

**CROWDFUNDING WEBCOMICS:
THE ROLE OF INCENTIVES AND RECIPROCITY IN
MONETISING FREE CONTENT**

Liz Dowthwaite

**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Monetising Free Content

Thesis submitted to the School of Engineering, University of Nottingham, in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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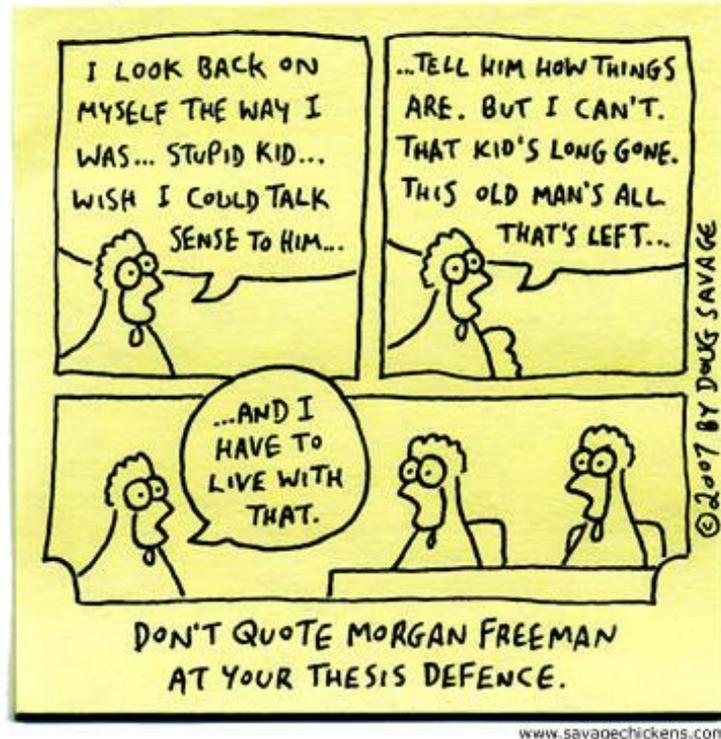
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Robert J Houghton
Alexa Spence
Richard Mortier

To my parents, and James.

Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



Doug Savage, 2007

<http://www.savagechickens.com/2007/05/morgan-freeman.html>

"They're not paying for the content. They're paying for the people."

Jack Conte, founder of Patreon

"We ascribe to the idealistic notion that audiences don't pay for things because they're forced to, but because they care about the stuff that they love and want it to continue to grow."

Hank Green, founder of Subbable

ABSTRACT

The recent phenomenon of internet-based crowdfunding has enabled the creators of new products and media to share and finance their work via networks of fans and similarly-minded people instead of having to rely on established corporate intermediaries and traditional business models. This thesis examines how the creators of free content, specifically webcomics, are able to monetise their work and find financial success through crowdfunding and what factors, social and psychological, support this process. Consistent with crowdfunding being both a large-scale social process yet based on the interactions of individuals (albeit en masse), this topic was explored at both micro- and macro-level combining methods from individual interviews through to mass scraping of data and large-scale questionnaires.

The first empirical chapter (comprising of two survey and interview-based studies) investigated how members of the webcomics community made use of the Internet and social media to read and post content, interact with other readers and artists, and how they monetise these efforts. Creators and readers were found to use a large range of websites for webcomic-related activities; social media and the ability for creators and readers to get to know each other online is hugely important, often as important as the content of the work itself. Creators reported having diversified ‘portfolio careers’, and avoided relying on a single source of income as any one might fail at any time. The use of social media was found to be vital to all stages of the monetisation process; primarily because creators must build a dedicated community that is willing to spend money on them. Crowdfunding was found to be one of the biggest routes to monetisation, particularly as it lessens the risk of creating merchandise, combines selling items with a strong focus on interaction, and allows the main creative output to remain free.

The second empirical chapter reports a large-scale scraping-based study of webcomics crowdfunding campaigns across the two major platforms most commonly used by creators, namely Kickstarter and Patreon. The two platforms were shown to exhibit distinctive characteristics. Kickstarter follows the traditional rewards-based model whilst Patreon is subscription-based, a model which is rising in place of paywalls which have traditionally

failed. Both Patreon and Kickstarter provide varied benefits but also some dissatisfactions were found. Kickstarter does not equal a steady income and Patreon rarely provides full-time income levels. Even when Kickstarter projects are hugely successful, they rarely do more than pay for the fulfilment of a particular project specifically, which does not tend to cover living expenses or provide a wage. While Patreon does allow creators to receive a recurring income, this rarely exceeded \$1,000 a month.

The final empirical chapter reports the findings of a study of psychological attitudes amongst crowdfunding backers and considers this in the light of psychological theories of giving and reciprocity. The study investigated why backers are motivated to give to webcomics campaigns, and their underlying attitudes towards giving, including factors that may convince them to give more. The main reason for backers to choose to support a crowdfunding campaign was found to be because they are existing fans of the specific webcomic or more generally, the campaign's creator. The other main motivation given was the intention to more generally support the surrounding community. These two motives were strongly manifest amongst backers on both platforms, but they lead to different behaviours as Kickstarter backers tend to consider rewards more important than community. Kickstarter is more self-regarding and directly reciprocal, Patreon more other-regarding and generally reciprocal. Patreon backers are not more or less altruistic but they are more motivated to give by all reasons other than rewards, which they do not consider important. Both selfish and other-regarding reasons are involved on both platforms, and neither seem to crowd-out the other.

In conclusion, people tend to pay for free content because i) they are fans and they want to own an item related to that fandom, or ii) they are fans and they want to be supportive and allow that fandom to continue. Overall, subscription-based crowdfunding was implicated as being the most suitable for creators who work on the internet, giving away free or intangible content, such as podcasts, webcomics, or livestreaming, whilst creators who work offline with tangible products that may appeal to a wider audience may find more success with rewards-based funding.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AON	All-or-Nothing
CET	Cognitive Evaluation Theory
CROWDFUND Act	Capital Raising Online While Deterring Fraud and Unethical Non-Disclosure Act
GCT	Goal Contents Theory
IRL	In Real Life
JOBS	Jumpstart Our Business Startups
KIA	Keep-it-All
LBGTQ	Lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer
NSFW	Not safe for work
PWYW	Pay What You Want
ROI	Return on Investment
SDT	Self Determination Theory

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 THESIS MOTIVATION

Many creators, including musicians, artists, and authors, use Internet technologies such as social media to promote and monetise their work, often dedicating parts of their workday to cultivating and maintaining their online presence. This has led to the emergence of new business models and new types of creative professionals, such as webcomics creators, podcasters, and bloggers, who provide their main creative content for free, and use other avenues to monetise. This thesis takes one such group, webcomics creators, as a case study for looking at new models of patronage through crowdfunding and online donations. It questions why consumers who can access a creator's work for free would then choose to pay that creator, taking as a starting point the emphasis on social interaction and building relationships that is prevalent throughout the webcomics industry. From looking at a group that is embracing these new models, lessons can be learned for creative individuals from all industries who are also trying to make their living on the Internet.

1.1.1 Introduction to Webcomics

There are thousands of comics on the Internet, ranging from graphic novels distributed by large publishers to single hand-drawn panels posted online by amateurs. They are variously known as Internet comics, online comics, digital comics, or web comics. The single word 'webcomics' is used throughout this work; for the purposes of this research the term means any comic that is first posted on the Internet for free by an independent creator. They are primarily intended for consumption on a website or app, and readers do not have to pay to read the latest instalment. They may have differing payment models after initial posting, and they may later be offered in different formats such as printed books. The creators are not paid by a publisher to create the comics. It is not

known how many webcomics there are online worldwide, and estimates vary considerably, with some as high as fifteen thousand (Walters, 2009).

Webcomics range from people posting occasional panels to social media to creators with readerships of thousands who make a full-time living. As such, motivations to create this content range from it being a fun hobby, to artists who use the medium to practice their work, to those who wish to work in the traditional comics industry professionally or see webcomics as a profession in its own right. Webcomics cover a huge range of styles, genres, and interests: single panel to long form stories; popular culture to complex science jokes; observations of everyday life to deep philosophical treatises on the meaning of life; and realism to high fantasy across occupations and hobbies of all kinds. Generally focusing on a particular overarching theme, creators often aim at niche audiences, and work with limited money and resources. Some are posted every day whilst others update only once or twice a year.

xkcd by Randall Munroe¹ is one of the most famous webcomics (see Figure 1-1), beginning as sketches in school notebooks, scanned and posted online since 2006, and now drawn digitally as a full-time job (Munroe, 2017). It covers everyday life, current affairs, and subjects such as maths, physics, philosophy, and linguistics. The gaming comic *Penny Arcade* by Jerry Holkins and Mike Krahulik² may be the most popular individual webcomic, online since 1998 and once reporting an audience of 3.1 million readers and 29 million page views a month (Allen, 2007) (see Figure 1-2). Other specific genre comics include *Library Comic* by Chris Hallbeck and Gene Ambaum³ which focuses on life working at a public library, and *PhD Comics* by Jorge Cham⁴ which follows the lives of graduate students and their professor (see Figure 1-3). Examples of the long-form, full-colour, graphic novel type comic include *Gunnerkrigg Court* by Tom Siddell⁵ (see Figure 1-4) and *Stand Still. Stay Silent*, by Minna Sundberg⁶. These comics tend to look more like traditional graphic novels, with high production values and a sequential story often organised into chapters; often the aim from the start is to create a printed version of the finished story.

¹ See <https://xkcd.com>

² See <https://www.penny-arcade.com/comic>

³ See <http://librarycomic.com/>

⁴ See <http://www.phdcomics.com/>

⁵ See <http://www.gunnerkrigg.com/>

⁶ See <http://www.sssscomic.com/>

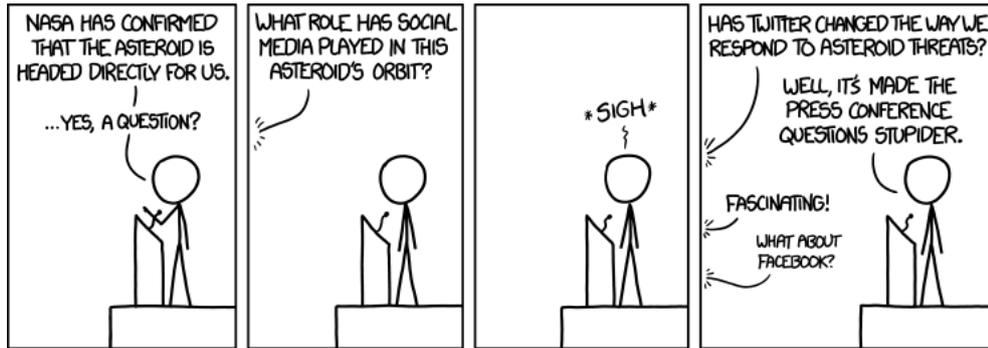


Figure 1-1 xkcd by Randall Munroe is one of the most famous ongoing webcomics. "Social Media" <https://xkcd.com/1239/>



Figure 1-2 Penny Arcade by Jerry Holkins and Mike Kraulik has been running for nearly twenty years and once reported an audience of 3.1million. "Generational" <https://www.penny-arcade.com/comic/2013/11/15/generational>



Figure 1-3 PhD Comics by Jorge Cham is about the lives of graduate students. "That Thing" <http://www.phdcomics.com/comics/archive.php?comicid=1836>



Figure 1-4 Gunnerkrigg Court by Tom Siddell is laid out in distinct chapters ready to print as books and has a detailed ongoing story, based on both mythology and science fiction. <http://www.gunnerkrigg.com/>

A Brief History of Webcomics

Traditionally, a comic artist had to work with a publisher if they wanted to become successful; the cost of printing enough comics to make any profit was too prohibitive for it to be otherwise. This meant that they were limited in both style and content because publishers had very particular ideas about what they wanted to print (McCloud, 2006). The underground, self-published Comix of the 1960s began to challenge this notion, distributing small print runs by hand to a small number of shops and readers. They also appealed to those who traditionally would not be fans of comics, due to the broader range of genres and topics covered; examples include feminist or LGBTQ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer) comics. Nowadays this practice has moved to the Internet, where anyone can reach a potentially huge audience with content “that the mainstream industry and audience would reject” (Fenty, Houp, & Taylor, 2005) as well as the historically popular superheroes and monsters. Additionally, the artists themselves were just one link in the chain in traditional publishing: their work would be passed on to colourists and inkers, followed by editors, publishers, printers, and distributors (McCloud, 2000). Whilst successful webcomics may use third parties for activities such as advertising, website design or merchandise, many of the steps common to “the massive

entrenched corporate structure” (Jacques, 2009) are removed, meaning the artist sees more profits from their work. Figure 1-1 provides a very brief history of webcomics from their origins on Usenet groups and mailing lists (Allen, 2007; Garrity, 2011; Mautner, 2015).

1985 →	<i>Witches in Stitches</i> by Eric Monster Milikin distributed through CompuServe	THE STONE AGE
1986		
1987		
1988		
1989		
1990		
1991 →	<i>Where the Buffalo Roam</i> by Hans Bjordahl published through FTP and Usenet, calls itself 'the Internet's First Comic Strip'	
1992		
1993 →	<i>Doctor Fun</i> by David Farley is the first webcomic with its own website	THE BRONZE AGE
1994 →	<i>Rogues of Clwyd-Rhan</i> by Reinder Djikhuis is the first non-US (Dutch) webcomic	
1995		
1996		THE SINGULARITY
1997 →	<i>Goats</i> by Jon Rosenberg, <i>Sluggy Freelance</i> by Pete Abrams, and <i>User Friendly</i> by JD Frazer are among the first in the explosion of webcomics as the overall online population increases.	
1998		
1999		
2000	Creators start making money from their online work.	
2001 →	<i>Nowhere Girl</i> by Justine Shaw is among the first entire longform comics formatted for the web.	THE AGE OF SHIT GETTING REAL
2002 →	<i>American Elf</i> by James Kochalka moves online, kicking-off the trend for autobiographical webcomics	
2003		
2004	A huge number of webcomics began in this era,	
2005	as well as print comics from indie creators moving to the web.	
2006		
2007 →	<i>Hark, A Vagrant!</i> By Kate Beaton begins; a year later she is making a living from webcomics.	THE AGE OF THIS WHOLE APP THING
2008	Dedicated websites and apps are built to accommodate webcomics.	
2009		
2010	Creators begin to publish on social media.	
2011		
2012		THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
2013	Social Media is vital to the financially successful creator and the amateur cartoonist alike, particularly Tumblr for posting comics and Twitter for fan-interactions.	
2014		
2015		
2016...		

Figure 1-5 A brief history of webcomics, from their origins on Usenet groups and email lists, to the present ubiquity of social media (adapted from Allen, 2007; Garrity, 2011; and Mautner, 2015)

The number of creators who make money from their webcomics is still small but is increasing. Webcomics fit into reader's lives, as they are published in short instalments that can be read in a work-break or during the work commute thanks to the ubiquity of Internet-enabled mobile devices (Jain & Lyons, 2008). Social media sites provide easy avenues for promotion and dissemination of webcomics; webcomics without their own websites may rely on sites such as Tumblr or Facebook. There are also a number of webcomics hosting sites offering a relatively risk-free environment for an aspiring artist to experiment, as well as mobile apps which allow creators to display their webcomics alongside their peers in traditional comics. For example ComiXology⁷, owned by Amazon, works with over 75 publishers including Marvel and DC, and allows self-publishers to submit work; Comic Chameleon⁸ is a free app currently hosting 153 webcomics, optimised for mobile.

As the independents of the past were acknowledged as having a particular role within the industry, established creators are recognising the creativity and knowledge of the webcomic community (Garrity, 2011, 2013), seeking their contribution to mainstream comics, or publishing their own webcomics alongside paid work. The Eisner Awards, known as the Oscars of the comics industry, have included the category of Best Digital Comic since 2005. Although they do not solely reward webcomics in this category, those that have won include *PvP* by Scott Kurtz⁹, *Sin Titulo* by Cameron Stewart¹⁰, *The Abominable Charles Christopher* by Karl Kersch¹¹, and *The Oatmeal* by Matthew Inman¹². Webcomics have also won in other categories; Emily Carroll won Best Short Story in 2015 for *When the Darkness Presses*¹³ and Nicholas Gurewitch won Best Humor Publication for a print collection of the *Perry Bible Fellowship*¹⁴ in 2008.

Monetising Webcomics

Webcomics creators have complex understandings of how the Internet works and what they need to do to find popularity and commercial success. They give

⁷ See <https://www.comixology.co.uk/>

⁸ See <http://www.comicchameleon.com/>

⁹ See <http://pvponline.com/>

¹⁰ See <http://cameron-stewart.tumblr.com/webcomic>

¹¹ See <http://abominable.cc/>

¹² See <http://theoatmeal.com/>

¹³ See <http://emcarroll.com/comics/darkness/>

¹⁴ See <http://pbcomics.com/>

away free (high quality) content, form a strong fanbase through social media and other online platforms, and eventually they may be able to monetise (see Figure 1-6). It is the accumulation of many activities that allows this financial viability, most often a combination of advertising and sponsorship; merchandise and publishing; commissions and original art; paywalls and subscriptions; and donations and crowdfunding.



Figure 1-6 The work of webcomics, from “This is Everything I know” by Spike, <http://spikedrewthis.tumblr.com/post/64136324548/this-is-everything-i-know-a-24-hour-comic-about>

With an audience of between 10,000 and 30,000 readers, a creator may be able to start making a living through the basic webcomics business model: give away free content, and raise money through selling advertising space, books, clothes, art, and other merchandise to loyal readers. (Guigar, Kellett, Kurtz, & Straub, 2011). As one such creator has said “if you can truly connect with your die hard fans, those that would willingly pay for you to keep doing what you love to do, you CAN make a living from your creative output” (emphasis in original) (Watson, 2013b). Some webcomics creators have used their own success to help others, and many are very open about how they make money, publishing their incomes and sales numbers on their websites, or writing blogs aimed at helping others to monetise their comics.

Although the original content is provided for free, readers of webcomics are often motivated to buy merchandise or give monetary support in whatever way they can; this is in opposition to the finding that, with products from a major

publisher, readers feel less inclined to buy if they can find a free version (Boswell, 2009). This may be due to a greater perceived need of the independent creators, or to do with differing motivations surrounding *why* a reader pays for content. Chapter 2 summarises the monetisation options, but as this thesis focuses on crowdfunding, the following section provides a brief introduction.

1.1.2 Introduction to Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a subset of crowdsourcing, which is a portmanteau of the terms 'crowd' and 'outsourcing' (Howe, 2006). It can therefore be basically defined as crowdsourced funding. More specifically, it is "a collective effort by consumers who network and pool their money together, usually via the Internet, in order to invest in and support efforts initiated by other people or organisations" (Ordanini, Miceli, Pizzetti, & Parasuraman, 2011). In 2011, €1.5 billion (around \$2 billion) was raised through crowdfunding (Posner, 2013) and it was estimated to create over \$62 billion in new capital by the end of 2015 (Baumgardner et al., 2017). Research into online crowdfunding is still in early stages, with the term only emerging in academic literature around 2009. There are calls for more research, with requests for platforms to release data to researchers (De Buysere, Gajda, Kleverlaan, & Marom, 2012).

Crowdfunding may also be seen as a new form of the ancient concept of patronage, a system where rich benefactors would sponsor artists and other creators and thinkers to make new works. Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, Hadyn, and Michelangelo were all sponsored by aristocracy to create some of their best known works, including the Sistine Chapel (Safner, 2015). Patronage was essential to the careers and social status of creators, and was also a way for rich members of society to signal their worth, often with benefit to society being of secondary concern. Nowadays, governments and large institutions become patrons by providing funds and public sponsorship for the arts. Crowdfunding allows many people to take on the role of patron through small donations, providing funds for goods that do not yet exist but which may benefit more than just the individual (Safner, 2015).

Raising money through multiple small donations is not a new idea, notably charity fundraising and church groups have been using collection boxes for centuries. In seventeenth century Germany, small amounts from large numbers

of people were used to finance book prints (Marelli & Ordanini, 2016). Mozart and Beethoven both financed concerts and the publishing of new music through subscriptions solicited in advance (Hemer, 2011; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014). Guildford Cathedral was funded by asking the public to donate money that essentially bought them a brick of the new building (Adams, 2014). In 1884 Joseph Pulitzer raised funds for the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty through over 160,000 donations, more than 75% of which were less than one dollar (Marelli & Ordanini, 2016). Other examples include Social Credit Movements, and the People's Bank movement of the mid-1800s (Adams, 2014). More recently, in 1997 the English rock band Marillion raised \$60,000 from fans to pay for their US tour. Barack Obama's 2008 election campaign was largely funded by small donations, with around half of the total made up of payments of less than \$200 (Hemer, 2011; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014).

The Internet allows funding efforts to bypass geographical location, and crowdfunding has grown massively in the past decade (Barabas, 2012; Collins, 2014). The financial crisis in 2008 also contributed to its adoption and success (Adams, 2014). Often there is some form of incentive for people to back a project. This may be financial remuneration or equity in a start-up company, or 'rewards' such as thank-you notes, autographs, meetings with the artist involved, visits to sets, or merchandise (Hemer, 2011; Turner & Hopkins, 2013). Often the reward is the product being funded, provided for donations lower than the eventual retail price. They may also be items or opportunities that are not available outside of the crowdfunding campaign, such as private meetings or limited editions. Charitable and civic crowdfunding campaigns tend to focus on less tangible rewards and the non-financial aspects such as helping others and getting involved in a good cause (Stiver, Barroca, Petre, Richards, & Roberts, 2015). While crowdfunding allows projects to reach people across the world, the vast majority are based in the United States (over 70%) and Europe (just over 25%) (Collins, 2014).

The modern concept of crowdfunding has been applied in many areas, including charitable donations and political campaigns, citizen journalism, business ventures, manufacturing new products, and creative endeavours. One of the largest areas of success has been the creative industries, particularly art, music, and film. Creators appeal to their audiences directly rather than relying on being picked up by record labels, publishers, and distributors. They are able to

bring tangible value to their work, particularly those who release work for free online. Additionally, crowdfunding platforms which focus on creative ideas are themselves encouraging the growth of the creative industries. For example Kickstarter is registered as a Public Benefit Corporation, meaning they are legally obligated to consider their impact on society. As such they have declared a commitment to donate 5% of their “annual post-tax profits to arts education and organisations fighting inequality” (Strickler, Chen, & Adler, 2015), turning themselves into patrons of the arts.

Funding through Fans

There is an increasing amount of research looking at the relationship between fandom and crowdfunding, because fans tend to form communities, particularly online, that can be leveraged to make money. For years, fans have been volunteering to help at conventions, creating fan fiction, and taking an active part in their fandom. Whilst crowdfunding at scale may be a relatively new form of support, fans have been financially active for a long time, giving money to buy tickets and memorabilia, as well as funding other fans’ creative works such as fan art and cosplay (Booth, 2015; Scott, 2015). Also known as ‘fanancing’ (with backers becoming ‘fanvestors’), crowdfunding places creators in direct contact with fans, turning them into investors (Coleman, 2015) who have the power to influence the direction of their fandoms by choosing which project to back. For some, crowdfunding is an important call-to-arms to fans:

“It’s always been difficult to fund art, this isn’t new, the Internet didn’t break anything. In fact, the Internet has given us new ways to fund things we believe in. It’s not just up to artists to become better business people – for some that just won’t ever happen. It’s time for us – fans, supporters, listeners, readers, lovers of art, culture, knowledge – to step up” (Boekbinder, 2014).

Crowdfunding through fans has allowed many creators to pursue projects that allow them greater creative freedom due to not having to go through publishers, agents, studios, or funding bodies. Additionally, it can allow creators to broach subjects that would not be accepted by mainstream media, and to make potentially controversial topics more mainstream (Scott, 2015). Appealing to fans first may also mitigate some of the risk associated with new crowdfunding projects, by bringing in committed customers who signal to

others that a project is worthwhile (Skold, 2013). Additionally, creators that already have a loyal fan base before they begin their campaigns are likely to be more successful, as in other voluntary payment schemes such as Pay What You Want (PWYW) (Suzor, 2014).

Fans choose to crowdfund because it allows them to interact with the creators they admire; online communication and online relationships can be just as important as real-world connections (Coleman, 2015). Successful campaigns focused on fans are usually based around a creator who “identifies him or herself as a member of a community, not someone who is above it” (Galuszka & Brzozowska, 2015, p.5). However, such practices are not seen by all to be beneficial to either fans or producers, with arguments that large media companies could use crowdfunding to exploit fans, that already successful artists can use it to take money away from independent producers who rely on such schemes, and that the time and money spent on campaigning and providing rewards takes away from the main work of the creator (Bennett, Chin, & Jones, 2015). Such arguments mostly surround well-known actors and studios who use crowdfunding for projects that they may already be able to produce themselves. Trading social, cultural and emotional exchanges for cash is also felt by some to be both exploitative and unsustainable, particularly if a creator does not continue to engage and involve fans after a campaign is finished (Coleman, 2015; Scott, 2015).

Even if fans are content with funding their idols, people outside a fandom often have more negative responses. Some see the pre-ordering type of crowdfunding as simply merchandising that is marketed as charity or donations, and therefore represents a form of lying to fans. Others do see crowdfunding as charity, but “see project creators as beggars looking for handouts” (Boekbinder, 2014). Many creators thrive on collaboration and interacting with fans, and crowdfunding is an extension of this; rather than exploiting emotional and social capital, it can actually enhance the relationships and strengthen fan communities (Coleman, 2015). However, whilst appealing to a network of dedicated fans may be fine for one project or for a particular creator, this does not necessarily scale to a network of return backers who fund a wide range of projects (Aitamurto, 2015). Thus, whilst beneficial to individual creators, financing may not help the success of platforms overall.

Contrary to these opinions, many others believe that far from being exploited, fans are aware of their role in crowdfunding and are capable of making their own choices (Booth, 2015). Crowdfunding may actually force “media producers, consumers, and scholars to reconsider the audience’s role in media production” (Scott, 2014, p.2). It may be a way for fans to give back to a creator they have been emotionally committed to for years. Thanks to the visibility afford by working on the Internet, people are more aware of the costs associated with being an independent creator, and the opportunity to engage and give back is appealing. Fans are able to choose the projects they want to back, and essentially invest in the future work of the creators they enjoy (Boekbinder, 2014). More broadly, fans of particular areas such as comics, journalism, or videogames, may choose to back projects because they wish to support the wider industry (Aitamurto, 2015).

Crowdfunding for Webcomics

As discussed in the previous section, crowdfunding platforms have become a viable way for webcomic creators to fund their projects through fan engagement, and make their webcomics a success. Creators use crowdfunding to raise money for specific projects or to fund continued work on their comic, whilst their primary comic content remains free-to-view.

Many webcomics projects have been extremely successful in their crowdfunding efforts. The success rate for the Comics category on Kickstarter is higher than the reported success rate across the entire site (53% versus 36%). Only Dance and Theatre are more successful. When they succeed, they also quite often achieve much more than their goal amounts, for example, *Dresden Codak*¹⁵ artist Aaron Diaz funded the printing of his first book within an hour, ending with 1783% of his target amount from over 7500 backers. Other webcomics-based projects getting funded in this way include games, toys and figurines, animated shows, and new comics. After an initial success, some creators continue to crowdfund subsequent books; *Shortpacked!* and *Dumbing of Age* creator David Willis¹⁶ has run five successful campaigns, each earning

¹⁵ See <http://dresdencodak.com/>

¹⁶ See <http://www.dumbingofage.com/>

between 118% and 370% of the goal amounts. Other creators choose the route of traditional publishing after a success – Ryan North of *Dinosaur Comics*¹⁷ successfully funded a choose-your-own-adventure book based on Hamlet entitled ‘To Be or Not to Be’; for the sequel, ‘Romeo and/or Juliet’, he went with Riverhead Books, a division of Penguin (Tyrrell, 2015a).

Crowdfunding is also an area in which creators have expanded to help others. C Spike Trotman, creator of *Templar, AZ*¹⁸ founded Iron Circus Comics, which both publishes anthologies through Kickstarter and helps others to fulfil their campaigns. For example, Trotman completed the delayed shipping of Dean Trippé’s *Something Terrible*¹⁹, and ran the campaign for *The Less Than Epic Adventures of TJ and Amal* by EK Weaver²⁰ which completed its goal in 6 hours. Trotman has also written a comic book about crowdfunding (Trotman, 2015). Other examples include BreadPig, who market themselves as a ‘sidekick-for-hire’, and help creators at all stages of their crowdfunding campaigns, and Make That Thing, an off-shoot of the merchandising company Topatoco, who run production and fulfilment for comics’ crowdfunding campaigns.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The overarching aim of this work is to answer the following question:

How do creators of free online content monetise their work through crowdfunding?

This will lead to suggestions about how creators can maximise their financial success through their online fan base. There are several objectives that contribute towards this, which will be discussed in terms of the research questions they can answer.

RQ1: How do webcomics communities interact online and how does this translate into monetisation?

The first objective is to establish how creators make use of the Internet to engage with their readers, and how this relates to the forms of monetisation

¹⁷ See <http://www.qwantz.com/>

¹⁸ See http://templaraz.com/chapter_guide/

¹⁹ See <http://www.tencentticker.com/somethingterrible/>

²⁰ See <http://tjandamal.com/>

within webcomics. This forms the groundwork for further study of monetisation, and starts to address the importance of online communities to creators. As such the first research question has two parts:

- a) How do creators and readers use the Internet for webcomics content?
- b) What methods do creators use to monetise their work?

RQ2: How does crowdfunding work in the webcomics industry?

The second objective is to examine the use of crowdfunding by webcomic creators and readers, particularly in terms of creating successful campaigns. This involves examining the different models of crowdfunding in use by creators, leading to the first part of research question 2:

- a) How do webcomic communities use crowdfunding?

Establishing factors that contribute to success can help creators to decide whether and how to crowdfund their own work, leading to the second part of this research question:

- b) What are the success factors for webcomics using different models of crowdfunding?

RQ3: What motivates people to give to webcomic crowdfunding campaigns?

The third objective is to explore factors that characterise this area of the economy by looking at the reasons that people give to crowdfunding campaigns, leading to an understanding of why crowdfunding works for creators of free content, and how it might be better utilised by different types of creators. Rewards are often cited as the strongest motivators to crowdfund and so it is sensible to investigate which incentives are strongest in the crowdfunding of webcomics:

- a) How do rewards and incentives offered to backers affect crowdfunding success?

The importance of meaningful interactions to webcomics in general and crowdfunding efforts in particular also implies a role for reciprocity in the motivations of backers, leading to the second part of this research question:

- b) What is the role of reciprocity in crowdfunding?

Understanding the motivations for giving to a campaign can increase the chance of success of a project from two directions: first, an artist with a good understanding of their community can focus their campaign on the most important factors in that community, and second a creator with a particular type of campaign will be able to target particular types of readers more effectively.

1.3 RESEARCH AREAS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Webcomics have received very little attention in academia but they form an extremely interesting niche group within the creative industries in their own right. Work within this community will also be applicable to any sector where the interactions between creator and fan are vital for success, and to other creators whose business models involve free content. The emerging creative economy, encompassing any area which specialises in the use of creative talent for commercial purposes (Bakhshi, Hargreaves, & Mateos-Garcia, 2013), has been evolving as the online world allows greater access to digital technologies which means that more and more people can do creative work and create their own 'micro-businesses':

“these industries, especially the thousands of small and micro-businesses that are at the cutting edge of creativity, may not only be of growing economic significance but, in some sense, are a harbinger of a whole new economic order, providing a new paradigm for the way in which businesses are organised, education is understood and provided, value is measured, the working lives and career prospects of millions of people are likely to develop and how the cities they live in will be planned and built” (Newbigin, 2014).

As a study of one of these niche industries in which individuals are able to work, furthering research into the creative economy is an important contribution of this thesis.

Additionally, crowdfunding platforms are becoming important players in the digital economy, and the study of them is still relatively nascent. This research both draws from and adds to this literature. As well as comparing two similar models of crowdfunding, by focusing on a particular group this thesis also shows the importance of context in studying the crowdfunding phenomenon. Social psychology, particularly theories of altruism, reciprocity, and pro-social

behaviour were important influences on this work. This research uses established theories in this area and applies them to the domain of crowdfunding creative endeavours. The work suggests a role for considering different types of reciprocity in planning successful crowdfunding campaigns.

The studies in this thesis have contributed to several publications:

- Dowthwaite, L., Houghton, R. J., & Mortier, R. (2016). How relevant is copyright to online artists? A qualitative study of understandings, coping strategies, and possible solutions. *First Monday*, 21(5). Retrieved February 14, 2017, from <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6107/5457>
- Dowthwaite, L., Houghton, R. J., & Mortier, R. (2015). Fame or Function? How webcomic artists choose where to share. In S. Sharples, S. Shorrock, & P. Waterson (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Ergonomics and Human Factors 2015* (pp. 355–362). London: Taylor and Francis.
- Dowthwaite, L. (2014). Getting Paid for Giving Away Art for Free: the Case of Webcomics. *CREATE*. Retrieved February 14, 2017, from <http://www.create.ac.uk/blog/2014/02/25/webcomics-dowthwaite/>

They have also been presented at a series of conferences and events, including:

- Dowthwaite, L. (2016). Monetising Free Comics: Comparing two models of crowdfunding for webcomics (presentation). *Kick Starting Media Symposium 2016: Cultures of Funding in Contemporary Media*. Bath Spa University, Bath, 9th June 2016.
- Dowthwaite, L. (2015). When Things Go Wrong, When Things Go Right: Meaningful interactions between webcomics creators and readers (presentation). *Electricomics 2015*. University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, 14th October 2015. Online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLKgT8jqfvs#t=1h30m29s>
- Dowthwaite, L. (2015). Comics, Communities, and Crowdfunding: The importance of meaningful online interactions between webcomics readers and creators (poster). *EMoTICON Network Postgraduate Researcher Workshop*. Hinsley House, Leeds, 9th September 2015.
- Dowthwaite, L. (2014). Webcomic Artist's attitudes towards copyright and attribution (presentation). *CREATE Technology Capacity Building Event*. Nottingham, 18th June 2014.

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE

Table 1-1 An overview of studies carried out

Study	Purpose	Methods Employed	Chapter
1	To study the use of the Internet by webcomic readers and creators; to examine sources of interaction between readers and creators	Online questionnaire	2
2	To examine interactions between readers and creators, from the viewpoint of creators	Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews	2
3	To study the use of crowdfunding in the webcomic community; to identify reasons for choosing to crowdfund	Online and paper-based questionnaire	3
4	To compare two major platforms used in webcomic crowdfunding; to identify and examine the types of rewards offered	Website scraping	3
5	To examine the motivations of backers to give to webcomic crowdfunding; to measure attitudes towards giving; to determine the importance of rewards	Online questionnaire	4

The bulk of this thesis is made up of empirical studies, summarised in Table 1-1. Partially due to the interdisciplinary nature of the PhD, this research utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods, ranging from the micro-analysis of hundreds of crowdfunding projects to the macro-analysis of the feelings and opinions of people who use such platforms. Each of the main chapters takes as its focus one of the research questions summarised above and describes the related literature and the studies that were carried out to investigate it.

Chapter 2 focuses on research question 1 and reports an online questionnaire aimed at both readers and creators of webcomics which investigated the use of social media and online tools, and a series of face-to-face interviews with creators to assess their particular views of their interactions with readers.

Chapter 3 focuses on research question 2, and reports the results of two studies: a short questionnaire, and analysis of two major platforms used in webcomic crowdfunding to compare the efficacy of each and factors for success in differing models. This also allows for comparison between webcomics crowdfunding and crowdfunding in general, highlighting the importance of context.

Chapter 4 focuses on research question 3, and reports on a further online questionnaire aimed at examining the motivations of backers to give to

webcomics crowdfunding, their attitudes towards giving, and the importance of rewards.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides a synopsis of the thesis, an overall summary of how creators can maximise their financial success through their communities. It ends with conclusions as well as a critical reflection on the work and suggestions for future work.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Despite the seemingly ephemeral nature of webcomics, they can attract large audiences and for some creators they are a full-time job, despite the fact that they give away their main product for free. The methods that creators use to make money are varied but online interactions with readers and other creators are paramount to all of them. In particular, the phenomenon of crowdfunding is helping many in the webcomics industry to fulfil their goals. The main aim of this research is to study the influence of communities on monetisation for this interesting group in the creative industries, and as such section 1.2 presented several research questions pertaining to this goal. The thesis contributes to several areas of study, including social psychology, the digital economy, and the creative industries. These contributions were summarised in section 1.3. Finally, section 1.4 laid out the structure of the thesis with brief descriptions of each study carried out. The next part of this thesis (chapters 2 to 4) describes the studies and background work that forms the bulk of this research.

HOW DO WEBCOMICS COMMUNITIES INTERACT ONLINE?

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes two studies of creators and readers of webcomics. Both aim to answer the first research question, “How do webcomics communities interact online?” particularly in terms of methods creators use to monetise their communities. As such it can be split into two sub-questions:

- a) How do creators and readers use the Internet for webcomics content?
- b) What methods do creators use to monetise their work?

As introduced in Chapter 1, creators make wide use of the Internet to engage their fans, as well as with other artists and other aspects of their business. The first study is a grounded, exploratory questionnaire study investigating which websites people use for reading and posting both webcomics and surrounding content, as well as buying and selling behaviour in terms of merchandise and donations. Some of the results of this study have previously been published by Dowthwaite, Houghton, & Mortier (2015). The second study is a series of semi-structured interviews with creators investigating their attitudes and the considerations they make with regards to interacting with their audiences, and ways of making money, adding context to the first study. Some of the results of this study have been published in Dowthwaite (2014), Dowthwaite, Houghton, & Mortier (2015), and Dowthwaite, Houghton, & Mortier, (2016).

2.1.1 The Importance of Community and Social Media to Webcomics

Comics are “a powerful, personal way to tell stories, and the Web is an amazing way to distribute those stories to the world” (Guigar, Kellett, Kurtz, & Straub, 2011, p.14). Since the beginning of comics scholarship, the important relationship between comics creators and their readers has been highlighted

(McCloud, 1993), and the dawn of the Internet and social media saw technology become a vital tool in this relationship (McCloud, 2000). Webcomics are the first part of the comics industry to rely on the Internet and social media to build a community around their works: “[o]ne of the greatest things about Webcomics is the immediacy, frequency and intensity of your interactions with readers. You can talk to them, and they can talk back” (Guigar et al., 2011, p.104). A lot of time and dedication on the part of the artist is required to build these interactions, but in response they can end up with a group of fans willing to spend their time and money to support the artist. Most successful webcomics artists cite the close relationships with their readers as a major factor in their success (Allison, 2013; Guigar et al., 2011; Jacques, 2009; Watson, 2012). In some cases readers become co-creators, giving a fan even greater investment in a webcomic: comics may run strips based on reader suggestions (Brown, 2016) or reader polls (Buckley, 2015), print t-shirts and other merchandise at the request of fan feedback (see Figure 2-1) (Jacques, 2013; Watson, 2009), or base comics on social media conversations (Watson, 2009).



Figure 2-1 In response to "overwhelming demand" from readers, Joel Watson produced the t-shirt shown in in this Hijinks Ensue comic. The actor featured, Edward James Olmos, ordered one. "Luna Nueva"
<http://hijinksensue.com/comic/luna-nueva>

The artist can also use their community, which includes other creators, as “an opportunity to learn, to grow, to get feedback, and to get better” (Guigar et al., 2011, p.17), as well as gaining community and social motivations to keep producing their work. Online readers also generate a lot of information by simply regularly visiting their favourite sites, and this can help the creator to

increase their traffic and fan base, and identify options for monetisation. In this way, creators and readers both contribute to the success of a webcomic, and both gain in many ways: products, profit, knowledge and information, cultural impact, entertainment, education, relationships, and so on.

The True Fan

Kelly describes the True Fan as “someone who will purchase anything and everything you produce” and theorises that a creator only needs 1,000 True Fans to make a living, although this number will vary depending on the artist and the industry (Kelly, 2008). Joel Watson has given a similar explanation of how he has been able to run his webcomic as a full-time profession: “I just needed a few thousand loyal readers who cared enough about what I was doing to support me” (Watson, 2013a), and other creators have suggested that 10% of a webcomics audience will be willing to buy something (Tyrrell, 2006a). This also resonates with the concept of the ‘long tail’ championed by Chris Anderson (2008) and the Street Performer Protocol of Kelsey & Schneier (1999). The ‘long tail’ is the idea that, especially as things move online and costs of production and distribution fall, culture and the economy is moving away from focusing on the small number of mainstream ‘hits’ and toward the huge number of ‘niche’ products and markets in the tail, as illustrated by Figure 2-2.

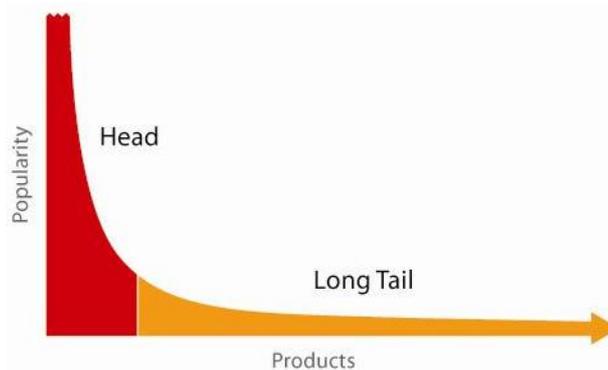


Figure 2-2 An illustration of the long tail concept (Anderson, 2009)

The Street Performer Protocol also shares similarity with the subscription-based crowdfunding model discussed in chapter 3. Using authors as their example, they say “using the logic of a street performer, the author goes directly to the readers before the book is published; perhaps even before the book is written. [...] Readers can go to the author's Web site, see how much money has already been donated, and donate money to the cause of getting his novel out” (Kelsey & Schneier, 1999).

The True Fan, according to Kelly, is surrounded by Lesser Fans, who will buy some of what a creator releases, but not all. There is another group of fans that may be just as important as True and Lesser Fans to an online creator: those who are active in communities, encourage creators and introduce others to their work, and point out issues when they see them. These readers contribute to success not by buying things, but by clicking on ads, and sharing comics with others (Jacques, 2009). They are the fans that retweet comics and jokes on Twitter, share them on Facebook, and recommend comics to friends. A tweet might get shared 50 times and gain an artist 10 new readers, in contrast to paid advertising which may only get 5 clicks and no returning readers (Rohac, 2010). These readers and other creators also provide advice and support, and can be highly beneficial in cases of misattribution or copyright violation, often taking to social networks in great numbers to protest illegal hosting of content (Dowthwaite, 2014b; Dowthwaite et al., 2016).

Social Media

In order to foster meaningful interactions that can lead to True Fans, many creators blog about their methods, and communicate with their readers about creative decisions. Readers can email creators, post comments on comics, or visit forums or Facebook pages in order to engage with the creator directly (Rohac, 2010). The focus of much of this behaviour has now moved from the individual webcomic's homepage to social media, where the reach is much more extensive. Artists make use of a wide range of social media, and often part of their working day is dedicated to social media (Guigar, 2013), as they actively foster closer relationships with readers. Readers and creators can interact instantaneously and on many levels. Such is the importance of social media that several creators write extensive blog posts about the different social media sites and ways to maximise their benefit and publicise their art, usually emphasising the importance of the person behind the comic as a selling point.

Through social media, creators who are just starting out get noticed, retweeted, and followed by creators who are further along in their careers, and also by those in traditional publishing. Artists interact with other artists and with others involved in various aspects of their businesses; they provide support and advice to each other such as which art tools they use, how to get a fair price for their work, or which printers to use. Webcomics artists frequently link to each

other, encouraging their readers to discover new artists, and creating networks of communities that cross-over and interact. This indicates the presence of reciprocity between creators, which in addition to helping others (perhaps in ways others have helped them before) can increase the reputation of the creator in the industry and amongst both readers and other creators.

2.1.2 The Monetisation of Webcomics

The world of traditional comics publishing is one in which the big publishers, mainly the Big Two (Marvel and DC), have a lot of advantages and the most success: they can print more, and so maintain a lower average price-per-unit cost; they can afford to ensure that retailers and distributors have a constant supply of stock and can pay for more advertising; and they can spend more on production (McCloud, 2000). They also have an established cultural standing, with Batman and Superman, Iron Man and the Avengers being recognised names the world over. More money is made through licensing, especially movies, than in the actual publishing of the comics (Duncan & Smith, 2009).

Traditional comics have had a presence on the Internet since its beginnings, but they have tended to focus on selling physical comics and merchandise (Sabin, 2000), and advertising, rather than digital content. In the publishing of traditional paper comics, the publisher must consider artists (which may include separate writers, artists, pencillers, inkers, colourists, and letterers), printers, distributors, the retailer, editors, agents, accountants, couriers, lawyers, and so on, as well as taking into account other needs such as warehouse and office space. Prices for digital versions of comics from these publishers therefore remain high. Additionally, whilst individual writers and artists often have as many fans as the characters they create (Round, 2010), the need for the middleman and pursuit of profit can start to overshadow the importance of the artist-reader relationship (McCloud, 2000).

Whilst it is easier for the big publishers to publish paper comics than it is for independents, this is not the case for digital work. Small and self-publishers have embraced new technologies quicker, and often flourish where the Big Two have struggled (Allen, 2008; Hochstein, 2009; Murray, 2012); publishers such as IDW, Archaia, Top Shelf, and Arcana Comics often take more risks and adapt faster than the larger players (Reid, 2013). The problem is that traditional publishers must demonstrate to creators that they can distribute their products

online “not only better than others bidding for rights, but also, in the Internet-Age, better than the originators can” (Loebbecke & Powell, 2002, p.311), which is where webcomics flourish.

Several professional webcomics artists do separate work for mainstream comics, often after making a name for themselves through their webcomics. For example, Ryan North works on *Adventure Time* and Marvel’s *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* alongside the webcomic *Dinosaur Comics*; Christopher Hastings works on *Adventure Time*, *Deadpool*, and other Marvel titles alongside the webcomic *The Adventures of Dr McNinja*²¹; Danielle Corsetto, John Allison, Noelle Stevenson, Raina Telgemeier, and Meredith Gran are just a few more of those who have also taken that step. Others have been commissioned to run syndicated strips in newspapers, although the sacrifice of editorial control may not be appealing after the freedom of working online (Boswell, 2009). Instead of (or alongside) choosing to work with mainstream publishers, the Internet allows webcomic creators to become self-employed business people, as such becoming their own marketing department, accountant, lawyer, and so on. Often one person both creates the comic and handles all the business concerns; some work in partnership with other artists, and others may be able to afford to hire assistants. The rest of this section looks at the main methods employed by webcomics to monetise their work in this way: advertising, merchandise, commissions, paywalls, and crowdfunding.

Advertising and Sponsorship

Traditional paper-based publishers subsidise the prices of individual issues with advertising, which may take up to half the space in a comic. Most financially successful webcomics also sell ad-space to help to pay for their hosting costs and keep their comics available for free. Whilst in the past advertising revenue may have been enough to cover server costs or office expenses (Jacques, 2009), revenue has been falling over the last few years mainly because many people now use ad-blockers (Guigar, 2015b). A recent report found that 615 million mobile and desktop devices used adblock, growing by 30% in 2016 and covering 11% of the global Internet population

²¹ See <http://drmcninja.com/>; now complete.

(PageFair, 2017). However, some creators do still make significant ad revenue. Zach Weinersmith of *Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal*²² lists his top methods for monetisation as ad revenue, followed by Kickstarter (Donaldson, 2017).

From the other side, advertising a webcomic can help to build an audience, so some creators pay for ad-space on other websites. However, experienced creators emphasise that it is important to place the ad where a relevant community will see it (Tyrrell, 2006b). Some creators also enter into affiliation deals, meaning they get a small amount of money per sale that originates on their site, for example Erika Moen and Matt Nolan of *Oh Joy Sex Toy*²³ have joined 21 affiliate programs (Nolan, 2015c), and also licence their work to run on other sites. Advertising is not investigated further in this study, due to the focus on the reader and their interactions with creators.

Merchandise and Publishing

The reasons for printing a webcomic are widely varied amongst both creators and readers, for example “readers’ enthusiasm to own these printed webcomics often comes from a desire to support the creator, or to own something tangible, collectable, and sometimes personalized” (Fattor, 2013, p.2). Creators, as well as wishing to make money from their work, may also publish because they feel it ‘legitimises’ their work in some way. Some webcomics artists use a traditional publisher to print and distribute their comics. Through Dark Horse, *The Perry Bible Fellowship* sold over 30,000 copies (Hudson, 2008), and John Allison’s *Bad Machinery*²⁴ has been published by Oni Press since 2012. However, many choose to self-publish, managed either through pre-orders or small print runs, which the artist can financially afford and physically store. Some creators format their comics online with printing in mind, using limited colours or page layouts to make the eventual publication easier (Fattor, 2013). Others appear to use the webcomic format as a gateway to mainstream publishing, for example *Hereville* by Barry Deutsch²⁵ began as a webcomic but once it was picked up by a print publisher, the site was used solely to post teasers and to sell copies of the work. (Fattor, 2013).

²² See <http://www.smbc-comics.com/>

²³ See <http://www.ohjoysextoy.com/>

²⁴ See <http://www.scarygoround.com/>

²⁵ See <http://hereville.com/>

As well as books, webcomics artists often sell prints, t-shirts, mugs, tote bags, pins, plush toys, and other items. Those who are just starting to experiment with monetising their comics may use an on-demand production service, to test the popularity of products with readers (Guigar et al., 2011). To help alleviate the demands for space that physical merchandise imposes on the creator, some already successful creators have started businesses to help others by providing both online store pages and warehouse space, as well as fulfilling the shipping required. One of the largest, Topatoco, was started by Jeffrey Rowland of *Wigu* and *Overcompensating*²⁶ in 2004 and now handles the merchandising and shipment for at least 50 webcomics, as well as around 30 podcasts, musicians, artists, writers, and games. Another option is to release digital collections under a pay-what-you-want (PWYW) pricing scheme. Creators choose a minimum or a suggested cost for an item, which can be zero, and the reader can choose how much they want to pay for the item. Sam Logan of *Sam and Fuzzy*²⁷ uses Gumroad to offer collections of sketches and pin-up art; Allison Shabet of *Dead Winter*²⁸ has offered collections of her comics on the same site.

