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The Vital Role of Crowdfunding and Social Media in Establishing an Art Career: A 'How To'

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The Vital Role of Crowdfunding and Social Media in

Establishing an Art Career: A 'How To'

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Abstract

This research project focuses on whether and how social media and crowdfunding platforms have changed the relationships that artists and creators have with their audience members, their creative works, their peers, their professional role identities, and the art market generally.

Primarily, I offer an analysis of artists' life experiences with respect to their careers in the traditional market (e.g., galleries and museums) compared to the social media environment (e.g., Kickstarter). After analysing artists' life stories and the art market ecosystem generally, this project focuses on how artists use social media platforms to promote and sell their work, and, related to this, how they use the new business model – crowdfunding – to advance their careers.

According to the research objectives, my literature review supports an analysis of the United Kingdom's art market ecosystem to present a detailed picture of the market trends pre- and post-social media. Next, the literature focuses on observations and testimonials about the relationships creators and artists had to the art market environment prior to 2007 (social media's inception) and post 2007. Additionally, the literature helps to contextualise online business transactions and associated practices in the wake of the 'attention economy' and the turn towards the 'attention-emotion economy'; in particular, how this impacts artists' communications with and packaging of their creative works for their audiences.

Selecting this particular research design helps to identify why and how artists use crowdfunding platforms (supported by social media) to develop their art careers instead of relying on galleries (i.e. traditional approaches) to acquire more power and opportunities to have a reasonable standard of living and pursue their artistic passions.

This research project draws on multi-methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies that are supported by auto-ethnography, action research, and creative visual research methods (such as LEGO). For the purposes of this study, I have developed a RAINBOW analysis framework to support data collection, interpretation, reflection on the results, and propose validated best practices for emerging artists who want to advance their careers through social media and crowdfunding platforms. This analysis framework facilitates each interview subject (including the researcher) in adopting seven perspectives (reflection, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities, and weaknesses) and enabling a deep exploration of internal and external relationships within the art market environment.

The study's findings demonstrate that successful business people – including artists – who want to conduct business online must be responsive to the dynamics of the 'attention-emotion economy'. Given the accessibility and popularity of the internet and social media platforms, it is becoming increasingly difficult for entrepreneurs to first attract and then capture attention. The literature review, case study, and data from the ten in-depth interviews each show that it is imperative for sellers to use emotion to create the kind of organic connections with their potential customers (through communications and products) that will convert an interest into a sale. Once creators and artists establish organic connections and begin to see them grow, it will not only help them to develop their careers but also empower them to become independent in the art market. This further ensures that creators and artists will be able to have more power and autonomy in the art market ecosystem, without having to rely on traditional galleries.

Table of Contents

Figures

Tables

Acknowledgements

If you were to ask me: What does 'quality of life' mean to you? I would answer 'opening yourself to possibilities and exchanges'. I believe that when you truly want something, you ought to pursue it passionately and open yourself to an adventure. True to form, I left my comfort zone and stepped away from the life that I had built in my home country, Taiwan to research in the United Kingdom. I exchanged my time and wealth for opportunities to broaden my world view and work with leading experts to grow my ideas and values.

Was it all worth it? Yes, I think so. In the last few years, I came to realise that memories are priceless, no matter the happiness, frustration, or sadness you feel in the moment. All of these experiences proved to me that I am open to taking a journey, committing to a goal, and appreciating beauty amidst challenges.

For my academic adventure, I want to say a sincere 'thank you' to my doctoral supervisors, Professors David Gauntlett and Graham Meikle. David always encouraged me to be brave and embrace challenges. Because of his encouragement, I actually became braver than before and explored new possibilities within and outside of my university's walls. Graham's thoughtful advice and insights became the academic light that guided me when I felt I had lost my way. It was a beautiful experience having David and Graham as my supervisors on my academic journey. Moreover, Dr. Anthony Mcnicholas gave me wonderful support, and I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Roza Tsagarousianou's lectures when I began my doctoral studies.

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Chun Man, Kuo Ting Yu, Zeng Ru Ying, and Fan Ting – reminded me how blessed I am to have friendships that I carry within my heart wherever I go.

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I will carry my beautiful memories with me to my next adventure. In the words of *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I will now 'focus on the next step to do more meaningful things and continue finding happiness'.

London, UK

20 August, 2018

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Motivation for This Project

1.1 My early career …

In 2006, I began working as a journalist at *Business Week*, one of the largest financial magazines in Taiwan. I was responsible for interviewing and writing about business people and cultural professionals, including artists, designers, and writers. Observing Taiwan's cultural market front and centre gave me an intimate exposure to artists' lifestyles, just as it ignited my passion for creative artistic expression.

When I reflect on the four years I worked for the magazine, one incident stands out above all others. It is not an overstatement to say that this moment shaped the trajectory of my future career. The renowned artist, Liang Danfeng was commissioned by *Business Week* to prepare two illustrations for our cover story on Bhutan. At the time her work was commissioned, the magazine had the highest national circulation in the industry and was very profitable (drawing a readership of over 100,000 per week with each issue priced at £2).

By chance, I had a conversation with my colleague who was leading the cover project. Among other things, she described the drawings our team had solicited and informed me that they were going to be completed by Danfeng, who would be paid less than £2000 for her work. It is worth noting that Danfeng was over eighty years old at the time and had invested her life's work in her art. She hardly needed more exposure, so it was clear enough that illustrating our cover was something she was doing strictly for the money.

The obvious disparity between *Business Week's* profits and the quality of Danfeng's work (which would help to further drive the magazine's profits) motivated me to reflect deeply upon the worth of art, the artistic lifestyle, and the art market generally. In particular,

I began to question how much an artist or creator[1] deserves in financial compensation for their artwork. I also wondered about Danfeng's bargaining capability: could she have gotten another, better offer than this one?

These questions pointed towards the deeper issue of the power relationships between artists and the art market. It seemed to me that power dynamics and asymmetries between artists and the art world – i.e. business and commercial markets – largely determined, even limited, the value of creative works.

Since this time, developments in the art market – e.g., the reach and accessibility of the internet and the communication landscape – inspired me to explore how artists can develop their careers and promote their art by using social media and crowdfunding platforms. Accordingly, this research project explores the relationship between artists, social media, and the marketplace in an effort to support artists in developing prosperous relationships with their audience base, and nurturing their careers through social media and crowdfunding platforms.

1.2 Social media: a changed landscape

Although many artists continue to struggle to navigate the art market and sustain themselves through their work, 2006 brought significant changes to the way every professional communicates and does business on a global scale. At the time, the Pew Research Centre investigated the role of the internet in people's major life moments. Approximately 60% of Americans claimed the internet played a significant role in facilitating their important life decisions, such as a financial decision like buying a home, finding a job, or choosing a college for themselves and/or their children (Horrigan and Rainie, 2006).

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[1] Hereafter, these terms will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

As a point of comparison, in 1996 approximately 45 million people were using the internet[2]. By 2002, regular internet users numbered more than 500 million. By 2006 – when the impetus for this project was born – that number rose to more than 1 billion. In the critical time-span between 2004 and 2007, Mark Zuckerberg had launched Facebook, YouTube's video-sharing platform was rolled out, and the iPhone, which brought wireless internet access to millions of people worldwide, was released.

In its inception, the primary role of the internet was to connect people to information. Even though most people use the internet for this purpose, technological innovations have also enabled unfettered access to media and entertainment. Capitalising on this, in 2003, Apple Computer introduced the Apple iTunes Music Store, which enabled customers to download songs for ninety-nine pence. This ignited a revolution in the creative industry and profoundly changed how people access, use, and perceive entertainment media and creative products (InvestinTech.com, 2017).

Increasingly, the internet has become the medium through which individuals communicate, shop, learn, work, and build relationships. In that same way, the internet has helped overcome barriers in physical spaces (i.e. geographical distances and topographies) and physical human bodies (i.e. impairments), as well as family, work, and household responsibilities.

The above mentioned Pew report (2006) also provided critical insight into the impact the internet has had on interpersonal relationships, human behaviours, and activities. Broadly speaking, our communities have changed from solitary to social networks, and have become more diversified because the internet has enabled connections with people from all over the world (Wellman, 2001). Moreover, because of the social capital provided by the internet, people are now getting information in two forms – from other people and web

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[2] http://www.elon.edu/e-web/predictions/early90s/internethistory

resources – rather than just within their home communities. This has inspired many people to assume the role of 'individual internet entrepreneur' (The Pew Research Centre Report, p. 42), a testament to the internet's cultural influence.

In sum, by 2006, the internet had assumed a potent role in people's lives, re-framing the notion and practice of 'community' as a virtual networked space that unites individuals according to shared interests and purposes. Following the emergence of YouTube, the iPhone, and Facebook, the internet became sought out by greater numbers of people, and we also began seeing changes in the ecosystem of creative industries. For instance, technology has offered people new ways to consume music – through the iTunes store – instead of buying CDs in a physical shop. In turn, the creative industry began to change, especially the ways in which creative products were accessed and consumed. Increasingly, the internet came to be recognized by professionals in the creative industry as a 'game changer', exerting a powerful influence not only on consumers but on artists seeking to launch, build, and sustain their creative careers.

1.3 A critical transition: 2006 – 2012

The internet continued to evolve and influence people's daily lives between 2006 and 2012. On a personal note, in 2012 – after ten years of working as a journalist – I made the decision to give up my job, step outside of my comfort zone, and travel to London, UK to become a researcher. I sought out a project that would enable me to explore the nexus between art and economics. My goal was (and remains) to promote positive social change through research that articulates the contributions artists make to modern society, and to help foster a greater appreciation (including in monetary form) of art in the marketplace. Denfang's experience with *Business Week* galvanized my decision, reminding me of how

much I care about artists' well-being, and how much I deplore their unfair treatment in our market-driven, technocratic world.

Inspired to learn more, I began analysing trends in the art market between 2006 and 2012. I soon discovered that there were significant changes that occurred throughout this period, which appeared to be driven by the rise of the internet and the birth of social media. This coupling seemed to provide unprecedented opportunities for artists to change their lives, art careers, and – I daresay – the entire art ecosystem.

Further research revealed that the invention and extraordinary popularity of social media platforms became the 'fuse' that ignited the (now) booming digital media trends. Dramatic shifts in the way people communicate also created new ways of working for artists.

Even so, it is challenging for artists accustomed to the traditional art market to harness the power of social media and understand *just how much* it can impact their work. In Toddy Henry's words (2011),

> one day we wake up and realize all media is now digital, which means that artists have to shift their business model to give up their main art and instead focus on selling care peripherals… artists aren't great at business models, distribution, or line extensions. They just want to make great, valued art and sell it at a fair price.

The question becomes: if an artist is not adept at navigating the traditional marketplace, can social media help him or her to overcome that deficit and facilitate a successful, and financially prosperous, artistic career?

To help answer this question, Steven White (2013) collected data from Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WordPress.com, and Tumblr, which showed the growth of social media from 2006 to 2012. In total, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of these seven media sites is 900.05 percent.

These findings encouraged me to examine the developing trends within social media to identify unique opportunities for artists. I discovered that the Pew Research Centre updated their research questions (2016) to reflect social media usage and interviewed 1,520 American adults. Results showed that 68% of American adults regularly use Facebook. In terms of other popular social media platforms, 28% use Instagram, 26% use Pinterest, 25% use LinkedIn, and 21% use Twitter.

In the United Kingdom, Ofcom commissioned a study (2017) highlighting the critical role that social media plays in daily life. Similarly, the 2017 *Communication Market Report* states 'the fastest-grower in the UK, Snapchat is now used by more than 158 million people worldwide every day, and the rise of Instagram has paved the way for the creation of a whole new celebrity: the "instafamous"…'.

Within the context of this research project, the more people who are using social media platforms, the more opportunities artists will have to develop relationships. Indeed, there is a strong sense in which the modern marketplace mandates that artists who want to make a living by selling their art must become entrepreneurs, skilled in digital promotion, marketing, and customer service.

And social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for doing just that, offering virtually unlimited access to an unlimited market. Voogt and Martin (2017) observe,

> In the past year (2016), 3,175 billion people worldwide were active internet users. That's almost half the global population. Active social media users totaled a whopping 2.206 billion just in 2015… What does that mean for you as an artist or creative? More reach.

Said another way, social media has enabled artists to access 2.206 billion people worldwide, who can – in turn – become followers and customers.

Jeff Mueller (2015), who has extensive experience using social media for his art career, suggested that

marketing ourselves via social media is largely a numbers game. The goal is to find and develop genuine relationships with people who are motivated to help us. We are members of a "personal" profession… Like choosing friends in real life, we are choosing which relationships to develop online….

Even though social media makes potential customers accessible and artists seem to have more opportunities to develop their careers through these platforms, it is not always an easy path. According to artist Ann Rea (2013), 'social media won't sell your art… It is one of many marketing tools that you can use once you have a clear understanding of your unique value proposition and target market'. Echoing this, Voogt and Martin (2017) observed 'if you know how to play your cards right, this is the foundation to building an engaged group of followers'.

It is evident that the internet and social media have opened new pathways to connect and do business with people worldwide. Internet and social media trends, as well as clear changes to the art market, suggest that relationships are at the core of building sustainable art careers. Questions remain, however, about the *kinds* of relationship dynamic that artists must cultivate to establish themselves in their early careers.

1.4 Crowdfunding platforms: a brief history

Although the practice of crowdfunding dates back to at least 1730[3], it gained prominence as a technological tool in 1997[4] and had a resurgence in 2003[5]. Between 2006 and 2009, Indiegogo and Kickstarter were launched and quickly began to enhance the role of social media in the art market. Surveying the landscape from 2006 to 2012, the influence social media and crowdfunding platforms have had on artists' careers is apparent. Above all, artists gained greater power in setting their career trajectories.

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[3] https://www.kickstarter.com/blog/kickstarter-before-kickstarter
[4] The first noteworthy instance of online crowdfunding in the music industry was in 1997, when fans underwrote an entire U.S. tour for the British rock band Marillion, raising 60,000 USD in donations by means of a fan-based internet campaign.
[5] Crowdfunding gained traction after the launch of ArtistShare, in 2003.

1.5 Dissertation Overview

With this background context in mind, this research project focuses on addressing the question of whether and how social media and crowdfunding platforms have changed the relationships that artists and creators have with their audience members, their creative works, their peers, their professional role identities, and the art market generally.

Primarily, I offer an analysis of artists' life experiences with respect to their careers in the traditional market (e.g., galleries and museums) compared to the social media environment (e.g., Kickstarter). For example, in the traditional market, creators and artists must accept the resource arrangements made by galleries on their behalf. There is, therefore, a strong sense in which traditional organisations wield the power and make decisions that directly impact the livelihood and careers of creators and artists who work with them. At the same time, galleries take on the burdens of management, promotion, and administration, which may help artists to focus on their work and on developing their careers while gallery agents establish their audience bases.

Nevertheless, creators and artists are left to navigate their feelings and the financial consequences of earning a lower profit for their artwork. It is also evident that traditional organizations often have explicit preferences about how to popularise art, and develop plans that artists and creators must follow. In fact, this is one of the greatest barriers artists confront in their decision as to whether to work with traditional organisations.

After providing an analysis of artists' professional biographies and the art market ecosystem generally, the primary research question of this thesis is *how can artists effectively use the new business model – crowdfunding – to advance their careers*?

According to these research objectives, the literature review (Chapter 2) will present a detailed picture of the market trends in the United Kingdom pre- and post-social media. Following this, the literature turns towards observations and testimonials on the

relationships creators and artists have to the art market prior to and post 2007 (i.e. social media's inception). Additionally, this chapter will help to contextualise online business transactions and associated practices in the wake of the 'attention economy' and the turn towards the 'attention-emotion economy'; in particular, how this impacts artists' communications with, and packaging of their creative works for, their audiences.

Selecting this particular research design will illuminate why and how artists use crowdfunding platforms (supported by social media) to develop their art careers, instead of relying on galleries (traditional approaches) to acquire more power and opportunities to have a reasonable standard of living and pursue their artistic passions.

To that end, I will draw on in-depth interviews and case studies that will be supported by auto-ethnography, action research, and creative visual research methods (such as LEGO). For the purposes of this study, I also created a RAINBOW analysis framework to support data collection, interpretation, and reflection on the results. It will further support the validation of promising practices for emerging artists who want to advance their careers through social media and crowdfunding platforms, including fostering 'organic' connections.

Essentially, 'organic connections' can be read as synonymous with 'living relationships' between artists and their audiences. Typically, these relationships grow and are maintained through an emotional 'seed'. This concept enables me to explore artists' projects and, further, contributes to the theory base, insofar as it provides a new perspective to recast the discussion about trends in the internet from the 'attention economy' to the 'attention-emotion economy'.

This analysis framework will also facilitate each interview subject (including the researcher) in adopting seven perspectives (reflection, audience, innovation, network,

business, opportunities, and weaknesses) that will allow for a deep exploration of their internal and external relationships in the art market environment.

Taken together, this research will demonstrate that successful business people – including artists – who want to conduct business online must be responsive to the dynamics of the 'attention-emotion economy'. Given the accessibility and popularity of the internet and social media platforms, it is becoming increasingly difficult for entrepreneurs to first attract and then capture attention. The literature review, case study, and data from the ten in-depth interviews will each show that it is imperative for sellers to use emotions to create the kind of organic connections with their potential customers (through communications and products) that will convert an interest into a sale. Once creators and artists establish organic connections and begin to see them grow, it will not only help them to develop their careers but also empower them to become independent within the art market. This further ensures that creators and artists will be able to have more power and autonomy in the art market ecosystem, without having to rely on traditional galleries.

At this point, it is also worth mentioning the limitations of this project, particularly related to conducting case studies and in-depth interviews. In doing case studies, there were gaps between my expectations and what I gleaned from the artists I had selected to work with. Like many other researchers who do case studies, I was under the impression that if I had looked harder I could have found better cases than the ones I ultimately pursued. Still, I was appreciative of the time and the insights of the artists who agreed to work with me; after all, there were many individuals who refused to meet with me (citing time concerns as their main reasons).

There were also methodological limitations in my research, which included developing and applying an original analysis framework to support my process of leading in-depth interviews and reviewing findings. On the one hand, the approach that I took

(RAINBOW) generated a new method that social media researchers can use and it gave me a creative perspective to frame my interviews and analyse the findings that emerged from them. On the other hand, when a researcher uses an original analysis framework, there should be ample applied data to support its credibility and that of the entire study. In the end, my research was guided not only by my academic interests but also by my principles – valuing creativity and enriching the field of social media research by creating new knowledge through a new framework.

1.6 Chapter Breakdown

This chapter provided an overview of the motivation for undertaking this research project; presented the main research question and methods; and surveyed the internet's development, the birth and exponential growth of social media, and the corresponding relationships between artists, social media, and the art market.

Chapter 2, Literature Review will offer a systematic analysis of the art market ecosystem and the relationships between artists, the social media environment, and the art market generally. The literature review will begin with reflections on artists' stories about their work and formative experiences. In the analysis that follows, I will explore the relationships between artists and their audience members, innovation and their art, and their personal and business networks. To explore artists' business perspectives, chapter two will also include an examination of social media business theories to bolster the analysis of artists' business approaches.

Chapter 3, Methodology will explain the rationales underlying the multi-method approaches used in this project, i.e. in-depth interviews and case studies, as well as the choice to integrate auto-ethnography, action research, and creative visual research methods.

Chapter 4, Fieldwork will detail the four research steps – i.e. data-collection, analysis and action planning, observation and analysis of the actions undertaken, and reflection (supported by action research). Complementing this, I will explain why and how I designed an analysis framework, 'RAINBOW' to support the in-depth interview and the reflection stages that follow.

Chapter 5, Identifying and Analysing Crowdfunding Campaigns will unpack the design process of this research project, including the ten main cases (successful Kickstarter campaign creators). Everything from the idea phase through to the analysis of creators' campaign results will be covered here.

Chapter 6, Analysis of Ten Case Studies will show my criteria for choosing specific cases, and how I applied the 'RAINBOW' analysis framework to my case studies in a systematic way.

Chapter 7, Analysis of the Researcher's Kickstarter Campaign builds upon the previous chapter to share the experience I gained by creating my own Kickstarter project – from the launch of my campaign through to its conclusion. Based on the results of my Kickstarter project, I will provide an analysis of the business models of art production and sales via social media.

Chapter 8, Conclusion will offer summary remarks, including a proposal for how artists can develop their careers in the social media era and the new art market ecosystem. Using data collected from the cases and my own campaign, I will outline business trends in the 'attention-emotion economy' and whether/how this departs from the theory of the 'attention economy' first proposed in 1971. Moreover, my evaluation of the RAINBOW analysis framework will be included in this chapter to show the 'big picture' relationships that obtain between artists, social media, and the art market.

Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

This study focuses, primarily, on how artists can use social media and crowdfunding platforms to develop their careers independently of galleries. This includes an analysis of the art market ecosystem, the relationships artists have with their audiences, and an examination of social media and crowdfunding platforms generally. The purpose of this study is to shed light on whether and how relationship dynamics have changed between creators and artists and the art environment since social media's inception.

Social media research has been taken up by a broad variety of disciplines. In terms of its over-arching application, social media can be divided into many categories, including social networks, photo and video sharing, microblogging, social bookmarking, social gaming, and apps (Golbeck, 2015). The various types of social media available, the emergence of digital media, and the activities that these platforms have made possible have influenced people's lives. According to Nancy K. Baym, 'technologies affect how we see the world, our communities, our relationships… and they lead to social and cultural reorganisation and reflection' (Baym, 2015, p2).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the accessibility and functionality of the internet and social media have brought significant changes to the art market, the creative process, and how artists connect with their work and audiences. With this backdrop in mind, this research project focuses, primarily, on the role that relationships play in the art market (via social media and crowdfunding platforms), artists' day-to-day experiences, as well as the opportunities these platforms open for artists' career development. My literature review, which I will detail below, offers a robust description of the traditional art market through to

the emergence of the social media ecosystem. The corresponding impact and the changed

dynamics of the relationships artists now have with their careers, followers, and their

creative processes will also be presented.

2.2 Surveying the Art World

In an effort to understand job satisfaction among artists, the German Socio-

Economic Panel Survey (SOEP)[6] collected information based on occupation, income,

working hours, and education, spanning the years 1990 to 2009. In each domain, they asked

artists and non-artists alike to rate their level of satisfaction from 0 to 10 (10 being 'highly

satisfied'). The results showed that artists have higher rates of job satisfaction than non-

artists, at 7.32 and 7.06, respectively (Steiner and Schneider, 2012).

According to Menger (2001), this can be explained by the fact that artists' work

can be considered as highly attractive along a set of measurable dimensions of job
satisfaction that include the variety of the work, a high level of personal autonomy in
using one's own initiative, the opportunities to use a wide range of abilities and to
feel self-actualised at work, an idiosyncratic way of life, a strong sense of
community, a low level of routine, and a high degree of social recognition for the
successful artists. All these benefits have a so-called shadow price, which may be
compensated for by a lower income than would be expected from less amenable jobs
(Menger, 2001, p245).

Of course, some artists do have very high incomes[7]; however the majority struggle to

maintain a living wage in building their careers. To help understand why, Abbing (2002)

offered an analysis of the art market's characteristics, including its inherent 'winner takes

all' posture. He explained that even when there is very little difference in terms of artistic

quality, talent, and effort that goes into specific pieces, there can be huge differences in

terms of artists' incomes, and this is the direct result of customers' buying behaviours. The

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[6] The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households, located at the German Institute for Economic Research, DIW Berlin (http://www.diw.de/en/diw_02.c.221178.en/about_soep.html).
[7] http://www.forbes.com/sites/zackomalleygreenburg/2014/12/10/the-worlds-highest-paid-musicians-of-2014/

implication is that if an artist is not the number one in the market, he or she will likely struggle (Abbing, 2002).

On a related note, Alper et al. (1996) observed that, 'for the average art consumer it makes sense to limit one's energies to a small number of already famous artists. This "limited start capacity" of consumers helps to explain the astronomical incomes that some artists fetch' (Alper et al., 1996, p56).

Being *irreplaceable* is another important factor in determining income among artists. Cowen and Grier (1996) pointed out that the top incomes in the arts are significantly higher than in many other markets, and this is because of the artwork's supposed sacredness and authenticity which the public values above commodities and is prepared to pay handsomely for (cited in Abbing, 2002).

To further illustrate this point, consider the fact that, after Steve Jobs died, Apple Inc. could continue producing Apple products up to their prior standard, but after Francis Bacon died, nobody else could continue producing paintings like him.

In keeping with this theme, on 12 January, 2015 Susan Jones published an article in the *Guardian*[8] that shared findings from the 2014 report, *Paying Artists campaign*. Jones explained how, in the United Kingdom, the majority of contemporary artists find it difficult to survive financially, as they are not earning a living wage through their artwork. Other countries who also have well-developed fee structures, such as Canada, Sweden, and Australia, are confronted by this same issue. For example, a typical Canadian artist's income is about £11,219, which is lower than the average national income of £15,061. Only 43.6% of visual artists earn money from their studio practices. In Sweden, 60% of artists do not get paid after fulfilling their contracts, or receive less than their original agreement dictated. In

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[8] https://getpocket.com/a/read/813598131

Australia, the average annual income of an artist is significantly less than the average earnings of the country's labour force (at £5,396).

Upon comparing artists' incomes with other professionals in the United States, they earn roughly 10% less, based on Alper and Wassall's (2006) findings. In addition to their hourly wages being lower than those in the non-artistic market (Throsby, 1994), artists also face low employment, including non-voluntary part-time work and intermittent work (Menger, 2001; Alper and Wassall, 2006).

These factors make it difficult for artists to support themselves through their art alone, leaving many of them spending the majority of their time working at non-artistic jobs. In fact, Sari Karttunen (1998) said this issue is so pervasive that many artists call their practice an 'expensive hobby', suggesting that their artistic incomes are inconsequential to how they provide for themselves (Karttunen, 1998).

Julie Sokolow, the head of *Healthy Artists*, claimed that she sees these challenges on a daily basis[9]. Based on her observations, it is very difficult for artists to remain independent and practice their artwork. Typically, they expect to be paid very little, and, even if they are frugal, they cannot meet their financial needs because of the cost of materials and living expenses.

Abbing (2002) explored the reasons why artists are not 'well off', even when they devote much of their time to making art. In his words, 'artists are willing to forsake monetary rewards, are over-confident and inclined to take risks, and artists are ill-informed about day to day work.' Echoing this sentiment, Struyk and Rengers (2000) explained that 'artists are, more than others, inclined to self-confidence and self-deceit. When more people enter the arts, consequently, the average income is lower than it would have been otherwise'

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[9] http://pittnews.com/9881/archives/employment-guide-independent-artists-face-tough-road-to-success/

(cited in Abbing, 1996, p172). In a word, Abbing (2002) suggested that there are five

pervasive myths that are damaging to the art world:

> (1) Making authentic art will be endlessly rewarding; (2) even when no other
> rewards are forthcoming, artists receive ample private satisfaction; (3) talent in the
> artist is natural or God-given; (4) certain talents in the arts will only appear at a later
> point in someone's career; and (5) success in the arts depends exclusively on talent
> and commitment, everyone has an equal chance in the arts. And so the myths and
> delusions about the kinds of chances artists have in the arts, chances that are
> unthinkable in any other field with its diplomas, old-boys, networks etc. continue to
> beguile the would-be artists. Due to misinformation, more people choose the arts,
> more artists offer their services in the market, and more art is produced than would
> have been the case had this information been more accurate. Misinformation
> contributes to the low incomes in the arts (Abbing, 2002, p121).

