
The Impact on Idea Selection of the Intrinsic Qualities of a Creative Idea and Its Presentation: The Case of Pitch Evaluations during Start-Up Weekends¹

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ABSTRACT

What criteria are used to judge a creative idea? We attempt to answer this question by analyzing 57 idea pitches from two start-up weekends. Following the scientific and managerial literature, we identify four conditions intrinsically linked to the idea and three conditions linked to the presenter that could influence the evaluation of an idea. A comparative case analysis in Fuzzy Set mode highlights three configurations of sufficient conditions for the positive evaluation of a pitch. In addition, a good enunciation of the pitch is found to be a necessary condition. This research therefore shows that the intrinsic qualities of an idea are not sufficient for it to be favorably evaluated; it must also be well presented. Conversely, good presentation is not enough; the idea must have intrinsic qualities to be favorably evaluated. In addition, the physical appearance of the pitcher can be an asset in the specific context of start-up weekends.

Key words: Idea Selection, Creativity, Pitch, Assessment Criteria, Hackathon, FsQCA

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Innovation is a non-linear process involving three stages: generation of an initial creative idea by an individual or organization; appropriation of the idea by a larger group; and, finally, institutionalization of the idea by the authority that governs this group (Alter, 2000). In order to maximize the chances of appropriation, organizations have set up numerous evaluation mechanisms, including creative sessions whose objective is to generate as many ideas as possible (Lerch *et al.*, 2015); here, it is assumed that the higher the number of ideas generated, the higher the probability of finding a good-quality idea that is exploitable. Even so, the good idea still needs to be presented in such a way that it is selected (Boldrini, Schieb-Bienfait, 2016).

The literature on the selection of ideas is not abundant and mostly considers the selection of ideas on the basis of their intrinsic qualities (*e.g.* novelty, feasibility, relevance, and specificity; Dean *et al.*, 2006) or completeness (Sukhov, Magnusson, Olsson, 2015), as if the context did not matter. Recent research shows that this is only partly true and that the openness of the evaluator also matters (Sukhov *et al.*, 2018). Taking this idea further, we argue that the evaluation of an idea is a complex phenomenon that, as well as being influenced by the characteristics of the evaluator, depends not only on the intrinsic value of the idea itself but also on the way, and the context in which, it is presented.

This argument is supported by the literature on creative processes. First, Amabile (1996) reveals that good communication and good negotiation strongly contribute to the selection of an idea by the organization. Second, Drazin *et al.* (1999), while identifying the role of creativity during the different phases of a research project, note that the creative idea can also solve crises in which certain actors manage to gain power over the project thanks to their communication and negotiation skills. These two pieces of work imply that who is presenting the idea, whether they are capable of communicating the idea, and therefore how the idea is introduced to its audience might have an impact on the selection of the idea by the evaluating group or the organization as a whole.

Making the assumption that ideas are not judged independently of their proponents (ideators), we then consider whether the “blind” selection of creative ideas (*i.e.*, without knowledge of the ideators) might be any more effective than selection where the ideators are known to the evaluators. We find that there is as yet no research that provides a clear answer and that, more generally, little research is currently being conducted on how creative ideas are evaluated and the impact of presentation on evaluation. Some studies highlight that the gender of the ideator (Belghiti-Mahut *et al.*, 2018; Gupta, Turban, 2012; Parmentier, Le Loarne-Lemaire, Belkhouja, 2017;

Parmentier, Le Loarne-Lemaire, 2018), the experience of the ideator (Gupta, Turban, 2012), and the way in which the idea is presented (Chiaburu, Peng, Van Dyne, 2015; Shuye Lu *et al.*, 2019) have an impact on its evaluation. However, which of these criteria is the most “impactful”? Are other factors relevant? These questions remain unanswered. This study therefore examines the relative influence of the various aspects of presentation on the evaluation of creative ideas.

After an outline of the theoretical framework to the study and an explanation of the method used, we analyse and discuss the results before concluding with an assessment of the limitations of the study and its implications, as well as an indication of possible directions for further research.