Commissions and Original Art

Giving away free content provides publicity for artists and helps artists to obtain paid freelance work from people who have seen their art online first (Allison, 2013). Creators may also sell the original plans or sketches of a strip, or the original strips if the artist does not work digitally. Conventions and online stores are the most common ways of selling such content, as well as other merchandise. However, independent creators are finding that the larger conventions are aimed more at fans of movies and television shows based on large comic franchises who want to see celebrities rather than artists (Guigar, 2015a) and they can no longer guarantee that they will make a profit from attending a show. Combined with the often prohibitive cost of exhibiting, the risk is often too high for small creators. As will be shown, crowdfunding forms a new way to mitigate this risk and maximise any reward.

Several creators also work as illustrators, often as a full-time job whilst running a webcomic on the side. “It’s probably the most common way that cartoonists

²⁶ See <http://overcompensating.com> and <http://overcompensating.com/adventures/>

²⁷ See <http://www.samandfuzzy.com/>

²⁸ See <http://deadwinter.cc/>

make money and/or earn a living outside of comics, and for many is a viable alternative to knuckling down and getting a day job that isn't related to comics, or isn't creative or cultural work." (P. Johnston, 2015). They may also teach, for example Jillian Tamaki, creator of *Super Mutant Monster Academy*²⁹, and Meredith Gran of *Octopus Pie*³⁰ work at the New York City School of Visual Arts, and Danielle Corsetto of *Girls with Slingshots*³¹ teaches at Shepherd University, as well as teaching courses for Patreon backers.

Paywalls and Subscription Models

Sites offering free content of all kinds are part of the "fundamental dynamics of the future digital economy" (Lazonick, 2007, p.32), and experiments in charging for content in the past have predominantly failed (Guigar et al., 2011).

*"First of all, comics on the web are free. They always will be. The cat isn't out of the bag on this one, it's out of the bag, out the window, down the street, and up a tree mauling a bluejay. No matter how many pay-per-view comics are online, there will always be some totally free ones, and those will always outperform the non-free ones because **people expect the Internet to be free**" (emphasis in original) (Jacques, 2009).*

Most financially successful webcomics do not charge for their main content (ie the actual comic), and the most well-known of the pay-to-view sites, Modern Tales, closed down in April 2013 (Manley, 2013). Paywalls are unpopular with creators and readers alike. A paywall as implemented in comics does not give a reader a chance to get to know a comic or to choose whether they are willing to pay for it: "readers may want to give you money in exchange for the strip (or for additional content), but only once they like it and are invested in it. But they won't reach that point unless they can read it. And they can't read it if you first require payment up front" (Tyrrell, 2006b).

There are a few notable exceptions to this rule. One is arising in the form of the subscription-based crowdfunding model, discussed in the following section. The other concerns Not Safe for Work (NSFW) comics, those which involve

²⁹ See <http://mutantmagic.com/>

³⁰ See <http://www.octopuspie.com/>

³¹ See <http://www.girlswithslingshots.com/>

content which is of a mature or otherwise adult nature and would generally be frowned upon in an office situation. There are several hosting sites for explicit comics that provide a few pages of comics as free previews but then require a monthly subscription. Slipshine works with creators to release over 150 comic pages a month; once subscribed the reader can also access the entire archives of over 15,000 pages of comics. Filthy Figments hosts over 6,000 pages by thirty female creators, and updates every week day. It appears that for this type of webcomic, the paywall acts as a signal of quality. They also host a large number of comics, making the fee and the effort to subscribe more worthwhile than for one single comic. Some creators are also finding that offering NSFW art and comics as a reward for regular donations on Patreon attracts readers who are willing to pay (Guigar, 2015c).

Donations and Crowdfunding

Some webcomics creators provide access to their Amazon Wishlists, or invite their readers to donate to a 'tip jar', and many of these give away bonus content such as desktop wallpapers or access to extra sketches or commentaries as a reward (Guigar et al., 2011; Watson, 2009). There are several examples of creators who have succeeded with one-time only donation drives. Randy Millholland of *Something Positive*³² ran a fundraiser on his website which allowed him to draw comics full-time for a year, and he has now been doing so for over ten years (Millholland, 2013; Tyrrell, 2014). Dave Anez also had some success asking for help for his website for *Bob and George*³³ but was reluctant to ask again and found incentive programs to be ineffective (Allen, 2007). Successful webcomics asking for donations have often found it harmed their reader relations (Guigar et al., 2011) and there was no consistent way to raise money. Some creators experimented with voluntary subscriptions such as John Allison of *Bobbins, Scary Go Round*, and *Bad Machinery*, who takes yearly recurring donations on his website beginning at just £2. He was pledged over £4,000 in the first week; these donations allow Allison to concentrate on his webcomics rather than take freelance work, as well as pay towards his printing costs for print collections (Allison, 2013), although he is reluctant to publicise or openly ask for money.

³² See <http://somethingpositive.net/>

³³ See <http://www.bobandgeorge.com/>

Many webcomic creators now use the crowdfunding site Patreon as a way to manage recurring donations. Other services that try to curate microdonations for creators also exist, but these haven't taken off to the same extent as Patreon. There have also been attempts to use cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin to facilitate micropayments, but again these are rare to see on a webcomics site, and have been largely overtaken by crowdfunding. Websites such as Kickstarter are often used as a way to fund the first print collection of a webcomic, or a way to gauge demand for the product without placing a lot of financial risk on the creator:

"In the years Before Kickstarter, your alternative was to scrape together a bunch of money, make your thing, and then hope to hell it sold because if it didn't, you were out a bunch of time and money. [... A failed Kickstarter sucks...] but that's a lot better than sucks, plus the car doesn't get fixed, and the thermostat stays lower all winter, and the shoes don't get replaced. Failure is where we learn" (Tyrrell, 2015c).

2.2 METHODS

2.2.1 Materials and Procedure

This research was approved by the University Of Nottingham Department Of Engineering Research Ethics Committee. Specifically, all data collected was anonymised and kept securely at all times. Access to collected data is limited to the author and the supervision team and it is stored securely as per the University guidelines. Contact details are stored separately to responses.

Participants for the questionnaire were recruited through social media, webcomic sites, direct emails to creators, and creators sharing the study with their readers. As an online industry with a large emphasis on interaction, recruiting in this way was felt to be appropriate, particularly with the range of avenues utilised. The questionnaire consisted predominantly of fixed-choice (yes/no and multiple choice) questions, with space to provide further responses if needed. It was created using Qualtrics, an online questionnaire development, distribution, and reporting tool. An individual password protected account was used. Qualtrics state: "Our servers are protected by high-end firewall systems, and scans are performed regularly to ensure that any

vulnerabilities are quickly found and patched. Complete penetration tests are performed yearly. All services have quick failover points and redundant hardware, with complete backups performed nightly” (Qualtrics, 2016). All questionnaires also required participants to confirm they granted their consent to take part and to use their data, and that they understood the study.

At the start of the questionnaire participants were given a definition of webcomics and some examples, to ensure they were either readers or creators of such content. If they were not, they could not continue the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire focused on reading webcomics, including the websites used to access both the comics themselves and any additional content such as blogs, works-in-progress, and so on. Respondents were also asked about buying merchandise, and interacting with webcomics on social media. The definition of social media was left open to interpretation, to capture the opinions of participants. The second section focused on creating webcomics, beginning by collecting information about how many comics creators publish and when, how many readers they have, and whether they make money. This was followed by questions about selling merchandise, additional content surrounding their comics, and social media usage. Finally, respondents were asked to provide basic demographic details and, optionally, for comments and contact details. See Appendix A for a breakdown of questions.

Interviewees were recruited via email; all webcomics creators listed to attend Thought Bubble Comic Art Festival in 2013 were contacted. Whilst this sample was somewhat opportunistic, Thought Bubble is the largest gathering of webcomics creators in the UK, and includes both British and international creators, so therefore it was the best place to gain a diverse group of artists. Consent was obtained from each interviewee before the interview, stating they were under no obligation to discuss anything they did not wish to, and could withdraw at any time. In addition to this permission was gained to record participants, and to include direct quotations in publications. The privacy measures of the study and how data would be used were outlined. Participants signed and initialled forms in the presence of the interviewer. All interviews were audio recorded, and transcribed at a later date. Observational notes were also taken.

Interviews were carried out at the exhibiting tables of each creator, during the event. As well as being convenient to both parties, this allowed for observation

of the creators' behaviour in their 'natural habitat' and working environment, and would likely cause them to feel more comfortable being interviewed. The only interview not carried out in this environment took place in a location of the creator's choosing close to their home and work. The downside to working around the creators' own work is that some interviews were necessarily time sensitive. They were also occasionally interrupted by creators needing to talk to readers who came up to their tables, although this allowed natural interactions to be observed.

A semi-structured format was chosen because the interviews were intended to be very exploratory, and it was important to allow interviewees the space to say what they want and to lead the conversation in ways they felt were relevant. They were also not kept to a particular time limit in order to thoroughly cover all topics in as much detail as the respondent wanted. However, care was taken to make sure the interviews remained focused and the interviewer kept their own responses to a minimum so as not to bias the direction of the results. Interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes not including any breaks. Broadly conversations began with the use of social media for webcomics, including the types of content posted, the use of separate accounts, and the success of different platforms; this was followed by discussion of any concerns about using social media, issues of copyright and privacy, and how they dealt with any negative experiences. The interviews ended with questions about crowdfunding and patronage sites (see Appendix A).

2.2.2 Participants

In total, 209 questionnaire responses were analysed (referred to as 'Respondents'). This included 92 participants who self-identified as creators (referred to as 'Creators') and 207 who self-identified as readers (117 were readers only, referred to as 'Readers'). Both groups have similar demographics (see Table 2-1), with around half of the participants being male and between 26 and 35. Respondents were predominantly American (43.1%), and living in the USA (38.3%). Speaking to the global nature of the Internet and webcomics however, 19 nationalities and 15 countries of residence were represented in total. Of the Creators, only 6.5% considered themselves to make a living wage from webcomics, so meaningful comparison cannot be made between them and those who do not make a living. Two Creators also reported that they did not

read webcomics, and are therefore excluded from analyses of reading content. Figure 2-3 summarises further information about this group.

Table 2-1 Demographics of Questionnaire Respondents

		Respondents n=209	Creators n=92	Readers n=117
Age (%)	16-25	25.8	22.8	28.2
	26-35	46.4	56.5	38.5
	36-45	12.0	9.8	13.7
	46-55	5.7	5.4	6.0
	Over 55	1.4	2.2	0.9
	No response	8.6	3.3	12.8
Gender (%)	Male	53.6	50.0	56.4
	Female	35.4	45.7	27.4
	No response	11.0	4.4	16.2
Nationality (%)	American	43.1	42.4	43.6
	British	20.1	21.7	18.8
	Canadian	5.7	7.6	4.3
	German	2.4	1.1	3.4
	Other	11.5	15.2	8.5
	No response	17.2	12.0	21.4
Country of Residence (%)	USA	38.3	50.0	47.0
	UK	22.0	23.9	20.5
	Canada	7.2	8.7	6.0
	Australia	2.4	2.2	2.6
	Other	8.1	10.9	6.0
	No response	12.0	4.3	17.9

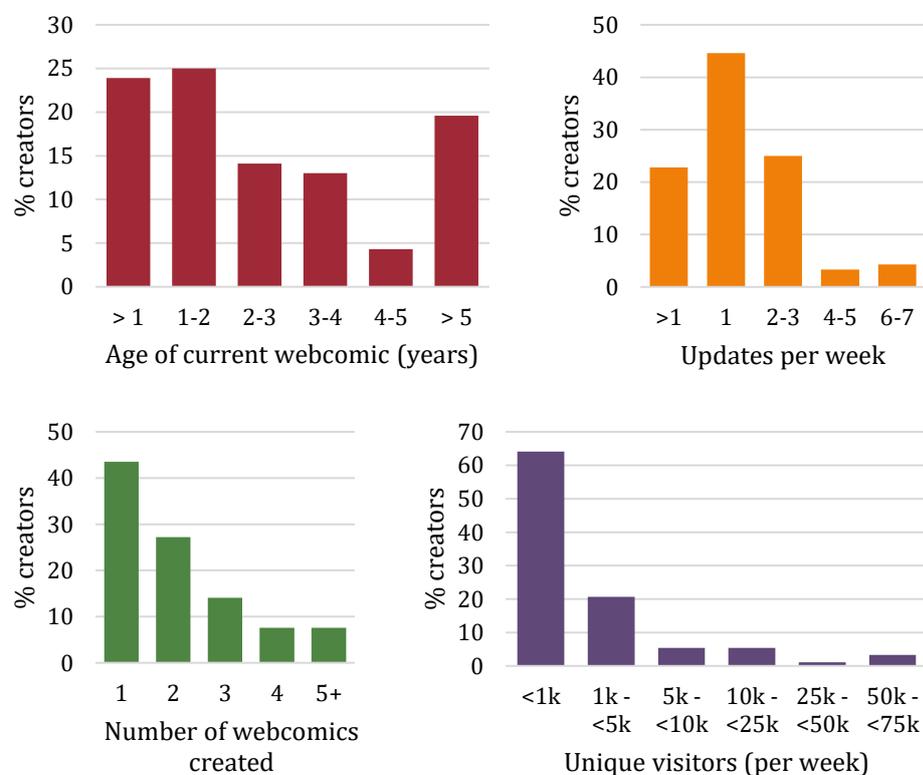


Figure 2-3 Summary data for the webcomic Creators in Questionnaire 1

The interviews were carried out with webcomics creators at a large comic convention. 19 creators indicated they would be happy to be interviewed, but due to time constraints only 11 interviews were carried out. The participants were 7 males and 4 females; 6 were full-time webcomics creators, 2 combined the role with other full time creative jobs, and 3 were hobbyists and made their living from other jobs (see Appendix A). Two creators were US-based and had flown to the UK for the event, whilst the rest were based in the UK. Interviewees are identified in this chapter by participant number (P#) followed by their gender (M, F), and career status (Professional: webcomic is only or main job, Amateur: webcomic is not part of their profession, Mix: webcomic forms up to half their income).

2.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.3.1 Questionnaire Results

Using the Internet for webcomics and related content.

The majority of Respondents currently read between 1 and 10 webcomics (60.4% of Readers, 53.3% of Creators), but around a quarter of all Respondents read more than 21. These webcomics are posted and read on a wide range of websites. Most Creators post their webcomics to a dedicated website (84.4%) and most Respondents read them on this site (96.6%). A total of 26 other specific websites were identified: 19 for reading and 21 for posting webcomics. One Creator commented that they “*only post the whole comic to my own site and other places just get a single panel ‘teaser’*”, which is likely the case for other creators also.

Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr are by far the most popular sites for both posting and reading comics, with the remainder of the listed platforms being predominantly other social media sites and webcomics hosting sites. This is illustrated by Figure 2-4, which shows the top ten websites used for either reading or posting webcomics and contains 16 websites. Only 13 out of the 26 websites were listed for both posting and accessing suggesting this sample just scratched the surface of Internet use for webcomics; after all, in order to read a comic on a website, it must first be posted there. This also illustrates the long tail nature of the Internet as discussed previously.

There are two types of additional content commonly posted surrounding webcomics. The first is content posted by the creator of the webcomic, such as works-in-progress and blog posts, or by another person but about a specific webcomic, such as fan forum posts and comments. 83.7% of Creators indicated that they posted this title-specific additional content, and nearly two thirds of those (61.6%) posted it on their webcomics site. 75.6% of Respondents (75.2% of Readers and 77.8% of Creators) access title-specific additional content, most commonly through the webcomics' homepage (84.1% of readers and 95.7% of creators). Figure 2-5 illustrates the top ten websites outside a webcomics homepage used to either access or post title-specific additional content by any group. Note that this only includes those who indicated that they did access or post this content. Once again, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook are the most popular sites by a long margin. However, it is a more complicated picture than for the webcomics themselves. In total 26 websites were mentioned with regards to this kind of additional content; 18 for reading and 18 for posting.

The second type of additional content is content posted about webcomics in general, such as review and news sites, general forums, and so on. The blog Fleen is a good example of this type of content, posting daily about news and events within the world of webcomics. This content is far more rarely accessed, with only 46.9% of respondents indicating that they read this content (33.3% of readers and 65.6% of creators). Figure 2-6 shows the top ten websites used by any group to do this; again this only includes those who said they did access such content. Creators and Readers vary quite a lot in terms of their preferences, but Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook are again clearly the most used by both groups. Whilst readers seem to rely on Twitter, creators are more evenly split between the three, slightly favouring Tumblr. Creators are more active in accessing general additional content than Readers.

Overall, a fairly complex picture emerges of the range of websites used for different purposes surrounding webcomics (see Figure 2-7). In total, 58 specific websites were identified. Sites used to read webcomics (19) sit within the black circle in Figure 2-7; sites used to post comics are within the yellow circle (21); sites used to post additional content (17) are in the red circle and for reading additional content (48) are in the green circle. Where the circles overlap, the site is used for both (or each) purpose. It can be seen that 11 sites were used for all four purposes (ie are contained within all four circles).

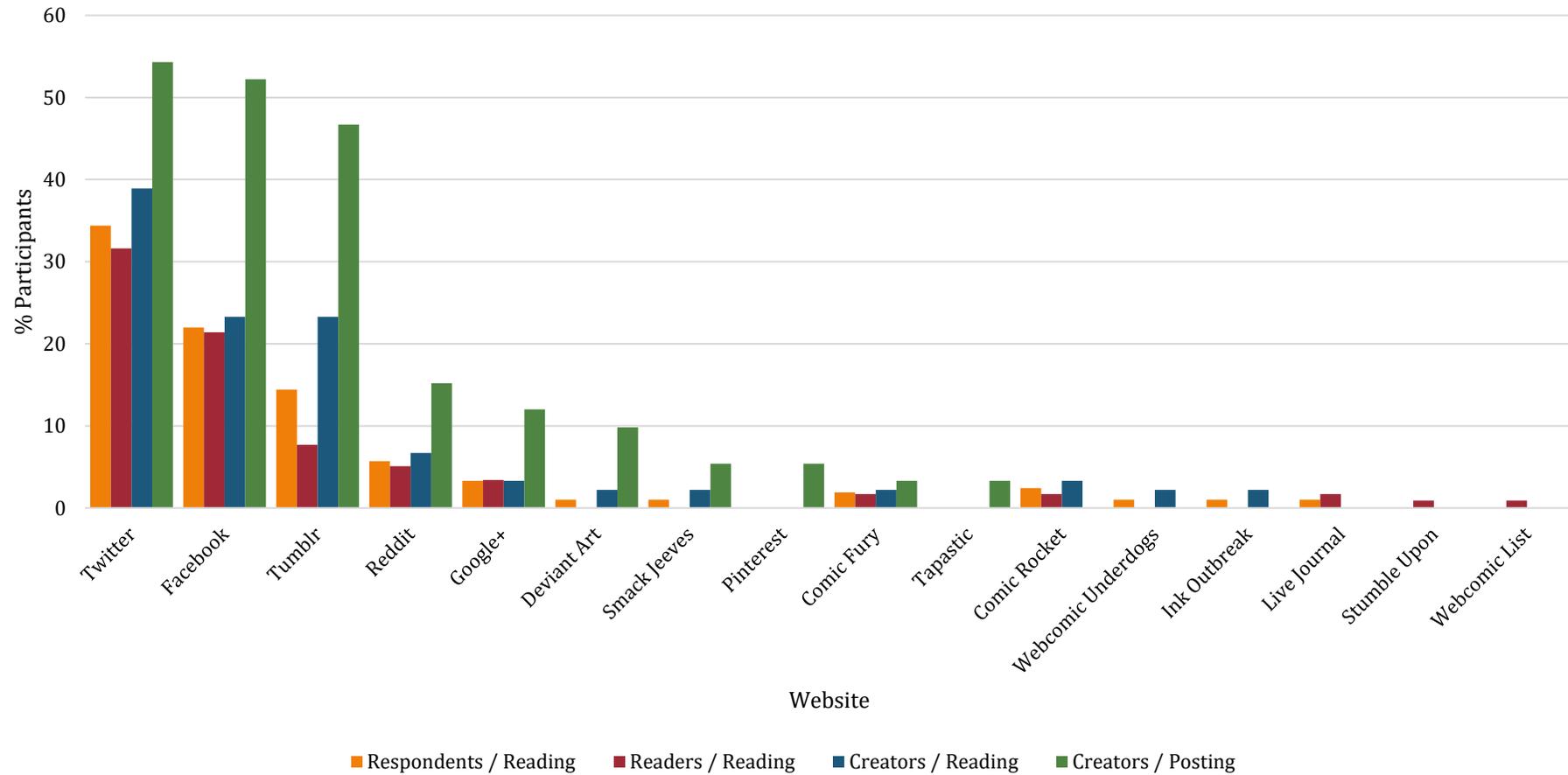


Figure 2-4 The Top Ten websites used for posting and reading webcomics

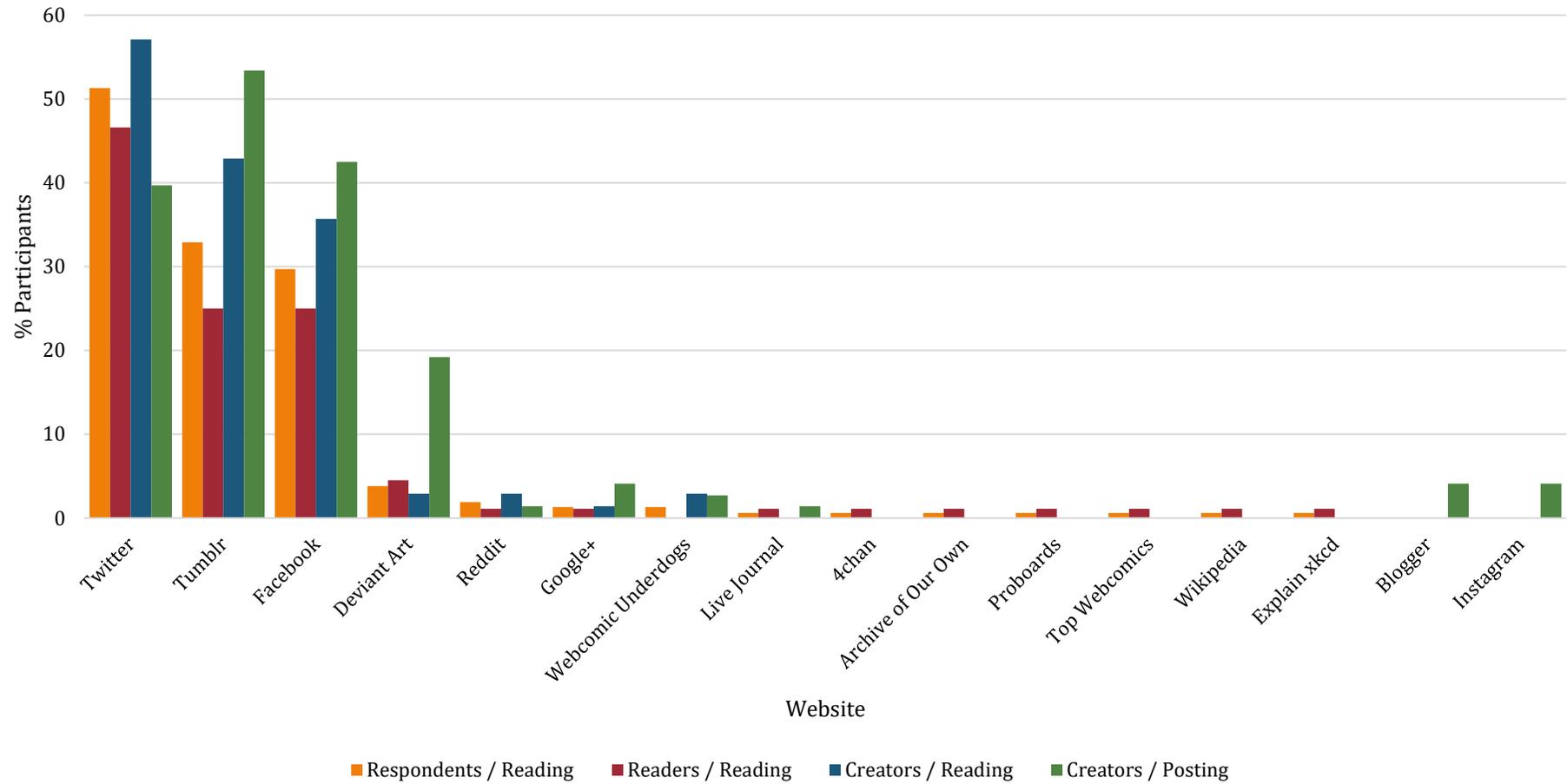


Figure 2-5 The top ten websites used to post or read additional content related to specific webcomics

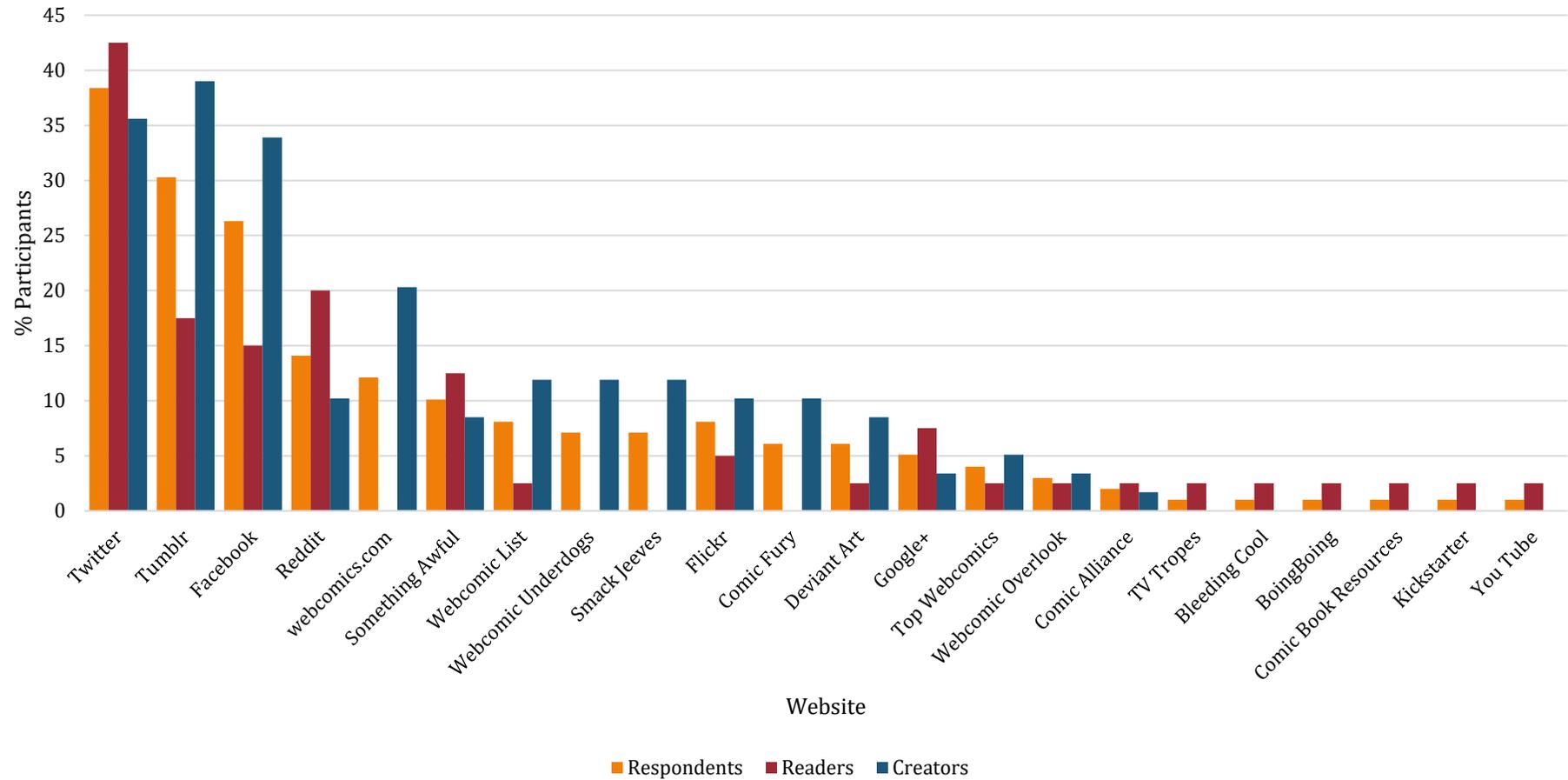


Figure 2-6 The top ten websites used to read additional content related to webcomics in general

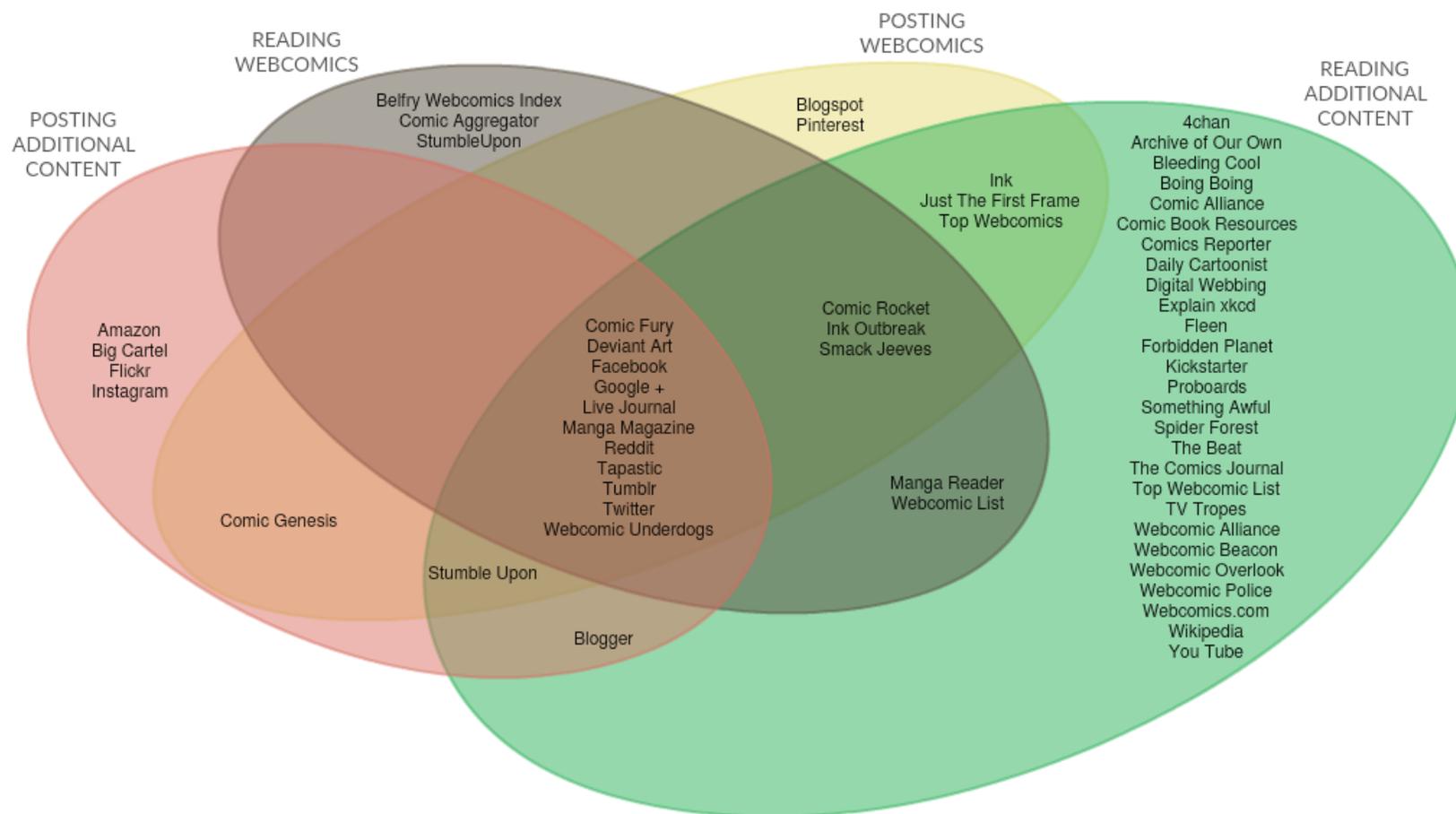


Figure 2-7 The range of websites used in relation to webcomics, and what they are used for

Social Media Use

It has been shown that both Readers and Creators make wide use of social media for webcomics, particularly Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. The vast majority of Respondents are members of at least one social media site (90.9%; 86.3% of readers, 96.7% of creators). Additionally, 79.3% of Creators indicated that they maintain a social media presence for their webcomics; 69.9% of these maintain a separate account specifically for this purpose. In total 16 websites were identified as social media, but only seven were chosen by both at least one Reader and one Creator: Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Google+, Pinterest, Deviant Art, and Instagram. Table 2-2 shows the membership and use of these sites. People who are members of these sites do not necessarily actively follow webcomics or their creators. However only 8.9% of respondents who were members of social media did not follow webcomics on any social media site at all, and it can be seen that some social media sites are used far more or less than membership would suggest.

Table 2-2 Membership of social media and webcomics activity on those sites

Social Media website	Respondents (n=209)		Readers (n=117)		Creators (n=92)		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	C
Twitter	81.8	82.5	77.8	79.1	87.0	86.3	72.5
Facebook	77.5	57.4	71.8	52.4	84.8	62.8	67.9
Google+	44.5	22.6	40.2	19.1	50.0	26.1	34.8
Tumblr	30.6	87.5	20.5	75.0	43.5	95.0	65.0
Pinterest	19.6	7.3	16.2	10.5	23.9	4.5	22.7
Deviant Art	4.3	66.7	1.7	0	7.6	57.1	14.3
Instagram	1.9	0	0.9	0	3.3	0	0

A=% of group who are members of that site

B=% of members of that site who also use it to follow webcomics and/or creators

C=% of members of that site who maintain a presence for their webcomics

Whilst the majority of Respondents who are members of Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook also follow webcomics on those sites, this is not true for other sites. Very few people are members of Deviant Art, and even fewer follow webcomics there; all of those that do are Creators. Only a few Respondents who are members of Google+ and Pinterest also follow webcomics there; very few people actually reported being members of Pinterest. For the most part, creators maintain a presence on the social media websites that people also follow on.

Merchandise

The majority of Respondents (80.4%; 75.2% of Readers and 87.0% of Creators) have bought merchandise, subscribed to, or donated to a webcomic, whilst only 22.5% of Creators have offered such things. By far the most popular types of merchandise are books, clothes, and art (see Figure 2-8). Small items such as badges, magnets and stickers were not very popular at all. A substantial number of respondents have donated money to a webcomic. Far fewer have subscribed to a webcomic, however very few creators actually offer subscriptions, so it may be more popular than people are aware.

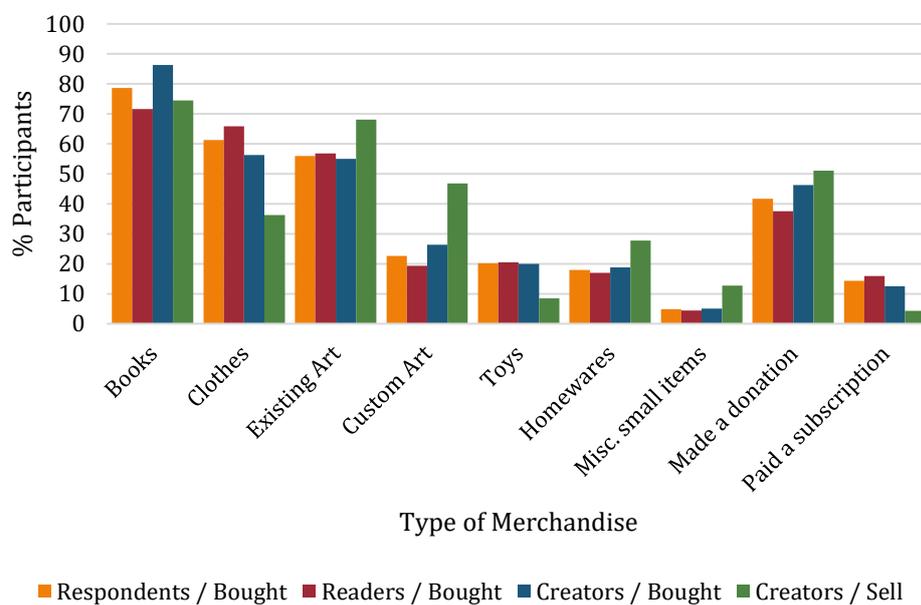


Figure 2-8 Comparison of buying and selling behaviour

2.3.2 Interview Results

Interviews were transcribed fully by the interviewer and an inductive, iterative, and grounded approach was taken to analysis. Responses were grouped into question topics, (those covered in this section are summarised in Table 2-3,

Table 2-3 Themes covered by the interviews

Topic	Summary
Finding an audience	Attitudes towards the use of social media to introduce people to work and find a readership
Interactions with other artists	Attitudes toward the use of social media for supporting networks of creators
Interactions with readers	Using social media to interact with an audience
Managing an audience	The management of interactions with audiences across social media platforms

others are in Appendix A), and further analysed to evaluate general attitudes towards each topic. Quotes used in this chapter were chosen as representative of each theme identified.

All of the creators interviewed use social media extensively as part of their work, although they often felt that they don't make use of it as well or as much as they should: *"I don't use it as much as I should, would be the short answer"* (P2, M, Amateur). Creators show clear preferences for particular sites, even if they post to a selection. They are also generally very aware of how they can find the biggest combination of reach and convenience: *"it changes every year which [social media sites] are the main ones, and which are the best ones, and you just have to kind of stay on top of it"* (P10, F, Professional). It is considered as part of a creator's job to build and maintain a social media presence, but knowing which platform to use to get the most benefit was tricky, and having the time to dedicate to social media was an issue. In particular P2 (M, Amateur) felt that building a community of readers from scratch through social media was too hard and aimed to introduce himself to existing communities.

Often a creator had one particular favourite website out of Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook, although they most likely posted something to all of them. Most creators *"use the different mediums for what [they] see as their intended purposes."* (P11, F, Amateur), and in order to make the most of what is on offer, creators most often prefer to use a combination of Facebook and Twitter, or Tumblr and Twitter. Twitter is mostly used to post links to new comics, and as a more personal platform for interacting with others. It is also used as a place to test jokes and ideas, both with other artists and with readers, and as a way to direct people to more content such as Facebook fan pages or the comic's main website. Tumblr is used for inspiration and more extensive posts about comics, including news and updates. As an image-heavy website it was seen as the best place to post art such as sketches and works-in-progress. Those who use Facebook tend to use Pages or Groups for purely webcomic-related reasons, keeping their personal profile pages separate. It is widely used to promote specific events, to post comic updates, or to connect with business contacts. It was also used to connect with other artists as friends, especially those they have met offline at conferences and other events (for further discussion of site features, see Dowthwaite et al., 2015).

Finding an Audience

Cultivating a loyal readership is a major goal for webcomics creators: *“there’s more value in the long-term fan”* (P5, F, Professional). There was a general feeling that people who read comics use social media as a *“trawl to find out interesting things happening”* (P2, M, Amateur) or *“as a platform to ask questions, keep in touch, stay up-to-date, and it helps get your name out there a little more”* (P11, F, Amateur). As such, many creators felt that finding the largest audience possible was the best strategy: *“I’m still small, I’m building up my career and I need as many people as I can to see my work”* (P8, M, Mix). This sentiment was reiterated across both full-time professionals and small or new creators. Users will share content they like with others, increasing the audience further, which is particularly useful when introducing a new comic or seeking a viral effect: *“I’ll instead use the fan base, use all the connections I’ve got to say hey there’s a new story up”* (P8, M, Mix). However, in some cases it may be better to find a smaller, more appreciative audience elsewhere; P2 (M, Amateur) found most success posting to gaming communities rather than generic social media, perhaps because it did not involve building an audience from nothing. Additionally, some felt that they did not want to repeat themselves across platforms or be seen as ‘spamming’ people, but it was too easy to get lost in the traffic if they did not post enough, and the balance was hard to maintain:

“I don’t think I can chase the constant churn of social media, I think at some point you have to say to people come to me, you know, you end up looking desperate, you end up looking like you’re floundering ‘cos you’re there going ‘help me help me help me’, rather than you know, are you waving or are you drowning, that’s the question, you end up looking like you’re drowning even if you aren’t” (P9, M, Professional).

Interaction with Other Artists

Besides readers, creators also liked being able to build up a community of other artists, who could be used for support, advice, and exchanging ideas: *“I think social media has done an amazing job of creating a community [...] for us to support each other when things go wrong, but also when things go right”* (P8, M, Mix). Seven participants discussed the benefits of being part of an online community of creators, with social media particularly providing *“a medium to*

keep in touch with other industry professionals" (P11, F, Amateur) and creating a *"gathering of artistic minds"* (P1, M, Mix). P9 (M, Professional) felt that Instagram in particular was good for communicating with other artists, as they were able to show what they were working on and items that may interest others, and P6 (F, Professional) used Google+ to have hangouts with other creators. There is a feeling that because the webcomics industry is such a tiny part of the comics industry, and creators mostly work alone, the ability to talk to others in similar situations was hugely beneficial: *"it's kind of just nice to know that other people are out there doing the same thing, and it's not just you on your own"* (P6, F, Professional). Several creators talked of this particularly in regards to times when their work may have been wrongly attributed or stolen. Finally, creators often linked to each other's comics, which helped to increase audiences and awareness of their work. However, both P5 (F, Professional) and P9 (M, Professional), who have been creating webcomics for many years, pointed out that before social media really took off, artists would still link to each other on their own websites, and that in fact this could be more impactful: *"I still get people telling me they heard about me through [artist], who linked to me on day one, when I had three pages in the archive, so that was a very big deal, you know nowadays he would Tweet about it"* (P5, F, Professional).

"If you were up on the front page of [webcomic] you could be up there maybe a week, two weeks, then thousands and thousands of people will have seen it and will have followed it cos it had some cache, it had some status, and Twitter's very much you know like a click and some people hear it some people don't and it's not worth much as soon as it's happened" (P9, M, Professional).

Two-way Interactions

All of the creators reported publishing their webcomics to a dedicated website, but most two-way interaction occurred through social media rather than on this site. Everyone used Twitter for their webcomics work, 7 used Facebook, and 8 used Tumblr. The most obvious and frequent reason given for using social media in their work was to find and interact with an audience. It was felt that being active on social media makes the artist appear more of a real person, someone that people can relate to and feel that they can get to know: *"people like to know there's a person behind a webcomic"* (P8, M, Mix) and rather than

simply driving traffic towards their sites, creators see social media as *“a way of building engagement with the audience”* (P3, M, Amateur). The audience responds better when they can interact with the artist, and this helps when creators want to sell their merchandise or promote their work. P10 (F, Professional) felt that *“they know that I’m doing things independently so they want to sort of help rather than, I dunno something more like a corporate account that they’re following they’re not really gonna make an effort to support”* (P10, F, Professional). Some creators also had particular tactics for actively interacting with their audiences. For example, P1 (M, Mix) indicated that he decided when he first started out that he would *“always respond, even if it’s just a simple one-word answer or something like that”*, perhaps out of a sense of reciprocity, however he noted that this would be more difficult for some extremely popular creators.

Of the eight creators who expressed a preference with regards to interaction, six of them preferred Twitter. *“I use [Twitter] to kind of help readers to get to know me [...] I vent the frustrations of my daily life in a way that I think is going to be amusing for people”* (P5, F, Professional). A potential reason for this preference is that Twitter provides an instant chat-like element to the interaction; another is that it provides slightly more privacy. Several artists were not comfortable with readers being able to see where they lived, who their family was, and so on, and on Twitter these things are easier to hide. Facebook Pages and Groups were preferred however when creators needed a permanent base for group discussions, longer bits of news, and opinions that were not practical to post in 140 characters. *“I was very keen to sort of build a kind of fan club around the comic so that people would regularly tune in”* (P8, M, Mix). Other methods used to find this interactivity were through allowing comments on the main comic’s website, or encouraging discussion in dedicated forums.

Managing an Audience

Due to the mixing of work and personal content, creators had various methods to manage their audiences, other than posting different kinds of content to different sites. Some were careful about the content they posted or the language they used, but it’s interesting to note that it was more often the case that they were self-censoring so as to not upset work colleagues or friends and family outside webcomics, rather than upsetting readers, who were often expecting

more risky or controversial content: *“I filter what I post cos I know everyone is looking and I’m a University lecturer so I [...] have to slightly think about what I post”* (P2, M, Amateur); *“I’m also a PhD student as well, and I’ve started to follow and be followed by some academics in my field, and suddenly I realise that this might not give me the impression of serious dedicated academic if I’m tweeting puns about fish.”* (P3, M, Amateur).

Some also actively manage the content posted by others, for example P1 (M, Mix) chose to delete negative comments on his site that were unconstructive but allow those that made a fair point. Similarly, P9 (M, Professional) switched from using forums and comments to a Facebook page because *“the loudest voices soon become the most annoying, whereas Facebook is more easy to democratise, also I can hide people if they talk too much or they become too loud, so you can kind of quell them from the community”*. Additionally P5 (F, Professional) was careful not to encourage people who made negative comments on Twitter: *“when people try to pick little fights with me I don’t engage and I’m usually very dismissive or I say send me an email I don’t want to talk about this on Twitter in public”*.

Creators’ Attitudes towards Monetisation

“You have to become very very very popular in order to make a living, [...] you have to be a business person, you have to know what you’re doing to an extent; or you can muddle through and eventually you know it might work, it might not. All you can do is try and learn off other people” (P9, M, Professional).

During the interviews, creators were also asked about their methods for making money through their readerships. They have various strategies to monetise their work, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Besides the most obvious avenues of merchandise and advertising, creators often supplement their webcomics work with other, related, money making activities, for example P5 (F, Professional) teaches illustration and webcomics as well as producing her webcomic full time as her primary income. There was a sense that creators could not rely on any one particular stream of income, but the ability to go full-time relied on building an audience, predominantly through social media. Even a full-time income from webcomics may only translate into *“minimum wage [...]”*

you know three years in and it's like oh actual minimum wage!" (P6, F, Professional).

Creators often attend conventions to promote their work and sell merchandise, although as previously mentioned this is becoming less lucrative and more people are moving to selling predominantly online. Typically, creators sell prints or original pieces of art, along with taking commissions for sketches or larger pieces on the day. They may also sell books, clothes, and so on, as well as smaller items like stickers, badges, and postcards often available for free or for a small fee. All the participants sold some combination of these items on the day they were interviewed; P10 also sells handmade models and crocheted dolls. Creators are very aware of which items will perform best through sales. P1 (M, Mix) for example had most success selling print copies of his main webcomic online and illustration prints at conventions. This is perhaps because items which are not necessarily related to a particular narrative or webcomic may attract new audiences walking past a display who were otherwise unaware of their work and unlikely to seek it out online.

Table 2-4 Items sold online by interviewees

Item	Number who sell item online
Books	9
Clothes	4
Existing Art	6
Custom Art	2
Toys	3
Homeware	4
Badges	3
Keyrings	2
Stickers	1

The creators that were interviewed also sold various items online (see Table 2-4). As was also found in the questionnaire study, books, clothes, and existing artwork are the most common items offered for sale. These items are perhaps the easiest to provide, through print-on-demand services, and hold the least risk due to their general popularity. P1 (M, Mix) commented that he personally preferred print books to reading content online, leading him to a preference to print his own comics if possible. Books may also allow creators to reach new audiences who wouldn't have found them online; similarly for prints and some t-shirt designs, where a person does not need to be an existing fan of a webcomic to enjoy them. Only 1 participant does not sell anything online, but

he does take donations through PayPal, as do 2 others; one also takes a yearly payment through PayPal.

Posting on social media can be very successful for creators wishing to monetise their work: *“there’s some people that do follow me on Facebook that will buy pretty much anything that I put out”* (P1, M, Mix). Despite the potential for content to be stolen or misattributed through social media, creators did not feel it was a big problem for their ability to make money: *“I don’t feel that I’m gonna lose any cash value from these sites”* (P3, M, Amateur). The idea that people like to see the person behind the work was strong here too: *“It’s an important part of webcomics, especially the commercialisation side of it, cos people like to buy things from humans and engage with humans and share things. If it’s just some site then it doesn’t really work”* (P3, M, Amateur). It is necessary to cultivate an audience who are willing to spend time and money on the content, and this necessitates using varying strategies across different websites, as discussed above, to find them: *“like anything else in comics, to really make money from it you have to work it and treat it like a job”* (P2, M, Amateur).

However, a large number of followers does not necessarily transfer into more success, either in terms of dedicated readership or merchandise sales. In fact, P9 (M, Professional) felt that as he got more followers, services like Twitter became less helpful: *“When I had 5,000 followers Twitter was tremendously effective in driving people towards merchandise sales, now I have 10,000 it’s essentially useless”*. This is because as Twitter grew, everyone started following hundreds of people, so Tweets became more likely to get lost in the feed and to not be seen by everyone. Others felt that large audiences on some sites were worth more than others: *“I know [Twitter]’s better financially, cos Tumblr is more sort of, well kids really, who you know, clicking is free and they’ll look at a thing but they don’t, they can’t reach into their pockets or anything”* (P6, F, Professional). In fact, Tumblr was generally felt to not be a good route to monetisation although it was good for sharing work and getting seen. Only P10 (F, Professional) had a particular comic that had gained traction predominantly through Tumblr. Where social media can be particularly useful is for gauging response to designs, for example for t-shirts, where *“the sort of Boolean yes or no is actually useful when you’re just trying purely to work out if something is commercial or not”* (P9, M, Professional).