It would seem that in order to avoid financial issues, artists must quickly build their

reputations so that they do not have to take on additional employment and so that their art

can achieve higher value in public markets[10]. Realising this, many young artists are electing

to exhibit their work for free to become known and attract a following (Jones, 2014).

The gallery ecosystem is, in turn, influenced by the art making process. On this

point, Marcia Bystryn (1978) explored the practices of traditional galleries, dividing them

into two types: art-oriented galleries and market-oriented galleries. Bystryn found that the

two types play a significant role in contacting or finding potential artists to meet the

market's needs. Specifically, art-oriented galleries support artists' working processes

through knowledge exchange and dialogue related to progress. Alternatively, market-

oriented galleries introduce artists to the art market and help to secure their mutual success

(Bystryn, 1978). Not surprisingly, then, art-oriented galleries tend to be viewed as the

gatekeepers to the market, having closer connections with the artistic community and better

connections with institutions and museums. Market-oriented galleries maintain a relatively

fixed staple and a greater degree of screening to evaluate if it is worth investing in

promoting specific art. Accordingly, when they actually permit an artist to exhibit in one of

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[10] http://www.pittnews.com/arts_and_entertainment/article_68c443ba-1c24-11e3-bf12-0019bb30f31a.html

their galleries, it is often easier for an artist to be successful in their career. When artists

have more stable relationships or contracts with this kind of gallery, they are less likely to

break the connection, albeit the relationship tends to evolve and become more dynamic over

time.

With this stage-setting in place, it is helpful to quote Bystryn at some length for the

advice she offers to young artists:

> This [art-oriented] type of gallery is important in the early stages of an artist's
> career. It provides the sort of support necessary to withstand the usual critical
> onslaught made by the gatekeepers of the market. But it is also problematic
> for the artists who do get through the gates. They become desirous of the
> monetary rewards that come with being successful artists. Both dealer and
> artists then begin to feel used. In order to understand the dealer's position, it
> is necessary to understand the way a dealer conceives of the artist's obligation
> to him [or her]. A dealer invests a great deal of energy and money in any artist
> [s]he handles. Frequently, money is lost on an artist. When an artist does
> succeed, however, the dealer feels that his [or her] effort should be rewarded
> (Bystryn, 1978, p395).

At the time of Bystryn's writing (1978), there was an apparent paradox in the art

market as to how to balance the relationships between artists and galleries, and how artists

could reap sufficient compensation to support their work and maintain their creative style. In

the past, galleries typically had the power to control the market, given that they were the

artists' main pathway to establishing themselves and becoming popular enough to sell their

work. On the one hand, when artists were accepted by galleries, they gained access to people

who were skilled in assisting them, particularly in promoting their work and growing their

reputations. On the other hand, many artists had to change their styles and negotiate with

galleries in order to fit into the market or meet the buyer's preferences. More

problematically, when artists who worked with galleries were successful, it was usually the

gallery that saw the majority of the profit (sometimes upwards of 40-50% of every sale,

according to (King, 2012). At bottom, the main tension in the art world was, and continues

to be, the artists' need to build their career in order to live and work, all the while wanting to keep their artistic style instead of pandering to market preferences.

2.3 In Context: the art market and artists within the United Kingdom

Prior to exploring the dynamics between artists, the changed art market, and crowdfunding/social media platforms, it is helpful to outline the state of the current art market in the UK. Through the rapid growth and evolution of crowdfunding and social media platforms, social media has become the hottest way to develop an art career (Tomczak and Brem, 2013). Despite the fact that online sales are on the rise, galleries remain the primary access points through which consumers purchase art (ArtTactic, 2016).

These findings were based on interviews with representatives from 246 contemporary galleries in the UK, which were conducted online, by telephone, or face-to-face. Two groups were selected to participate in these interviews, namely (1) Own Art gallery members (i.e. an interest-free loan system set up by the Arts Council that is designed to make it affordable for everyone to buy original, high quality contemporary art and crafts by letting customers spread the cost of their purchase over 10 months) and (2) ArtTactic members who are not part of the OwnArt system. Helpfully, for our purposes here, the final written report articulated the challenges the gallery sector has been facing over the past few years in the UK, which included identifying and attracting buyers:

> The pattern of how people view art and buy art is changing as a new generation of buyers matures. [In terms of] how to use social networking as a way of engaging new audiences and buyers, artists are increasingly using their own websites and social media, such as Instagram, to sell their work directly. This is, increasingly, becoming a challenge for galleries and their relationships with their artists (ArtTactic, 2016, p8).

2.4 Shifting Sands: galleries, the internet, and social media

Prior to exploring social media in the context of the art market ecosystem, it is necessary to first look at social media in isolation. There is a strong sense in which social media has not only changed our everyday activities but has also broadened the media research field. According to Hinton and Hjorth (2013)

> Social media impacts the way in which we think, experience and practice "online media"… it has become an integral part of everyday life… Social media further amplifies the changes in the media landscape and as it does, it provides new avenues for dissemination and engagement (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p2).

Consistent with this view, Van Dijck and Poell (2013) claimed

> many of the habits that have recently become permeated by social media platforms used to be informal and ephemeral manifestations of social life. Talking to friends, showing holiday pictures…. A major change is that, through social media, these causal speech acts have turned into formalized inscriptions, which, once embedded in the larger economy of wider publics, take on a different value (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p7).

Focusing on how social media influences 'sociality', Fuchs (2017) suggested that

> Social media enables the convergence of the three modes of sociality (cognition, communication, cooperation) in an integrated sociality. This means, for example, that on Facebook an individual creates a multimedia content like video on the cognitive level, publishes it so that others can comment (the communicative level), and allows others to manipulate and remix the content, so that new content with multiple authorship can emerge… On social media such as Facebook we act in various roles, but all these roles become mapped onto single profiles that are observed by different people who are associated with our different social roles. This means that social media are social spaces in which social roles tend to converge and become integrated in a single profile (Fuchs, 2017, p60-61).

Viewing social media from a network perspective, Meikle (2016) suggested

> Social media describes a specific set of internet-based, networked communication platforms. These use a business model of a database built by its own users. And they enable the convergence of public and personal communication. This definition

includes Facebook and Twitter, Reddit and Tumblr, Pinterest and Instagram, Blogger and YouTube, among others (Meikle, 2016, px).

Meikle further suggested that the most important characteristic of social media is sharing:

> Social media tools from Twitter to Tumblr highlight possibilities of sharing, and, with it, possibilities of connections. Instead of simply watching, listening, or reading, we are urged to share ideas and images, information and entertainment, stories and songs with self-selected networks of friends, contacts, and our own personal audiences (Meikle, 2016, p24).

The characteristic sharing and convergence features of social networks like YouTube and Facebook have been described as enabling 'participatory culture'. In contrast to older notions of 'passive media spectatorship', Jenkins (2006) defined 'participatory culture' as seeing users 'as participants who interact with each other' (Jenkins, 2006, p4). Years later, after social media had been fully embraced, accessible, and rather ubiquitous in many people's lives, Jenkins claimed

> I do not think of platforms like Facebook or YouTube as participatory cultures. Rather, they are tools participatory communities sometimes use as a means of maintaining social contact or sharing their cultural productions with each other… Participation, on the other hand, refers to properties of the culture, where groups collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experience (Jenkins et al., 2016, p12).

Parting ways, Fuchs (2017) suggested 'Jenkins's definition and use of the term "participatory culture" neglects aspects of participatory democracy; it disregards questions about the ownership of platforms/companies, collective decision-making, profit, class and the distribution of benefits' (Fuchs, 2017, p81).

Recapping, the perspectives outlined above show a variety of views on social media. Hinton and Hjorth (2013) analysed how social media influences daily life; Van Dijck and Poell (2013) discussed how social media has created new opportunities and forms of engagement; Meikle (2016) assumed a 'network perspective' on social media; Jenkins (2016) regarded social media as a form of 'participatory culture'; and Fuchs emphasised the

need to view social media through the lens of participatory democracy, ownership, and the distribution of benefits.

Bearing this in mind, I will now return to exploring the relationship between the art market ecosystem and social media. ArtTactic's report (2016) focused on the influence social media has on the art market, specifically how audience members view and buy art and whether social media is changing the relationship between galleries and art patrons. The report suggested a shift in the relationship dynamic, where galleries are rethinking – even redeveloping – their relationships with their audience base through social media networking. In more detail, as of 2015, '57% of total reported sales were generated through the physical gallery space. Physical gallery sales are considerably more important for the Own Art sample (76% of sales) against 34% of sales in the Art Tactic sample' (ArtTactic, 2016, p20).

The report also provided the statistics for online sales:

> Online sales (both direct and indirect) are becoming increasingly important with 21% (average) of all sales generated online. For younger galleries (less than 5 years), 22% of sales are conducted directly online or indirectly via digital communication. For 10% of the galleries surveyed, as much as 50% of their total sales are now generated either directly or indirectly online (ArtTactic, 2016, p19).

Looking more deeply into the survey findings, there are at least two important trends that are on the rise in the UK art market, that is: (1) physical sales still constitute the majority of the art sales in UK galleries, and (2) online sales are becoming increasingly important in the market, especially in younger galleries.

The report offers the following conclusions that are illustrative of where the UK art market is heading.

> The fact that close to 30% of gallery sales are now conducted online, either directly or indirectly, is a testimony that smaller galleries are increasingly using technology as a tool in their marketing and sales strategies. However, technology has also allowed the artist to increasingly become a free agent, establishing their own private channels to the market and their audience through their own websites and social media. In this new world, it is paramount that galleries re-think their role and their relationships with their artists and the market (ArtTactic, 2016, p27).

While the 2015/16 report by Creative United and ArtTactic provided a top-down analysis of the UK's contemporary galleries, research by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2004) explored the UK art market from the bottom-up. It focused on production, supply, and demand. It should be emphasised that this research pre-dated the emergence of social media and so gives us a good benchmark. Turning to their findings, with respect to demand – based upon an analysis of legitimised sales in England – the market value at the time (2004) was £354.5 million. Complementing this report's findings with 1,759 in-depth interviews (conducted out of a representative sample of 6,141 adults living in England), the market value was placed at £870 million, representing the total annual purchases of all contemporary art. This constituted a difference of £515.5 million – between the £354.5 million mentioned above and the £870 million mentioned here (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004).

Importantly, the Morris Hargreaves McIntyre report used the Art Eco-System Model (Figure 1, below) to explain how the art market functioned, and the role of the artist within it circa 2004. Emerging artists typically began their careers through freelance curators and exhibitions. Through these types of exposure, artists attempted to attract the attention of critics, dealers, and private collectors. When artists became accepted by dealers, they would, in turn, help to build the artists' reputations by selling their work, or they encouraged artists to obtain endorsements from galleries (which were either publicly funded or regional and independent). Work that was purchased by public collectors would be exhibited in prominent public galleries. This process was described as 'legitimisation', nodding to its added value and conferred status to collectors which produced collateral benefits for the dealer and the artist alike.

The Art Eco-System Model

①	Artists attract recognition of peers
②	Exhibition curated by artists or freelance curator
②a	Representation in a small publicly funded gallery
③	Activity attracts critical attention
④	Attracts attention of dealer
⑤	Attracts private collectors
⑥	Dealers build artists' reputation through sales including international art fairs
⑦	Dealer builds critical endorsement through exhibitions/sales in small publicly funded/regional independent galleries
⑧	Purchase or exhibition in major public gallery
⑨	Legitimisation adds value and status to collector and profit to dealer and artist
⑩	Collector lends to public gallery
⑪	Collectors' discernment is endorsed - invited onto Boards of Galleries
⑫	Collectors bequest collection to galleries

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Figure 1: The Art Eco-System Model, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (pg. 6)

In keeping with this theme, the 2015 Creative United report suggested a change in the need for legitimisation. Instead of working with commercial dealerships, buyers preferred to consume work directly from artists or through other channels, such as markets, shops, or fairs. This was demonstrated in their report by the fact that the non-legitimised art market is now more than two-times as large as the legitimised market. True, these are not the latest statistics. Nevertheless, they provide ample insight into the size of the UK's contemporary art market. The key takeaway for professionals in the art market – such as dealers and artists – is that they can be confident in developing their careers outside of legitimised channels.

To punctuate the point, it is worth returning to Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's report to show how artists tended to approach the art market in 2004, just before the emergence and

proliferation of social media platforms. The following is an excerpt from their report that is

quoted at length.

> Around a third of artists have resisted selling work, and forty-five percent of artists do not promote their own work. Some artists are opposed to the notion of the private ownership of art and orientate themselves entirely towards the public sector; forty-three percent stated that a significant amount of their work is designed for the public sector. Artists pursuing the subscription route are concerned that making their own sales to domestic purchasers could damage their career, isolate them from dealers, and may cause them to miss other important opportunities. This fear can cause paralysis, while artists wait to attract a dealer and, it is suspected, must contribute to the high number of artists who drop-out of the sector (p. 9).

When it comes to the issue of supply, even though social media platforms had not

yet launched in 2004, the report's findings are useful in highlighting the importance of the

coupling between the internet and social media in propelling present-day art careers

> The internet was heralded as the new channel through which to liberate sales. It has not yet been able to deliver on this promise. Where it is most efficient is in raising awareness of supply channels and artists and at selling well-branded editions (p. 13).

> Each of the reports presented above indicated that galleries and artists were adjusting

to the emergence and potency of online sales. As an interesting point of comparison, artists

now have to think about other ways to survive in this changed economic and business

environment. Jones (2014) pointed out,

> During the UK's economic downturn and subsequent recession, arts funding suffered substantial government cuts… The 2012-2015 funding cuts of £1.36 million to sixteen small-scale and artist-led organisations have severely damaged an important layer in the infrastructure for artists' practices, impacting on the livelihood of artists and future vitality and sustainability of the visual artists' ecology[11].

Expanding upon this idea, Jones shared an example of the decline in the appraised value of

artwork. In 2013, one piece depreciated by £2 million (from its 2012 value), and it was £7.5

million less than its 2007 appraised value (i.e. the year preceding the recession).

At the same time as galleries remained in control of the art market and artists were

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[11] http://www.padwickjonesarts.co.uk/rethinking-artists-the-role-of-artists-in-the-21st-century/

challenged by cuts in government funding and the appraised value of their work, this climate

pushed artists to take different approaches to developing their art careers.

2.5 The 'middle man', pre-social media

The Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Art Eco-System model depicted artists as passive,

suggesting they did not possess the power to decide where their art could be exhibited or

accepted. Artists were crucially reliant on capturing attention from critics, dealers,

collectors, and galleries to establish themselves. These intermediaries held the most power

in the art market.

Following the emergence of the internet and social media, the power structure in the

Art Eco-System gradually began to shift, insofar as the relationships between artists,

galleries, and the art market became more complex and nuanced.

In exploring the relationship between social media and cultural institutions, such as

galleries and museums, Hinton and Hjorth (2013) observed that

> cultural institutions… are responding to the challenges of evidence-based policy and
> social media by embracing the concepts of Web 2.0 in order to engage with their
> visitors… The role of the museum or gallery has been inverted, and context has
> increasingly been eradicated from museum and gallery spaces so that people are free
> to engage with the artworks without cultural interference (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013,
> p77-83).

Indeed, the emergence of social media brought changes to the balance of power

between artists and traditional cultural institutions. It also changed the business models of

traditional organisations. According to Hinton and Hjorth (2013), 'Art institutions, such as

museums and public galleries, have embraced social media, seeing it as a way to reach out

to the community and involve them in order to both improve access and improve

understanding' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p84). They went on to emphasise 'YouTube,

MySpace, and the Internet in general [are] no substitute for a gallery. But [they] can offer a

good resource for people wanting to research an artist … The gallery space is transformative, powerful and singular' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p85).

This is particularly apparent in the role of middle men or intermediaries. According to Prinz et al. (2014), 'the "middle man" is the bridge between artists and the art market… Artists who intend to sell their work attempt to do so by signing art galleries as the middle man. Galleries are the intermediaries between artists and both art investors and art collectors' (Prinz et al., 2014, p155). Prinz and colleagues further observed that in the traditional art eco-system

> galleries choose and promote particular artists who represent the 'supplier side'… The corresponding bargaining power of the individual artists only rises with a growing reputation and success in the art market, but initially it is very low. In contrast, the bargaining power of the 'buyer side' (e.g., private collectors) has recently tended to grow (Prinz et al., 2014, p158).

This description of the traditional art market also contained the seeds for inspiring artists to empower themselves. The emergence of social media had a catalysing effect, not only on the role of the artist but also in de-centralising power from galleries and fundamentally changing the role of intermediaries. Indeed, crowdfunding has become the new intermediary. Moritz and Block (2016) shared this perspective, stating,

> the involvement of a crowdfunding platform as an intermediary in crowdfunding transactions offers advantages for both capital seekers and providers. In addition to providing a standardized process, platforms act as an information, communication and execution portal. Accordingly, platforms can reduce information asymmetries and thus the risks involved for the participating parties (Moritz and Block, 2016, p40).

Crowdfunding is thus a pathway to rearranging the power structure in the art market. It not only assists artists in becoming closer to their buyers in the art market, crowdfunding plays a substantial role in the subsidy side and money side of art (Parker and Van Alstyne, 2005). For instance, artists can now achieve the same profits while charging customers less money than in the past, because they do not require the middle man (Gauntlett, 2011).

Expanding upon this observation, Horejs (2010) claimed,

> An interested buyer no longer needs to go through a traditional middle man, but can buy directly from the source. It is an exciting time to be an artist with the prospect of being able to connect directly to collectors and, frankly, it's a bit of a terrifying time to own a gallery and face the prospect of ever-increasing expenses juxtaposed against the threat of your traditional buyers circumventing you to buy directly from the artists[12].

That being said, artists now need to take care of ancillary matters that had previously been absorbed by galleries. Instead of being a pure artist, they have become a kind of cultural entrepreneur. According to Morris (2013),

> … emerging artists undertake cultural production primarily for exposure's sake and for the purposes of networking. Their artwork functions to increase their visibility. Importantly, the idea that artists are also entrepreneurs is not an attempt to undermine any sort of authenticity typically associated with the artistic process, but rather to acknowledge that the artistic process often involves entrepreneurial responsibilities and acumen. While art and commerce are frequently presented in opposition to one another, artists have long had to navigate the line between the two (Morris, 2013, p283).

On the one hand, artists seem to have good opportunities to retain their profits, free of the middle man (galleries). On the other hand, as Morris (2013) astutely observed, more challenges are created for artists because they have to deal with the things that middle men used to do for them. Morris (2013) further observed:

> It is hard to deny that social media have become primary tools for artists (amateurs and professionals alike) to gain exposure and connect with users. Social networks, like Facebook or MySpace and other technologies associated with Web 2.0, seem to mash up so many previous forms of publicity – concert posters, videos, interviews, demos, radios, etc. (Morris, 2013, p277).

To provide readers with a case-in-point, Morris referred to artists in the music industry. In more detail, musicians began to use alternative ways of distributing music and of connecting with their fans, such as iTunes or online fan clubs. Over time, this has shortened the distance between artists and their followers, and has also encouraged artists to re-evaluate their relationships with their agents.

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[12] http://www.finearttips.com/2010/06/visual-artist's-challenge-ii-balancing-self-promotion- gallery-representation/

By way of a summary, De Veiga (2015) characterised the development of the new art market as follows,

> the new media artist [is] the reconciler between technology and creativity, thus embodying a network of connections that puts him at the heart of a relational (eco)system, which also feeds the industry, technological multinationals, media and telecommunications giants, right at the fulcrum of progress and innovation, emphasizing the crucial role that art is gaining in research and development in scientific areas, but also in its capacity for social intervention and change of paradigms (Da Veiga, 2015, p4).

2.6 In their own words: artists' reflections on their work and lives

Many artists experience a tension between pursuing art for its own sake and monetising it. Philosophical questions abound concerning the purity of making art as a commodity. Artists are often perceived as unmotivated by commercial enterprises and satisfied with lower-income jobs to sustain themselves (Steiner and Schneider, 2012). Little by little, however, this view is starting to be overturned. For example, Morris (2013) claimed that 'while new technologies are celebrated for making cultural production more accessible, there is also more pressure on artists, as cultural entrepreneurs, to produce and distribute their own work'. (Morris, 2013, p274). According to Corner (2015) – who co-created Content University – 'contrary to the stereotype of "starving artists" who've given up hope of life's comforts, a burgeoning category of creative entrepreneurs are building wealth, creating jobs, and becoming a major force in national and global economies'[13].

The relationship between artists and the art ecosystem is such that, when the power structure and the economy of artwork changed, artists gained new opportunities to reconsider, even redefine themselves and their art careers. Said another way, this changed environment has implications for self-identity.

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[13] http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2015/04/25/can-artists-be-entrepreneurs- absolutely/#4bae9cce2379

Turning to the literature to unpack this idea,

Self-identity is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biology. Self-identity has continuity - that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will - but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography (Giddens, 1991, p53).

The suggestion here is that one's self-identity has to do with how the individual sees him or herself, and it continually evolves based on personal experiences and circumstances (both internal and external). It stands to reason that an artist's work reflects their thoughts and evolving self-identity, which according to Giddens and Gauntlett, cannot be totally changed at will. Hence, even though an artist may be willing to become more business-minded to embrace the emerging art ecosystem, it will not happen overnight. And it will not happen at all if there is a conflict with one's self-identity (Giddens, 1991; Gauntlett, 2008).

In more detail, Gauntlett (2008) observed a stable self-identity is based on an account of a person's life, actions and influences which makes sense to themselves, and which can be explained to other people without difficulty. It "explains" the past, and is oriented towards an anticipated future' (Gauntlett, 2008, p108). On this line of analysis, artists' self-identity serves as the bridge between their past and imagined future. Aligned with this, my project started with an analysis of the past and present-day art market to emphasise the impact Kickstarter projects have within the changed market. Part and parcel to this is the inclusion of in-depth interviews regarding artists' self-identities, so as to discover their ideas about their past and how those ideas will inform their future work.

2.7 On Social Media: artists and their audiences

Intimately linked with self-identity is the changed relationship between artists and their audiences. According to McQuail (1997), new media (pre-2007) already contained four

factors that influenced an artists' relationship with his or her audience, namely: (1) the availability of satellite and cable broadcasting, (2) the development of new recording and storage technology, (3) global users, and (4) innovations in computer-based technology. Hence, even before the emergence of social media/crowdfunding, technology played a significant role in changing the dynamic relationship between artists and their audience members.

In discussing the relationship between artists and their audience, Hinton and Hjorth (2013) observed,

> Some artists… have engaged with social media, working it into their artistic practice. However, as artists engage with social media and the internet, they also raise questions about the nature of the artist and his or her relationship with their audience… Other artists and art collectives… prefer not to see themselves as social media or internet artists at all, but are instead artists who use the internet. For other artists still… social media and the internet open up spaces for critical analysis that engages with audiences and, again, complicates the role of the artist and his or her audience (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p99).

For McQuail (1997), 'the most immediate driving force, as always, is technology… [Now,] the typical audience role can cease to be that of a passive listener, consumer, receiver, or target. Instead, it will encompass any of the following: seeker; consultant; browser; respondent; interlocutor; or conversationalist' (McQuail, 1997, p129). This (expanded) audience consisted of users and buyers of technology, as well as receivers of messages. Alongside this trend, McQuail analysed the power structure in the media eco-system prior to social media. He concluded that there had been a shift of power to media consumers – putting the receiver more in charge and reducing the manipulative capacity of communication production and distribution organisations. However, he was quick to point out that this also meant that there was no longer any mechanism for exercising this newfound power on behalf of the collective. The audience had been transformed into a desperate set of consumers with no expressed common interest or institutionalised presence,

making it more difficult to influence individual users (McQuail, 1997, p134).

On the policy side, this meant that 'for politicians, advertisers, pressure groups, campaigners… who want to influence behavior and opinion, the emerging media situation does represent a potential problem. Much greater ingenuity is now required to catch attention and engage an audience' (McQuail, 1997, p136).

The literature on audiences also contains well-developed findings on audience reception, audience attitudes, and media impact (Ferreira, 2014; Hazelwood et al., 2009; Livingstone, 1998b). Studies since 2007 have been complemented by research into audience interactivity with social media content, highlighting the changed role from passive to active recipients of information. For example, Jenkins (2006) spoke to the fact that

> for years, fan groups, seeking to rally support for endangered series, have argued that networks should be focused more on the quality of audience engagement with the series and less on the quantity of viewers… In the past, media producers spoke of 'impressions'. Now, they are exploring the concept of audience 'expression', trying to understand how and why audiences react to the content (Jenkins, 2006, p63).

The question of how to find one's actual audience and how to navigate an imagined audience have become significant issues in the new social media environment. Baym (2015) stressed there is always a gap between imagined and actual audiences. The following is her rationale:

> Because information is stored and replicable, it can travel to audiences for whom it was never intended. Because it is often searchable, it can be accessed by people with no understanding of the context in which it was created… Much of their activities may be benign, but we simply cannot know whom the information we share online may eventually reach (Baym, 2015, p122).

That is to say, when using social media to develop careers and realise goals, communication is key. To present ideas in a way that others will respond to, many savvy social media users project an imagined audience to help guide their interactions. With respect to how effective this can be, Litt (2012) explained that 'if people have the right skills and the environment affords it, they can more accurately reach the ideal imagined audience,

or they can at least manipulate their "imagined audience" to appropriately fit the specified context' (Litt, 2012, p342).

Rich (2014) viewed crowdfunding as a prime example of how to locate one's audience (both real and imagined). His conceptual starting point was to view crowdfunding as a circle comprised of four categories of project funders, i.e. (1) audience and supporters; (2) the inner circle (family members, close friends, and acquaintances); (3) social network (people known from cyberspace); and (4) a targeted audience within the general public – i.e. strangers who will care about the campaign (Rich, 2014, p79-81). Best practice, Rich went on to explain, is to present information in such a way that it will appeal to funders from every category when launching a campaign. Thus, knowing *how* to engage these groups – what they will care about – is the cornerstone of building successful relationships with members within them.

2.8 Innovation: artists, the art market, and social media

In the art world, what it means to be *creative* and *artistic* is an enduring topic of conversation – one that has also held tenure in academic theory. Generally speaking, 'creativity' is understood in two senses. The traditional approach is person-centred, focused on the prominent characteristics that creative people have, their background, and how they develop their work (Amabile, 1996; Barron, 2013; Mackinnon, 1962). The contemporary approach offers an expansion upon creativity's influence and function, giving credence to the view that creativity is not a trait that is possessed exclusively by certain *creative people* but rather it is a natural trait among humans.

