process, simple contests task the crowd to accomplish all stages of the process until submission, and stage-based contests do the same by incorporating several moments of interaction points between the initiating brand and the crowd. Our research highlights the diversity of models that brands and agencies can mobilize to engage crowds in the production of original video content for their advertising, and underlines the growing complexity of the crowdsourcing phenomenon.

We see the use of idea generation and simple contests as the popular ways companies are using crowdsourcing. They start out to engage and empower their consumers and encourage those customers to interact with their brand and to suggest ideas for advertising spots. It is an opportunity to generate content, fuel viral ads and conduct cost effective market research. The rise of “curated crowdsourcing” in the call for pitches model and the stage-based contest model begins to point to a refinement of the broad definition of sourcing from the crowd. The nascent movement towards precision and gaining control appears to be an evolution of the crowdsourcing model. Our research identifies new forms of crowdsourcing, which urges us to adapt our understanding of the concept beyond the early definitions. This pushes us to question the original, quite narrow definition of crowdsourcing (“a company posts a problem online, a vast number of individuals offer solutions to the problem, the winning ideas are awarded some form of a bounty, and the company uses the output for its own gain,” Brabham, 2008) given the innovative forms that have emerged to better accommodate the needs of advertising professionals looking to source creative video content. Some crowdsourcing platforms have adopted the model of traditional advertising agencies, some others are very similar to production houses, and others are still focusing on organizing simple creative contests, encompassing a varying degree of crowd input for the creation of video content. This diversity of models reflects the current research trend that aims to identify
and classify crowdsourcing models based on the workflow organization or the type of tasks that are being crowd-sourced (Geiger, Seedorf, Nickerson, & Schader, 2011) (Erickson, Petrick, & Trauth, 2012) (Adamczyk, Bullinger, & Möslin, 2012).

Curating content and engaging clients in more steps along the way in the video crowdsourcing process is an interesting evolution and one that we recommend to continue to monitor. The ability to break down each phase of the video production process and engage consumers while cherry picking the best ideas and talent is indication of a movement towards professionalism. In some cases this is driven by clients desire to have high quality video advertising to run either nationally or feed their social channels (YouTube, Facebook, Brand website, Twitter). We can assume that clients are seeking to reward their consumers with high content that is relevant, surprisingly and delightful. It is noteworthy to mention that crowdsourcing at the distribution phase does not seem to be existing in the industry; most companies in the scope of our study offer distribution as additional services, and only through industry partnerships with specialized companies, which is not different from the online amplification mechanisms used by existing advertising actors. These services are very important as video content does not necessarily spread by itself on the internet, hence online amplification methods are often needed (Dawson, et al., 2011). Only Tongal has some feature that integrates the crowd at the latest stage of our process: “The most watched video – which can be embedded anywhere but must be seen via the Tongal player and cannot be a YouTube hit – also wins a cash prize”, Tongal co-founder James DeJulio explains (2012), but it’s only on a proprietary player, thus being very limited when it comes to overall distribution on the web. After reviewing the literature on crowdsourcing as well as analyzing the different models of web based crowdsourcing companies, we believe the future of crowdsourcing for the production of video advertising looks bright. We cannot be too sure of the form it will take given changes in technology, but we are certain that companies will continue to remain consumer-centric and
thus engage consumers in crowdsourcing initiatives for their authentic point of view. In video production, we specifically see the liberation of experts such as producer or director and the empowerment of general consumers armed with camera to become the producer, director and editor of a brand’s story. With experts now playing the role of collaborators, we expect to see a rise in creativity resulting in rich video content. As consumers begin to participate and feel more empowered, they will become confident to influence and solve problems with interesting stories that capture their experience with the brand (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). This leads us to discuss the implications of crowdsourcing in the context of an emerging space within marketing which is Content Marketing and Content Strategy. Content marketing are all marketing formats that involve the creation and sharing of content in order to attract, acquire and engage current and potential customer bases with the objective of driving profitable action. The web, social and mobile revolutions have changed the world, connecting everyone and enabling the seamless flow of information. Empowered consumers are using technology to create compelling video content that they can easily share out beyond any geographical boundaries. While crowdsourcing for video production is very specific – to create brand content that is shareable and engaging, we believe that crowdsourcing video production will eventually fall within the purview of content marketing. This is an important shift to recognize and explore further, because as the core of crowd-sourced video production and content, consumers are publishing content on behalf of brands. This shift underscores the idea that brands and companies are moving towards the publishing business.
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