P2 (M, Amateur) also discussed using ads to make money, through embedding them into his content files: *“at this point I could make a living wage off the gaming community, just from adverts, but I would have to have the time to do the work, which I don’t have”*. Despite this he was making more money from this than anything else. On the other hand, P3 (M, Amateur) felt that having adverts on his website would not bring in enough money to make it worth the hassle.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding relies to a large extent on the power of social media to spread campaigns and encourage interaction with projects and their creators. As such, it can be expected that a creative industry that also thrives on social media may have particular viewpoints about the mechanisms and usefulness of crowdfunding. Two of the creators interviewed had run their own successful Kickstarter campaigns, whilst two others had been involved in other crowdfunding campaigns, one as part of an anthology on Indiegogo and one on his own website. Of the remaining 7 creators, 5 of them indicated they would use crowdfunding if they had a relevant project or wanted to go full-time. Since the time of the interviews, three more creators have been involved in successful Kickstarter campaigns: one for a game version of his webcomic, one for an anthology of several artists’ work, and one for a print version of her webcomic. Additionally, 7 of the creators interviewed now have Patreon accounts.

The greater power provided to artists through crowdfunding to make their own decisions and run their own comics, either as a career or as a side-line, was summarized by P11:

“Ultimately, [it is] part of a bigger evolving system that allows independent creators to avoid losing money to publishers. We can create materials, books, which we couldn’t otherwise afford, and get to retain complete control over our property and the presentation thereof. If a publisher does come a-calling, it allows us to ask the bigger question of ‘what can you actually do for me that I can’t do myself’ which ten-plus years ago was unthinkable. Consequently, we no longer need to give away the lion’s share of profit to someone who had very little to do with the production of the piece. Publishers need to earn their piece of the pie. There’s a lot to be said for that.” (P11, F, Amateur).

Every creator commented on the large amount of work involved in running a campaign, and in completing the project and fulfilling the rewards afterwards: *“it’s like another part-time job just to kind of get it funded.”* (P5, F, Professional). Some felt that crowdfunding was a useful pre-order tool and could help when creators didn’t have the capital to invest up front, but others thought the additional work and financial investments in rewards such as stickers, sketches, mugs, and so on might make a campaign unmanageable, and take away from the financial success of campaigns.

“It can be misleading about how much money they make because you have the cost of making the book is almost one of the smallest costs in there, because half of the money or more will be the shipping, and then you’ve got all these incentives that aren’t the book but like probably add up to more than the book, producing all of this extra stuff even if it’s just badges and patches and prints, like it’s just loads of extra cost, and then any time they have any profit it’ll go towards some stretch goal which will be you know, something else, so by the time they actually get the money it’s still not even that big.” (P10, F, Professional).

One creator who had successfully completed two campaigns warned that mistakes such as failing to account for shipping or printing costs can also hurt the overall financial success; she also discussed the stress levels involved: *“it’s a real rollercoaster cos some days you’re like ‘oh my god it’s working, oh my god it’s actually gonna work’, and other days it’s like, ‘oh no one actually gave any money in the last couple of hours so nobody ever will again”* (P6, F, Professional). Another interesting point was that when a campaign was hugely successful, and ended up many times over the initial funding goal, there is an expectation that the money goes back into the project, and a requirement to let people know how the money was spent, and this can be stressful in itself; creators often worry about owing things to readers even when their work is totally free, and adding a price tag can make this worse. This relates to the idea of a sense of reciprocity existing between creators and their readers. Whilst the majority of the thesis focuses on the reciprocity that readers demonstrate towards creators, it is important to note that creators also consider how to give back to their readers. Social media was seen as a vital part of running a Kickstarter campaign: *“you need to get into their feed, you need to get into what they look at every single day”*

(P8, M, Mix), and as with social media in general there was a balance to be sought between ‘spamming’, and making sure the campaign remained in view of the reader. Often the idea of having to *“never shut up about it ever for a month”* (P5, F, Professional) was uncomfortable to the creator, but others felt that it was worth it, and highly effective. Twitter was overall seen as the most effective platform for promotion of a crowdfunding campaign, with sites such as Tumblr and Deviant Art not having much of an impact. This may be due to the fact that Twitter lends itself to the constant stream of instant updates and reminders that are necessary, whereas on other sites it is seen as annoying. Kickstarter was also seen as *“a mini social media platform in itself”* (P7, M, Professional), which *“goes hand-in-hand with Twitter and Tumblr”* (P7, M, Professional). Both creators who had run campaigns had received as many as half of their pledges from within the site rather than through their own social media.

The popularity of crowdfunding could also be a bit of a problem, with creators frequently being asked for money from other creators, and there being an expectation that they back each other: *“you’re basically bothering your friends for money, and lately Kickstarter has exploded so much, particularly in this community, that I in the last two months have probably been asked for money by about 7 or 8 of my either industry connections or friends”* (P8, M, Mix). Once again this indicates that a sense of reciprocity exists in this community, this time in the relationships between individual creators. It was suggested that this could be a problem for readers and fans too, as with so many projects running from artists they like, the choice becomes overwhelming or their support becomes diluted. P3 referred to Kickstarter as *“a way of basically converting your social capital into actual capital”* (P3, M, Amateur), in which case running multiple campaigns may actually harm the reputation of the creator. *“I worry about fatigue, Kickstarter fatigue, I’ve seen people say they’ve got a third Kickstarter, or they’ve got two on the go at once, you’re asking people to care more than they have the capacity to care and eventually they will not care”* (P9, M, Professional).

P8 (M, Mixed), who had previously had an unsuccessful campaign for a graphic novel before being successful with his webcomic, suggested that webcomics are so successful because they already have a large body of work to show a potential backer, and often most of the work for books is already complete; his original campaign had been aiming to raise money so that he could work on a sequel to an existing book, but with only concept sketches and promises, this

was not popular. It was also felt that the most successful campaigns are those that already have a thriving audience and social media presence behind them, because those readers are both more likely to be invested enough in a comic to fund it, and to be the type of reader that will help to spread the campaign across social media and other websites.

2.4 GENERAL DISCUSSION

This chapter presented two studies that add to the literature about the use of the Internet and social media for creative work, increasing knowledge about the way creators and consumers interact online. It highlights both the benefits and problems encountered by independent creators working online. A complex picture of social media and Internet use by webcomics creators has emerged from these studies. In total 58 sites were identified by participants as being relevant to their consumption of webcomics, 26 in terms of the webcomics themselves, and 53 in terms of some kind of additional content. Overall, 21 websites were identified in relation to both, and a wide range of types of additional content was identified in addition to the simple posting of comics. This illustrates the wide range of platforms that creators who work online must be aware of, monitor, and manage for various types of content. Time and effort is needed to create a useful online network, and creators must be highly aware of how they can make the most of the tools available. Whilst creators do sell merchandise through traditional methods (for example, publishing books to sell at conventions), crowdfunding has begun to emerge as an important factor in the monetisation of webcomics, and creators interviewed were both enthusiastic about the response from their communities, and very aware of the large amount of work involved.

2.4.1 How do Creators and Readers use the Internet for Webcomics Content?

Both webcomics creators and their readers make use of a wide range of websites for webcomic-related activities. This is potentially in addition to a homepage where each specific webcomic is posted, with other sites often used to signpost readers to new comics. The most popular sites for reading and posting webcomics content are social media, specifically Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. It is likely that this is because social media is almost ubiquitous in our

online lives, with a wide range of people who otherwise may not use the Internet for entertainment using sites such as Facebook. As such, these may be the best places for creators to get people to see their work and find relevant audiences. The automatic functionality of these websites may also be appealing to creators who are not necessarily able to create their own websites; barriers to entry are lowered as it is easy to post a picture, blog, or comment and have it seen. Additionally, such sites can act as free advertising, with users sharing posts they like with their friends.

Creators were found to read other webcomics through a wider range of sites than general readers, and the difference is mainly made up of webcomics aggregators or host sites; this is potentially because they post their own webcomics on these sites and so they stay to browse or participate in the community aspects. Readers who focus on just a small number of webcomics might not be aware of these sites or the webcomics who use them; it is generally accepted that the most successful webcomics have their own domain names rather than, or as well as, using a host site. Additionally, several host sites offer personal URLs so people might not be aware this is where they are hosted. It was also found that additional content related to webcomics in general is far more rarely accessed than content related to a specific webcomic. However, nearly two thirds of creators do access this content, across a wide range of sites. It is likely that creators use these sites to stay up-to-date with current events in their field, to seek and offer advice, to interact with other artists, and so on.

Creators have a nuanced understanding of ways to use social media and other websites which are beneficial to them. They usually have a favourite place to post but cross-link amongst many different sites, and see each site as being optimised for a particular purpose. Most creators have a detailed understanding of where their audiences are coming from and on which websites their fans are reading their work. There is a profound feeling that the ability for creators and readers to get to know each other online is a major factor in the success of webcomics, where the person behind the work is often as important as the content of the work. Creators predominantly provide a combination of personal engagement with alerts to content, indicating that their personal sense of self may be inextricably linked to their work. There is a blurring between the personal and work spheres, and this is necessary in order to engage their audience, but there may also be a conflict with the possibility of

disengaging existing real life friends who get fed up of being asked repeatedly for help or money.

Creators also curate the type of content that is posted by others, avoiding negative and unconstructive comments both on their websites and in discussion on social media. Creators do have concerns about using these sites, particularly getting lost in the crowd and reaching the right demographic, but it is usually felt that the benefits outweigh the problems. Once a community of readers has been cultivated, it is not a simple one-way interaction where creators provide content and readers consume it. Communities are formed of a wide range of people, including other creators, who can help each other to improve their work and find success. Readers, as well as providing feedback on work, share content they like with others, buy merchandise, and alert creators to issues. There are many ways in which the expectations of creators and readers about their responsibilities to each other form a pattern of reciprocity. There is a balance to be sought between what creators can provide to readers and vice versa, without relationships becoming strained. Creators appear to feel obligated to provide their readers with content, merchandise, responses to comments, and so on, but at the same time they do not want to overload the reader so they get fed up or bored, or to ask too much of their audiences.

2.4.2 What Methods Do Creators Use to Monetise Their Work?

Creators tend to use a variety of methods to make money, not relying too heavily on a single income source as any one might fail at any point. They live portfolio careers, taking on work alongside their webcomics, working on several projects at once, and doing other full- or part-time jobs to support themselves. This study focused on merchandising and donations. The predominant method of directly monetising webcomics is through the sale of merchandise, whether this be through attending conventions or selling products online. Merchandise is also perhaps the most accessible form of monetisation open to amateurs, particularly if they post their webcomic through a free host. There are a great many online printing services that can be used for artworks, books, and even clothes. Linked to this, creators also use crowdfunding to fund the production of items to sell.

Surprisingly, only half of the creators who responded to the questionnaire sell any kind of merchandise. The most common types of merchandise sold are

books and artwork. It is likely the people who do not sell items do not feel they have a large enough audience to justify it. Most respondents have however bought merchandise of some kind; more creators than readers have done so, and the majority of this difference comes in book purchases. It is interesting that people buy collections and prints of comics that they have already read for free online, especially as this includes e-books. Custom Art was not as popular as existing art, potentially because of the high costs to purchase and ship; original existing art is also often high in price (\$100 for an original page is not uncommon), but prints can often be bought much cheaper. Creators buy both books and custom art from other webcomics slightly more than other readers, which could indicate a greater awareness of the effort that goes into creating such items and a willingness to support other artists by purchasing higher cost items, or they may have a greater personal investment in the fandom.

Clothes are also a very popular purchase, more so among readers than creators; this is potentially related to a desire to be identified as part of an ingroup: only those who also read the comic are likely to recognise a t-shirt based upon it. A much greater percentage of respondents buy toys and clothes compared to those that sell them. This may have something to do with the costs of production, and the uncertainty that they will sell compared to other merchandise. Art and books may seem a safe choice since presumably these are the reasons that readers are fans in the first place.

Small items such as badges, magnets, and stickers were not very popular to buy but many creators do sell them. This is most likely due to them being extremely cheap to manufacture, but shipping means they are not worth the money it would cost to receive them; these items are often given away with other purchases or included in 'bundles'. It is worth noting that such items are often on sale at comic conventions, where shipping costs do not come into account.

The use of social media in producing and selling merchandise has emerged as vital, at all stages of the process. First, creators must be active on social media in order to build a dedicated community that is willing to spend money on them. They may also post designs for items such as t-shirts or the front covers of books, to gain feedback and gauge demand. If enough people want a product the creator can then investigate the best way to produce it, which may involve speaking to other creators to gain advice about printers and suppliers for example. They also use social media to build hype for a product. Once the

product has been made, creators take to social media again, to promote their online stores, to announce when they will be at conventions to sell their wares, and to get people to share posts about what they are selling.

The relatively high percentage of respondents who have made a donation or paid a subscription suggests that readers are quite happy to 'reward' an artist that they feel deserves it, and to voluntarily pay for things they already receive for free. It is also interesting to note that creators seem more willing to donate (or subscribe) to their fellow artists, whilst not asking for donations themselves. Willingness to donate also implies that people do wish to show appreciation for the artists' work, however the low number of creators offering a donation option indicates that they may not believe that people would be willing to reward them. The difference in subscription patterns is most striking, with around five times more people having subscribed to content than creators who actually offer the option. This may be due to the artists' unnecessarily feeling guilty about asking for money for something they usually give away for free. This questionnaire was carried out before the popular subscription-based crowdfunding website Patreon was created, and as discussed previously this site is now particularly popular with webcomics, with 7 of the 11 interviewees now having Patreon pages.

Donations included those who specified they had given to a Kickstarter project, but this was not specifically enquired about in the questionnaire and therefore artists may not have included it in 'donations' and people may not have counted it in what they had 'bought'. The rise of sites such as Kickstarter and Patreon seem to be widely adopted mechanisms to allow smaller artists to experiment with merchandise, as they can gauge demand and willingness to pay before they have to outlay any money. Campaigns for books, in particular, allow a creator to estimate exactly how many items they need to print and are likely to sell.

Social media is especially important if the product is being funded through crowdfunding. Platforms such as Kickstarter are seen as social media sites in their own right, having many of the key features such as ability to interact with others, post information, and share content. Such sites are often seen as working hand-in-hand with sites such as Twitter and Tumblr for promotion. Without social media and strong communities, it is predominantly felt that crowdfunding would not work.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

It is fascinating that an increasing number of artists are able to support themselves full-time using merchandising and donation models which allow them to continue to provide content online for free at the same time. It appears that social media allows artists to interact with their readers more meaningfully, and in turn this makes them more likely to spend money. Crowdfunding may also allow people to experiment more with these ways of monetising their work. Creators use social media in a variety of sophisticated ways in order to build and maintain a community of readers. In general there is good agreement between where most creators post content and where most readers access it, suggesting that creators are highly aware of the websites and posting strategies which have the best effect on readership. It is necessary for them to treat social media as a part of their job to form meaningful connections with their readers. Once a dedicated audience is created they can then begin to monetise their work, predominantly through selling merchandise.

As the biggest growing avenue to monetisation in webcomics, crowdfunding is particularly interesting. With the rapid increase in use of both Patreon and Kickstarter, creators are able to take some of the risk out of producing merchandise, giving them the ability to gauge demand for an item and to raise money to pay for it without having to invest their own money on an uncertain venture. As such, the following studies investigate more closely the use of crowdfunding in webcomics, including reasons why it works so well.

HOW DOES CROWDFUNDING WORK FOR WEBCOMICS?

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes two studies of crowdfunding in the webcomics industry, which aim to answer the second research question, “How does crowdfunding work in the webcomics industry?” particularly in terms of the different models of crowdfunding and factors that contribute to success. As such it focuses on two sub-questions:

- a) How do webcomic communities use crowdfunding?
- b) What are the success factors for webcomics using different models of crowdfunding?

The first study reported in this chapter is a questionnaire targeting creators and readers who have used crowdfunding, to find out how they did so, which sites they used, and their general feelings about using the method to make or donate money. It is used as an extension of data collected in study 1, and confirms the direction taken by subsequent larger scale studies. The second study uses data scraped from the two largest platforms used for webcomics crowdfunding, which are based on differing models, to compare how they are used and the factors involved in the success of campaigns. As such, the following section will introduce the types of crowdfunding models that may be used.

3.2 TYPES OF CROWDFUNDING

The majority of crowdfunding campaigns take place on a dedicated platform that acts as an intermediary between the creator of the campaign and the backers who provide funds. Some campaigns are run independently and find great success, but this is rare in the webcomics industry. The first online crowdfunding platforms were created over a decade ago, and there are now

several hundred across the world. Exact numbers are difficult to come by; Adams (2014) identified 344 in the US, 87 in the UK, and 53 in France, whilst Ramos & Stewart (2014) reported on 88 across Europe; the crowdfunding section of crowdsourcing.org lists around 600 sites, and their Industry Report from Massolution is based on 1,250 platforms (Massolution, 2015). These platforms usually take a share of the funds raised.

The crowdfunding platform itself can be an important factor in the success and promotion of projects. Platforms are about more than just the exchange of money, and are often seen as social networks in their own right (Zheng, Li, Wu, & Xu, 2014), and places for crowdsourcing solutions to problems, gaining feedback, and taking advantage of the wisdom of the crowd (Greenberg & Gerber, 2014). They are made up of many differing communities: the overarching community of creators and backers, communities of fans of creators or products, communities centred on particular categories, and so on. These communities may compete with each other for support and resources (Inbar & Barzilay, 2014). Some crowdfunding platforms are aimed at a particular type of project or industry, for example Kickstarter is aimed at creative projects, Sellaband and ArtistShare focus on music, and Experiment is a platform for funding science projects. Some platforms like Kickstarter also regulate which campaigns can be run, whilst others like Indiegogo do not (Bouaiss & Maque, 2015).

There are various features that many platforms have in common. They tend to consist of a page for each project, displaying the goal amount and a description of the project, plus the number of backers and amount raised, and time left on the campaign if relevant. All-or-Nothing (AON) platforms do not release funds to a campaign unless the goal is reached within a time limit, as on Kickstarter. This takes much of the risk away from the backer and places it on the creator. Keep-It-All (KIA) platforms release the funds to the campaign owner after a certain amount of time, no matter how much has been raised, which transfers the risk to the backers as the creator is almost guaranteed to receive some funds but it may not be enough to fulfil any campaign promises such as rewards. KIA campaigns are less successful in reaching their goals, so creators using this model reduce their risk and also return on their projects; AON campaigns tend to have larger goals but creators are more likely to reach them and to attract more backers (Cumming, Leboeuf, & Schwienbacher, 2015). Indiegogo offers

KIA as an option alongside AON campaigns; higher quality campaigns on this platform tend to use the AON mechanism (Marwell, 2015). Additionally, some platforms freeze funding once the goal has been reached, whilst others remain open until the time is up, often allowing creators to achieve far more than their goal (Belleflamme, Omrani, & Peitz, 2015).

The most common way to distinguish crowdfunding platforms is based on the type of return that the backer receives (De Buysere et al., 2012). There are commonly four main types: equity-, lending-, donation-, and reward- (including pre-sales) based models. A fifth model, subscription-based crowdfunding, is also emerging, particularly in the creative industries. There are also hybrid models, in which platforms offer a combination of certain types of return and other funding methods. Hybrid models can maximise the potential for a project to succeed (Moutinho & Leite, 2013), appealing to as broad a range of motivations as possible; however, some motivations may undermine others, so care must be taken.

3.2.1 Equity-based Crowdfunding

Backers of equity-based crowdfunding receive a return on investment (ROI) related to how well a company or product performs, in the form of equity, revenue, or profits, and is common for start-up companies (Aitamurto, 2015; Deeb, Wang, & Yeransian, 2015). There are two kinds of equity-based crowdfunding (Beaulieu, Sarker, & Sarker, 2015; Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2013). Private equity crowdfunding entitles backers to part-ownership of a company. Generally goals are over \$1 million and contributions are over \$10,000; they are usually ended once the funding goal is met (Beaulieu et al., 2015). Royalty crowdfunding entitles the backer to a share of the profits from a project. Campaigns are usually for a product, for example an album, tour, or book. Goals are usually under \$50,000 and contributions are often under \$100; campaigns end once the goal is met (Beaulieu et al., 2015). An example of such a platform was Sellaband, which allowed 5000 fans to invest \$10 in a band to record an album, earning money from it once it is complete (Aitamurto, 2015; Spellman, 2008)

The passing of the Jumpstart Our Business Startups (JOBS) Act in America in 2012 included the Capital Raising Online While Deterring Fraud and Unethical Non-Disclosure (CROWDFUND) Act which aims to ease both restrictions on

equity crowdfunding and the risk of fraud (Barabas, 2012). Equity-based crowdfunding grew by 201% in 2014, with projects raising an average of £199,095 (Pope, 2015). The motivation for backers is predominantly the potential return on their investment (Ramos & Stewart, 2014).

3.2.2 Lending-based Crowdfunding

In lending-based crowdfunding, which includes micro-lending, microfinancing, social lending, and peer-to-peer lending, backers provide an amount of money that they expect to get back, sometimes with interest (Aitamurto, 2015; Belleflamme et al., 2015; Deeb et al., 2015; Ramos & Stewart, 2014). Microfinancing is often used by people in rural and underdeveloped areas who cannot get traditional bank loans, particularly farmers. In this case, interest is often not expected by the backers, funding goals are usually under \$1,000 and the average contribution is typically under \$50 (Beaulieu et al., 2015). The best known lending-based site of this kind is Kiva. Peer-to-peer lending often involves backers receiving interest on their contribution, as a personal or small business loan. The campaign usually runs for a certain time period and works on an AON mechanism (Beaulieu et al., 2015). In the UK, loans from these platforms added up to nearly £1.3 billion in 2014, compared to £480 million in 2013; however only 2-3% of borrowers were taking business loans (Pope, 2015), with the majority asking for personal loans.

3.2.3 Donation-based Crowdfunding

In donation-based crowdfunding, backers do not usually receive any additional incentives to back other than gratitude, and campaigns are often based on a 'social good' such as charitable or humanitarian causes, or art projects (Belleflamme et al., 2015). Goals are typically below \$5,000 with contributions around \$100 (Beaulieu et al., 2015). Backers are often seen as philanthropists, motivated by altruism, or by the lure of social benefits such as the feeling of belonging to a community (Aitamurto, 2015; Ramos & Stewart, 2014). Donation-based crowdfunding is often used in conjunction with rewards-based crowdfunding, using both tangible and intangible incentives to encourage people to back a project. For example, on Kickstarter, the lowest donation levels may not offer any reward other than gratitude.

3.2.4 Rewards-based Crowdfunding

Rewards-based crowdfunding is the most common model and may be the most successful (Strausz, 2015). It is used when creators want to fund a specific project, which may be a product, business, event, or other venture. To incentivise backers to donate they offer non-financial rewards which often include the product being funded, a related memento, or another benefit such as a meeting with the creator (R. R. Chen, Gal-or, & Roma, 2017; Deeb et al., 2015; Ramos & Stewart, 2014). There is a wide variety in funding goals, some being less than \$100 with others aiming to raise millions; this latter target is rare however and the goal is usually below \$1 million. Campaigns run for a set amount of time. The mean contribution is around \$70, and single contributions are often limited to a maximum amount (Beaulieu et al., 2015). Kickstarter is the biggest and best known platform, with over 125,000 successfully funded projects since its inception in 2009 (Kickstarter, 2017).

Backers of rewards-based campaigns may also become project ambassadors who actively promote a product by posting on social media; this can potentially lead to receiving additional rewards. Motivations to back may range from the altruistic to the materialistic (Belleflamme et al., 2015), and may be intrinsic or extrinsic (Ramos & Stewart, 2014). Rewards are often nominal and therefore in some respects are similar, and indeed often combined, with donation-based crowdfunding to maximise the incentives for backers.

A prominent form of rewards-based crowdfunding is pre-ordering or pre-selling, where a creator can use a campaign to sell a product before it is produced, and thus raise the money for its production. This is also a good way for fundraisers to receive feedback and gauge demand for their ideas. It means that a creator does not have to end up with unsold items, and may produce only as many as they sell, particularly if they produce items exclusively for that campaign or as limited-editions. However, whilst some may see crowdfunding platforms as an e-commerce platform, open to anybody who wants to provide goods or services (Beier & Wagner, 2015), the platforms themselves tend to disagree. Kickstarter for example makes it clear that it is 'not a store' (Strickler, Chen, & Adler, 2012), and introduced measures to make people more aware of the risks involved, such as a Risks and Challenges section on the campaign page, to be filled out by the creator to inform backers how the creator plans to identify and deal with any issues.

3.2.5 Subscription-based Crowdfunding

The subscription-based model of crowdfunding combines a recurring payment system with the focus on many small voluntary payments; it can be combined with any of the above models to provide all kinds of rewards and incentives, but it is relatively new and there is little research into this model as yet. The best known platform is Patreon, which offers creators the chance to earn money either periodically (for example monthly or weekly) or per new work (for example a new music track, comic, or other creation). Prior to Patreon, the model has been used particularly in journalism: Beacon, for example, allows backers to buy a subscription to a particular author or publication, and some non-profit publications use a similar model with yearly memberships (Aitamurto, 2015). Often the published stories are free to read online once funded, similar to webcomics who use Patreon. Other sites use a subscription model more like a traditional paywall, but this may diminish attention for stories, again similar to webcomics finding paywalls put off new readers.

3.3 PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

3.3.1 Method: Materials and Procedure

This research was approved by the University Of Nottingham Department Of Engineering Research Ethics Committee. The questionnaire was distributed both online and in paper form to webcomics creators and readers. Participants were recruited at the Nottingham Comic Convention and through Twitter. Whilst the sampling was opportunistic, and only a small number of responses were collected, this was deemed acceptable as the purpose of the study was to confirm and expand upon assumptions made from the literature and previous studies before carrying out larger investigations. At the start participants were given a definition of webcomics with examples, to ensure they either read or created such content. They were also given a definition of crowdfunding and examples of platforms. After collecting basic demographic information, the questionnaire split into two parts: questions for readers who had backed webcomics crowdfunding campaigns, and questions for creators who had run campaigns. The questions were a mixture of closed multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. Readers were asked which websites they read comics on, as well as what kind of merchandise they bought and how much they

had spent outside crowdfunding. They were then asked which sites they used for crowdfunding, how many projects they backed, and how much they spent. They were also asked how they made decisions related to crowdfunding and whether they would use it again. Creators were asked for basic information about their comics, where they are posted, and what merchandise they sold. They were then asked which crowdfunding sites they used, how often, and how much they had raised. They were also asked about how they made decisions about which platforms to use and how they publicised their campaigns, and whether they would run campaigns again. See Appendix B for a breakdown of questions. Online responses were completed in Qualtrics (see section 2.2); paper responses were transcribed into Qualtrics and then filed securely.

3.3.2 Method: Participants

Due to the extremely selective nature of the questionnaire, which required respondents to have backed or run webcomics crowdfunding campaigns, only 33 responses were collected, of which 29 were complete and therefore useable. Four participants were webcomic creators, two males and two females, aged between 16 and 35. Twenty-five were crowdfunding backers; 76% were aged between 16 and 35, and 52% were male.

3.3.3 Results

Due to the lack of responses from creators very little can be inferred from their answers. However, all four of them had run successful projects and stated that they would use crowdfunding again; all has used Kickstarter and two had also used Patreon. They all used some form of social media, predominantly Twitter, and sold books and art outside of crowdfunding. Over a third of respondents currently read over 21 webcomics; this is perhaps not surprising given that the data was collected at a comic convention where it could be expected that attendants would be comic fans. A third of respondents read between 1 and 5 webcomics. As was found with the previous questionnaire study, the vast majority read comics on the comic's own site (88%), followed by Twitter (44%), Tumblr (32%), and Facebook (20%). Only one respondent did not follow webcomics or creators on social media, with the most popular sites again being Twitter (84%), Tumblr (48%) and Facebook (56%).

Also agreeing with the previous study, the majority of backers had bought merchandise outside of crowdfunding (92%), and the most common items were books (75%), art (79%), and clothes (50%). Almost half (46%) had made an independent donation and nearly 17% had paid an independent subscription. The most popular crowdfunding platforms were Kickstarter (96%) and Patreon (32%); only one other platform was indicated (Indiegogo: 12%). Prior to October 31st 2012, Kickstarter did not host projects in the UK, so a lot of projects used Indiegogo, which remains a large and popular platform for crowdfunding.

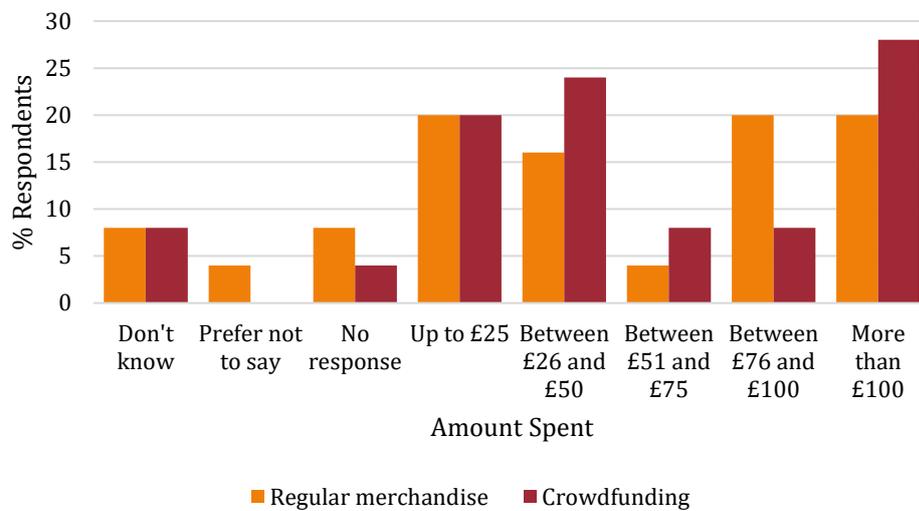


Figure 3-1 Total amounts of money spent on webcomics merchandise and crowdfunding

Some respondents have spent a significant amount on both merchandise and backing crowdfunding campaigns (see Figure 3-1) with 20% spending over £100 on merchandise in total and 28% spending over £100 on crowdfunding in total. The median values were between £51 and £75 for crowdfunding and between £76 and £100 for merchandise, but the highest total reported by a single person spent on crowdfunding was £625, compared to a total of £500 spent by a single person on regular merchandise. Most people (76%) had backed between 1 and 5 projects, and all the projects backed ended up being successful; 2 backers had supported over 21 projects. Additionally, 76% said they would definitely use crowdfunding again to back webcomics, with everyone else choosing 'Maybe'.

Qualitative responses were coded based on keywords, and five broad themes emerged: Community Support, Finances, Personal Choice, Reward, and Fandom. Table 3-1 gives examples of phrases coded under each theme, and the

distribution of each theme across the three major questions. The numbers represent the number of phrases which correspond to each question within each theme. Choice of project referred to the question “how do you choose which webcomics projects to back?”; choice of platform to the question “how do you decide which crowdfunding sites to visit/back webcomics projects on?”; and reasons to return refers to the question “Why will you back more webcomics projects on crowdfunding sites in the future?” Each question had a majority of answers within one theme. For choosing projects, the main theme is Fandom, followed by Community Support. Unsurprisingly, platforms are chosen based on Personal Choice, with backers preferring certain aspects of one or another website. Reasons for returning to crowdfunding are split between Community Support and Reward, with the former being the most common.

Table 3-1 Coding themes for qualitative answers to crowdfunding questionnaire

	Community Support	Fandom	Finances	Personal Choice	Rewards
	Community; Friendship; Social Media; Support; Word of mouth;	Browsing; Enjoyment; Fan; Interest; Quality; Type of work;	Affordable; Finances;	Curation; Currency; Ease of use; Familiarity; Policies; Popularity; Reliability;	Product; Reward;
Choice of Project	22	38	2	0	14
Choice of platform	4	2	1	20	0
Reasons to return	13	5	2	0	11
Total	39	45	5	20	25

3.3.4 Preliminary Discussion

This questionnaire formed the beginning of a deeper investigation into webcomics crowdfunding. Predominantly, both creators and readers use Kickstarter, with a fair proportion of people also using Patreon. Crowdfunding projects are successful endeavours for webcomics creators, and backers are willing to spend considerable amounts of money in backing projects and supporting creators that they like. Five major themes emerged from this: supporting a community, receiving rewards, being part of a fandom, personal choice of platforms, and financial limitations. People choose which projects to back predominantly based on being a fan of the work or the creator, followed by a wish to be involved in the community surrounding the webcomic, project,

or artist. Interestingly, Rewards is the third most common, implying that people do not solely back crowdfunding campaigns based on the end product or goal. The choice of platform on which to back projects is a personal one, with backers preferring some platforms over others, especially based on experience of the vetting and quality of projects, and the security of transactions. The willingness to use crowdfunding again, which was high, was largely based on community involvement, and supporting creators and the webcomics community. Backers were also drawn in by the promise of high quality and highly sought after rewards. These results back up the idea that crowdfunding is motivated by a combination of social and physical benefits. Fandom may be seen as a personal social benefit, in that the backer enjoys something and wants more of it, and by helping they can try to ensure that thing continues. Community Support is more of a widespread social benefit that not only benefits the backer but also others. Rewards is a more straightforward physical motivation, in that the backer gives money because they want to receive an item in return. Financial and personal choice considerations are more practical decisions rather than benefits.

3.4 KICKSTARTER AND PATREON

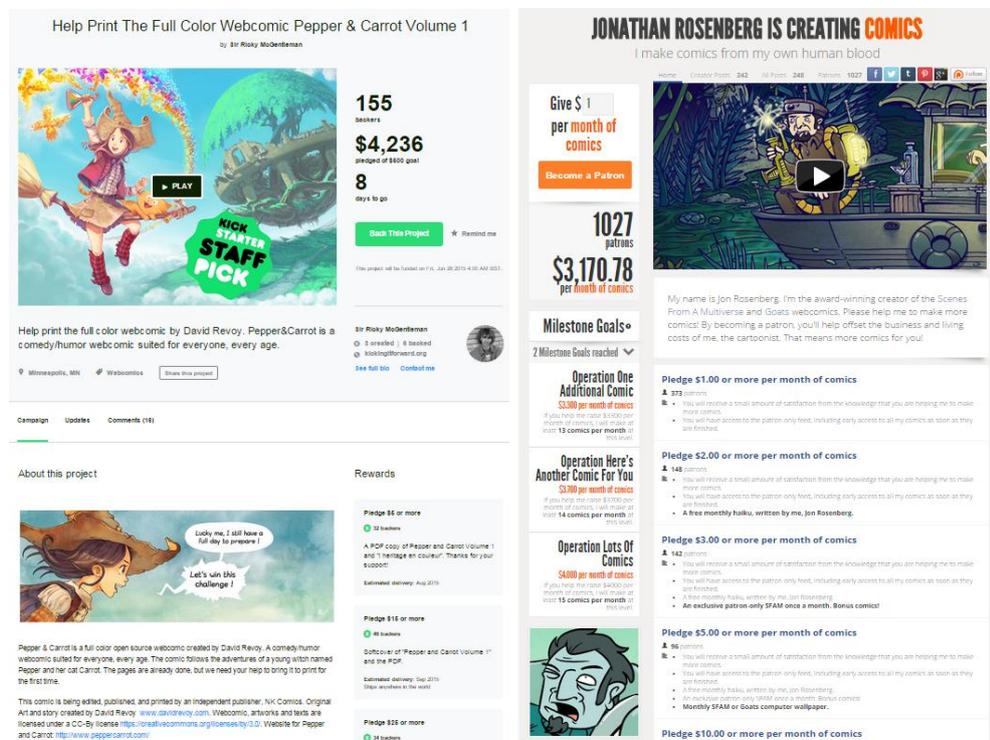


Figure 3-2 Kickstarter (left) and Patreon (right) project pages. Both platforms display the number of backers and amounts raised prominently at the top of the page, along with a video and headline to entice new backers. They also both use reward levels (displayed in a column down one side).

Kickstarter and Patreon were found to be the most relevant platforms for webcomics. This section focuses on how each platform works. Whilst they appear similar (see Figure 3-2), providing rewards in exchange for donations, and share some terminology (see Table 3-2), they are based on different models. Kickstarter is rewards-based whilst Patreon is subscription-based. Additionally, Kickstarter is an AON platform, so projects do not receive any money if they do not reach their goal, whilst Patreon has a KIA policy with creators keeping whatever they raise each month.

Table 3-2 Common terms used on Kickstarter and Patreon

Term	Platform	Definition
Backers	Both	People who pledge money to a project
Goal	Kickstarter	The initial amount needed for the project to succeed. If this is not raised, a project receives no money.
Stretch goals	Kickstarter	Further goals if the funding goes over the initial goal. These are not included in the all-or-nothing system.
Milestone goals	Patreon	Amounts that the creator is aiming to reach. Similar to goals and stretch goals on Kickstarter but not related to whether the creator receives pledged money.
Reward levels	Both	Depending on how much a backer pledges, they receive the option to claim a reward. Each level details a different reward for pledging at least that amount.

Kickstarter is the largest crowdfunding platform worldwide, and has processed over \$3.1 billion in pledges for over 125,000 projects since it was founded in 2009 (Kickstarter, 2017). It works on a rewards-based model of crowdfunding, aimed at creative projects with a particular goal. Many webcomic creators' self-publish books and Kickstarter can act as a relatively risk-free pre-order system. They seek small donations from their readers, of amounts usually starting at \$1. Backers give however much they choose, but there are reward levels. For example, a backer may give \$10 to receive a PDF of the upcoming book project, or \$25 to receive a printed version, often discounted from the usual sale price. Other rewards range from gratitude to merchandise, commissioned art, or the chance to meet the creator. Kickstarter takes a cut from donations of 5%, plus another 3-5% that they pay to their payment processor, Stripe. Creators must also pay tax on their raised funds as self-employed business people.

One of the fifteen main categories in which projects can sit is 'Comics' and the platform introduced subcategories in 2014, of which one is 'webcomics'. The success rate of projects overall is around 36%, with a higher rate of just over 53% in the Comics category. Kickstarter is so widely used by the webcomics community that a formula specific to that subcategory has been created to

predict how projects will turn out: “take the Predicted Value of a project at the 24-30 hour mark from Kicktraq³⁴ and call that PV. The range at close will be $\frac{PV}{4} \pm \frac{PV}{20}$, but has only shown to be valid for project with at least 200 backers at calculation time” (Tyrrell, 2015e).

Patreon, in contrast, is a subscription-based crowdfunding platform aimed at individual creators rather than projects. The site was launched in 2013, and distributes over \$8million a month (Graphtreon, 2017) to more than 50,000 creators (Patreon, 2017a). In their first 13 months of operation, Patreon sent over \$2 million to creators, with the first million taking 11 months to reach and the second just 2, demonstrating its escalation in popularity (Conte, 2014). There are 14 categories including Comics (there is no subcategory for webcomics), although a creator can be part of more than one category. Patreon is popular with independent creators of all kinds, ranging from musicians and artists to bloggers and street performers. Fans sign up to donate small amounts of money at given intervals, often per month or per new piece of work. For webcomics, this allows creators to continue to provide their main comic for free to everyone, but readers who wish to donate can do so, and are often rewarded by seeing the next comic early, or seeing works-in-progress or sneak previews. The fact that creators who use Patreon treat it as a donation platform, and not a paywall for their main comic content, is perhaps a reason why this site has flourished and other subscription models have failed. Patreon charge 5%, plus payment processing by Stripe or PayPal. Like Kickstarter, funds raised on Patreon count as taxable income.

Kickstarter projects rarely provide the creator with a large profit, simply paying for fulfilment of a particular project and not for living expenses or continued work. Erika Moen and Matt Nolan made a \$10,000 profit on each of their Kickstarter campaigns for volumes 1 and 2 of their comic *Oh Joy Sex Toy* (Nolan, 2015a, 2015b). Most of this is earmarked to help with future projects rather than providing a living, and most creators come away with much less after product fulfilment. Patreon however does provide creators with a recurring income, relieving some of the stress of self-employment. One creator successfully making use of the Patreon platform is Zach Weinersmith of

³⁴ Kicktraq (www.kicktraq.com) is a website that monitors Kickstarter campaigns over time, including daily funding progress and trends for overall outcomes, updated live.

Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal, who has over 3,000 patrons bringing in over \$7,000 per month. He says Patreon “doesn’t provide quite as much revenue, but it’s sooooo much more stable and reliable than other sources” (Donaldson, 2017, unpaginated). Such is the success of the webcomics community within Patreon that the site decided to recruit a “Creator Relations Representative” for webcomics (Patreon, 2014), and a webcomic creator, Joel Watson of *Hijinks Ensue*³⁵, was also featured for some time as the front page image on the site (see Figure 3-3). When *Penny Arcade*, mentioned previously as the most successful webcomic, ran a donation bar on their site, they were often making over \$5,000 a month (Fenty et al., 2005); now other comics have the potential to do the same.

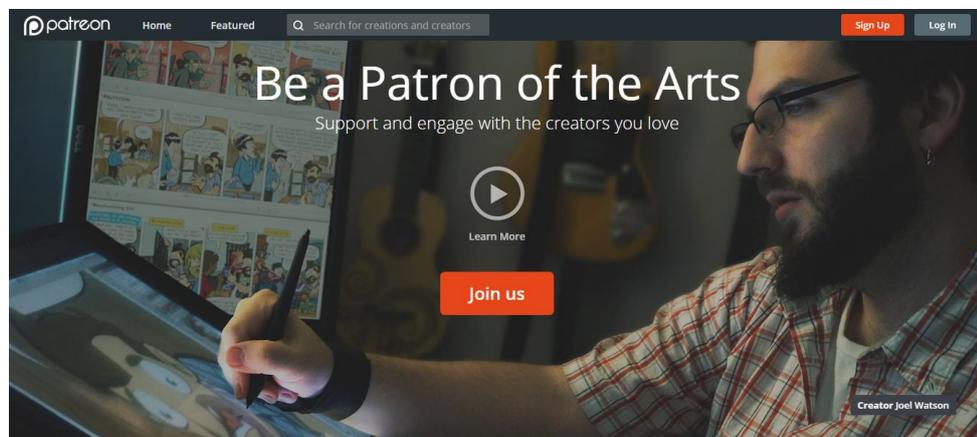


Figure 3-3 Webcomic creator Joel Watson on the front page of Patreon

Both Kickstarter and Patreon have a strong focus on rewards, despite the different models. The benefit that webcomics have when considering rewards is that much of the work already exists in digital form and can therefore be sent to backers with little work on the part of the creator. Distribution requires no extra expense such as shipping, and one file can be sent to many backers. According to a Kickstarter blog, these rewards are amongst the best for creators to choose (Rosner, 2015). Combinations of physical and digital products are also encouraged, which again works well for webcomics creators, as the same product can be both physical and digital. Also effective are rewards that encourage interaction, and rewards that can continue to be sold after the Kickstarter campaign has finished; both of these are beneficial to webcomics creators because they already tend to have a lot of experience interacting with readers and often sell merchandise at conventions.

³⁵ See <http://hijinksensue.com>

3.5 FACTORS INVOLVED IN CROWDFUNDING

Creators often add additional rewards as a project progresses, particularly with regards to stretch goals. This may be providing a given reward at a lower tier, adding a new reward to certain tiers, or creating a whole new reward tier with new incentives. Sometimes stretch goals and additional rewards are triggered by events other than raising a set amount of money. A milestone in terms of numbers of backers, number of people sharing the campaign on Facebook, or a number of people performing a certain action (for example creating a video or taking a photo) have also been used to trigger additional rewards. These types of stretch goals incentivise backers to share projects with others and encourage more backers to the campaign.

It is worth noting that creators have increasingly started to use 'Add on' items for backers. As well as providing reward tiers, creators provide a list of additional items that backers can purchase at a price that they add on to their donation. This was pioneered by table top gaming projects as a way to add expansion packs. It has taken away much of the necessity for having multiple reward tiers at the same price which provide different permutations of rewards, as backers can choose exactly what they want in addition to the dedicated reward. This may decrease the number of reward levels in newer projects who take advantage of this option.

3.5 FACTORS INVOLVED IN CROWDFUNDING

Five hundred new crowdfunding projects were created every day in 2015 (Li, Wang, & Yue, 2015) and the industry has been growing since. Most studies of crowdfunding focus on creators, backers, and platforms as the three major stakeholders, and while there are cross-platform studies of up to 81 websites (Greenberg, Hui, & Gerber, 2013), often researchers focus on just one or two well-known sites, usually Kickstarter or Indiegogo³⁶.

On AON platforms, success is relatively easy to determine, by whether a campaign reaches its initial goal. On KIA platforms success is harder to measure, as even if the goal is not reached, the funding may be enough to allow some parts of a project to go ahead. In future in this thesis, unless otherwise specified,

³⁶ Although many papers do not specify which platforms they are based on, of the literature reviewed for this thesis, over a third of the studies were explicitly based on either one or both of these platforms.

success refers the initial goal being reached. Across platforms, crowdfunding campaigns were found to reach a success rate of 45% in 2009 (Ramos & Stewart, 2014). On Kickstarter, the average project was found to have a goal around \$26,000 but receive pledges of less than \$14,000 from 167 backers (Madsen & McMullin, 2015); the current success rate is around 36%, adding up to more than 125,000 successful projects (Kickstarter, 2017), so whilst Kickstarter is the biggest platform, there is no guarantee of success.

Kickstarter has 15 categories (Art, Comics, Crafts, Dance, Design, Fashion, Film & Video, Food, Games, Journalism, Music, Photography, Publishing, Technology, and Theatre) and 150 subcategories (for example Comics has the subcategories Anthologies, Comic Books, Events, Graphic Novels, and Webcomics). Most research does not take into account differences between categories, despite the probability that different factors affect success, failure, and motivation. Some subcategories perform significantly better than others, for example Classical Music accounts for only 1.01% of projects but 1.52% of all successes (Calvo, 2015). The most popular Kickstarter categories are Film & Video and Music, and the highest success rates are in Dance (62%) and Theatre (60%), with Technology and Games having the highest goals (Madsen & McMullin, 2015). Games, Comics, and Technology have also been found to be less dependent of project location for success (Rakesh, Choo, & Reddy, 2015).

3.5.1 Campaign Structure

On Kickstarter, success rate has been found to decrease as the goal rises (Barbi & Bigelli, 2017; Madsen & McMullin, 2015). Unsuccessful campaigns tend to have larger funding goals but receive much less in pledges than successful projects (An, Quercia, & Crowcroft, 2014; Frydrych, Bock, & Kinder, 2016; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014; Marelli & Ordanini, 2016; Xu et al., 2014). Projects with low start-up costs, which can therefore succeed with a lower goal, are more likely to be successful (Sharp, 2014). A 1% increase in the goal can reduce the degree of overfunding by 5-6 times for technology projects (Cordova, Dolci, & Gianfrate, 2015). However, a lower goal might also prevent certain types of backers from pledging if they believe enough money will come from other backers (Bender, Gal-Or, & Geylani, 2016).

Across crowdfunding, successful projects often raise close to 100% of their goal, with 29% of projects raising less than 5% over their goal, 10% raising more

than twice their goal, and only 5% raising above 5 times their goal; conversely, failed projects miss by a very large margin, tending towards a very small percentage of their goal (Cordova et al., 2015; Frydrych et al., 2016; Rakesh et al., 2015). Kickstarter report that 14% of projects get no pledges at all, but if a project manages to raise more than 20% of its goal it will usually end successfully funded (78%) (Kickstarter, 2017).

Most projects on Kickstarter have a funding period of 30 days or less (Madsen & McMullin, 2015), but campaigns of 33 days have been found to have the most backers on average (Frydrych et al., 2016). Successful projects also have shorter campaigns overall compared to projects that fail (Barbi & Bigelli, 2017; Frydrych et al., 2016; Kuppaswamy & Bayus, 2014); the average duration of a successful campaign is 28.9 days but takes only around 13 days to become fully funded (An et al., 2014).

Mollick (2014) suggests that high quality projects receive more promotion through social media; Rakesh et al. (2015) found campaigns with social media promotion to be nearly twice as likely to succeed (63% versus 34%), and Lu, Xie, Kong, & Yu, (2014) found them to have more backers. An et al. (2014) also found that more than twice the number of tweets were generated about successful campaigns during the campaign period than about unsuccessful campaigns. Exposure on social media leads to more word-of-mouth promotion and greater interest in a project, which may then lead to success, particularly in the last days of a project (Beier & Wagner, 2015; Calvo, 2015). This is good news for creators who are already highly active on social media, as is often the case in webcomics. Additionally, based on a study of Indiegogo, Twitter is more influential than Facebook to campaigns that are for products or services that amount to private goods, such as books and merchandise (Hong, Hu, & Burtch, 2015), which are the majority of webcomics campaigns, with Twitter being extremely popular among creators. However it has been suggested that creators may not properly understand their own social networks or crowdfunding community, for example they may under or overestimate the size or reach of their networks, and may benefit from guidance in this area to improve project success (Hui, Gerber, & Gergle, 2014; Hui, Greenberg, & Gerber, 2014). Creators should not rely solely on social media to promote a project, and the design of the overall campaign has more to do with its success than promotion; whilst massive promotion can popularise a project it is intensive

interactions between participants that are more important to success (Lu et al., 2014).

Rewards

On rewards-based platforms, rewards cannot be monetary, and it is often not compulsory to offer rewards. Backers do not have to claim a reward but most do; one study found that an average of 90% of backers did so (Hauge & Chimahusky, 2016). Rewards tiers may range from between \$1 and \$10,000, but usually do not exceed \$500. The four most common reward types according to Kickstarter are copies of the actual product being crowdfunded, creative collaborations such as a part in the final product, creative experiences such as visits and meetings, and creative mementos such as thanks in credits (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014). Delivery of rewards has been found to be an important way that backers evaluate the success of a project, even when other outcomes such as events might have been successful (Mollick, 2015).

Special offers for early backers lead to greater success (Marelli & Ordanini, 2016), and most projects have at least one reward level in which a limited number are available (Madsen & McMullin, 2015). Limited number or limited edition rewards are often drivers for backing a project (Suzor, 2014), and if these run out backing numbers can drop off even if the project is popular (Rakesh, Lee, & Reddy, 2016). Rewards that correspond to pre-selling a product, and those that improve the backers' social image are positively correlated with success, whilst services unrelated to the goal product are negatively correlated (Crosetto & Regner, 2014). Introducing new rewards during a campaign can also entice new backers (Xu et al., 2014).