In that same vein, Amabile (1996) described a componential model of creativity that integrates the following three elements: expertise, creative thinking, and task motivation. Each of these components, Amabile further explained, is prominent in any given field of

inquiry (Amabile, 1996, p6) Digging deeper, Amabile outlined components of expertise that

included 'memory for factual knowledge, technical proficiency, and special talent in the

target work domain' (Amabile, 1996, p4). In terms of how creative thinking is best applied

to our lives and work, Amabile suggested that it is a special thinking tool:

> Creative thinking skills depend, to some extent, on personality characteristics related
> to independence, self-discipline, orientation toward risk-taking, tolerance for
> ambiguity, perseverance in the face of frustration, and a relative unconcern for social
> approval (p. 4).

By that same token, if one lacks creative thinking skills, then that 'individual cannot produce

creative work (Amabile, 1996, p4). These 'skills include a cognitive style that is favorable to

taking new perspectives on [existing] problems, an application of new cognitive pathways,

and a working style conducive to persistent, energetic pursuit of one's work' (Amabile,

1996, p4). Amabile's componential model emphasised that expert and creative thinking

dictate what a creative individual's abilities are in their respective domain. Motivation

goes hand-in-hand with creativity on this line of argument, enabling individuals to

realise their desire for power, experience greater challenges, and compete with others to

achieve their goals.

This research project not only draws on Amabile's model to explore the relationships

between artists' creative thinking and how it bears on their artwork, but also how creative

thinking can support artists' career motivations. According to Amabile, we are each

influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivation is triggered by an

individual's interests, curiosity, or desires, while extrinsic motivation is driven by outside

stimulus, such as rewards, competitions, reputation, or regulations (an example of which is a

deadline). Though it is possible for individuals to create free of any form of motivation,

Amabile (1996) referred to a number of studies that have shown 'a primarily intrinsic

motivation will be more conducive to creativity than a primarily extrinsic motivation'

(Amabile, 1996, p7). Given these considerations, a person's creativity is a matter of

expertise, creative thinking, and task motivation.

Harter (1978) and Dweck (1986) agreed, claiming

without intrinsic motivation, an individual will either not perform the activity at all, or will do it in a way that simply satisfies the extrinsic goals… A high degree of intrinsic motivation can make up for a deficiency of domain-relevant skills or creativity-relevant skills… Highly intrinsically motivated individuals are likely to draw skills from other domains or apply great effort to acquiring necessary skills in the target domain (Dweck, 1986; Harter, 1978; Amabile, 1996, p7).

Following the emergence of social media, there is a growing body of literature that has tied individual creativity and innovation to the influence of social media platforms. In order to explore the relationships between creativity and social media, it is helpful to include a working definition of its cousin concept 'intercreativity'. Meikle (2016) drew our attention to the definition put forth by the internet's creator, Tim Berners-Lee. For Berners-Lee, 'we should be able not only to follow links, but to create them between all sorts of media… Intercreativity is the process of making things or solving problems together' (Berners-Lee, 1999, p182-183 ; Meikle, 2016, p125).

After drawing on Berners-Lee's operational definition, Meikle (2016) continued to unpack this concept by identifying four dimensions of intercreativity:

'textual intercreativity' - through which existing media images and narratives are reimagined and reworked into entirely new texts or into hybrid subversions of their component images; 'tactical intercreativity' - as activists develop online variations of established protest gestures and campaign tactics; 'strategies intercreativity' - which builds upon the traditions and conventions of alternative media; and 'network creativity' - whose participants work to build new media network models, including those which link open sources of software to experimental online publishing practices (Meikle, 2016, p125).

This understanding of 'intercreativity' contains a holistic retelling of how the networks within social media function and serve as accelerators for interaction and knowledge exchange. This effectively creates tight linkages among users and cultivates a foundation for real-time collaboration, bringing creativity and global thinking to our very

fingertips. In fact, social media is now considered to be one of the most influential forms of innovation media in the twenty-first century.

Gauntlett (2015) has a different take on social media and creativity than those detailed above. Specifically, he proposed that 'the digital world does not cause more [creative] activity to happen, but it does enable people to make and —in particular— connect, in efficient and diverse ways which were not previously possible' (Gauntlett, 2015, p115). This is based on his observation that people mainly use social media to serve their interests. In Gauntlett's words, '[p]eople use social media services to communicate something for themselves, or about themselves, an urge which has been part of human creativity practices for thousands of years' (Gauntlett, 2015, p124).

Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2014) suggested that 'social media adoption is highly related to innovation uniqueness, which increases the speed of technology adoption. Innovation attributes of social media reflect the idea that the greater the innovation, the more room there is for the adoption of the technology' (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman, 2015, p192).

To analyse the relationships between innovation and social media, Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) applied Rogers' five characteristics of innovation, namely: relative advantage, compatibility, trial-ability, observability, and complexity. Using a mixed methods approach, their findings demonstrated that three of the five characteristics are relevant to social media users' motivations, that is: relative advantage, compatibility, and trial-ability (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman, 2015, p194).

Focusing on the role that social media plays for artists, Hinton and Hjorth (2013) shared the following observation:

> One of the ways that artists have responded to social media is to make art from social media itself. Artists use social media in different ways: having their work influenced by input from social media like Twitter; producing visual works based on social networks and online interactions; and performing within social media as a platform for delivering art and reflecting on the medium in which it is delivered (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p86).

In sum, each of these theorists suggested the characteristics of creativity are ascribed to personality traits, while the characteristics of innovation bear more on the relationships between adopters/users and the medium they use.

2.9 Networks: the new rules of engagement

According to Gauntlett (2018), 'at the heart of social media is the idea that online sites and services become more powerful the more that they embrace this network of potential collaborations' (Gauntlett, 2018, p15). For Hinton and Hjorth (2013), social media networks can be defined 'in many ways. SNSs are the definitive social media technology. They are the interface through which people engage with social media, and increasingly they are the way that people engage with the internet' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p53). To trace how networks have developed since the emergence of social media, Meikle (2016) presented four lenses: connections, communication, communities, and commerce. In more detail,

> [t]he development of the internet from the APPANET towards what we now call social media, is, in part, a story of connections – it's a story of new ways of connecting ideas and information, and a story of new ways of connecting computers into a network. It's also, in part, a story of communication, and a story of the ways that people communicate through networked digital media to form communities of many different kinds. And it is also, in part, a story of commerce, in which the pre-web internet, whose developments and users were largely one and the same, gives way to a commercial media space in which developers transform their users into their product (Meikle, 2016, p8).

Williams and Chinn (2010) applied Gronroos' (2004) relationship-marketing model to sports memorabilia in order to show that consumers have become more knowledgeable than ever before, and that this has put them in the position of co-operators in the marketing process (Williams and Chinn, 2010, p435). Similarly, new models have emerged to characterise and understand social media monitoring behavior, including freemium models

that provide basic devices for free with the option to buy advanced features at a premium. In tandem, affiliate models are driving consumers to associate websites with internet advertising models.

To graphically depict this, particularly with respect to the managerial aspects of social media, Kietzmann et al. (2011) developed a honeycomb framework (Figure 2, below). Their objective in creating this framework was to help researchers to understand how the various functionalities of social media could be configured under the umbrella categories of presence, identity, groups, relationships, reputation, sharing, and conversations (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Figure 2: Social Media Lenses (Source: Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M., 2009)

Marking the transition from the old art market into the new, the most obvious change is greater access to customers. As detailed above, for artists who lacked access to potential

consumers, the only effective way to establish their careers was to maintain good relationships with galleries. Traditional galleries also had the unilateral advantage of deciding the monetary value of an artists' work, and, with it, their future opportunities to exhibit and build their reputation.

According to Hinton and Hjorth (2013) 'Web 2.0 doesn't refer to any changes in the internet's architecture. Rather, it refers to the types of software employed and changes at the level of user practices' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p16).

For Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 was synonymous with user-generated content (UGC). Expanding on this idea, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) outlined three requirements of UGC – first, publishing either on a publicly accessible website or a social network; second, showing a certain amount of creative effort; third, being created outside of professional routines and practices (2007). These features of UGC have contributed to the emergence of YouTube, eBay, Facebook, Flickr, Craigslist, Wikipedia, Pinterest, and Instagram. The common denominator among them is that people can use these platforms to share their experiences (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Meikle (2016) viewed Web 2.0 as 'enabling online collaboration on an enormous scale and offering a platform for anyone who wants to contribute their resources to a project that will be more than the sum of its parts' (Meikle, 2016, p15).

Speaking metaphorically, Gauntlett (2011) suggested that these platforms are public gardens, wherein people cooperate in a shared space. Extending his description, Gauntlett characterised the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 as if people had first occupied their private gardens alone and then started to enjoy working together in a public garden (see Figure 3, below).
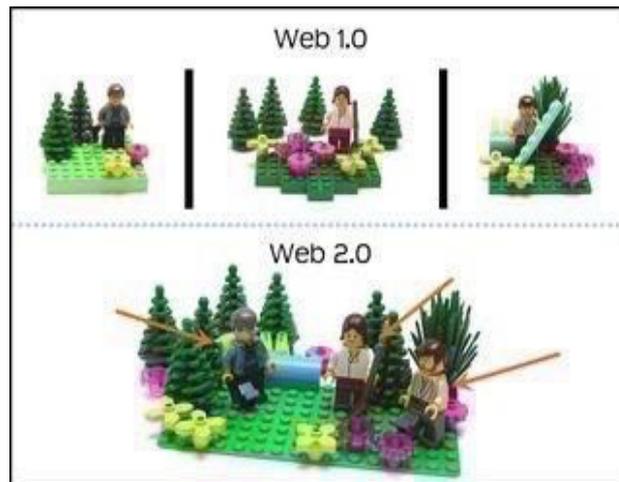
Figure 3: The Concept of Web 2.0 (Gauntlett, 2011)

In these special gardens, people share experiences through creativity, connectivity, collaboration, convergence, and community. Here, social media is considered to be a communal activity, which involves 'harnessing the collective abilities of the members of an online network to make an especially powerful resource or service' (Gauntlett, 2018, p15). In concrete terms, through digital platforms or future business platforms, people can find new ways to link up on global social issues. Indeed, Web 2.0 is an access point to connect to the 'global brain' (the internet); access online information resources by clicking links; and negotiate barriers like the digital divide (Crenshaw and Robison, 2006).

Consistent with this, Tapscott and Williams (2010) suggested participation 'has reached a tipping point where new forms of mass collaboration are changing how goods and services are invented, produced, marketed, and distributed on a global basis' (Tapscott and Williams, 2010, p20).

Gauntlett's later research (2018) enriched his original description of social media by focusing on the role that creativity plays in informing and motivating the user's interactions. In more detail, '[t]he commenting and community facilities enable others to engage with and

respond to the content, and help to build relationships, and possibly collaborations, between creators' (Gauntlett, 2018, p166).

With respect to the types of interactions that occur on these platforms, Rheingold (2000) pointed out that 'people in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk' (Rheingold, 2000, p66). Tan and Teo (2002) have further explained that this convergence has created a shift from e-commerce to m-commerce, which also highlights the power of the mobile internet in the Web 2.0 world.

Returning to the metaphor, the five characteristics (presented in Figure 2) can perhaps best be thought of as the nutrients for the Web 2.0 gardens that feed into the development of social media. To unpack this further, Karakas (2009) has described the gradual process by which the five elements of Web 2.0 have started to influence our lives, making it 'possible for professionals from all over the world to collaborate, interact, and participate in the process of innovation and value creation' (Karakas, 2009, p27). On that note, companies began adopting new business models to collect people's data outside of their areas, which they could use to stimulate breakthroughs in innovation (Nambisan and Sawhney, 2007).
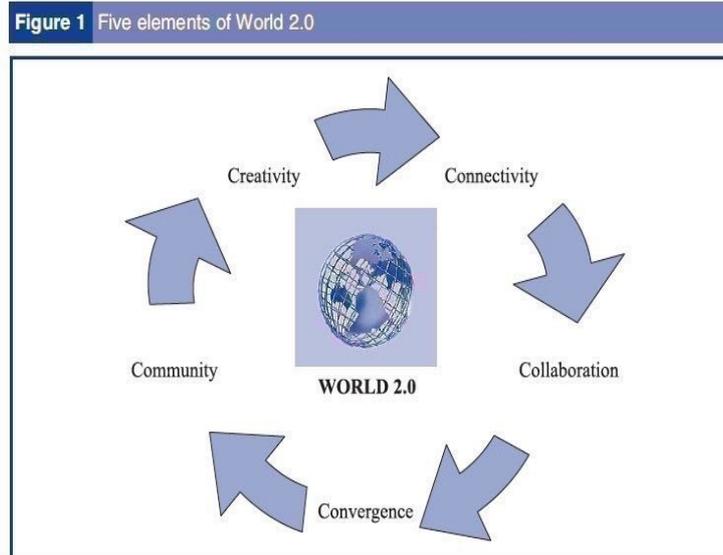
Figure 4: Five Shifts of Web 2.0 (Karakas, 2009)

As I see it, the social media environment is now more analogous to a big celebration in a park than a community garden. There are continuous and varied events happening in this park, and at all hours. In fact, it is such a large park that people require a map or guidebook to explore and find the right event to attend. Accordingly, it is very important for a visitor (in this case, the researcher) to find a good model to explore the social media environment for emerging artists.

On the relationship between artists and social media, Marwick and boyd (2011) emphasised the different types of interactions that occur between artists and their audiences. One of the more popular methods of communication is to set up websites to interact with fans and followers, whereby they can be updated in real-time and en masse for information and engagement purposes. In addition to being members of artists' communities, followers can use hashtags and '@ functions' to communicate with the artist they admire, without actually having to gain permission to subscribe to a particular account. All of this yields new opportunities for artists to show their art, instead of hiding themselves behind galleries. In

the words of Teresa Kogut (2013), an artist who owns and operates her own business, social

media is

> not only a great way to get your art in front of people but more importantly you will
> connect with people. Have you ever admired an actor, musician, singer or artist and
> wondered what they are really like behind all the glitz and glam? It is the same idea.
> People not only love your art but they want to get to know the person behind the art.
> Social media has changed the way people do business. It's personal. People want to
> support the companies and the people they connect with. Having said that, it is
> important that you be authentic, be transparent, be natural, be you! People want to
> know YOU, not who you think they want to know.[14]

Indeed, Kogut expressed appreciation for the positive role that social media has

played in her artistic life and the business opportunities it has brought her. By contrast, Lori

McNee (2010) emphasised the challenges for artists who want to use social media for their

careers:

> Social media is a two-edged sword which has also increased the sense of competition
> between artists. Now collectors can easily compare and contrast artists with only a
> click of a button. This, coupled with the ever-increasing expenses artists must
> absorb, leads me to believe that the idea of 'charging artists to display their work'
> will backfire on galleries.[15]

One obvious outcome of this changed dynamic is that more potential customers will

stop purchasing legitimised art through galleries or other small dealers, and will prefer to

select and consume art from their favorite website or artists' personal social media

platforms. From the buyers' point of view, it is advantageous to have a more direct

relationship with the artist.

Davey (2010) analysed the future of the artist's way of working and its challenges.

He compared the traditional model with the new social media business model and concluded

> It was my belief before the advent of the social media phenomenon that self-
> promotion was the primary job of the artist. Yes, there are cases of art dealers and
> promoters who have driven an artist's success, but they are few compared to the
> thousands of artists who are on their own when it comes to gaining recognition. The
> trick is to use the leverage when an artist brings in a loyal following. These things do

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[14] http://teresakogut.com/visual-artist-social-media/
[15] https://www.fineartips.com/2010/06/visual-artist-challenge-ii-balancing-self-promotion-gallery-representation/

not happen overnight just because you get a Facebook Fan Page going. But, if an artist is diligent about building a strong database of both traditional mail and email addresses it can be used to the benefit of both artists and galleries.[16]

From Davey's vantage point, even though artists are able to control the timing of their art sales through various platforms, it is critically important to develop relationships over time, keep track of followers, and work hand-in-hand with galleries.

2.10 The 'art' of changed business transactions

Although there is a strong argument to be made for the role that social media has played in expanding the art market and modes of financial transactions for artists, crowdfunding has also introduced new challenges. As Kortelainen and Katvala (2012) remind us, 'everything is plentiful - except attention' (Kortelainen and Katvala, 2012, p663). This is also the reason why some artists are hesitant to depend on crowdfunding and social media platforms alone to develop their art career. Appreciating this need, researchers have increasingly focused on the new funding methods that arose during the last ten years (Belleflamme et al., 2013; Hui et al., 2012; Lehner, 2013; Puschmann and Alt, 2016; Valančienė and Jegelevičiūtė, 2013).

2.10.1 Crowdfunding and Social Media: an origin story

Contrary to popular belief, crowdfunding is not a new business funding model. As early as the 1700s, microfinancing was used in Ireland to extend credit to the country's poor (Hollis and Sweetman, 2001; Hobbs et al., 2016). In the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were projects that demonstrated people understood how to co-operate with

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[16] https://www.finearttips.com/2010/06/visual-artist-challenge-ii-balancing-self-promotion-gallery-representation/

one another to bring creative ideas to life and monetise them. For instance, in 1713, Alexander Pope planned to translate 15,693 lines of Ancient Greek poetry into English, and then print them in six volumes of *Quarto* on the finest paper with his initials engraved in copper. In order to bring this creative idea to life, Pope attracted 570 subscribers, each of whom donated two golden guineas to support his ideas before he undertook the project. In return, their names were listed in the early version of the book. Mozart used a similar approach to gain support for his music. He published an invitation to potential backers to fund his three composed piano concertos in a Viennese concert hall, and backers could obtain his manuscripts in return. In the end, Mozart could not reach the funding goals he set for all three concerts. The next year, he took action again and was successful, seeing 176 backers pledge support for his concertos. As a sign of gratitude, Mozart placed all of their names in the concertos' manuscripts.

In 1885, France gave the United States a statue of the Roman goddess of freedom for its centennial celebrations. However, the statue didn't have a pedestal to stand on in the New York harbor, so – in an effort to fundraise – Joseph Pulitzer started a project model of the Statue of Liberty using the tagline 'Enlightening the World'. For their donations, Pulitzer proposed to give backers the following reward: for one dollar, supporters would receive a six-inch statuette of Lady Liberty. Ultimately, there were over 120,000 people who pledged to fund the project, which fetched 102,006 USD.

As you can see, even three hundred years ago, people had already cooperated to bring creative ideas to life through fundraising activities. The major difference today is that the emergence of the internet and social media can connect investors and supporters in real-time through internet-based information.

2.10.2 Crowdfunding through Kickstarter campaigns: an artist is born

It is evident that the development of the internet and social media platforms not only broadened people's forms and styles of communication, but also created more opportunities to pursue creative outlets and collaborative undertakings. Upon comparing the traditional model with the internet model, Gauntlett (2015) stressed

> the distribution and funding possibilities of the internet are better than the traditional models. In this kind of case, the "traditional models" - decent state funding for civic services and amenities - could well be preferable (although the crowdfunded solutions offer a working alternative where otherwise there is none)… For individual people, though – or amateur groups, or an innovative duo, say – the Kickstarter model is a powerful new way of making things happen where otherwise they simply wouldn't happen (Gauntlett, 2015, p141).

According to Wirtz et al. (2010) fundamental environmental factors, such as the new competitive market structure, governmental and regulatory changes, and technological progress have forced the strategic renewal of established business models. Hence, the benefits of connecting, cooperating, and sharing could be viewed as one of the most important reasons for the boost in crowdfunding initiatives that have enabled the exchange of money on a global scale (Gerber et al., 2012; see also Danmayr, 2013, p18).

Crowdfunding provides new opportunities for creators to become independent of traditional funding and support mechanisms by harnessing support from a broader, even global, audience (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014; Gerber et al., 2012). No longer reliant on other funding organisations, artists and creators can now gain support from individuals and groups.

Crowdfunding platforms are generally quite popular among investors, intermediaries, and entrepreneurs. For our purposes here, 'investors' are a group of ordinary people who invest a small amount of money in promising projects; 'intermediaries' are the crowdfunding platforms that connect people to entrepreneurs and allow investors to make online contributions; and 'entrepreneurs' are those individuals who seek financial support

through crowdfunding platforms by providing goods or services (Valančienė and Jegelevičiūtė, 2013).

Today, crowdfunding can be seen as the most effective and independent way to create and do business in the digital era. Belleflamme and Lambert (2013) suggested that crowdfunding is also 'a form of donation or exchange for rewards for a specific purpose.' Further, crowdfunding is considered to be an evolution of the social mode that draws on personal relations to acquire resources (Belleflamme et al., 2013, p315). At the same time as crowdfunding connects investors and entrepreneurs, it is a method of collecting money from people to support potential ideas in real businesses through the internet.

From a financial standpoint, Lu et al. (2014) have suggested that crowdfunding activities also include fundraising-related social activities that occur on social networks, where users are willing to give feedback on projects. If users see the value of the projects, they may financially back starters and may even promote them to others through their own networks. This cycle becomes a complementary marketing source for the crowdfunding process (Lu et al., 2014). Bolstering this view, Lehner (2013) suggested that when a crowdfunding platform is connected to social networks, it releases more power. In other words, crowdfunding is enhanced and empowered through social media platforms.

In keeping with this theme, the Crowdfunding Centre (2014) identified two types of crowdfunding that occur online – reward-based crowdfunding and equity-based crowdfunding – each of which falls into one or more of the following funding models:

(1) <u>Money for goods (all or nothing (AoN) and keep it all (KiA):</u> Quite simply, *all or nothing* means that there is a certain period of time that a campaigner has to elicit a required amount of funding. If the project is successful in obtaining a pre-determined minimum amount of money, the money will be collected from supporters, such as through Kickstarter. *Keep it all*, as the expression suggests, implies that it does not matter whether the campaign is successful within a certain time-frame, the money will be collected and given to entrepreneurs in any case. Examples of this include the platforms FundAnything and GlobalGiving.

(2) <u>Money for business ventures:</u> Equity crowdfunding means that companies or entrepreneurs who are raising funds will give investors equity, such as through the Trillion Fund. Debt crowdfunding is how lenders are able to provide required debt financing based on the knowledge that the lender will receive a debt instrument that pays return interest, such as through Funding Circle. Investors can also receive interest on a property from an owner who is raising funds.

(3) <u>Continuous funding:</u> This is the opposite of a one-time donation. Essentially, creators are awarded post-creation, such as after they have published their works on Flattr or Patron.

(4) <u>Donation-based funding:</u> is given to creators to support their projects without any strings attached or expectations of benefit.

Related to this, Tomczak and Brem (2013) have identified three types of crowdfunding roles, namely: the matchmaker, the fundraiser, and the investor. The intermediary, of course, is the matchmaker who works between promoters and funders (Burkett, 2011, p68). To understand how this plays out, fundraisers, entrepreneurs, and others raise funds via crowdfunding platforms. These fundraisers use crowdfunding to 'get direct access to the market and to gather financial support from truly interested supporters' (Ordanini et al., 2011, p445). Within this landscape, investors are, themselves, defined as the crowd, insofar as they '… decide to financially support these projects, bearing a risk and expecting a certain payoff' (Ibid, 460).

According to Danmayr (2014), '… platforms can be seen as an enabler for innovations, offering a set of practices and systems. Supporting different phases of problem solving, platforms can be divided into three different types – exploration platforms, experimentation platforms, and execution platforms' (Danmayr, 2013, p26).

2.10.3 Under the lens: Kickstarter

Kickstarter is one of the most successful crowdfunding platforms. It was created by Perry Chen, Yancey Strickler, and Charles Adler and it was launched in the United States on

28 April, 2009. Over time, Kickstarter has become accessible from other locations, such as Canada (9 September, 2012), the United Kingdom (31 October, 2012), Australia and New Zealand (13 November, 2013), Demark, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden (15 September, 2014), and Spain (19 May, 2015). Kickstarter is, primarily, intended for creators who come to the crowdfunding platform to promote their projects by connecting their various social media platforms to their campaign. More than other crowdfunding platforms, Kickstarter has become quite influential in the art market.

Chen and Jones (2013) described Kickstarter as '… a website providing a centralized hub to help people crowd-source funding for their projects, especially creative projects'. Based on statistics from Kickstarter's website, as of 2016, 36% of the campaigns on the platform were successfully funded[17]. According to the global media company, Forbes 'Kickstarter has become synonymous with crowdfunding, as the most popular site for seeking funding for creative projects'[18].

Kickstarter, in its most basic form, is a platform creators can use to introduce their project(s) and request funding to complete them. To entice potential backers to support them, it is important for creators to use persuasive images, videos, and written content to encourage engagement and an understanding of the project's value. This process includes a description of various tiers of funding support as well as rewards for pledges. In an effort to augment this process, most creators will also use other social media platforms to cross-promote their campaign. Once the campaign ends, if it is successfully funded, Kickstarter will retain 5% of the funds raised as its commission for using the platform and the artists recoup the remaining 95%. This favourable commission rate is the main reason why a large

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[17] https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats?ref=footer [Accessed 18 July 2016].

[18] https://www.forbes.com/sites/katetaylor/2013/08/06/6-top-crowdfunding-websites-which-one-is-right-for-your-project/

number of creators prefer to obtain funding through a crowdfunding platform like Kickstarter. If artists depend on galleries or other organizations, it is likely they will only get half of their work's purchase price (for more on this, see Figure 5 below).
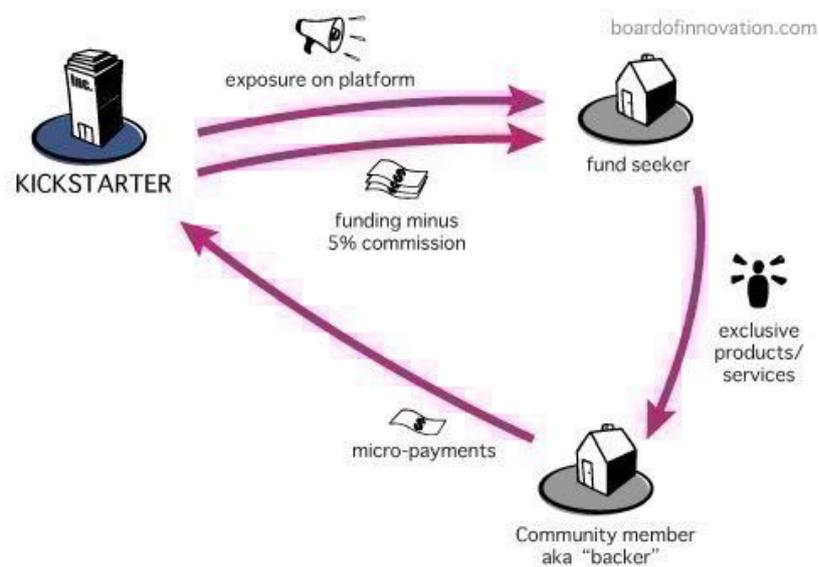
Figure 5: Kickstarter Revenue Model (source: boardofinnovation.com)

In 2012, over 2 million people had pledged a total of 319,786,629 USD on Kickstarter, resulting in 18,109 successful projects. Remarkably, 99% of countries worldwide took part in funding Kickstarter campaigns. In 2013, 3 million people pledged 480 million USD to Kickstarter projects. According to the math, an average of 1,315,520 USD was pledged daily. The 3 million people who backed projects came from 214 countries and territories, and from all seven continents (even Antarctica). In 2014, over 3.3 million people had pledged over half a billion dollars on Kickstarter, which is equivalent to 1,000 USD per minute.

