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"*Please, draw me an apple !":* children's relationship with marketing standards and "ugly" responsible products

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Several products are discarded by supermarkets because they are not matching with the aesthetically standardized criteria. Nevertheless, in an ecological perspective and for new business opportunities, supermarkets have recently decided to change their marketing norm in proposing a new offer called: "*ugly products*". This research focuses on children's receptiveness because they could become influencers and future consumers. A qualitative study has been performed resulting in 18 individual interviews and drawings of French children aged 8 to 12 years. Results highlight the existence of an implicit norm and the negative consequences of a rupture with it. This research helps to understand how this transgression of the aesthetic norm must be realized.

Research keywords: transgression, food waste, reverse socialization, retailing, aesthetics.

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INTRODUCTION

Many authors have highlighted that retailers have means of influencing social and environmental sustainability (Ritch 2015), for example with organic products (Wiese *et al.* 2015), labels (Bezawada and Pauwels 2013) or sustainable transport and logistic (Björklund *et al.* 2016). However, their aesthetic criteria today represent a significant food waste (15 to 30% prior to the commercialization process[1]). Some of these products are used to make soups, compotes, or fruit juices, but many do not find outlets[2]. Thus, this aesthetic standard of retailers jeopardizes the sustainability of products and more precisely the reduction of food waste. In a context where consumers are expecting more responsible behavior, several retailers have decided to change this standard. Since 2014, supermarkets[3] propose a new offer of products called "ugly" (appendix 1). This offer (distorted and unsightly products) concerns different categories but mainly fruits and vegetables.

Hanan and Moulins (2017) have highlighted that regular customers reject these products even when they support the "no waste" approach. Thus, given the low level of interest in this more responsible standard, it is interesting to focus on the receptivity of children. The purpose is to know how an offer, which breaks the usual aesthetic standards of the supermarket for less food waste, is perceived by children and how to communicate on it. To answer this question, the psychological mechanism specific to the unaesthetic will be studied, as well as how to modify the value of these products.

The benefit of targeting children is threefold. Children constitute a primary market (the child is consuming), an influencing market (child influences the purchase of his/her parents) and a future market (McNeal, 1992). Studying children is very interesting as it remains easier

[1] Despite their abnormal shape, they have the same quality as any other and have followed the same production process

[2] In France, every year 17 football stadiums are wasted

[3] The first supermarket was "Intermarché" then several retailers (Carrefour, Monoprix or Auchan) did the same.

to initiate habits very early in the consumer's life, rather than making those changes later. Such childhood habits, in addition, become permanent as the consumers grow (Moschis, 2007). In concrete terms, children are to be considered here as potential actors of consumption (future consumers) as well as potential social actors (socialization agents) who can encourage this marketing change.

To do so, in the first part of this article we will give an overview of the pertinent literature concerning children sensibility to ecological problems, food aesthetic standards and socialization. After outlining the methodology, the results will be presented. Finally, discussion and contributions will be addressed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Consuming "ugly products" represents a specific case among the measures to reduce waste, as it does not imply the throwing away (households' production of food waste) of what is in the refrigerator, but the involvement of oneself more precisely in a systemic perspective. "Ugly products" are related to two different fields: ecology (food waste) and aesthetics. Besides, it is important to specify that the child is characterized by the fact that he/she is in development (Piaget and Inhelder 1966), by a strong affective dimension and by socialization (Ward 1974). So considering children are acquiring skills, knowledge and attitude relevant to become consumers, ecology and aesthetics have to be investigated also from the socialization point of view.

Socialization

We are not born consumer, we become consumer. Thus even if the child is the subject of studies whose aim is to understand his/her influence, it is clear that the child learns standards of consumption. During childhood, socialization is the substratum of the future

(Moschis 2007) During this period, socialization remains more structuring than during adulthood.

Ward (1974) defines socialization as *« processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace »*. The authors (*e.g.* Muratore 1999) consider that there several factors. Each of them generates a particular form of influence on the child'socialization: family, peers, media and school.

