

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Digital Living Ethnography and Report

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Field Notes

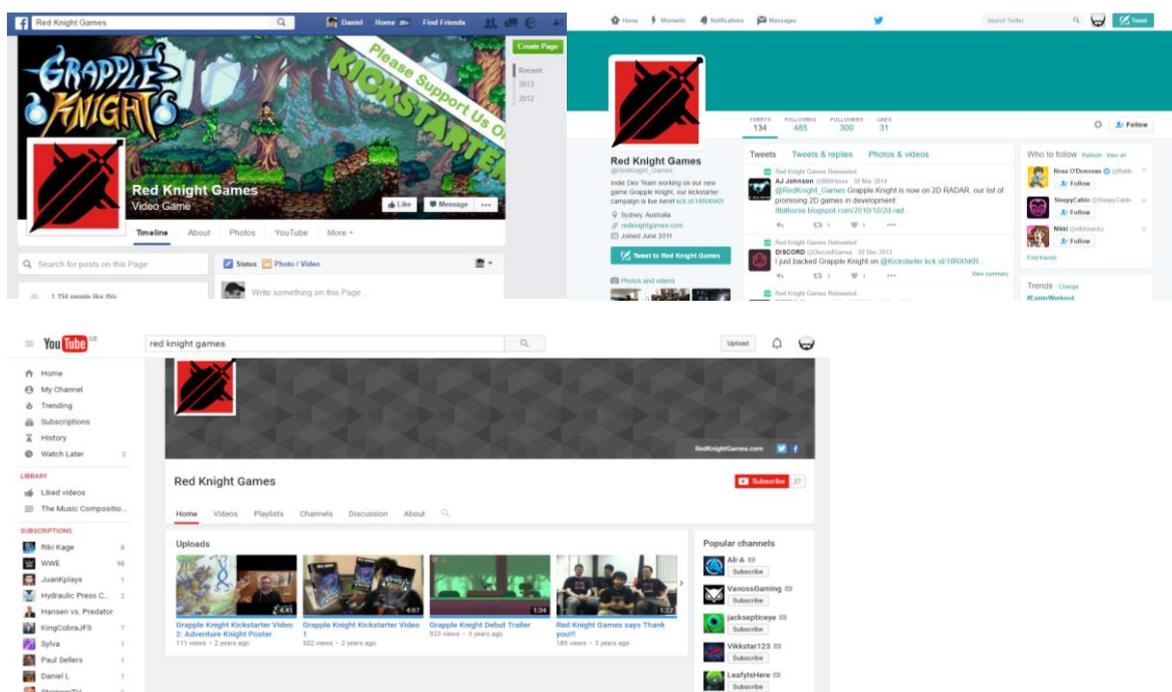
First Entry

This case study will examine the transparency of video-game developers who use crowd funding websites such as Kickstarter to fund an idea for their game. The case study will be a developer named **Red Knight Games** located in Sydney, Australia. In 2013 Red Knight Games created a Kickstarter campaign for their game called **Grapple Knight**.



Figure 1. Screenshot of the Grapple Knight Kickstarter campaign archived in 2013.

The social media platforms that Red Knight Games used during this crowdfunding campaign was Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.



The main use of Red Knight Game’s social media was to heavily promote the Kickstarter campaign. Twitter was used to re-tweet when backers would tweet after funding the campaign.

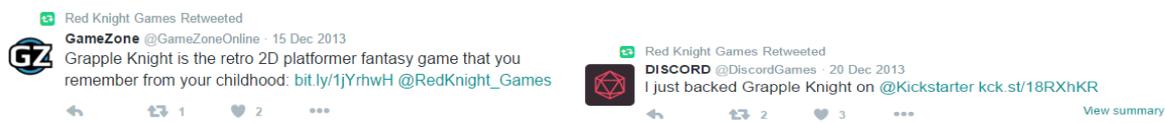


Figure 2: Example screenshots of backers tweeting about backing Grapple Knight on Kickstarter.