According to statistics from the UK Fundraising website, those who organise their campaigns in conjunction with other social media platforms, such as Facebook (43%), Reddit (30%), Twitter (16%), YouTube (7%), and others (4%), are more likely to achieve their funding goals. In 2015, 36% of projects were successfully funded.

Compared to traditional funding models, the major difference in crowdfunding is the relationship with intermediaries. According to the statistics on the website crowdfunding.org, the scale of the crowdfunding market was estimated at 1.5 billion USD worldwide as of 2011. More recently, Daniel Broderick (2014) pointed out that the economic scale had risen to over 5.1 billion USD worldwide as of 2013. In 2015, there were 258,532 projects that had been launched on Kickstarter, of which 93,077 were successful. That same year, Kickstarter attracted 9,519,204 backers who pledged just under 2 billion dollars (1,972,370,450 USD) to Kickstarter projects.

Over time it has become clear that crowdfunding has the power to overturn the traditional power distribution in the art market by enabling artists and creators to become self-sufficient. That being said, according to a recent Kickstarter website poll, 63.51% of projects are unsuccessful (i.e. do not achieve their stated goal). This is due to Kickstarter's 'all or nothing' model[19].

Based upon Kickstarter's stats, it is evident that even though this crowdfunding platform creates an opportunity for artists to solicit funding for their projects so that they can become self-sufficient, there is no guarantee that this will happen. Given the fact that over 50% of campaign creators could not make their campaigns successful on Kickstarter, there is more research required to identify how artists can maintain successful campaigns on crowdfunding platforms. This research project does just that.

Beginning with a preliminary sketch by Mollick et al. (2013), it would seem that the size of the social network and the number of Facebook 'likes' on a page influences a Kickstarter campaign's success (Moisseyev, 2013; Giudici et al., 2013; Mollick, 2014). These researchers further suggested that it is vital to spread information to key individuals and groups (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014; Aral and Van Alstyne, 2011).

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[19] http://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats. Accessed 2012-09-17

Although research on crowdfunding remains limited, there is a body of work on how creators can successfully build networks on social media to support their career aspirations (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Perlstein, 2013; Wheat et al., 2013). This includes information about the difficulties of creating online communities, such as starting up the community, attracting members, motivating commitment, motivating contributions, and regulating community health and wellness (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014).

Several researchers have incorporated questions into their case study interviews to probe these issues more deeply. For example, Hui et al. (2014) carried out interviews with 105 crowdfunding project creators to explore the process of launching campaigns and the challenges of developing a network. From these interviews, the researchers concluded that crowdfunding involves more than simply raising money, it requires preparing materials, merchandising, testing designs, publicising the project, and working towards the project's goal.

These activities are not only time-consuming, they also require a broad variety of skills – many of which are not possessed by the typical entrepreneur, let alone artists and creators. One creator, for instance, had this to say when asked about developing a video to promote their work:

> It was enveloping in terms of taking up time and emotion and overall effort. Creating a video, obviously, is difficult. I felt like it was a good opportunity and a good experience, but it takes a lot of time developing a script, collecting all the videos, editing, etc. (Hui,Greenberg, et al., 2014, p65).

For some Kickstarter campaign creators, it was valuable to test promotional materials prior to their campaign's launch with a pilot audience. Reflecting on this experience, one campaign creator said

> I was nervous because it's one thing to be sitting in front of a computer, and it's quite another thing to show a video to an audience where you can actually hear their reactions... Are they going to find this funny? When you haven't done something like that before, it's a little intimidating (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p66).

When it comes to the stage of publicising a crowdfunding project, one of Hui's

interviewees suggested that the most difficult part is spreading news about the project and

managing relationships with potential backers.

> It's honestly, like, it's a full-time job. If you're going to launch a Kickstarter, you
> have to be prepared to devote 4-5 hours a day just to making sure that you are
> promoting it or following up on it, you know, or anything like that (Hui,Gerber, et
> al., 2014, p67).

One successful crowdfunding campaigner had this to say about the experience of

making connections and building relationships:

> I was emailing people individually asking for support... I would say, "hey person's
> name, I am doing this project. It's really cool," and give them like a description of it,
> and at the end of it, I would say, "I know that this project will be very successful on
> Kickstarter because of supporters like you" (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p68).

Those campaign creators who were unsuccessful shared what they had learned from

this process as well.

> I've reached out to dozens and dozens of blogs and newspapers and entertainment
> sites... And I've just gotten a couple of mentions, which really surprises me. It's been
> very difficult getting the word out there... I have good friends that I haven't been
> able to get to the site. It's very shocking. It kind of shows you who your real friends
> are (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p68).

The importance of cooperation was also noted in Hui's research, especially with

respect to the exchange of labor.

> Say you do layout or you do editing, there's sort of this relationship now that you get
> with project creators where you can sort of agree on a handshake deal to work on
> their project on the condition that it be funded first... So, though no money has
> exchanged hands, and no one's really contractually obliged to... you can still come to
> agreements that are mutually beneficial (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p68).

Given these considerations, even though crowdfunding makes it possible for creators

to have their projects funded outside of traditional funding streams and models, there are

still pragmatic challenges that they have to navigate.

In keeping with this theme, Hui et al. (2014) observed three major infrastructural challenges that emerged from their interviews, namely understanding network capability, activating network connections, and expanding network reach. The most significant challenge these researchers highlighted is building the campaign's audience.

Although it can be difficult to get even close ties to visit campaigns, the support of weaker ties can come as a pleasant surprise to Kickstarter creators. One creator Hui et al. (2014) interviewed shared '… there are people I went to high school with, people I haven't seen in 20 years... and I've gotten them onto the site, and they've become backers' (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p680).

Some creators believed that positivity is the key to the kind of successful communications that covert potential audience members into backers. Specifically, one of Hui et al.'s (2014) interviewees shared that her initial approach – focusing on *her* need for support – faltered. She had much more success changing her message to something more positive. '[I said] I know that this project will be very successful on Kickstarter because of supporters like you, and then I listed a lot of people that that person knew that had already supported' (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p678).

In addition to maintaining positivity in messaging, the scale of a campaign creator's audience base is critical to crowdfunding success (Mollick, 2014). Oftentimes, developing a network is relatively neglected in the process of building a campaign, meaning many creators are left to build their reputation and become popular in a short period of time. Other successful creators dedicated up to one year to expanding their network prior to launching their campaign. On this point, one successful starter shared,

> when I was getting started, I didn't have the name recognition. All I had were contacts in the community, and so I had to spend a lot of time putting myself out there, blogging, sharing thoughts, getting into discussions, going back and forth with people, responding to comments very quickly…. (Hui,Gerber, et al., 2014, p679).

The impact of his efforts at building followers – through Twitter, Facebook, and a personal blog – are significant. His first campaign successfully raised 3,030 USD and his second one raised 24,000 USD.

Taking a synthesis of these findings, it is evident that artists who create Kickstarter campaigns will confront challenges expanding their networks because it places demands on their time, requires a particular communication style, and it requires successfully making connections with the right groups (i.e. individuals and groups who share the artists' interests and value what they do). This can be a frustrating reality for creative types, as they must pay for the freedom they expect. Their work does not just speak for itself and command financial backing on its own merit.

2.11 A change of tide: From 'attention economy' to 'attention-emotion economy'

Through the popularity of the internet and social media, people have started to appreciate that money does not always take the form of real currency. By this I mean to suggest that attention is also a form of currency (Ghosh and Aiyer, 1997). Capturing this idea, in 2007, Goldhaber said that '… money now flows along with attention, or, to put this in more general terms, when there is a transition between economies, the old kind of wealth easily flows to the holders of the new'[20].

Goldhaber further explained that even though attention draws money in the direction of companies and entrepreneurs, this does not mean that money can buy attention.

> Someone who wants your attention just can't rely on paying you money to get it, but has to do more, has to be interesting. That is, they must offer you illusory attention in just about the same amounts as they would if you had instead been paying money to listen to them… Money flows to attention, and much less well does attention flow to money.[21]

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[20] http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/519/440#dep14
[21] http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/519/440#dep14

Davenport and Beck (2001) described the attention economy as follows:

The attention economy is to buy attention with money and anyone who wants to sell something or persuade someone to do something has to invest in the attention market… In this new economy, capital, labor, information, and knowledge are all in plentiful supply. It's easy to start a business, to get access to customers and markets, to develop a strategy, to put up a website, to design ads and commercials. What's in short supply is human attention (Davenport and Beck, 2002, p5).

Wu (2017) offered a more global perspective, stating

since the rise of capitalism, it has been known that capturing someone's attention causes him to depart with some money… and we are always paying attention to something. If we think of attention as a resource, or even a kind of currency, we must allow that it is always, necessarily, being spent. There is no saving it for later. The question is always, what shall I pay attention to? (Wu, 2017, p10-15).

According to Hutchinson (2004), the attention economy

… basically says that we are faced with too much information and being pulled in so many directions trying to figure out where we should be spending our attention most. A study by the Yankelovich Group showed that most consumers feel there is too much advertising and not only is it not effective, it's starting to piss people off… Attention now is very valuable and arguably, more valuable than anything else (p. 30).

The role that emotion plays in the economy had been underestimated for a long time (Castelfranchi, 2003; Hanoch, 2002; Patalano, 2009). Through the pioneering research of Elster (1999), Loewenstein (1996), Frank (1987, 1998), and DiMaggio (2002), emotion – as it bears on economic activities – began to be noticed and appreciated. We now know that emotion plays a significant role in the decision making processes underlying consumption choices. Said another way, Matthews and Wells (1994) proposed that '… emotions have a framing power because they select the subsets to consider from a range of facts and actions… and emotions serve as one of the chief mechanisms to constrain and direct our attention and hence frame our decisions' (Wells and Matthews, 1996, p885).

When Davenport and Beck first described the attention economy in 2001, the internet was not as popular or accessible as it is today. Moreover, the changing role of

emotion in economics predated the advent of social media and crowdfunding. Still, the arguments regarding individuals' attention and emotions apply to our present analysis of potential audience members' decision making processes on Kickstarter.

In more detail, with the inception of the internet, online content was new, and so it was easy to attract attention. As the internet became more popular, it led to the emergence of the 24-hour news cycle and social media platforms. Now, people can access a wealth of information from thousands of websites. Coinciding with this, exploring the internet's webpages has changed from idle curiosity to purpose- and entertainment-driven. As a result, attention has become scarcer than ever before, implying that capturing attention is something of a competitive sport. In turn, advertisers realise that consumers need to have strong reasons and feel an emotional pull to pay for products. This characterisation is at the core of the 'attention-emotion economy'.

The following graph depicts decision making processes that have emerged as the result of the internet and social media platforms. Essentially, in order to motivate followers to buy artists/creators' work, they must appeal to both their attention and to their emotions.
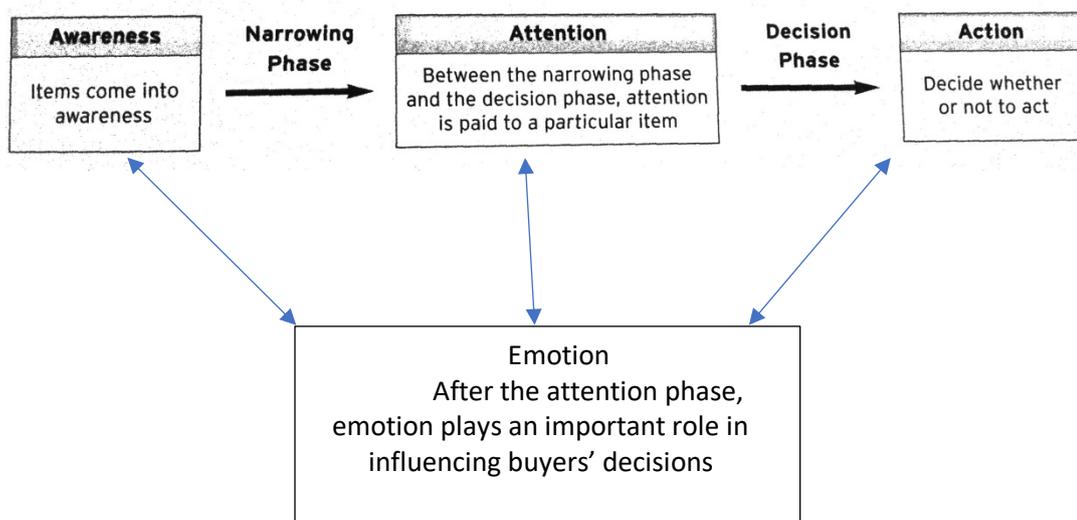
Figure 6: Attention–Emotion model, revised from Davenport and Beck (2001, p. 21)

2.12 Drawing Conclusions: From opportunities and weaknesses

Thanks to the emergence of social media, artists are forming new communities, building relationships, and are creating and sharing experiences and information through websites and devices. Tied to this, artists now have new ways to establish their careers (King, 2012).

Nevertheless, artists and creators confront challenges to their independence and autonomy in the art market. Offering a useful summary, King (2012) outlined two pathways that are available to artists. Firstly, while galleries can exhibit and sell their artwork, the artist will typically retain less than 50% of the profit. This imbalance results from the traditional art market, where 'winners take all' (Abbing, 2002). This entails that only famous or reputable artists can work with good galleries or receive fair treatment. Secondly, outside of galleries, even talented artists can confront financial issues and challenges that they must navigate on their own.

As detailed throughout this chapter, there are different types of analytic models that can be used to understand the interactions and economic processes that now occur on social media platforms. Recall, some models examined users' personalities and behaviors. Others analysed businesses that take place on social media or the range of functions of social media (e.g., the honeycomb model). Still others proposed an analysis structure, whereby we approached social media platforms as microsystems that include ownership, governance, business models, content, users/usage and technology (Diejk, 2013).

Following the description of the analytic models, this literature review explored the social media environment from the perspective of creators and artists. In so doing, it created an opportunity to develop and harness a systematic structure to deconstruct artists' relationships based on seven perspectives, namely – reflection, audience, innovations, networks, business, opportunities, and weaknesses. This systematic analysis structure is an

original contribution to the social media field, and is particularly useful when combined with the concept of the 'attention-emotion economy.' Its practical aspects will be further demonstrated in the following chapters on methodology and fieldwork.

Anticipating this, in order to gain a well-rounded analysis of social media that will enable me to support artists and creators in finding solutions to their financial challenges and perceptions of their professional roles and related lifestyles, it is necessary to use analytic models that can broaden these perspectives, anticipate the challenges, and respond to these real-life problems through validated solutions. Crowdfunding can enable cooperation and bring creativity to life. Moreover, it introduces more opportunities for people to make art and nurture their creative dreams. Because these platforms exist and they are accessible worldwide, new perspectives on the economy should be embraced – most notably the attention-emotion economy model. I say this because this particular model affords a broader picture of how people are involved and interact within the social media environment, and so how successful business transactions can best be facilitated. It is imperative for artists to gain a full understanding of this to guide them in their campaign creations such that they can convert campaign followers into funders and effectively sustain their work over time. This will be explored fully in the following chapter.

<center>**Chapter 3**</center>

<center>**Research Methods**</center>

3.1 Introduction

<center>**"For the things we need to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."**</center>

<center>**Aristotle**</center>

Although human beings have always learned through experience, our paradigm learning scenarios and needs have changed significantly over time. In our everyday lives, we learn by exploring (i.e. knowing *how to do something*), whereas in institutional educational settings we acquire propositional knowledge (i.e. knowing *that*). With respect to the latter, disciplines vary by topic, inquiry, and methods used (Jasper, 2013, p9 ; Kolb, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016). Experience can thus be categorized into eight types: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, religious, social, virtuous, and subjective (Schmitt, 2011; Stake, 2010; Straatemeier et al., 2010; Sundbo and SËrensen, 2013).

The primary area of inquiry in this research project is experiential learning through a multi-methods approach, including in-depth interviews, case studies, and creative visual research methods integrated with auto-ethnography and action research methods. The main reason for applying this multi-methods approach is to benefit from different methods to support this research and develop a systematic research framework.

Specifically, case studies and in-depth interviews played a significant role in collecting data, insofar as they enabled me to understand the facts about how creators and artists established their careers. In terms of the credibility of the data and reducing the distance between the interviewer and the interviewees, auto-ethnography enabled me to adopt both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives to acquire more practical data to support the

implementation of my findings. This approach also aligns with the principles of action research, insofar as it emphasises how effective relationships between practitioners and participants can reduce the gaps between them.

It is worth mentioning that, during the process of action research, I applied visual creative research methods to immerse myself in the research process. (Although this did not constitute the main foundation of this project, it did play a critical role in inspiring my creativity and infusing it throughout the project). Taken together, these methods provided an original analysis framework that was applied to the main and subsidiary research questions, enabling me to integrate multi-perspectives within one overarching narrative. Overall, this design helped me to understand how artists and creators could use crowdfunding platforms and social media to develop their careers and promote their artwork, instead of simply relying on traditional methods, such as galleries.

Consistent with this, I categorized experience into two types. The first was that of the artist, which served as the basis for data-finding through in-depth interviews and case studies. The second form of experience was that of other successful Kickstarter campaigners. The latter form of 'experience' was also informed by my research activities and lived experiences, which were catalogued in a research diary and facilitated by creative visual methods. Combining these methods provided a foundation that I could use to analyse successful artists' Kickstarter experiences and identify promising practices that could be effectively used by others.

Action research therefore played a supportive role in this project, insofar as it enabled the integration of concepts as applied in practice, as well as processes I could use to collect valuable anecdotal data from case studies and in-depth interviews. This approach effectively bridged the divide between the researcher (me), practitioners, and participants.

3.2 Stuck in the middle (with you)? The researcher's position

"No action without research; no research without action." Kurt Lewin

There is a strong sense in which action research arose as a gap-filler between social action and social theory (Dickens and Watkins, 1999; Kemmis et al., 2013; McKernan, 2013). In the 1940s, Lewin described the essence of action research, suggesting it could be used as a method to find a solution through problem identification and discussion. So understood, action research could be used to inform decision making, monitoring, and provide a pathway towards achieving measurable results (Burnes and Cooke, 2013; Kemmis et al., 2013; Coghlan, 2014).

Action research is now turned to as one of the primary methods to use to identify solutions to problems across disciplines. Even still, there are critiques of this method, in terms of the accuracy of the findings it can generate and its ability to set research controls (Cohen et al., 2013; Dickens and Watkins, 1999; Stringer, 2013). Further challenges have been put forth by Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1987), who claimed that Lewin 'never wrote a systematic statement of his views on action research' (cited in Dickens and Watkins, 1999, p131).

On my reading of Lewin, the gap between researchers, practitioners, and the research project should be made explicit to generate research answers that explore deep meaning, expose 'insider' and 'outsider' positions, and enable the researcher to reflect on the power asymmetries that can exist among the relationships, which would otherwise influence outcomes and interpretations (Berger, 2015; Ritchie et al., 2013; Janesick, 2015; Herr and Anderson, 2014; Sprague, 2016). The value of Lewin's method to this project is that it enabled me to outline the systematic steps to take to explore participants' experiences and helped me to narrow the gap between myself and my research participants, so that I could

identify and validate solutions to real-world problems artists confront.

This approach is consistent with Schwartz et al., who hold that – in any social

research project – the observer is the

> instrument through which and by which the phenomena of the investigation are selected and filtered as well as interpreted and evaluated[.] The way in which [the researcher] operates is crucial in transposing 'reality' into data and in producing a close correspondence between the actual and the recorded event (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955, p343).

To paraphrase, researchers need to know their subjects' thinking and be open to

other points of view to authentically capture and convey insights. This is also known as the

'position concept' (i.e. being higher, equal, or lower in power to others) and it is a valuable

reminder for the researcher to be aware of the proper distance to assume between her and

her subjects. Unpacking this idea in more detail, when a researcher stands in a 'higher

position', she may think she knows more than the participants themselves; as an equal, the

researcher believes she has something to learn from her subjects; and in the higher position,

the researcher professes her personal experiences.

Not surprisingly, if these three positions are not acknowledged and negotiated, they

can influence the research process and the research outcomes. Hierarchies yield less

valuable, even inaccurate, data when participants' voices are not truly heard. It is only when

there is a relationship of equals that genuine experiences, thoughts, attitudes, ideas, and

beliefs can be shared and understood.

Accordingly, this project employed a 'circle relationship model' that integrated three

types of relationships (i.e. 'interpersonal relationships', 'social media relationships', and

'business relationships'). When combined, these models enabled a full explanation of how

interpersonal relationships influenced artists' lives and careers, how the emergence of social

media affected their career pathways and trajectories, and how the unique type of business

relationships made possible by social media influenced the development of artists' careers.

On a personal note, this model created space for observing and responding to the intricacies of the relationship between me and my research participants. I endeavored to take a relationship of equals approach (i.e. a medium position) with my research participants.

3.3 Action Research: History and (dis)advantages

Due to its subject matter and intent, action research typically deals with 'living theories' that require practical problem solving and solutions that will respond to real-world needs (Bradbury-Huang, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). According to McNiff (2013), 'action research is about putting ideas into action not only talking about them' (McNiff, 2013, p49). Part of this process involves a layer of interpretation by the researcher (McNiff, 2011). Given that the researcher is at the centre of action research, there is a need to deconstruct one's own thinking prior to drawing conclusions.

The subjects of 'living theories' communicate their ideas as 'theories of real-world practice, by explaining what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what they hope to achieve' (McNiff, 2006, p8). These theories also respond to life changes. It is worth noting, however, that researchers can choose more than one methodology to conduct action research. Because of this, it is also challenging to define pure action research (Dickens and Watkins, 1999, p132). That being said, using action research in this project served the purpose of exploring deep real-world practices and problems.

While all action researchers ask questions concerning how to influence processes of change, each research project requires different perspectives and begins with different fundamental questions. To appreciate these differences, we must now return to the idea of outsider and insider research (McNiff, 2006, p8).

3.4 The costs and benefits of being an 'insider' and 'outsider'

Prior to contextualizing the differences between action research and traditional research enterprises, it is worth unpacking the concept of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in terms of how they influence research outcomes and designs. Often, we see 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives raised in experiential research. For example, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) asserted,

> In any social research, the observer (researcher) is the instrument through which and by which the phenomena of the investigation are selected and filtered as well as interpreted and evaluated. The way in which he operates is crucial in transporting 'reality' into data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p343).

As noted above, observers/researchers play a significant role in describing reality and cultivating the conditions under which participants can share their perspectives of reality. Closely related to this is the debate over the ways in which a researcher can gain access to a privileged, or at least more balanced, viewpoint (Lughod and Castells, 1998; Collins, 1986; Archibald, 1995). In terms of the 'insider' position, Lughod (1998) and Collins (1986) both observed that researchers who *belong* to the group they research can gain more intimate insight into their subjects' perspectives. Alternatively, it has been proposed by Fonow and Cook (1992) that 'outsiders' are more likely to stand in an objective position that enables them to avoid misinterpreting their participants' contributions.

Neither insider nor outsider perspectives are free of concern, however. When researchers assume an insider position, they may obtain valuable data but draw biased conclusions (McNiff, 2011). In fact, some investigators take issue with the binary distinction between the 'insider' and the 'outsider.' For Mullings (1999),

> the 'insider/outsider' binary, in reality, is a boundary that is not only highly unstable but also one that ignores the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space. No individual can consistently remain an insider and few ever remain complete outsiders (p340).

At the end of the day, researchers would do well to remain neutral, open to exploring and hearing different perspectives. Yet action research has 'had a hard time justifying itself as science, and it is still a diverse and debated research tradition' (Helskog, 2013, p36). In traditional research, the investigator studies and makes claims about what is *out there*, separate from themselves. An outsider perspective is adopted, by default, to generate propositional theories about the world. These theories are often referred to as 'E-theories', where the 'E' stands for external. By contrast, in action research, the researcher studies and makes claims about what they are doing, in relation to others, to generate their living theory of practice. These theories are referred to as 'I-theories', where 'I' stands for individual or internal (Chomsky, 1986; McNiff, 2011, p17-18).

In terms of power dynamics, in traditional research, if research outcomes can make an impact on practice, then the researcher is responsible for making observations and sharing results. The researcher is situated as the knowledge-holder and the participant is treated as a conduit to share information that will be synthesised and packaged. By contrast, in action research, practitioners and participants take action together to improve outcomes. Moreover, action research does not require professional training, though one needs to develop capacity through engaging with ideas, literature, and learning on the job (McNiff, 2011, p16). The common ground between traditional and action research is that, in each case, the researcher makes observations as a professional and then writes formal reports to share findings with others within their research community.

3.5 Action research, explained

Lewin's formulation of action research included steps researchers could take to support the enterprise, from fact-finding, conceptualisation, planning, execution, and more fact-finding through to evaluation. This process is meant to be iterative and guided by the

research and the context (Sanford, 1970, p. 4; Dickens and Watkins, 1999, p. 128). Since the time of Lewin's seminal article (disseminated in 1946), researchers have proposed revisions to his process. For example, Baskerville (1997) articulated five steps the researcher should take, namely diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluation, and specifying learning. Outrun Zuber-Skerritt (1992) presented the CRASP model of action research, outlining the following six necessary steps: critical/self-critical collaborative inquiry, practitioner reflection, accountability and transparency, self-evaluation, participatory problem solving, and continuing professional development (Zuber-Skerritt, 2004, p58).

McNiff and Whitehead (2011) posited the need for distinctions among 'voices' in action research, such that different 'voices' should be used to explain the different roles of researchers/practitioners in action research. Specifically, 'I' frames should be used to divide the voices of researchers into seven main layers: actor-agent 'I', explanatory 'I', researcher 'I', scholarly 'I', critically reflexive 'I', dialectically critical 'I', meta-reflexive 'I', and editorial 'I' (McNiff, 2011, p32-34). These 'I' frames represent and demarcate the researchers' functions and the tasks that are used to organise their research project and findings.

For example, the smallest frame – the actor-agent 'I' – focuses on the descriptions of narratives, including asking challenging questions and data-gathering. The explanatory 'I' is used to dig deeper into the stories and the data of fact-finding. Not surprisingly, the researcher 'I' plays the role of researcher and provides the reasons for the research actions, such as gathering data from the action and getting evidence. In terms of the scholarly 'I', researchers emphasise the value of the claim through the exploration of existing data (literature), or expressing how and why ideas and beliefs are contained in the action research. The first four 'I' frames – namely, actor-agent 'I', explanatory 'I', researcher 'I', and scholarly 'I' – mainly explore how the key actions of the research project proceed –

from gathering data, the reasons for action, and the analysis of evidence through to the investigator's claims made near the end of the research.