Regarding environmental socialization (*i. e.* the process of learning pro-environmental behaviours, through the acquisition of relevant skills, knowledge, and attitudes). Several studies in the field of the environment have shown that children's attitudes to environmental issues are influenced by their parents (Ritch and Brownlie 2016). However, it must be noted that parents' influence, when it exists, does not give the main explanation of environmental awareness (Meeusen 2014). This allows us to think that other agents of socialization play a major role.

Several recent studies (*e. g.* Meeusen 2014) suggest that school may enhance the environmental knowledge of children, that in turn may affect their buying decisions. For Gentina and Muratore (2012), pupils who followed a program or a course related to environment, are significantly influenced by them. Their mothers are even more likely to think that school plays a major role in informing children about environmental issues. In addition to these courses, schools are implementing more and more environmental programs urging pupils to be eco-friendly (recycle, do not waste…). The reasoning is that if children behave this way at school, they will maintain this behaviour at home (through getting into a kind of routine or gaining conviction) and will in their turn be agents of socialization. Nevertheless, according to Boeve de Pauw *et al.* (2013) pro-environmental programs implemented at school seem to increase children's environmental involvement more from a cognitive point of view than a behaviour one.

Resocialization

Even if studies concerning children's ecological resocialization present mixed results (Gronhoj and Thogersen 2007 and 2009), recent ones seem to offer the same kind of results (Gentina and Muratore 2012) which is that an ecological resocialization exists. Ecological resocialization refers to the process where parents learn from their children about pro-environmental consumption behaviour (Larsson *et al.* 2010). Such a process of resocialization can be qualified as active (interaction) and/or passive (observation). Gentina and Muratore (2012) revealed that they "are active participants in decisions about household consumption in relation to pro-environmental issues. However, parenting style and the frequency of communication are clearly decisive to the extent of the kids' influence on pro-environmental parental consumption".

Aesthetic standards

The concept of aesthetics was not initially targeting manufactured products. Indeed, the ability to appreciate aesthetically a product implied the compulsory independence of considerations linked to its use. Marketing literature is generally assuming that the aesthetic value of a product has a positive impact on the global preference and the final choice of consumers (Creusen and Schoormans 2005). The determining role of sensory elements in the consumer's decision-making process (Jansson-Boyd and Marlow 2007), especially for food, can be explained by their impact on functional and symbolic representations of the product. The visual aspect of the product conveys, for the consumer, information about the product's gustative quality. This reflex of the consumer is explained by the impossibility to taste food products before buying them.

The concept of incorporation (literally and etymologically "into the body") relates to the "magic thinking" dealt by anthropological studies related to food (Fischler 1996) and plays a

fundamental role in eating. The consumer – the eater – considers that he or she acquires the properties of the food product: “we are what we eat” (Rumiatti and Foroni 2016) is part of the fundamental beliefs of our society. It is consequently not only about health, as Hippocrates mentioned, “let food be your first medicine”, or about safety, but also about identity and self-consciousness. These reactions are collective beliefs as valid among adults as children and transmitted *via* food socialization. Children will in this way acquire consumption standards, knowledge, tastes and food preferences transferred from parents, especially. Moreover, children learn eating practices thanks to social interactions “within different socialization contexts” (Hemar-Nicolas et *alii.* 2013). One context feeding another one. So children will also, through the phenomenon of reverse socialization, be the introducers of new products to their families (Ayadi and Brée 2010). These eating practices covering both nutritional, emotional and social experiences and contributing to the child food well-being (Hémar-Nicolas and Ezan 2018).