Theoretical Framework

The management literature, and more specifically the literature on organizational creativity, suggests conditions linked to the intrinsic characteristics of ideas that can affect their selection. Further to these intrinsic conditions, the management and psychology literatures identify other factors that can come into play during idea selection: conditions related to the message; the enunciation and presentation of the creative idea; and characteristics of the ideator/presenter.

Evaluation of the Intrinsic Features of a Creative Idea

The evaluation of creative ideas refers to the cognitive process of assessing the consequences of the potential development of an idea according to more or less explicit evaluation standards (Lonergan, Scott, Mumford, 2004). Dean *et al.* (2006), on the basis of a review of 90 articles describing methods for evaluating ideas in research laboratories during creative processes, identify four main categories of criteria: novelty; feasibility; relevance; and specificity. The novelty of an idea can be assessed according to its degree of originality and its “relative paradigm” – that is, to some extent, the degree of disruption that the idea will create. In this respect, selected ideas are more “novel” when evaluators are specified to choose the most creative ideas rather than the best (Rietzschel, Nijstad, Stroebe, 2010). The feasibility of an idea can be assessed in terms of its potential social acceptability as well as its potential technical implementation. The relevance of an idea can be judged in terms of its applicability to a problem and its effectiveness in solving that problem (Ford, 1996). Finally, specificity can be determined from the completeness of

the description of the idea, which should include all and only the information necessary for the idea to be understood.

According to Magnusson, Netz and Wästlund (2014), when experts evaluate ideas, they subconsciously use the criteria of originality, user value, and producibility. These intuitive criteria, which overlap with the criteria described above, have been widely disseminated and are often the most explicit criteria used in idea selection in creative processes (Dean *et al.*, 2006; Magnusson, Netz, Wästlund, 2014). However, research suggests that among these three criteria, evaluators are primarily looking for ideas that are producible (or feasible), thus emphasizing utility at the expense of originality (Rietzschel, Nijstad, Stroebe, 2010). In addition, however, the structure of the message carrying the idea can influence evaluation, as Dean *et al.* (2006) indicate with the criterion of specificity. According to the management literature (Klaff, 2011), details should be avoided and the message must be presented in a positive light. This advice is in line with a later study showing that ideas are evaluated positively when they are presented constructively (Chiaburu, Peng, Van Dyne, 2015).

Recent research shows that there is not always a correlation between the completeness of the presentation of a creative idea and the positive evaluation of its quality according to the criteria that are intrinsic to it (Sukhov, 2018). This suggests that the evaluation of ideas is not necessarily a rational decision based solely on the information provided and standardized evaluation criteria. Indeed, the literature shows that the choice of relevant criteria for evaluating creative ideas depends on the context, the nature of the creative sessions, and the strategic objectives of the organization (Ford, 1996). However, the evaluation of ideas is more than the “simple” addition of these components. An idea is considered to be “good” when it possesses a certain degree of completeness (Sukhov, Magnusson, Olsson, 2015) that allows the evaluator to understand it fully (Sukhov, Magnusson, Netz, 2019).

“What Is Well Thought Out Is Clearly Stated”: The Role of Presentation in the Selection of Ideas

Although the scientific literature is not prolific on the subject, the management literature, which is not always based on established research results, suggests that the intrinsic quality of a creative idea is not sufficient for it to be selected by evaluators. Characteristics related to the way in which the idea is presented could also have an impact on its selection by an organization. Thus, Klaff – author of the bestseller *Pitch Anything* (2011) – believes that the positive evaluation of an idea may be based on the intrinsic characteristics

discussed previously, but that these criteria are not sufficient for selection. The way in which the ideator presents the idea and, in particular, the fluency of the presentation increases the chances of selection. The author emphasizes that pitchers can induce positive emotions in evaluators by means of their presentation style. From this perspective, the way in which the message is conveyed becomes a priority. The pitcher should have a mastery of language and good presentation skills so that the idea can be enunciated in a clear, easily understandable way.