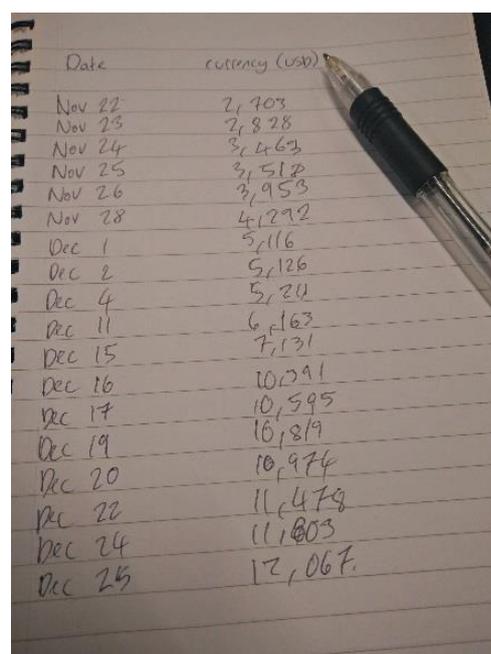
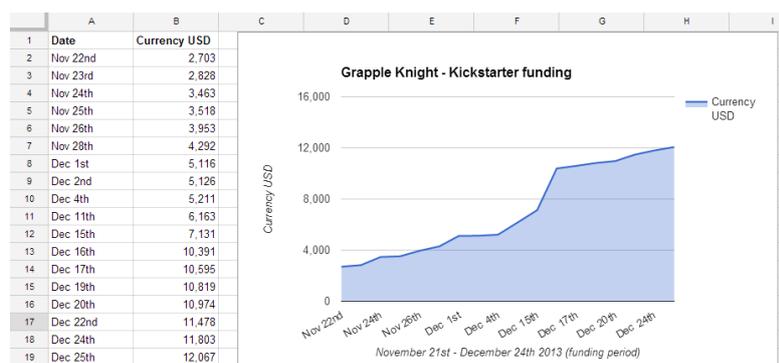
This helped spread the word of the campaign and could potentially result in the Twitter followers of a funder to fund the campaign too. Social media interaction with crowdfunding websites like Kickstarter will tweet and post a message on Facebook for the backer.

Australia has many of their own popular crowdfunding websites such as OzCrowd, Crowdfundit and ReadFundGo. But many businesses decide to use the popular crowdfunding websites like Kickstarter because of how popular they are. Over the past few years Kickstarter has been the main crowdfunding website for video games.

Other entries

Because this study occurred in 2013, the web-pages for the Kickstarter page had to be viewed using an internet archive website. Using this tool will allow you to see what the webpage looked like back in 2013.

The first thing that was observed was the Kickstarter finding for the game Grapple Knight. The Kickstarter campaign was created on November 21st, 2013 with a goal of \$10,000 USD.



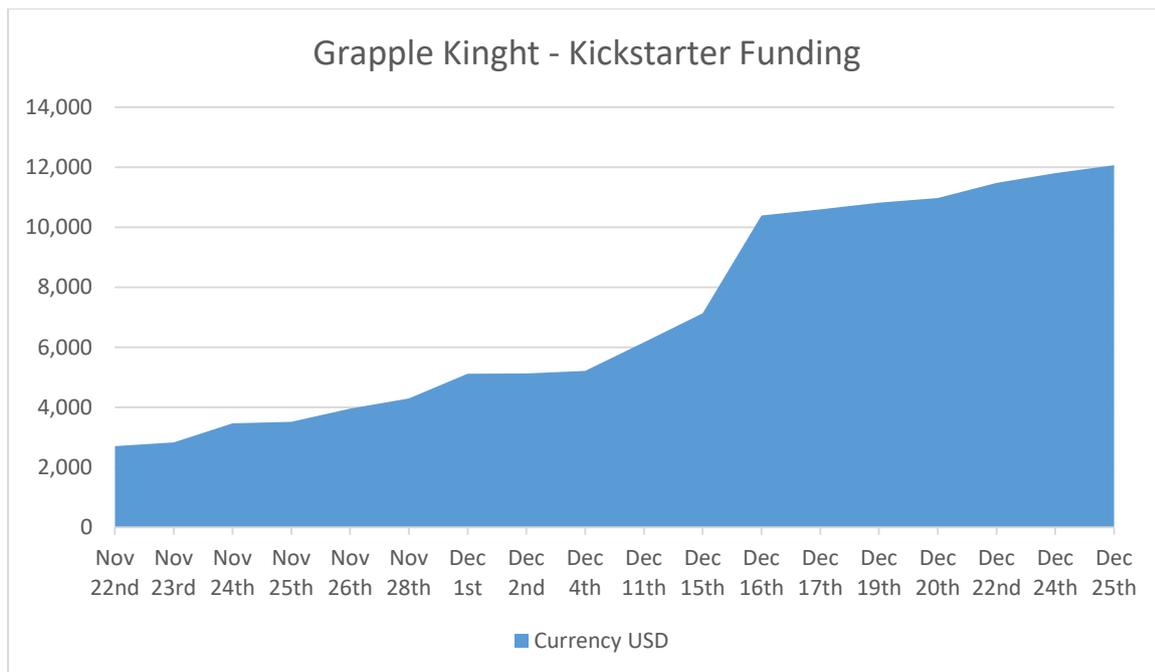


Figure 3. Data showing the money raised from the beginning of the Kickstarter campaign to the end of the campaign.

As you can see from the graph above, Grapple Knight was officially reached its goal as early as December 16th, nine days before the campaigns deadline. The spike in funders towards the end of a campaign is usual. People who are interested in campaigns usually help fund campaigns when they see the deadline is about to end.



Figure 4. Screenshot showing examples of tweets sent by Red Knight Games to advertise the Kickstarter campaign.