METHODOLOGY

Recruitment and tested product

A qualitative survey (semi-directive interviews and drawings) was conducted among 18 French children, aged 8 to 12. We chose children at the “concrete operational stage” (aged 7–12), as described by Piaget and Inhelder (1966). The participants were 10 boys and 8 girls and they live in France. It was important to define which would be the category of product in this study. Among products related to the offer of « ugly products », fresh products have been selected. This category has been represented by apples because the Agrimer study (2013) shows that French people buy more often fruits than vegetables (74% *vs* 56%), and that apples are more often chosen on a yearly basis. Children were selected according to their age, gender criteria, social category and consumption of apples. Particular attention was paid to verify not only that the selected children liked and consumed apples but also to check that

“ugly products” have never been bought. The children were also not exposed to the advertising of "ugly" products. The interviews were between 60 and 75 minutes in length and were conducted privately at home in order to facilitate informant openness.

Proceedings

A semi-structured interview guide based on the Dimensional Qualitative Research (DQR) approach of Cohen (1999) was achieved. Indeed according to Cohen (1999) “ DQR represents a comprehensive and systematic model for approaching and ultimately realizing the objectives typically set in a qualitative research” (Cohen 1999). The DQR has been gradually applied according to the topics covered. For instance, the DQR has been declined through the theme of “apple” then of “the ugly apple” (without telling that it was an “ugly” product) then explaining what is an “ugly” apple (and so food waste, advertising about these products…). So the DQR has been applied several times in the interview according to the topic involved. Specifically, the interview focused on five dimensions (DQR), here are some examples presented according to the dimensions but not necessarily in the order of the interview guide.

Behavior: Tell me about your normal routine when you go shopping apples; Tell me about how you choose an apple?(...)Would you eat (buy, ask your parents to buy) this apple (ugly one)? ; Why ? (...) What do you do concerning food waste? (…) ; (*cf.* Imaginery) Would you buy (ask your parents to buy, eat) the apple that you want to sell? (…).

Affect: What do you think about this apple, what do you feel about it (a standardized apple and later an “ugly” apple)? (…); What do you feel concerning food waste?

Sensation and Imagery: Draw and describle the profile (his/her environment, car, job…) of the one who eats, buys this apple (the standardized apple then the ugly one)? (...); Now we are going to imagine “that you are a seller of “ugly ” apples… ; What would you do in order to sell these ugly apples to your customers or friends? (What would you say…?).

Cognition: What is an ugly apple for you (perception: healthy, natural, ecological, harmful, good?); Have you heard about ugly apples, what do you know about that? Why are these apple different? For you, is this apple " ugly"? ; Why/ where are these apples sold? (…); Tell me what you know about reducing waste; From your point of view are the ugly apples related to food waste?

Interpersonal relations: Have you ever talked about ugly apples with someone (friends, parents…how and why); Would you bring such an apple at school (why)?; What would you think if one of your friend bring such an apple at school ?(…) ; Are your parents/ friends/school talking about food waste with you (how, why, what, what do they do (…)?; What should you tell your parents/friends in order to make them buy these apples (how ?)(…)

To meet the objective of this research, an approach mobilizing children's drawings was implemented. This projective method is particularly adpated to children who manage to express their thoughts better than through verbal expression.

Data analysis

Consistent with an exploratory approach, content analysis was achieved to identify themes in the interview narratives. In the initial stage, the two researchers have independently read each verbatim transcript to realize several coding. They have developed and refined categories of analysis then after a consensus about the categories they have independently coded all the interview transcripts. The researchers have discussed their codings and also their disagreements and finally have found a consensus.

RESULTS

To truly explore the representation of "ugly products", the first questions focused on the children's representation of a beautiful/not beautiful apple as well as on aesthetic habits.

Standardization is the norm

Children were requested to describe and draw their representation of: a beautiful apple *vs* a not beautiful one (Figure 1). Their distinction between the beautiful apple and the not beautiful one was clearly based on aesthetic dimensions more precisely on color and calibration. The beautiful was associated with perfect products, standardized and calibrated, whereas the not beautiful one was represented by bumps, different shapes, dark colors and associated with rottenness: *"A beautiful apple is the red apple we can see in cartoons, it is a shiny apple"* (Guillaume, 11 y.o.) ; *"Its color must be homogeneous without marks."* (Mateo, 12 y.o.). According to Nelson (1970), a difference can be made between research products and experience products. Research products are ones the quality and value of which for the consumer can be easily evaluated before being bought (*e.g.* the speed of a microprocessor), whereas experience products are ones the quality of which is difficult to evaluate before being bought and used or consumed. For these products, less easily to evaluate, we find the perception of risk (but children do not mention health risks and do not categorize it as an inedible product). These negative mental associations can be akin to beliefs.