The relationship between number of reward levels and funding received is mixed; a greater number of reward tiers has been found to both increase funding on Kickstarter (Barbi & Bigelli, 2017) and reduce funding (Xiao, Tan, Dong, & Qi, 2014). Six to 11 reward levels are most common, with creative categories tending to offer more reward levels (Frydrych et al., 2016). One blog report found that on average Comics have the most reward levels at 53, followed by 35 for Film and 28 for Music, with the most popular tier for Comics being \$30 (Mikhaylova, 2015); though note that this report only looked at a subsample of 150 projects. The average across Kickstarter for a successful campaign is 10. Additionally, projects that raise far above their goal amount,

maybe tens or thousands of times more, tend to offer significant rewards to keep backers giving even after the goal is reached (Calvo, 2015); projects receiving around 100% of their goal may not offer any further incentive to back after the goal is reached.

3.5.2 Backer Dynamics

Backers have been found to typically be childless, college educated, under 35 years old, with incomes over \$30,000, and to spend around five minutes on the crowdfunding platform, which they browse from work (Gerber, Hui, & Kuo, 2012; Kuo & Gerber, 2012). The majority of backers pledge to only one project, and up to 95% joined Kickstarter and pledged in the same day (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014), suggesting they are part of an external community with the creator. Repeat backers account for around 30% of backers on Kickstarter and 72% of the total pledges, having supported an average of 5.9 campaigns each (Inbar & Barzilay, 2014). Most people back just one or two campaigns, and very few back more than 100 (Rakesh et al., 2015). Increasing the number of backers who return for future projects can significantly increase the donations received overall (Althoff & Leskovec, 2015; Madsen & McMullin, 2015). It should be noted that in this thesis, as in many other studies of crowdfunding, the focus is on English language campaign and a predominantly Western audience, so results may be affected by cultural factors.

Frequent backers have been found to act more like investors, and are attracted to technology, games, and comics projects, whilst occasional backers act as donors, and usually support art projects such as music and dance (An et al., 2014). Backers who fund in multiple categories have been found to support more campaigns than those who are category-specific, although they are less involved with the community associated with projects and platforms (Inbar & Barzilay, 2014). Success has been found to be positively associated with non-local repeat backers, as well as having backers from a wide range of locations (Madsen & McMullin, 2015).

Hahn and Lee (2013) identify four archetypes of repeat crowdfunding behaviour (see Table 3-3). Successful campaigns and large monetary outcomes are associated with large ratios of casual wanderers and focused supporters; interestingly the reverse is true of category enthusiasts and portfolio masters who may be seen as the more frequent and serious backers. Two explanations

are put forward for this by the authors. Either successful projects appeal more broadly to the masses, or regular backers are more risk neutral, as failed projects do not receive funds. New or infrequent backers may perceive a higher risk to their money (even if a project is successful it may not be fulfilled or may be of a lower quality than promised) and therefore may be more selective in what they choose to back.

Table 3-3 Hahn and Lee's (2013) typology of repeat backers

		Category Concentration	
		Low	High
Backing frequency	High	Portfolio master	Category enthusiast
	Low	Casual wanderer	Focused supporter

Successful projects attract far more backers (An et al., 2014; Marelli & Ordanini, 2016), and the overall pledged amount is highly correlated to the number of backers (Rakesh et al., 2015), implying that goals are rarely achieved by a small number of large donors. Whilst total backer numbers are displayed by most platforms, it is often not compulsory for a backer to show publicly how much they have chosen to donate. This can be termed 'pledge hiding' and there may be several reasons for it. Public exposure of the campaign, other backers hiding information, the number of funders, and giving 'extreme' amounts may prompt pledge hiding, which can be beneficial to the creator if the contribution is small but not if the donation is large (Burtch, Ghose, & Wattal, 2013b).

The most common pledge across all crowdfunding campaigns has been found to be around \$50 (Ramos & Stewart, 2014), and is around \$75 on Kickstarter (Calvo, 2015), with a mean pledge of \$77.51 (Benenson & Gallagher, 2014). The vast majority of pledged money, at least on Kickstarter, goes towards successful projects (An et al., 2014; Calvo, 2015), suggesting backers are good at judging which projects will do well. Donations that complete funding goals (i.e. those that allow the project to reach its goal) have been found to be more than double the norm, and these funders are more likely to become repeat backers, with larger sums (Wash, 2013). Three reasons are offered for this: larger donors are more likely to contribute if the donation will complete the funding; they wait until they are sure a project will be funded; or they increase their donations at the end of the project.

Individual pledges are more important to small projects, with each donation making an average of 4.5% of a small goal amount and just 0.65% of a large goal

(Cordova et al., 2015). Backers who pledge large amounts (\$5,000) have been found to give almost exclusively to successful projects that end with few backers overall, and when the goals are large they can be made up of a few very large donors (Hekman & Brussee, 2013); the authors of this study also found that the amount pledged per backer increased only slowly with the goal amount and could be approximated to $9 \times Goal^{0.20}$.

The typical pattern of support is widely reported as 'bathtub-shaped' or U-shaped (Crosetto & Regner, 2014; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014): backers are more likely to give in the first and last week of a campaign, with successful campaigns in particular receiving a lot of support in the last week (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014). Campaign success has been positively related to the amount raised per day (Cordova et al., 2015), however only 41% of funded projects appear to be on track for success during the early part of the funding campaign (Crosetto & Regner, 2014). The majority of early backers to a campaign may be explained by donations from family and friends (Agrawal, Catalini, & Goldfarb, 2014), and most backers at any point are likely to come from the creator's social circle, including social media (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014). Early contributions accelerate the success of a campaign (Colombo, Franzoni, & Rossi-Lamastra, 2015), potentially by removing levels of uncertainty such as quality, and increasing word-of-mouth. Backer support is also seen to fall off considerably once a project has reached its goal (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014), although nearly 19% of pledges are made to projects that have already reached their goal (Crosetto & Regner, 2014).

3.5.3 Creator Dynamics

Creators often find that crowdfunding requires more time and skills than they expect. It can take around two days of work a week over the duration of the funding period for a creator to manage a campaign (Song & Boeschoten, 2015). The greater the amount raised above the initial goal of a first project, the more likely a creator is to launch a second project, possibly as it shows the presence of a loyal fan community. More backers in the first project also increases the chance of a creator running a second project, but higher pledges per backer decreases the chance of running another project (Davidson & Poor, 2016).

The behaviour of those who both back and create projects is measurably different to normal backers; they more actively back projects, provide more

community support, and display more reciprocity (Zvilichovsky, Inbar, & Barzilay, 2013). Backing other projects also leads to an increased chance of success, and a higher total from a greater number of funders. For every project a creator has previously backed, their own likelihood of success may be raised by 1 to 2% (Safner, 2015). A recent study however found that most creators are not typically also project backers (Hauge & Chimahusky, 2016). Interestingly there is a creator-made scheme known as 'KickingItForward' where a creator can commit to reinvest 5% of their eventual profits into other projects (Colombo et al., 2015). To date just over 1,600 projects have used the scheme, for a total of just under 1 million pledges and nearly \$55 million raised³⁷.

3.6 ASSERTIONS

Based on the background research reported in sections 3.4 and 3.5, several assertions can be made for webcomics crowdfunding on Kickstarter which can be tested through quantitative analysis of projects:

1. The average project:
 - a. has a goal around \$26,000
 - b. receive pledges of less than \$14,000
 - c. has 167 backers
2. Successful projects:
 - a. predominantly raise only a small amount above their goal (and failed projects will raise very little of their goal)
 - b. have shorter campaigns than those who fail
 - c. have far more backers than failed projects
 - d. have a success rate of around 53% which decreases as the goal amount increases.
3. Pledges:
 - a. increase only slowly with the goal amount
 - b. correlate strongly with the number of backers
 - c. are around \$78 on average
4. Rewards and Goals:
 - a. Goals will be mostly books
 - b. The most common reward tier will be \$30
 - c. Campaigns (particularly successful campaigns) will have a large number of reward options

³⁷ See <https://kickingitforward.org/>

Due to the lack of existing literature looking at Patreon and similar subscription-based crowdfunding ventures, it is difficult to make such specific assertions. However, the following may reasonably be expected:

5. Patreon and Kickstarter campaigns will differ in that:
 - a. Patreon campaigns will raise less per payment and have lower pledges from backers.
 - b. Patreon will attract fewer backers as the pledge requires more of a commitment, and campaigns are KIA.

Factors related to rewards and pledge hiding on Patreon will also be compared to Kickstarter to identify differences in the two models. There has been little research into the effect of stretch goals on Kickstarter, and milestone goals on Patreon, and this study will also contribute to these gaps.

6. Stretch and Milestone Goals:
 - a. Successful campaigns will have more stretch goals
 - b. As amount raised above the goal increases, so does the number of stretch goals
 - c. As the money pledged on Patreon increases, so does the number of Milestone goals.

3.7 SCRAPING STUDY

3.7.1 *Materials and Procedure*

Scraping is widely used in Computer Science and HCI studies. It allows for large datasets to be collected from many URLs at once, and can save a great deal of time over traditional data collection methods. Following an extensive search to identify all relevant URLs, the front page of several hundred projects across both Kickstarter and Patreon was scraped using the import.io desktop application³⁸. All data was freely available and did not require registration with the crowdfunding websites. This data was cleaned and sorted to create three distinct datasets for further analysis.

Variables collected for each project include number of backers, goal amount, amount raised, percent of goal raised, and number of backers at each reward level (see Appendix B). All monetary data was converted into US dollars for comparison purposes based on the average exchange rate in the month and year that the campaign ended. Qualitative data such as project descriptions,

³⁸ Available at <https://www.import.io/>

rewards levels, and stretch or milestone goals were also collected. Many creators used text-based pictures as descriptions (see Figure 3-4); these cannot be scraped and so data was also transcribed as needed. The number of backers at each reward level was also manually collated into 47 groups to facilitate comparison (there are 212 different reward levels chosen by creators on Kickstarter, and 41 on Patreon). Backers were placed into the group corresponding to the lowest amount that must be given at that reward level³⁹.



Figure 3-4 Example of a stretch goal described in an image

Finally, it is worth noting that since the data was collected, both Patreon and Kickstarter have changed their interfaces in particular ways. For example, Patreon now presents the amount that a creator will likely receive after fees and declined pledges are removed (Guigar, 2015d). Kickstarter have changed aspects of their site too, so that scraping in the way it was done for parts of this study is no longer possible.

Selection of Cases for Scraping

Kickstarter Webcomics: On Kickstarter, all projects in the ‘webcomics’ subcategory up to the end of November 2015 were included. Data was collected once the project had ended, including projects that were cancelled by the creator or suspended by the platform. Projects can be displayed in various ways: by Magic (based on an undisclosed algorithm which takes into account several factors), Popularity, Newest, End Date, Most Funded, and Most Backed. For each sort it is possible to load up to 4,000 projects at a time. Successful and high profile projects are put to the forefront, making it very hard to capture every project in a category. Fortunately the subcategory Webcomics only includes several hundred projects and so by collecting all URLs from each

³⁹ Reward levels are worded as “Pledge X or more” and as such backers at each level may have given more than X to claim that reward. As it is not possible to tell for each individual backer, and there is no indication how likely it is for backers to give different amounts, this was felt to be acceptable.

sorting option and deleting duplicates, it can be certain that all projects on the site are included. This resulted in 292 projects being scraped from Kickstarter.

Patreon Webcomics: For Patreon the process was more laborious as the website does not allow search by category. All creators previously identified through Kickstarter who were also on Patreon were included, and other projects were identified through Internet searches, blogs, Twitter and Tumblr searches, including a list created by a Tumblr user (Mortality Plays, 2014). The data was collected as a snapshot of one day of their campaign, the majority of which was December 8th 2014. This resulted in 188 projects being scraped.

Kickstarter Other: A second set of Kickstarter data was also collected early in the process. Any project not in the webcomics subcategory that was identified as a webcomic project through web search, blogs, and Twitter was included, up until December 8th 2014. This was because subcategories were only introduced in 2014 and so at the time of collection there were relatively few projects in the webcomics subcategory. Of the 109 webcomics projects thus gathered, 78 were from the Comics category. The remaining 31 projects were spread across various categories and subcategories (see Appendix B). This dataset was only used in the analysis of rewards and goals.

Analysis

For all quantitative data, SPSS was used to extract descriptive statistics and to carry out planned comparisons of the two platforms. Descriptive statistics included mean, median, and standard deviation, as well as minimum, maximum, and the 25% and 75% quartiles. The main comparison tests performed were independent samples t-tests and spearman's rho correlations. The t-tests were carried out on all of the main quantitative variables between: i) successful projects and failed projects on Kickstarter; and ii) successful projects on Kickstarter and projects on Patreon. Correlations were carried out between all the quantitative variables collected on each platform, with each platform treated separately.

3.8 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3-4 summarises the descriptive statistics for the main quantitative variables on both platforms. For Patreon, the mean, standard deviation, and median are given. For Kickstarter, the mean, standard deviation, median and

'Expected' values are given. These are values found in previous studies of the platform, reported in section 3.5. Results for Kickstarter are split into three groups: Success is the data for all campaigns that successfully funded their project; Failure is the data for all campaigns that did not successfully fund their project; All is the combined data for all campaigns studied. Further statistics are given in the relevant subsections below.

Table 3-4 Summary of crowdfunding campaign characteristics

		Patreon	Kickstarter		
			Success	Failure	All
Goal (\$)	Mean		7,863.60	22,828.55	8,642.04
	(SD)		(8,772.66)	(110,966.52)	(57,419.83)
	Median		5,500.00	4,000.00	1,000.00
	Expected				26,000
Days of Campaign	Mean		31.22	34.34	32.55
	(SD)		(8.43)	(10.96)	(9.70)
	Median		30.00	30.00	30.00
Number of Backers	Mean	156.07	467.96	19.41	275.95
	(SD)	(390.41)	(793.14)	(51.17)	(639.84)
	Median	44.50	196.00	5.00	45.00
	Expected				267.00
Amount Raised (\$)	Mean	624.52	23,612.47	819.16	13,855.06
	(SD)	(1,300.09)	(46,074.90)	(1,808.73)	(36,606.38)
	Median	222.11	8,334.11	160.00	1,965.00
	Expected				14,000
Average Donation (\$)	Mean	4.74	47.82	32.95	41.45
	(SD)	(2.90)	(21.06)	(36.94)	(29.82)
	Median	4.26	44.98	28.10	39.94
	Expected				78.00

3.8.1 Webcomics on Kickstarter

The Average Project

It was asserted that the average projects would have a goal around \$26,000 but receive pledges of less than \$14,000 from 167 backers. The average webcomics Kickstarter project had a goal of \$8,642.04, and received pledges of \$13,855.06 from 276 backers (see Table 3-4). Whilst the amount raised is similar to the expected average, the goals are much lower and the projects receive a larger number of backers. In contrast to the expected results, webcomics campaigns also raise more than their goal on average, suggesting a higher success rate than for other crowdfunded projects. It should be noted that the data is highly skewed, and standard deviations are very high. The median is consistently much lower than the mean due to some projects performing extremely well or asking for extreme amounts, demonstrating the long tail nature of the Internet.

Examining goal amounts indicates that webcomics on Kickstarter tend to ask for fairly low amounts, from as low as \$10, with half of the projects asking for goals of \$4,500 or less and 75% asking for \$10,000 or less; the maximum goal amount was \$1,000,000 but only 7 projects asked for more than \$50,000. Goal amount is positively correlated with the number of backers, the overall amount raised, and the average donation ($r_s=0.455$, $p=0.000$, $r_s=0.499$, $p=0.000$, and $r_s=0.341$, $p=0.000$ respectively).

Successful projects

Webcomics are relatively more successful on Kickstarter than other projects. Kickstarter, which updates a statistics page daily, reports a successful project rate hovering around 36% across all categories (35.83% as of 28th July 2017), and 53% for Comics (53.24% as of 28th July 2017). For the webcomics dataset, this rate is 57.19%.

Table 3-5 Success rate of webcomics projects depending on goal amount, compared with existing literature

Goal	Success Rate from current dataset	Success Rate from literature	Difference (data - literature)
Up to \$100	80.00% (n=5)	75.7% (n=634)*	+ 4.30
> \$100 to \$500	63.33% (n=30)	67.0% (n=6,281)*	- 3.67
> \$500 to \$1,000	41.66% (n=24)	60.9% (n=9,593)*	- 19.24
> \$1,000 to \$2,000	50.00% (n=34)	59.6% (n=13,084)*	- 9.60
> \$2,000 to \$5,000	50.77% (n=65)	52.5% (n=30,572)*	- 1.73
\$5,000 to \$7,999	59.52% (n=42)	46.84% (n=19,980)**	+ 12.68
\$8,000 to \$16,499	67.19% (n=64)	41.66% (n=20,574)**	+ 25.53
> \$5,000 to \$10,000	63.33% (n=60)	44.1% (n=20,199)*	+ 19.23
Over \$16,500	56.76% (n=37)	27.44% (n=20,263)**	+ 29.32
> \$10,000 to \$50,000	67.16% (n=67)	33.1% (n=21,263)*	+ 34.06
Over \$50,000	14.29% (n=7)	16.8% (n=4,371)*	- 2.51

* Existing figures from Barbi and Bigelli (2015)

** Existing figures from Madsen and McMullin (2015)

Contrary to expectations, success rate did not decrease as goal increased. Table 3-5 presents success rate in relation to goal and compares this with the findings of Barbi and Bigelli (2015) and Madsen and McMullin (2015) who examined crowdfunded projects across categories. Success rate actually appears to rise with the size of the goal, though this dips dramatically at between \$500 and \$1,000 and over \$50,000. This suggests that backers are aware of the amounts required to create a product such as a book, and they are unwilling to back goals that are unrealistically high or low. Goals between \$100 and \$5,000 and over \$50,000 have lower success rates than found in the literature; all of the others are substantially higher, which explains the higher overall success rates of

webcomics. It is worth noting that the number of cases is small for each group, and this limits the generalisability of results.

It was also expected that successful campaigns would predominantly only raise a small amount above their goal, and failed projects would raise very little. As seen in Table 3-6, some webcomics projects were extremely successful. Far fewer raised only close to their goal than previously found, and far more raised at least double. Out of the projects that failed, 90.40% failed to reach 50% of their target, and 13.60% failed to raise a single donation, supporting the finding that when projects fail, they fail by a long margin.

Table 3-6 Performance of webcomics Kickstarter projects above their goal

Percentage of goal achieved	% of projects	Results from previous literature
Between 100% and 105%	5.99	29%
At least 200%	35.33	10%
At least 1,000%	5.39	

Failed Kickstarter campaigns raise much less than successful Kickstarter campaigns, $t(166.683)=6.386$, $p<0.000$. The highest amount raised for a successful Kickstarter campaign is \$377,471.00 which is a massive 2,516.47% of the original goal, versus \$16,241.00 raised for a failed (cancelled at 64.96%) campaign. The next highest failed campaign raised \$6,641.00, or 44.27% of a \$15,000 goal. As seen above, webcomics Kickstarter campaigns tend to ask for far lower amounts than this, and so more realistic goals may improve chances of success. The percent of goal raised is positively correlated with number of backers, overall amount raised, and average donation ($r_s=0.851$ $p=0.000$, $r_s=0.825$ $p=0.000$, and $r_s=0.420$ $p=0.000$ respectively).

Successful campaigns were also expected to run shorter campaigns than those that fail. Data indicates that for webcomics on Kickstarter, 73.97% of projects run for up to 30 days, and 25.69% run for between 30 and 60 days. Successful projects range from 6 to 89 days, and failed projects from 10 to 60 days. The length of the campaign is weakly negatively correlated to the percentage of the goal raised ($r_s=-0.156$, $p=0.008$), so shorter campaigns raise more of their goal. Additionally whilst the median value for both failed and successful campaigns is 30 days, the mean for failed campaigns is 34 as opposed to 31 for successful campaigns (see Table 3-4). This difference is significant, $t(225.172)=-2.645$, $p=0.009$, so failed campaigns do tend to run for longer than successful campaigns. Finally, it was asserted that successful campaigns would have far

more backers than failed campaigns. As illustrated by Table 3-4, this was found to be the case, with a median of 196 versus 5; this difference is significant, $t(167.844)=7.288$, $p<0.000$.

Pledges

Pledges correlate positively with the number of backers, ($r_s=0.497$, $p<0.000$), although perhaps not as strongly as expected. The average pledge was \$41.45, much lower than the \$78 found in previous studies. Successful campaigns on Kickstarter attract significantly higher donations per backer than failed campaigns (see Table 3-4) with a median pledge of \$44.98 for successful campaigns and \$28.10 for failed campaigns, $t(183.576)=4.041$, $p<0.000$.

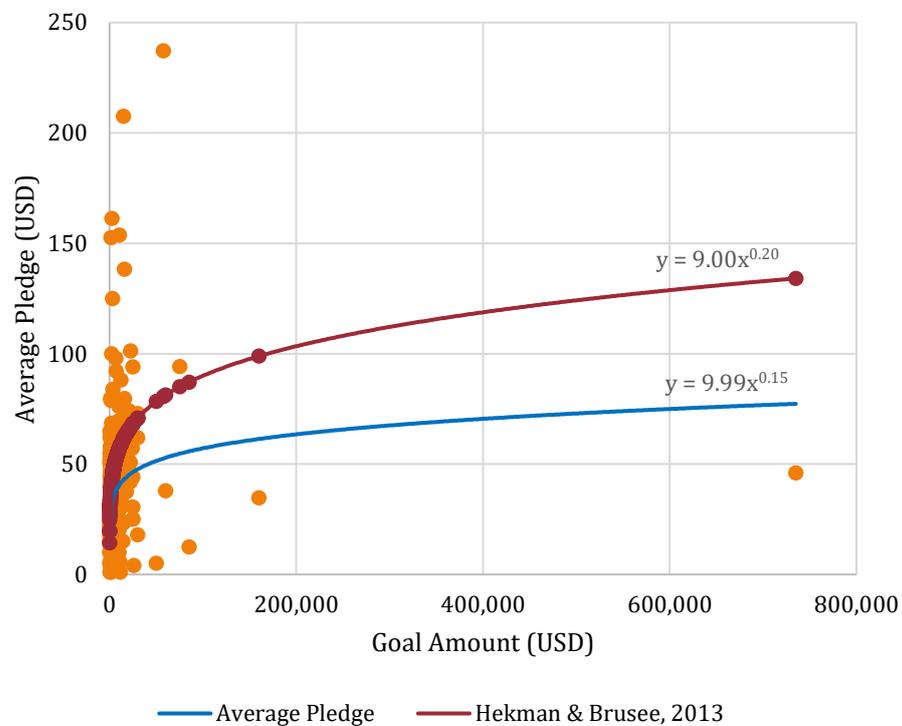


Figure 3-5 How average pledge rises with donation, compared to predictions from Hekman and Brussee, 2013

The average pledge per backer rises slowly with the goal amount, as previously predicted by Hekman & Brussee (2013), who analysed projects across Kickstarter, regardless of category. For webcomics however the rise is slower and the average donations are consistently lower, approximating to $9.99 \times Goal^{0.15}$ for all projects and $11.62 \times Goal^{0.16}$ for successful projects (see Figure 6-3 and Figure 6-4). Pledges also significantly correlate with the overall amount raised ($r_s=0.625$, $p<0.000$), so backers may donate more to receive greater

rewards for campaigns that they see will be successful (pledges can be altered until the campaign closes).

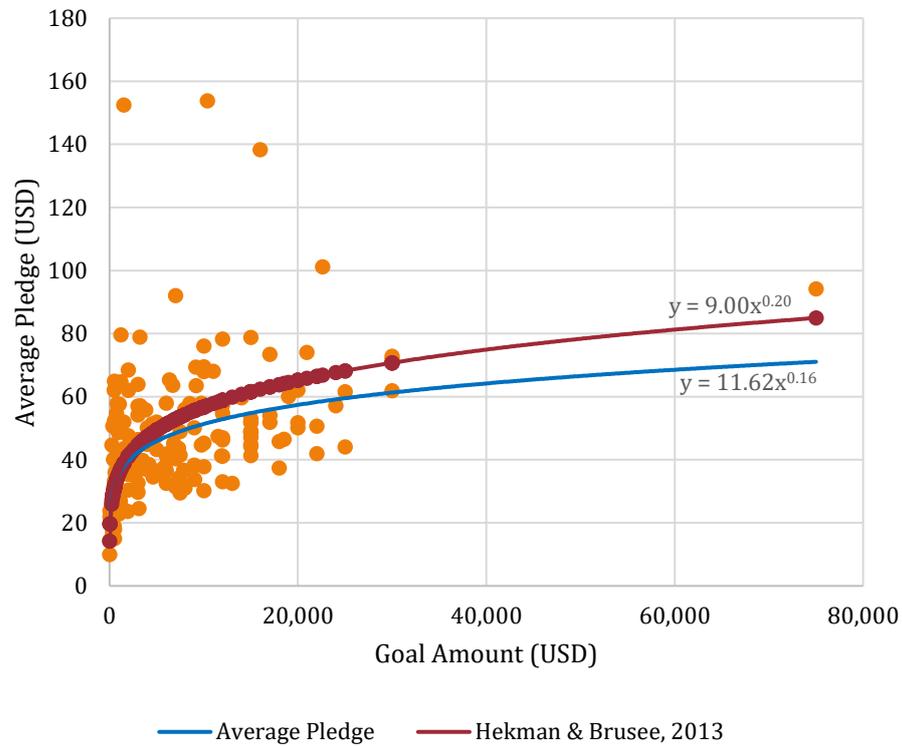


Figure 3-6 How average pledge rises with donation for successful projects only, compared to predictions from Hekman and Brusee, 2013

Rewards and Goals

It was asserted that the goals for Kickstarter webcomics campaigns would mostly be for books. A book goal predominantly means a collection of comics that already exist online, edited and formatted for a paper volume. It may also include e-book versions of the reformatted comics. For the identified set of webcomics projects, 60.1% of the goals are indeed to create a book (see Figure 3-7); 75.47% of successful campaigns are for books, compared to only 30.15% of failed campaigns. The second most popular goal is for a new webcomic, which accounts for 20.00% of the projects; 46.32% of failed campaigns are for creating a new webcomic, compared to just 6.42% of successful campaigns. These projects usually describe an idea for a comic, including settings and characters, and plans for updates, with money going towards hiring artists or writers, hosting websites, or buying art supplies.

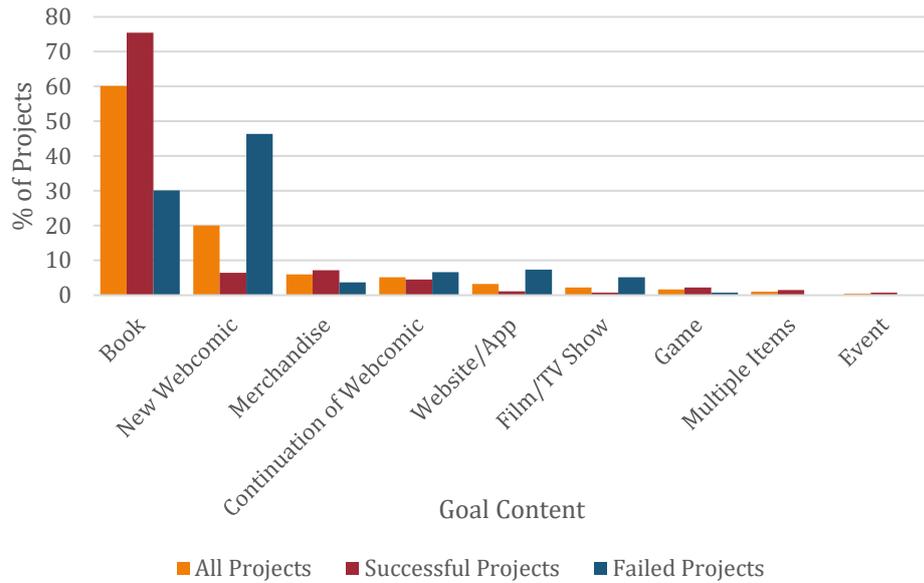


Figure 3-7 Goal content for webcomics Kickstarter projects

Book campaigns succeed 82.99% of the time (see Figure 3-8), far above the overall webcomics success rate overall, suggesting this goal is appealing to backers. In contrast, new webcomics have a success rate of just 21.25% indicating that this goal is not popular. This is likely because backers are aware that most webcomics are online for years before asking for money, so do not like to be asked before the comic even exists. It may also be the case that if the artist is unknown to potential backers and has not run a popular webcomic before, backers are unwilling to take the risk that the creator might not deliver.

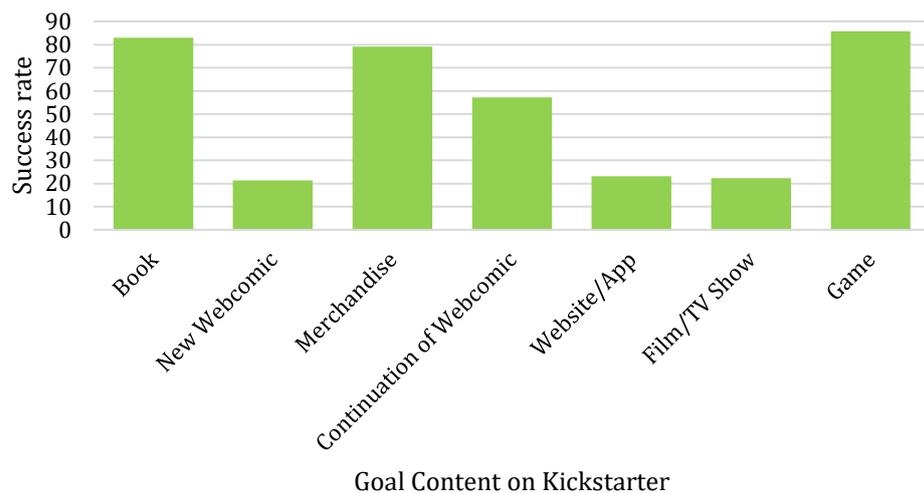


Figure 3-8 Success rate for webcomics Kickstarter projects, based on goal content

Similar reasons may account for the low success rate of projects aiming to create and maintain a website or app (23.08%). Creating other merchandise

based on an existing webcomic, such as plush toys or prints, is a very successful goal at 79.17%, although fairly rare. Raising money to be able to continue an existing webcomic succeeds 57.14% of the time and may relate to the number of readers and perceived quality of the artist and webcomic. This again is a fairly rare goal. Other goals are very rare and little can be inferred from their success rates.

For successful Kickstarter campaigns, the most chosen reward level is between \$25 and \$29 (13.12%), and 50% of people choose a level at \$29 or below; for failed campaigns, the most common level is between \$20 and \$24 (31.30%) and 50% choose a level at \$24 or below. This is comparable to the finding that most people give at the \$30 level for comics (Mikhaylova, 2015) although it appears a little lower for webcomics; this may be due to the levels at which the rewards start to contain the goal product and the relatively low cost of the products. It was also suggested that webcomics campaigns, especially successful ones, would have a large number of reward levels. It was found that successful campaigns have an average of 14.07 (median 12) reward levels, compared to 8.24 (median 7) for failed campaigns (see Table 3-4). Successful campaigns range from 2 to 56 levels, failed from 0 to 29 levels. These averages are lower than that found for the Comics category by Mikhaylova (2015) of 53 levels, but for successful campaigns it is higher than the expected 6-11 levels found across categories. The number of reward levels is positively correlated to number of backers ($r_s=0.659$, $p<0.000$), amount raised ($r_s=0.676$, $p<0.000$), average donation ($r_s=0.474$, $p<0.000$), goal amount ($r_s=0.423$, $p<0.000$) and percent of goal raised ($r_s=0.508$, $p<0.000$).

Stretch goals encourage people to continue to give after the initial goal is reached, often by increasing reward offerings, or the quality of the end product. For example, books may have higher quality binding, or include dust jackets and bookplates. Stretch goals can be added at any time, for any amount and any content. Out of all webcomics Kickstarter projects, 51.37% had stretch goals. These were used within 70.19% of successful projects and 14.71% of failed projects. This may indicate that stretch goals make projects more desirable but may also support the idea that creators only tend to add stretch goals if they have a chance of reaching them.

It was expected that successful campaigns would have more stretch goals. The average number of stretch goals for successful campaigns is 5.98 (median 4),

with a maximum of 34, compared to an average of 3.95 (median 2.5) for failed campaigns and a maximum of 14, supporting this expectation (see Table 3-7). An average of 70.15% of stretch goals are reached by successful campaigns and 89.78% of such campaigns reached at least one stretch goal. Only 37.86% of creators reached all of their stretch goals.

Table 3-7 Stretch Goals in webcomics Kickstarter campaigns

	Number of stretch Goals		Number of stretch goals reached		% Stretch goals reached	
	Successful	Failed	Successful	Failed	Successful	Failed
Mean	5.98	3.95	4.60	0.35	70.15	3.5
(SD)	(5.18)	(3.76)	(5.18)	(1.57)	(34.93)	(15.65)
Median	4	2.5	3	0	83.33	0
Max.	34	14	34	7	100	70.0

It was also expected that the number of stretch goals would rise with the amount raised above the initial goal. The number of stretch goals is positively correlated with the amount raised and percent of goal raised ($r_s=0.475$ $p<0.000$ and $r_s=0.444$ $p<0.000$), in line with the idea that stretch goals are often not released until the previous stretch goal is hit; the promise of ‘more things’ keeps people interested. The number of stretch goals is also positively correlated with number of reward levels ($r_s=0.363$ $p<0.000$), goal amount ($r_s=0.262$, $p<0.000$), average donation ($r_s=0.301$ $p<0.000$), and number of backers ($r_s=0.455$ $p<0.000$). The proportion of stretch goals remaining to be reached is moderately negatively correlated with number of backers and amount raised ($r_s=-0.464$ $p<0.000$ and $r_s=-0.449$ $p<0.000$).

3.8.2 Comparison between Kickstarter and Patreon campaigns

This section compares the relevant factors from Patreon campaigns with those from Kickstarter campaigns. As Patreon is KIA and Kickstarter is AON, it makes sense to compare campaigns that pay out, so comparisons will be made with successful campaigns. First, it was expected that Patreon would raise less per payment and have lower pledges than Kickstarter, due to the recurring nature of payments which means that totals are potentially spread out over a long period of time. Patreon campaigns do tend to raise much less money than Kickstarter campaigns, as shown in Table 3-4, with Patreon campaigns having a mean total pledge of \$624.52 and a median of just \$222.11 compared to a mean of \$23,612.47 and median of \$8,334.11 earned by successful Kickstarter

campaigns. This difference is significant, $t(166.235)=6.445$, $p<0.000$. Whilst Patreon may be beneficial for a relatively guaranteed recurring income, this is rarely enough to make a living. Only 7.98% of creators earn over \$2,000 per month; very few creators do make significant amounts, with four creators taking over \$5,000 a payment. 86.70% of creators earn less than \$1,000 a payment. However, even smaller amounts can be enough to allow creators to pay for websites and servers, to stop hosting ads on their sites, and to create more merchandise to sell. 3.72% of creators fail to raise anything at all, but as Patreon only takes payment if the creator does, they are not losing out financially by continuing to use the page.

Backers on Patreon also do tend to pledge much less than donors to successful Kickstarter projects, $t(171.603)=26.207$, $p<0.000$. The median individual donation from a backer on Patreon is \$4.26 versus \$44.98 to a successful campaign on Kickstarter. One interesting point is that because Patreon payments are recurring, the amount received over time is much higher than the individual total. Creators can choose how often they wish backers to pledge; 74.47% are pledge monthly, 21.28% are pledge per update and 3.19% are pledge per week. This is likely because Patreon is treated like a 'pay check' and page totals then correspond to what Patreon actually pays out once a month. Even repeat Kickstarter campaigns, for example for new volumes of books, are only run around once a year. There are 147 Patreon campaigns which either get paid per month or per week, so assuming the donations remain stable webcomics creators on Patreon take home a median of \$3,162.00 a year (see Table 3-8). Whilst still far lower than the median Kickstarter pay out, it is more impressive; it is also worth remembering that whilst the vast majority of Kickstarter money goes towards fulfilment, this is not the case for Patreon.

Table 3-8 Potential yearly earnings for Patreon creators paid monthly or weekly

	Total Earnings (\$)	Individual Pledges (\$)
Mean	9,228.52	64.85
(SD)	(17,478.06)	(42.53)
Median	3,162.00	54.12
Maximum	117,444.00	278.16

If these potential payments over a year are taken into account creators on Patreon earn a median of \$54.12 per backer which is significantly more than for a successful Kickstarter, $t(205.595)=-4.391$, $p<0.000$. This suggests that spreading payments over a longer time may be appealing to both backers and

creators, allowing backers to give more to creators they wish to support, and providing creators with more income overall. Like Kickstarter, amount raised also significantly correlates with the average donation ($r_s=0.273$, $p<0.000$), suggesting that successful campaigns attract backers willing to give more.

Patreon was also expected to attract fewer backers because the pledge requires more of a commitment, and campaigns are KIA. Patreon campaigns do generally have far fewer backers than successful Kickstarter campaigns (45 versus 196) (see Table 3-4) $t(235.462)=4.610$, $p<0.000$. However, across all webcomics projects on Kickstarter, campaigns have the same median number of backers as Patreon despite a higher mean. On Patreon, the project with the most backers has 3,371 people regularly donating money, whilst on Kickstarter the most backers for a project was 7,119. This is more than twice Patreon, which suggests that many people prefer one-off payments to an ongoing commitment, even though that commitment can be cancelled at any time. Additionally, the fact that a Kickstarter backer does not pay unless the goal is reached reduces the risk and so may incentivise more people to pledge. Unsurprisingly, amount raised and number of backers are strongly correlated on both Patreon and Kickstarter ($r_s=0.950$, $p=0.000$ and $r_s=0.983$, $p=0.000$ respectively).

Rewards

Successful Kickstarter campaigns have an average of 14.07 (median 12) reward levels, compared to 8.24 (median 7) for failed campaigns, and 4.26 (median 4) for Patreon (see Table 3-4). Successful campaigns range from 2 to 56 levels, failed from 0 to 29 levels, and Patreon from 0 to 9 levels; on Patreon, 2.66% do not offer any rewards for backing. On Patreon, creators may stop their reward tiers earlier because they do not expect their backers to donate as much. The highest tier offered on Kickstarter is \$10,000 whilst on Patreon it is \$500. It appears that on Kickstarter, backers prefer to have a wide range of choices of rewards. For Patreon most people choose a level between \$0.01 and \$4.99 (66.84%), in line with the median and means of individual pledges given above. 90.31% of people choose a level at \$9 or below, so very few people give more than \$100 a year to a single creator. As on Kickstarter, the number of reward levels is positively correlated with number of backers, amount raised, and average donation ($r_s=0.149$, $p<0.042$, $r_s=0.287$, $p<0.000$, and $r_s=0.429$, $p<0.000$ respectively), although in all cases the correlation is weaker.

Table 3-9 Types of rewards offered on Kickstarter and Patreon

Type of Reward	Kickstarter Examples	Patreon Examples
Choice	-	“Ask me to do something”
Clothes	T-shirts, tote bags, etc.	-
Competition	-	Entry into a competition, vote for content
Early access	Seeing the comic before everyone else	Seeing the comic before everyone else
Existing art	Physical copies of art works or single comics	Physical copies of art works or single comics
Extra content	Guest artists, extra comics for backers	Extra comics for backers, behind-the-scenes art
Goal item	The aim of the campaign	-
Gratitude	‘our thanks’ etc written in reward tier; thank you email	‘our thanks’ etc written in reward tier; thank you email
Large digital items	Digital versions of a print book, pdfs of comics, digital audio recordings or videos	Original digital art, ebooks, pdfs of comics
Large physical items	Print books, Dust jackets/cases, figurines, gaming items	Character merchandise, plush toys
Limited Edition	Items that are only available through the campaign or in limited numbers	Items that are only available through the campaign or in limited numbers
Nothing	Some tiers literally say ‘nothing’.	Some tiers literally say ‘nothing’.
Online contact	Google hangout, online tutorial, one-on-one skype call	Google hangout, online tutorial, one-on-one skype call
Original art	Physical commissions, original page from comic, personalised story, mini-comic.	Physical commissions, original page from comic, personalised story, mini-comic.
Part in work	Become or create a character in the comic, create a storyline,	Become or create a character in the comic, create a storyline,
Personalised	At least one reward item is signed or sketched in; written thank you	At least one reward item is signed or sketched in; written thank you
Random	-	Creator randomly decides what to send
Real-life contact	Handshake if we meet, dinner, face-to-face consultation etc.	Handshake if we meet, dinner, face-to-face consultation etc.
Recognition	Name on product or on website	Name on product or on website
Small digital items	Digital art for desktop or phone backgrounds	Digital art for desktop or phone backgrounds
Small physical items	Bookplates, bookmarks, stickers, buttons, badges, key chains, phone charms, patches	Bookplates, bookmarks, stickers, buttons, badges, key chains, phone charms, patches
Subscription	Online access to exclusive content, subscription to receive items repeatedly.	Online access to exclusive content, Patreon activity feed,
Warm glow	‘satisfaction of supporting us’, ‘that warm fuzzy feeling’ etc written in reward tier	‘satisfaction of supporting us’, ‘that warm fuzzy feeling’ etc written in reward tier

In the dataset of identified projects there are 816 Patreon reward entries and 3,340 Kickstarter rewards entries. Ten percent of these from each platform were coded to elicit the types of rewards offered to backers (see Table 3-9). The 23 reward types broadly fall into five categories: Recognition, Extra Content, Digital Rewards, Physical Rewards, and Personal Contact. In terms of the content of rewards, on both Kickstarter and Patreon the first level often consists of some form of expression of gratitude, presumably meant to elicit some form of ‘warm glow’ feeling from the backer. Most tiers on Kickstarter tend to contain a version of the goal product as soon as possible; when the goal is a book, a digital version is usually offered early on, followed by softcovers and then hardbacks. This corroborates the idea that Kickstarter is often used as a pre-order system. Aside from the goal products, there are a wide range of rewards offered, from stickers and bookplates to personalised meetings, and both original artwork and prints.

There are also some reward types that, whilst basically the same, offer slightly different things depending on the platform, for example Patreon creators do not tend to offer copies of their print books and usually stick to smaller physical items if they have tangible products at all. When exclusive content is offered, especially on Patreon this is mostly behind-the-scenes type work, including works-in-progress, sketches, and designs. Art is often personalised with sketches or signed, even when not specially commissioned work, and digital creations such as personalised avatars and wallpapers are common too.

Pledge Hiding

The number of backers accounted for by reward levels is lower than the total amount of backers due to backers who choose not to disclose their pledge publicly⁴⁰. Pledge hiding is higher on Patreon than on Kickstarter, whether campaigns are successful or fail (see Table 3-4). The difference is significant between Patreon and successful campaigns, $t(289.739)=-4.817$, $p<0.000$) but not Patreon and failed campaigns. In total, only 2.48% of backers of webcomics Kickstarter projects hide their pledges, compared to 10.10% on Patreon. This could perhaps imply that the motivation to give for donors on Patreon is not social recognition or thanks, but something else. This could be material reward,

⁴⁰ Note that if a backer gives less than the lowest tier (for example if the first tier is \$10 and a backer gives the minimum \$1) they also will not show up on the project page.

although these are offered less on Patreon, and therefore it is likely to be a genuine desire to help or support a creator, or because giving feels good or produces warm glow.

On Kickstarter, the difference in pledge hiding between successful and failed campaigns is also significant, $t(146.322)=-4.776, p<0.000$. Only three successful projects had more than 50% pledge hiding, and only 29 (10.94%) in total had more than 10% compared to 21 and 52 (38.25%) respectively. Failed campaigns may have more backers hiding their pledges because they rely more on close friends or family who may feel that they should hide their relationships to the creator in order to attract more backers. It is possible that creators themselves donate in order to bulk up the amounts raised and number of backers, but they hide this fact. A third option is that people back projects that they like but think might fail and hide their pledge so as not to reduce social capital.

On Kickstarter, pledge hiding significantly negatively correlates with number of backers, amount raised, goal amount, and percent of goal reached ($r_s=-0.180, p<0.000$ $r_s=-0.154, p=0.002$ $r_s=-0.117, p=0.019$ and $r_s=-0.168, p=0.001$ respectively, see Table 6-10). This implies that as more people are attracted to give to a project, the more others are willing to show their support as well. Pledge hiding does not correlate significantly with any factor on Patreon.

Table 3-10 Milestone Goals for Patreon webcomics projects

	Number of milestones	Number of milestones reached	% milestones reached
Mean	4.13	1.50	29.54
(SD)	(2.14)	(1.84)	(29.10)
Median	4	1	25.00
Maximum.	12	11	91.67

Milestone goals can be used on Patreon to indicate the level of donation the creator is aiming for. Milestone goals are events or additional rewards that are triggered when a creator reaches a certain amount of funding. They can be anything the creator chooses and can be set at any level, with the lowest set at just \$1. Out of the Patreon webcomic campaigns, 80.32% have at least one milestone goal, and of those 59.60% have reached at least one of those goals. The average number of milestone goals is 4.13 (median 4), with a maximum of 12, and on average creators have reached 29.54% (median 25%) of their

milestones (see Table 3-10). No one had reached all of them. Milestones can be added and removed at any time, so it is likely that some creators add additional milestones as they reach the previous one, to encourage new donors.

It was expected that as the money pledged increased, so would the number of Milestone goals, in the same way that happens for stretch goals on Kickstarter. This was found to be the case ($r_s=0.258$ $p=0.01$). The number of milestones is also significantly correlated to the number of reward levels offered ($r_s=0.258$ $p=0.001$) suggesting that creators are fairly consistent when creating their pages, and if they want a lot of goals, they give a lot of rewards in return. It is also significantly correlated to average donation amount, and number of backers ($r_s=0.224$ $p=0.006$ and $r_s=0.178$ $p=0.029$) suggesting that backers try to help creators who have more goals by giving more if they can. Unsurprisingly, and like stretch goals, the proportion of milestones remaining to be reached is moderately negatively correlated with the number of backers and the amount raised ($r_s=-0.504$ $p<0.000$ and $r_s=-0.541$ $p<0.000$); more backers means more money, and more money means more goals can be reached.

3.9 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Based on existing literature on both crowdfunding and webcomics, a series of assertions were made about how various factors would affect webcomics campaigns, summarised in Table 3-11.

Table 3-11 Summary of results relating to assertions made in section 3.6

Assertion	Supported?
Failed projects raise very little of their goal	Yes
Successful projects have shorter campaigns	Yes
Successful campaigns have more backers	Yes
Pledges increase slowly with goal amount	Yes
Pledges correlate with the number of backers	Yes
Goals are mostly for books	Yes
Patreon attracts fewer backers	Yes
Successful campaigns have more stretch goals	Yes
Number of stretch goals increased with percent of goal raised	Yes
Number of milestone goals increased with amount of money pledged	Yes
The average project has a goal of \$26k, raises less than \$14k from 167 backers	No
Success rate is around 53%	No
Successful projects raise only a small amount above their goal	No
Pledges are around \$78 on average	No
Success rate decreases as goal increased	No
The most common reward tier is around \$30	Partially
Campaigns have a large number of reward options	Partially
Patreon raises less per payment	Partially
Patreon raises lower pledges	Partially

On Kickstarter the average webcomics project had a goal of \$8,642 and received pledges of \$13,855 from 258 backers, which is substantially different from that found by Madsen & McMullin (2015). They also have a higher success rate than expected, at around 56%. The most common pledge is between \$20 and \$30 and the average pledge is \$41.45, again very different from that reported by Calvo (2015) and Benenson & Gallagher (2014). It was predicted that successful projects would predominantly raise only a small amount above their goal, and failed projects would raise very little. Whilst the latter was seen to be the case, the first prediction was not observed. The amount raised does correlate fairly strongly to the goal amount, somewhat supporting this supposition, although this is not always the case. A substantial number of webcomics projects raise a great deal above their targets: nearly 30% of all projects and 52% of successful projects reached at least 150% of their goal. Success rate also did not decrease as the goal amount increased. In fact success rates actually appear to increase with the goal.

Other results were more ambiguous. The most common reward tier, which was found to be \$30 on Comics Kickstarter campaigns, was slightly lower at around \$25. In terms of rewards and goals, campaigns were expected to have a large number of reward levels; this was only somewhat supported with a median of 12 for successful campaigns but only 7 for failed and 4 for Patreon campaigns. Finally, in terms of Patreon, it was found that pledges and amount raised are lower than on Kickstarter on a per payment basis, as expected, but were higher on average over a year.

3.9.1 How Do Webcomics Communities Use Crowdfunding?

When webcomics creators choose to use crowdfunding to fund a particular project, they usually run for around a month, and aim to raise around \$4,500. The average (median) successful webcomic campaign on Kickstarter gets 196 backers and raises just over \$8,300, compared to just 5 backers raising \$160 for failed campaigns. When they choose to opt for a recurring donation system, they generally prefer for pledges to be per month of work rather than per specific posting, perhaps giving more freedom to creators to vary their update schedule. Such projects also tend to attract more backers. The median Patreon webcomic campaign raises just over \$220 a payment from 45 backers.

As the overall amount raised increases, so does the number of backers, and the amount pledged per backer rises only slowly with the goal amount, suggesting that backers of webcomics projects tend to give similar amounts regardless of goal, perhaps to gain a particular reward that tends to appear at similar levels. Most goals (60%) were for books, which are predominantly published as collections of comics that have appeared online. As such they tend to be produced once a year. As subcategories only began in 2014 and data was collected at the end of 2015, creators may not have had time to run more than one campaign. Books are also the most successful goal, funding at a rate of 83%.

Other uses of reward-based crowdfunding include creating a new webcomic or continuing an existing one, other forms of merchandise such as plush toys and calendars, and occasionally goals such as games, videos, attendance at events, or apps or websites for hosting webcomics. Creation of a new webcomic is the second most popular, accounting for 20% of projects but this goal is largely unsuccessful, funding just 21% of the time. As previously stated, this is likely due to a higher perceived risk or lack of trust in a new creator.

3.9.2 What are the success factors for webcomics using different models of crowdfunding?

Kickstarter is rewards-based and Patreon is subscription-based crowdfunding so the potential for comparing two models within the crowdfunding community is interesting. There are different measures of success across both platforms, and significant differences in the amounts of money exchanging hands and the numbers of backers for each project, amongst other variables. The finding that the promise of rewards and tangible products are not necessarily the main drivers for supporting crowdfunding campaigns is also particularly interesting.