First Observation – Facebook

After observing Red Knight Games’ social media use, Facebook was the most used social media platform. In December 2013, Facebook was the most used social media platform in Australia (Social Media News, 2013).

more people visiting travel-related websites, whilst not specifically a social networking activity' has plenty of influence on what we post on social media websites.

You can view last months report for [November 2013](#) to compare and movements.

Social Media Statistics Australia – December 2013

(Please note all stats represent the number of Unique Australian Visitors [UAVs] to the site over December – except for Facebook which is the number of active monthly users as reported by Facebook themselves).

1. Facebook – 12,800,000 users according to Ad tool, 12,000,000 monthly Australian users (according to Facebook figures).
2. YouTube – 12,200,000 UAVs
3. WordPress.com – 6,100,000
4. Tumblr – 4,700,000
5. LinkedIn – 2,900,000
6. Blogspot – 2,900,000
7. Twitter - 2,500,000 Active Australian Users (see calculation)
8. Instagram - 1,600,000 Active Australian Users (see calculation)
9. Snapchat - 1,070,000 Active Australian Users (see calculation).
10. TripAdvisor – 1,050,000
11. Flickr – 820,000
12. Pinterest – 450,000
13. Yelp – 220,000
14. MySpace – 200,000
15. Reddit – 160,000
16. Google Plus – approx 70,000 monthly active Australian users (my estimation *revised*)
17. StumbleUpon – 65,000
18. Foursquare – 40,000
19. Digg – 28,000
20. Delicious – 22,000

Key Points to Note:

Follow SocialMediaNews on LinkedIn Today

SPONSORS

JOBNET
www.jobnet.com.au

Figure 5. Screenshot of the Social Media News website from December 2013.

After observing the 2013 social media statistics, it became clear why Red Knight Games’ used Facebook more than any other social media platform. As you can see from the graph bellow, Red Knight Games used Facebook more than any other social media platform to advertise their campaign.

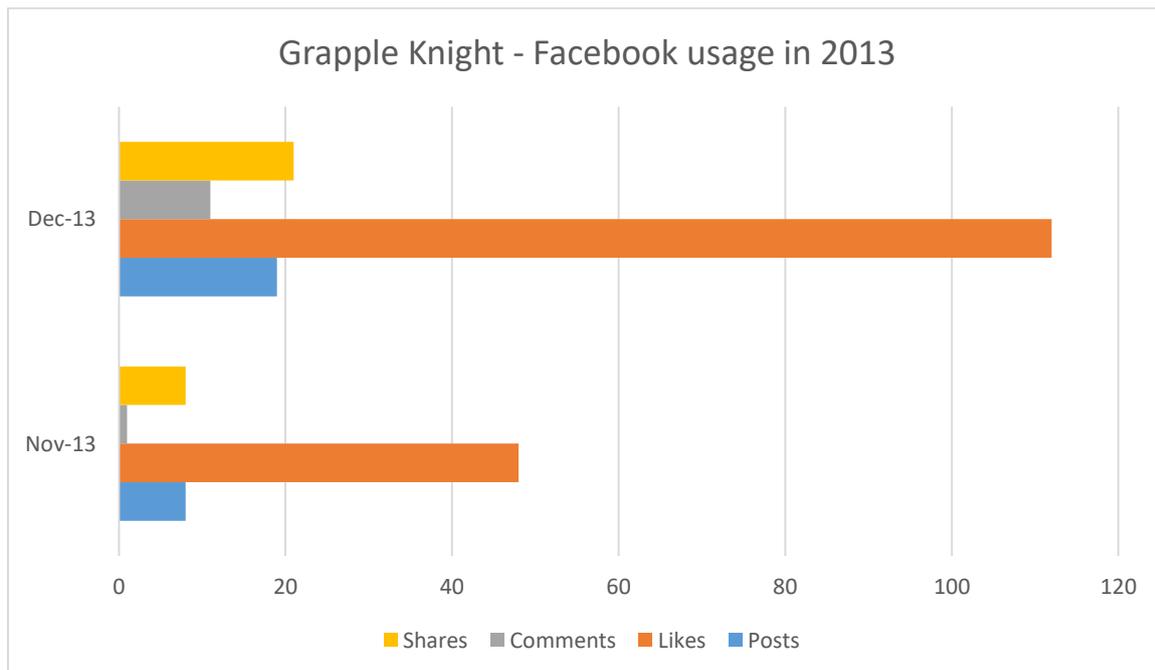


Figure 6. Data from Grapple Knight’s Facebook page, recorded in April 2016.

As you can see from the graph above, Red Knight Games was very active on Facebook leading up to their campaign at the beginning of the campaign in November 2013, leading up to the deadline in December 2013.

Unfortunately for the backers of this campaign, once the campaign was successfully funded Red Knight Game's did not update the backers on social media. The last post that the developers made on Facebook was on the last day of the Kickstarter campaign. Backers of the campaign have tried to reach the developers on Facebook by posting comments, but none have been answered. The comments posted by people on Facebook were questions about the game's development and if the developers had simply 'given up'.