Insert Figure 1

Thus, the question of an association between standardization and beauty should be raised. Several decades ago, the aesthetics of these products were probably perceived differently by children. The establishment of standards by retailers contributes to these new representations of beauty for children. Indeed, traditional food is defined (Kühne *et al.* 2010) as a product which is regularly eaten, according to family habits (the usual food product). In

this case, the traditional food for children is represented by the standardized product. The beauty is linked to a familiar universe; it is based upon pictures cumulated all over one's life (Boulding and Kirmani 1993). To be clear when an apple is in the children's mind, it is necessarily a beautiful apple. Children associate the beautiful with a standardized product. Standardization is the norm for food products. So, retailers through a homogenized offer have imposed aesthetic standards. Consequently, the not beautiful apple corresponds to an apple which breaks these aesthetic codes. So, standardization has an influence on the perceived typicality of the product. Thus, from a cognitive point of view, food and aesthetics are perceived as being strongly associated. Children want to buy what they are used to buying that is "the normal" product and leave the "not beautiful" for other people : "*If I really have nothing else to eat then I shall eat this apple"* (Eliott, 11 y.o.). An authentic product is opposed to the standardized offer (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). Consequently, not beautiful products could refer to the perception of authenticity, a decrease of aesthetics could be perceived as a reduction of pesticide, but results are only extremely marginally following such theory.

These reactions are very homogeneous. Only a very marginal case of children opposed authenticity to standardization. For them, the "not beautiful" is "good" for health (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). Consequently, not beautiful products could refer to the perception of authenticity, a decrease of aesthetics could be perceived as a reduction of pesticide. But results are only extremely marginally. This difference can be explained by the possession of a vegetable patch by their parents. "*Perfect apples have pesticides, ungracious ones not. Without pesticides, they risk malformation but they are better. Once, I had a kitchen garden, I had carrots, strange, stuck together… there was no pesticides*" (Léo, 10 y.o).

We also perceive the effect of the aesthetic norm on the taste. When children have been requested to draw a good apple *vs* a not good one, they explain that their drawings would be

like their drawings related to a beautiful and a not beautiful apple. In their comments, the good and the bad refer mainly to the functional approach of the product, especially their nutritional value (fresh or on the opposite unhealthy, musty, bacteriological) and their hedonic value related to pleasure (juicy, appetizing, soft or on the opposite too hard, too soft). Good and beautiful are linked with pleasure, health and well-being: *"If the color is bright it means it will be juicy; I avoid big black marks, it means it is moldy inside"* (Alexia, 8 y.o). Thus, the spheres of "beautiful and not beautiful" and the one of "good and not good" are extremely linked for children. Judgements are based solely upon affective/aesthetic dimensions instead of upon organoleptic quality: *"A good apple is normal. That is beautiful"* (Juliette, 9 y.o.). Without information about the attributes, uncertainty is high regarding levels of attributes. Consequently, aesthetics are a central discriminating attribute as they play a major role when buying or consuming the product. This is why it can be noticed that standardized products can be bought as impulsive purchases whereas "not beautiful" products tend to follow more complex patterns of informed purchasing decisions.

Two criteria were used by children to create a profile which corresponded to their mental picture: emotions of the character and their status. The buyer/consumer of the "ugly apple" is described with negative feelings such as sadness. These characters would either be without income or scientists who could understand these products: *"An elderly person or a disabled person because as she is not as the others, she would take this apple which is not as the others too"* (Jessica, 10 y.o). On the opposite, consumers of beautiful apple would be active people, rich and beautiful (figure 2):*"He is one of us, a normal person"* (Jessica, 10 y.o). These reactions highlight the lack of value for these new ecological products. The break with consumption codes reduce this product to a lower rank. These consumers intended for modest people. It is therefore essential to promote these products, by finding them a different positioning, so that they cease to appear like downgraded products.