On Kickstarter, webcomics are successfully funded 57% of the time, which is higher than either the wider Comics category or Kickstarter overall. As mentioned above, books are the most successful goal. Discounting very small goals, the most successful targets are between \$8,000 and \$50,000, which is quite a large range but suggests that backers are aware of the costs involved for different projects and are willing to give to realistic goals. The percent of goal raised appears unrelated to the original goal amount. Successful projects have far more backers than failed projects, have shorter campaign runs, and raise

more both overall and per backer. Backers of successful projects also hide their pledges less than those of failed projects.

Successful Kickstarter campaigns have a greater number of reward levels than failed campaigns. The number of reward levels correlates with number of backers, amount raised, and average donation, suggesting backers are attracted by rewards and like to have a selection of choices. Backers predominantly give around \$25 to a Kickstarter campaign, which often corresponds to the reward tier at which the goal product first appears in physical format (ie a printed book rather than an ebook). Kickstarter campaigns that succeed are highly likely to add stretch goals, with 70% having at least one, with a median of 4 per campaign. Usually at least one stretch goal is reached (nearly 90%) and the number of stretch goals correlates positively with the amount raised, average donation, and the number of backers. This is consistent with the idea that creators add stretch goals in order to incentivise people to continue to give after the campaign is successful. Existing backers may also increase their donations in order to receive additional benefits triggered by a stretch goal.

Patreon does not have a simple success metric although nearly 60% of creators who choose to place milestone goals have reached at least one of them. Patreon campaigns tend to raise much less than successful Kickstarter campaigns however, even when the potential earnings over a year of Patreon are taken into account. However, whilst the vast majority of Kickstarter payments go towards creating a product, with little left over for living expenses, this is not the case for Patreon, in which the bulk of the earnings are aimed at providing an income for the creator. For many creators, the potential to earn an extra \$3,000 a year may be more appealing than receiving \$8,000 to create a specific product. On the other hand, the stability of Patreon donations is questionable; backers can give for as long as they want so for some this may amount to a single small payment over a year, and monthly payments can fluctuate greatly. Some creators have warned against relying on Patreon as a stable source of income, and advise thinking of it as a bonus on top of their other money making activities; this may be wise especially considering that only 8% of creators make over \$2,000 a payment. In the past Patreon has also had problems with 'ghost' patrons who pledge in order to get access to additional content and rewards but who withdraw before their payments are taken; this has been

addressed by offering the option of charging backers their first payment as soon as they pledge (Patreon, 2017b).

Patreon campaigns also tend to attract far fewer backers than Kickstarter, and raise less per individual payment. However, given the caveats in the previous paragraph, yearly earnings per backer are potentially higher. This suggests that a creator who has a dedicated community who will give long term support might have more overall success on Patreon. Most people on Patreon give less than \$5 a payment; backers are likely to consider how much they are willing to give over time, planning to stop their donations past a certain point. Very few people give more than \$100 a year to a single creator, which is the level at which the 1,000 True Fan theory (see section 2.1.1) suggests is the target. Creators who have failed campaigns on Kickstarter also tend to raise less than many Patreon campaigns, and so some creators may do better raising a small amount on a regular basis than aiming for a larger amount and receiving nothing.

Patreon also tends to offer fewer rewards than Kickstarter, suggesting incentives for backing on the two platforms might be different, although backers on both platforms are willing to give more for an appealing reward. Creators give physical rewards out much less frequently on Patreon so backers are not usually triggered by rewards to give more.

Rewards predominantly take the form of Recognition, Extra Content, Digital Rewards, Physical Rewards, and Personal Contact. It is likely that backers are motivated to differing extents by each type of reward. This will be investigated in the following chapter where the extent to which backers are drawn to each type of reward across the two platforms will be compared. The draw of each type of reward is also likely to determine how much a backer gives as they appear at different levels, and may help to explain why some campaigns earn so much more than others.

3.10 CONCLUSIONS

Both Patreon and Kickstarter provide varied benefits to webcomics creators who wish to monetise their work. Much of the literature on crowdfunding discusses the importance of community, and the need to emphasise the *person* behind the *product*. This is possibly why webcomics creators have found that the crowdfunding mechanism is so useful to them; they have often spent years fostering relationships with readers and relying on their communities of

dedicated fans. However, crowdfunding is by no means a golden ticket for creators; Kickstarter does not provide a steady income, and Patreon rarely provides full-time income levels. Even when Kickstarter projects are hugely successful, they rarely do more than pay for the fulfilment of a particular project, not covering living expenses or providing a wage. Patreon does allow creators to receive a recurring income, but this rarely reaches over \$1,000 a month.

For creators who do choose to pursue crowdfunding, it may not be as simple as it appears to choose between a Patreon or Kickstarter type campaign. Whilst a creator who has a book to publish may automatically choose Kickstarter, the type of reader that their comic and community attracts may actually respond better to Patreon, and the creator would be better off running a long campaign and waiting until they can afford a print run themselves. Additionally, whilst there is no financial or material penalty to running a failed campaign, and therefore it might be expected that a creator could run campaigns on both, there may be other costs of failure such as losing social capital or reputation. There is also actually a large amount of work involved in launching and maintaining a project, not to mention fulfilling rewards once a project is successful. A creator may be better off focusing on one campaign that they are confident that they can get their fans to support.

Most current literature does not take into account the context of the campaigns themselves, studying performance across categories as if they all had the same underlying mechanisms. It is likely that campaigns with large goals for highly technical products will operate and perform differently to those with smaller goals for creative products for example. Some types of campaign will naturally attract particular types of backers, and some will have dedicated communities behind them before the project whilst others will build up a following during the campaign. This thesis aims to begin to address this by studying a particular context of crowdfunding in depth, one which is predominantly focused on smaller creative projects aimed at an existing community. This chapter investigated factors that may be involved in successful webcomics campaigns, comparing them with existing literature as well as across two different models. The following chapter will investigate the specific behaviour of backers and their motivations behind their backing choices, including further examination of the roles of rewards and goals.

WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO GIVE TO WEBCOMICS CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGNS?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes a large online study, conducted by questionnaire, of backers of webcomics crowdfunding campaigns on both Kickstarter and Patreon, which aims to answer the third research question, “What motivates people to give to webcomics crowdfunding campaigns?”, particularly in terms of the roles of incentives and reciprocity within campaigns. As such it focuses on two sub-questions:

- a) How do rewards and incentives offered to backers affect crowdfunding success?
- b) What is the role of reciprocity in crowdfunding?

The main aim is to determine the motivations and attitudes of people who back webcomics crowdfunding campaigns, and to identify differences between rewards-based and subscription-based crowdfunding. This was done by asking backers about their previous behaviours on specific crowdfunding projects, their reasons behind this behaviour, and their attitudes towards giving.

4.2 MOTIVATIONS AND DETERRENENTS FOR BACKERS USING CROWDFUNDING

Whilst the most obvious motivation for backers to support a crowdfunding campaign might seem to be rewards, previous authors have emphasised that backers are “not primarily motivated by material rewards, but predominantly by [...] immaterial rewards and a range of intrinsic motives” (Hemer, 2011, p.14), and find mixed responses about the draw of rewards with some backers not wanting to receive them at all (Choy & Schlagwein, 2016). The role of collaboration is also important to both backers and creators, (Hui, Greenberg, et al., 2014), from providing finances to having creative input, and motivations

4.2 MOTIVATIONS AND DETERRENENTS FOR BACKERS USING CROWDFUNDING

for giving tend to surround the connections between backers and creators (Gerber et al., 2012). The main motivations that previous research has found for backers to give money to crowdfunding campaigns are summarised in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Motivations for backers to use crowdfunding, according to existing literature

Motivations	References
Rewards; Private and community benefits; early-access or limited edition products	Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2012; Gerber & Hui, 2013; Gerber et al., 2012; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016
Obligation to back other creators and entrepreneurs; Attracting others to own project; guilt	Gerber et al., 2012; Hemer, 2011; Zheng et al., 2014
Liking the person asking for money; engaging and interacting with creators; identification with creators; shared goals	Beier & Wagner, 2015; Hemer, 2011; Li et al., 2015; Mitra & Gilbert, 2014
Deferring to authority	Mitra & Gilbert, 2014
Completing funding goals; Satisfaction from being involved in the realisation and success of a project; personal impact	Althoff & Leskovec, 2015; Crosetto & Regner, 2014; Hemer, 2011; Wash, 2013
Belonging to a community; expanding a personal network; social ties	Aitamurto, 2015; Belleflamme et al., 2012; Choy & Schlagwein, 2016; Gerber & Hui, 2013; Gerber et al., 2012; Hemer, 2011; Hui, Greenberg, et al., 2014; Inbar & Barzilay, 2014; Zheng, Zhang, Xu, & Wang, 2015
Supporting people and causes; philanthropy	Gerber & Hui, 2013; Gerber et al., 2012; Ramos & Stewart, 2014; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016
Showing acceptance of others; empathy; sympathy	Choy & Schlagwein, 2016; Gerber & Hui, 2013; Gerber et al., 2012)
Personal identification with a project; interest in a project; connectedness to a project;	Choy & Schlagwein, 2016; Hemer, 2011; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014; Li et al., 2015; Ramos & Stewart, 2014; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016; Solomon, Ma, & Wash, 2015
Contributing to society	Hemer, 2011
Playfulness, fun, enjoyment, hedonism	Gerber et al., 2012; Li et al., 2015; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016; Schulz, Haas, Schulthess, Blohm, & Leimeister, 2015
Nostalgia	Choy & Schlagwein, 2016
Image; reputation; recognition; prestige; seeking respect; identity	Choy & Schlagwein, 2016; Gerber et al., 2012; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016
Trust	Althoff & Leskovec, 2015; Beier & Wagner, 2015; Gerber & Hui, 2013
Curiosity	Li et al., 2015

Motivations are not mutually exclusive; a backer may choose to back for any one reason or a combination thereof. Ryu & Kim (2016) classify backer motivations based on whether they are predominantly intrinsic or extrinsic, and self-oriented or other-oriented, reproduced in Table 4-2.

4.2 MOTIVATIONS AND DETERRENENTS FOR BACKERS USING CROWDFUNDING

Table 4-2 Backer motivation types, from Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Self-oriented	Interest Playfulness	Reward
Other-oriented	Philanthropic	Relationship Recognition

They discuss the relationships between these motivations and funding behaviour using a typology of backers (Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016). Angelic backers are highly agreeable, but not very open, are older than other backers, tend to pledge small amounts early on to larger projects; they are motivated most by philanthropy, and lowest by rewards. Reward hunters are not very agreeable but are highly open, and tend to pledge later on in campaigns for smaller projects; they are motivated most by rewards and least by philanthropy. Avid fans are the most open, conscientious, extroverted, and agreeable group, and give the highest amounts; they scored highest on all motivations apart from rewards. Tasteful hermits are as active as avid fans but are more introverted and less motivated by relationships and recognition. Ryu and Kim (2016) also provide advice to creators on which backers to target and when (see Figure 4-1), and what type of rewards to offer to whom. For example, reward hunters can be attracted early by offering limited edition rewards, and relationship-building rewards such as offline meetings might attract avid fans.

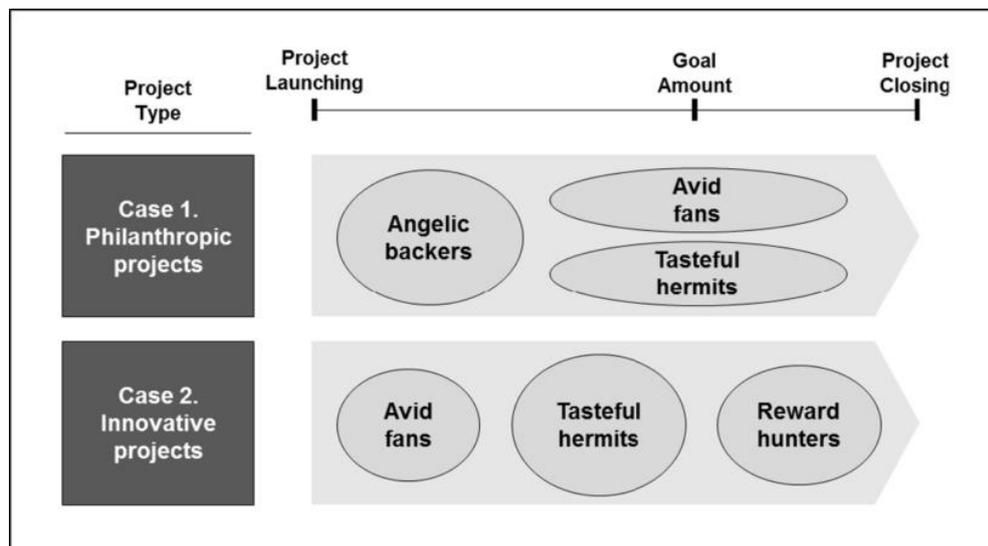


Figure 4-1 "Targeting strategy for project creators" showing when in a campaign to target particular types of backers, Ryu and Kim, 2016.

The perceived motivations of creators are also important: prosocial motives make a campaign seem more feasible, trustworthy, and active, whilst monetary motives are positively related to the perceived value of rewards (Ryu & Kim,

4.3 EXISTING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN BACKING BEHAVIOUR

2014). The authors suggest that further research is needed into both the relationships between creators and backers, and the relationship between motivations and subsequent behaviour.

Similar to this typology of intrinsic-self, intrinsic-other, extrinsic-self, and extrinsic-other, Choy identifies four motivation types for charitable crowdfunding: intrinsic-individual, intrinsic-social, extrinsic-individual, and extrinsic-social (Choy & Schlagwein, 2016). Extrinsic factors are tangible returns like rewards, whilst intrinsic factors are more intangible and may include fun, curiosity, and altruism. Backers who find projects through a platform, rather than through a creator or recommendation, are likely to have a higher intrinsic motivation to back, and are more likely to return to crowdfunding, than backers who arrive at a project through the creator (Althoff & Leskovec, 2015).

The main deterrent is lack of trust in the creator (Gerber & Hui, 2013). Waiting to see if a campaign will succeed before backing, in order to free-ride if it does so, may also prevent people from backing (Solomon et al., 2015; Suzor, 2014). Perceived risk can also cause backers to revoke pledges before campaigns end (Gierczak, Bretschneider, & Leimeister, 2014). The sheer number of projects and platforms has also pointed to a 'Kickstarter Fatigue' effect where backers are becoming less likely to back projects, particularly if the goal is high (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014). Very high performing projects, frequently with a known name attached to them, are often highlighted by a platform to encourage success of other projects. However, such 'superstars' may actually hinder the success of other projects by setting too high a standard about what a fundable project looks like to backers (Solomon, Ma, & Wash, 2016).

4.3 EXISTING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN BACKING BEHAVIOUR

Many studies that have used psychological theories to explain motivations to back and subsequent backing behaviour (see Table 4-3) only begin to scratch the surface, often as part of a larger study or as an attempt to explain observed trends rather than being the focus of the study to begin with. Few have looked in depth at the psychological reasons people might have for crowdfunding and the underlying attitudes. Some of these findings are discussed below, before a more in depth look at the relevant concepts.

Table 4-3 Theories related to backer motivations to crowdfund

Theories	References
Social capital; reciprocity of social capital; norm of reciprocity	Colombo et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2014, 2015
Persuasion: reciprocity, scarcity, social proof	Mitra & Gilbert, 2014
Social identity theory	Mitra & Gilbert, 2014
Social influence: altruism and crowding-out	Burtch, Ghose, & Wattal, 2013a
Diffusion of responsibility	Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2013
Social reputation	Belleflamme et al., 2012
Resource exchange theory	Greenberg & Gerber, 2014
Self-determination theory; intrinsic vs extrinsic motivations	Choy, 2016; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016
Herding; signalling; bandwagon behaviour; snowballing	Calvo, 2015; Inbar & Barzilay, 2014; Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2014; Solomon et al., 2015
Psychological ownership	Thürriidl & Kamleitner, 2015a, 2015b; Zheng et al., 2015
Altruism	Aitamurto, 2015; Burtch et al., 2013a; Crosetto & Regner, 2014; Li et al., 2015

Resource exchange theory is used to examine patterns of exchange in stakeholder relationships. Backers have been identified as receiving five of the six factors in resource exchange theory through rewards-based crowdfunding: information, status, love, services, and goods (not money) (Greenberg & Gerber, 2014). Platforms may facilitate different types of exchange in different ways, leading the authors to suggest allowing backers to commit more than just funds, for example time and expertise, to help a campaign to succeed.

Psychological ownership may be important to backers' decisions to crowdfund because it connects that backer with the campaign. Public recognition, for example thanking people on a website, as opposed to private recognition such as an email, increases psychological ownership, which in turn elevates a willingness to pledge and intentions to share campaigns, but only for those who have a high level of public self-consciousness (Thürriidl & Kamleitner, 2015b). Other ways of increasing psychological ownership are through messages of empowerment (Thürriidl & Kamleitner, 2015a), and manipulating social capital and social interaction (Zheng et al., 2015); for example, if backers can influence decisions about a project, or if they have insider knowledge of it, they will feel as if they have some ownership of it and will become more involved.

Altruism may be seen to a greater extent in backers who are not attached to a particular creator, but rather want to help others succeed, or those who like the idea of a product but do not plan to buy it themselves. Examples include

supporting environmental projects because they support the cause, not because they want a product (Bender et al., 2016). Reciprocity is more likely in backers who are attached to a creator. Social network ties and shared meaning may feed into motivations to back campaigns as a reciprocal return on social capital already spent (Zheng et al., 2014). Social capital is the bundle of relationships, social cues, norms, values, and understandings that a person creates and uses in order to function in social groups. Generalised reciprocity from internal social capital can be triggered by making behaviour visible to others in the community, for example Kickstarter displays the number of projects a person has either created or backed. Backers may be more likely to back a project if the creator has also backed projects themselves in the past (Colombo et al., 2015).

Once enough initial backers have been attracted, others may follow suit. The finding that 97% of campaigns that are able to raise 40% of their goal go on to meet their goal has been used to suggest the presence of herding (Inbar & Barzilay, 2014). Early donations can signal to other backers that a project is worthwhile; however, if backers wait too long for a signal from others, projects may fail (Solomon et al., 2015).

Crowding-out is the idea that some types of motivation (particularly extrinsic) can undermine other types of motivation (particularly intrinsic). Burtch et al. (2013a) studied a journalism crowdfunding site, and found support for altruism and crowding-out as a model of social influence, but suggest that crowding-out may be reduced in more social crowdfunding settings where backers are concerned about identity and how they are perceived. This is further discussed in section 4.3.4. Diffusion of responsibility in the context of crowdfunding is where people do not contribute to a project that already has a lot of supporters because they think others will fill the funding gaps. This may have similar effects to crowding-out. Diffusion of responsibility shows a deadline effect, lessening closer to the end of the campaign, which suggests that backer motivations once a campaign has reached its goal may be substantially different to beforehand (Kuppuswamy & Bayus, 2013). The authors also do not expect to see crowding-out in the social setting of rewards-based platforms, nor herding, reciprocity, or conformity.

With regards to webcomics crowdfunding, where most backers are likely to be in some way attached to a creator or a fandom, the most applicable theories are likely to do with prosocial motives, social norms, social capital, social

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reputation, and psychological ownership. Whilst donating money to a creator may be seen as an altruistic or charitable act, it is rarely the case that the donor receives no reward at all. Even when no physical reward is supplied, the donor may be benefitting in other ways, such as getting their name on a website in thanks, or simply feeling good for helping (known as 'warm glow'). They may also benefit the whole community and not just themselves, for example the funds may help to allow the creator to make more updates to the comic. The overarching theme emerging from much of the literature on crowdfunding appears to be a give-and-take relationship between creators and consumers, with both parties benefitting in different ways. Much of the success of webcomics is attributed to a similar feeling of give-and-take between readers and creators. This implies that reciprocity will be an important concept for webcomics crowdfunding.

Prosocial behaviour is voluntary behaviour performed in order to benefit another, a community, or society as a whole. Examples include sharing, helping, donating, co-operating, and volunteering (see for example Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Wittek and Bekkers (2015) identify four types of prosocial acts: acts carried out by individuals to benefit a specific other individual; acts carried out by individuals to benefit a collective, as in donations to charity; acts carried out by a collective to benefit an individual; and acts carried out by a collective to help another collective. Most studies of prosocial behaviour assume the first form (individual to individual). Wittek and Bekkers (2015) also classify formal prosocial behaviour as actions that involve an intermediary, such as giving to charity, volunteering, and blood donation, and informal prosocial behaviour as less structured action such as social and emotion support, caring for children, and helping strangers. Crowdfunding would therefore be a formal prosocial behaviour, but it has aspects of all four prosocial acts: an individual chooses to give to a campaign run by another individual (or group), but the overall campaign consists of a group giving to that individual (or group).

There is an important distinction between motives and intention. Whilst the intention may be to help another person, the motivation to do so may be to receive rewards, increase one's reputation, or simply to be helpful. The same behaviours may be carried out for different reasons, which may be altruistic or selfish, and the same motives may lead to different behaviours (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994). It is most likely that for any act, there are a number of

underlying motivations and intentions, some of which are more altruistic than others. Often reasons for behaving prosocially are a mixture of self- and other-regarding (Diacon, 2014), for example helping a cause, helping others, gaining experience and learning new skills, feeling useful, gaining status, and for pleasure.

So, although altruism is not the same as, and does not always lead to, prosocial behaviour, it may be one of the motivations for such an act (Batson, 1998). For example, Locey & Rachlin (2015) found that even when there is no chance of reciprocation, people may still be willing to give up significant amounts of money for the sake of others. Other explanations for prosocial behaviour include reciprocity; empathy, sympathy, and compassion; benefits to the self, including gaining prestige or avoiding shame and guilt; peer pressure (Reyniers, 2013); maintaining a positive mood (Clary et al., 1998); and cultural and social norms (Diacon, 2014). Prosocial behaviour has also been linked to personality, although as a highly complex set of behaviours it may be impossible to predict through a single characteristic (Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger, & Freifeld, 1995). It has been suggested that forms of helping and motivations to give may be split into three areas based on how self- and other-oriented they are: those of altruism, reciprocity, and egoism or selfishness (Penner et al., 1995; Wang, 2013); relevant literature is then structured under these three headings.

4.3.1 Altruism and Giving

Altruism has been proposed to be particularly important in communities that are formed around a common interest (Ma & Chan, 2014), which strongly applies to webcomics communities. Altruism has been problematic to define for researchers. Some consider that for a behaviour to be altruistically motivated it must be entirely other-regarding and unrewarded. Others allow for varying degrees of return for the actor. At its broadest, altruism may be seen as “an intentional and voluntary act performed to benefit another person as the primary motivation and either without a conscious expectation of reward [...] or with the conscious or unconscious expectation of reward” (Feigin, Owens, & Goodyear-smith, 2014). Due to the differing opinions of many researchers as to the correct definition of altruism, a continuum of altruism may be more appropriate (e.g. Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994), from purely selfless to more self-regarding motivations. Therefore, the term ‘pure altruism’ is used to

describe behaviours in which the motivations are solely other-regarding, with no expectation of reward, and often with some personal cost (Andreoni, 1990). The majority of the concepts reviewed do not discount a concern for the welfare of others or a motivation to help another, therefore forms of behaviour such as reciprocity are considered altruistic as long as they are not completely motivated by self-regarding concerns with no consideration of others. This is in agreement with other studies who have used underlying motivation to distinguish pure altruism from other forms of altruism and helping behaviour (Batson, Darley, & Coke, 1978; Feigin et al., 2014; Ferguson, Atsma, De Kort, & Veldhuizen, 2012; Krebs, 1982).

Warm Glow and Impure Altruism

Pure altruism is problematic because even when concern for others is the sole conscious motivation for giving, it often elicits positive emotions and feelings of satisfaction. These feelings are termed 'warm glow'. Warm glow may also arise from meeting the needs of society rather than an individual (Evans & Ferguson, 2014). Unexpected warm glow as a result of a behaviour can be reinforcing and so that behaviour may be repeated (Ferguson & Lawrence, 2016). It is often hard to determine whether warm glow is a motivation or a consequence of an altruistic action, and there is some debate about whether unanticipated warm glow should prevent a behaviour from being classed as purely altruistic. "Self-benefits may be unintended consequences of reaching the ultimate goal of benefitting the other. If so, the motivation would be altruistic, not egoistic" (Batson, 1998, p.300).

Some rewards in crowdfunding seem specifically designed to elicit feelings similar to warm glow, for example gratitude and acknowledgement, which often include being publicly thanked on a website or product. If it is the primary motivation behind a behaviour, the pursuit of feeling good may also be defined as egoistic, or as negative state relief in that guilt or shame over not giving is avoided. Prestige, the positive consequences of being seen by others to give, can also look like warm glow from the outside (Katz & Malul, 2015). These motivations are discussed in section 4.3.3.

Impure altruism is often defined in terms of the combination of both (anticipated) warm glow and a desire to help another (Andreoni, 1990; Ferguson, Atsma, et al., 2012). Feeling good as a result of doing good is generally

not viewed as selfish, and increases perceptions of moral character (Barasch, Levine, Berman, & Small, 2014). As such, feeling good does not stop people from classifying the behaviour as altruistic but rather qualifies it as impure.

Reluctant Altruism

Reluctant altruism is the concept that an individual helps because they do not trust others to do so (Evans & Ferguson, 2014; Ferguson, Atsma, et al., 2012; Ferguson & Lawrence, 2016; Reyniers, 2013). This differs from most theories of altruism, in which trust in others leads to greater altruism. It has been seen in first-time and novice (four or less donations) blood donors, and is also associated with frustration (Ferguson, Atsma, et al., 2012). This concept could apply to crowdfunding, as backers may only choose to give money to a campaign because they believe no one else will. Whilst they do not want the creator to fail, or to stop being able to create, under normal circumstances they may not themselves be compelled to back a campaign. It may be important because Maximiano (2012) reports that whilst 90.3% of people are prepared to return a favour, only 63% of people expect a favour in return from someone who they themselves help. She suggests that this could be due to a lack of trust that others will return favours, finding that only 36.8% of people trust others in general (not just to return favours).

Reluctant altruism and warm glow have been found to correlate, although they are considered to be individual motivations (Ferguson & Lawrence, 2016). Reluctant altruism may be a mechanism used to mitigate the effects of free-riding, in which people take advantage of others willingness to pay and do not pay themselves, merely consuming the free benefits that result. As such, it could be an individual's preference to help when free-riding is present rather than punish the free-riders, particularly relevant when punishment options don't exist (Ferguson & Lawrence, 2016). This may be relevant in the case of webcomics, who tend to keep the vast bulk of their content available for free whether or not they raise money through other sources. Fans may choose to continue to consume the free content without giving anything back even when the opportunity exists.

Reluctant altruism has also been compared to a sense of duty, "with donors acting in the face of others inaction, with both driven by a sense of moral worth in terms of what should be done. However, reluctant altruism is more likely also

driven by a sense of frustration with others inaction, whereas duty is likely driven by a sense of pleasing others by doing the right thing” (Evans & Ferguson, 2014, p.119). In this sense, it may be less altruistic and more egoistic, as a form of negative state aversion. It may also resonate with social norms for fairness and reciprocity.

Diffusion of responsibility “refers to the belief that others present are just as capable of helping the victim” (Feigin et al., 2014) and as such is perhaps the opposite sentiment to reluctant altruism. It is more likely to occur when there is danger involved in helping, however, it could potentially occur in crowdfunding if the campaign is perceived to have a great deal of support and therefore an individual’s donations is seen as not needed. This is sometimes referred to as crowding-out, with the more people who contribute, the less important an individual might deem their own contribution to be, and therefore they will not donate. This is not to be confused with motivation crowding-out, where some types of motivation, such as receiving a reward, are seen to undermine others, such as providing help, as discussed in section 4.3.4.

4.3.2 Reciprocity and Giving

The norm of reciprocity is a universal social norm that tells people they should help (and not injure) people who have helped them (Batson, 1998; Gouldner, 1960). Similar to altruism, reciprocity may be more appropriately understood as a continuum of behaviours (Gouldner, 1960), and has been defined in many different ways. For example, Diacon (2014) discusses reciprocity in terms of actions taken by individuals who take into account the intentions of others, particularly the recipient, and DeSteno (2015) sees reciprocal altruism in terms of opportunity for ‘pay-back’. Generally, reciprocity is “an exchange between individuals or networks for mutual benefit that serves as a catalyst for relationship and community building” (Holton, Coddington, Lewis, & Zúñiga, 2015, p.2530). Benefits can include emotional, social, or physical return. Reciprocal behaviour may be altruistically or egoistically motivated, or a combination of the two. This norm may also be internalised so that it is enforced through self-punishment and self-reward without external stimulus; therefore reciprocity may become its own goal rather than simply a way to achieve a goal (Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi, & Ercolani, 2003), for example if one feels obligated to return a gift, favour, or benefit. Gift giving is widely considered to

be part of a cycle of reciprocity, where gifts come with an obligation to give something back in return (Mauss, 2002; Shaw & Webb, 2015). The return does not need to be immediate or precisely equivalent, but it is integral to creating social relationships.

There are two major forms of reciprocal behaviour: giving with the expectation of receiving something in return, and giving in return for something that has already been received. Neither motivation necessarily diminishes the extent to which the giver cares about the outcome or wishes to support another. In terms of webcomic crowdfunding, backing a campaign may be either a response to the free content a reader has received in the past, or an expectation of receiving a reward in future. Both may have altruistic components. In pay-what-you-want (PWYW) schemes giving is often seen as a reward to creators who have benefitted them in the past (Suzor, 2014). It has been observed that the decision to pay in such schemes, and how much is paid, are both influenced by conceptions of fairness and reciprocity, as well as a “social norm that artists deserve to be paid for their work” (Suzor, 2014, p.22). This norm is often absent from online work, with consumers appearing reluctant or refusing to pay for online services and content; innovative payment schemes may help by providing varied and personalisable options as well as a novelty effect. Developing norms of fairness and reciprocity may be just as important in motivating crowdfunding donations as it is in PWYW.

Generalised Reciprocity

The norm of reciprocity does not consider helping behaviour towards a third party, only an exchange between two people (direct reciprocity). Generalised reciprocity describes the case where someone who has been helped in the past helps a different person in the future, or where a person helps because they anticipate a reward from someone else in the future (Batson, 1998). Prosocial behaviour is often a form of generalised reciprocity (Simpson & Willer, 2015).

Pay-it-forward or upstream reciprocity is generalised reciprocity of the first type: people who have received a kindness from someone forward it on to someone else. This concept is relevant to ‘KickingItForward’ (see section 3.5.3), an initiative on Kickstarter in which campaign creators pass on 5% of their earnings to other projects (Colombo et al., 2015). There are many other documented cases including chains of hundreds of people paying for the order

of the people behind them in line at a coffee shop. However theoretical studies have found that it is not sustainable without other influences such as incentives, and that generalised reciprocity based on reputation is more stable (i.e. those that co-operate gain a positive reputation and others will co-operate with them in turn) (Horita, Takezawa, Kinjo, Nakawake, & Masuda, 2016). It may be that people carry on a chain of generalised reciprocity because they do not want to be seen as the person who broke it.

Generalised reciprocity may be present in crowdfunding if a backer supports a campaign because they have themselves been successful at crowdfunding in the past, or if they feel they have received a lot of benefit from a particular community and wish to give back support to whoever needs it. Both direct and general reciprocity may be triggered by perceived levels of social capital on crowdfunding platforms, particularly among connections made online through crowdfunding (internal social capital) rather than those made offline and carried through into the crowdfunding environment (external social capital) (Colombo et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015). Both internal and external social capital have been found to be important drivers in crowdfunding however (Liao, Zhu, & Liao, 2015). Positive reciprocity is considered a foundation to social capital (Molm, 2010; Molm, Schaefer, & Collett, 2007), particularly internal social capital (Lester, 2013; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998), which can help to spread information beyond the creators' own networks, and may trigger both direct and generalised reciprocity through a sense of obligation (Colombo et al., 2015).

Identity and Reciprocity

Social identity theory has been related to backer motivations to crowdfund (Mitra & Gilbert, 2014). Social identity theory is the theory that the groups and communities that people belong to are important for their sense of who they are, their self-esteem, and their sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social groups that a person identifies as belonging to are known as ingroups, whilst those that they do not consider themselves part of are termed outgroups. People may belong to a wide range of ingroups, based on for example ethnicity, religion, occupation, a particular hobby, and so on. It has been found that people who identify strongly as part of a group give more money to benefit the group, work harder to achieve group goals, and contribute more time and effort (Ren, Kraut, & Kiesler, 2007). It has been suggested that even groups that are loosely

connected “become more cohesive and less subject to internal factioning when they can be rallied to the demands of achieving a common goal” (Brewer, 1999, p.436). This common goal could be a successful crowdfunding campaign, so even communities who are not strongly bonded at the start of a campaign could become so by the end.

Parochial altruism is the “tendency for increased cooperation and prosocial behaviour within boundaries of a group” (Everett, Faber, Crockett, & De Dreu, 2015) and is related to ingroup favouritism. This suggests that identifying with a particular group leads to greater reciprocity within that group, and is likely to be seen in crowdfunding in general and webcomics in particular, due to the smaller, generally fairly close knit, communities. Help is provided with the expectation that it will be compensated or returned by those they have helped or the group as a whole. According to Ren et al. (2007) the type of attachment felt to an online community will affect the type of reciprocity displayed: bond-based attachment (connection to particular people in a group, i.e. friendship that exists outside the group) elicits direct reciprocity and identity-based attachment (connection to the group as a whole, i.e. as a fan of the theme of the group) leads to generalised reciprocity. Group membership also triggers attitudes of sharing and working together to achieve group goals (Ren et al., 2007).

Similarly, homophily, the theory that people who are similar or who have similar interests will form stronger social ties, has been used to explain ties amongst people on social networks (Abbasi, Zafarani, Tang, & Liu, 2014), and it may explain why readers of particular webcomics often feel strongly connected to their creators, and are willing to support them. Constructing a collective identity can also be a large part of building communities through crowdfunding (Thurlow & Yue, 2013), and identity may also be linked to other mechanisms such as reputation, recognition, and prestige (Choy & Schlagwein, 2016; Gerber et al., 2012; Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016).

4.3.3 Selfishness and Giving

Motives for giving often involve the possibility of personal gain (Batson et al., 1978). The pursuit of rewards with no consideration of the effect the behaviour has on another can be selfish whilst also having the effect of helping another person. For example, someone might donate to a crowdfunding campaign

because they want a particular product, and the support of the creator is a by-product. The norm of self-interest may lead to people being more likely to believe motives were selfish rather than altruistic (Barasch et al., 2014). Egoistic motives can occur at the same time as altruistic intentions, and apart from pure altruism, all other motivations for giving in this chapter may include egoism of varying intensity (Batson, 1990; Batson et al., 1978). The intention or motivation behind an action determines whether it is altruistic or egoistic: unintended self-benefits do not exclude altruism.

Social reactions can become incentives for a person's behaviour because they are associated with specific rewarding or punishing consequences from past experience (Bandura, 1991); praise or disapproval that has no tangible effect stops being motivating. The following sections look at positive and negative aspects of social reactions as selfish motivators of altruistic actions.

Negative State Aversion

Altruism may be motivated by the avoidance of anticipated guilt or shame, rather than the wish to help someone else (Batson, 1998; Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; Rawlings, 1970). Avoiding actual punishment, whether self-imposed, social, or material, can be another strong motivator (Batson, 2010). The empathy-altruism hypothesis accepts that motives such as aversive-arousal reduction and punishment avoidance may be possible consequences of altruistic behaviour, but maintains that if they are not the ultimate goal of the behaviour then they are not selfish motivations (Batson, 2010). Cialdini et al (1987) however found that empathically oriented people (i.e. those who believed their mood would be improved by helping) were more motivated to help to alleviate their own sadness than from an empathic concern for others, whilst those who believed that helping would not improve their own moods were not as helpful.

Similarly, it has been found that "public transgression, whether intentional or unintentional, whether immoral or only situationally unfortunate, leads to reparative altruism. Reparative altruism would seem to alleviate a negative state associated with lowered self-esteem" (Krebs, 1970, p.267). Reactive guilt, the response a person has when they did not behave the way they felt should have, can also lead to altruistic behaviour (Rawlings, 1970). Both anticipated and reactive guilt have been seen to play a part in PWYW schemes, in which a

feeling of shame about not paying can play a large role in an individual's decision to pay (Suzor, 2014). This may have a similar effect in crowdfunding for webcomics, where readers often have received free content for years before being asked for money.

Reputation, Recognition, and Status Seeking

In charity fundraising there is often a particular emphasis on social recognition or prestige. People who give to charity tend to like their contributions to be seen by others and make bigger donations when they know their actions are public; specifically, they make sure their donations are bigger than those given by others (Katz & Malul, 2015). Increasing the number of observers to a donation from one to two can increase donation by over 40% (Reyniers, 2013). In terms of crowdfunding, this could be a useful mechanism; indeed Reyniers (2013) cited the popularity of giving websites that exploit peer pressure. However, whilst most crowdfunding sites make the amount raised visible, they do not always show individual donations. Self-satisfaction and social recognition are also frequent motivators (Bandura, 1991). People may perform an altruistic act because they wish to signal, to themselves or to others, that they are generous or selfless (Fehr & Schmidt, 2006), showing concern for their reputation. Reciprocal behaviour may result from a person seeking recognition as an altruistic person, or wishing to gain a reputation for repaying favours.

Social reputation has been cited as a potential motivation for backers to take part in crowdfunding (Belleflamme et al., 2012). Social reputation and status seeking (which depends on the relative ranking of others) may also be related to crowdfunding by an analogy to philanthropy, where the two concepts work together. Philanthropists may give larger donations relative to others in order to improve their status, whilst also being aware that how much and how often they give can affect their reputations regardless of what others choose to donate (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007); crowdfunding platforms display the number of backers who choose to donate at each amount, and often also show information about backers such as how many campaigns they have backed.

4.3.4 Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) presents a framework for the study of motivation, based around the idea that satisfying needs for autonomy (i.e.

4.3 EXISTING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN BACKING BEHAVIOUR

freedom or independence to act as desired), relatedness (i.e. connection with others), and competence (i.e. the ability to carry out an action effectively) increases motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Self-determination theory also involves the influence and management of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, concepts that have relevance to the types of incentives provided by crowdfunding. SDT has been used to explain such things as why scientists may use crowdfunding for their research (Hui & Gerber, 2015): they show competence in their subject, establish relatedness with others, and gain autonomy by securing finances without having to apply for traditional funding which can take months and be fruitless. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have also been used to produce crowdfunding archetypes based on motivation (Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016).

Behaviour	Nonself-determined				Self-determined		
Type of motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic motivation				Intrinsic motivation	
Type of regulation	Non-regulation	External	Introjected	Identified	Integrated	Intrinsic	
Locus of causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat external	Somewhat internal	Internal	Internal	

Figure 4-2 "The self-determination continuum, showing the motivational, self-regulatory, and perceived locus of causality biases of behaviours that vary in the degree to which they are self-determined" Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.237

Different motivations have been illustrated across a continuum of self-determination (see Figure 4-2) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Extrinsic motivations are those which originate externally to the individual, and as such have a separable outcome such as money or perceived non-material benefits (e.g. Deci, 1972). Extrinsically motivated behaviours are not inherently interesting and are often performed because they are valued by someone who is perceived as a (current or desired) significant other (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Extrinsic motivations vary depending on where the cause of the behaviour is perceived to originate; the more internalised a motivation, the greater the sense of autonomy. A good example of this is provided by Ryan & Deci (2000b): students who complete homework either because they know it is important for their future or due to their parents' control are both extrinsically motivated, because both involve external forces rather than enjoyment of the work. However, the first (because it is important for their future) involves a feeling of choice or personal decision making, and therefore invokes a sense of greater autonomy than the latter.

4.3 EXISTING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN BACKING BEHAVIOUR

Intrinsic motivation occurs when an activity is inherently interesting or enjoyable (e.g. Ryan & Deci, 2000a) and where there are “no apparent rewards except the activity itself or the feelings which result from the activity” (Deci, 1972, p.217). It includes activities that are done for fun, as a challenge, or due to personal convictions. According to Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), for motivation to be intrinsic individuals must experience both competence or efficacy, and self-determination in the sense that the behaviour is internally regulated (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

An important factor in motivation is the individual’s own perception of why they are carrying out an activity: if they are doing it for internal satisfaction for example, the motivation is intrinsic, whilst if they are doing it to receive a reward they are extrinsically motivated because the environment becomes the stimulus for acting (Deci, 1972). Choice can enhance intrinsic motivation by enhancing a sense of personal causation (Hagger, Rentzelas, & Chatzisarantis, 2013). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are important in economic decisions (Ito, Ida, & Tanaka, 2014) and extrinsic motivators are often offered for non-intrinsically rewarding behaviours (Richardson, 2010). In terms of backers of crowdfunding campaigns, the majority of the motivations to give may be extrinsic as giving money is not inherently interesting or enjoyable. However, certain motivations may be more internalised, for example giving to help another person or community rather than giving for external reward.

It has been suggested that intrinsic motivations can be undermined by extrinsic motivation such as receiving rewards (Chao, 2014; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Katz & Malul, 2015; Rode, Gómez-Baggethun, & Krause, 2015). This is referred to as motivational crowding-out (in contrast to economic crowding out, where an individual deems their contribution to be unnecessary), and could have an important effect on crowdfunding because people who would normally give in order to simply support a creator or to benefit their community may no longer do so if they are offered a reward in exchange. Evidence for and against the motivational crowding-out effect is varied, some studies find crowd-out whilst others find none at all. Where it is found, crowding-out is usually not complete, which indicates that motives to give are more strongly related to warm glow and impure altruism than pure altruism (Konow, 2010).

Theories surrounding motivational crowd-out mainly arise from CET, which is concerned with the effects of social contexts on intrinsic motivation. CET does not apply for activities that are not found to be novel, challenging, or aesthetically pleasing (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b), and therefore motivation crowd-out should not occur. It may be argued that the act of donating money does not meet this criteria and therefore receiving rewards in return should not affect people's motivation to give. However, in the presence of an intrinsic motivation to give, even optional, opt-in gifts have been shown to decrease giving (Chao, 2014).

In Goal Contents Theory (GCT), which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic goals and looks at their impact on motivation and wellness, it is considered important whether rewards are expected, and if so, what they are contingent upon. Expected tangible rewards have been found to undermine intrinsic motivation across a wide range of interesting activities, whether they are contingent upon simply doing the activity, completing it, or are performance-related (Deci et al., 1999); intrinsic motivation may be diminished by contingent monetary payments, threats of punishment for poor performance, or negative feedback (Deci, 1972). Unexpected rewards and non-contingent rewards have not been found to have a detrimental effect (Deci, 1972; Deci et al., 1999). Providing incentives may reduce self-perceived altruism (Batson, 1998), implying that people see altruism as purely selfless behaviour that is undermined by receiving a reward. Self-reflection after helping has also produced a similar reduction in self-perceived altruism, perhaps because it triggers feelings and thoughts that could constitute motivations other than pure altruism.

Positive feedback and reinforcement can enhance intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1972), as it can increase feelings of satisfaction; however CET stresses that the context of the feedback changes its interpretation and therefore its effect, so that verbal rewards such as acknowledgement or approval can also have the potential to undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). However, feedback that enhances feelings of competence during an activity can also increase intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Covington and Müeller (2001) posit that extrinsic motivation can actually complement intrinsic motivation rather than oppose it; economic incentives reinforcing intrinsic motivations may be referred to as crowd-in. Crowding-in

may be caused by enhanced internal satisfaction, as in self-esteem or warm glow, through social recognition, because individuals perceive rewards to support and acknowledge their positive behaviour. Whilst all incentives may cause crowding out, crowding-in may only occur for positive incentives. (Rode et al., 2015). Chen & Putterman (2015) found that that in microfinance lending to developing countries, neither financial return nor intrinsic motivation crowded out the other. Specifically, they found that the importance of financial incentives decreased when a philanthropic incentive was present, and that the presence of intrinsic motivations versus no motivation increased giving only when there was no extrinsic incentive. Therefore in crowdfunding, people may be motivated to support a creator through a combination of altruism and reward-seeking. For one person the motivation of helping support a creator they love may outweigh the desire to claim a reward, and for others it may be the other way around.

4.4 HYPOTHESES

In a broad sense, the behaviour of a backer may be based on the types of expected return (emotional, social, or physical). The overall hypothesis for this study is that people are motivated to give to webcomics crowdfunding campaigns due to a combination of four main factors related to rewards: the material return gained from backing; personal or internal gains such as feelings (e.g. warm glow) or looking good to others; basic or 'pure' reciprocity which deals with a sense of giving back for something received; and community gains which include a sense of reciprocity or altruism which leads to a desire to 'support' a campaign or creator, often without consideration of the self. This assumes that a form of reward is always part of the motivation to back, but that the reward is not necessarily material or tangible; this suggests that pure altruism cannot exist in the crowdfunding context. All of these motivational factors may be present in an individual backers' decision, to a greater or less extent, forming a continuum with concern for the campaign at one end, coinciding with altruism, and concern for the self at the opposite end, coinciding with selfishness.

By taking the three main forms of helping and motivations to give based on literature on prosocial behaviour, this study focuses from the outset on underlying reasons for backing campaigns for a particular group of

crowdfunders. Some more specific hypotheses can be formulated, based on this previous literature, and existing studies of crowdfunding.

1. Altruism:
 - a. Patreon backers will be more altruistic and other-oriented overall than Kickstarter backers
 - b. Reluctant altruism will be higher in Kickstarter backers due to a focus on completing goals and tangible outcomes.
 - c. Warm glow and impure altruism will be higher on Patreon due to a focus on support
2. Reciprocity:
 - a. Reciprocity will be more present on both platforms than just altruism.
 - b. Kickstarter backers will be more motivated by direct reciprocity
 - c. Patreon backers will be more motivated by generalised reciprocity; social identity will be more important on Patreon.
 - d. Higher levels of reciprocal motivation will correlate with giving higher amounts
3. Selfishness:
 - a. Kickstarter backers will be more self-oriented than Patreon backers
4. Rewards:
 - a. Kickstarter backers will be more motivated by rewards overall than Patreon backers
 - b. Kickstarter backers will prefer material rewards
 - c. Patreon backers will prefer social rewards
5. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations:
 - a. Extrinsic motivations will be strongest for Kickstarter backers
 - b. Intrinsic or internalised extrinsic motivations will be strongest for Patreon backers
 - c. Crowding out is not expected to occur on either platform due to their social natures.

4.5 METHOD

4.5.1 Materials

This research was approved by the University Of Nottingham Department Of Engineering Research Ethics Committee. A questionnaire was developed based on theories of reciprocity and altruism to investigate the motivations and attitudes of crowdfunding backers. Backers were first asked to select which campaign they were answering for in order to compare responses between platforms. They were asked to only answer for one particular project, whether or not they had used both platforms. The questionnaire used a range of question

types including yes/no, multiple choice, open-ended, ratings and ranking, and Likert and Likert-type scales. Statements in all longer question blocks were counterbalanced to attempt to retain attention and alleviate boredom effects, and to prevent respondents from choosing the same point on the scale for every question. Additionally, this was done to minimise negative bias due to negative phrasing and vice versa (Garg, 1996).

The questionnaire began with a series of demographic questions and questions about previous backing behaviour on both Kickstarter and Patreon. This was followed by questions based on both literature on giving and previous results of studies 1 and 3, covering donation behaviour for the specific crowdfunding campaign (amount donated, when, and the influence of stretch and milestone goals); social and community aspects (associations and interactions with the creator, sharing of campaigns on social media, how the campaign was heard about); reasons for backing campaigns; and the influence of rewards (which rewards were selected, how important they were, which rewards are most preferred).

The final block of questions modified two short questionnaires based around attitudes towards donation and volunteer behaviour. There are a wide range of existing measures, including the Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner et al., 1995) the Altruistic Personality Scale (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981), and the Intrinsic Motivations Index (Ryan, 1982). Many of these measures are either very general measures of altruistic behaviour or focused on highly particular domains. Additionally, they are predominantly fairly old, although they have been widely validated, and it would have been necessary to alter some of the phrasing in light of modern attitudes.

A modified version of a questionnaire developed by Ferguson, Atsma, et al. (2012) was chosen. This questionnaire was designed to determine attitudes towards giving blood, but is also relevant to other prosocial behaviours and as such could be used for crowdfunding. The areas covered by this questionnaire include many of the factors discussed in this chapter including norms, pure altruism, identity, trust, and empathy. This makes this particular measure more relevant than other scales that have been developed. The factors measured are briefly explained in Table 4-4 along with the combined factors of warm glow, impure altruism, and a focus on the self.

Further reasons that this questionnaire was chosen were because it is relatively modern and therefore likely to coincide with current attitudes towards prosocial behaviour, and it was well validated by previous study (Ferguson, Taylor, Keatley, Flynn, & Lawrence, 2012). This is the only block of questions in study 6 that did not use a seven-point scale; the five-point scale of the original measure was retained to keep consistency with the original study.

Table 4-4 Factors explored by the final section of questionnaire, from Ferguson et al (2012).

Factor	Description	Relevant theories
Intention	The intention to give	Identity
Subjective Norm	Others' expectations that you will give (e.g. friends and family)	Social norms, Norm of reciprocity
Self-efficacy	Perceived ability to give	Identity
Personal Moral Norm	The feeling that you should give	Norm of reciprocity, negative state aversion
Pure Altruism	Giving focuses on the other and their needs, not personal gain	Pure altruism
Role Identity	Giving as related to a sense of who you are	Identity
Habit Formation	Giving as an automatic response	Identity, generalised and direct reciprocity
Trust	Giving is related to trust in others	Reluctant altruism
Cognitive Attitude	How the act of giving is subjectively viewed	Intrinsic motivation
Affective Attitude	The emotional or empathetic response to giving	Intrinsic motivation, warm glow, impure altruism, negative-state aversion
Warm glow (combined factor)	Role Identity; Subjective Norm; Affective Attitude; Personal Moral Norm; Trust	Warm glow
Impure altruism (combined factor)	Cognitive Attitude; Affective Attitude; Pure Altruism	Impure Altruism
Cognitive-Behaviour – Self (combined factor)	Self-efficacy; Intention; Habit Formation; Role Identity	Reputation, recognition, and status seeking; negative state aversion

A final scale measuring reluctant altruism was included, developed by Ferguson (e.g. 2012, 2014, 2016). This was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (Ferguson, personal communication, 2015). A full list of questions is provided in appendix C. The Cronbach's alpha reliability measures, shown in Table 4-5, show that the constructs are predominantly reliable. A single item, "I find it hard to give money time after time" was removed from self-efficacy in order to improve the measure from 0.513 on Patreon to 0.640, and two constructs, Habit formation

and Trust, do not reach an acceptable threshold of 0.6 and are not analysed further.