It is clear from the research that Facebook in this case was used as just a promotional tool to push the Kickstarter campaign. Some effort was made by the owner of the Facebook page to answer questions before and during the campaign, but not after.

Second Observation - Twitter

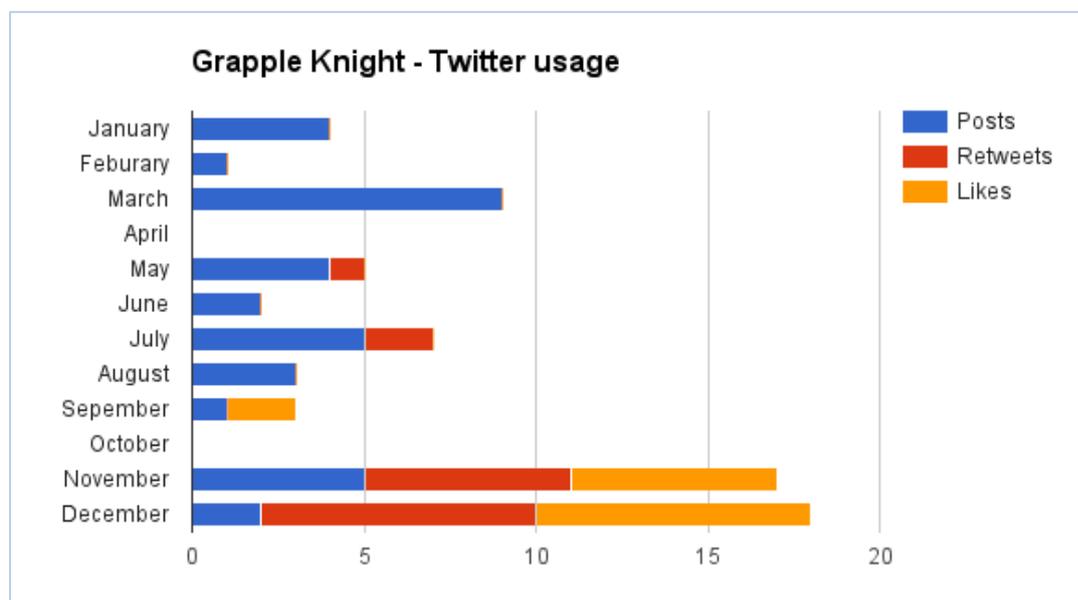


Figure 7. Data from Grapple Knight's Twitter profile, recorded in April 2016.

Red Knight Games' second most used social media platform is Twitter. As you can see from the graph above, Twitter was not used that much during the Grapple Knights Kickstarter campaign. Twitter was mostly used to re-tweet backer's message in-which they tweeted to @Redknight_Games.



Figure 8. A Tweet re-tweeted by Red Knight Games on March 2014.

After observing both Red Knight Games' Twitter, something out of the ordinary was noticed. When the campaign was successful in December 2013, Red Knight Games did not post any

updates on Facebook or on Youtube. But on March 30th 2014, Red Knight Games' Twitter re-tweeted a tweet about Grapple Knight being featured on a 'promising 2D games in development list. As expected, no more tweets about the development of the game was ever posted on the Twitter page since this re-tweet.

Third Observation – YouTube

Uploads

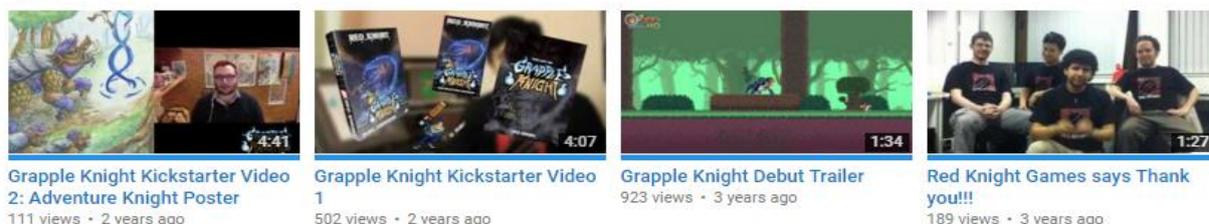


Figure 9. A screenshot of the four videos on Red Knight Games' Youtube channel – captured April 2016.

One platform that was observed was Red Knight Games' YouTube channel. The channel was very small by only having 27 subscribers and a total of 1,731 views on a total of four videos.