When researchers fall into one of these four frames, they are close to their research and must, therefore, be intimately involved in exploring the data collection process. In the latter three 'I' frames – recall, the critically reflexive 'I', the dialectically critical 'I', and the meta-reflexive 'I' – the relationships between researchers and their research subjects are further removed. That is to say researchers are more aware of their biases in their action research and, therefore, continuously try to ensure it is controlled, in addition to deconstructing their ideas, and recognising their limitations and the necessity to compromise (McNiff, 2011, p34). In the meta-reflexive phase, the researchers' stance integrates all of the 'I' frames to analyse the entire action-reflection process. In so doing, researchers emphasise the contributions of the action research and connect the analysis of the action research to the other's learning and experiences.

There are four steps that remain consistent across disciplines in informing action research, namely planning, action, reflection, and then evaluation on the need to take further action. Corresponding with these steps is a series of action-reflection questions researchers should pose, including: 'What is my concern? Why am I concerned? How do I present these findings as they unfold? How do I move these insights into practice? How do I determine whether my conclusions are fair and accurate? How do I modify ideas and practices in light of my findings?' (McNiff, 2011, p90).

With respect to my own project, I applied the following reflection frames to reconsider the relationships between me and my interview subjects:

Fact-finding/data-gathering: By appealing to Lewin's model, I connected the different 'I' roles and voices. Recall, his auto-ethnography action research model began with fact-finding. In this stage, the researchers' role is to gather data to be used in the planning of

actions. Of course, there are different methods that can be used for the process of fact-finding/data-gathering, such as diaries and logs, reports, questionnaires, surveys, interviews, focus group, and social networking sites.

In more detail, the actor-agent 'I' can be used to describe the collected data and facts, and illuminate additional pathways through which the project can proceed. For instance, one interview can lead to others, snowballing to gain a more comprehensive vantage point of the issue at hand. Hence, the data-gathering stage assists researchers/practitioners in making the decision about what changes are needed and how to best implement change.

Analysis and planning: Following the data-gathering phase, the action research proceeds to its second stage – analysis and planning. This engages two different voices: the explanatory 'I' and the researcher 'I'. According to McNiff and Whitehead's explanation of frames of reflection (2011), the explanatory 'I' provides the underlying explanation for data collection.

After analysing the information gathered, I began to make the data I collected meaningful and then planned my corresponding actions. In my research design, I highlighted the process of the action, identified the problem, and collected possible solutions. At this stage, apart from the explanation of the data (stage one), I was involved in doing the research tasks, which included proposing how the action research should be done, establishing evidence, and showing the steps of proceeding with the research. In this stage, I asked – and attempted to respond to – the generative questions outlined above. By answering these questions, my action research moved from the level of description to the explanation stage.

Action and observation: Essentially, doing action research demonstrates how researchers synthesise ideas into actions and consciously take action to influence, or even change, something in the real world (Varela et al., 2017; Corbin et al., 2014; Wellington,

2015). Once action is initiated and observations are made, the researcher 'I' plays a

significant role in taking action to try to explore the connections between the problem and

its possible solutions. Researchers and practitioners both have their actions and engage in

their respective actions to test the proposed solutions to determine whether there is a

rightness of fit. Hence, action tactics are often applied at this stage. For example, researchers

may hire specialists to achieve better results (Baskerville, 1999). Collaboration (not one

authority figure) is the key in successful action research.

Reflection: The last stage is reflection, which is regarded as a type of experiential

learning. According to Jasper (2013), reflective practice is an effective way for professionals

to learn from experience so that they can understand and improve upon their own practice.

In other words, by learning from others and drawing on our experiences, we can think about

them in a different way and thereby act differently going forward (McNiff, 2013, p3). For

Jasper (2013), there are three components involved in reflective practice: (1) people's

experiences, (2) learning from past practice, and (3) knowing when to act based on

'experience-reflection-action' (ERA).

Reflection can be further subdivided into two distinct types: reflection-in-action and

reflection-on-action. According to Donald Schon (1983),

> reflection-in-action is the way that people think and theorize about practice whilst
> they are doing it… It is thought, by some people, to be intuitive and an
> "unconscious" process, and therefore not really a reflective activity that we use
> deliberately… Reflection-on-action involves consciously exploring an experience
> and thinking about your practice after it has occurred, discovering the knowledge
> used in this situation… It occurs through analysis, interpretation and the
> recombination of information about the experience so that new perspectives are
> formed about what has happened… Reflection-on-action also helps us to identify our
> knowledge gaps, and to identify missing pieces of theory or practice that we need to
> find, to ensure that we have a sound evidence base on which to make decisions and
> base our future practice…. (cited in Jasper, 2013, p7).

Complementing this view, Zuber-Skerritt (2004) claimed that a key element in the

action research model is critical and self-critical reflection on the entire process 'which is

emancipatory, empowering, transformational, and therefore effective only if subsequent steps are taken to transform the system and to make changes to those conditions in the organization which impede real change and improvement' (Zuber-Skerritt, 2004, p99). Hence, reflection can move the research agenda forward even when there is disagreement.

In sum, there are three different voices and corresponding jobs of the different 'I's' in the reflection stage, i.e. the critically reflexive 'I', dialectically critical 'I', and the meta-reflexive 'I'. After completing the main action, researchers analyse the relationships between themselves and the research context in an effort to avoid biases. Here, researchers should also be mindful of the fact that respecting other people's opinions can help make the research process and findings sound. In terms of the dialectically critical 'I', researchers should reflect on the limitations of the action research in the process of reflection. Stated explicitly, researchers should recognise that it is sometimes necessary to negotiate, even yield, in the process of conducting research. Far from derailing the research agenda, this practice can help to make the process of acting smoother and the goal of action clearer to employ in practice.

By the end of one of the cycles of action research, researchers will have integrated all of the different 'I' voices and effectively gained a well-rounded analysis through which they can propose further directions the research can take (McNiff, 2011).

Five reflective frameworks

Jasper (2013), building upon Lewin's original reflection framework, referred to five popular reflection frameworks which each provide researchers with different approaches they can take to explore experiences. These reflection frameworks are Kolb's (1984) ERA cycle of experience, reflection, and action; Goodman's three levels of reflection (1984); Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988); John's model of structured reflection (1994); and Borton's

developmental framework (1970). These frameworks, while not perfect or complete, do offer approaches researchers can take to gain a deeper understanding about their experiences, which they can then put forward to develop theories, organise knowledge, and fill in gaps in understanding.

In more detail, Kolb's ERA cycle summarised three main components of reflection practice: the person's 'experiences', the 'reflective process' that enables people to learn from experience, and the 'action' that is taken by the impacted individual (owing to their new perspective). In Jasper's words (2013), 'when we want to learn from something that has already happened to us, we need to recall our observations in some way' (Jasper, 2013, p3).

Goodman (1984) encouraged researchers to use three levels of reflection to gain a deeper understanding of their reflective work. The first is to focus on how facts are described to learn what happened in the past. In the second level, practitioners should be able to explain and explore the facts by applying some theories to practice. The third level relates to the meta-reflective 'I', which entails exploring wide influences on actions in relation to the broader social context.

Gibbs (1988) proposed reflective cycles containing six stages that are initiated by asking a series of questions. Asking these questions facilitates the interviewee in offering an objective description of a given event, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and evaluation of the event so that the researcher and subject can, together, identify the knowledge, skills, and experiences they may be lacking. Next, the subject is called upon to explore the topic from various perspectives to elicit more information through the practitioner's judgement and coaxing (Jasper, 2013, p82). Jasper stressed that it is important, at this stage, for practitioners to undertake honest analysis given the likelihood of bias. When subjects do not have the opportunity to share their true experiences or they are not heard, it is highly probable that practitioners will miss out on valuable information and opportunities for

learning. To reduce the likelihood of this happening, Gibbs advised practitioners to ask a critical question: 'What could I do differently?' Seeking to answer this fundamental question helps to explore a greater number of potential solutions to the existing questions. The final stage of this process is the formulation of an action plan, which informs the next plan. Guiding this process, the following question is front and centre: 'Would I act differently, or would I be likely to do the same thing again?'

Similarly, John's model outlines a series of questions for investigators to use to develop a reflection framework that 'tunes the practitioner into the experience in a structured and meaningful way' (cited in Palmer et al., 1994, p. 112). John's structured framework uses five core questions to gain a rich description of the subject's experiences by priming him or her to share significant background factors that contributed to the experience described. In terms of identifying influencing factors, the researcher is encouraged to ask 'What internal factors influenced my decision?' Other questions related to learning and how to better deal with the situation include: 'What other choices did I have?' 'How do I feel about this experience?' 'How have I made sense of this experience in light of past experiences and future practices?' (Jasper, 2013, p87)

It is worth noting that there are several differences between Gibbs' and John's frameworks. Overall, Gibbs' framework focuses on the reflection of individual experience, and then uses the information obtained to support action planning. For that same reason, Gibbs' framework is criticised for never ending the cycle of reflection. John's framework allows for other people's feelings or reflections to help understand their experiences in context. Whereas Gibbs' approach is limited to how to take the *next* action, John explores what the practitioner wants to achieve through action. There is, therefore, a strong sense in which John's framework can be seen as providing the missing link to Gibbs' theory (Jasper, 2013, p99).

Borton's reflective framework connects the reflective process to taking action in the world by using three stages of reflection: (1) description, (2) theory and knowledge building, and (3) course correction (i.e. 'what could have been done differently?'). To some extent, the three stages of Borton's framework absorb Gibbs' and John's reflective cycles. This also explains why Borton's framework is a 'generic one that can be used by anyone' (Jasper, 2013, p103). Not only can this framework provide a set of cues for practitioners to use to structure their reflective thoughts, it can also be used to foster reflection either alone or in groups. Moreover, the questions that correspond with the three stages can be revised for practitioners in different research situations.

3.6 Summary position

Overall, there are two reasons why I chose action research to complement in-depth interviews and case studies. First, I appreciate and value using other peoples' lived experiences to identify solutions that can be tailored and applied to solve real-world problems. Recall, this study began with my personal reflections on my career. The main data used in this study were the experiences that were shared by successful campaign creators and what I learned from developing and launching my own Kickstarter campaign. This approach was deliberate, based on my belief that people's lived experiences are the 'life-data' that can help research change practice. Said another way, real-life experiences can illuminate and bolster theoretical explanations. Furthermore, when guided by 'life-data', researchers take more realistic approaches to the solutions they propose, and in-so-doing facilitate the uptake of ideas in real-world contexts.

Second, my learning philosophy is that research should be developed through actions and researchers should be aware of the power dynamics that exist in their relationships to help ensure that the data collected and interpretations that are drawn from it are unbiased. As

noted, there are advantages and disadvantages between being an 'outsider' and an 'insider', each has its value and drawbacks. Given my background in journalism, I have a wealth of experience finding facts in the real world without sticking to a strictly outsider or insider position. In this project, I strived for balance in the research power dynamic and spent most of my time assuming the role of an 'insider'. Specifically, I was involved in auto-ethnography research, and used my personal experience as the main action to validate my theory. Meanwhile, I was also an 'outsider' in the process of fact-finding – doing case studies and conducting in-depth interviews with my participants.

3.7 What is Auto-ethnography, anyway?

In addition to action research, the participant observation method – in the form of auto-ethnography and creative visual methods – resonated with me. I raise these methods here because each played an important role in this project and influenced my motivation, design, and process in undertaking this research. For example, the participant observation method helped me to reconsider my position so that I could acquire more valuable data and experience. Moreover, I applied some auto-ethnography in my research because I believed self-reflection is a good way to mirror the truths in our society, not to mention to help evaluate the assumptions that informed my research project and their likely impact on my analysis. Additionally, I applied creative visual methods in my research design, based on my research structure – the RAINBOW analysis framework – to process my research systematically.

According to Adams (2014), auto-ethnography plays a significant role in building rapport and connection with research subjects. Stated explicitly, auto-ethnography is a research method that uses a researcher's personal experiences to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and events. It acknowledges and values a researcher's

relationships with others, and reveals people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles (Adams et al., 2014, p23).

Auto-ethnography is used, primarily, by authors to reflect on their experience during their research, or to involve and engage their capacity for self-observation and self-reflection during their fieldwork (Garance, 2016; Broadbent et al., 2004). Through auto-ethnography research, investigators explain or connect themselves to their social context, and thereby acquire more well-rounded data (Broadbent et al., 2004; Garance, 2016). It is helpful to quote Butz and Besio at length to illustrate the importance and efficacy of taking a holistic approach to the research enterprise:

> The intended audience for auto-ethnographic representation, as for other types of research communication, are often multiple and difficult to engage simultaneously. Academic researchers may have to shape their self-representation to catch the ears of the people with whom they research in the field… and they need to communicate effectively… Auto-ethnography provides a mode of reflexivity for tracing the effects of these influences on the work that we produce and on our constitution as researching subjects (sf, Meneley and Young, 2005, p. 166).

Heeding these insights, my research project began with my personal experiences. In this chapter, I speak to my investment in the use of auto-ethnography as a hermeneutic tool for the broader study. Essentially, I have fused my previous journalistic experiences with my enduring interest in professional development and the need to help artists become established within a precarious art market. My personal experience played a particularly useful role in providing evidence for, and supporting the analysis of, the relationship between artists and the virtual economy. For this, I endeavored to build my own relationships with artists to describe and understand their subjective perspectives, a process that mandated my own self-reflection to ensure that I accurately conveyed their viewpoints without conflating them with my own experiences, values, and motivations.

As previously noted, in this research project, I used auto-ethnography research and action research as my main methodologies. The process of reflection allowed for the

integration of different 'I' voices in my action research (Jackson, 2015). Given the subject matter of 'I' reflection, I became exposed to various viewpoints and differences of opinion. On the one hand, the advantages of auto-ethnography included surfacing and sharing worlds that would have otherwise remained private (Pavlenko, 2007). Another advantage of writing auto-ethnographically was that it allowed me to 'write first-person accounts which enabled my voice to be heard, and thus provided me with a transition from being an outsider to an insider in the research' (Méndez, 2013, p282).

That said, auto-ethnography research has been critiqued for being self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualised (Atkinson, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Méndez, 2013, p283). In fact, Watford went so far as to suggest auto-ethnography is of *no* value because social research should be based on organized and logical claims that are supported by empirical data (Walford, 2004; Méndez, 2013). By contrast, Denzin and Lincoln stated 'objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations…' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p5).

I believe that research methods based on other people's experiences can be as valuable as more traditional methods. After all, people's experiences often reflect social realities. Aligned with this, I wholeheartedly believe that 'auto-ethnography is an instrument through which researchers can explore and portray the culture where a phenomenon is being experienced…' (Méndez, 2013, p285).

3.8 The value of case studies and in-depth interviews

As noted above, I applied some of the main themes of action research as the dominant perspectives and featured data in this study, including data-collection; analysis and planning of the relevant actions (case studies, in-depth interviews, and launching a campaign); analysis and observation of the relevant actions; and reflections of cases and the

researcher's perspectives. My objective in doing so was to ensure that the exploration of the main research sources (of case studies and in-depth interviews) proceeded systematically and smoothly.

As evidenced in my review of the literature, the virtual market for artists remains promising but uncertain. On the one hand, the power map of the art market has changed over time. Artists have responded by using social media to develop their careers instead of depending on galleries alone. On the other hand, it is evident that galleries have not disappeared; they remain entrenched in the art market. Indeed, the traditional art market still influences artists' careers (Currid, 2007; Bugge et al., 2013).

It is this combination of ambiguity and promise that motivated me to choose case study as the principal methodology to guide this project, because it is a potent tool for exploring subjective perceptions and perspectives on uncertainty. It was already evident to me, at the outset of this project, that artists face unclear and precarious circumstances. Through my research, I confirmed that, in developing their careers, artists need to consider both the social media market and the traditional art market.

I also sympathise with Cousin's (2005) vivid description of case study research: 'case study research data collection and analysis is a bit like good detective work… the researcher should consider the ways in which a detective meticulously builds up a picture of the case' (Cousin, 2005, p424). Case study in this research project served as a tool to build my map of research by charting the topographies of the artists' experiences as they navigated the virtual marketplace.

Granted, some researchers believe that 'cases are so specific, one cannot make meaningful generalisations from case studies… other methods are more suitable to hypothesis testing and theory building' (McLeod, 2010, p25). Echoing this, Fidel observed:

> On the one hand, generalisation from a few cases is not reliable because one cannot determine which regularities are general and which are unique. On the other hand,

generalisation statements about regularities may be too general to explain a specific case (Fidel, 1984, p275).

Contrary to this, I believe that a persuasive and in-depth description can support researchers in developing meaningful descriptions of generalisable results. The value of case study, therefore, depends on the research purpose and the amount of time that a researcher can devote to this method. Upon reflection, the case study method assisted me in acquiring sufficient evidence to support my hypotheses. Indeed, I relied on in-depth interviews in developing my case studies and conducting my fieldwork.

Generally speaking, interviews are considered to be a special type of conversation that aim towards knowledge production or meaning-making partnerships between interviewers and interviewees (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Hennink et al., 2010; Silverman, 2015). According to Yates (2003), interview literally means:

> to develop a shared perspective and understanding (a view) between (inter) two or more people. … The researcher and the participant(s) develop a shared understanding of the topic under discussion (Yates, 2003, p58).

Of course, this description of interviews bears on their function, not their practicability for research. With respect to the latter, Rapley (2004) outlines five types of interview, i.e. structured, semi-structured, unstructured, focused, and group. For Rapley,

> qualitative interviewing does not involve extra-ordinary skill, it involves just trying to interact with that specific person, trying to understand their experience, opinion and ideas… [This may involve] initially introducing a topic for discussion….; listening to the answer and then producing follow-up questions….; asking them to unpack certain key-terms… And whilst listening going "mm", "yeah", "right", … alongside nodding, laughing, joking, smiling, frowning, as all of us use these activities every day (Rapley, 2004, p25-26 ; cited in Silverman, 2015).

Rapley's argument belies a common misunderstanding of the interview method – that interviewing need not be a skilled activity. In fact, interviewers rely on various skills to motivate interviewees to share their true feelings. To create a comfortable conversational

ambiance, in a good interview – especially an in-depth interview – interviewers must be well-prepared. For example, interviewers should not only design good questions but also pay attention to more subtle details, such as the tone of voice, style of dress, and communication skills. These preparations make interviewees feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and experiences.

For that reason, I am more inclined to see the interview method like Oakley (1981) when he compared interviewing to a marriage: 'everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed door there is a world of secrets' (Oakley and Roberts, 1981, p41). Similarly, Fontana and Frey (1994) claimed

> asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first. The spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and report or code the answers. Yet, interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p361).

Good interviewers must use auxiliary tools and techniques to elicit deeper meaning. Researchers should begin their interviews by 'breaking the ice' and progress from general questions to specific ones, taking special care not to influence the conversation with personal opinions and to remain objective. That being said, some interviewers will (and should) share their opinions with interviewees to establish trust (Fontana and Frey, 1994). At the same time, interviewers should be mindful of other aspects of the interview process that may impact the outcomes, including non-verbal elements like glances, body postures, and long silences (Goffman, 1999).

3.9 LEGO meets research: creative visual research methods

In addition to auto-ethnography – i.e. the action research method – I deployed creative visual methods to develop my analytical framework and research structure, and then applied them to my in-depth interview process to assist in fact-finding.

Creative visual research methods are divided into four areas: art-based research, research using technology, mixed-methods research, and transformative research frameworks (Kara et al., 2015; Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015; Rose, 2016). Subsumed under these categories are data-gathering approaches, such as reflexive data, writing diaries and journals, interviews, video, online, other secondary data, drawing, mapping, and mixed methods (Kara et al., 2015; Barrett and Bolt, 2014; Tracy and Redden, 2015).

When it comes to the creative visual method, mixed-methods can be entirely quantitative or qualitative (Frost et al., 2010; Lal et al., 2012; Kara et al., 2015) or combined with theoretical perspectives, different disciplines, or data analysis (Kaufman, 2010; Sameshima and Vandermause, 2009; Frost et al., 2010).

According to the design of my auto-ethnography action research, this research project combined mixed-methods research and creative visual research methods with qualitative analysis methods. The reason I chose creative visual methods as one component of my broader research methods is that I believed visual methods could enrich communication between me and my interviewees, especially considering the fact that I interviewed artists.

Consistent with Gauntlett's observation (2005) I was aware that,

> when participants are asked to make a creative artefact, this brings about a considerable change in the pace of statement-generation within the research process… Creative tasks, on the other hand, are understood to take time to think about what is to be produced and how this can be achieved (Gauntlett, 2005, p3).

Creative visual methods are not a new technique. On the contrary, they have operated in a wide range of disciplines, examples of which include sociology, psychology, geography, and health care (Heinonen and Hiltunen, 2012). They are also used to effectively express abstract ideas, enhance data collection and presentation, and aid communication (Heinonen and Hiltunen, 2012, p305-306). Moreover, creative visual methods offer a different way for the audience/participants to reflect on their self-expression. According to

Gauntlett (2005),

> The process of making a creative visual artefact - as well as the artefact itself (which may be, for example, a video, drawing, collage, or imagined magazine cover) - offers a reflective entry-point into an exploration of individuals' relationships with media culture (Gauntlett, 2005, p1).

In other words, creative visual methods use visual materials to help individuals express feelings and concepts. Through reference to physical items, this method provides a unique and expansive way to collect data. To this end, I applied three methods in my project: a research diary, in-depth interviews, and reflective data.

Reflective data played a significant role, particularly in the action research component where I used it as an aid to reflect upon the results of launching my Kickstarter campaign, Mr. Dash's Inspiration. Throughout the reflection process, I used visual items, including circular shapes of various colours, during my interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators and the reflective data of my own Kickstarter campaign experiences.

For example, I created coloured circles for my research design that participants used to write their thoughts about their personal backgrounds, art careers, and the role of being an artist generally. This involved participants in the creative visual method because they were asked to use visual items to document abstract ideas in the circles they were given. These circles were then used as Venn diagrams, connecting rings to link participants' thoughts. My general approach was to treat this process as a 'reflective entry-point' into participants' relationships and as a means to ask participants to write what came into their minds in a way that was, for visual artists, familiar and comfortable.

Above all, I appreciated the descriptive power of this creative visual method. On the one hand, as mentioned above, I believe that doing interviews is a creative way to conduct research because the interviewer and the interviewee come together to create meaning

through in-depth and structured conversations (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p11 ; Kara et al., 2015, p82). On the other hand, it should be noted that different results follow from different data-gathering approaches. For example, it is commonplace that interviewers control the conversation and the key-takeaways of interviews. This is part of the reason why I applied visual items for my participants to use during interviews. The visual items served as tools my participants could use to organize and show the consequence of the interviews, thereby balancing the power relationship.

Furthermore, I used the visual items to gather reflexive data about the main action, my experience launching my own Kickstarter campaign. Of course, here, there was not the same power issue because it was a solo exercise that was used for a different purpose.

3.10   Conclusion

My objective in this chapter was to explain how I applied different methods to answer my research questions. As detailed above, this research project used a multi-method approach whereby in-depth interviews and case studies served as the main data, and were further supported by three additional methods, i.e. auto-ethnography, action research, and creative visual methods. Each method had its value in this project. In-depth interviews and case studies yielded 'life-data', while the role of auto-ethnography, action research, and creative visual methods provided empirical data to support this research project.

It is worth mentioning that good research should not just tell researchers or readers *where we are*. On the contrary, it should help researchers and readers know *where we should go next*. The main reason why I integrated traditional research methods and other methods into this project was to explore where we should go next and provide a clear map to my conclusions.

<div align="center">**Chapter 4**</div>

<div align="center">**Fieldwork**</div>

4.1 Introduction

As detailed in Chapter 3, I adopted in-depth interviews and case studies as the primary

methods to obtain data for this research project. Additionally, I used auto-ethnography

action research and creative visual methods to bolster my findings, in an effort to ensure that

my observations were well-rounded and my proposed solutions were balanced. Consistent

with this, my fieldwork began with data-collection, followed by analysis and planning of the

relevant actions (i.e. cases studies, in-depth interviews, launching my Kickstarter campaign,

analysis and observation of the relevant actions undertaken, and then reflections upon cases

and my own experiences).

Organisationally, the first section of this chapter will focus on the approaches I took

to collect data. Essentially, for this stage of my research, I applied case studies and in-depth

interviews, beginning with two pilot cases that enabled me to unpack and clarify my

research questions. The second section of this chapter will set out the requirements of the

case studies and how I used the Kickstarter platform to identify appropriate cases for in-

depth interviews, based on the research questions and overarching theme of this study.

Following this, I will show how I employed creative visual methods via the

'RAINBOW' analysis framework I developed to analyse and observe relevant actions.

Simply put, this framework served my larger goal of outlining developmental processes,

identifying milestones achieved along the way, and assessing the overall outcomes of

campaign successes.

By way of a preview, I applied the RAINBOW analysis framework during in-depth

interviews to organise the interview questions, facilitate my interviewees during their

reflection processes, and to then analyse the proper actions to take based upon my findings. (The results of these efforts will be presented in Chapter 8 of this dissertation, where I propose promising practices that other artists can use to develop their careers through crowdfunding and social media platforms.)

The third section of this chapter will show how I performed more data analysis prior to undertaking the final stage of reflection. For this, I – again – relied upon my RAINBOW analysis framework to help my interview participants adopt seven lenses, i.e. reflection, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities, and weaknesses. In parallel, this framework helped me to reflect upon my experiences and the relationships between artists/myself, art careers, and the social media environment generally.

Finally, I will describe how I transitioned from the data collection to the data analysis phase for the purposes of planning my main action (i.e. conducting in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators and launching my own Kickstarter project). Here, the reader will learn why I focused, primarily, on using the RAINBOW analysis framework to organise the interview findings and then analyse interview data to inform my own campaign's development. Ultimately, my Kickstarter campaign, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* was used to bridge 'living theories' and identify solutions that can resolve real-life challenges artists confront in establishing their careers.

In what follows, I will detail each of the steps outlined above. For the purposes of stage-setting, it is worth noting that I was inspired by Lewin's original formulation of action research (presented in the previous chapter). Hence, it will not come as a surprise to learn that several action reflective frameworks emerged during my project, namely: data collection, analysis and action planning, observation and analysis of actions, and, finally, reflection.

4.2 Phase one: data collection

This stage is characterized by my interview participants' descriptions of experiences and facts, a review of the literature, and my own experiences. The reader may recall from Chapter 3 that Goodman's framework encouraged researchers to describe facts that occurred in the past, while Gibbs' framework emphasised factual descriptions should be captured objectively. John's structural framework focused on the description of experiences, including background factors. Overall, these frameworks each point to the same task required in this stage of the research process: the need to describe experiences and facts as clearly and unbiased as possible.

Proceeding with fact-finding and experience-gathering, this project categorized experiences into two types: the researcher/practitioner's experiences and the participants/successful Kickstarter campaign creators. To gain a deeper understanding of the research context, this project began with two pilot cases. The first pilot case was Lucy Sparrow's successful campaign, *The Corner Shop*, and the second was my *Lego trial*.

