Several years ago Lays launched a question in The Netherlands to come up with a new flavor for chips. The Dutch people reacted to this question by providing 678,682 ideas (PepsiCo.nl, n.d.). Patatje Joppie appeared to be the winner and is now available on the Dutch market (PepsiCo.nl, n.d.). This is an example of crowdsourcing for innovation. Crowdsourcing means, as the name implies, outsourcing to the crowd (Howe, 2006).

Crowdsourcing is related to other innovation fields, such as open innovation, user innovation, and open source innovation (Schenk and Guittard, 2011). Different open innovation practices are distinguished in the literature based on the openness of the process and the type of external actors that are involved and based on the openness of the outcome. With regard to the different external partners suppliers, customers (or users), competitors, research institutes as well as other organizations in different industries are often distinguished (Huizingh, 2011). The crowd was most of the time neglected. In addition to the process also the outcome can be closed or open. Open source innovation is an example in which the outcome is open (Muller-Seitz and Reger, 2010; Huizingh, 2011). In crowdsourcing the outcome is in general closed, since the organization has control and ownership over the idea as well as the further development and implementation thereof (Schenk and Guittard, 2011; Brabham, 2008).

Although concrete examples and research (Kleeman et al., 2008; Poetz and Schreier, 2012; Brabham, 2009) have shown the potential of crowdsourcing for organizations, crowdsourcing is a relative new but growing area in the literature. Until now, the studies merely focused on crowd’s motivation to participate (Zheng et al., 2011; Ye et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2013), on differences between crowdsourcing practices (Kleeman et al., 2008; Acar and Van den Ende, 2011; Ye et al., 2012), and on the grounds for firms to use crowdsourcing (Afuah and Tucci, 2012; Ye et al., 2012). Especially research into the process of crowdsourcing is scarce. Few studies (e.g. Brabham, 2009; Smeets et al., 2012; Ye et al., 2012) looked at the design of a crowdsourcing competition and the implications for the success. But still many interesting and challenging questions remain.

References