“Can We Judge The Book by Its Cover?”: The Role Of The Distinctiveness of the Pitcher in the Selection of Creative Ideas

As has been shown, evaluation is a cognitive process that results from an observation or an opinion on the value of an idea (Lonergan, Scott, Mumford, 2004) and as such is influenced not only by criteria intrinsic to the idea (such as the novelty, feasibility, relevance, and specificity), but also by other criteria, such as the way in which the idea is presented. Here, we discuss criteria that are related to the ideator.

The gender literature shows that the gender of the individual has an impact on the selection of ideas: Female leaders who show selfish characteristics are considered less effective than other persons by their subordinates, while the same people evaluate their male leaders with the same characteristics more leniently (De Hoogh, Den Hartog, Nevicka, 2015). In addition to gender, other characteristics of the ideator could have an impact on the reception of ideas by evaluators, and in turn on their selection. For instance, the more evaluators believe that the ideator has experience in the field associated with the idea, the more inclined they are to select the idea (Foo, 2010).

Based on a Hollywood study, researchers have shown that evaluators use a set of physical and behavioral cues to match each pitcher to the archetypes of scriptwriter such artist, storyteller, showrunner, neophyte, journeyman, dealmaker and nonwriter (Elsbach, Kramer, 2003). Each of these archetypes reflects specific levels of creativity that ultimately have a strong influence on the evaluation of the pitches. In a completely different context, other researchers have demonstrated that the pitcher’s “presence,” when participating in a pitch in front of business angels at an investor forum, has an impact on the evaluation of the idea by funders (Clark, 2008). This phenomenon of presence is explained in the literature on the psycho-sociology of communication. It refers to the place occupied by the body of the pitcher of an idea (Trevarthen, 1993). Presence refers not only to the size of the body – small

or large – but also to the pitcher’s voice and movement during the discourse. For example, recent research indicates that the tone of the pitcher’s voice may have a persuasive or deterrent effect on the audience’s perception of the idea: In an experiment conducted by O’Connor and Barclay (2018), listeners perceived low-pitched voices as being more trustworthy and attractive than high-pitched ones. This result may support Klaff’s (2011) conclusion that appropriate use of the voice – emphasis, tone, and pausing – promotes audience acceptance of an idea.

Method

The Case of Idea Evaluation during Start-Up Weekends

Hackathons are short collaborative processes that aim to develop, enrich, and select creative ideas. Initially set up to enable software development (Trainer *et al.*, 2016), hackathons have recently spread to the world of innovation and entrepreneurship. Indeed, they are becoming standard practice in the world of innovation and entrepreneurship education (Ewango-Chatelet, 2019; Foliard, Pontois, 2019; de Vaujany, Bohas, Irrmann, 2019).

Our research focused on pitching sessions during start-up weekends, a form of hackathon that provides a standardized format for the creative process. We chose to examine idea selection within this type of creative process on the basis of recommendations in the literature that entrepreneurial practices identify both the message and the fluidity of the presentation of the idea.

During start-up weekends, over the course of 54 hours, through exchanges of ideas with coaches, investors, entrepreneurs, and sponsors, participants learn together how to create a business. During the first few hours, participants who have an idea for a business activity submit this via a one-minute pitch to all the other participants. All participants, including those who have an idea and are pitching, are given dummy tickets for a total amount of €6000 (one €3000 ticket, one €2000 ticket and one €1000 ticket). At the end of the pitching session, each participant invests all or part of this amount in their preferred ideas. The ideas that collect the highest investments are selected to be worked on by a team made up of the participants who invested in them. At the end of the event, the improved ideas are presented and defended by the teams in front of a jury of entrepreneurs and investors. The three finalists, as evaluated by this jury, are rewarded not only by integration into a network of entrepreneurs but also with budgets and hours of support to start the activity associated with their creative ideas.

Out of methodical opportunism, we selected two start-up weekends that were taking place in the French Alps Region: one in Grenoble in November 2018 and one in Chambéry in February 2019. The Grenoble event brought together 89 participants with 37 initial ideas, of which 15 were selected to be worked on by teams, while 48 people attended the Chambéry event, where 22 ideas were pitched and 8 were selected. The 59 idea pitches (37 + 22) were filmed and the text transcribed. The overwhelming majority of pitches and exchanges were conducted in French. Therefore, we did not include two pitches that were conducted in English in order to preserve the consistency of the sample and to exclude any bias. Our final sample of cases thus contains 57 pitches, each of one-minute duration. We also obtained the amounts invested by the participants in each of the 57 ideas.