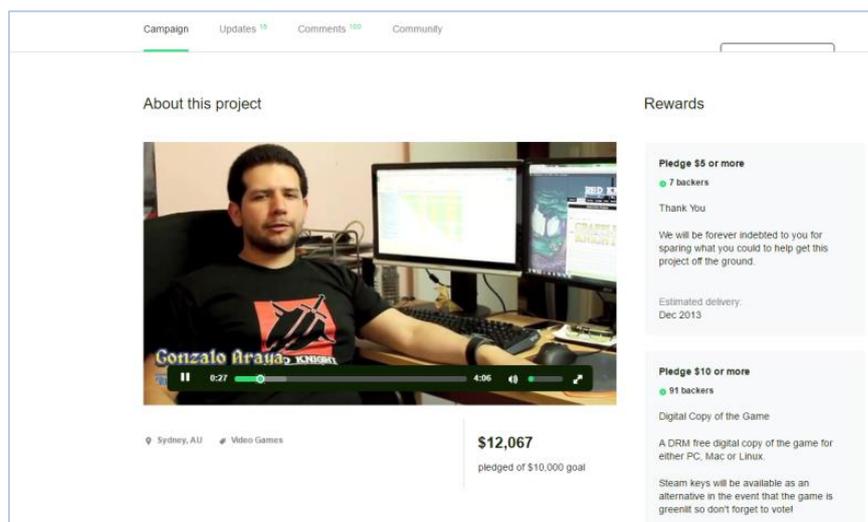


Figure 10. A screenshot of the promotional video at the top of Red Knight Games' Kickstarter campaign.

Because this is a small project by a small team, their Youtube channel didn't get much attention. The majority of the views for their top viewed videos (the debut on trailer and Kickstarter video) came at the beginning of their campaign in November 2013.

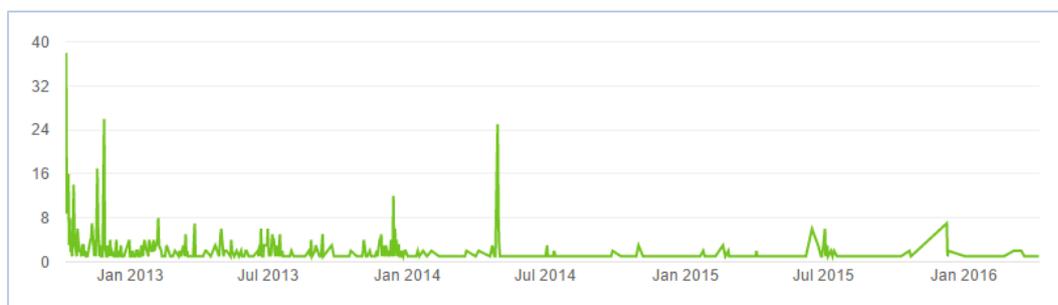


Figure 11. A screenshot of the viewer statistics for the video 'Grapple Knight Debut Trailer' – captured 2016.

As you can see from the screenshot above, you can see that this video got the most amounts of viewers in 2013 when the campaign was started.

Red Knight Games posted three videos consecutively from October 2013 to December 2013 during their Kickstarter campaign. The last video that was posted on Red Knight Games' YouTube channel was on December 1 2013, but did the least amount of view of all four of their videos.

Similar to Facebook and Twitter, Red Knight Games has not posted a new video since December of 2013.

Reflection

These observations on the social media use of Red Knight Games proved very useful in identifying if these social media pages were created to push campaign, to get more backers to fund their game. Because the developer has not posted on any of their social media platforms for over three years, it's clear that the project was abandoned. There were no problems encountered during the observation of this case study. The only limitations that came up during this observation were the inability to contact the developer, Red Knight Games for an update.

Industry Report

Digital Living - Case study of social media use: ethnography and report

Executive summary

The case study on this report is on the social media use of a video game called 'Grapple Knight' on a crowdfunding website called Kickstarter. The game development team for this game were based in Sydney Australia and the data gathered for this report occurred in November to December 2013. 'Grapple Knight' was officially funded on December 24th after raising \$12,067 with 194 backers, surpassing their goal of \$10,000 AUD.

Accounts on social media websites Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are often utilized to increase exposure to new potential backers. The social media accounts of the 'Grapple Knight' development team were observed in order to see if effort was made.

The purpose of observing these social media accounts were to see if effort was made to show transparency and keep their backers up to date with the development of the game they funded.

The focus of this report is how this game developer used a crowdfunding website, as well as social media to essentially swindle their backers. This report should be read because this report shows that there have been many cases of companies abusing crowdfunding websites like Kickstarter for financial gain.

The evaluation for this project was in-fact that this small game development team based in Sydney morally abused the terms and conditions of this crowdfunding website. After the game was successfully funded in December 2013, Red Knight Games essentially ran away with \$12,067 AUD, leaving their 194 backers in the dark for over three years.

Background

Red Knight Games was a small game development team of five team members based in Sydney Australia. The company was formed in 2012 and began development on their first and only game called Grapple Knight (Red Knight Games, 2016). The team consisted of five team members. Interestingly, only three of the five are featured on the company's website along with contact information. All three have portfolio sites but they all seem to be the same template, and without any contact information. Effort was made to try and search social media to find and contact them for a response regarding an update on their game.