Insert Figure 2

After, the interviewer explains that "ugly products" (that is the not beautiful ones) are anti wastage products, children understand that if they are not bought, they will be thrown away. From an ecological aspect, these products (from a no waste perspective) appear to show that children talk easily about parental socialization, school socialization and their own behaviour regarding wastage. However for them, food wastage consists only in finishing their plate because children, in other countries, are starving. Their anti-waste behaviour concerns both social and economic perspectives (it costs money to buy food). So, the involvement of "ugly products" in the case is less important because it is "indirect" food wastage. Indeed, it is the retailer who throws away or does not sell these products. So, individual responsibility is clearly less involved. Moreover, children do not make any link between waste and ecology. The ecological aspect of these products doesn't seem to be a strong enough argument to launch a purchase decision whatever the gender: "*No-wastage does not motivate me, concerning the apple because if I have to buy it, I will not eat it thus I am going to waste it"* (Matéo, 12 y. o.).

The choice of conformity

What emerges from, it is that children do not break their parents' socialization standards, who themselves do not break the standards dictated by hypermarkets. Children identify what their parents consume and know perfectly what they themselves or their family appreciate or reject. This phenomenon is linked to an active or a passive socialization, parents explaining upstream which elements to look at when purchasing, or the child learning by observation what parents take into account for a purchase decision (Ayadi and Brée 2010). Children's preferences, habits and norms are learned by socialization. According to them,

their parents would make the choice of conformity by preferring the beautiful product: *"My parents buy only what is beautiful, the opposite is not normal."* (Jade, 11 y. o.)

The negative opinion of children towards the "ugly" products increases when the consumption of these products moves to other places of sociality (their school), where other interactants influence their choice, which refers to the normative influence of peers (Khare and Pandey 2017). They express a negative attitude towards these products which is linked to an apprehension of being mocked by other children or perceived as different. Clearly, children's social well-being is in danger when they consume "ugly products". It has consequences on what they are and how they are perceived. They also explain that they would make the same judgment about a friend consuming such products. The food product is consumed for what it represents and what it involves in terms of social interactions and peer acceptance (Ward 1974). This is in accordance with several studies showing that peers have in particular a normative influence (Bearden *et al.* 1989) and that this influence is even more important when the product is consumed in public (Ezan *et al.* 2014). Such reactions recall how food contributes to the construction of social identities and also the concept of incorporation (Rumiatti and Foroni 2016). Food consumed while being watched by others refers to the concept of self-extension (Belk 1988). What one owns is a reflection of one's identity. Even if identity construction is a lifelong process, childhood is a key moment. This refers to maintaining or enhancing their self-esteem (Banister and Hogg 2004) and also to the materialism concept, *i.e.* the importance that the consumer attaches to possession, and the belief that consumer goods and services provide the greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life (Belk 1988): *"I shall be perceived as a loser but I am not a loser. It is as if I was this strange fruit and I do not want to be perceived as strange. It is important to be normal as the others. With such a fruit I shall be ashamed. No, I will not bring this fruit at school"* (Raphaël, 12 y.o).

More marketing and less ecological dimension

Taking into account that children's perceptions and intentions are not positive, children were asked to play the game of being directors of supermarkets in charge of selling "ugly products" to their friends. They are given main objectives: to reduce the perceived uncertainty linked to the evaluation of quality (cognitive dimension) and to improve the value of the product (affective dimension).

Their promotion through their price would be counterproductive because a price decrease would raise a concern regarding their quality and would make them look even less attractive compared to beautiful products. They also highlighted that the apple (for example) was different, rare (and not "ugly") and that rare products were more expensive: *"If you say they are ugly, you must sell them for less, because you say they are not beautiful, but if you say they are special you should sell them as expensive or more"* (Evariste, 10 y.o.).