Table 4-5 Cronbach's alpha reliability measures for constructs on each platform

Construct	Kickstarter	Patreon
Intention	N/A	N/A
Subjective Norm	0.764	0.827
Self-Efficacy*	0.869	0.640
Personal Moral Norm	N/A	N/A
Pure altruism	0.786	0.683
Role identity	0.707	0.627
Habit formation **	0.519	0.575
Trust**	0.536	0.157
Cognitive Attitude	0.782	0.793
Affective Attitude	0.851	0.783
Reluctant Altruism	0.945	0.943

** Constructs with items removed to improve reliability*

*** Constructs with Cronbach's alpha below threshold*

4.5.2 Procedure

Participants were predominantly recruited via the creators of webcomics crowdfunding campaigns during the summer of 2015. Two hundred and nine creators that were identified during study 4 were contacted via email or contact forms on their websites, asking them to send a link to the study questionnaire to their backers of specific crowdfunding campaigns. All creators had at least one campaign on Kickstarter, Patreon, or both. Creators were offered an incentive of a prize draw for a £100 Amazon voucher if they shared the study with their backers, whilst the backers were offered the chance to win 1 of 5 £50 or 10 £25 Amazon vouchers for completing the questionnaire. On both Kickstarter and Patreon it is possible to message backers of both previous and current campaigns with updates so this was the preferred method, although this was left up to the creator so they may have emailed the link to their supporters or shared the link on Twitter for example. It was hoped that due to the request coming to backers from creators, more respondents would be willing to help. Some creators indicated reluctance to contact their backers, and this is discussed in chapter 5. It is not known exactly how many creators shared the study, but the campaigns used in the study involved over 100,000 backers who could potentially have been contacted. The actual number contacted is likely to be closer to 10,000. After several weeks, the questionnaire was also advertised on Twitter using the researcher's personal account, and was retweeted by several users.

4.5.3 Participants

In total 764 people started the questionnaire; the median time of completion was 17 minutes. Participants who did not complete at least one of the sets of questions about attitudes were removed leaving 601 usable responses. The average age of respondents was around 34 years old (range 17 to 79), and 63.56% identified as male.

4.6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Around half of the respondents had backed projects on both Patreon and Kickstarter (52.25%). In total 572 respondents (95.17%) had backed at least one project on Kickstarter, and 345 (57.40%) had backed at least one project on Patreon. The number of Kickstarter projects backed is highly skewed, with a mean of 40 and median of 14. An average of 80.63% of projects backed by an individual were successfully funded (compared to a success rate of 57.19% across the webcomics subcategory), suggesting respondents had a good sense of which projects would do well. On Patreon, respondents predominantly back between one and three creators (48.09%) but a substantial number back more than 10 creators (18.77%). This suggests that most backers are choosier about which projects to support on Patreon, perhaps due to the recurring nature of payments, or because an individual project on Kickstarter is easier to judge than an entire, ongoing, body of work. Additionally, the fact that pledges always go straight to the creator whereas a failed Kickstarter costs backers no money may affect decisions to pledge. Nearly two thirds (65.73%) had spent over \$250 on Kickstarter in total, compared to the Patreon backers most commonly pledging up to \$5 a month (27.27%) in total, with a similar number giving between \$11 and \$20 (24.34%); perhaps surprisingly, some backers (5.57%) give more than \$100 a month in total.

Participants were asked to provide the remainder of responses for one specific campaign; answers were collected for Kickstarter campaigns from 71.38% of respondents across 30 different projects whilst Patreon projects accounted for 28.62% of responses across 28 campaigns. On both platforms the minimum donation was \$1; the maximum was \$377 on Kickstarter and \$55 on Patreon. The median donations were \$35.50 on Kickstarter, and \$5 on Patreon, which is comparable to the dataset studied in chapter 3 in which the median donations

were \$39.94 and \$4.26 respectively. Just 2.33% backers hid their pledge on Kickstarter compared to 7.56% of Patreon, again similar to the behaviour found in the webcomics dataset on both platforms in chapter 3 (3.06% on Kickstarter and 8.33% on Patreon). A 2x2 Chi-square test shows that there is significantly more pledge hiding on Patreon, $X^2(1)=9.12$, $p<0.01$.

Table 4-6 How did you decide how much to pledge? Open-ended responses

Kickstarter	%	Patreon	%
Rewards	89.05	Personal Finances / Budget	51.01
Personal Finances / Budget	9.98	Rewards	35.57
Add-ons	4.14	Experience /Enjoyment of work	18.79
Experience / Enjoyment of work	3.89	Other creators to back	12.08
Benefit to creator / comic	3.16	Benefit to creator / comic	9.40

The decision of how much to pledge was examined using an open-ended question (see Table 4-6 and Appendix C). Decisions for Kickstarter backers were predominantly based on rewards offered (89.06%), for example *"I always aim for a physical copy of the books I back, so I have something solid at the end"*. Many participants noted they pledged the minimum amount needed to get the reward they wanted. In contrast, rewards were highlighted by just 35.57% of Patreon backers; the main factor was personal finances or a budget that they needed to stick to (51.01%). Some backers (12.08%) also took into account that they would back several creators on the platform: *"I pledge small amounts to many creators, with a goal of making a series of small differences that altogether don't break the bank"*, which was never a point made by a Kickstarter backer; budgetary needs were referenced by only 9.98% Kickstarter backers.

On Kickstarter, 32.87% of backers pledged to the campaign after the initial funding goal was reached, suggesting they were not driven to pledge by helping the campaign to succeed. In terms of the campaign timing, regardless of when the initial goal was reached, most people pledged towards the start of the campaign (see Figure 4-3), with 63.40% backing before the halfway point, suggesting that backers are keen to help a campaign to succeed from the start. It also suggests that campaigns tended to reach their funding goals early in their campaigns. Only 6.06% waited until the very end of the campaign to make their donations. On Patreon most people had been backing their particular creator for at least 6 months (63.96%) showing an ongoing and sustained dedication to support (see Figure 4-4).

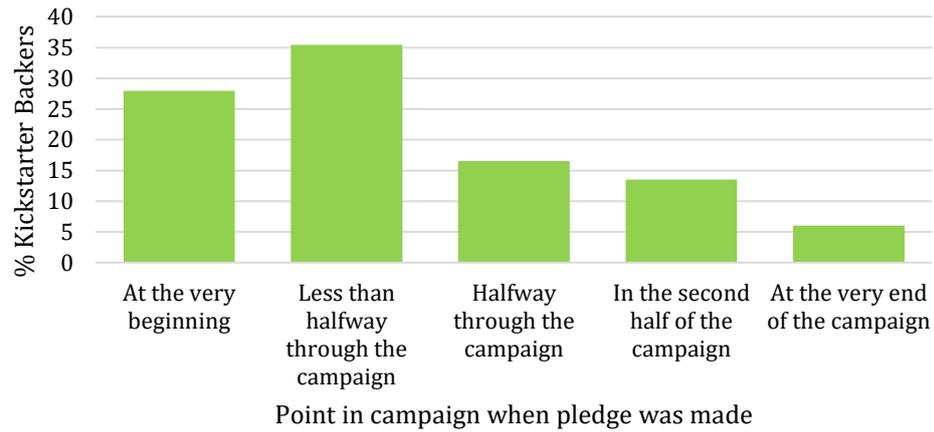


Figure 4-3 How far into the campaign did you pledge (Kickstarter, fixed-choice)

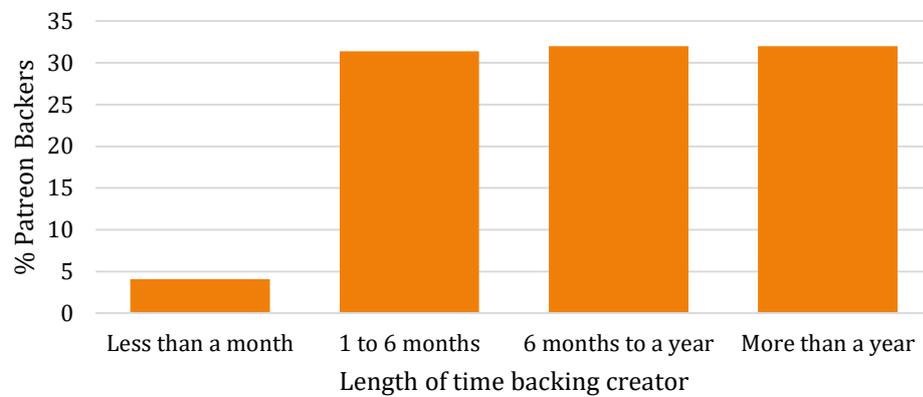


Figure 4-4 How long have you been backing this creator? (Patreon, fixed-choice)

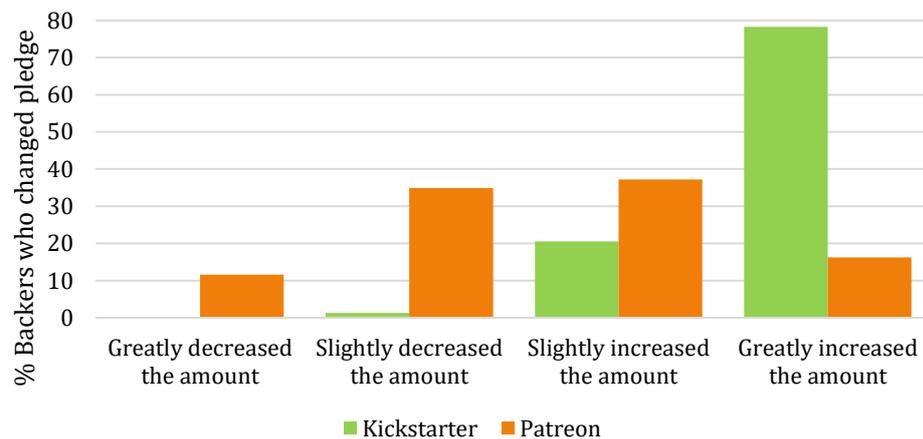


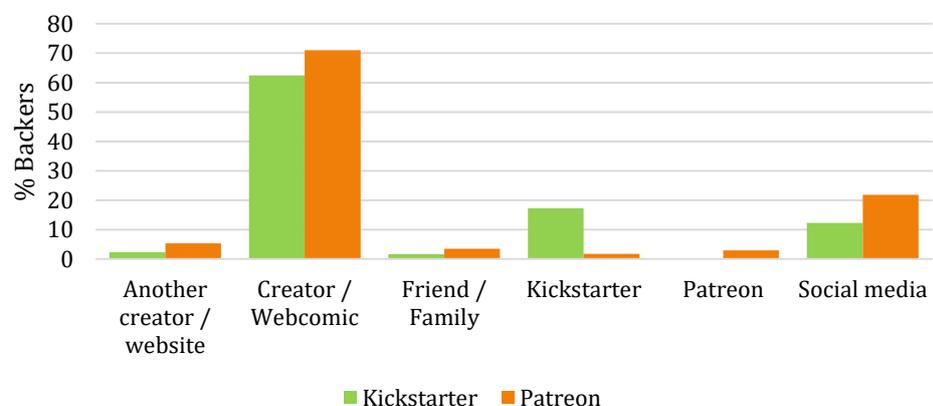
Figure 4-5 How much did you change your pledge by?
 Kickstarter: Greatly = more than \$10, Patreon: Greatly = more than \$5

Fewer Kickstarter backers changed their pledges than Patreon backers (18.18% compared to 25.00%). Of those that did, on Kickstarter 78.21% increased their pledge by more than \$10, and only 1.28% decreased it at all, by less than \$10 (see Figure 4-5). On Patreon 53.49% increased (16.28% by over

\$5) and 46.51% decreased (11.63% by over \$5) their pledges. Most reasons (from a provided list) on Kickstarter were because rewards were added that the respondent wanted (61.54%) or to reach a stretch goal (23.08%). In contrast, on Patreon the main reason for changing pledges was a change in financial circumstances (46.51%) followed by the addition of rewards (16.28%) and changed opinions on the project's worth (16.28%). Whilst on Kickstarter reasons were predominantly about the return provided to the respondent, on Patreon more reasons to do with personal circumstances (of the backer or creator) and giving support were chosen.

4.6.1 Social Factors in Backing

Respondents predominantly did not have a personal relationship with the creator of the campaign. Just 6.53% on Kickstarter and 20.47% on Patreon identified as a friend, family member, or acquaintance of the creator. This suggests that motivations to do with supporting part of a social circle are stronger on Patreon than they are on Kickstarter. The foremost relationship on Patreon is 'friend' (11.05%) whereas on Kickstarter it is 'acquaintance' (3.73%). Very few backers were family of the creators (less than 1% on both platforms). Backers mostly heard about the project from the creator or webcomic directly (62.47% on Kickstarter and 71.01% on Patreon, see Figure 4-6). Kickstarter backers found the project through the platform 17.34% of the time, compared to just 2.96% of Patreon backers finding the project through that platform. Interestingly, whilst 1.78% of Patreon backers heard about the project through Kickstarter, no Kickstarter backers heard about the project through Patreon.



(Not shown: 'Convention'=0.24% on Kickstarter, 'Email'=3.09% on Kickstarter)

Figure 4-6 How did you hear about the project? Free-text response

The other major source for learning about the campaigns was social media (12.35% Kickstarter, 21.89% Patreon), mostly Twitter. Roughly a quarter of backers on each platform (24.71% on Kickstarter and 29.07% on Patreon) in turn shared the project to social media themselves (see Figure 4-7). A total 42.42% of Kickstarter backers follow the creator of the project compared to 69.77% on Patreon. Whilst respondents mostly followed creators before they backed them, both platforms caused roughly an additional 9% of backers to start to follow them after backing the campaign. It may be that these backers discovered the creator through the crowdfunding campaign.

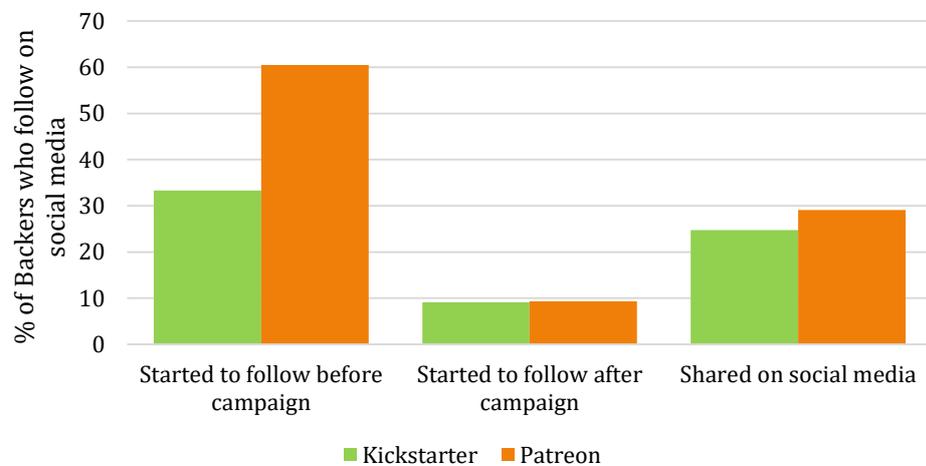


Figure 4-7 Combined data for "Do you follow the creator(s) of the project on social media", "Did you follow the creator before the campaign" and "Did you share the campaign to social media?"

4.6.2 Reasons for Backing Campaigns

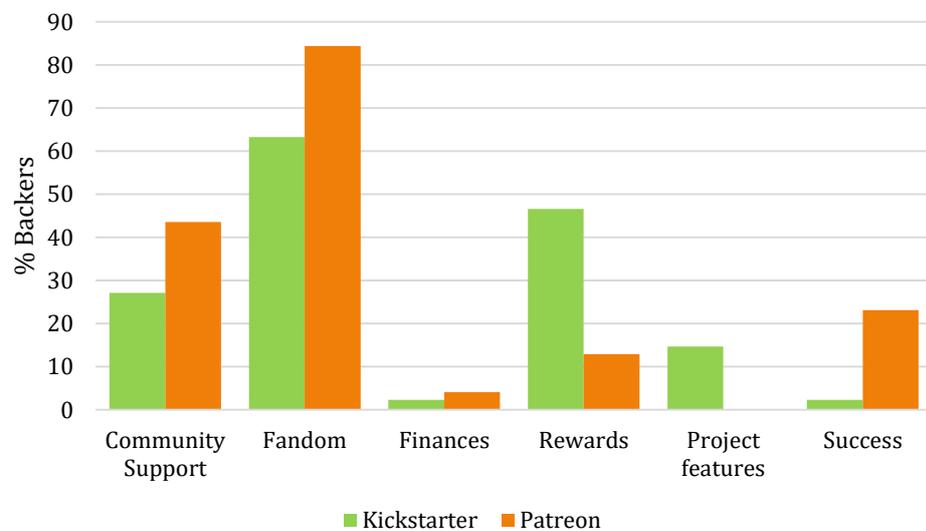


Figure 4-8 Why did you back this particular project? (free-text)

Respondents were asked why they backed the particular campaign in their own words. Every response was coded by the researcher into themes, and then a subsample was independently checked for agreement. These themes included the four identified by study 3 (Community Support, Fandom, Finances, and Rewards) plus Project features, and Success. A reason given by a single respondent could fit into more than one theme. Community Support revolved around supporting or giving back to creators and webcomics: *“like to support local artists”, “it is a form of support that benefits both sides”*. Fandom related to the idea of being a fan, liking, enjoying, or investing time in the work. Finances focused on being able to afford to pay, or getting value for money: *“I want her to have as much of my money as I am able to share”, “To get the stuff cheap”*. Rewards involved pledging in order to receive a particular reward or goal, often the paper or PDF version of the comic. Project features included statements suggesting the respondent found the project interesting or of good quality but was not necessarily an existing fan: *“the idea was solid and it looked fun”*. Success included backing projects to help it succeed, reach a goal, or to ensure future updates to the comic. Patreon backers predominantly gave answers relating to ‘Fandom’ (84.35% of responses), ‘Community Support’ (43.54%) and ‘Success’ (23.13%), whilst Kickstarter backers mostly gave responses relating to ‘Fandom’ (63.29% of responses), ‘Rewards’ (46.35%) and ‘Community Support’ (27.09%) (see Figure 4-8). With the exception of ‘Rewards’ and ‘Project Features’, Patreon backers mentioned all factors proportionally more than Kickstarter backers. A 2x5 chi-squared test shows there is a significant difference in these responses, $X^2(5)=124.98$, $p<0.01$.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 24 statements highlighting reasons for backing a webcomics crowdfunding campaign, and for the particular campaign in question. Statements were created from answers provided in the first 3 studies as well as background literature. In order to group reasons into higher order factors, principle components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was carried out. Two statements were removed from the primary analysis, one because it only applied to Kickstarter (“I wanted the product / goal of the campaign”), and the other because its anti-image correlation was less than 0.50 (“I wanted a particular reward from this campaign”). After removals the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy, $KMO=0.88$, and all anti-image correlations were greater than 0.71, which is above the acceptable minimum of

0.50 (Field, 2013). An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Four factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 48.16% of the variance. The scree plot showed an inflexion around 4 factors including the inflexion point, which was retained due to the large sample size and the agreement with the Kaiser value. Factor loadings after rotation can be found in Table 4-7. Due to cross-loading, a further two items were removed. "I am an existing fan of the creator/webcomic" is considered to be an interesting standalone item so is included as factor 5, labelled 'Fandom'. The other, "I was confident this campaign would succeed" is not included in any further analysis.

Table 4-7 Principal Component Analysis of reasons for backing - Rotated Component Matrix for all respondents

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I wanted to help the creator to succeed	0.77	0.10	0.05	0.10
I want to reward creators I like	0.69	-0.03	-0.07	0.08
It made me feel good to back this campaign	0.63	-0.05	0.31	0.15
Webcomics as a whole will benefit from this campaign succeeding	0.62	0.03	0.22	0.08
Webcomics are important to me	0.62	-0.05	0.10	-0.01
I thought the goal/campaign was worthwhile	0.62	0.03	0.14	-0.10
The creator is actively involved in the webcomics community	0.58	0.27	0.09	-0.13
I am an existing fan of the creator/webcomic*	0.56	0.40	-0.24	-0.24
I feel sympathetic towards the creator	0.55	0.14	0.08	0.34
I feel that I owe the creator something	0.55	0.23	-0.02	0.11
I feel connected to the creator	0.45	0.37	0.35	0.23
I have helped this creator in another way (not financially) before	0.12	0.74	0.22	0.14
The creator has helped me socially in the past	0.09	0.73	0.30	0.12
The creator has helped me financially in the past	-0.14	0.65	0.27	0.11
I have helped this creator financially before*	0.26	0.62	0.00	-0.21
I think that others will help me in future if I help them now	0.10	0.04	0.70	-0.01
I wanted others to see that I backed this campaign	0.11	0.34	0.57	0.04
I wanted to receive the goal/content before others	0.14	0.17	0.53	-0.05
My friends backed the campaign	0.03	0.39	0.52	0.06
If I did not back this campaign, the goal product would not have been made/it would not do well*	0.08	0.14	0.08	0.70
I was confident this campaign would succeed*	0.45	0.04	0.19	-0.55
I cannot rely on others to support the creators I like	0.18	-0.01	0.01	0.53

Items loading at more than 0.4 are in bold.

** Items removed from factors*

Ten statements loaded strongly onto Factor 1, which consists of statements surrounding community belonging (e.g. "I feel connected to the creator" and "Webcomics as a whole will benefit from this campaign succeeding"). This factor is labelled 'Community Support', and corresponds with the same factor

above. Four statements loaded strongly onto Factor 2, which consists of statements surrounding a sense of there being a straight exchange between the backer and the creator (e.g. “I have helped this creator financially before” and “The creator has helped me socially in the past”), labelled ‘Exchange’. Four statements loaded strongly onto Factor 3, which consists of statements to do with benefitting the self over others (e.g. “I wanted to receive the goal / content before others”) or reputational motives (e.g. “I wanted others to see that I backed this campaign”), labelled ‘Reputation’. Finally, two statements loaded strongly onto Factor 4, which consists of statements to do with a lack of trust in others (e.g. “I cannot rely on others to support the creators I like”), and as such is labelled ‘Lack of Trust’. The statement ‘I am an existing fan’ cross-loaded on Community Support and Exchange, and is included as a separate factor, Factor 5, Fandom, corresponding to the factor previously identified above.

Table 4-8 Cronbach's alpha results for identified factors on each platform

Factor	Kickstarter	Patreon
Community Support	0.823	0.809
Exchange	0.744	0.716
Reputation	0.561	0.623
Lack of Trust	0.232	0.436

The Cronbach's alpha reliability measure (see Table 4-8), is particularly low for Factor 4, Lack of Trust, so this is included as a one item factor: “I cannot rely on others to support the creators I like” as this best represents the ideas contained within the factor. Factor 2, Exchange, is improved by removing one item, “I have helped this creator financially before”.

For each factor, the mean of unweighted items was taken to form a score for that factor for each participant, on a 7-point scale in the same format at the individual items. Fandom has the highest levels of agreement from backers (mean 6.40 on Patreon, 5.71 on Kickstarter) (see Figure 4-9), followed by Community Support (5.60 on Patreon, 5.20 on Kickstarter). Exchange had the least influence on backing campaigns (2.38 on Patreon, 1.92 on Kickstarter).

A 2 (Platform: Patreon or Kickstarter) x 5 (Backing reason: Community Support; Exchange; Reputation; Lack of Trust; Fandom) mixed methods ANOVA was carried out to investigate differences between the platform used and the reasons for giving. Tests for normality showed significant skew and kurtosis in several of the between-subjects variables, some negatively and some positively (see Table 4-9); Levene's test of equality of variances was also significant for

four out of the five factors (not factor 4, Lack of Trust), showing that the assumption of equality of variance was violated. However, it was decided to keep the original dataset rather than to transform variables.

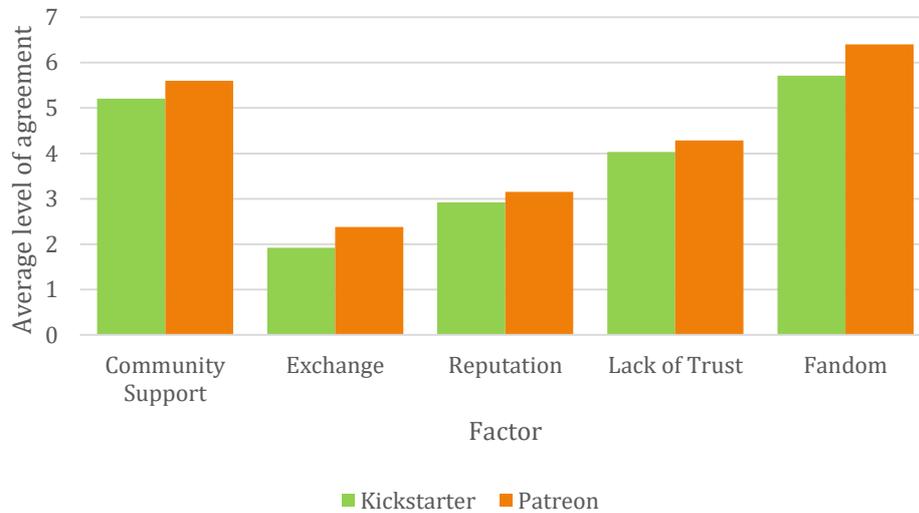


Figure 4-9 Average level of agreement with factors related to reasons for backing webcomics campaigns

There are several reasons for this. With a large number of participants in each group, small differences can cause significant results in these tests; the uneven number of participants in each group make violations of assumptions difficult to correct; and due to the different transformations that would be required, it is highly likely that the data would become rather meaningless (Field, 2013). ANOVA is also highly robust to violations of normality. However, a caveat must be stated that results of the statistical analysis should be regarded as indicative of difference and not conclusive.

Table 4-9 Skew and Kurtosis in tests for normality for reasons for backing

Factor	Kickstarter		Patreon	
	Skew	Kurtosis	Skew	Kurtosis
Community Support	-0.71*	1.37*	-2.18*	10.12*
Exchange	1.29*	1.77*	0.78*	0.14
Reputation	0.11	-0.70*	-0.11	-0.47
Lack of Trust	-0.30*	-0.40	-0.50*	-0.39
Fandom	-1.47*	0.99*	-3.50*	16.46*

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Mauchley's test of sphericity also indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, $X^2(9)=615.189$, $p < 0.000$, so the Greenhouse-Geisser correction will be used ($\hat{\epsilon}=0.700$). There is a significant main effect of platform, $F(1, 599)=39.201$, $p < 0.000$, showing that Patreon backers tended to rate reasons for

backing significantly higher than Kickstarter backers overall, perhaps showing they feel more strongly about backing the project. Figure 4-10 shows the distribution of responses for each platform.

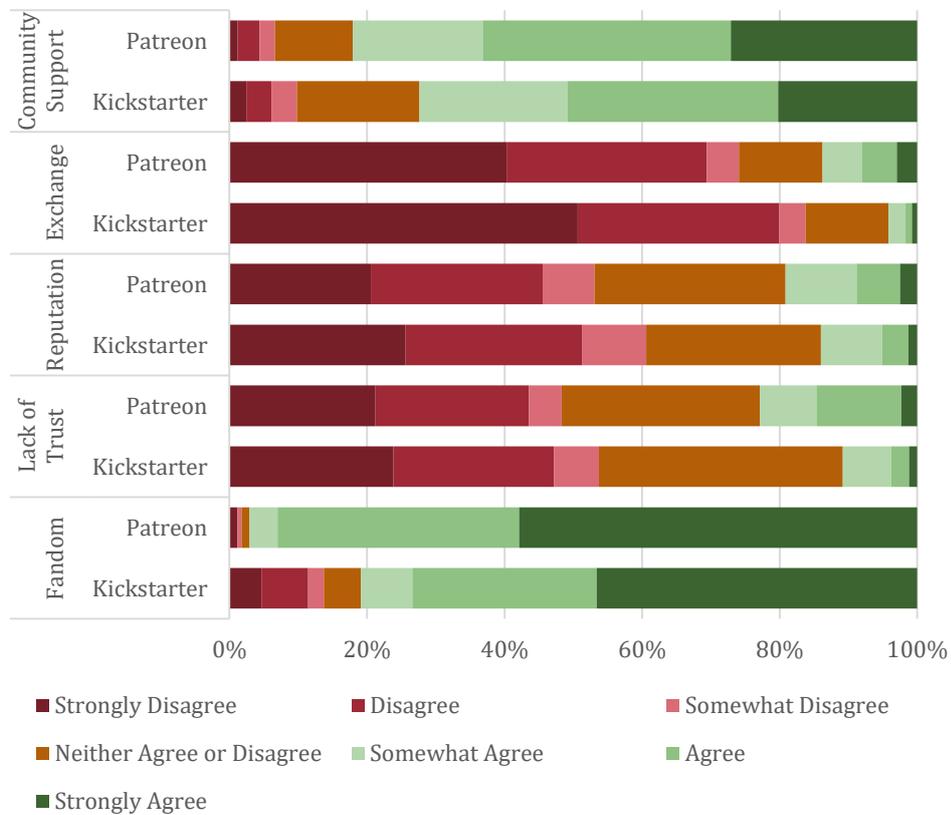


Figure 4-10 Average level of agreement with statements related to the identified backing factors, showing patterns of response on Kickstarter and Patreon

Independent samples t-tests were carried out comparing Patreon and Kickstarter scores for each factor. Patreon backers gave significantly higher scores than Kickstarter backers for Community Support ($t(334.435)=-5.780, p<0.000$), Exchange ($t(257.995)=-4.184, p<0.000$), Reputation ($t(271.831)=-2.239, p=0.026$), and Fandom ($t(523.098)=-5.946, p<0.000$). There is also a significant main effect of reason to back, $F(2.801, 1677.979)=960.807, p<0.000$, showing that respondents agreed with different reasons for backing projects to different levels. Pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment show that backers are most likely to back due to Fandom, followed by Community Support. Lack of Trust is responded to neutrally, and for most, Reputation and Exchange are not likely to be reasons to back the project. There is also a significant interaction between platform and reason for giving, $F(2.801, 1677.979)=6.050, p=0.026$. This is likely to be explained by the larger differences in scores on Exchange and Fandom despite the relative order of

motivations remaining the same and Patreon backers consistently scoring higher.

Correlations were carried out between the amount that a backer gave and their scores on each motivational factor. Due to the violation of assumptions of normality and linearity for most of the motivational factors measured, Spearman's rho was chosen. On Kickstarter, significant positive correlations were found between amount given and Community Support, Exchange, and Fandom, whilst on Patreon significant positive correlations were only found between amount given and Reputation and Fandom (see Table 4-10). This suggests that more is given on Kickstarter by backers who have a stronger sense of belonging to a fandom, a stronger regard for community, and if they have given or received from the creator previously. More is given on Patreon by backers who have a higher regard for their reputation, or if they have a stronger sense of belonging to a fandom.

Table 4-10 Spearman's rho correlation coefficients for amount pledged and motivations to give

Factor	Kickstarter	Patreon
Community Support	0.223*	0.154
Exchange	0.127*	0.167
Reputation	0.044	0.238*
Lack of Trust	-0.005	-0.083
Fandom	0.250*	0.193*

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

4.6.3 The Influence of Rewards

As seen in the previous section, 46.35% of Kickstarter backers explicitly mentioned rewards as a reason to back the crowdfunding campaign, compared to just 12.93% of Patreon backers. It was the second most common reason for donating on Kickstarter compared to the fourth most common on Patreon. When donating to a crowdfunding campaign, it is not compulsory to claim the reward that corresponds with the donation amount. Backers can choose to claim a lower tier reward, or no reward at all. On Kickstarter, 96.97% of backers claimed the reward that matched their donation level, and only 0.47% claimed no reward at all. On Patreon however, 73.26% claimed the matching reward, and 21.51% claimed no reward. Respondents who did not claim a reward were asked why through an open-ended question. Of the 20 answers from Patreon backers, 17 indicated they were giving only to support the creator: *"I don't care about an additional reward. I simply wanted a way to support the creator of a*

thing I like”, “There wasn't anything more I wanted than what he already produces online for free. Patreon is mostly an act of altruism.” Backing up this idea, when asked directly how important rewards were, Kickstarter backers felt they were significantly more important, $t(214.030)=15.890$, $p<0.000$, with 95.57% of Kickstarter backers selecting at least Somewhat Important (mean 5.86, Very Important, SD 0.90), compared to just 44.19% of Patreon backers (mean 3.77, Neutral, SD 1.63).

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the campaign and the items they received, based on a 7-point scale labelled from Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied. Mean satisfaction with items received was Satisfied (around 6) on both platforms (6.19, SD 1.81 on Kickstarter and 5.73, SD 2.07 on Patreon) but Kickstarter backers were significantly more satisfied, $t(281.107)=2.515$, $p=0.012$. Mean satisfaction with the campaign as a whole is Very Satisfied on Kickstarter (6.56, SD 0.90) and Satisfied on Patreon (6.21, SD 1.32), and again this difference is significant, $t(237.062)=3.214$, $p=0.001$. This may be because Patreon does not have firm deadlines for the provision of any rewards or returns, so some backers may feel frustrated.

Table 4-11 Principal Component Analysis for rewards – Rotated Component matrix for all respondents

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Product corresponding to a goal of the project	0.66	-0.06	-0.02	0.31
Other large physical items	0.80	0.11	0.04	0.12
Other small physical items	0.68	0.01	0.28	0.00
Personalised items	0.71	0.39	0.24	-0.03
Limited number items or Kickstarter exclusives	0.63	0.37	0.21	0.07
Physical originals	0.66	0.39	0.13	0.03
Physical commissions or personal products	0.43	0.76	0.00	0.12
Digital commissions or personal products	0.19	0.80	0.03	0.22
Meeting creators online*	0.04	0.59	0.51	0.17
Meeting creators in real life	0.07	0.64	0.40	0.02
You having a part in the product	0.13	0.69	0.28	0.04
Gratitude (i.e 'our thanks') or warm glow	0.11	0.10	0.75	0.01
Your name on a website or on the product	0.18	0.30	0.68	0.04
Early or exclusive access to content	0.26	0.12	0.64	0.28
Digital items or digital content*	0.04	0.33	0.34	0.48
Additional content for all backers	0.25	0.17	0.13	0.76
Additional content for everyone, regardless of whether they give money	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.82

Items loading at more than 0.4 are in **bold**.

* Items removed from factors

Respondents were provided with 17 descriptions of rewards, based on study 4, and were asked to rate them on a scale from (1) Dislike a lot to (7) Like a lot. A

PCA was conducted with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy, $KMO=0.864$, and all anti-image correlations were greater than 0.71. Initial analysis revealed four factors with eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1, which in combination explained 61.69% of the variance. The scree plot confirmed retention of the four factors. Factor loadings after rotation are in Table 4-11. Two items cross-loaded onto two factors: 'meeting creators online' was removed from analysis; 'physical commissions' loads much more strongly onto Factor 2, with a loading difference of 0.33 and was therefore retained on Factor 2 (Field, 2013). Six items loaded strongly onto Factor 1, consisting of rewards that are physical or tangible in nature, such as goal products, personalised items, and exclusive items, labelled Physical Items. Four items loaded strongly onto Factor 2, which is labelled Bespoke Items, and includes rewards such as commissions and the backer having a part in the product. Three items loaded onto Factor 3, Recognition, which are rewards such as gratitude, public acknowledgement, and early access to content. Finally, three items loaded onto Factor 4, which form Extra Content rewards, particularly online content, whether just for backers or for all readers. The Cronbach's alpha reliability measure, shown in Table 4-12, was improved for Extra Content when "digital items or digital content" was removed, so this item will be discussed as a separate single item 'Digital Items' factor and Extra Content now consists of two items.

Table 4-12 Cronbach's alpha results for reward factors

Factor	Kickstarter	Patreon
Physical items	0.812	0.880
Bespoke items	0.781	0.847
Recognition	0.700	0.660
Extra Content*	0.585	0.719

** Reported alpha with item removed to increase reliability*

The means of items were taken to form a scale; scores for each reward type are similar for each platform (see Figure 4-11), with backers on both responding positively. Eyeballing the results shows that Kickstarter backers like 3 of the 5 categories more than Patreon backers (not Digital Items or Recognition). Overall, backers on Kickstarter like Extra content the best (mean 5.88, Like, SD 0.93) and Recognition the least; Patreon backers also like Extra Content most (mean 5.73, Like, SD 1.12) and Bespoke Items the least (mean 4.92, Slightly Like, SD 1.32), perhaps because they are more complex for creators to provide through that platform.

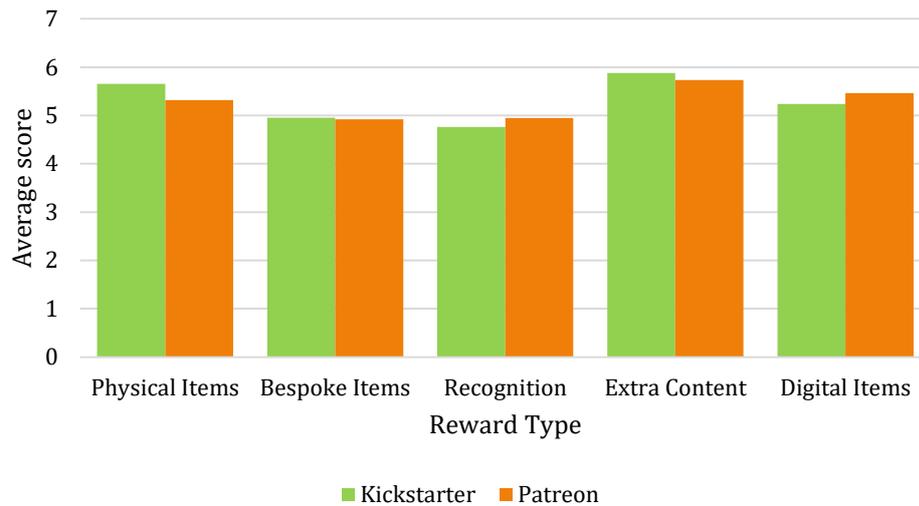


Figure 4-11 Average score for reward types

A 2 (Platform: Patreon or Kickstarter) x 5 (Reward: Physical Items; Bespoke Items; Recognition; Extra Content; Digital Items) mixed methods ANOVA was carried out to further investigate interactions between the platform and the reward scores. Tests for normality showed significant skew and kurtosis (see Table 4-13), and Levene's test for equality of variances was significant for Physical Items. Again, for the same reasons discussed in section 4.6.2, the decision was taken not to transform the data.

Table 4-13 Skew and Kurtosis in tests for normality for reward types

Reward Type	Kickstarter		Patreon	
	Skew	Kurtosis	Skew	Kurtosis
Physical items	-1.27*	3.35*	-1.24*	1.94*
Bespoke items	-0.47*	0.15	-0.87*	0.81*
Recognition	-0.27*	0.60*	-0.48*	0.35
Extra Content	-0.72*	-0.05	-1.46*	3.33*
Digital items	-0.74*	0.26	-1.30*	2.09*

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, $X^2(9)=127.724$, $p < 0.000$, and the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was too stringent ($\hat{\epsilon}=0.902$) so the Huynh-Feldt correction is used ($\tilde{\epsilon}=0.910$). There is a significant main effect of reward type, $F(3.641, 2180.710)=83.615$, $p < 0.000$, showing that backers prefer some rewards to others. Pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment show significant differences between scores for all reward types, except for between physical and digital items, and between bespoke items and recognition. As such it seems that backers most like rewards that contain extra content, followed by physical and digital items to a similar level, and finally recognition and bespoke items also to

a similar extent. There was no significant difference between platforms, although there was a significant interaction between reward type and platform ($F(3.641, 2180.710)=8.658, p<0.000$, showing that the backers on each platform do respond differently to different types of rewards.

Response patterns indicate differences between platforms within Physical Items and Recognition (see Figure 4-12). Kickstarter backers like physical rewards more than Patreon backers, $t(261.055)=3.431, p=0.001$, with an average score of Like (5.66 SD 0.92) compared to Slightly Like (5.32 SD 1.16). Patreon backers like recognition rewards more than Kickstarter backers, $t(599)=-1.993, p=0.047$, although backers on both platforms gave an average score of Slightly Like (4.95 SD 1.06 on Patreon and 4.76 SD 1.02 on Kickstarter).

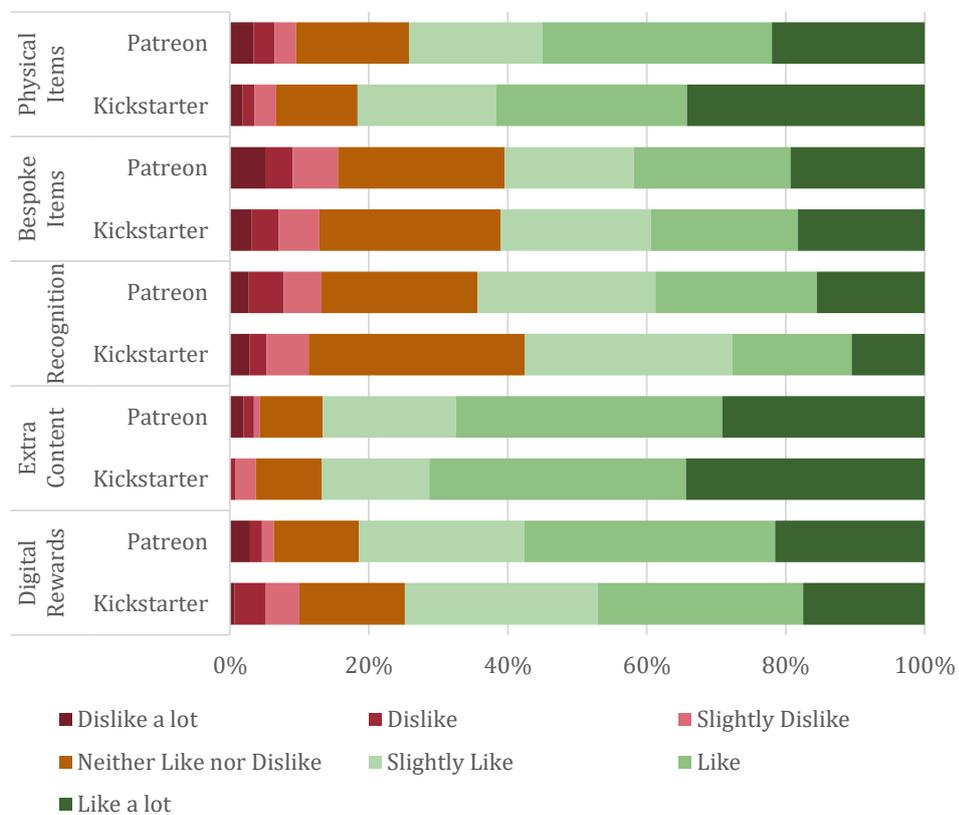


Figure 4-12 How much backers on both platforms like different reward types

Respondents were also asked to explicitly rank their top three rewards from the 17 items. More Kickstarter backers placed physical items in these positions than any other category (87.9% first, 60.9% second, and 46.9% third) (see Figure 4-13). Recognition was most often placed in first position by Patreon backers (28.5%), and Physical Items in second and third (29.7% second, 27.9% third). Preferences are much more spread out across categories on Patreon.

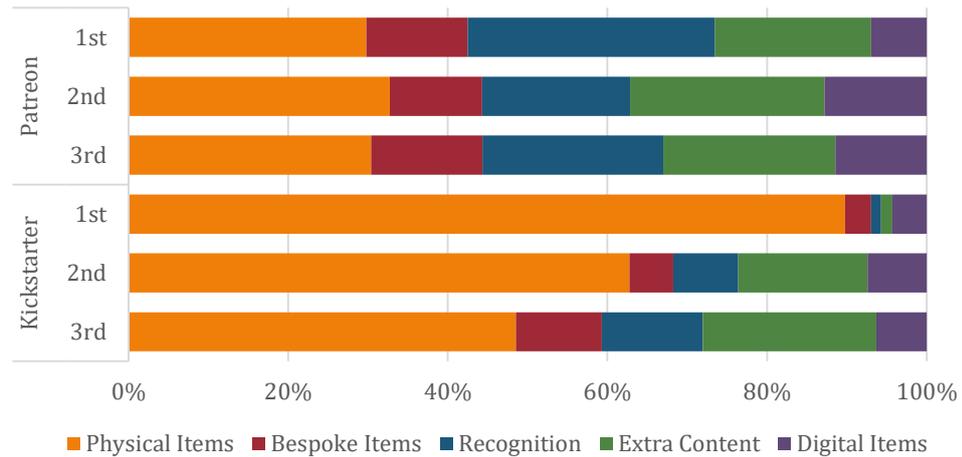


Figure 4-13 Percent of backers on each platform who ranked each reward type first, second, or third

Correlations were carried out between the amount that a backer gave and their rating of how much they liked each reward type. Due to the violation of assumptions of normality and linearity in ratings, Spearman's rho was chosen again. The only significant correlation on Kickstarter is between the amount pledged and physical items ($r_s=0.124$, $p=0.034$), which suggests that people who very much like physical rewards will pay more for items they desire. On Patreon there are three significant correlations with amount pledged: Physical items ($r_s=0.213$, $p=0.027$), Bespoke items ($r_s=0.262$, $p=0.006$), and Recognition ($r_s=0.275$, $p=0.004$). This suggests that whilst backers on Patreon are willing to pay more for items they want, they also appreciate being thanked, and receiving personalised rewards, and will pay more for these kinds of rewards.

4.6.4 Attitudes Towards Supporting Crowdfunding

Patreon backers show a higher level of agreement with each of the constructs measured in the final part of the questionnaire (see section 4.5.1 and Figure 4-14). The highest levels of agreement were for Cognitive Attitude (Kickstarter mean 4.31, Agree, SD 0.57, Patreon mean 4.49, Agree, SD 0.50) and the lowest for Personal Moral Norm (Kickstarter mean 2.19, Disagree, SD 0.98, Patreon mean 2.58, Disagree, SD 1.05). Reluctant Altruism, which was measured on a different scale, a 5-point scale (and therefore not included in Figure 4-14), had a mean response of Neutral on both platforms (Kickstarter 3.95 SD 0.92, Patreon 3.92 SD 0.92).

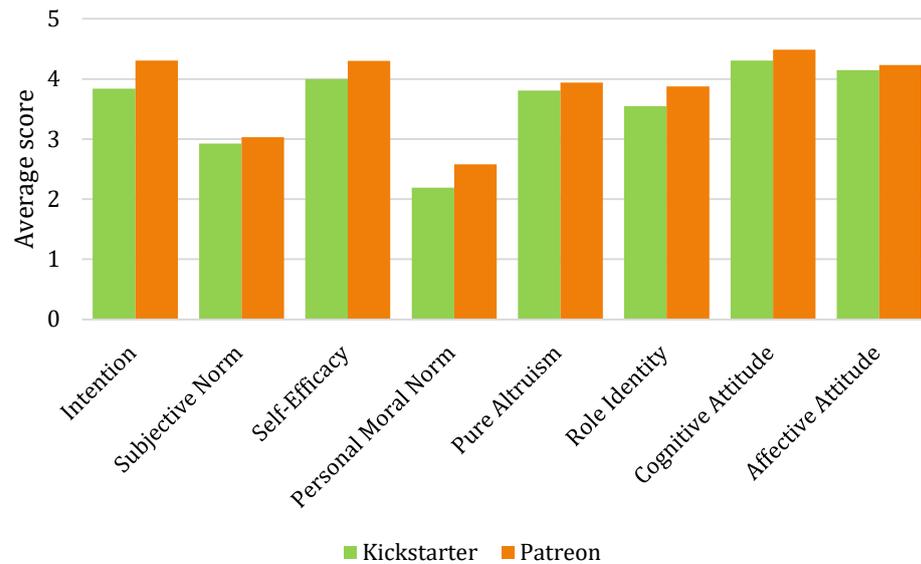


Figure 4-14 Average scores on each platform for different constructs of altruism

A 2 (Platform: Patreon or Kickstarter) x 8 (Construct Score: Intention; Subjective Norm; Self-Efficacy; Personal Moral Norm; Pure Altruism; Role Identity; Cognitive Attitude; Affective Attitude) mixed methods ANOVA was carried out to investigate the interactions between the platform and attitudes towards backing. Tests for normality showed significant skew and kurtosis (see Table 4-14), and Levene's test for equality of variances was significant for five out of eight of the constructs (not Subjective Norm, Self-Efficacy, or Affective Attitude). As previously, the decision not to transform the data was taken.