Due to the popularity of the very popular crowdfunding website Kickstarter, Red Knight Games launched their campaign in November 2013 with a goal of \$10,000 AUD. The Kickstarter page for Grapple Knight very looked really promising. They showed their backers exactly what their money would be spent on, and even offering backers a demo to try before funding their game.

Red Knight Games took full advantage of using social media effectively to push their campaign to gather more backers to reach their Kickstarter goal. After doing some thorough research, the most used social media platform during the campaign was Facebook. One of the reasons why Facebook was used more than any of their other social media platforms

was because in 2013, Facebook was the most used social media platform in Australia with over 12.8 million active users (Cowling, D. 2016).



Figure 1. Screenshot of the Social Media News website from December 2013.

Social media is the key tool to making crowdfunding campaigns successful. Without social media websites like Facebook, most crowdfunding campaign would fail without support from people sharing.

To date, Kickstarter has 7,659 successfully funded games, 63 of which raised over a million dollars (Kickstarter.com, 2016). Kickstarter however does not have good reputation when it comes to crowdfunding video games. In 2015, it was quoted that only a third of all games funded on Kickstarter fully deliver (Shaw-Williams, 2014).

In some cases, game developers promise more than they can achieve just to reach their projects goal in time. There has also been a trend of some game developers on crowdfunding websites like Kickstarter, who are essentially scamming anyone who backs their campaign by lying to them about their campaign. The word 'scampaign' was created to describe these unethical campaigns (Alois, 2016).

The reason why these scampaigns seem to be happening more and more frequently on predominately Kickstarter and equivalent site 'IndieGoGo', is that loopholes in the terms and conditions of these sites allow for it. In the Kickstarter terms and conditions under 'Who is responsible for project creators to deliver what they promise?' it reads:

"It is the responsibility of the project creator to fulfil the promises of their project...

...Kickstarter does not investigate a creator's ability to complete their project."
(Kickstarter.com, 2016).

This means that crowdfunding scampaigns, big or small, can get away with taking the money from a successful campaign and disappear from the internet. Another reason why scams seem to happen occasionally on crowdfunding websites is because people forget that Kickstarter and IndieGoGo are not explicitly offering a finished product in exchange for money, but instead an opportunity to 'donate' to the completion of a project. As such, they are not subject to the same legal obligations as protected under the consumer rights act. The result of this is a crowdfunding website which is somewhat unmonitored and unregulated.

Observations, key findings, and evaluation

The social media usage in this case Australia did not differ from how social media would be used in the UK. Social media in a crowdfunding environment was used just the same, to promote the campaign and to interact with the fans/backers. The major difference being that Facebook and Twitter was used predominantly because they are faster to update, rather than taking a lot of time and resources in creating a video update.

The first observation in this case study was Kickstarter. The question that needed to be answered was how this campaign was funded over a period of just one month, with a big goal. To record the Kickstarter funding for Grapple Knight, a website called 'Internet archive Way Back Machine' was used to look at what the Kickstarter page looked back in 2013 (Archive.org, 2016).