It is worth noting here that creators and artists take different approaches to obtaining support to develop their careers; for example, applying for public or private funds, collaborating with dealers or galleries, or approaching patrons. Although each of these approaches plays a specific role in establishing one's career, the research focus is on crowdfunding and power dynamics. When artists choose to collaborate with art dealers or private patrons, there are often expectations to be fulfilled rather than empowering artists to freely create. In other words, patrons hold the power to decide how and who they should support. In crowdfunding, the power dynamic is importantly different. Artists largely decide what they want to make and what they want to express (here, I mean individual artists and creators, not commercial groups). Consistent with the view that creators and artists should hold the main power to develop and price their artwork, it follows that they are also

responsible for their business outcomes.

In other words, crowdfunding provides creators and artists with not only the power to decide the subject matter and commercial value of their work, it also places responsibility over audience interactions, sales, administration, and promotion exclusively with the artist. Essentially, the more freedom artists obtain to create and build their audience base, the more administrative and customer service responsibilities they assume. In any case, I believe the type of power relationship does improve the hierarchy of the traditional market that has, historically, included an intermediary.

Focusing on the variety and purpose of crowdfunding platforms, in comparison to Indiegogo and GoFundMe, Kickstarter is used primarily by creators and artists to launch their creative projects to achieve their fundraising goals. Indiegogo and GoFundMe have few limitations regarding the purpose of funding projects; in fact project founders can simply ask for funding without creating anything.

Even though this means of securing funding is not wrong or illegal, it does not reflect the true situation that artists confront. Indeed, most creators and artists want to make their art well known so that they can build their audience base and encourage people to appreciate their work. More often than not, artists are keen to make art but they do not know how to make their art popular enough to financially support themselves. Kickstarter encourages and facilitates artists and creators to share their art (products) as rewards to attract customers, and in this way anticipates and responds to their needs and marries them with those of their prospective customers. Therefore, Kickstarter was the most appropriate choice for this research project.

4.2.1 Pilot cases: *The Corner Shop* and *LEGO trials*

In 2013, I began investigating artists' campaigns on Kickstarter, which is one of the

most popular crowdfunding platforms in the United Kingdom. Many artists and creators were already using the platform at this time and their number continues to grow – no doubt because Kickstarter is empowering them to pursue their artistic endeavours in a non-conventional and sustainable way. Consistent with this positive hypothesis – that crowdfunding helps artists break free of the strictures of the traditional art market – I worked to identify artists who were engaged in social media and crowdfunding on Kickstarter.

In 2014, I found a case that captured my attention because of its inspiring and creative art, namely Lucy Sparrow's *The Corner Shop*. Sparrow's branding was inviting and memorable – 'sewing your soul' – which complemented her motif of using fabric to create artistic renditions of materials from everyday life, such as newspapers, chocolate bars, potato chips, chewing gum, and food cans. Her stated objective on her campaign page was to use backer's pledges to open a physical shop to sell her products and connect people in her community. Sparrow's campaign not only captured my attention, it also drew the interest of mass media. In fact, both *BBC News* and the *Guardian* reported on her campaign.

In more detail, Sparrow's campaign was launched on 23 January, 2014 and closed 22 February, 2014. Her original – modest – goal was to raise £2,000. Ultimately, she received pledges to the amount of £10,744. Four months later, Sparrow opened *The Corner Shop* in the backstreets of London's Bethnal Green. It was not only the quality of her artwork, but also her strategic thinking and marketing strategy on Kickstarter and social media that made me want to learn more from her through an in-depth interview.

The questions presented below informed the in-depth interview guide I developed prior to meeting with Sparrow. They were used in parallel with the creative visual research

method coloured circles (described in the previous chapter) to support fact-finding. The collected data served as the main resource for the next stage of planning my main action.

4.2.2 First layer: self-reflection (R-eflection)

What is your relationship with your family? Does your family support your art? Why do you want to be an artist? Are you confident about your future career, even though you may not become a famous artist or earn enough money to sustain your artistic lifestyle?

4.2.3 Second layer: artists and their audiences (A-udience and I-nnovation)

How do you build a relationship with your 'actual audience' (potential buyers) in your life? What is the difference between your actual audience and imagined audience? Do you think you may be influenced by your imagined audience in your art career? When you create your art, do you think about the market? How do you know whether your audience will like your art? What is the role of social media in your creativity? Do you think that social media/crowdfunding platforms may influence your creative style?

4.2.4 Third layer: the art market and platforms (N-etwork, B-usiness, O-pportunities, W-eaknesses)

Compared to the traditional art market, do you think social media will be a greater platform to develop your network for your art career? What are the challenges you confront in developing your art career through crowdfunding and other social media platforms? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the traditional business model? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using social media to develop your network? Given the chance, would you prefer to work with galleries rather than to develop your art career by

yourself? Why/not? What opportunities are social media or crowdfunding platforms bringing to you to develop your art career? What opportunities does Kickstarter bring to your art? How can you use crowdfunding and social media platforms to become known in the art market? What are the weaknesses of traditional approaches in developing your career? What are the weaknesses of crowdfunding platforms and social media in developing your career? How can you overcome the weaknesses that social media/crowdfunding bring to your art?

4.2.5   A Kickstarter project is born: *LEGO trials*

While it is best practice for investigators to gather data using traditional research methods, which include interviews and focus groups, it is also worthwhile for researchers to use additional methods to try to uncover 'hidden facts'. In January, 2015 I took part in my doctoral supervisor's workshop, which was dedicated to using creative visual methods to express abstract ideas. Through the guided use of creative visual methods, I came to appreciate how they could be used to expose my deep-seated convictions and ideas, and facilitate me in communicating them.

For instance, while building LEGO configurations, I valued the fact that I was the only person deciding the meaning of my model. This form of reflection and analysis did not involve looking for correct answers and evaluation and it did not require any professional skills to *get it right*. Indeed, the process was tied strictly to what I was reflecting upon or wanted to express in the moment (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015; Gauntlett, 2015; Rose, 2016). When I made LEGO models to express my ideas, I was free to grow in a variety of directions, because I did not have to consider if what I was making mapped onto pre-established rules or standards.

In more detail, the visual methods that were presented during this workshop

motivated me to explore my creative drive and interests, and – eventually – helped me to

develop a good project that attracted attention. Ultimately, I used a 57 piece LEGO set to

explore my thinking around social media, crowdfunding platforms, and the relationship

between artists and the art market. During that period, in order to track how my ideas

evolved, I used the app – 'DayOne'– to record my daily activities and reflections over the

course of three months.

4.2.6 In-depth interviews: Kickstarter artists

Based on my pilot interview with Lucy Sparrow, I identified ten other Kickstarter

cases that were suitable for in-depth interviews; cases I could draw from to learn about

successes, challenges, and promising practices. In what follows, I outline how I identified

and narrowed down successful cases to ten interviewees.

Step one: finding 656 successful cases

Following my pilot study with Lucy Sparrow and my LEGO trials, I designed a

process for identifying additional cases. On Kickstarter's website, geographical locations

are filtered by one of two categories: broader and nearby locations. When I clicked on

'broader location' a prompt came up showing the United Kingdom and then England,

Greater London, and London. Under 'nearby location', Kickstarter displayed Greater

London, London, Edinburgh, Greater Manchester, and East Sussex.

I focused on Kickstarter cases in the United Kingdom because the main research

question did not bear on regional differences and this focus enabled me to have in-person

meetings with these starters. Moreover, the internet and social media effectively reduce

boundaries between geographical locations, and the main actions in this research project

occurred within these virtual spaces. In other words, even though the artists I collaborated

with are located in England, they have audience members worldwide and the insights they obtained through their interactions could therefore be generalised. Given these considerations, I do not believe geographical locations should determine how artists launch their projects and develop their careers through social media and crowdfunding platforms.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that geography has no influence on artists' careers. I believe the art market varies to a greater or lesser extent by location. Specifically, art patrons have different tastes, artists have different creative styles, and art market ecosystems vary. However, these factors are not highly relevant to this study, because the internet allows artists to better connect with and anticipate the interests and needs of their audience base no matter where they are geographically located. This is the main reason why I did not focus on differences between geographical locations in choosing cases to study.

In terms of process, I began by sorting cases through Kickstarter's search filter. I set criteria for this using the categories—'art, place'—England UK, and sorted by popularity. At this stage, I found 1,705 campaigns on Kickstarter during the period 1 January, 2014 to 1 January, 2016. I then entered 'popularity, successful cases, and >100% raised' in the search filter to narrow my cases further. By following this process, I identified 656 successful cases and 1049 unsuccessful ones.

In terms of my operating philosophy, I was guided by the assumption that if I wanted to launch my own successful campaign I should model the success of others and learn what they did to achieve their success. A key part of my research project was, therefore, asking participants to answer relevant questions based on their successful campaigns, such as comparing the advantages and disadvantages of using Kickstarter with the traditional market. This fed into my overall objective of addressing two principal questions: (1) why do artists use crowdfunding and social media to establish their art careers? And (2) how can

they be successful in using crowdfunding/social media platforms in their art careers?

Given the fact that I selected my cases according to their positive results on Kickstarter, all of the artists were successful and could offer promising practices based on their own experiences that could be used to guide others (myself included). Hence, the founders had to be positive about the benefits of social media; otherwise, there was little chance that they would be successful on these platforms. Of course, artists can still have successful careers without social media or crowdfunding platforms. They are not the focus of this study, however.

Step two: Narrowing focus

After identifying 656 successful cases, my next step was to decide, in a principled manner, how to reduce the number to a realistic one for interviewing purposes. Broadly surveying the 656 cases, I decided to filter them based upon the funders' working context.

Appreciating that the funders of successful campaigns are a diverse group – everything from museums, galleries, university departments, companies, full-time professional artists, amateur artists, and private workshops to small creative groups – they also have different resources to support campaigns, and may make choices based upon individual artists' backgrounds. Given that the purpose of this project was to find solutions for individual creators who are not supported by galleries or large organizations, those artists who are so supported were not included as my research subjects.

Step three: the 'top 10' successful cases

Although I decided to use individual artists as my cases, this group still numbered over 100, which far exceeded my capacity for conducting in-depth interviews. My third step, therefore, was to set up detailed categories.

To inform this process, I appreciated the fact that, in the art market, the 'winner-takes-all' mentality is held by art patrons and results in a significant disparity in income levels between artists (Abbing, 2002). For example, the more popular artists are, the more opportunities they have to earn a higher income than others. In the end, most artists experience enduring poverty, or take on jobs to supplement what they earn through their art. Moreover, oftentimes galleries cooperate with established artists and deal with the business affairs for them, freeing established artists from the need to use crowdfunding and social media platforms to sustain their careers. Even though I appreciated this, I also believed that changes in the art market are inevitable, owing to social media and crowdfunding platforms, and that this may create more balance in the future.

Based on these considerations, I refined my search criteria to 'emerging/beginning artist' as my primary cases, and identified individuals based on their biographies presented on their Kickstarter campaign pages. This whittled the potential subject pool down to 45 artists.

My next task was to identify which artists would make the best cases. In other words, who among the 45 artists would be best positioned to answer the questions I had prepared? Digging deeper, I investigated the results of each of these artists' projects and discovered that some of them had launched two, or even three, campaigns. It seemed safe to assume that these artists believed that crowdfunding platforms and social media could help them to develop their art careers, and that they also had strong reasons to continue using Kickstarter and social media. Based on this observation, I chose 10 artists as my cases, and I conducted my in-depth interviews with them because they had either (1) launched at least two successful campaigns, or (2) they had at least one very successful campaign, which I determined to be a campaign that generated over £5000, or exceeded their original goal by over 200%.

4.3 Phase two: analysis and action planning

Even though each of these artists had successful Kickstarter campaigns, they confronted unique challenges that they had to navigate, if not overcome. Learning from the breadth of their experiences was critical to delineate and design the main action plan in my own project. Had 'Mr. Dash's Inspiration' been a collaboration with other artists, I would have had to negotiate creative content, intellectual property, and products. That being said, my creative ideas were ultimately influenced by my literature reviews and in-depth interviews. In the interests of time and competing priorities, I was unable to go through the entire process that is typical of creators and artists who establish themselves through crowdfunding and social media platforms. I was in a privileged position insofar as I did not have to confront the idea that the success of my project was critical to my future career trajectory. Nevertheless, launching my own project enabled me to learn by doing, and obtain more valuable and credible data to support this research project.

A further advantage of launching my own Kickstarter campaign is that it enabled me to successfully transfer my research position from an 'outsider' to that of an 'insider'. As an 'insider', I could examine the 'RAINBOW' analysis framework as an independent creator. Because the framework constitutes an original contribution to the field, it was necessary for me to go through the entire process to experience what my participants had in order to examine this analysis framework. In more detail, I reflected on my childhood experiences of learning about art and being noticed for my skills early on in my education; how I felt about the art market ecosystem during my time working in the magazine company; and how I felt about my relationship with my audience, my creative drive, and the success I had achieved through 'Mr. Dash's Inspiration'. As a practitioner I was also poised to share my experiences of interacting with my followers and funders, how I launched my projects on the crowdfunding platform, and how I analysed my projects from a business perspective to

discover the opportunities and weaknesses inherent in my project.

According to the methodologies detailed in Chapter 3, I knew that in order to explore potential solutions this second stage of planning needed to combine various 'I' frames to clarify my own position. The explanatory 'I' and the researcher 'I' played a significant role in this stage of my project. In more detail, after I chose 10 Kickstarter campaign creators, I began the in-depth interview process. At the same time, I began to prepare for the launch of my own Kickstarter project, which served as the bridge between the facts expressed by successful artists and my own experiences. To identify potential solutions, I undertook two planning phases – i.e. an analysis of pre-experiences and the main action plan.

Laying the groundwork: campaign preparation

Before initiating my main action plan, I analysed the 10 Kickstarter campaigns. I explored how the artists started their campaigns, the objectives of their campaigns, the results of their campaigns, their possible weaknesses, and the potential opportunities, challenges, and advantages therein.

Planning the main action

In designing the other main action – i.e. my own Kickstarter campaign, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* – the previous analysis proved an important reference point. Based on my research design, I used seven lenses to gain a broad understanding of artists' dynamic relationships. Specifically, in the 'business circle', creators/artists were asked to analyse their campaign results. Even though each campaign was successful, every artist had their own unique challenges. Learning from them proved helpful in thinking about my own campaign. That is to say, in the process of action design, I used the previous analysis to

anticipate and work around the challenges the artists confronted, and also integrated my analysis of their previous experiences into the main action design.

In this stage, I explored the following questions: What is the aim of my Kickstarter campaign? How can I launch a successful campaign? What are the requirements of a successful Kickstarter campaign? How can I attract more followers to my Kickstarter campaign?

4.4 Phase three: analysing and observing relevant actions

Following planning, I launched *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* on 21 July, 2017 and completed it on 20 August, 2017. It is worth noting that I began preparing for this project as far back as 2015, when I conducted my first series of in-depth interviews with successful creators. The two-year gap in time demonstrates the complexity of the process. Because I am not a so-called pure artist, I do not have professional drawing or photography skills, which are assets for Kickstarter campaign success. Yet, given my academic background and 10 years of experience working as a professional journalist, I was confident in my writing skills and ability to craft a story and come up with good ideas.

Putting these skills to use, I came up with the idea of designing an 'emotional thermometer' that people could use to express their emotions, similar to a 'mood ring'. This idea – while catchy – was challenging to convert into a product for the sake of rewarding backers. Another idea I entertained was to create my own 'LEGO' book campaign. However, based on my research, I learned there were quite a few LEGO Kickstarter campaigns launched over the years and the vast majority of them had failed.

Soon after I moved away from these working ideas, I was fortunate to get a border collie, Dash. Knowing about my project and the challenges I was confronting, several of my

friends encouraged me to use my stories about Dash to make my own campaign. This suggestion immediately appealed to me. Inspired to create my campaign around my love for Dash, I focused on developing connections between my campaign and followers so that I could raise awareness about my campaign in one month. To make this campaign successful and to identify potential solutions to my research questions, I focused on how to make my campaign relatable and engaging to my network. In the end, I divided my network into two spheres, i.e. virtual relationships and real relationships, and then connected my Kickstarter campaign to them in different ways. Augmenting this, I came up with the idea to build cooperative working relationships with professionals who could fill in my skills gaps and enable me to create a high-quality campaign.

Networks

In Chapter 3, I explained the process I used to develop connections with my campaign followers, how I found potential backers through social media, how I connected my network to my campaign, and the difference between imagined followers and real followers.

Action Results

At this stage of my project, there were two main results from the actions I had undertaken through in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter creators and launching my own Kickstarter project. Through observation and analysis of the two main actions, I collected more evidence and gathered more data to support further analysis I could then use to identify solutions for other starters and contribute to the body of research in this domain.

4.5 Phase four: critical reflection

My reflections were relevant to all of my previous steps, providing the entire picture of the artists' and my own internal and external relationships, as set against the backdrop of the social media art market. As detailed in Chapter 3, this stage engaged different voices – particularly the critical reflexive 'I', the dialectically critical 'I', and the meta-reflexive 'I' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). In this phase, I applied the systematic analysis framework, 'RAINBOW' to reflect on the successful Kickstarter campaign creators' experiences of developing their art careers, as well as my experiences launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*. Taken together, this provided me with the opportunity to explore a broad range of evidence that eventually informed my proposed solutions.

4.6 RAINBOW: purpose and structure

Jasper (2013) proposed a SWOB analysis framework to guide the reflective process, which included four elements, i.e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers. This was based on his observation that it is critical to understand individual skills and abilities (and personal limitations) to be a professional practitioner (Jasper, 2013, p32). Jasper further suggested using a structured reflective framework to illuminate certain areas of inquiry and communicate ideas effectively.

Guided by this thinking, after I identified the most suitable cases for my project, I used a systematic framework to conduct my in-depth interviews. Essentially, I integrated some of the features of Jasper's SWOB reflective framework into the 'RAINBOW' analysis framework, and applied additional social media categories, including audiences, networks, innovations, and business. This approach provided me with the lenses I needed to elicit seven perspectives from each interviewee, i.e. relationship, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities, and weaknesses.

Before I offer more depth about how I applied the RAINBOW framework to this research project, I want to expand upon how I organised the analysis framework as well as the content of the RAINBOW analysis framework. Briefly here and in more detail below, the rainbow's seven colours served as metaphors for the seven analytical perspectives in this research project. Therefore, when I carried out my analysis, I applied the creative visual research methods to this framework in the form of colourful circles that could be filled with written ideas during in-depth interviews and my own self-reflection.

R: Reflection

According to Jasper (2013), 'reflective processes help us to see the world in alternative ways by enabling us to focus on different aspects of our experience… By using reflective processes we come to understand our experiences differently and take action as a result' (Jasper, 2013, p1-12). Building on this account, Schön (2017) described two types of reflection—'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'.

In this research project, I viewed the reflection process as 'an active process of transforming experience into knowledge' which involved 'much more than simply thinking about and describing practice in order to understand…' (Jasper, 2013, p7). Said another way, my research interests were more aligned with 'reflection-on-action' than 'reflection-in-action' throughout my project.

Answering my research question necessitated further dividing reflection into two categories, i.e. practitioner's lives and the main action. With respect to artists' lives, my questions focused on their life stories and the relationships they had with their family members, particularly during their formative years. This process involved an exploration of the reasons why each of my subjects chose to become an artist. In terms of how these questions contributed to my main action, the answers I was given enabled me to reflect on

how the artists' past experiences influenced their present actions and successes. This further

facilitated me in exposing the gap between my theoretical knowledge and their real

experiences to help me propose solutions that would help others who want to succeed

through Kickstarter.

In sum, my reflection involved two stages. First, during the stage of fact-finding

and auto-ethnography action research, I reflected on the research cases I had read about and

how they compared with the experiences of my interview subjects. Second, I reflected on

the main action during the last stage of my auto-ethnography action research, which also

included my life story and how my previous experiences influenced this action research.

A: Audience

Given the ubiquity of the internet and the popularity of social media, an audience's

size, composition, and what audience members like are each important factors for artists to

consider in establishing successful careers. In particular, for those who want to promote

their creative works and develop their careers exclusively on social media sites, the size of

the audience matters tremendously.

In an effort to define social media 'audiences', I discovered that there is a well-

developed body of research concerned with the relationships between media and audience,

including audience reception studies, the history of audience attitudes, and mass media

impacts (Livingstone, 1998a; Ferreira, 2014; Hazelwood et al., 2009). More recently,

audience studies have been complemented by research into how audiences interact with

social media content. This demonstrates the changing role of the audience from passive

recipients to active engagers made possible through technological developments. Jenkins

(2006), for instance, notes that fans are able to not only 'communicate amongst themselves

about media but also to participate in the creation of digital content… Online fans

essentially represent the way all audiences will interact with media from now on…' (cited in Bird, 2011, p503).

In this phase of my project, it was critical to explore the methods or processes successful artists used to develop relationships with their audience members, other artists, and social media and crowdfunding platforms.

Interestingly, when Cool first introduced the concept of 'audience' in 1902, he proposed an 'imagined audience', or 'the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating…' (Litt, 2012, p331). Relationships that artists have with their audiences have since undergone significant changes due to the introduction, popularity, and accessibility of social media.

Applying this thinking to my project, I explored how artists developed their relationships with their 'imagined audiences' as well as their actual audience members in front of their computer screens. Second, I investigated the changes that occurred in the relationships between artists and their 'actual' real-life audiences through successful Kickstarter campaigns. Dovetailing this, I turned to changes in the art market, and how those changes influenced the artists' relationships with their audiences.

For example, the UK Contemporary Gallery's annual report (2015) discussed the online opportunities and challenges artists face. The report notes 'artists are increasingly using their own websites and social media, such as Instagram, to sell their work directly to their customers. This is increasingly becoming a challenge for galleries and their relationship with their artists' (ArtTactic, 2016, p8).

To some extent, prior to the emergence of new technology, the role of a gallery was to develop an audience base to make artists' work well known and help them to sell their art over time. Thus, galleries held the power – almost unilaterally – to decide which artist would grow their audience and attract buyers. The art environment has since undergone

significant changes, and this influenced the relationships between galleries, artists, and audiences.

I: Innovation

Next, I divided my exploration of innovation (i.e. creative approaches to artwork) into two parts—first, the relationship between artists' creativity and their artwork, and, second, how artists use their art to communicate with their audiences. For example, I asked my interview subjects the questions detailed above, i.e. what motivates them to create their work; how they come up with their creative ideas; what their thinking is about their art; and how they overcome their frustrations tied to obtaining social approval.

N: Networking

As outlined above, the emergence of the internet and Web 2.0 have created new opportunities in the art world and the art market. According to Morris (2013), 'it is hard to deny that social media has become the primary tools for artists (amateurs and professionals alike) to gain exposure and connect with users' (Cohen et al., 2013, p5). Additionally, social media has enhanced each artists' ability to grow their network independently of galleries.

Under these changed circumstances, it is worth comparing the role that networks traditionally played, and the role that they now play in career development and the power dynamic of the art market. That many artists have dedicated business spaces on social media platforms – from Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, and LinkedIn to Kickstarter – is a testament to this changed relationship and value structure.

In more detail, Marwick and boyd (2011) described how artists use social media, emphasising the types of interactions they have with their fans. Their research demonstrates that websites, in particular, have been used to post relevant information and keep resources

up-to-date for artistic audiences. With these changed relationships, different working styles and types of interaction have emerged. Besides being members of artists' communities, followers can now use hashtags and '@ functions' to better connect with the artists they admire. In turn, this practice encourages artists to continue showing their art to maintain existing, and attract new, followers – rather than waiting to exhibit their artwork in galleries. In the words of the visual artist, Teresa Kogut, social media is:

> not only a great way to get your art in front of people, more importantly, you will connect with people… People will not only love your art but they will want to get to know the person behind the art. Social media has changed the way people do business. It's personal. People want to support the people they connect with. Having said that, it is important that you be authentic, be transparent, be natural, be you! People want to know YOU, not who you think they want to know….[22]

B: Business

With respect to the business environment of the art market, social media has created new opportunities and incentives. Yet challenges remain. For example, the crowdfunding model can open doors, so to speak, but it is still difficult to capture interest, considering the fact that 'everything is plentiful – except attention' (Kortelainen and Katvala, 2012). This is the reason why some artists are hesitant to rely on crowdfunding or social media to develop their art careers.

Knowing this, my 'RAINBOW' analysis framework focused on the relationships between artists' work, their careers, and the art market generally, and excluded artists who did not believe, or were not interested in, the power of social media. Situating this, my discussions about the business perspective, made possible by social media, explored economic changes that resulted from artists' career development and the promotion of their work. Moreover, in terms of practical applications, my RAINBOW analysis framework explored strategies used in successful Kickstarter campaigns to offer solutions for aspiring

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[22] http://teresakogut.com/visual-artist-social-media/

artists in the social media era.

O: Opportunities

Drawing again on Jasper's SWOB analysis framework (2013), I identified practitioners' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers so that I could gain a complete picture of who they were, as artists, how they worked, and what they could do better to succeed and sustain their careers. Next, using my 'RAINBOW' analysis framework, I helped each individual I interviewed to appreciate their lived experiences and the opportunities afforded to them by social media. In turn, the questions I posed helped me to learn where the individual artists excelled and the approaches they took to become successful on Kickstarter.

With respect to the opportunity analysis of social media's impact on the art market, I asked the artists I interviewed why they used new media platforms to identify opportunities instead of traditional forums, like galleries.

W: Weaknesses

According to the SWOB analysis framework, the purpose of analysing weaknesses is to gain an 'actual' assessment through the reflective process that can allow artists to confront the real-world in their careers. Consistent with this, I asked artists about the difficulties they had experienced in launching their campaigns, and to elaborate on what they felt they were not good at. I anticipated responses that attributed challenges to administrative burdens, marketing, projections, and sustainability, as these activities used to be absorbed by galleries, and many artists are not trained in marketing and coordination (Cohen et al., 2013).

I also recognised that, because social media enables artists to draw followers

worldwide, they must think about whether and how to deliver upon other people's expectations. Related to this, followers now expect artists to offer real responses, and even provide services (Ordanini et al., 2011). These activities can take away from the pleasures of creating and sharing art. Thus, I tailored my interview questions accordingly.

4.7 Knowledge Translation: researcher turned practitioner

In this auto-ethnography action research project, I used my 'RAINBOW' analysis framework during two stages. In the first stage, fact-finding, I used RAINBOW during in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators to gather valuable data that I could not get from textbooks and articles alone. I used RAINBOW again in the final stage to support my own reflection as a practitioner. Specifically, after designing the RAINBOW analysis framework, I applied it to my three-layered research questions to analyse the seven circumscribed topics – i.e. reflection, audience, innovation, network, business, opportunities, and weaknesses. For this, I used the seven colours of the rainbow to map onto the seven topics and to organise the interview questions. I also used the colours to support my own organisational analysis.