The Conditions, Necessary or Sufficient, For an Idea to Be Selected

We used the Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) method to address our research question. This method identifies the conditions that are necessary and sufficient to obtain a given result (Rihoux, Ragin, 2009). Following previous work, especially in the field of creativity (Sukhov *et al.*, 2018; Valaei, Rezaei, Ismail, 2017) the fsQCA appears to be a method adapted to the study of antecedents that act on the generation and evaluation of ideas. It also makes it possible to identify the optimal configuration of the identified conditions for obtaining that result. In this case, the given result is the selection of 23 (15 + 8) of the 57 ideas by the participants for the follow-up sessions of the start-up weekends.

Performance Measure

We used the pitch evaluations by the participants to assign a score from 0 to 100 to each pitch. The 100-point scale is based on the highest score (amount of virtual money) achieved by a pitch, which was €33 000 for Grenoble and €39 000 for Chambéry. Each score was a percentage of that highest score. The crossover point was fixed at 32. This value of crossover point corresponds to the level of pitch selection for the weekend start-ups of Grenoble and Chambéry.

Condition Coding

Each of the conditions has been identified in the literature. In a first step, we coded each of the 57 pitches. We coded the intrinsic conditions from the transcript of the pitch text and the presentation conditions from the video of

the pitch. In a second step, both codes have been compared. In this respect, Cohen's kappa coefficient is 0.734. Where these were different, a discussion on the gap ensued to reach a common assessment.

Conditions intrinsic to the idea – novelty, feasibility, relevance – were rated on a scale from 1 to 5 with a crossover point at 2.9. For specificity, we coded five sub-conditions based on Klaff (2011): the presence in the pitch of the explanation of a need or a problem, the presentation of a solution, the identification of a target group of users, the use of an anecdote or a story to convey the idea, and the announcement of the name of the idea. The sub-condition is coded to 1 if it is present in the pitch or to 0 if it is absent. The final score for the specificity is the sum of the coding of these sub-conditions. The crossover point has been set at 2.5.

Again based on Klaff (2011), the condition for the enunciation of the message was divided into five sub-conditions: absence of reading written notes; fluency of speech; absence of hesitation (fewer than seven signs of hesitation, such as “er ...”); appropriate use of grammar; and respect for the time limit. The final score for the enunciation is the sum of the coding of these sub-conditions. The crossover point has been set at 2.5.

The four sub-conditions linked to the pitcher's presence are: modulation of the voice, with pauses and accentuation of important elements; inclusion of smiles; mobility of the body in space; generation of interaction with the audience. The final score for the pitcher's presence is the sum of the coding of these sub-conditions. The crossover point has been set at 1.9.

The distinctiveness of the pitcher's physical appearance in relation to that of the other participants is based on visible differences in corpulence, ethnic origin, or age. If any such difference was observed, the condition was coded to 0. If there was no difference, the condition was coded to 1.

Results

Three Configurations That Lead To a Creative Idea Being Selected

The literature review allowed us to identify three categories of criteria that could, a priori, have an impact on the selection of an idea: criteria intrinsic to the idea – originality, feasibility, relevance, and specificity; criteria related to the presentation of the idea – tone of voice and gestures; and criteria related to the pitcher – his or her body shape, age, and ethnicity. Having identified

these criteria, or conditions, we examined whether certain *configurations* of conditions would be more likely to lead to the selection of a creative idea.