Moreover, it seems important to further develop a cognitive communication for "ugly products", as they generate uncertainty. The brand name "ugly" must be rethought. For children, such a name does not represent these products which shall rather be represented through positive adjectives such as "special" or "original". They more often use terms such as *"bizarre, distorted, different, strange, quirky"*. Conversely, for them ugly *"is made to hurt"; "the apple is not ugly, it is not normal but it is not ugly".* When choosing a food product, the perception of the product will certainly be affected by its sensory characteristics but also by a symbolism issued through extrinsic variables such as the brand name (Shifferstein 2001). Concretely, here, children are pointing out the fact that even if the word "ugly" offends, once the interest has been aroused, children don't want to buy the product. This word contributes to raise its aestheticism and consequently the signals underlined upfront and related to quality issues. Moreover, it is not the usual way to sell a product. In fact, this "ugly apple" is considered as "different" and not "ugly" and it is not because it is different that it is not good

whereas an “ugly” product will be “not good”. The transcripts are convergent with Zajonc’s research (1968). This deals with the familiarity with the product and the necessity to suppress differences not by stigmatizing them but, on the contrary, by putting these various products (beautiful and ugly apples) on sale together: *“Imagine that there is a city of apples, all the same and that there is a strange one, it will be hated at the beginning, it won’t be bought. But after a while, some people will reflect and will buy this apple, then they will explain why this apple is like that”* (Noé, 12 y. o.); “*In fact, it would be necessary to sell the “ugly” apple and the “not-ugly” one together in the same box”* (Maëlle, 11 y. o.).

Besides, as children have expressed the need to taste the product, the experiential dimension of quality signs could be useful. This dimension describes information which conveys a guarantee on consumption experience, *i.e.* which informs the consumer of somebody else’s judgement about the product. The quality meaning can be also indicated by a well-known and trusted agent of certification (Caswell and Mojduska 1996). Concerning ugly products, statements by a nutritionist, a doctor or a well-known practitioner could increase consumer confidence. This kind of information source mainly reassures rather than giving subjective or objective information (Lynch and Schuler 1990) :*“I would offer them to be tasted”* (Alexia, 8 y.o. and Gwendal, 8 y.o.);*“Make advertisements with doctors or dietitians who explain the benefits of this apple”* (Maeva, 12 y.o.). A certification label could increase the credibility of this offer. Official or not, it should allow consumers to be informed, to classify products and to be reassured. In this frame, efficient signal strategy can be implemented by producers if the latter are able to supply a credible information from the consumers’ point of view : *“ I would have put a question: what does it change? It questions people. We do things by habit and we can change it”* (Léo, 10 y. o.).

Persuasion or incitation techniques have also been suggested, notably the concept of associating fun elements to food products to attract children’s attention and leading to impulse

buys. This allows them to act as persuaders or deciders of parents' purchase decisions. The addition of fun, reinforcing hedonic elements, would attract the child, for instance scratch cards or presents (Muratore 2003), or paradoxically offering beauty products when buying "ugly products": *"We should offer something to push people to buy it. My friends, they would love to find beauty products (samples) or jewels (i.e. claire's brand)"* (Ambre, 10 y.o).

If the ecological product is connected with a playful promotion adapted to children's expectations, the purchasing intention becomes possible and the ecological argument appears to be an additional benefit. In agreement with Monnot and Renou (2013), it is necessary to minimize the perceived constraint involved by ecological speech. It seems more relevant "to show the utility of ecological behaviour by valuing economical and practical arguments". So, it seems essential to think about these products, primarily, through a marketing axis and, secondly, an ecological dimension as an additional benefit. This allows children to ask for the "ugly product" through a more rational dimension (an ecological reason) to their parents and also to participate in their resocialization: *"It is necessary to avoid that the farmer throws away (...). I did not know but it should be known. In fact, it would be necessary to put a lego gift in it and to say also that it is anti-wasting"* (Evariste, 10 y. o.).