In terms of my process, prior to conducting my interviews, I cut out circles from coloured paper. During the interview, I explained their significance to my participants, i.e. red represents reflection; orange represents audiences; yellow represents innovation; green represents network; blue represents business; indigo represents opportunities; and purple represents weaknesses. This also helped me to maintain a clear organisational order to my interview questions, guided by the seven topics that were colour coordinated.

When my interview participants spoke, I also asked them to write their ideas down on the circles and organize them by using the visual aids as prompts. Thus, at the same time, the visual aids functioned as a thinking tool that facilitated expression and an organised

presentation of ideas. This method was the bridge between artists' subconscious leanings and their real-life situations. Upon completion of the in-depth interviews, these visual items functioned as the map I could use to connect interviewees' ideas and shared experiences, as well as rearrange them to support the various stages of data-gathering.

Reflecting on my subjects' insights as a practitioner, I also used the coloured circles and followed the same procedures I had instructed others to assume. These methods were my tools, enabling me to use visual items to express my abstract ideas clearly and draw meaning from the total responses. Even though it was not my primary method, these visual aids played an important role in my research project.

Chapter 5

Artists' Crowdfunding Campaigns: An Analysis of Success Cases

5.1 Successful Kickstarter campaigns: an overview

The foundation for fact-finding in this research project consisted of ten in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter creators. Granted, there are always more successful cases to be found, but, for the purposes of this project, I determined that ten cases were not only feasible but also a representative sample of artists who were using social media and crowdfunding platforms to establish their careers. My hypothesis was confirmed through the process of using the facts that I had gathered to develop my own successful Kickstarter campaign. In what follows, I share details about the successful starters I interviewed, and offer an analysis of the individual strategies they used to achieve campaign success.

Part of my strategy in selecting Kickstarter success cases was to look for a breadth of specialties that would enable me to capture variety in terms of practices and outputs. Lucy Sparrow and Katrin Albrecht both focused on hand-made products to engage sentiment and evoke warm memories. Sophie Giblin's *Death by Galleries* and Gabriela Davies' *(dis)placement project* were, essentially, calls for emerging artists to work together to empower themselves. Jane Moore's *Sketch a Day Project*; Kelly Sweeney's *Develop a New Body of Painting*; and Dianne Bowell's *Exhibition and New Explorations in Painting* each used drawing to raise consciousness about feminism, equality, and the meaning of life. Peter Driver's projects, *Let's tool-up my First Printmaking Studio*, and *…and then Three Come Along at Once* each involved printmaking and requests for backers to fund the associated costs and supplies. Emily Brown was keen to use her potential earnings to buy the tools she needed to refine her pottery-making skills and help her to develop her career. Finally, Mike Spence had four campaigns on Kickstarter; in each, he passionately pursued drawing and without having remarkable skills.

5.2 Successful artists and their campaigns

5.2.1 Lucy Sparrow's *The Corner Shop*

Lucy Sparrow is an artist from Bath, United Kingdom. She has become well-known for connecting with her audience through nostalgia art that taps into the public's imagination. Based on the success of her 2014 Kickstarter campaign, she created chocolate bars, chips, bean cans, Oyster cards, and newspapers out of felt, and has sold each of these items in her physical and online shops.

Sparrow launched her second campaign in 2015, with the purpose of setting up a convenience store in New York City to sell her felt products. It was even more successful than her first campaign. Sparrow's reaction to her campaign's success is telling:

> I never thought, or ever dreamed it was possible, that the fine art world would accept what I was making. I already had it in my mind that people would dismiss it as silly and childlike… but now that it is [successful] I've got this huge responsibility on my hands. Not only am I carrying this subject… I'm carrying this material into realms where it hasn't been before. I've got to present it in a way that continues to be challenging and lives up to the massive history of painting….

Of the ten cases, Sparrow achieved the greatest success, and, therefore, her cases serve as the primary resource for this component of fact-finding. Sparrow's two successful campaigns and our in-depth interviews shed light on the challenges artists face in the art market, and how they are adjusting (identity-wise and business-wise) to the changed landscape, made possible through social media and crowdfunding platforms.

On Sparrow's Kickstarter page for *The Corner Shop*, she invited visitors to reflect on whether they remembered their local corner shops from their childhoods. To support this reflection process, she asked a series of related, engaging questions, ending with the evocative question "Where did it go?"

Traditionally – she explained to her campaign visitors – the corner shop was small and at the heart of one's community, located on a busy street corner. People went there not just to buy groceries, but also to socialise with their neighbours. This meant that the role of the corner shop was not only a centre to purchase essentials, but a place to share ideas, opinions, hear the latest community news, and make memories. With this backdrop in mind, Sparrow used *The Corner Shop* campaign to raise awareness about the changed community dynamics that came with the emergence of chain and big box stores. Aligned with this and through her campaign's success, Sparrow rented an old pub on a corner of Bethnal Green, London. The following photos show one part of her campaign process.

The pub prior to its renovation and the opening of *The Corner Shop*

Following Sparrow's campaign success

Both visually and virtually, Sparrow used *The Corner Shop* as a hub for residents and creative types to converge and discuss common ideas. In addition to showcasing and selling her own creative works, Sparrow used this space to organise live-sewing events and workshops.

To gain a broader following and continue engaging her audience, Sparrow created a website that she regularly updated with photos, progress videos, and a blog wherein she described her experiences, her campaign's outcomes, and invited discussion on *The Corner Shop's* growth and future.

In addition to offering a space for people to connect, Sparrow used her platform and her hand-crafted products to encourage people to reflect on their daily consumption habits. In our modern society, people have become accustomed to shopping in chain stores and supermarkets. They enter the store, seek out what they need or want, pay, and then quickly exit. Knowing this, Sparrow stressed the value of crafting and, through *The Corner Shop*, reminded people about the feeling of patronising old shops, the importance of slowing down, and helped them to experience a connection to the past through hand-crafted products.

Overall, the consistent theme across Sparrow's work and her Kickstarter campaigns is an exploration of 'the power that making has in building self-esteem and enhancing social relations'[23]. In fact, while introducing her follow-up campaign – *The New York Fabric Convenience Store – An Art Installation* – Sparrow jogged visitors' memories by connecting them back to her first campaign and how felt products fit within this overarching theme.

While Sparrow's *Corner Shop* remained filled with felt items, she dreamed of opening a convenience store in Manhattan, USA – which would be five-times the size of her first shop. For this, she requested £40,000 in funding, i.e. twenty-times more than the £2,000 she received in funding from her first campaign.

Similar to *The Corner Shop*, Sparrow's approach was to sentimentalise the American convenience store, and convert a physical store into a community hub of nostalgia goods. In her own words 'the local convenience store is not just there to buy Twinkies, and where else

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[23] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sewyoursoul/the-cornershop

would Chunk have bought his Baby Ruth bars? It is often the first taste of freedom teenagers get, being sent to the store to fetch missing cupboard items, and bumping into friends staying out just a little longer than you're all meant to….'

Indeed, Sparrow used *The Corner Shop* and *The New York Convenience Store — An Art Installation* to engage her campaign funder's memories, sentiments, and arouse fond feelings towards her felt products. Sparrow's second store was more interactive than her first, including a designated section to create customers' own bespoke fabric sandwiches at a deli counter.

Despite the fact that Sparrow's two campaigns had similar goals and themes, her second one was four-times more successful. The key factors contributing to this included the media attention of her first campaign, developing a loyal following through in-store and web visits, and – perhaps, most importantly – bringing investors into her second campaign. Sparrow stated explicitly during her second campaign that she needed 'to raise half the funds for its production costs from crowdfunding to prove to [her] angel investors that this is an exciting art installation that people want to see.'

The following photos are products that appear in Sparrow's *The New York Fabric Convenience Store – An Art Installation*.

Rewards

Sparrow's *Corner Shop* evokes feelings of nostalgia through showcasing felt products in a physical gathering space – inviting memories of simpler times when

communities were more enmeshed. Sparrow's designs were, therefore, selected and framed with the purpose of connecting with her audience's lives. In her own words 'Have you ever wanted a cuddly ice lolly that you could take to bed with you and hug forever? Well that's what you get when you pledge £50. No more melting ice lollies that are gone once you eat them; these guys last forever!' To connect through her felt embroidered newspaper design, Sparrow asked '[Do you] like reading the news in bed? Well now you can double up this one as a pillow. Intricately stitched with the latest felt headlines and signed and dated by me.'

Even though a cuddly ice lolly for £50 and a felt embroidered newspaper for £150 are not cheap, Sparrow managed to connect these items to people's lived experiences, creating value by offering a sentimental object and aesthetic. Sparrow extended her reward items into other daily products, including felt recreations of Heinz Tomato Soup, Wrigley's Extra chewing gum, and Heinz Beans (pictured above). Overall, Sparrow's reward design is an exemplary model of how to use low cost to create high value products.

Following the success of her Kickstarter campaigns, Sparrow has continued to confidently and creatively express her artistic talents. In fact, outside of Kickstarter, Sparrow opened a felt sex shop called *Madame Roxy's Erotic Emporium*. In her own words,

> I don't think you can change people's opinions or offer any sort of alternative if you're aggressive about it from the get-go… I thought, "how about doing it in a comedic way and approach it in a gentle way—actually make people think and not insult their intelligence?" I think that's the danger of making any kind of art that makes a point. You shouldn't treat your viewer as being anything but super intelligent….

5.2.2 Katrin Albrecht's *The Shed Is On Fire / Die Hutte Brennt*

Katrin Albrecht is a London-based artist who was born and raised in Germany. Before moving to London, Albrecht worked as a professional tailor and built her experience over the course of 5 years. Through attaining two master's degrees, studying Fine Arts at

Weißensee Berlin Art School and University of London, Albrecht broadened her perspective on art, developed her skills, and resolved to work professionally as an artist.

Albrecht is skilled in using fabric, as well as clothing and second-hand materials, to create bold and colourful installations that are inspired by her everyday interactions and relationships. She communicates with her audience through sculptures, installations, and collages. In particular, Albrecht focuses on physical objects and intimate textiles, stating

> I like to subvert the usual context of a material by transforming it into something totally different or by taking it out of its context… The characteristics of fabric are similar to how I perceive a human life, and I use the relationship between media and ideas to create tension in my work….

Albrecht has received numerous awards for her artwork, including the Chelsea Arts Club Award (London, 2012), the Berta Koch collective (London, 2014), the German Central Bank's Art Award (Frankfurt, 2010), and a Government scholarship from Cusanuswerk (2006-2012).

Like Sparrow, Albrecht used felt products in her campaign, but in the form of fabric brick installations. A significant difference in their methods is that Albrecht used fabric materials that were donated from her friends and family members, while Sparrow used fabric material that was purchased from markets.

Another difference is how Albrecht and Sparrow approached connecting with their audiences. Whereas Sparrow played on general nostalgia, sentiment, and memory, Albrecht portrayed her friends' memories through making bricks from their clothes. Sparrow made her campaign resonate with her potential backers' experiences, and enabled her backers to visit the physical shop to experience it for themselves. In terms of Albrecht's campaign, her proposal focused on funding an exhibition. Compared with Sparrow's campaign, Albrecht's backers could not get as intimately or directly involved. In the end, I believe this is one of

the main reasons why their campaigns had significantly different outcomes. I will have more to say about this below.

The following photos show Albrecht's artwork:

Albrecht explained to her campaign visitors that 'every material has its own history/memory. All of these materials come from my friends' T-shirts, trousers, dresses, towels, etc. For me, they are not just materials, but they have their own "life" or "meaning". When I used these clothes to make bricks, I always thought about my friends and appreciated their support.' In terms of what she was building, Albrecht explained that her fabric bricks could be used to represent a house, a corner, or even ruins.

In 2007, Albrecht attended different exhibitions throughout Germany, accompanied by 300 fabric bricks. Through her Kickstarter campaign, she wanted to raise enough funding to make 100 more bricks to exhibit her work in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In the end, Albrecht's project was successful, seeing 23 backers support her campaign and raising £2,911 pledged from her original goal of £2,850.

The main reason why I selected Sparrow and Albrecht's comparable campaigns for fact-finding was so that I could learn about how they each used memory, sentiment, and personal experience to connect their audience to their respective campaign's purpose, while achieving dramatically different results. From their campaign outcomes, it was evident that visitors were more emotionally connected to Sparrow's.

Sparrow and Albrecht both incorporated life memories into their campaigns to express themselves and create an emotional connection with their potential backers. The important difference between their campaigns is that the memories/experiences in Albrecht's campaign were connected solely to Albrecht's life stories, whereas the memories/experiences in Sparrow's campaigns were more universal.

In addition to connecting with the audience, I was also intrigued to learn how these artists felt about social media and its connection to their campaigns, as well as how they used it to effectively build relationships with funders. I learned that Albrecht connected her website and Facebook account to her campaign, attracting 648 followers. Sparrow had 2,836 followers on Facebook, 6,589 on Twitter, and 26,600 followers on Instagram.

Comparing Sparrow and Albrecht's campaign results, Sparrow had 361 backers (£10,744) and 532 backers (£40,519) in her first and second campaigns, respectively. In Albrecht's campaign, she had a total of 23 backers (£2,911) for a project that had a similar theme and output.

Compared with Albrecht, Sparrow had many more social media followers – meaning she also had more opportunities to convert followers into campaign backers. Apart from that, their attitudes towards social media and their online personalities may have influenced their campaign results. For example, during my in-depth interviews, when we discussed the topic of networks, Sparrow expressed a positive attitude, saw its value, and explained how she interacted with her social media followers. In her own words

> I am always on my phone. I am always Tweeting and doing something on Facebook… It is actually a full-time job developing relationships… With Kickstarter, I was quite focused on money. That is the main aim with Kickstarter.

Albrecht had a different attitude towards social media, stating 'I am a bit reluctant and careful to use social media… because of privacy… I don't want everyone knowing everything about me.'

From their success cases, the content of their campaigns, their strategies, and online networks, it is clear that a successful starter's attitude towards potential audiences/backers and the relationships they are able to establish significantly impact their overall results. Situating this discussion within the broader art market, it is worth mentioning that emerging artists typically have limited power in the art market. Expressing awareness of this, these young artists emphasised the importance of cooperating amongst themselves and with their peers who have complementary skills to support each other and empower themselves. Shining examples of this came out in Giblin and Davies' campaigns; I will say more about this below (in sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4).

First, I would like to expand upon reward designs. Albrecht's reward design was simple, offering fewer choices than the other Kickstarter campaigns profiled here. In addition to displaying limited prints, Albrecht provided supporters with felt collages and bricks. On the one hand, perhaps this simple design saved Albrecht time, because she did not have to prepare many items for supporters and did not have to invest much time in dealing with consumer's demands upon her campaign's success. On the other hand, Albrecht had to work to attract supporters despite having limited items to use to connect with them. Specifically, supporters could back her with £10, £100, £400, and £1000, respectively.

As such, potential customers may have felt that they were offered too few choices, or that the costs were prohibitive. After all, the majority of the time, customers are not willing to spend over £100 to support Kickstarter artists, unless they know the artist well or love the art. On Kickstarter's website, it states that most visitors support artists by offering between one and five pounds. Once the artist raises the amount of their rewards, the number of supporters tends to decrease. This is likely the reason why Albrecht did not attract more supporters – i.e. they could not find an item that they valued highly enough for the price.

5.2.3 Sophie Giblin *Kollecktiv's first ever gallery* and *Death by Gallery - Kollektiv Gallery*

Sophie Giblin is a visual artist from Brighton who now lives in New Zealand. Prior to her move, Giblin ran her own art gallery, Kollektiv that she had established in 2013. A recent graduate at the time – having completed both performance and visual arts degrees – Giblin felt frustrated by the lack of support and resources available to emerging artists. Proactively responding to this, she used her gallery to encourage other local emerging artists to show their work in the art market. Because of her father's influence (who is a businessman), Giblin decided to take some courses dedicated to entrepreneurialism to bolster her efforts.

In order to sell and promote emerging artists' work, Giblin used Kickstarter to launch two campaigns focused on creating pop-up stores. Through establishing the pop-up stores – *Kollecktiv's first ever gallery* and *Death by Gallery - Kollektiv Gallery* – Giblin learned how to become self-empowered, as well as how to encourage and support other emerging artists. In her own words, 'it is difficult to sell in pop-up stores and reach online audiences… but it's not just about the money. Pop-up stores enable us to interact with our customers, as well as help the local community.'

Giblin launched her first and second Kickstarter campaigns in 2013 and 2014. In the first campaign (*Kollektiv's First Ever Gallery*) her campaign's description began with the words 'Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.' This nicely conveys the working philosophy and resourcefulness of many emerging artists, who are keen to pursue their artistic passions. Essentially, Giblin cooperated with 15 artists from Brighton, who found an empty high street shop that they used to exhibit their work over the course of a month. At the same time, they used the shop as the Brighton's community centre to host workshops, have open discussions, sell their artwork, and become more involved in their

local community. The following photo is of one of Giblin's pieces (one of her rewards, in fact) for backers.
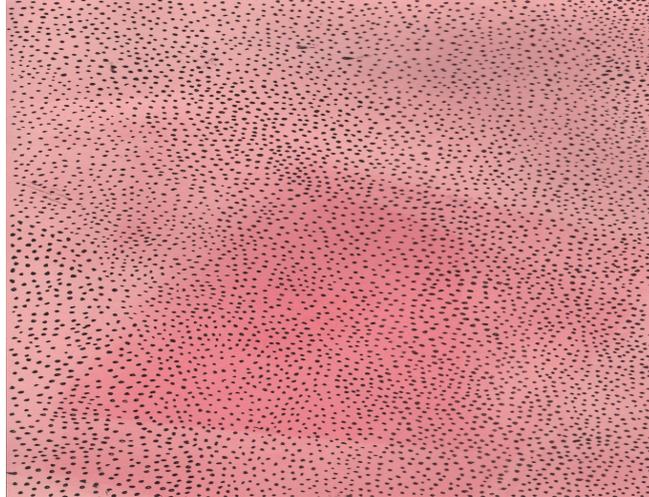
Pledge £30 or more **Many times illustration** • A4 • digital print • Sophie Giblin

With respect to method, Giblin mixes different styles, mediums, and forms – including performance, drawing, and photography – into her body of work to explore the themes of memory, experience, and imagination. In Giblin's performances, she uses different artefacts, such as drawings and photography, integrating them into physical forms of expression. Through the repetitive process of drawing lines on her body, Giblin claims to redefine the meaning of line art, stating 'each unique line has an impact on the proceeding line drawn. This ever-morphing, visual rhythm offers a representation of the metamorphosing human memory, where the first line made is nothing like the final one.' The following is a sample of her artwork:
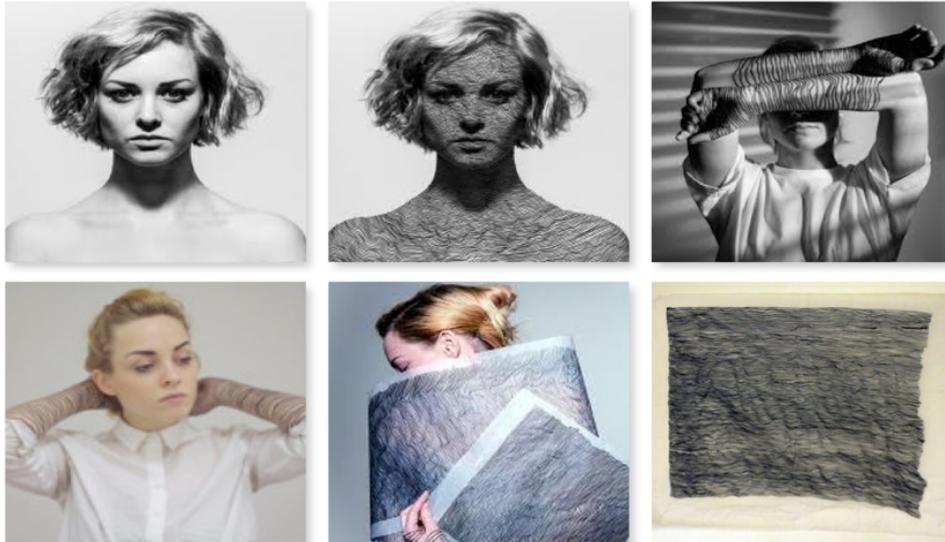
Photographs of Giblin's art: The art of 'drawing lines'

Through our in-depth interview, I learned that social media and crowdfunding gave Giblin and her colleagues more opportunities to create, support each other, and gain an audience. She was empowered to develop her art career by herself, instead of needing to work with a gallery.

Following her first campaign's success, Giblin launched *Death by Gallery, Kollektiv Gallery*. Her objective was to work alongside a new set of local talented artists to organise workshops that would inspire co-creation, such as DIY guerrilla exhibiting[24], selling art together, and making ceramic dishware.

Like Sparrow and Albrecht, Giblin's campaigns were connected to her social media accounts. She has 592 followers on her Facebook page, 1,322 followers on her Twitter account, and 406 followers on LinkedIn. With respect to the results of her Kickstarter campaigns, Giblin received £3,605 (from 86 backers) during her first campaign and £2,342 (from 71 backers) during her second campaign.

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[24] During Giblin's workshop, everyone contributed one pound to create something together and sold it in street markets.

In terms of her approach to relationship building, Giblin focused on forming cooperatives with other emerging artists and the overarching theme of personal identity. In the description of her first campaign, Giblin had the following to say, 'I have this never-ending passion to understand how people are shaped by the external influences they have undergone… This [art project] was a unique opportunity for people to express who they are in any way they want.'

Giblin's rewards

In Giblin's campaign, the works of emerging artists' were used to reward backers. In total, 27 rewards were offered (ranging from £2 to £250). The themes of the pieces varied by style, gender, politics, portraiture, and emotional tone. Ultimately, Giblin attracted support from 71 backers by offering variety and choice. That said, the fact that there were so many choices may have been a detractor for some potential backers – i.e. they may have experienced information overload. In the end, if Giblin were to reorganise her presentation of the reward themes and focus attention on them, I suspect her campaign could draw more attention and achieve better results.

5.2.4 Gabriela Davies' *IDENTITY/ MEMORY* and *(dis)placement project*

Gabriela Davies is a Brazilian artist who characterizes herself as a curator. She graduated from University College London with a Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Criticism, and Conversation. Soon after, Davies began organising exhibitions for other artists, even though she created her own pieces in her written online diary under her Twitter handle @pinkontology.

While studying in London, Davies had many opportunities to reflect on her Brazilian heritage, particularly with respect to the concept of self-identity. Regarding her two

Kickstarter campaigns, Davies said that 'the works on display often suggest cultural differences, and personal identity in relation to the environment… In other words, what it is to be "at home", to have a home, and to find a home'. Related to this, Davies explained to me that curation is a relatively new vocation, one that tries to bring new work-environments and create new pathways for artists to establish themselves and express their visions.

When I first found Davies' campaign, I was exploring the theme of reflection among creators/artists. I noticed that Davies had an interesting technique that she used to express personal identity through life stories. In more detail, Davies created an online database of artwork from all over the world to help creators/artists express their identities (www.identitymemory.com). In her first campaign, she facilitated over 50 artists in expressing their identities through drawing, poetry, songs, and even books. Ultimately, 20 artists attended the exhibition at the Tea Embassy Gallery in London (which was what Davies had used Kickstarter funding to seed).

In Davies' second campaign, she focused on the topic of (dis)placement, and used a new pathway to identify and engage artists worldwide to exhibit their works. A panel of 5 judges decided which artists could participate in the exhibition. At the end of this process, 14 artists were selected from 58 applicants. Davies explained that the purpose of this project was 'to develop an open-submission exhibition method, which gives the opportunity for young and emerging artists to submit their work they have been developing'.

What I found most intriguing about Davies' topics – personal identity and (dis)placement – was that they are rather academic and conceptual. They are not entertaining, and they do not play to nostalgia or memory like the other starters I interviewed. Still, both of Davies' campaigns achieved good results, namely £10,218 (from 59 backers) and £3,941 (from 35 backers), respectively.

In terms of developing her audience, Davies connected her Facebook page (of 1,201 followers) to her campaign, as well as the following three websites: gabidavies.co.uk; identitymemory.com; and displacementproject.co.uk. Even though Davies did not develop well-rounded social media sites for her campaigns, the connections she had already established through her websites are noteworthy. For example, Davies used an online database to attract artists worldwide and store their information. Hence, her individual artists' social media networks supported her own Kickstarter campaigns from afar and automatically.

Davies' Rewards

Davies had a simple and straightforward reward design, offering backers 7 items to choose from. However, the rewards may have been unappealing due to their simplicity. For example, among the rewards, backers who pledged £1 would get a 'thank you' email from all participating artists. Those who pledged £10 would have their names placed on a formal acknowledgement and receive a post card with a written 'thank you' note. Backers who pledged £50 would receive an A3 poster of one of the works on display.

As I see it, where most people are on the receiving end of countless emails per day, the prospect of receiving a 'thank you' email for funding support may have been viewed in a negative light. Perhaps that is part of the reason why Davies' campaign did not attract a large audience base or significant backing.

5.2.5 Jane Moore's *Draw Every Day Project*

Jane Moore is a fine artist based in London, UK. Although she specialises in portraits, Moore works as an illustrator, a storyboard artist, and a sketcher in various industries, including advertising, marketing, fashion, music, and publishing. In her words, 'I

do a lot of portraits, mostly of friends, and I like drawing animals in human clothing… I could draw 24/7… I never run out of inspiration. My favourite medium is oil but it's a slower process. Watercolour is quicker and dries faster'.

Moore's *Draw Every Day Project* was inspired by her art career and daily life experiences. In fact, it began as her New Year's resolution in 2014:

> Normally, I decide to give up chocolate, cake, or to start a new sport. I usually stick to my resolutions until about March. Last year I thought I would choose a resolution I knew I would commit to, and that would make me concentrate and spend more time on my personal development as an artist. I wanted to strengthen my drawing skills and develop new techniques through my resolution.

Moore further explained that her project allowed her mind to wander off on a creative tangent from her everyday work, providing her with the freedom to draw what she desired and also allow for personal growth and development. This process enabled her drawing skills to improve dramatically, and fostered her ability to think of fresh and unique ideas for both personal and commercial work.

In reflecting on the reasons for her campaign's success, Moore believed that mass media reporting was a significant factor, explaining 'I approached different media [outlets] and emailed them about my project. I also framed the project through different lenses to make sure I could get press attention. When you get press, more people can see it. I tried to inspire people to think "I want to get involved"'.

On the topic of creators/artists empowering themselves through the connections they make via social media and crowdfunding, Giblin and Davies harnessed this for cooperatives and co-creating products. Alternatively, Moore, Sweeney, and Bowell used these platforms for a different purpose. Moore used her campaign, *Sketch A Day Project* to motivate and share her personal artistic resolution. Specifically, on 1 January, 2014, Moore resolved to complete one sketch each day for the next 365 days.