The first phase of the fsQCA analysis addresses the necessary conditions. Our analysis reveals one necessary condition for a positive evaluation of the pitch: enunciation (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1 - Analysis of the necessary conditions with positive conditions and positive outcome

Conditions tested	Consistency	Coverage
Novelty	0.660	0.686
Feasibility	0.785	0.587
Relevance	0.772	0.705
Specificity	0.807	0.639
Enunciation	0.927	0.569
Presence	0.679	0.616
Physical appearance	0.552	0.428

Table 2 - Analysis of the necessary conditions with negative conditions and positive outcome

Conditions tested	Consistency	Coverage
~ Novelty	0.708	0.558
~ Feasibility	0.582	0.652
~ Relevance	0.657	0.580
~ Specificity	0.628	0.650
~ Enunciation	0.423	0.705
~ Presence	0.697	0.619
~ Physical appearance	0.448	0.478

The second phase of the QCA analysis addresses sufficient conditions. The consistency threshold of 0.8 is adopted to select configurations associated with the positive and negative outcomes. In addition, to increase the robustness of the results, we retained only configurations that contained at least two cases. Analysis of the pitches revealed 11 configurations of conditions (see Table 3), 3 of which were identified as sufficient for the idea to be selected.

Table 3 - Truth table (11 configurations)

Conditions								Output value*	No. of cases**	Cases (title of pitches)
Config.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G			
1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	Home Stylist, Refuel
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	3	Phoenix, Solal, La Coulisse
3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	Hero Bot, Annophila
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	Safe Hear, Demeure, Willo
5	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	BAO, Mobilier C
6	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	VR School, Talentueux
7	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	Chanclas, Simon, Ecolove
8	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	4	Adé, Tably Power, Improjecteur, Prollix
9	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	Randoski, Hogo
10	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	U Trip, Together
11	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	5	Lokki, Smart Travel, By by Fisc, Impact, Formation E

A: Novelty; B: Feasibility; C: Relevance; D: Specificity; E: Enunciation; F: Presence; G: Physical appearance

* Sufficiency inclusion score greater than 0.8

** Number of cases by configuration > 1

Finally, we highlight three optimal configurations of conditions for ideas to be evaluated positively and, ultimately, selected (see Table 4). The first configuration applies to six pitchers, who proposed a good idea in terms of novelty, feasibility, and relevance, with a well-structured pitch (specificity), a mastery of enunciation, and stage presence. However, in this configuration, physical appearance has no influence on the outcome.

The second configuration applies to five pitchers, who propose a good idea in terms of novelty, and relevance, but not feasibility, with a well-structured pitch, a mastery of enunciation, and stage presence. In this configuration, the pitchers do not present any physical distinction compared with most of the other participants.

The third configuration applies to cases in which the idea is new and is presented with a well-structured pitch, a mastery of enunciation, and stage presence, but is neither feasible nor relevant. In this configuration, the two pitchers are physically different from the majority of participants.

Table 4 – Sufficient conditions for a highly positive evaluation* of pitches

Conditions	Configurations		
	1	2	3
Novelty	•	•	•
Feasibility	•		0
Relevance	•	•	0
Specificity	•	•	•
Enunciation	•	•	•
Presence	•	•	•
Physical appearance		•	0
Consistency	0.881	0.873	0.912
Raw coverage	0.369	0.239	0.155
Number of cases	6	5	2
	Phoenix	Hero Bot	Home Stylist
	Solal	Annophila	Refuel
	La Coulisse	Safe Hear	
	Safe Hear	Demeure	
	Demeure	Willo	
	Willo		

Solid circles (•) indicate the presence of a condition, and blank circles (0) indicate the absence of a condition. Blank spaces indicate that the condition has no influence on the outcome.

* A “highly positive evaluation” refers to the top 33% of pitches in terms of the scores received.

Being Intrinsically Creative Is Not Enough for an Idea to Be Selected

Our research on the creative ideas expressed during two start-up weekends confirms the results of the above-mentioned research: The conditions of novelty, feasibility, relevance, and specificity appear in the first configuration of conditions that are sufficient to achieve a positive evaluation of an idea. However, the novelty and the specificity of an idea are the two only conditions that emerge in all three configurations of sufficient conditions for the creative idea to be positively evaluated and, therefore, selected (Table 4). Conversely, feasibility and relevance are not included in all of these configurations. In addition, the lack of influence of feasibility in configuration 2 indicates that this criterion is not always important for evaluators in the

context of a start-up weekend. Among the four intrinsic criteria of an idea, it seems that originality and specificity are the most important to evaluators.