DISCUSSION

From a theoretical perspective, there is a real inference for children between standardization (aesthetic criteria), the taste and the quality of the product: the standardized product is linked to goodness. Moreover, a non-standardized product has less value than the standardized products, and the consumer of those products also has "less value" from a social point of view.

This offer generates a feeling of misunderstanding. It is in contradiction with the aesthetic standards of the hypermarkets and the expectations of a perfect product. The

perception of a non-conform aesthetic stimulus can generate the feeling of transgression for the consumer, which is a breach making consumers face the "unthinkable" or the "unexpected", a contradiction to a norm which is not consciously known by the consumer. Such a breach might lead to an alteration of the representation of the product and have an influence on the evaluation done by children. These variations might also be seen negatively (*i.e.* as losses). This is the reason why brands are usually focusing on incremental improvement operations, rather than on major changes. The conformity and symbolic dimension of consumption are significant and can have consequences for children, this is the result of a socialization phenomenom. The potential transgression, estimated here through a change of consumption habits, plays a role on the behavioral intentions. It induces, in this case, the perception of a product intended for people having a low income: a product for the poorest.

To consume such products which means transgressing aesthetic standards constitutes a double risk: first, the risk of the wrong taste and the wrong quality; secondly, the social risk coming from the social influence of peers' perspective, which is even more important for a child when building his/her social identity. That is why children do not want to buy them and prefer a standardized product, a normal product that they are used to buying.

Still from a theoretical aspect, all these points can deteriorate children well-being (Hémar-Nicolas and Ezan 2018). The study underlines that what is true for adults, is also true for children. In fact, socialization plays a main part in this phenomenon. Indeed, parents socialize their children according the inferences existing between the beautiful and the good, and peers socialize children from a social risk perspective.

From a managerial point of view, children have made suggestions for "ugly products" to be accepted. The aim for them is not to reduce the price which would confirm reduced quality but sales promotions through free gifts in order to raise interest in such products. According to

Muratore (2016) promotional incentives can trigger impulsive buying. It is a relevant way to focus consumers' attention on emotionally appealing products. The deal should contribute to increasing the value of the product's image which is perceived as having a low value. This allows an increase in purchasing intentions, to increase the familiarity with the product, to test the product. The free-gift could lead to shape the behaviour and to change the perception of the product, raising awareness of "ugly products" amongst children who in turn become influencers and future consumers. This increase in the familiarity with the product (Loebnitz *et al*. 2015), contributing to decrease the initially perceived disruption and transgression, means that children can be more "sensitive" to this kind of product if they get used to seeing them in store. This point has to be studied because in France, these "ugly products" are more and more sold.

The word "ugly" makes children think about damaged, rotten or inedible food. So, this word "ugly" should not be used because they stigmatized the product, sending wrong cues concerning the product's quality. They feel that terms such as "strange", "special" will be more relevant in order to sell these products.

"Ugly" product communication should, in order to avoid the social risk perceived by the consumption of this type of product, integrate in its visual the friendly presence of peers group. This perspective is in line with the recommendations of Ezan *et al.* (2014), aiming to put not only a music (which could later be sing by the real peer group), a setting, a story, characters but also a group of peers.

From a societal perspective, even if children are socialized by parents and school concerning food waste in the home, they do not make a link between "ugly product", waste food and ecology. The field of food waste is not so clear. The link between "ugly products" and ecology is not so easy to make. So, it is necessary to engage in educational campaigns in order to understand what is food waste. In fact, if children think that it is not good to waste it

is for two main reasons. On the one hand, it concerns an economic perspective (it costs), on the other hand, it deals with some kind of moral perspective. So, it is important to explain in a deeper way that wasting food is an ecological problem. This public policy recommendation is also called, more widely by Gruber *et al*. (2016) *via* "Awareness campaign: create understanding about natural resources necessary for food production". As mentioned in the review of literature, school (*e. g.* Gentina *et al.* 2010) seems to be the best socialization agent in order to enhance children's anti-waste knowledge explaining the ecological consequences of this phenomenon. Behaviourist actions have more impact than theoretical teaching in order to maintain behaviours in the supermarket context. The aim of such a socialization is to make them sensitive little by little without feeling any guilt. To be clear, if for them an "ugly product" is not synonymous with ecology. It seems important that such information (in a cognitive way) can be communicated by brands allowing the child to use this argument (while he/she wants products for the promotion which they contain) in order to convince his/her parents and indirectly to contribute to their resocialization.