Table 4-14 Skew and Kurtosis in tests for normality for attitude constructs

Construct	Kickstarter		Patreon	
	Skew	Kurtosis	Skew	Kurtosis
Intention	-0.69*	0.72*	-0.45*	0.30
Subjective Norm	-0.46*	1.92*	-0.20	3.28*
Self-Efficacy	-1.13*	2.96*	-0.77*	2.39*
Personal Moral Norm	0.51*	-0.45	0.22	-0.94*
Pure Altruism	-0.57*	0.81*	-0.63*	1.12*
Role Identity	-0.45*	0.26	-0.43*	0.66
Cognitive Attitude	-0.44*	-0.38	-0.76*	-0.06
Affective Attitude	-0.49*	0.27	-0.26	-0.82*

* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Mauchly's test of sphericity indicates that the assumption of sphericity was violated, $X^2(27)=865.479$, $p < 0.000$, and so the Greenhouse-Geisser correction is used ($\hat{\epsilon} = 0.691$). There was a significant main effect of platform, $F(1, 594)=38.392$, $p < 0.000$, showing that Patreon backers tended to score higher than Kickstarter backers. There was also a significant main effect of construct, $F(4.835, 2871.905)=673.564$, $p < 0.000$, suggesting that backers agreed with

different attitudes to greater or lesser extents. Pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment show significant differences between scores of respondents on Kickstarter and those on Patreon for Intention ($t(429.539)=-7.449$, $p<0.000$), Self-efficacy ($t(599)=-4.915$, $p<0.000$), Personal Moral Norm ($t(293.381)=-4.293$, $p<0.000$), Pure Altruism ($t(380.4)=-2.756$, $p=0.006$), Role Identity ($t(371.245)=-5.296$, $p<0.000$), and Cognitive Attitude ($t(599)=-3.661$, $p<0.000$). In all cases, Patreon backers agreed significantly more with statements relating to each factor than Kickstarter backers. No significant differences were found between scores for Subjective Norm or Affective Attitude, or Reluctant Altruism. Finally, there is a significant interaction between platform and construct, $F(4.835, 2871.905)=6.985$, $p<0.000$, suggesting that backers on each platform did have different attitudes towards backing. Backers on both platforms agreed most strongly with statements related to Cognitive Attitude and least to Personal Moral Norm. The platform affects backers' scores for Self-Efficacy, Intention, and Affective Attitude.

Correlations were carried out on each platforms between the altruism measures and the other factors. Due to the violation of assumptions of normality and linearity, Spearman's rho was chosen again. On Kickstarter there are significant positive correlations between scores for Pure Altruism and every other factor except Personal Moral Norm; Patreon is similar with only Personal Moral Norm and Subjective Norm not significantly positively correlating with Pure Altruism (see Table 4-15). On Kickstarter Reluctant Altruism also significantly positively correlates with most other factors (not Subjective Norm or Cognitive Attitude), although more weakly; on Patreon only Role Identity significantly correlates to Reluctant Altruism (see Table 4-15).

Table 4-15 Correlations between attitudes towards backing and Pure and Reluctant Altruism

Construct	Kickstarter		Patreon	
	Pure Altruism	Reluctant Altruism	Pure Altruism	Reluctant Altruism
Intention	0.316**	.150**	0.240**	0.144
Subjective Norm	0.186**	-0.007	-0.025	0.046
Self-Efficacy	0.299**	0.155**	0.278**	0.095
Personal Moral Norm	0.070	0.110*	0.055	0.126
Role Identity	0.231**	0.116*	0.435**	0.259**
Cognitive Attitude	0.350**	0.092	0.275**	-0.019
Affective Attitude	0.273**	0.103*	0.205**	0.003

*Significant at the $p<0.05$ level

**Significant at the $p<0.01$ level

Ferguson, Atsma, et al., (2012) identify three additional factors, whose scores are calculated based on a combination of the other factors described previously, which were identified as being related. Trust and Habit Formation were included in the makeup of these factors but due to them not reaching the threshold in section 4.5.1, they are removed here. Impure Altruism and Warm Glow correspond to theories as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Cognitive-Behaviour-Self combines attitudes related to identity and competence, and as such look at the more self-oriented reasons for giving. The Cronbach's alpha reliability measure is acceptable for Impure Altruism and Cognitive-behaviour-self on both platforms, but not Warm Glow on Patreon, so this will not be analysed further (see Table 4-16).

Table 4-16 Cronbach's alpha results for additional combined factors

Additional Factor	Combined Factors	Original	Cronbach's alpha	
			Kickstarter	Patreon
Warm Glow	Role Identity; Subjective Norm; Affective Attitude; Personal Moral Norm		0.649	0.392
Impure Altruism	Cognitive Attitude; Affective Attitude; Pure Altruism		0.718	0.695
Cognitive-behaviour-self	Self-efficacy; Intention; Role Identity		0.822	0.802

Patreon backers agreed more strongly with statements relating to both of these attitudes relating to prosocial behaviour motivations than did Kickstarter backers. For Impure Altruism the mean response for backers on both platforms was Agree (4.09 SD 0.49 on Kickstarter and 4.22 SD 0.42 on Patreon) although the difference is significant, $t(360.82)=-3.337$, $p=0.001$). For Cognitive-Behaviour-Self statements the mean response on both platforms was also Agree (3.80 SD 0.67 on Kickstarter and 4.17 SD 0.53 on Patreon) and again this is significant, $t(388.19)=-7.111$, $p<0.000$.

Spearman's rho correlations were carried out between the amount that a backer gave and their agreement scores for each factor. There were no significant correlations on Patreon between amount given and any of the constructs measured. The only significant correlations with amount pledged on Kickstarter were for Intention ($r_s=0.127$, $p<0.030$), Self-Efficacy ($r_s=0.168$, $p=0.04$), Affective Attitude ($r_s=0.124$, $p=0.034$), and Cognitive-Behaviour-Self ($r_s=0.126$, $p=0.031$), with higher levels of agreement leading to higher

donations. This suggests that altruism, whether pure, impure, or reluctant, is not related to donations on crowdfunding platforms.

4.7 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results show that Patreon backers are not more or less altruistic or selfish than Kickstarter backers, but they are generally more motivated to provide support. Kickstarter backers are more motivated by rewards than Patreon backers however. Reciprocity due to community factors or being member of a fandom are the strongest motivators to give to crowdfunding, although whilst being part of a fandom correlates to giving more on both platforms, wishing to provide community support only does so on Kickstarter. This is contrary to what was expected, with the more 'selfish' factors affecting amount given on Patreon, including a desire for recognition. Finally, only Kickstarter backers' attitudes towards backing had any correlation to their pledges, giving more when they scored higher in perceptions related to identity, warm glow, impure altruism, and selfish motivations for giving. So whilst results for Kickstarter backers have generally emerged as expected, support patterns and motivation factors on Patreon appear more complex.

4.7.1 How do Rewards and Incentives Offered to Backers Affect Crowdfunding Success?

Nearly half of the Kickstarter backers explicitly listed rewards as a reason for backing the campaign they chose, compared to just over a tenth of Patreon backers. Additionally, almost every Kickstarter backer cited rewards as a factor in deciding how much to pledge, whilst this was only a consideration for a third of Patreon backers who were more focused on their own budget. Similarly, addition of rewards can persuade Kickstarter backers to increase their pledge amounts whereas any change in Patreon pledge tended to be related to financial circumstances. More than a fifth of respondents on Patreon claimed no reward at all, and two fifths felt that rewards were not that important to the campaign. Even for those who did choose to accept a reward on Patreon, rewards were predominantly not seen as an important factor in whether they backed the creator or not, and some selected the lowest tier that they could; those who took nothing cited the roles of support and altruism as more important than rewards. However, interestingly, explicit measurement of altruism was not

correlated to levels of support on Patreon. These findings agree with the hypothesis that Kickstarter backers are more motivated by rewards than Patreon backers. However, even for Kickstarter backers, rewards were only the second most cited reason for backing, after support for the community.

Whilst not necessarily being motivated to back by the promise of rewards, backers on both platforms tended to very much like the types of reward on offer. Five types of rewards were identified by this study: physical items, digital items, bespoke items, recognition, and extra content. Backers on both platforms like rewards that contain extra content, such as additional comics or blogs, most, followed by physical and digital items. It was shown that backers on each platform do respond differently to different types of rewards. Backers on Kickstarter like physical rewards more than backers on Patreon, and backers on Patreon like recognition rewards more than backers on Kickstarter. When asked specifically about their favourite rewards, Kickstarter backers showed an overwhelming preference for physical items. Patreon backers have a lot more varied preferences, particularly for recognition and extra content.

It was expected that extrinsic motivations such as rewards and incentives would be stronger for Kickstarter backers, and this does appear to be the supported. Whilst Patreon backers also value rewards, they are not a strong reason for choosing to back a campaign, and the fact they prefer recognition or prestige awards suggest that these are related to internalised extrinsic motivations rather than external (physical rewards), which also supports expectations.

Less tangible types of reward may be preferred by Patreon backers because they do not reduce the profits of the artist, they are easy to provide on a recurring basis, and they do not take as much time to fulfil in general. This in turn may suggest that Patreon backers are more concerned with making a creator's life easier than receiving things for themselves. Extrinsic rewards may reduce the incentive to donate money because it is off-putting to think that the money may be going to create the reward rather than to help the cause. Rewards for giving money may then be seen as equivalent to making a purchase, rather than donating to a cause. If a backer is giving because they wish to support the creator or the project, the idea of claiming a large reward might be off-putting as their donation may not help the final outcome even if it helps the creator to reach their target amount. Having said this, there is no

evidence that the presence of an extrinsic incentive crowds-out any intrinsic motivations.

Overall the results suggest that physical rewards have more of an effect on success on Kickstarter than other types of rewards, and backers who greatly value this type of reward are prepared to pledge more, supporting the hypothesis. Patreon backers may also be enticed to pay more for certain items; they like physical items more than expected, but are also willing to pay more for recognition and receiving personalised rewards. Data indicates that the provision of extra content in addition to the already free webcomic is the biggest draw to backers on both platforms, and this can include content that is provided to all readers (not just backers), highlighting the social factor in backing. So whilst the prediction that Patreon backers prefer social rewards is supported, Kickstarter backers also appear to value these types of rewards.

4.7.2 What is the Role of Reciprocity in Crowdfunding?

No direct measure of altruism (pure, reluctant, or impure) was found to have an effect on donated amounts on either platform. However, in terms of attitudes towards backing, Patreon backers scored significantly higher for Pure Altruism than Kickstarter backers, as expected. Cognitive Attitude had the highest scores among backers on both platforms, and is positively correlated with pure altruism on both platforms. Additionally, Patreon backers scored significantly stronger than Kickstarter backers for Intention to back, Personal Moral Norm, Role Identity, and Cognitive Attitude, all of which are positively correlated to higher levels of Pure Altruism. This suggests that Patreon backers actively wish to continue backing webcomics more than Kickstarter backers, are more likely to feel guilty if they did not help, feel that webcomics contribute more to their identity, and see benefits and meaning in backing creators they like. This in turn suggests they have more generally altruistic tendencies. However, none of these factors correspond with giving more on either platform.

Neither group considered a lack of trust in others to have an effect on their decisions, nor was reluctant altruism found to be a strong attitude on either platform, suggesting that this construct is not a key determinant in backing behaviour. This contradicts the hypothesis that Kickstarter backers would be more affected by reluctant altruism. Additionally, there was no correlation between level of reluctant altruism shown and amount given; the theory that

reluctant altruism is related to an individual's preference to help when free-riding is present rather than punish the free-riders (Ferguson and Lawrence, 2016) is not supported here. The majority of webcomics readers may be considered free-riders, consuming content for free when there is the option to pay, and there is generally no way to 'punish' them, however this does not affect the amounts given by those that do choose to give. This may be due to the fact that many webcomics creators make clear their appreciation for all their readers, whether they give financially or not, and they often point out the other important contributions such as sharing the comic with others and raising awareness of an artist's work.

Warm glow could not be identified using the factors measured, but some rewards in crowdfunding seem specifically designed to elicit feelings similar to warm glow, for example gratitude and acknowledgement, including being publicly thanked on a website or product. These recognition type rewards were often ranked very highly by Patreon backers, more so than any other type of rewards, and more than by Kickstarter backers. Warm glow may also be indicated by higher scores in the affective attitudes, in that crowdfunding was considered pleasant, enjoyable, and appealing. These were rated positively on both platforms, suggesting a role for warm glow in both crowdfunding models. Patreon backers did show significantly higher levels of impure altruism than Kickstarter backers, as predicted, although this is also not associated with giving more. As impure altruism is considered a combination of warm glow and a desire to help, it may be that whilst backers on both platforms experience warm glow, backers on Patreon have a greater desire to help and gain more positive utility from doing so; the higher levels of pure altruism on Patreon may also back this up. Both warm glow and impure altruism may have selfish rather than altruistic roots, in that a desire to support can come from not wanting to feel guilty about not helping, and the pursuit of good feelings to do with helping can take the form of prestige and status-seeking. These more egoistic aspects also appeared more strongly on Patreon, as discussed below.

Whilst altruism was not found to affect donation behaviour, there are many reciprocal aspects in the identified factors that do affect backers' decisions. Of the five identified potential reasons for backing campaigns (Community Support, Exchange, Reputation, Lack of Trust, and Fandom), only Community Support and Fandom were found to be actual reasons. Both of these have strong

reciprocal aspects to them. Community support is a form of generalised reciprocity where all members of a group benefit from the actions of members of that group, for example a backer donating money allows an artist to keep providing work to everyone for free. This is also related to social identity and ingroup behaviour, and social capital. Fandom is more related to direct reciprocity, where a backer gives to an individual creator that they personally admire, with less consideration of other's benefits. Exchange as a standalone factor did not appear to have much effect on the decisions to back campaigns, in that backers predominantly did not feel they had been helped (either financially, socially, or another way) by the creators that they chose to help. However, more Patreon backers did indicate that they had either a financial or social reciprocal interaction with the creator in the past, suggesting that on this platform reciprocity may play more of an active role. It appears that rather than being its own reason for backing crowdfunding, reciprocity remains a way to achieve the goal of supporting a community or fandom that a backer is part of.

These results suggest that reciprocity is a greater influence on backing behaviour than altruism. It was expected that Kickstarter backers would be more motivated by direct reciprocity, which in this case would coincide with Fandom, and Patreon backers would be more motivated by generalised reciprocity, in this case through community support. In fact, backers on Patreon scored significantly higher than backers on Kickstarter for both Community Support and Fandom, and backers on both platforms were most affected by Fandom, followed by Community Support. So whilst Patreon backers are more motivated by generalised reciprocity than Kickstarter backers, they are also more motivated by giving back to a particular creator as direct reciprocity. This perhaps shows that Patreon backers are more invested in the surrounding context of the projects they choose to back. On both platforms, Community Support was positively correlated with the amount given, and therefore creators who want to monetise through the platform should continue to focus efforts on community building. The lack of support for the Exchange factor may be due to backers perceiving their donations to be for content to be received in the future, rather than demonstrating prosocial behaviour to a community that they feel has provided some benefit to them in the past. It may also be that whilst backers are both giving and receiving benefit, the backer may not be conscious that reciprocity was a motivation.

Higher levels of reciprocal motivation were also expected to correlate with giving higher amounts, which was the case for all three reciprocal reasons on Kickstarter, but only Fandom on Patreon. Almost all backers showed high levels of community support and fandom, regardless of how much they decided to, or were able to, give. Many more backers on Patreon talked about financial reasons in their decisions about how much to give, so it may be that these backers would give more if they had the ability to; additionally, there is a smaller range of donation amounts on Patreon so many backers choose the same amount for different reasons, and any correlation would be harder to draw out.

Reputation, a factor that appears towards the more selfish end of the altruistic spectrum, did not elicit positive responses on either platform, although significantly more Patreon backers were motivated by incentives such as recognition and the potential for receiving future help. Additionally, this factor was positively correlated with the amount given on Patreon but not Kickstarter. As mentioned with regards to warm glow, Patreon backers also liked recognition-type rewards more than Kickstarter backers and almost 30% of Patreon backers ranked these rewards at the top. So whilst this is not a strongly perceived reason for backing campaigns, it might be worth it for creators to give some thought as to what they can give back to their supporters in the form of prestige rewards, particularly on the subscription platform, Patreon. Patreon backers also show significantly higher egotistical (Cognitive-Behaviour-Self) attitudes. This is contrary to the prediction that Kickstarter backers would be more self-oriented than Patreon backers. It appears however that where more selfish motivations do appear, they are coupled with other-regarding tendencies as in warm glow and fandom; additionally, the selfish factors that do appear to higher levels may be considered the 'less negative' aspects of egotism, for example backers aren't overly concerned for their reputations but they do like to receive recognition for the good that they do.

Finally, the results do not indicate any evidence of crowding-out. High levels of one motivation or attitude towards backing do not discount there being high levels of another, even if they may appear contradictory, such as the desire to help and the desire to gain a reward. Instead, crowding-in may be more likely in webcomics crowdfunding, with backers perceiving rewards to support and

acknowledge their positive behaviour and enhancing their desire to help. This is expanded upon in the following chapter.

4.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The three main motivations that backers on both Patreon and Kickstarter have to supporting campaigns are: being part of a fandom, supporting a community, and receiving rewards. Backers on both platforms are primarily motivated by being a fan of the webcomic or the creator they are supporting, although this feeling is stronger on Patreon. A stronger feeling of fandom also correlates with larger donations on both platforms. Kickstarter backers are far more motivated by rewards than Patreon backers, and Patreon backers are more influenced by community factors than Kickstarter backers. These results suggest that whilst backers on both platforms first and foremost need to be interested and attracted to the webcomic, creator, and campaign, after that their main motivations to give diverge somewhat.

Creators who can work to enhance and encourage interactions with and between their readers may be able to maximise their successes on Patreon more easily than on Kickstarter. However, there is no correlation between amount given and desire to support the community on Patreon. This may be because Patreon requires a longer term commitment, and so it is more likely that lower payments are given in order to prolong the ability to give; many Patreon backers mention the restraints of personal finance and wishing to give to a number of different creators. Therefore, a stronger community motivation may be more linked to giving for a sustained period of time rather than the amount given each time.

Kickstarter backers also show a fairly high level of motivation towards community support, and higher donations are related to higher levels of regard for community. However, they are more motivated by the promise of rewards. They are prepared to pay more to receive physical items that they desire. Therefore, to succeed on Kickstarter, creators must also ensure that the physical rewards they are offering are particularly appealing. This can be enhanced with the use of stretch goals and add-ons as found in study 4 and further discussed in chapter 5. Creators who use Patreon should focus more on rewards related to recognition and personalised items.

Altruism does not have an effect on donations to webcomics crowdfunding campaigns, but both direct and generalised reciprocity are present in the strongest reasons for giving. Overall, Patreon backers scored more highly across each motivation than Kickstarter backers, regardless of whether it can be considered more altruistic or more selfish. Backers show high levels of motivations that include both selfish and altruistic reasons for backing, which are difficult to separate from each other, but appear to indicate a lack of crowding out. All identified reasons for backing involve some form of reciprocity, but it is not always clear whether the predominant consideration is about helping the other or helping the self.

DISCUSSION

The studies that make up this thesis aimed to establish how creators of free content can find financial success through their communities, by looking at how webcomics creators monetise their work through crowdfunding. It was found that creators make use of many different methods to make money and all rely on strong interactions with their online networks. Crowdfunding is extremely popular as it combines social media use, merchandise, and pre-order mechanisms, whilst allowing the main content to remain free. Results add to the literature on crowdfunding, by particularly highlighting the importance of the context surrounding the campaigns and platforms involved. Webcomics are relatively more successful than either comics in general or projects on Kickstarter overall, and the campaigns often raise funds much higher than their goals, indicating that rewards-based crowdfunding is valuable for this industry. The emerging subscription-based model such as used on Patreon attracts fewer backers, but over a year the amounts raised have the potential to be higher and contribute more significantly to a sustainable living.

The results also go beyond quantitative data surrounding platforms to probe the reasons why backers might choose to support campaigns, and particularly why they would pay creators for content that is provided to others for free. Being part of a fandom was the most important reason for giving on both Kickstarter and Patreon, followed by the promise of rewards on Kickstarter and supporting a community on Patreon. This work supports the idea that both general and direct reciprocity play a large part in motivations to give. The underlying motivations are a combination of selfish and other-oriented factors as discussed below, indicating that those who are more focussed on fandom and rewards are more self-regarding and directly reciprocal, whilst those for whom the support of a community is a strong factor are more other regarding and generally reciprocal. Pure altruism does not correlate to amount given on either platform although Patreon backers tend to have more strongly altruistic

attitudes overall, and tend not to be motivated by physical incentives. These findings enhance previous work which has started to look at the psychological factors in backing crowdfunding; they both support ideas surrounding how different crowdfunding models work and go beyond by considering factors within the individual community that uses each platform.

5.1 MONETISING FREE CONTENT

Webcomics creators and readers were found to make use of a wide range of websites for webcomic-related activities, including homepages, hosting sites, social media, and other sites often used to signpost readers to new comics. Social media is particularly important, as a wide range of people who otherwise may not use the Internet for entertainment use sites such as Facebook and Twitter. These are currently usually the best places for creators to get people to see their work, and for those people to share it with others. Creators have nuanced understandings of how to use social media and other websites in beneficial ways, including the best time to post work on particular sites, where their audiences are coming from, and on which websites their fans are reading their work. The ability for creators and readers to get to know each other online is hugely important, and the person behind the comic is often as important as the content of the work. Creators tend to provide a combination of personal engagement with links to content, with a blurring between work and personal spheres; this is necessary in order to engage their audience but also may result in disengaging some real life contacts. Creators predominantly felt that the problems associated with working online are outweighed by the benefits.

Creators also use a variety of methods to make money, not relying on a single income source as any one might fail at any time. They live portfolio careers, doing other work alongside their webcomics, working on several projects at once, and usually doing other full- or part-time jobs to support themselves. The predominant method of directly monetising webcomics is through selling merchandise, whether through online stores, at conventions, or in bricks-and-mortar stores. The use of social media in producing and selling merchandise is vital to webcomic creators at all stages of the process. Creators must build a dedicated community that is willing to spend the money on their creations. They may post designs for items to gain feedback and gauge demand. If enough people want the product the creator can then investigate production, which

may involve speaking to other creators and getting advice on printers, suppliers, and so on. They often use social media to advertise and build hype for a product, and then once produced they also use social media to make sales, promote online stores, and to announce where and when items will be on sale.

5.1.1 Crowdfunding Webcomics

It was found that readers are quite happy to 'reward' an artist that they feel deserves it, and to voluntarily pay for things they already receive for free, through one-time-only and recurring donations. Sites such as Kickstarter and Patreon are good mechanisms to allow smaller artists to experiment with their merchandise, as they can gauge demand and willingness to pay before they outlay any of their own money. Book campaigns especially allow creators to estimate how many items they need to print and are likely to sell. Social media can be especially important when using crowdfunding to fund the production of items to sell and crowdfunding platforms are seen as social media in their own right, using many key features associated with social media such as the ability to interact with others, post information, and share content. Such sites work hand-in-hand with more widespread social media such as Twitter and Tumblr for promotion.

Study 4 showed that whilst crowdfunding provides varied benefits to webcomics creators who wish to monetise their work, it is not a golden ticket. Kickstarter does not equal a steady income and Patreon rarely provides full-time income levels. Webcomics Kickstarter campaigns are however more successful than both the wider Comics category and Kickstarter as a whole. Whilst agreeing with some previous studies of crowdfunding in several important areas, for example with failed campaigns raising very little of their goal, and successful projects tending to run shorter campaigns and attract more backers, in other important ways webcomics crowdfunding campaigns differ from the norm. They have a much lower average goal and the average pledge is lower but they tend to raise more money from more backers, and they often raise far more than their original goals, with the percent of goal raised being unrelated to the original goal amount. The success rate also does not decrease with higher goals, as was found with other crowdfunding campaigns. Backers are not put off by higher goals when it comes to webcomics, and the content of the campaign is more important to its success than the overall goal amount.

Most goals are for books, published as collections of comics that have appeared online and as such often being produced annually. Books are also the most successful goal, being funded at an astonishing rate of 83%. Other uses of reward-based crowdfunding include creating a new webcomic or continuing an existing one, other forms of merchandise such as plush toys and calendars, and occasionally products such as games and events. Creation of a new webcomic is the second most popular goal, accounting for 20% of projects, but it is predominantly unsuccessful, being funded just 21% of the time. This is likely due to a perceived higher risk or lack of trust in a new creator: they are “inherently risky for both backers (who can easily end up feeling burned) and creators (who can kill the goodwill of their fans)” (Tyrrell, 2015b).

Patreon is more difficult to compare to previous studies of crowdfunding as it is a much newer emerging model. It was found that Patreon campaigns raise much less than successful Kickstarter campaigns, even when the potential earnings over a year are taken into account. However, it must be remembered that the bulk of the earnings do go to providing an income for the creator and for many creators the potential to earn an extra \$3,000 a year may be more appealing than receiving \$8,000 to create a specific project. Some creators have warned against relying on Patreon as an income and advise thinking of it as a bonus on top of their other activities, which may be wise considering that only 8% of creators make more than \$2,000 per payment (month). Patreon campaigns also attract far fewer backers than Kickstarter, and raise less per individual payment although the yearly earnings per backer are potentially higher. A creator who has a dedicated community who will give long term support might have more overall success on Patreon compared to Kickstarter. Most people on Patreon give less than \$5 a payment, implying they consider how much they are willing to give over a period of time. Very few people give more than \$100 a year to a single creator, suggesting that creators may be more successful asking for a small amount on a regular basis from a greater number of people, rather than aiming for a larger amount and receiving nothing. Many creators on Patreon emphasise the importance of people who only give \$1 regularly, often valuing them as an accumulation of continued support over a supporter who may give a larger amount for a shorter time.

Study 5 showed that backers appear choosier about which projects to support on Patreon, with most supporting up to 3 creators compared to a median of 14

projects being backed on Kickstarter. It is likely that this is due to backers having to commit to repeated payments on Patreon; another potential reason is the KIA (keep-it-all) nature of Patreon meaning that every pledge will be processed and sent to creators. This means that backers have to be certain of the quality of the project and their own commitment, whereas on Kickstarter the judgement is made across a large number of people. Conversely a single payment for a specific item may be easier to justify than supporting an ongoing body of work that is supplied to most for free.

In contrast to previous studies of crowdfunding, which find that the majority of backers come from a pool of friends and family (Agrawal, Catalini, & Goldfarb, 2011), in study 5 only a very few people identified as friends, family, or acquaintance of the creators. More did so on Patreon, with around a third considering themselves to have a relationship (mostly friend) compared to around an eighth on Kickstarter (mostly acquaintance). This suggests that the community of fans surrounding a creator holds a greater importance for webcomics and the creative industries than other industries that use crowdfunding. Additionally, when asked how they heard about the particular projects, the vast majority on both platforms did so through the creator or webcomics itself. There were also a lot of repeat backers, suggesting an association with the external surrounding community.

Backers are also fairly active on social media, particularly on Patreon, with more than two thirds following the creator and around a third sharing the project with their own followers. Campaigns on both platforms also attracted some backers to become followers, thereby increasing the community and potentially the success of future projects. It is therefore beneficial for creators to pay attention to their community both on social media and their own websites, and to point new backers towards social media accounts in order to increase the potential reach of campaigns.

By far the greatest motivation to back on both platforms was due to being part of an existing fandom, although this motivation, like all motivations, was stronger on Patreon. The other main reason to give is as support to the surrounding community, which is a stronger reason on Patreon and the second most important factor after fandom. These two motives are strong on both platforms, but they lead to the different behaviours observed in studies 4 and 5, and on Kickstarter rewards are more important than community. Patreon

backers do not consider rewards important. A higher sense of being a part of a fandom also led to giving more money on both platforms, but the desire to support the community was only observed to have an effect on Kickstarter.

Other reasons to back campaigns, including a straight exchange of resources, a lack of trust in others, and a desire for a positive reputation did not have much effect on backers. A direct exchange of resources did correlate with amount given on Kickstarter, as did the opportunity for enhanced reputation on Patreon, so it may be useful for creators on each platform to use language that attracts backers with higher tendencies towards the respective factors. For example, creators could emphasise direct reciprocity in their language when describing Kickstarter campaigns, by talking about what backers get in return. On Patreon, creators should use language that emphasises individual recognition and public acknowledgement that can enhance how others see them. The lack of support for a reluctantly altruistic aspect, shown by the relative unimportance of lack of trust, shows that backers on both platforms are not thinking about what others will do, but are either more focused on how to support everyone, or on what they personally want. It suggests that whether or not backers expect other people to support campaigns is not a consideration when deciding if they themselves should donate. Reluctant altruism has previously been found amongst blood donors in combination with warm glow (Ferguson & Lawrence, 2016), and in charitable giving when peer pressure is a factor (Reyniers, 2013). The reluctant altruism measure could be applied to a range of other online communities, particularly those that rely on support from many individuals, such as contributions to open-source software or shared information platforms. It would be useful to compare the exchange of different types of resources (time, information, money, etc.) to establish whether the concept is applicable to other domains and different types of giving.

5.2 THE ROLE OF REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

Studies 3 and 4 suggest that the promise of rewards and tangible products are not necessarily the main drivers for supporting crowdfunding campaigns, agreeing with Hemer (2011). However, they are certainly important, with nearly all Kickstarter backers claiming a reward and almost every Kickstarter backer citing rewards as a factor in deciding how much to pledge. Rewards were only a consideration in deciding to back for a tenth of Patreon backers and how

much to pledge for a third; Patreon backers were more focused on their own budget and often they wished to back several creators over a period of time. Addition of rewards can persuade Kickstarter backers to increase their pledges whereas any change in Patreon pledges is more usually related to personal finances. Given that more than a fifth of respondents on Patreon claimed no reward at all, and two fifths felt that rewards were not important to the campaign, the subscription model may work with less tangible incentives than the traditional rewards-based model. Even for those who did choose to accept a reward on Patreon, some selected the lowest tier that they could; those who took nothing cited the roles of support and altruism as more important than rewards. Backers who do not claim rewards may not want their money to go to creating the reward rather than helping the cause, or rewards may be seen as the equivalent of making a purchase, rather than a donation. If a backer is giving simply to support the creator of the project, claiming a large reward would mean the donation may not help the final outcome even if it helps the creator to reach their goal.

The provision of extra content in addition to the free webcomic is the biggest draw, in terms of rewards, to backers on both platforms. This includes additional comics, blogs, works-in-progress, and behind the scenes work. Interestingly, extra content is liked whether or not it is exclusive to the backer or available for all readers once unlocked, suggesting that it is not simply a form of prestige from receiving items. Such rewards do not take away from the amounts donated or the work of the creator, as they are already being produced in their day-to-day content creation.

The most common pledge to a Kickstarter campaign often corresponds to the reward tier at which the goal product first appears, particularly in physical format (i.e. a printed book rather than an ebook). Kickstarter backers liked physical items more than Patreon backers, and they overwhelmingly ranked physical items as their preferred rewards. Successful Kickstarter campaigns have a greater number of reward levels than failed campaigns, and more reward levels are associated with more backers, more raised, and a higher average donation, so backers like to have a selection of choices of things to 'purchase' from a campaign.

Kickstarter campaigns are also highly likely to add stretch goals, and nearly 90% of those that do reach at least one stretch goal; the number of stretch goals

correlates positively with the amount raised, average donation, and the number of backers, consistent with the idea that creators add stretch goals during a campaign in order to incentivise people to continue to give. Existing backers may also increase their donations in order to receive additional benefits triggered by a stretch goal; it may be easier for a creator to persuade an existing backer to increase their pledge by a few dollars than to find an entirely new backer to start from zero. This is reminiscent of the foot-in-the-door sales technique (Freedman & Fraser, 1966), a compliance tactic which is used to persuade people to agree to larger payments by starting with a modest sum and adding small amounts incrementally. Additionally, improvements to physical rewards, such as increased paper quality for books, can entice backers who are willing to pay more for desirable items.

Patreon campaigns tend to offer fewer rewards than Kickstarter, which suggests that creators are aware that other incentives may be more important, although backers on both platforms are willing to give more for an appealing reward. Creators give physical rewards out much less frequently on Patreon so backers are not usually triggered to give more by rewards. Although Patreon backers did indicate that they liked physical rewards, and it was found that a preference for such rewards leads to giving more, the types of physical rewards offered on Patreon were found to be different to those on Kickstarter. For example, creators offered books and large objects much less, focusing on prints, stickers, bookmarks, and so on. Patreon backers like rewards that signal recognition more than Kickstarter backers do, ranking them at the top of their favourites more than other kinds of rewards. They are more driven by incentives that involve receiving acknowledgement or gratitude, and when they like rewards they like them to be personalised. Recognition has been shown to increase willingness to pledge, especially when it is public (Thürriidl & Kamleitner, 2015b). As such it may be that Patreon backers with a strong focus on community also have a high level of public self-consciousness, which increases willingness to pledge. However, the higher levels of pledge hiding on Patreon should be taken into account, and may suggest that the desire for recognition is actually fairly low.

Less tangible types of rewards may be preferred by Patreon backers because they do not reduce the profits of the artist, they are easier to provide on a recurring basis, and in general they do not take as much time to fulfil. This in

turn may suggest that Patreon backers are more concerned with making a creator's life easier rather than with receiving things for themselves, which implies higher levels of intrinsic motivation among this group. Previous studies have found that acknowledgement can both undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999) and increase it (Ryan & Deci, 2000a); the results suggest that the latter is the case for Patreon backers and as such the forms of recognition offered by creators may enhance the feelings of competence of a backer, an important basic psychological need in self-determination theory.

Previous studies in which both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives are present have found that extrinsic rewards can be off-putting to those with a strong intrinsic motivation (Chao, 2014; Deci et al., 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Katz & Malul, 2015; Rode et al., 2015). However, due to the results consistently indicating high levels of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in backers on both platforms, crowding out was not identifiable in these studies. This is in agreement with previous literature suggesting that crowd-out only occurs with interesting or challenging activities (for example Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b), which giving money is not. It also agrees with previous studies of crowdfunding by Burtch et al. (2013a) and Kuppuswamy & Bayus (2013), neither of whom expected to see crowding-out in reward-based crowdfunding. Patreon backers did not appear to be strongly motivated by extrinsic rewards, but they were not put off from giving for more intrinsic reasons such as internal satisfaction or providing support to others. Giving enough to claim that reward (but not doing so) may signal to others a more selfish motivation to give and prevent a backer from doing so (Fehr & Schmidt, 2006), however this does not appear to have been a consideration for Patreon backers who did not claim rewards. It has also been found that extrinsic incentives (especially economic) can complement intrinsic motivations by enhancing self-esteem and warm glow, and social recognition (Covington & Müeller, 2001; Rode et al., 2015), and it may be that this crowding-in can be identified on Kickstarter, for whom extrinsic motivations are stronger but intrinsic motivations remain high.

5.3 THE ROLE OF RECIPROCITY

It has been shown that there are many ways in which the expectations of creators and readers about their responsibilities to each other form a pattern of reciprocity. Creators spend time cultivating the balance between what they

can provide to readers and vice versa, without putting a strain on relationships. Creators may feel obligated to provide readers with content, merchandise, responses to comments and emails, and so on, but at the same time they do not want to overload the reader so they get fed up or bored, or to ask too much of their audiences, for example through too frequent crowdfunding campaigns.

Being part of a fandom and providing support to a community, as well as the promise of rewards, all have a strongly reciprocal aspect to them. Reasons to do with both fandom and rewards involve donating to something that has provided, or will provide, entertainment, enjoyment, or fun, along with a directly reciprocal exchange between backer and creator. Reasons to do with supporting a community are more generally reciprocal, and benefit a larger number of people than just the self. Both fandom and community support are effected by combinations of similar motivations discussed in Chapter 4: warm glow, negative state aversion, egoism, reputation, intrinsic motivations, pure altruism, and identity. However, from response patterns and looking at statements related to the two factors, it seems sensible to suggest that those for whom fandom is a strong reason to give have a higher concentration of the more selfish motivations (for example reputation or egoism), whilst those for whom community is more important are more other-focused (for example identity or pure altruism).

Creators already use a social language with regards their readers and online interactions, and are aware that social capital is a limited resource (see section 5.5.1). A recent example illustrates the power of social capital, or ‘good will’: A Kickstarter campaign run by Howard Tayler of *Schlock Mercenary*⁴¹ offered an ‘early bird’ reward tier at \$20 which offered more rewards than the next tier at \$25. Two days into the campaign, some backers had opted for the more expensive, less beneficial to them, tier whilst the early bird was still available: “people just wanted to give him more money. [...] That’s entirely down to goodwill, and it’s worth more than any six-figure campaign of the past or future” (Tyrrell, 2017). A strong regard for the community around webcomics and webcomics campaigns highlights the importance of social capital. Social capital is involved in social network ties and shared meaning, both of which are particularly strong in communities formed around fandoms, and which can

⁴¹ See <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/howardtaylor/deluxe-rpg-handbrain-screen> and <https://www.schlockmercenary.com/>

enhance motivations to back campaigns as a reciprocal return on social capital (Zheng et al, 2014). Patreon backers in particular may feel they have received a lot of benefit from the community as a whole, particularly those who wish to support a range of creators. It predominantly appears to be external social capital which is the driver to successful webcomics crowdfunding, with creators bringing their networks of fans and supporters to the platforms. Internal social capital from backers who find campaigns from the platforms themselves is also demonstrated through the finding that some creators received up to half of their backers through the platform rather than their communities, and a fifth of respondents in study 5 found the campaign through the platform. Internal social capital has in the past been found to be highly important to reciprocity in crowdfunding (Colombo et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015) but these findings agree with Liao, Zhu, and Liao (2015) in also indicating the importance of external social capital through a strong interactive community.

The strength of community factors agrees with the finding that people who identify strongly as part of a group give more money, as well as time and effort, to that group (Ren, Kraut, & Kiesler, 2007). Ren et al (2007) also suggest that identity-based attachment such as through fandom leads to higher generalised reciprocity and attitudes of working together for group goals. The strong focus on both fandom and community support suggests that this is the case for webcomics communities, and is also backed up by the fact that a high score in attitudes related to identity is related to giving more on Patreon where both factors are higher.

No direct measure of altruism was found to be related to the amounts donated on either platform. Patreon backers did score more highly on attitudes that correlate with altruism than Kickstarter backers, suggesting these motivations are more important for subscription-based crowdfunding than for rewards-based crowdfunding. Patreon backers have a higher regard for their own effectiveness in backing webcomics, are more likely to feel guilty if they do not help, are more motivated by purely altruistic reasons, feel that webcomics contribute more to their identity, and see greater meaning in backing creators they like.

On Kickstarter, giving more is related to self-efficacy and affective attitude; it also correlates with a focus on self, suggesting that backers are motivated by how they will feel after giving. How much they want to crowdfund comics in

general, their own sense of ability, and how appealing, enjoyable, or pleasant they find giving to webcomics affects the amount they choose to give. Backers on both platforms with a high affective attitude give more, suggesting a strong feeling of warm glow may encourage people to give more.

Whilst neither a strong regard for reputation nor the existence of previous reciprocal behaviour emerged as reasons to give to a crowdfunding campaign, the first correlates with amount given on Patreon and the second with amount given on Kickstarter. As such it may be beneficial for creators on these platforms to aim to increase the proportion of backers for whom these factors are in fact considerations. Offering prestige awards on Patreon may attract more backers who are strongly motivated by reputation. On Kickstarter, directly appealing to a sense of reciprocity, for example by emphasising potential shared benefits, may be a way to encourage backers to give more. It should be noted that whilst backers were not motivated by reputation on Patreon, they did like incentives related to recognition the most. Both are on the more selfish end of prosocial motives and are similar in terms of their ability to signal to others that a person is kind or generous. As Patreon backers tend to have more other-oriented reasons for backing they care how they are seen by others in their community as well as wishing to help them. However, higher levels of pledge hiding on Patreon suggest that the desire for public recognition does not override other considerations such as a purely supportive motivation.

Table 5-1 Backer motivation types, from Ryu & Kim, 2014, 2016, and motivations found in study 5 (in brackets)

	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Self-oriented	Interest Playfulness (<i>Fandom</i>)	Reward (<i>Reward</i>)
Other-oriented	Philanthropic	Relationship (<i>Community Support</i>) Recognition (<i>Recognition Rewards; Reputation</i>)

Returning to classifications of motivations, the six motivations Ryu & Kim (2014, 2016) identify may be compared to motivations identified in study 5 (see Table 5-1); Recognition coincides well both with reputational motivations and recognition style rewards, and Reward has a direct counterpart in rewards in general and physical rewards in particular. The intrinsic self-oriented motivations Playfulness and Interest have many features in common with being part of a fandom. However, there are some important differences: Fandom is more usefully considered as a combination of these two factors, but also implies

the idea of more of connection and identification with the creator. The extrinsic other-oriented motivation of Relationship coincides with the community support motivations identified in study 5, although perhaps in a more directed fashion than the general support of an ingroup; the community support motivation also appears to have aspects of philanthropy, particularly on Patreon as a combination of wanting recognition and wishing to help. The pattern of responses suggests that when Patreon backers are extrinsically motivated it is mostly other-oriented, evidenced by their focus on Recognition Rewards and community support. Strong levels of intrinsic motivations are focused on the self as part of Fandom. Kickstarter backers appear to be more consistently focused on self-oriented factors, evidenced by their high scores for rewards and fandom related reasons to back. It would be interesting to do further work to classify backers in the same typology as Ryu and Kim (2016): Angelic Backers, Reward Hunters, Avid Fans, Tasteful Hermits. From the current data, it would be predicted that there would be more Reward Hunters on Kickstarter and that both platforms attract Avid Fans and Tasteful Hermits. The fact that many backers donated after the goal was reached would support the idea of Reward Hunters being prevalent. With higher scores for community and fandom, Patreon backers are more likely to be Avid Fans.

5.4 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

5.4.1 The Rise of the Subscription Model

Since the original studies were carried out, and largely due to Patreon, the subscription model of webcomics has become popular again. Patreon has since grown massively, including acquiring Subbable, a video subscription platform similar to Patreon (Pham, 2015). The models that use a crowdfunding and PWYW aspect work much more successfully than those introduced in chapter 2 such as paywalls and individual subscriptions to archives, likely because most of the content is still free and people are paying for extra content and other benefits. Brad Guigar, a professional webcomics artist, the creator of webcomics.com and author of two books on how to make successful webcomics, believes the subscription model will be the dominant business model with the death of advertising (Guigar, 2016). Advertising revenues have weakened substantially due to the number of people using ad-blockers and the sheer market saturation of ad banners and pop-ups across websites. He also

believes that rather than the Patreon campaign being support for a free comic, the trend is towards the opposite: “Patreon is not a tip jar. It’s a subscription service for exclusive content” (speaking on the ComixLaunch podcast in 2017). The idea that the free webcomic is there to drive people to the additional paid-for stories is an interesting one, and is one that has not worked in the past. The issue is that if Patreon comes to be seen as a ‘paywall’ this may be off-putting after many years of webcomics being free. Data also indicates that backers do not mind if additional content is exclusive, which may also speak against this idea as they are not paying for content for just themselves, but for everyone. The taboo against paying creators for content also appears to be fading, as more creators of all kinds join these platforms, but there still needs to be enough free content for people who cannot or do not want to pay, and to get a readership up to a level where monetisation is possible.

5.4.2 The Importance of Context

Most of the existing literature on crowdfunding does not take into account the context of the campaigns themselves, the surrounding communities and the differing format of projects and goals. They study performance across categories as if they all had the same underlying motivations for both backers and creators. Studies of the webcomics community specifically have shown some large differences between the findings of these studies and the workings of specific categories. For example, webcomics have a higher overall success rate, and success rate does not fall as the goal increases, unlike what was found by Madsen & McMullin (2015) and Barbi & Bigelli (2015); they ask for less money than crowdfunding overall, although they receive more from a greater number of backers, as shown in study 4. Some projects manage to be vastly overfunded, rather than sticking close to 100% as found by several cross-category studies (e.g. Rakesh et al., 2015), although they raise this money from lower average pledges than those found by Calvo (2015) and Benenson & Gallagher (2014). Considerations that need to be taken into account when studying crowdfunding include the type of product being funded, the type of backer being targeted, and the size of the overall campaign. Large technology products will have different underlying mechanisms to small creative projects; in particular community and fandom associations are likely to be lower and rewards of ever greater importance. Some campaigns will have existing

communities to target whilst others will rely on building hype around the product as they try to fund it. This thesis aimed to highlight and start to address this through its focus on a niche community but it is important that these factors are considered in all studies of crowdfunding. Whilst it is recognised that different models of crowdfunding (for example equity-based versus rewards-based) will attract different types of backers and creators, it is clear that within platforms that run on a single model this is the case also, with a wide range of backer types and motivations being present. The questionnaires used in this thesis would be simple to modify for use in different categories of crowdfunding; depending on the interplay between particular community characteristics and the amounts of money involved, differences between different categories are likely to be significant.

5.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis focused on a niche community to investigate how creators of free content can maximise their financial success through their communities, especially through crowdfunding. This makes a significant contribution to the study of the creative economy (see section 1.3), which in recent times have been thriving due to the ability for individuals to create and reproduce their ideas for large audiences at small cost (Howkins, 2002). Webcomics creators embody this idea, finding success thanks to the proliferation of digital technologies and without relying on larger corporate structures. Additionally, this thesis highlights some of the important relationships between the community, online platform, and the developing business models that underpin the changing digital and creative economy.

Webcomics creators were found to be sophisticated users of the Internet with broad awareness of how to make the most of their readerships. Whilst incentives were found to be extremely important in converting readers into paying customers, the reciprocal nature of communities is also overwhelmingly important in backers' motivations to support webcomics crowdfunding campaigns. Backers are influenced by a range of things, from the purely selfish to the almost purely altruistic wish to help. A backer can be highly motivated by two seemingly contradicting things, for example wishing to provide help and wishing to own a product, without showing evidence of one undermining the other, and theories of motivation need to consider the combined effects of

different motivations and how they interact to lead to an intended outcome. Studying motivations individually can miss nuanced information about the effect of one on another, particularly in situations which attract both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

The studies focused on the platforms Kickstarter and Patreon. Both platforms came out of a similar desire to help independent creators, and both were created by people who were independent creators themselves, but they function differently and have approached the problem in different ways. Motivations to donate money on both platforms strongly revolve around community and fandom; fandom is most important on both platforms and correlates with giving more. This is followed by rewards on Kickstarter and community considerations on Patreon. There is a stronger need to be aware of a creator or comic before backing them on Patreon, likely due to the sustained commitment required, whilst on Kickstarter project rewards may just be interesting or attractive and engage with an impulse backer. Whilst rewards of all kinds are highly important to Kickstarter, backers are prepared to pay more for physical rewards; Patreon backers are not motivated by rewards but when they are they will pay more for recognition and personalised rewards.

Both backers and creators already use language that suggests a reciprocal relationship, including referring to both altruism and social capital when discussing backing. Whilst both platforms are 'free' to use, in that they only charge for successfully processed pledges, it has been shown that a Kickstarter campaign takes roughly two days a week to run and fulfil, and it is possible that a failed campaign could work detrimentally to social capital with potential backers. Such factors have not yet been studied on Patreon, but as an ongoing KIA platform, even \$1 a month from 1 backer can be used to encourage others to give. Given the choice and freedom to run both or either types of campaign, a Patreon campaign may take less time (rewards are often things that already exist), and there is less penalty for failure. Kickstarter needs people to want a product and feel that it is worth paying for at that moment. Patreon can be an on-off, flexible relationship, in that backers can stop and restart their pledges month by month. Patreon is also more flexible in that the creator can signal their own virtue or good-will by not charging at certain times to build back up social capital and then restarting the campaign. Whilst Patreon may also seem to provide more freedom to a creator, it needs a more dedicated audience than

a one-off donation to Kickstarter. Creators should appeal to the continued benefits of being part of that backing community.

Creators need to be aware of the type of backers they think they have in their communities, and may choose which platform to use and which rewards to offer accordingly. There are two kinds of communities, although both share characteristics: those that thrive on Patreon have higher levels of willingness to give and feeling towards the creator as well as for members of the surrounding community, whilst among Kickstarter backers this feeling slightly lower and many backers just want the product. Big creators will probably have enough of both types of backer and succeed on both platforms, but small creators may need to work out their market. Much of what has been learnt from webcomics is applicable to other independent creators, especially as the model of giving away free content becomes more pervasive. Both rewards- and subscription-based crowdfunding work well for creators who already have a strong fan base, and who can encourage community interactions and emphasise support and reciprocity between creators and consumers. Rewards-based crowdfunding may work with a wider range of industries who can offer tangible products for one off support, whilst creators who can spend time enhancing and encouraging interactions with their audiences may be able to maximise their successes in subscription-based crowdfunding. Creators who work on the internet, giving away free or intangible content, such as podcasts, webcomics, or livestreaming, should most likely concentrate on subscription-based funding, whilst creators who work offline with tangible products that may appeal to a wider audience may find more success with rewards-based funding.

5.5.1 Limitations

A major difficulty in studying communities that rely on reciprocity and exchange of social capital is that some creators, who are aware of its importance, are unwilling to spend that capital unnecessarily. As such, some creators that were contacted did not want to ask their backers to help with the project. Whilst this is useful in that it shows that creators do actually consider the altruistic and reciprocal natures of their readers, it is frustrating in collecting participants for the studies. For example,

I'm in the "not comfortable" category. To clarify the whole concept of crowdfunding is asking people that appreciate your work to give of

themselves just so you can make a personal goal happen. Their satisfaction in the transaction is almost entirely based on altruism. Sure they might get a comic or a book or a record out of it, but primarily they're trying to make your dream come true out of selflessness (Joel Watson, Personal Communication, 2015).

In terms of the final large questionnaire, respondents may have got bored before reaching the end and so fatigue effects in the altruism measures may be present. Over 100 respondents dropped out before completing the questionnaire in study 5 so a shorter, more refined survey may have been more effective. Additionally, more focused questions based specifically on categorisation of motivations from Ryu and Kim (2014, 2016) as discussed above or Choy and Schlagwein (2016) to compare charitable crowdfunding motivations, would have allowed direct comparison with these studies.

Finally, the projects and platforms investigated in this thesis were all English-language and western-oriented, and it is highly likely that the mechanisms behind crowdfunding success may work differently in other cultures. Many cultures have different attitudes towards the sharing of work and towards publishing, especially with regard to comics. Differing formats (for example manga in Japan, the Franco-Belgian bande dessinée tradition) may also mean that crowdfunding goals and rewards are likely to differ. Extending the study to non-western platforms and projects in other languages than English would have allowed an interesting comparison.

5.5.2 Future Work

In addition to the motivation categorisation discussed above, Hahn and Lee's (2013) archetypes based on backing frequency would be interesting to investigate further. For example the focus on fandom and the fact that the number of projects backed by individuals on Kickstarter was relatively high (average of 40 and median of 14) suggests an abundance of category enthusiasts and focused supporters (see Table 5-2). Focused supporters are associated with large monetary outcomes but category enthusiasts are not. A similar classification could be done for Patreon with some further examination of backing habits within categories.