Nevertheless, as can be seen, these conditions alone are not sufficient for an idea to be evaluated positively. The conditions of presentation, enunciation and presence, are also included in the three configurations of sufficient conditions for a highly positive evaluation of pitches. In other words, the criteria traditionally used in the selection of an idea are not the only ones that should be considered in an idea selection process such as that carried out in start-up weekends.

Presenting an Idea Well Is Essential To Sell It

As shown in configurations 1 and 2, to be selected by the participants in a start-up weekend, an idea must not only have intrinsic qualities but also be well presented. Our results therefore confirm the importance of presenting an idea well, even when it incorporates all the required intrinsic qualities. Moreover, our analysis shows that enunciation is a necessary condition, *i.e.*, it *must* be present for the idea to be selected. The physical appearance of the pitcher, even if this condition is not present in Configuration 1, could also influence the public's evaluation.

Physical Distinctiveness Can Be an Asset

We note that, in configuration 3, the pitchers show physical differences from the majority of participants. In this configuration, only the intrinsic conditions of originality and specificity are met, but the pitcher presents the idea well and also has good stage presence. In the cases that match this configuration, the difference in terms of physical appearance refers to the corpulence of the pitcher. Furthermore, in one of these cases, the pitcher is a woman.² In both cases, the pitchers' physical difference from the majority of the participants seems to have had a positive impact, since the only other criteria that were met were originality and good structure, good use of enunciation, and stage presence. Here, physical distinctiveness seems to compensate for a lack of feasibility and relevance.

2. Women represent only 26% of the pitchers.

Discussion

Complementarity between the Intrinsic Qualities of the Idea and the Qualities of the Presenter

Our results are partly consistent with existing research. Thus, Rietzschel *et al.* (2010) show that, when given basic instructions and no explanation of the main generic principles for selecting innovative ideas, evaluators tend to spontaneously select the most feasible and least original ideas (Rietzschel, Nijstad, Stroebe, 2010). In a similar vein, Criscuolo *et al.* (2017) show that managers who decide on the allocation of budgets and R&D investment fund projects that are moderately innovative at a higher level than those that are deemed highly innovative (Criscuolo *et al.*, 2017). One reason may be that the newer the idea, the more guarantees and concrete elements such as physical supports and prototypes must be provided. Here, we reveal somewhat different results: in the three identified configurations, novelty remains a condition for an idea to be accepted but never alone. Other conditions remain sufficient, such as relevance, specificity, enunciation, presence, and no physical difference, as suggested in configuration 2.

In other words, our results show that proposing a good idea in terms of novelty, feasibility, relevance, and specificity is not enough to ensure that it is properly evaluated and ultimately accepted. The selection of the idea is not only based on the intrinsic conditions of the idea. The quality of the pitcher is also important, especially in terms of their ability to present the idea in a fluid and attractive way as well as their stage presence during the presentation. In the case of an original, feasible, relevant, and well-structured idea, however, stage presence alone is not enough; the pitcher must still present the idea with good enunciation. Our results corroborate the few studies that have already been published on this subject (Parmentier, Le Loarne, 2018): The pitcher of an idea influences evaluators' judgment of it. In this study we have identified the conditions related to the presentation that influence the evaluation of the pitch. Similarly, the work of Shuye Lu *et al.* (2019) indicates that the pitcher must influence the audience by rational argument or an appeal to the emotions. In the cases we studied, where the pitches lasted a maximum of one minute, we found that the pitchers rarely used artefacts or prototypes, but they used a lot of tactics and most speeches contained the minimum message elements expected in a pitch (need, solution, target, storytelling...). However, the pitchers also used clear enunciation, gestures, and varied intonation. The work of Clarke *et al.* (2019) attests to the importance of non-verbal communication in pitching entrepreneurial ideas to financial investors.