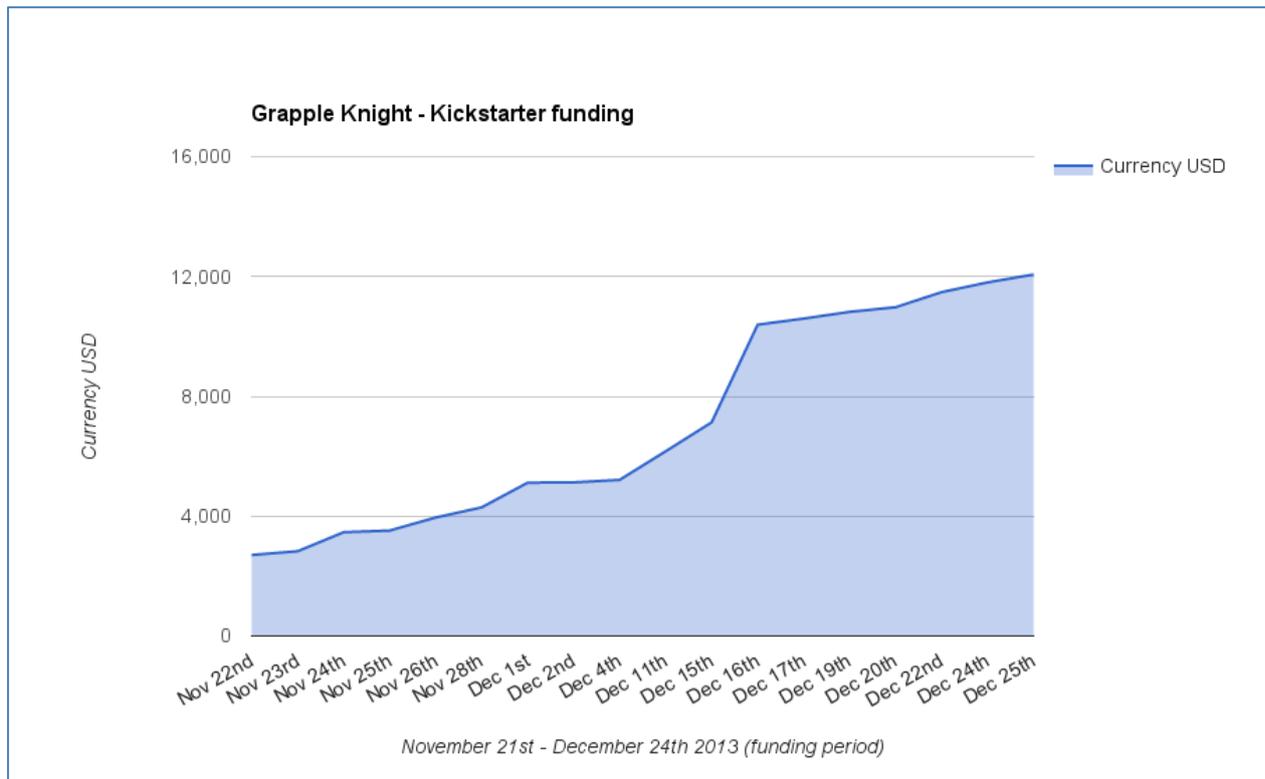


Figure 2. Data showing the money rose from the beginning of the Kickstarter campaign to the end of the campaign.

With this data, we could see which days Grapple Knight received their most funding from backers. These big spikes in funding occurred two ways: potential funders saw that the campaign was about to end and so they decided spontaneously to back the campaign as well, posting regularly on social media helped push the campaign to reach a bigger audience.

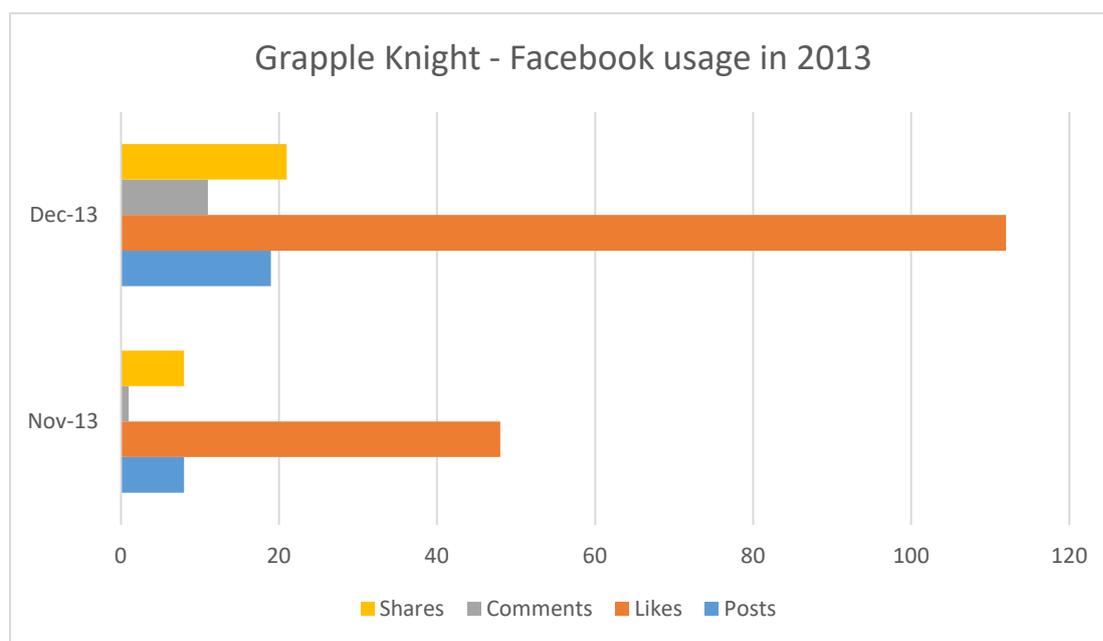


Figure 3. Data from Grapple Knight's Facebook page, recorded in April 2016.

As you can see from the graph above (figure 3), Grapple Knight’s Facebook usage double and even tripled in December of 2013. This usage of social media helped make the campaign visible to a larger audience and in turn produced more backers to help fund their campaign. Almost every crowdfunding professional argue that social media usage is key to a successful Kickstarter (Almerico, 2014).