Table 5-2 Hahn and Lee's (2013) typology of repeat backers

		Category Concentration	
		Low	High
Backing frequency	High	Portfolio master	Category enthusiast
	Low	Casual wanderer	Focused supporter

Whilst the combination of motivations present on both crowdfunding platforms studied showed no evidence of the crowding-out effect, this concept could not be studied in any great depth. An experimental or quasi-experimental study would allow for a formalised investigation of whether backers using different crowdfunding models and in different communities are affected differently by combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives. Manipulating the incentives on offer in a structured way may show, for example, a threshold where extrinsic and intrinsic motivations begin to have negative effects on each other. This could be useful in determining ways to increase success in the different crowdfunding models that rely on incentives. Looking at fans of webcomics who choose not to back crowdfunding campaigns, either on Patreon or Kickstarter, would also help with investigating crowding-out, as well as identifying the different attitudes that these fans have that may explain their decisions not to provide financial support, for example diffusion of responsibility and free-riding. This may also help to suggest more ways to turn non-backers into backers. Additionally, investigation of the crowding-in effect, particularly on Kickstarter, would be interesting as the results suggest that this may be more likely than crowding-out.

Many things have changed since these studies were conceived and carried out. Both Kickstarter and Patreon have altered their interfaces significantly, whilst staying true to their underlying business models. It would be interesting to take some of these updates and see how they have changed the functioning of crowdfunding in small creative communities. Kickstarter has introduced much more flexibility in its rewards, including reward scheduling and the option to back without claiming an award straight from the campaign page (see Figure 5-1), which suggests they may be trying to encourage more backers with more altruistic motivations to give. They have also introduced the ability to pledge to a campaign without creating an account, as a 'guest pledge' and it would be interesting to see the kinds of backers this attracts. On Patreon, the campaign page no longer necessarily shows the amount raised, which may affect how much backers are willing to give, and change the patterns of motivation. This

may be interesting to study in combination with further investigation of pledge hiding from backers, which is already higher on Patreon than Kickstarter. Additionally, it would be interesting to see when and why creators choose to hide their earnings; for example creators with only a few versus a large number of backers, or those who earn a little versus a lot.

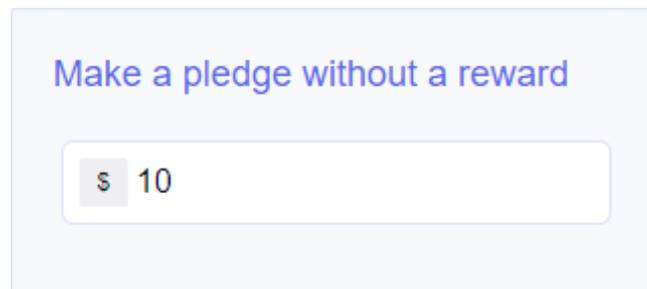


Figure 5-1 Kickstarter has made changes that may encourage backers with more altruistic motivations to give

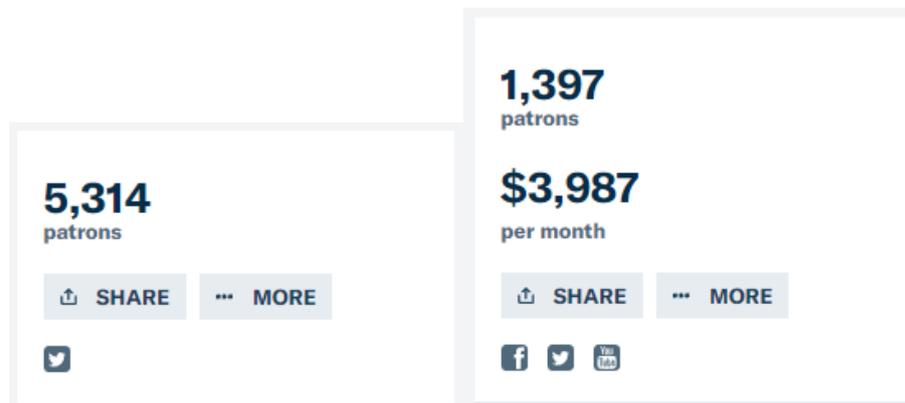


Figure 5-2 Patreon has removed the necessity to show the total amount pledged on campaign pages

As well as further study of the subscription-based model of crowdfunding, there are other monetisation models that would benefit from further study and comparison to crowdfunding. PWYW, already discussed as part of this thesis, is likely to have similar motivations as crowdfunding, but as the reward is the same no matter what is given, the reward motivation itself may be lower as the donations get higher. Applying specific findings from PWYW such as the influence of reparative altruism or guilt avoidance would be useful; webcomics creators and other online industries use both PWYW and crowdfunding so these communities would be a good place for such comparisons. Specifically, a feeling of shame has been found to play a large role in decisions to pay in PWYW (Suzor, 2014); it may be that avoidance of anticipated guilt from not giving, or giving because of perceived guilt from a previous behaviour, may better explain

behaviour than similar seeming mechanisms such as reluctant altruism or direct return for benefits received.

Other more niche business models also exist. Board game creator GMT Games uses a pre-order program called P500 where new games are released when they reach 500 pre-orders and production is worthwhile⁴². The rise of crowdfunding and the ubiquity of social media have allowed these niche business models (that may only work for a small group) to thrive. Each small creative industry may have its own combination of factors that dictate which new business model works best for them and this would be interesting to investigate and compare. Finally, this thesis focused on projects that usually have existing communities of fans (and other creators) surrounding them before the campaign, rather than the creator relying on attracting people through the use of crowdfunding itself. Comparing the motivations and backing habits found in both types of backer (existing fan or new consumer) and community (strong support before or support created during the campaign) would also contribute to the study of different contexts of crowdfunding and the functioning of internal and external social capital on different types of crowdfunding platforms, enabling more creators to benefit fully from their own crowds.

Finally, there is value in the dissemination of these findings to various stakeholder groups, for example informing platform developers about their communities of backers can help them to design future improvements, as well as to advise creators using their platforms on how to gain the greatest success. The results of this thesis could be of real use to creators of webcomics who want to run their own crowdfunding campaigns. As well as further dissemination of results via academic routes such as papers and conferences, the aim is to work with some of the creators interviewed during the course of the thesis to create a resource for other creators, perhaps a book or website, through the use of comics and summaries of the most important points to help them to succeed. The creators will not only help to identify the most interesting and important points from their point-of-view but will also be commissioned to create comic pages; this will highlight the talent of these independent creators as well as provide valuable support to the community.

⁴² See <https://www.gmtgames.com/t-GMTP500Details.aspx>

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A

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 2

QUESTIONNAIRE: INTERNET USAGE AND WEBCOMICS READING HABITS

Question text		%
Reading Webcomics: In the first section we would like to ask you some questions about your online behaviour and reading habits with regards to webcomics.		
1. How many webcomics do you currently read? If 0, participants are taken straight to Q8	0	1.0
	1-5	29.7
	6-10	27.3
	11-15	12.4
	16-20	4.3
	21+	25.4
2. Which websites do you use to access webcomics? Please check as many as apply.	The webcomics own website	95.7
	Facebook	22.0
	Twitter	34.4
	Google+	3.3
	Reddit	5.7
	Other (specify)	
	- Tumblr	14.4
	- Comic Rocket	2.4
	- Comic Fury	1.9
	- Smack Jeeves	1.0
	- Webcomic Underdogs	1.0
	- Deviant Art	1.0
	- Ink Outbreak	1.0
	- Live Journal	1.0
- Comic Aggregator	0.5	
- Manga Reader	0.5	
- Manga Magazine	0.5	
- StumbleUpon	0.5	
- Tapastic	0.5	
- Webcomics List	0.5	
- Belfry Webcomics Index	0.5	
3. Do you read any additional content related to specific webcomics?	Yes	75.6
	No	24.4
If answer to Q3 is yes: Which sites do you use to access this additional content? Please check as many as apply.	The webcomics own website	89.2
	Facebook	29.7
	Twitter	51.3
	Google+	1.3
	Reddit	1.9
	Other (specify)	
	- Tumblr	32.9
	- Webcomics Underdogs	1.3
	- Deviant Art	3.8
	- Live Journal	0.6
- Manga Magazine	0.6	

	- 4chan	0.6
	- Archive of our own	0.6
	- Comic Rocket	0.6
	- Comic Fury	0.6
	- Proboards	0.6
	- Top Webcomics	0.6
	- Webcomics.com	0.6
	- Wikipedia	0.6
	- Explain xkcd	0.6
<hr/>		
4. Do you read any content related to webcomics in general? For example, blogs such as Fleen, forums, and sites such as Reddit.	Yes	46.9
	No	53.1
<hr/>		
	- Twitter	38.4
	- Tumblr	30.3
	- Facebook	26.3
	- Reddit	14.1
	- Webcomics.com	12.1
	- Something Awful	10.1
	- Webcomic List	8.1
	- Webcomic Underdogs	7.1
	- Fleen	8.1
	- Smack Jeeves	7.1
	- Comic Fury	6.1
	- Deviant Art	6.1
	- Google+	5.1
	- Webcomic Overlook	3.0
	- Top Webcomics	4.0
	- Ink Outbreak	3.0
	- Webcomic Alliance	3.0
	- Comic Alliance	2.0
	- Manga Magazine	2.0
	- TV Tropes	1.0
	- Bleeding Cool	1.0
	- Boing Boing	1.0
	- Comic Book Resources	1.0
	- Comic Rocket	1.0
	- Digital Webbing	1.0
	- Forbidden Planet	1.0
	- Ink	1.0
	- Just The First Frame	1.0
	- Kickstarter	1.0
	- Manga Reader	1.0
	- Spider Forest	1.0
	- Stumble Upon	1.0
	- Tapastic	1.0
	- The Beat	1.0
	- The Comics Journal	1.0
	- Comics Reporter	1.0
	- Daily Cartoonist	2.0
	- Top Webcomic List	1.0
	- Webcomic Beacon	1.0
	- Webcomic Police	1.0
	- You Tube	1.0
<hr/>		
5. Do you use RSS, email, or a Feed Reader (such as Feedly, The Old Reader, Netvibes) to keep up-to-date with webcomics or webcomic-related content?	Yes	33.0
	No	62.2
<hr/>		

	RSS Feeds	69.6
	Email Updates	8.7
	Feed Reader (specify)	55.1
	- Feedly	56.4
	- Comic Rocket	5.1
	- Feedspot	5.1
	- Akregator	2.6
	- Bamboo	2.6
	- Ino Reader	2.6
	- Netvibes	2.6
	- Chrome	2.6
	- RSS Owl	2.6
	- Feeder	2.6
	- Piperka	2.6
	- TinyTiny RSS	2.6
If answer to Q5 is Yes		
5b. What do you use to keep up-to-date with webcomics or related content? Please check as many as apply		
	6. Have you ever purchased any books or merchandise (such as prints, t-shirts, toys etc) from a webcomic, or paid a donation or subscription?	
	Yes	80.4
	No	13.9
	Books	78.6
	Existing art	56.0
	Custom art	22.6
	Clothes	61.3
	Homewares	17.9
	Toys	20.2
	Made a donation	41.7
	Paid a subscription	14.3
	Other (specify)	
	- App	0.6
	- Badges	1.8
	- Magnets	0.6
	- Keyring	0.6
	- Bookmark	1.2
If answer to Q6 is Yes		
6b. What have you purchased? Please check as many as apply.		
	7. Are you a member of any social media sites? For example, Twitter or Facebook?	
	Yes	90.9
	No	9.1
	Facebook	77.5
	Twitter	81.8
	Google+	44.5
	Pinterest	19.6
	Other (specify)	
	- Tumblr	30.6
	- Deviant Art	4.3
	- Instagram	1.9
	- Flickr	1.0
	- Linked In	0.5
	- Blogger	0.5
	- MySpace	0.5
	- Charlie's Diary	0.5
	- Imgur	0.5
	- Live Journal	0.5
	- Stumble Upon	0.5
	- Reddit	0.5
If answer to Q7 is Yes		
7c. On which (if any) of these sites do you 'follow' webcomics or their creators? Please check all that apply.		
	None	9.0
	Facebook	54.1
	Twitter	82.6
	Google+	12.2
	Pinterest	1.7

	Other (specify)	
	- Tumblr	36.0
	- Deviant Art	4.7
	- Stumble Upon	0.6
	- Flickr	0.6
	- Live Journal	0.6
Creating webcomics: In the second section we would like to ask you some questions about creating your own webcomics		
8. Do you actively publish your own webcomics?	Yes	44.0
If No, participants are taken to Q18 (If Q1 was also no, participants are taken to the end of the questionnaire)	No	50.7
9. How long have you maintained your current webcomic? If you have more than one, please answer for the comic you update the most.	Under a year	23.9
	1-2 years	25.0
	2-3 years	14.1
	3-4 years	13.0
	4-5 years	4.3
	5+ years	19.6
10. How many webcomics have you created in total, including your current creation?	1	43.5
	2	27.2
	3	14.1
	4	7.6
	5+	7.6
11. How often do you update your current webcomics? If you have more than one, please answer for the comic you update the most.	Less than once a week	22.8
	Once a week	44.6
	2-3 times a week	25.0
	4-5 times a week	3.3
	6-7 times a week	4.3
	More than 7 times a week	0.0
12. How many unique visitors does your webcomics receive on average each week? If you have more than one, please answer for the comic you update the most.	0-999	64.1
	1,000-4,999	20.7
	5,000-9,999	5.4
	10,000-24,999	5.4
	25,000-49,999	1.1
	50,000-74,999	3.3
	75,000+	0.0
13. Would you say you earn a living wage from your webcomic(s)	Yes	6.6
	No	93.4
14. Do you sell any books or merchandise (such as prints, t-shirts, toys etc) from your webcomic(s), or take donations or subscriptions?	Yes	51.6
	No	48.4
If answer to Q14 is Yes	Books	74.5
What merchandise do you sell? Please check as many as apply	Existing art	68.1
	Custom art	46.8
	Clothes	36.2
	Homewares	27.7
	Toys	8.5
	I accept donations	51.1
	I take subscriptions	4.3
	Other (specify)	
	- Badges	8.5
	- Magnets	2.1
	- Stickers	2.1
15. One which websites do you post your webcomic(s)? Please check all that apply	Own site	84.8
	Facebook	52.2
	Twitter	15.2
	Reddit	5.4

	Pinterest	0.0
	Flickr	54.3
	Google+	12.0
	Tumblr	46.7
	Other (specify)	
	- Comic Rocket	1.1
	- Comic Fury	3.3
	- Smack Jeeves	5.4
	- Webcomic Underdogs	1.1
	- Deviant Art	9.8
	- Ink Outbreak	1.1
	- Live Journal	1.1
	- Manga Magazine	2.2
	- StumbleUpon	2.2
	- Tapastic	3.3
	- Just the First Frame	2.2
	- Blogspot	1.1
	- Comic Genesis	1.1
	- Ink	1.1
	- Top Webcomics	1.1
16. Do you post any other content related to your webcomic(s)? For example, concept art, blog posts, etc.	Yes	84.6
	No	15.4
	- Background information / Answering questions	14
	- Behind-the-scenes / process info	13
	- Blogs / links to blogs	29
	- Bonus Art, Pin ups etc.	16
	- Character Design / Character Art	11
If answer to Q16 is Yes	- Concept Art / Development work	25
16b. What additional content do you typically post? Please be as specific as possible (free text)	- Events / Announcements / Merchandise	12
NB Number of creators not %	- Extra strips	4
	- Fan Art, Guest Art	8
	- Other	5
	- Reviews	3
	- Short prose	4
	- Sketches / Doodles / Illustrations	25
	- Works-in-progress/ remakes / previews	19
	- The webcomics own website	61.6
	- Facebook	42.5
	- Twitter	39.7
	- Google+	4.1
	- Reddit	1.4
If answer to Q16 is Yes	- Tumblr	53.4
16c. On which websites do you post this content? Please be as specific as possible. (free text)	- Webcomic Underdogs	2.7
	- Deviant Art	19.2
	- Live Journal	1.4
	- Manga Magazine	1.4
	- Comic Fury	2.7
	- Tapastic	1.4
	- Stumble Upon	1.4
	- Comic Genesis	1.4
	- Blogger	4.1

	- Instagram	4.1
	- Amazon	1.4
	- Big Cartel	1.4
	- Flickr	1.4
	- Portfolio	1.4
	- Vimeo	1.4
	- webcomics.com	1.4
	- Blogspot	1.4
17. Do you maintain a social media presence for your webcomic(s)? For example, Twitter or Facebook accounts.	Yes	81.1
	No	18.9
If answer to Q17 is Yes	Facebook	79.7
	Twitter	79.7
	Google+	23.0
	Pinterest	8.1
17b. Which social media sites do you use for your webcomic(s)? Please check all that apply.	Other (specify)	
	- Tumblr	40.5
	- Live Journal	1.4
	- Deviant Art	4.1
	- Aggregator Forums	1.4
If answer to Q17 is Yes		
17c. Do you maintain separate accounts/pages specifically for your webcomic(s)? i.e. separate from your personal accounts/pages	Yes	69.9
	No	30.1
If answer to Q17 is Yes	- Background information / Answering questions	2
	- Behind-the-scenes / process info	3
	- Blogs / links to blogs	4
	- Bonus Art, Pin ups etc.	12
	- Character Design / Character Art	4
	- Concept Art / Development work	9
What sorts of content do you typically post on social media sites? For example, updates, extra content, conversation topics, links, character accounts etc. If you maintain separate accounts for different things, please elaborate on this here (free text)	- Conversations / comments / commentary	16
NB Number of creators not %	- Events / Announcements / Merchandise	19
	- Extra strips	1
	- Fan Art, Guest Art	7
	- Jokes	5
	- Links to other sites / creators / webcomics	18
	- Other	1
	- Reviews	1
	- Sketches / Doodles / Illustrations	6
	- Updates / links to updates	50
	- Works-in-progress/ remakes / previews	7
Demographics		
	16-25	25.8
	26-35	46.4
18. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?	36-45	12.0
	46-55	5.7
	Over 55	1.4
	No response	8.6

19. What is your gender?	Male	53.6
	Female	35.4
	No response	11.0
20. What is your nationality? (free text)	American	43.1
	British	20.1
	Canadian	5.7
	German	2.4
	Australian	1.9
	Austrian	1.9
	Mexican	1.9
	Aboriginal	0.5
	Belgian	0.5
	Dutch	0.5
	Danish	0.5
	French	0.5
	Indian	0.5
	Italian	0.5
	Native American	0.5
Polish	0.5	
Portuguese	0.5	
Salvadorean	0.5	
21. What is your country of residence? (free text)	USA	48.3
	UK	22.0
	Canada	7.2
	Australia	2.4
	Austria	1.4
	Germany	1.4
	Mexico	1.4
	Belgium	0.5
	Denmark	0.5
	France	0.5
	Israel	0.5
	Italy	0.5
	Poland	0.5
	Taiwan	0.5
	The Netherlands	0.5
22. If you would be willing to take part in further studies, please provide your contact details:		
Name:		
Email	Address:	
Twitter Handle:		
23. If you have any further comments, please write them below.		

INTERVIEW QUESTION AREAS

- 1) Introduction to artist and their webcomics, and whether they create webcomics for a living, how long they have been doing it, and so on.
- 2) The use of social media with regards to creators' webcomics, including whether they post different types of content on different sites, and why.
- 3) Whether creators use separate accounts for personal and webcomics content, and why.
- 4) How creators track which sites and links traffic comes from, and which sites are most successful.

- 5) Creators' concerns are about using social media and whether they have had any negative experiences.
- 6) Creator's concerns about copyright and privacy, and how they identify their work and deal with any problems.
- 7) Creator's awareness of different sites privacy policies and their own IP rights.
- 8) Whether creator's use creative commons licences, and why.
- 9) Overall views of creators about using social media for the webcomics industry.
- 10) The use of crowdfunding and patronage sites, and opinions surrounding them.

INTERVIEW THEMES

Main Theme	Subtopic	Summary
Attitude towards Social Media	- Finding an audience	- Attitudes towards the use of social media to introduce people to a creators' work and find a readership
	- Interactions with other artists	- Attitudes toward the use of social media for supporting networks of creators
	- Negative aspects	- Problems that arise through using social media for work, including misattribution, art theft, and getting lost in the crowd
Using Social Media for Different Types of Content	- News	- Using social media to provide news about new work and events
	- Two-way Interactions	- Using social media to interact with an audience
	- Art work	- Using social media to share art
Managing Accounts and Audiences	- Use of multiple accounts	- The use of multiple accounts within a single platform, for example one for personal and one for work
	- Update schedules	- Managing updates to social media
	- Analytics and tracking	- Tracking the success of different platforms over time
	- Managing an audience	- The management of interactions with audiences across social media platforms

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

P	M/F	Location	Style	Updates	Professional
1	M	UK	Diary, story	1 x week	Partially
2	M	UK	Experimental, interactive	Variable	No
3	M	UK	Single panel gag	3 x week	No
4	M	US	Longform Story	3 x week	Yes
5	F	US	Longform Story	10 x month	Yes
6	F	UK	Longform Story	3 x week	Yes
7	M	UK	All-ages longform story	Daily	Yes
8	M	UK	Gag, story	Daily	Partially
9	M	UK	Newspaper style, All-ages longform story	Daily	Yes
10	F	UK	Diary, gags	Variable	Yes
11	F	UK	Longform story	Variable	No

B

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONNAIRE: CROWDFUNDING

Question Text		%
Demographics		
Which of the following age groups do you fall into?	16-25	40.0
	26-35	52.0
	36-45	8.0
	46-55	8.0
	Over 55	8.0
What is your gender?	Male	60.0
	Female	52.0
	Other	4.0
Reader's Questions: To be eligible to complete this questionnaire you must:		
i) currently read one or more webcomics		
ii) have used crowdfunding to support webcomics		
Please tick here to confirm that you meet both of these requirements.		
Section 1 Webcomics		
How many webcomics do you currently read? (free text)	1-5	32.0
	6-10	12.0
	11-15	0.0
	16-20	16.0
	21+	36.0
	No response	4.0
Which websites do you use to read webcomics? Please check as many as apply.	The webcomic's own site	88.0
	Facebook	20.0
	Twitter	44.0
	Tumblr	32.0
	Google+	0.0
	Reddit	4.0
	Other (specify)	
	- Comic Fury	4.0
	- Feedly/RSS	16.0
	- Something Awful	4.0
- Tapastic	4.0	
On which social media sites do you follow artists or webcomics? Please check as many as apply.	None	4.0
	Facebook	56.0
	Twitter	84.0
	Tumblr	48.0
	Google+	16.0
	Other (specify)	
	- Deviant Art	4.0
	- Instagram	4.0
	- Live Journal	4.0
	- Patreon	4.0
- Something Awful	4.0	

	Nothing	8.3
	Books	75.0
	Existing Art	50.0
	Custom Art	29.2
	Clothes	50.0
	Homewares	33.3
	Toys	20.8
	Made a donation	45.8
	Paid a subscription	16.7
	No response	4.2
	- Don't know	8.0
	- Up to £25	20.0
	- £26-£50	16.0
	- £51-£75	4.0
	- £76-100	20.0
	- More than £100	20.0
	- No response	12.0
Section 2: Crowdfunding		
	Kickstarter	96.0
	Indiegogo	24.0
	Patreon	32.0
	Other (specify)	
	- PledgeMusic	4.0
	- Subbable	4.0
	Kickstarter	96.0
	Indiegogo	12.0
	Patreon	32.0
	Other (specify)	
	- PayPal	4.0
	- 1-5	76.0
	- 6-10	8.0
	- 11-15	8.0
	- 16-20	0.0
	- 20+	8.0
	- 1-5	72.0
	- 6-10	8.0
	- 11-15	8.0
	- 16-20	0.0
	- 20+	8.0
	- No response	4.0
	- Don't know	8.0
	- Up to £25	20.0
	- £26-£50	24.0
	- £51-£75	8.0
	- £76-£100	8.0
	- More than £100	28.0
	- No response	4.0
If you have backed successful webcomics projects on more than one site, please specify the split in number and money for each (free text)		
	- Community Support	22
	- Finances	2
	- Rewards	14
	- Fan of creator or work	38
	- Community Support	4
	- Finances	1
	- Preference for Platform	20
	- Fan of creator or work	2

Will you back more webcomics projects on crowdfunding sites in the future?	Yes	76.0
	No	0.0
	Maybe	24.0
Why/Why not? (free text)	- Community Support	13
	- Finances	2
	- Rewards	11
	- Fan of creator or work	5
Creator's Questions: To be eligible to complete this questionnaire you must:		
i) currently create one or more webcomics		
ii) have used crowdfunding for webcomics		
Please tick here to confirm that you meet both of these requirements.		
Section 1 Webcomics: if you have more than one webcomic, please answer for the comic you update the most.		
How long have you maintained your current webcomic? (free text)	- Under a Year	25.0
	- 2-3 Years	50.0
	- 3-4 Years	25.0
How many webcomics have you created in total? (free text)	- 1	25.0
	- 2	50.0
	- 3	25.0
How often do you update your current webcomic? (free text)	- Less than one a week	25.0
	- Once a week	25.0
	- 2-3 times a week	25.0
	- 4-5 times a week	0.0
	- 6-7 times a week	25.0
Would you say you earn a living wage from your webcomic(s)? (free text)	- Yes	25.0
	- No	75.0
Roughly how many unique visitors does your webcomic receive each week? (free text)	- 0-999	25.0
	- 1,000-9,999	0.0
	- 10,000-24,999	25.0
	- 25,000-49,999	25.0
	- No response	25.0
On which websites do you post your webcomics? Please check as many as apply	The webcomic's own site	75.0
	Facebook	25.0
	Twitter	75.0
	Tumblr	50.0
	Google+	0.0
	Reddit	0.0
	Other (specify)	
- Unspecified	25.0	
- Deviant Art	25.0	
On which social media sites do you maintain a presence for your webcomic(s)? Please check as many as apply	None	0.0
	Facebook	50.0
	Twitter	100.0
	Tumblr	75.0
	Google+	0.0
	Other (specify)	
	- Deviant Art	25.0
What merchandise do you sell? Please do not include crowdfunding campaigns.	None	0.0
	Books	100.0
	Existing art	100.0
	Custom art	50.0
	Clothes	0.0
	Homewares	50.0
	Toys	25.0
	Take donations	50.0
	Offer subscriptions	25.0
	Other (specify)	
- Keyrings	25.0	
- Stickers	25.0	

Section 2 Crowdfunding		
Which crowdfunding websites have you campaigned on for your webcomics?	Kickstarter	100.0
	Indiegogo	0.0
	Patreon	50.0
How many webcomics projects have you run? (free text)	- 1	75.0
	- 2	0.0
	- 3	25.0
How many of these webcomics projects were successfully funded? (free text)	- 1	75.0
	- 2	0.0
	- 3	25.0
Roughly how much money have you raised on webcomics projects in total? (free text)	- Up to £5,000	25.0
	- £5,001-£10,000	25.0
	- £10,001-£20,000	0.0
	- £20,001-£25,000	25.0
	- £25,001-£30,000	25.0
If you have run successful webcomics projects on more than one site, please specify the split in number and money for each. (free text)		
How/why did you choose where to run your webcomics crowdfunding campaign? (free text)		
How did you publicise your webcomics campaigns? (free text)		
Will you use crowdfunding for webcomics again?	Yes	100.0
	No	0.0
	Maybe	0.0
Why/Why not? (free text)		

PLATFORM COMPARISON

- Kickstarter Webcomics (KW): 292 projects
- Patreon Webcomics (PW): 188 Projects
- Kickstarter Other (KO): 109 Projects

Variable	Platform	Scraped or Manually calculated	Data used in analysis
URL	Both	Both	
Platform (Kickstarter or Patreon)	Both	Manual	
Creator	Both	Scraped	KW PW KO
Project	Both	Scraped	
Goal (converted to USD)	Kickstarter	Scraped	KW
Currency (USD, CAD, NZD, GBP, AUD)	Kickstarter	Scraped	
Number of Backers	Both	Scraped	KW PW
Total Raised (converted to USD)	Both	Scraped	KW PW
Outcome of campaign (Successful, Failed, Canceled, Suspended)	Kickstarter	Scraped	KW
Recurrence of pledge (Monthly, Weekly, Per Update, Other)	Patreon	Scraped	PW
Category	Kickstarter	Scraped	KW KO
- Art			
- Comics			
- Crafts			

- Design			
- Film & Video			
- Games			
- Publishing			
Subcategory	Kickstarter	Scraped	KW KO
- Animation			
- Children's Books			
- Comedy			
- Comic Books			
- Digital Art			
- Fiction			
- Graphic Novels			
- Product Design			
- Videogames			
- Webcomics			
- Webseries			
- None (main category only)			
Average donation	Both	Manual	KW PW
Campaign length (days)	Kickstarter	Scraped	KW
Year campaign ended	Kickstarter	Scraped	
Month campaign ended	Kickstarter	Scraped	
Percent of goal raised	Kickstarter	Manual	KW
Number of reward levels	Both	Manual	KW PW KO
Backers accounted for by reward levels (sum of backers at each level)	Both	Manual	KW PW KO
Backers unaccounted for by reward levels (total backers minus backers accounted for)	Both	Manual	KW PW KO
Percent of backers accounted for	Both	Manual	KW PW KO
Percent of backers unaccounted for (equivalent of pledge hiding)	Both	Manual	KW PW KO
Whether the campaign has milestone goals	Patreon	Manual	PW
Number of milestone goals	Patreon	Manual	PW
Number of milestones reached	Patreon	Manual	PW
Number of milestones remaining	Patreon	Manual	PW
Percent of milestone reached	Patreon	Manual	PW
Percent of milestones remaining	Patreon	Manual	PW
Whether the campaign has stretch goals	Kickstarter	Manual	KW KO
Number of stretch goals	Kickstarter	Manual	KW KO
Number of stretch goals reached	Kickstarter	Manual	KW KO
Number of stretch goals remaining	Kickstarter	Manual	KW KO

Goal content	Kickstarter	Manual	KW
- Book			KO
- Continuation of webcomic			
- Event			
- Film/TV			
- Game			
- Merchandise			
- Multiple			
- New webcomic			
- Website/App			
Whether the goal is a book	Kickstarter	Manual	KW
			KO
Number of backers pledging at particular reward level amounts	Both	Manual	KW
(216 total levels; 212 on Kickstarter, 41 on Patreon)			PW
			KO
- size 5 from \$0 - \$99 (20 groups)			
- size 50 from \$100 - \$999 (18 groups)			
- size 500 from \$1,000 - \$4,999 (8 groups)			
- single bin 5,000-10,000			

Category	Subcategory	Projects
Art	Digital Art	1
Comics	-	78
Comics	Comic Books	1
Comics	Graphic Novels	3
Comics	Webcomics	292
Crafts	-	5
Design	-	1
Design	Product Design	3
Film & Video	Animation	3
Film & Video	Comedy	1
Film & Video	Webseries	1
Games	Tabletop Games	3
Games	Video Games	3
Publishing	-	3
Publishing	Children's Books	2
Publishing	Fiction	1

Projects	Distribution	Number of creators
1	Patreon only	135
1	Kickstarter only	213
2	Patreon only	1
2	Kickstarter only	19
2	One on each platform	26
> 3	One Patreon, multiple Kickstarters	25
> 3	More than 2 Kickstarters	14

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONNAIRE: REASONS FOR BACKING CROWDFUNDING

Question Text	Overall Response	Kickstarter	Patreon
How old are you? (%)	Mean	33.64	33.66
What is your gender? (%)	Male	63.6	61.0
	Female	31.6	32.0
	Other	3.7	5.2
Have you ever run a crowdfunding campaign? (%)	Yes	6.2	7.6
	No	93.8	92.4
From which crowdfunding site were you sent the link to this questionnaire? (%)		71.4	28.6
Which Kickstarter project / Patreon campaign specifically sent this questionnaire to you?		30 projects	28 projects
Have you also previously supported creators on Patreon / Kickstarter? (%)	Yes	40.2	83.0
	No	59.8	17.0
Participants who had supported Kickstarter campaigns completed Block 1. Participants who had supported Patreon campaigns completed Block 2. All Participants completed Blocks 3. Wording based on platform.			
Block 1			
Question Text		Kickstarter	
For the following questions, please think about your previous activities on Kickstarter			
How many projects in total have you backed on Kickstarter? If you are unsure please estimate to the nearest 5, rounded up	Mean	40.23	
	Median	14	
How many of these projects are... (Mean, Median)	Ongoing	2.87, 1	
	Successful	33.16, 10	
	Failed	4.11, 1	
Please provide your Kickstarter username			Optional
How much money have you spent on Kickstarter in total? (%)	Up to \$25	2.5	
	Between \$26 and \$50	3.7	
	Between \$51 and \$75	4.4	
	Between \$76 and \$100	3.5	
	Between \$101 and \$150	7.6	
	Between \$151 and \$200	5.3	
	Between \$201 and \$250	7.4	
	More than \$250	65.7	
Block 2			
Question Text		Patreon	
For the following questions, please think about your previous activities on Patreon			
How many creators in total have you backed on Patreon (%)	1 to 3	48.1	
	4 to 6	24.9	
	7 to 9	8.2	
	10 +	18.8	
Please provide your Patreon username			Optional

	Up to \$5	27.3
	Between \$6 and \$10	18.2
	Between \$11 and \$20	24.3
On average, how much money do you pay to Patreon each month? (%)	Between \$31 and \$40	9.4
	Between \$41 and \$50	4.4
	Between \$51 and \$100	3.5
	More than \$100	7.3
Block 3		
Question Text	Kickstarter	Patreon
For this section, please think about the specific project which sent you this questionnaire (i.e. the one you chose at the start of the study)		
How much did you pledge to the campaign? (\$)		
KICKSTARTER: If you have changed your pledge, please give the final amount	Mean	54.55
	Median	35.50
		6.83
		5.00
PATREON: If you have changed your pledge, longer pledge to this campaign, please give the final amount you gave.		
Did you 'hide' this amount from the campaign webpage (for example, donate anonymously or hide your pledge amount)? (%)		
	Yes	2.3
	No	97.7
		7.6
		91.3
KICKSTARTER: Had funding been reached when you backed the project? (%)		
	Yes	32.9
	No	66.7
		28.0
		35.4
KICKSTARTER: How far into the campaign did you pledge? (%)	At the very beginning	28.0
	Less than halfway through the campaign	35.4
	In the second half of the campaign	16.0
	At the very end of the campaign	13.5
		6.1
PATREON: How long have you been backing this creator?		
	Less than a month	4.1
	Between one and six months	31.4
	Between six months and a year	32.0
	Over a year	32.0
How did you decide how much to pledge? (%)		411 responses
Rewards		149 responses
Personal Finances / Budget		89.05
Add-Ons		9.98
Thank you / donation		4.14
Stretch goals		1.46
Experience / Enjoyment of artists' work		2.43
Fairness		3.89
Friendship		0.49
Value for money		0.24
Don't remember		0.24
Benefit to creator / comic		3.16
Shipping costs		2.92
Space for physical items		0.49
What others have given		0.24
Other creators to back		0.00
Warm glow		0.00
Minimum option		0.49
		1.34

Random / Arbitrary		0.49	1.34
Did you change your pledge amount at any time? (%)	Yes	18.2	25.0
	No	81.8	75.0
[IF YES] How much did you change your pledge by (%)	Slightly increased the amount	20.5	37.2
	Greatly increased the amount	78.2	16.3
(For this question, slightly is considered to be up to \$5 [PATREON] / \$10 [KICKSTARTER], greatly is anything above that amount)	Slightly decreased the amount	1.3	34.9
	Greatly decreased the amount	0.0	11.6
[IF YES] Why did you change your pledge amount?			
Stretch goals were added that I wanted the project to reach		23.1	4.7
Rewards were added to a level that I wanted to receive		1.5	16.3
The project would have failed if I did not (KS) So the campaign could reach a milestone goal (P)		2.6	-
The amount I pledged was no longer needed		-	7.0
I changed my mind about what the project was worth		0.0	9.3
My financial circumstances changed		6.4	16.3
Other		3.8	46.5
- Add on		7.6	20.9
- Reward		69.2	0.0
- Creator need		30.8	12.5
- Spread across other creators		0.0	37.5
- Lack of updates		0.0	37.5
- Budget		0.0	12.5
Did the stretch goals [KICKSTARTER] / Milestone goals [PATREON] for the campaign affect the amount you pledged? (%)	Yes	19.3	25.6
	No	71.3	69.8
	N/A	9.3	4.7
[IF YES] How much did the stretch goals [KS] / Milestone goals [P] change your pledge? (%)	Slightly increased the amount	31.7	63.5
	Greatly increased the amount	34.1	11.5
(For this question, slightly is considered to be up to \$10 [KS] / \$5 [P], greater is anything above that amount)	Slightly decreased the amount	0.0	3.8
	Greatly decreased the amount	0.0	1.9
[IF YES: KICKSTARTER] Why did you change your pledge amount? (%)		69	responses
Introduced / enabled add ons		11.6	
Hitting the Goal itself ('fun' or great goal)		18.8	
Support / Additional benefit to creator		5.8	
Value for money		7.3	
Improve final product		4.4	
Receive bonus content		7.3	
Items added to reward level / reward levels added		56.5	
[IF YES: PATREON] Why did the Milestone goals affect your pledge? (%)			33 responses
The act of hitting the goal			21.2
Helping creator to achieve			27.3
Additional content			30.3
Better rewards			33.3
Make up for others dropping out			3.0

Don't remember			3.0
What is your relationship to the creator(s) of the Kickstarter / Patreon campaign? (%)	Friend	2.0	11.0
	Family	0.2	0.6
	Acquaintance	3.7	8.7
If there is more than one creator, answer for the one with which you have the closest relationship	None	85.5	70.9
	Other	7.9	8.1
Did you share the project on social media?	Yes	24.7	29.1
	No	75.1	70.9
	Friend / Family	1.7	3.6
	Creator / Webcomic site	62.5	71.0
	Kickstarter	17.3	1.8
How did you hear about the project?	Another creator	1.0	2.4
	Social media	12.4	21.9
	Email	3.1	0.0
	Another website	1.4	3.0
	Don't remember	4.5	0.0
	Convention	0.2	0.0
	Patreon	0.0	3.0
Do you follow the creator(s) of the project on social media, for example Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr (%)	Yes	42.4	9.8
	No	57.6	29.7
If there is more than one creator, following at least one of them counts.			
[IF YES] Did you follow the creator of the project on social media before the Kickstarter / Patreon campaign?	Yes	78.6	86.7
	No	21.4	12.5
Did you leave a comment or ask a question about the project?	Yes	14.2	37.2
	No	85.8	62.8
[IF YES] How did you make contact with the creator?	Through Kickstarter / Patreon	75.4	46.9
	Through social media	14.8	29.7
	By email	4.9	12.5
	Other	4.9	10.9
	Statements are randomly presented.		
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale		
	Strongly Disagree (1)		
	Disagree (2)		
	Somewhat Disagree (3)		
	Neither agree nor disagree (4)		
	Somewhat agree (5)		
	Agree (6)		
	Strongly Agree (7)		
I feel involved with the community surrounding this project	Mean	3.8	4.0
	Median	4	4
I feel involved in the webcomics community as a whole	Mean	4.1	4.3
	Median	4	5
	Community Involvement	27.0	43.2
	Fandom	63.0	83.8
Why did you back this particular project?	Finances	2.3	4.1
	Rewards	46.4	12.8
	To help it succeed	2.3	23.0
	Project features (interest, stretch goals, quality)	14.6	0.0

Statements are randomly presented.			
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale.		
	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)
	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)
	Strongly Agree (7)		
I am existing fan of the creator / webcomic	Mean	5.71	6.40
	Median	6	7
I wanted the product / goal of the campaign	Mean	6.34	-
	Median	7	-
I wanted to help the creator to succeed	Mean	6.02	6.30
	Median	6	6
I wanted a particular reward from this campaign	Mean	6.07	3.36
	Median	6	4
I feel connected to the creator	Mean	3.81	4.43
	Median	4	5
Webcomics as a whole will benefit from this campaign succeeding	Mean	4.81	5.01
	Median	5	5
My friends backed this campaign	Mean	2.46	2.74
	Median	2	2
I thought the goal / campaign was worthwhile	Mean	6.06	6.21
	Median	6	6
It made me feel good to back this campaign	Mean	5.40	5.90
	Median	6	6
I wanted to receive the product / content before others	Mean	3.27	3.42
	Median	4	4
The creator has helped me financially in the past	Mean	1.51	1.59
	Median	1	1
The creator has helped me socially in the past	Mean	2.04	2.72
	Median	2	2
I think that others will help me in future if I help them now	Mean	3.07	3.22
	Median	3	4
I feel that I owe the creator something	Mean	3.66	4.74
	Median	4	5
I have helped this creator financially before	Mean	3.17	3.41
	Median	2	3
I have helped this creator in another way before	Mean	2.22	2.83
	Median	2	2
I wanted others to see that I backed this campaign	Mean	2.90	3.23
	Median	3	4
I feel sympathetic towards the creator	Mean	4.93	5.36
	Median	5	6
I was confident this campaign would succeed / do well	Mean	5.94	5.33
	Median	6	6
The creator is actively involved in the webcomics community or with their readers	Mean	5.51	5.70
	Median	6	6
I want to reward creators I like	Mean	6.14	6.38
	Median	6	7
Webcomics are important to me	Mean	5.72	5.97
	Median	6	6
If I did not back this campaign, the goal product would not have been made / it would not do well	Mean	2.49	2.91
	Median	2	3

I cannot rely on others to support the creators I like	Mean	4.03	4.28
	Median	4	4
Which reward, if any, did you select from the project?	The reward that matched my donation amount	97.0	73.3
	A reward tier lower than my donation amount	2.6	5.2
	No reward	0.5	21.5
If the answer is lower, which reward did you choose?		Free text	Free text
If the answer is none, why did you not take a reward?		Free text	Free text
	Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale:		
	Dislike a lot (1)		
	Dislike (2)		
	Slightly Dislike (3)		
	Neither Like nor Dislike (4)		
	Slightly Like (5)		
	Like (6)		
	Like a Lot (7)		
Goal			
- Product which corresponds to the goal of the project / a milestone goal	Mean	6.71	5.80
Physical rewards			
- Other large physical items	Mean	5.63	5.23
- Other small physical items	Mean	5.03	5.04
- Physical commissions or personal products	Mean	5.48	5.35
- Physical originals	Mean	5.49	5.29
Digital rewards			
- Digital commissions or personal products	Mean	5.16	5.16
- Digital items or digital content	Mean	5.24	5.44
Extra Content			
- Limited number items or Kickstarter exclusives	Mean	5.28	4.85
- Early or exclusive access to content	Mean	4.88	5.02
- Additional content for all backers	Mean	6.06	5.71
- Additional content for everyone, regardless of whether they give money	Mean	5.69	5.71
Personal Contact			
- Meeting creators online	Mean	4.16	4.45
- Meeting creators in real life	Mean	4.40	4.47
- Having a part in the product	Mean	4.77	4.56
Recognition			
- Personalised items	Mean	5.74	5.49
- Gratitude or warm glow	Mean	5.07	5.55
- Name on a website or on the product	Mean	4.34	4.21
[KICKSTARTER] Did you add any Add-On items to your donation (%)	Yes	19.3	
	No	80.4	
What have you actually received from the project so far? (%)			
Gratitude		38.0	63.4
Your name on a website or on the product		5.1	13.4
Early or exclusive access to content		9.3	56.4
Additional content that was provided to everyone, regardless of whether they give money		27.7	34.9
Online meeting with creators		7.0	15.7
		0.5	6.4

Real life meeting with creators	0.0	1.7						
A part in the product	0.2	0.6						
Nothing	8.9	13.4						
The goal product / a milestone goal product	83.0	26.2						
Large physical items not part of goal	7.9	1.2						
Small physical items not part of goal	28.7	11.0						
Personalised items	12.1	8.7						
Limited number items or Kickstarter exclusives	9.8	2.3						
Physical commissions	1.2	2.9						
Digital commissions	2.6	7.6						
Digital items or digital content	28.2	33.1						
Physical originals	3.5	5.2						
Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale:								
How satisfied are you with the following?	Very Dissatisfied (1)							
	Dissatisfied (2)							
	Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)							
	Neutral (4)							
	Somewhat Satisfied (5)							
	Satisfied (6)							
	Very satisfied (7)							
The items you have received from the project	Mean	6.19 5.73						
The campaign as a whole	Mean	6.56 6.21						
Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale:								
When you choose to back a campaign, how important are rewards to you?	Not at all important (1)							
	Very Unimportant (2)							
	Somewhat Unimportant (3)							
	Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)							
	Somewhat Important (5)							
	Very Important (6)							
	Extremely Important (7)							
	Mean	5.86 3.77						
Please indicate your three favourite types of rewards by typing 1, 2, and 3 next to the relevant item, where 1 is your favourite								
Percent at each rank.								
Mean score is out of 30 (30=ranked 1st, 20=ranked 2nd, 10=ranked 3rd)								
	Kickstarter				Patreon			
	1st	2nd	3rd	Mean Score	1st	2nd	3rd	Mean Score
Product which corresponds to the goal of the project/ a milestone goal	82.5	6.1	4.9	26.5	4.7	5.8	9.3	3.5
Other large physical items	1.2	15.2	10.5	4.4	2.9	5.2	4.1	2.3
Other small physical items	0.5	11.4	12.6	3.7	8.7	4.1	6.4	4.1
Personalised items	1.6	12.1	7.7	3.7	7.0	7.6	5.8	4.2
Limited number items or Kickstarter exclusives	1.2	11.4	9.3	3.6	1.2	2.3	0.6	0.9
Physical commissions or personal products	1.6	2.1	3.5	1.3	2.9	2.9	3.5	1.8
Digital commissions or personal products	0.9	1.4	1.6	0.7	4.7	5.8	2.3	2.8
Digital items or digital content	4.2	7.2	6.1	3.3	6.4	11.6	10.5	5.3
Physical originals	0.9	4.7	1.9	1.4	2.9	4.7	1.7	2.0
Gratitude or warm glow	1.2	4.4	7.5	2.0	19.2	8.1	11.0	8.5

Your name on a website or on the product	0.0	2.1	2.1	0.6	0.6	0.0	1.7	0.3
Early or exclusive access to content	0.0	1.4	2.6	0.5	8.7	8.7	8.1	5.2
Additional content for all backers	0.2	10.3	12.4	3.4	3.5	12.8	9.9	4.6
Additional content for everyone, regardless of whether they give money	1.2	5.4	8.6	2.3	14.5	9.3	9.9	7.2
Meeting creators online	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	2.3	2.9	1.2	1.4
Meeting creators in real life	0.0	0.2	0.9	0.1	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.5
You having a part in the product	0.7	1.6	4.4	1.0	2.9	1.2	6.4	1.7

Items are randomly presented.

For this section, please think about crowdfunding webcomics IN GENERAL rather than the specific campaign that you backed.

Statements presented on a 5 point Likert scale:
 Strongly Disagree (1)
 Disagree (2)
 Neither agree or disagree (3)
 Agree (4)
 Strongly agree (5)

I want to crowdfund webcomics for as long as I am able	Mean	3.84	4.28
My family think that I should continue crowdfunding webcomics as long as my finances allow it	Mean	2.86	2.89
My friends think I should continue crowdfunding webcomics as long as my finances allow it	Mean	2.98	3.07
I feel able to contribute money to webcomics as long as my finances allow it	Mean	3.98	4.25
I think myself capable of continuing to crowdfund webcomics as long as my finances allow it	Mean	4.02	4.37
I find it hard to give money to webcomics time after time	Mean	2.61	2.56
If I did not donate money to webcomics, I would feel guilty	Mean	2.19	2.56
I prefer working toward my own well-being than toward the well-being of others	Mean	2.80	2.62
I try to work towards the well-being of society	Mean	3.86	3.94
I am not very interested in helping others	Mean	1.49	1.76
I think it is important to help the poor and the needy	Mean	4.00	4.08
Webcomics are an important part of who I am	Mean	3.33	3.62
I would be disappointed if I could no longer donate money to webcomics	Mean	3.50	3.94
Supporting webcomics means more to me than just giving money	Mean	3.80	4.01
I habitually give money to fund webcomics	Mean	2.82	3.50
When I receive a request from a creator in relation to webcomic funding, I automatically give money	Mean	2.19	2.37
In general, most people can be trusted	Mean	3.47	3.43
You cannot be careful enough when you are dealing with other people	Mean	3.10	2.99

For each pair of words please indicate on the scale below where you feel is most accurate for you	Items presented on a 5 point bipolar scale		
	I find crowdfunding webcomics...		
Negative: Positive	Mean	4.37	4.51
Good : Bad	Mean	1.63	1.48
Meaningless : Worthwhile	Mean	4.18	4.44
Pleasant : Unpleasant	Mean	1.81	1.77
Annoying : Enjoyable	Mean	4.10	4.16
Unappealing : Appealing	Mean	4.16	4.31
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For the following section, please think about your BEHAVIOUR IN GENERAL, rather than crowdfunding or webcomics.	Statements presented on a 7 point Likert scale:		
	Strongly Disagree (1)		
	Disagree (2)		
	Somewhat Disagree (3)		
	Neither Agree or Disagree (4)		
	Somewhat Agree (5)		
	Agree (6)		
	Strongly Agree (7)		
Please read each statement carefully, and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree			
I would / do volunteer to help others because...			
I cannot trust others to help	Mean	3.54	3.48
Very few people help others these days	Mean	3.55	3.58
I get frustrated that other people do not help those in need	Mean	4.21	4.41
I get angry because others do not help those in need	Mean	3.56	3.71
I am ashamed that other people do not help others	Mean	3.75	4.03
I get upset by people's disregard of others in need	Mean	4.29	4.30
I feel sad that other people generally do not help each other	Mean	4.38	4.49
I feel our society is generally uncaring	Mean	4.00	3.83
Many people are only interested in themselves these days	Mean	4.35	4.24
Reluctantly, many people do not want to help others	Mean	4.01	3.90
Most people are selfish	Mean	4.00	3.78
It seems that it is culturally acceptable these days to put self before others	Mean	4.62	4.45
We live in a selfish society	Mean	4.38	4.24
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Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. If you have any further comments or questions, please write them here.			
If you would like to enter the prize draw, please provide your email address. Your address will not be linked in any way with your responses to the questionnaire.			
If you would like to receive further information about the results of this study, please click here.			