Most importantly, our results suggest that there is an *interaction* between the level of creativity of the idea, the construction of the message associated with the idea, the way in which the message is conveyed, and the physical appearance and presence of the pitcher. Good presentation is not enough; the idea must also be good for it to be well received by the audience. Conversely, a good idea must be accompanied by a good argument and good presentation.

How Does A New Idea Become Accepted?

Recent research finds that all ideas – especially new ones – must be socialized before they can be selected by an organization (Perry-Smith, Mannucci, 2017). However, our findings may provide another explanation for the frequent rejection of new ideas by the group: The newer an idea is, the more it needs to be feasible and relevant. The message that conveys the idea must also be clear, well presented, and explicit. In this sense, our results are consistent with the finding that organizations tend to kill creativity and are biased towards ideas that are only moderately innovative but feasible. When we want to reduce uncertainty, we tend to undervalue creative ideas (Mueller, Melwani, Goncalo, 2012). This bias is even stronger when the innovative idea is presented along with other more useful but unoriginal ideas (Mueller *et al.*, 2012).

In our research, participants invested in ideas using virtual money, without any real value. Despite this specificity, we argue that these participants were in similar positions to investors and invested directly in potential entrepreneurial projects. In this context, participants also demonstrated risk aversion by investing mainly in original, feasible, and useful ideas. It seems easier for a pitcher to sell an original, feasible, and useful idea than an idea that is original but contains risk. In such a context, only pitchers who “relate” physically to their audience and have good stage presence can obtain a positive evaluation for innovative ideas; in addition, they must have a well-structured, well presented pitch.

As shown in configuration 3, we would then be led to think that if the sponsor of the idea is different from the group of evaluators, he or she is more visible and the idea will be more easily accepted, provided that it is also novel and well presented. In this case, its infeasibility and irrelevance do not prevent the idea from being positively evaluated. This could be due to the fact that evaluators have to select ideas after the presentation of *all* the ideas. We did not investigate the actual process by which each evaluator selected ideas; we simply observed that they did not take notes during the pitches but do not know if they pre-select ideas they like or not after each presentation

for instance. We also note that participants were waiting to present their own ideas while listening to the ideas presented by others, which might have affected their attentiveness. In any case, we noted that the evaluators had to remember a large number of ideas before selecting some of them, between 1 and 3 since participants have only three tickets. In such a memorization process, physical distinctiveness might stand out and could explain why some ideas that are proposed by people who are physically distinctive are selected; other conditions might have been forgotten by the evaluators.

Conclusion: Inputs, Research Limitations, and Outstanding Issues

To our knowledge, with the exception of Sukhov *et al.* (2018), who state that an idea can be selected depending on configurations of conditions that relate not only to the idea *per se* but also to the evaluator, little work has been done on the necessary and sufficient conditions that lead to the selection of a creative idea. By showing that ideas are selected on the basis of configurations of conditions that relate not only to the intrinsic idea but also to the pitcher and to the way he or she introduces the idea, the present study allows us to add to the set of knowledge on this subject.

Admittedly, this study suffers from certain limitations. It is limited to a case of selection of real ideas because the participants are not in the logic of experimentation and choose to invest their time and energy for the enrichment of the one in which they invest. This study is based on the analysis of two events held in France; therefore, findings are necessarily contingent to these situations. Moreover, the evaluation of the ideas studied was rather high since we considered ideas feasible and useful when they have a score greater than or equal to 2.9 out of a maximum of 5. Similarly, we considered an idea to be creative when it had a score greater than 2.9. Finally, we were not able to integrate other sub-conditions relating to the pitchers to measure their compliance with social standards, *e.g.* by considering their clothing, education, or professional experience.

These limitations invite future research based on a higher number of cases and different contexts, if only in start-up weekends carried out in other locations or with different populations. Also, the parameters of certain conditions, such as those linked to the physical appearance of the pitcher, need to be refined. Furthermore, to develop our work and the work of Sukhov *et al.* (2018), future researchers might attempt to refine the configurations of criteria leading to the selection of an idea by integrating both the intrinsic

conditions of the idea itself, but also the conditions relating to the person introducing the idea, the style of presentation and the evaluators themselves.

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