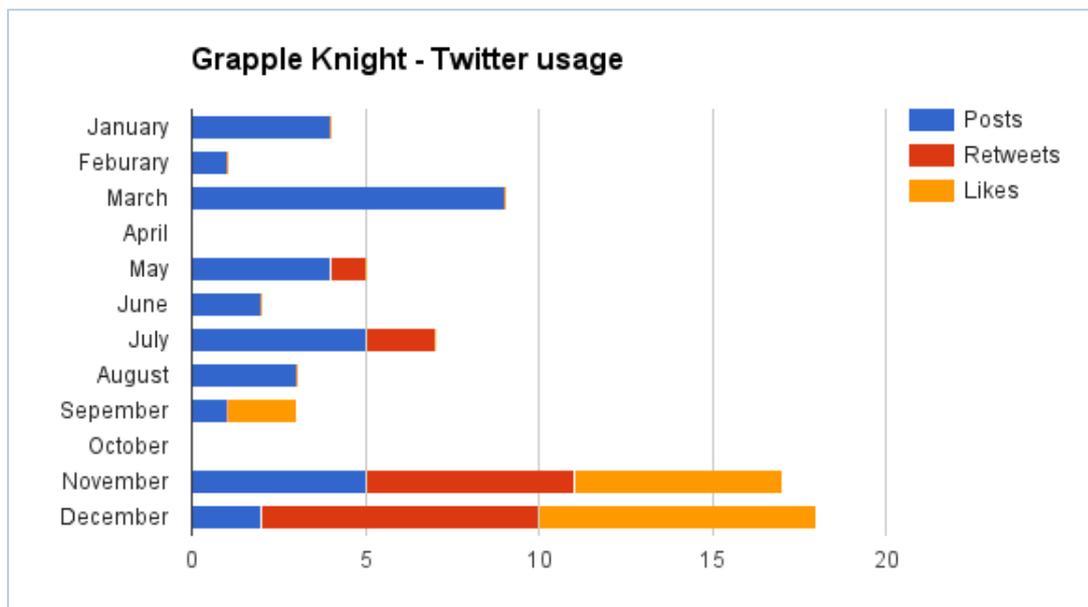


Figure 4: Data from Grapple Knight’s Twitter profile, recorded in April 2016.

As well as increasing their Facebook usage, Red Knight Games also began using Twitter more effectively to interact with their backers. As you can see from the graph above, the usage of Twitter skyrocketed in November and December during Grapple Knight’s Kickstarter campaign. This graph also shows that in December, Red Knight Games posted less towards the end of their campaign.

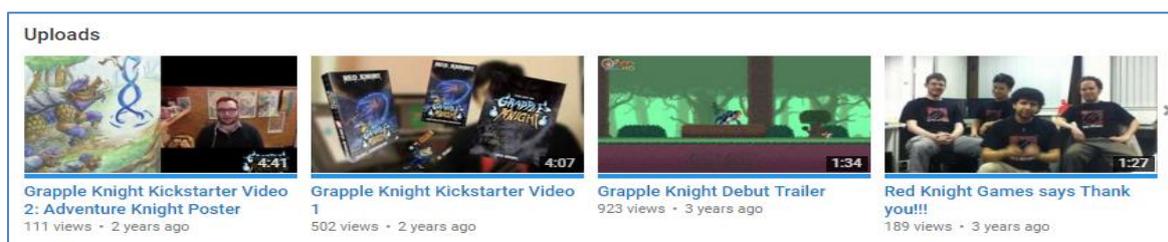


Figure 5. A screenshot of the four videos on Red Knight Games’ Youtube channel – captured April 2016.

YouTube usage frequently plays a key factor in the success of a crowdfunding campaign. But after observing Red Knight Games’ Youtube page, it was apparent that the only videos that received viewers were the debut trailer with gameplay and the Kickstarter video. Usually game developers would use this platform (YouTube, 2016) to post more update videos after a campaign was successfully funded, but the last video Red Knight Games posted was in December 2013.

Very much like Red Knight Games’ YouTube channel, Facebook and Twitter was not updated after the campaign was funded in late December 2013. Efforts by backers of the campaign to try and contact the developers Red Knight Games for an update were unsuccessful and at this time, Grapple Knight seems to have been abandoned.

Recommendations

The abuse of crowdfunding campaigns has begun to grow over the last few years and so changes need to be made to combat scams. Kickstarter and IndieGoGo need to have a bigger role in campaigns that do not deliver after a period of time. As it stands, in the Kickstarter terms and conditions, Kickstarter does not follow up on campaigns to see if they delivered the product to their backers.

Because crowdfunding campaigns do not fall under The Consumer Rights Act 2016 (Consumer Rights Act, 2016), government need to take action and update the act and include crowdfunding campaigns that do offer digital goods. The recommendation is that before a Kickstarter campaign is posted, all developers and creators will need to agree and sign a failsafe document. This document would fall under the jurisdiction of the country in which the creator is located. Although crowdfunding is new media and laws have not been created, action must be taken now to prevent bigger instances of in the future.

Transparency should play a bigger part in the success of a campaign, like having a good track history or showing exactly how the money is being spent along with evidence. Developers need to promise what they can achieve and not engage in deception just to reach their goal. Social media should be used in a positive way to interact with a fan base and build a relationship with people who like their idea and want to help fund their game.

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