School has a key role to play. These lessons can be part of the communication axes related to children food well-being (Hémar-Nicolas and Ezan 2018). Indeed, in a logic of well-being, school can intervene, of course, on the objective part of well-being in a transient and durable way. It deals with the importance of consuming fruits reminding the consequences of fruits on vitality and health. But, it is especially, the subjective dimension of well-being which need to be considered in order to make things change. School could demonstrate the organoleptic qualities of "ugly" product (by consuming them) in a transient way but also in a durable way through an altruistic perspective (that is to contribute to the planet well-being and so to feel well because of that). This subjective and durable part of well-being contributing to the eudemonism.

Finally, the fact that these teachings take place at school can modify the perceived social risk because peers would objectively have the same knowledge and could understand that buying such products is in fact a responsible and valuable behavior.

In the light of this new offer of “ugly products” to reduce waste, the school as a socialization agent may be a key-factor in countering the lack of awareness of adults in these products. Once aware of “ugly products”, children could act as an influencer for this product category and modify their parents’ behaviours as part of a reverse socialization.

Concerning limitations, two exist. On the one hand, the small size of the sample even if a semantical saturation has been reached. On the other hand, the exploratory perspective of this research. This aspect constituted the directions for further research. So, deeper investigations must happen concerning socialization about “ugly products”. How to desensitize people from the aesthetic criteria established by retailers. An idea emanating from this research is, for instance, to work on the notion of difference. It would have also been instructive to delve more deeply into the explanation to “ugly food sensitivity”. Gender, siblings, environment (countryside, city), self-esteem, materialism, ecological awareness, normative influence, well-being, parental occupation, country/cultural, should be investigated through their relationship with the intention of purchasing “ugly food”. Moreover, in which way “ugly food” can result in positive effects on retailer perception also needs to be investigated.

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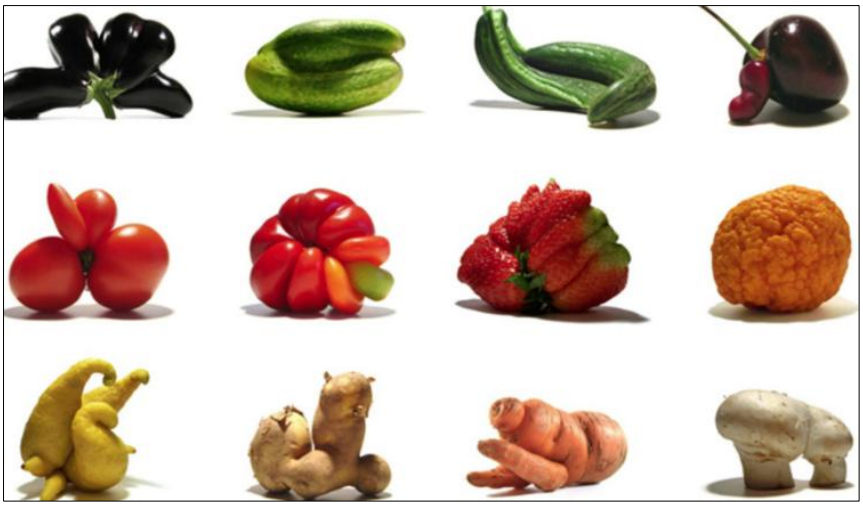
Figure 1. A beautiful and a not beautiful apple: An example of a child's drawing

Figure 2. Consumers of an ugly apple *versus* consumers of a beautiful apple: examples of children's drawings

A homeless person with nothing to eat	A scientist	A billionaire looking for recognition

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE OF "UGLY PRODUCTS"