Sweeney and Bowell used their campaigns to gain financial support to finance their artwork. As an emerging artist who was preparing for his first solo exhibit in London, Sweeney needed financial support to purchase materials, including stretchers, canvas, and paint. But the funding was not only for an exhibition, it was also for artistic freedom. In Sweeney's words, 'I would like to have the freedom to be prolific and create as many paintings as the funding will allow, exploring my artistic concerns'. Likewise, in Bowell's first campaign, *Exhibition and New Work in Painting* the objective was to secure funding to purchase materials, such as canvases, to create new paintings for her solo exhibition.

In the process of selecting successful campaigns, I was curious about artists' motivations to pursue their creative expression and stick to an art career, despite its inherent challenges. Moore's New Year's resolution to complete one sketch each day for the next 365 days was a prime example of persistence paired with pragmatism. Moore was not only following through on the creative challenge of her artwork, she also used the campaign to spread her influence through a planned exhibition, as well as self-publishing a hardback book of the 365 sketches. In tandem, she ran drawing workshops for London-based secondary schools.

The following is a sample of the drawings Moore completed during her campaign:

Moore's Rewards

Moore offered potential backers 13 reward choices. Taking a well-organised approach, she connected each of her items, which varied in type and by theme, to her campaign. These items ranged from a £10 'Sketch a Day' set of alphabet playing cards, £15 to join an evening workshop, £20 for a 'Sketch A Day' T-shirt, and £25 for a limited edition mounted print. Apart from that, Moore provided backers with vouchers (£25, £50, and £75), a sketch book (£30), and for those who supported her campaign through a £200-£500 contribution, they could have a piece of artwork commissioned. The basic reward – of 3 blank greeting cards and an invitation to her exhibition – enticed many backers.

Moore's rewards demonstrated that she had a strong awareness of her audience's needs and preferences. The vouchers and the private commission provided backers with freedom, the workshop created opportunities for interaction, and the invitation to her exhibition appealed to many art patrons who could only afford a modest contribution to fund her project.

5.2.6 Kelly Sweeney's *Development of a new body of paintings*

Kelly Sweeney is a London-based fine artist, whose practice includes works on paper, film, paintings, and sculpture that appear to be otherworldly. The perspective and subject matter she depicts attempt to marry the sinister and playful. In describing her style, Sweeney says that

> there is often an ugliness to it, a nod to the grotesque. The florescence is nasty, obnoxious, and artificial, yet paired with a bubblegum palette the whole piece can become sugar-coated and appealing. There is, at times, a deliberate disparity between the subject matter and the palette, but I try to use the two facets in a way that creates an overriding feeling of uncertainty….

Sweeney's art questions conventional thinking, and calls on the spectator to adopt various perspectives as well as critically reflect on the subject matter. In terms of her process, Sweeney claims

my sculptures are never planned and literally just happen in quite a spontaneous way, hence they are always made up of whatever is lying around. A fresh body of paintings usually follow this "sculptural intervention". I like the way that one discipline punctuates another - changing and influencing it, questioning what has been, and what will be. It keeps things fresh and in a state of questioning. I have started to become more fluid with how I approach a multi-disciplinary painting practice.

As an emerging artist, Sweeney has a strong vision and passion to make her art. So much so, in fact, that she sold her house to be able to afford pursuing her artwork full-time while maintaining her autonomy and artistic integrity.

Sweeney's campaign, like Bowell's, involved building a new body of paintings. She explained 'I continue to be interested in anamorphic forms and remain drawn to that which presents some kind of transcendence; the place where two worlds dissolve'. Sweeney expressed her struggles in launching her first Kickstarter campaign, particularly her feelings of discomfort in asking for funding. When I asked her to describe the process and the feelings that ensued, Sweeney said

I didn't know much about Kickstarter… I thought it was more to do with a business model. I didn't realise artists were using it, and creators were using it, and I felt uncomfortable about it because I was asking for funding to support something personal, rather than a business venture… I found the whole process so overwhelming, and when I hit my target I was quite emotional. I thought that "Wow, people were prepared to support my art... and not just the pledges". It also sparked a lot of interaction with people who I hadn't been in touch with for a long time. They sent me messages saying, "Wow, it's brilliant you're doing that", and "Good for you", and "I'm really pleased you're making a go of it". So, just the level of support, not just financially, was such a positive experience.

The following photos are of Sweeney's art exhibited on her Kickstarter campaign page and during her first London-based solo show in 2017.

Sweeney's Rewards

Sweeney's reward design offered potential backers with two options. Specifically, the first 20 people who pledged £50 would receive a signed limited-edition print of one of her drawings. For £500, backers could choose a painting from her website. To provide her potential backers with an idea of the appraised value of her work, Sweeney shared that her last painting that measured 122 x 102 cm in size sold for £2,000.

Compared to other artists' reward designs, Sweeney's approach was plain and simple – consistent with Kickstarter's suggestion that potential backers appreciate and are drawn to simple rewards. In particular, I believe that backers were drawn to the fact that Sweeney mentioned the appraised value of her art.

5.2.7 Dianne Bowell's *Exhibition and New Explorations in Painting*

Dianne Bowell is a studio-based artist who lives and works in northeast England. Bowell's art typically features body portraits, is inspired by her memories, life experiences, and dreams, and explores themes of beauty, femininity, love, passion, and personal identity. In terms of her creative process, Bowell shares

> I love to feel that creative process and follow it through. With the ink-works, the base is put down and sprayed with water, and more ink is then worked into it. This creates a very fluid surface, which moves and sometimes needs to be blotted or worked into. So I spend quite a lot of time literally watching paint dry; it's quite meditative.

Earlier in her life, Bowell stepped away from being an artist to work as a driving instructor for a few years. In the end, this experience reminded her of how much she loved creating art and encouraged her to get back into it. In Bowell's words

> after a long period of not painting, feeling worthless, and having really lost my confidence, I thought I would never really paint again… I had slowly forgotten who I was… Eventually, I found the confidence to regain my sense of self and remember who I am and where I came from.

Bowell cites her memories and experiences as formative in her creative style, as well as how she looks at life from a feminist perspective.

Despite the fact that Bowell is a full-time artist, and has to consider other financial issues (as a mother), she is now confident about her artistic life and prospects, saying 'What makes me happy? When I am free, when I allow my materials to be free, when I find "happy accidents" which I can hone into usable, repeatable techniques.'

In describing her artwork, Bowell claimed 'the new work will bring together a lot of elements and themes I have been exploring over the past year, including beauty, the portrayal of 'normal' women, self-portraiture, sexuality within art, the painterly surface, and experimentation with paints and other mediums'.

Photographs of Bowell's drawings

Bowell's Rewards

Bowell offered 12 personalized items to potential backers. For £5, backers would receive a hand-written 'thank you' note via snail mail on a greeting card that featured a print of one of her paintings. For £10, backers would receive an A5 limited edition signed print created specifically for the Kickstarter project, and a hand-written 'thank you' note and business card. Backers who pledged £15, £30, £31, £50, and £100 would receive different packages of limited edition prints in different sizes.

Apart from limited edition prints, Bowell offered a series of customised rewards. For £150-400, backers could purchase oil prints created just for them. I believe that this thoughtful and broad approach helped Bowell to develop a close relationship with her audience, and encouraged their active engagement in her campaign.

In terms of Kickstarter results, each of these emerging artists led successful campaigns. Moore received £8,556 pledged of a £7,000 goal (from 113 backers). Sweeney received £1,550 pledged of a £1,500 goal (from 22 backers). Bowell received £600 pledged of a £400 goal (from 12 backers).

With this background context in place, I now want to explore these varied results and the reasons underlying them. With respect to social media networks, Moore connected her Facebook page (740 followers) and personal website to her campaign. Sweeney connected her personal website to her Kickstarter campaign, and Bowell connected her Facebook page (415 followers), personal website, and artfinder.co.uk to her campaign. According to the campaign results and the social media sites selected to draw audiences to them, it is evident that the number of Facebook followers had a significant impact on overall campaign success, particularly the number of backers. Those campaign creators who had active networks on social media sites and attracted more followers throughout their campaigns also had greater opportunities to promote their work and convert followers into backers.

Another obvious difference is the impact mass media had on campaign results, evident through Sparrow and Moore's campaigns[25]. This point is further reinforced in Kickstarter's *Creator's Handbook*, which emphasises the importance of getting press coverage to drive campaign success[26]. As Moore explained, the process of attracting media attention to one's Kickstarter campaign is comparable to drawing followers on social media sites. Of course, there is no guarantee that those campaigns that attract mass media attention will be successful, however media remains an important pathway to draw people's attention initially. Once people start to pay attention to a given campaign, artists have a greater chance of persuading them to support their campaign and connect with more audience members to grow relationships through word of mouth.

In that same vein, there is no guarantee of continued Kickstarter success from one successful campaign, despite Sparrow's track record. For instance, although Bowell's first campaign received £600 pledged of a £465 goal (from 12 backers), in her second campaign, Bowell aimed for £40,000 in funding and only achieved £420 (from 13 backers). Comparing Sparrow and Bowell's social media networks, I noticed a significant difference in terms of their number of followers. When Sparrow launched her second campaign in 2017, she had 2,836 Facebook followers, 6,583 Twitter followers, and 26,600 followers on Instagram. In 2017, Bowell had 415 Facebook followers, but no Instagram or Twitter accounts connected to her second campaign. Sparrow had many more opportunities to attract followers and convert them into campaign backers. It seems clear that Bowell could have benefitted from a more strategic use of social networks and their integration into her campaigns.

As previously mentioned, Sparrow also made her campaign highly relevant to people's life stories, played on their feelings of nostalgia, and connected her projects to

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[25] Belfast Telegraph http://shar.es/1XFMGV, Creative Review http://creativereview.co.uk/feed/november-2014/24/sketch-a-day-project, Diva Magazine http://www.divamag.co.uk/category/arts-entertainment/winter-pride-art-awards-marred-by-theft-of-artworks.asp and Pink News http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/11/17/eight-artworks-stolen-at-londons-winter-pride-awards/
[26] https://www.kickstarter.com/help/handbook/promotion

building community relationships and a physical meeting space. It stands to reason that these strategies were largely responsible for enabling Sparrow to convert followers into funders, and across multiple campaigns.

The theme of Bowell's second campaign was similar to her first, namely she asked for financial support to host an exhibition. This goes to show the importance of attracting followers and the need to sometimes diversify strategies.

5.2.8 Peter Driver's campaigns: *Let's tool-up my first printmaking studio* and *… and then three come along once*

Peter Driver is an artist based in Reading, UK. His artistic focus is printmaking, drawing, and performative action. Interestingly, Driver returned to art school in 2011 at the age of 49, after having built a career in public administration. Now, Driver uses art to question and invite the spectator to explore uncertainty and wonder. For him,

> art is about a shared experience. It is a way of being in the world, a way of expressing something to other people about the experience of being human… If there is no audience, it isn't art. (The audience may be oneself, or God, if the artist believes in her)… If it isn't true to the artist's experience, it isn't art….

In terms of the commonalities underlying Driver, Spence, and Brown's Kickstarter campaigns, they are each emerging artists who led successful campaigns and do not work on their art full-time. That being said, they each caught my eyes for different reasons. Spence and Brown do not have professional artistic skills or training. I view them as brave and adventurous for pursuing their artistic passion and vision despite their apparent lack of education in this domain. Driver is perhaps best characterised as an artist who is pursuing his dreams, no matter his age or life circumstances. In Driver's first campaign, it was clear that his purpose was to seed his career as a self-employed artist by equipping his studio with a printing press and other essential items. The following are samples of Driver's art

Driver's first campaign was launched in 2014 and his second was launched in 2015. His campaigns were separated by a few months and he asked for similar amounts of funding in each. In the second campaign, Driver's aim was to earn funding for three exhibitions. In his words, 'after four years of study, I am short of cash! Materials and framing are expensive up-front costs, which I simply can't afford'. Driver's successful Kickstarter campaigns helped him to move forward in his art career and sustain his practice.

Driver's Rewards

Driver's reward design was also clear and simple, offering 6 types of limited edition prints for denominations of £10, £25, £50, £100, £200, and £300. In fact, for £100, £200, and £500, backers could receive framed prints. For £200, backers could have a limited-edition hand-made artist book. If backers pledged £300, Driver would host them on a one-day tour of small art galleries throughout London. More modestly, Driver offered original drawings for pledges of over £50.

5.2.9 Mike Spence's *Time for Art #1: Home Art* and *Time for Art #2: Waterloo Bridge*

Mike Spence is a 3-D game designer and lecturer at South Thames College. Spence completed his undergraduate and master's degrees, worked in an unrelated career, and then returned to university to major in Education, specifically gamification. He believes that 'everyone is an artist. You can be an artist in accountancy, in science, in engineering, or in medicine… You're coming up with your ideas, spin on something… You are making something happen'.

Spence launched four Kickstarter campaigns. He was motivated to use his campaigns to encourage his students to show their work and explore future possibilities in being independent artists. In his campaigns, Spence focused on drawing and art, even though he is not a pure artist.

Spence took a different tack than the other artists I interviewed in terms of the strategy underlying his campaigns. As noted, he launched a total of 4 campaigns, 3 of which were successful. Perhaps that is because his goal in each was the (very modest) amount of £1, and he received backing from 11 supporters. In two of his successful campaigns – *Time for Art #1: Home Art* and *Time for Art #2: Waterloo Bridge* – his campaign purpose was for backers to push him onward. 'Every £1 donated gives me one more minute to work on my painting'. Notably, Spence did not connect a personal website to his Kickstarter campaigns, but he did connect his Facebook page (of 638 followers).

Here, it can be seen that it is not very difficult to have a successful campaign if you are not aiming very high in terms of number of backers and overall funding. This is an approach that is encouraged in Kickstarter's guidebook[27]. By contrast, I learned that a highly successful campaign requires sufficient time to develop an audience base, connect rewards to audience members' lives, and connect with each of them on a personal level, as evidenced in Sparrow's approach.

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[27] https://www.kickstarter.com/about

Spence's Rewards

Spence had three successful campaigns, each of which was small-scale. For £1, Spence would invest 1 minute on a painting (digital copy) that he would then email to backers. Similarly, Spence would invest 10 minutes on a painting for £10, and so on up to £250 (with the additional advantage of having him work from a specific theme).

The content that appeared in Spence's first two campaigns was highly similar. His third project was a departure, insofar as he used the theme of a rose for his illustrations. In this campaign, for £1 backers could have a digital copy. For £5, the resolution of the rose illustration would be higher quality, intended for print. If backers pledged £10, they would receive a 120 character personalised message. For £250, backers could choose their own type of flower and he would add a 120 character message to it.

Even though Spence's campaigns were small-scale, his reward ideas were highly creative and concept-driven.

5.2.10 Emily Brown's *Buying a Pottery Wheel*

Emily Brown is an emerging artist who specialises in ceramics and is based in Southampton, UK. Most of her artwork is inspired by feminist thinkers, including Sylvia Plath and Germaine Greer. In Brown's words, 'I am eager to make my thoughts and opinions surrounding women's issues accessible and playful, rather than overly confrontational or shocking'.

From Brown's pottery, it is evident that her pieces are not flawless or made by an established artist. Yet, instead of feeling as though her pieces are not up to standard, Brown embraces the flaws and differences in her art, claiming 'each piece is completely different, there may be small flaws but I am always honest about them… They are not beautifully crisp, identical IKEA mugs, but these have been formed individually by me'. In my view,

Brown is a confident and brave emerging artist to show her art in the competitive market and pursue her passion through a growth mindset.

Brown's successful campaign – *Buying a Pottery Wheel* – demonstrated that a very young emerging artist can receive support through Kickstarter. What struck me in viewing her campaign and interviewing Brown was that she knew exactly what she wanted – a specific type and make of pottery wheel[28]. In fact, she even explained to potential backers why she required £700 instead of the pottery wheel's ticketed price of £640. In her words, this amount includes 'the cost of the wheel due to VAT, shipping costs, rewards, and fees for payments, and Kickstarter's deduction for hosting the fundraiser'.

I selected Brown's campaign because I knew I could learn from her about the importance of knowing exactly what she wanted to achieve through her funding, the resources required to continue pursuing projects, and being transparent with her audience. During our interview, Brown suggested funders are more persuaded to support measurable and realistic aims because they know exactly what they are supporting and how the creators intend to use their funding. In turn, those who become trusted to deliver and follow through on their commitments increase the possibility of gaining future support and success. The following are photos of Brown at work, as well as her pottery art:

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[28] https://www.bathpotters.co.uk/shimpo-rk5tf-aspire-potter-039-s-throwing-wheel-with-foot-pedal/p6718

Brown's Rewards

Brown offered potential backers 6 choices that were based on the theme 'hand-made.' For £5, Brown would bake a cake and give one or two slices as rewards. For £10, backers could choose one print that was on display on her Facebook page. Those backers who were willing to pledge £20 would receive a drawing, painting, or piece of photography according to their preferences. For £30 and £40 rewards, Brown offered backers a cereal bowl or a mug.

To sum up this section, the reason why I selected Driver, Spence, and Brown for in-depth interviews was so that I could learn the different strategies they used to acquire the resources they needed to continue doing their creative works. Of course, some had greater overhead costs than others, but they were each able to achieve campaign success.

5.3 Conclusion

From these 12 campaigns, it is evident that the number of backers is highly relevant to the amount of funding raised. As a paradigm, in Sparrow's first campaign, her goal was to raise £2000, and she successfully generated £10,744 from 361 backers – surpassing her goal 5-times over. Upon review of other successful campaigns, Katrin Albrecht raised £2911 pledged from her original goal of £2850 through 23 backers. Sophie Giblin had 71 backers, enabling her to raise £2342 out of her original goal of £2200.

When we compare Sparrow's results with Albrecht and Giblin's, despite the fact that they all had similar goals (to raise around £2000), Sparrow had 5-times the number of backers than Giblin and 10-times more than Albrecht.

Kelly Sweeney achieved her goal of £1550 from 22 backers, and Peter Driver raised £2046 from his original goal of £1500 through 65 backers. Moore attracted 113 backers to raise £8,558 in funding, and Davies drew 59 backers and raised £10,288. Driver had 65

backers (£2,046), Spence was supported by 11 backers (£48), and Brown attracted 20 backers (£731).

Overall, these successful campaigns demonstrate that the more backers artists attract and engage, the more funding they will receive. Looking closer, the successful campaigns also demonstrated the importance of paying close attention to how to set up a campaign's aims and reward design. Sparrow and Bowell's campaigns are illustrative here. In Sparrow's second campaign, her fundraising goal was significantly higher than in her first (from £2,000 to £40,000). Instrumental in achieving this goal was Sparrow's reassurance to her potential backers that this hike was justified because of her first campaign's successes, the following she had established, and the fact that she had become better prepared and more experienced through opening her first shop.

Even though Bowell also set a much higher funding goal in her second campaign (from £465 to £4,400), from its description, Bowell was unable to establish why she required more support than the first time, and the aim of the campaign was almost the same as her first (i.e. to exhibit).

Given the marked success of Sparrow's second campaign, it is worth exploring, at some length, her strategy in comparison to the others. A key factor in driving Sparrow's success was the strength of her social media networks. In advance of her campaigns, Sparrow surmised 'Facebook is probably a thing for raising awareness of your project and raising interest… Twitter, I think, is not so personal and you can approach businesses and galleries. I think each one has its own little function in a way'. Tied to this, Sparrow drew a lot of mass media attention.

Like Sparrow, the press Moore received powered her campaign by making it mainstream. Helpful to our purposes here, Moore validated her approach – to take tailored communications approaches to attract media attention – through analytics, claiming

'actually, there were quite a few backers who read the reports and went to see my Kickstarter page, and then supported my project'.

Having an investor can also push a campaign to greater funding success. As Sparrow noted in her second campaign's description, she was looking to show angel investors that there was great interest in her work, and this would be demonstrated by how much backing she generated.

Last but not least was the question of how to establish a strong bridge between the campaign itself and potential backers' experiences. Knowing this fosters relationship building, helps convert potential audience members into backers, and also inspires them to positively change their lives through the campaign's main action. Recall, Lucy Sparrow used a local space that had become run down and closed to trigger sentiment and nostalgia among her Kickstarter campaign's visitors. Related to this, during both of her campaigns, she invested time in engaging her followers by updating photos, videos, and a regular blog with relevant information about her campaign.

Similarly, Moore showed people that she was enthusiastic about sketching every day for a year, so that she could perfect her craft and eventually exhibit her work. Giblin organised a local gallery to form a co-operative with local artists, and interact with the broader community. The consistent theme here is that the source of each campaign's success was its emotional appeal to its audience base.

A summary chart of each successful campaign appears below, for ease of reference and completes this chapter.

Ten Successful Kickstarter Creators/Artists and their Campaigns	
Case #1: The Corner Shop	Creator: Lucy Sparrow Campaign Summary (Verbatim): 'In 2014, I, Lucy Sparrow restocked an abandoned corner shop in London with felt products. Each item - from the bean cans, to the cigarette packets, the chewing gum, and the porn magazines - were made entirely out of felt: each item meticulously hand sewn, stuffed and priced by yours-truly'. Result: £10,744 pledged of £2000 goal Backers: 361 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sewyoursoul/the-cornershop
Case# 2: The New York Fabric Convenience Store – An Art Installation	Creator: Lucy Sparrow Campaign Summary : For Sparrow's second campaign, she elected to open a convenience store in New York (summer, 2017). For this, she had to raise half the funds for production costs by crowdfunding to prove to her angel investors that this was an exciting art installation that people wanted to see. Result: £40,519 pledged of £40,000 goal Backers: 532 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/sewyoursoul/the-new-york-convenience-store-an-art-installation
Case #3: The Shed Is On Fire, or Die Hütte Brennt	Creator: Katrin Albrecht Campaign Summary: This project was an installation of fabric bricks that Albrecht made from her clothes – T-shirts, trousers, dresses, and towels. The purpose of the project was to support Albrecht to attend an exhibition taking place in September, 2014. Result: £2911 pledged of £2850 goal Backers: 23 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1781300533/the-shed-is-on-fire-die-hutte-brennt
Case #4: Death by gallery	Creator: Sophie Giblin Campaign Summary: Giblin's project was to open a gallery (for one month) in an empty high street shop in central Brighton for the Fringe Festival, and the Open House Festival. Local artists would gather to exhibit their artwork, organise talks and events, as well as offer free workshops to their community. Result: £2342 pledged of £2200 goal

	Backers: 71 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/kollektivgallery/death-by-gallery
Case #5: Sketch A Day Project	Creator: Jane Moore Campaign Summary: On January 1, 2014 Moore formed a New Year's resolution to draw one sketch per day for 365 days. She fulfilled this resolution and wanted to use campaign funds to exhibit her work and support her in continuing her 'Sketch A Day' project. Result: £8558 pledged of £7000 Backers: 113 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1949162220/sketch-a-day-project
Case #6: Development of a new body of painting	Creator: Kelly Sweeney Campaign Summary: Sweeney needed to raise funds to enable her first solo show in London (2017). The money raised would be used to purchase materials, such as canvas and paint, so that she could create a series of paintings. Result: £1550 pledged of £1500 goal Backers: 22 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/844174168/development-of-a-new-body-of-paintings-by-kelly-sw
Case #7: Let's tool-up my first printmaking studio	Creator: Peter Driver Campaign Summary: Driver launched this campaign to equip his studio in Reading, UK. In return, Driver rewarded backers with original edition artwork. Result: £2046 pledged of £1500 goal Backers: 65 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2028413663/lets-tool-up-my-first-printmaking-studio
Case #8: …and then three come along at once	Creator: Peter Driver Campaign Summary: Driver launched his second campaign to support preparatory work for three exhibitions. Funding would cover the cost of equipment, materials, and framing. Result: £1963 pledged of £1650 goal Backers: 49 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2028413663/and-then-three-come-along-at-once

Case #9: Time Art #1 – Home Park	Creator: Mike Spence Campaign Summary: Spence said he loved drawing but he needed people who believed in his talent to push him onward. Hence, every £1 donated would give him another minute to work on his paintings. Result: £30 pledged £1 goal Backers: 6 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/195970652/time-for-art-1-home-park
Case #10: Buy a Pottery Wheel	Creator: Emily Brown Campaign Summary: Brown launched this campaign so that she could buy a pottery wheel to refine her skills. Result: £731 pledged out of £700 goal Backers: 20 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1272575248/buy-a-pottery-wheel
Case #11: Identity/ Memory	Creator: Gabriela Davies Campaign Summary: Davies launched this project to exhibit her 'identity' website, and her exhibit which would take place at the Tea Embassy Gallery in London. Her intention was to use this funding to rent a gallery, ship works, hold a party during the opening, and make a limited-edition catalogue. Result: £3941 pledged out of £3000 goal Backers: 35 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1751950675/identity-memory
Case # 12: (dis)placement project	Creator: Gabriela Davies Campaign Summary: Davies' second campaign sought to develop an open-submission exhibit, offering young and emerging artists the opportunity to submit work they had developed that met the theme '(dis)placement'. Her objective was to use the funding for transportation, framing, installation material and furniture, maintenance of the website, rental space, and to hold a party for the opening. Result: £10,218 pledged of £10,000 goal Backers: 59 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1751950675/displacement-project
Case #13: Exhibition and new explorations in painting	Creator: Dianne Bowell Campaign summary: The purpose of Bowell's campaign was to have her first solo exhibition at The Python Gallery in Middleborough. Specifically, Bowell intended to use the funds to buy materials, such as canvas,

	so that she could create more paintings.
	Result: £600 pledged of £465 goal Backers: 12 Address: https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/dianneartist/exhibition-and-new-explorations-in-painting It is important to note that Bowell launched her second campaign on July 10, 2016. Her aim was to raise £4,400 but, in the end, she only received £420 (from 13 backers).

Chapter 6
RAINBOW Analysis Framework

6.1 Introduction

As noted throughout this dissertation, the methods employed in this research project and the findings contained herein are most relevant to those who are engaged in multi-methods research, which includes case studies, in-depth interviews, and creative visual research methods.

The approach undertaken throughout this research project – to acquire experiential data on the strategies artists can use to establish and sustain their careers through social media and crowdfunding platforms – is informed by auto-ethnography and action research. Auto-ethnography is a method researchers can use to engage in self-observation and self-reflection during fieldwork to help inform their research questions, interpretations, and conclusions (Ellis, 2004; Maréchal, 2010). In this project, I used self-observation to support not only the primary research undertaken, but also the action research component.

Specifically, my analysis focused on artists' internal and external relationships, facilitated by creative visual research methods. For this, I created the RAINBOW analysis framework to help my interview subjects adopt seven lenses to reflect upon their careers and social media – i.e. Reflection, Audience, Innovation, Network, Business, Opportunities, and Weaknesses.

The RAINBOW analysis framework constituted two pillars of this research project. First, I used the RAINBOW analysis framework to facilitate generative conversations with ten successful Kickstarter artists during our in-depth interviews. I applied creative visual methods to the RAINBOW analysis framework to support critical reflection with my interviewees, and I used it, again, to support my own action plan. Second, I used RAINBOW to reflect on my experience of setting up a Kickstarter campaign and to identify

lessons learned to share with other artists who are trying to establish non-traditional careers (the details of which will be further discussed in Chapter 7).

This chapter offers an analysis of one component of the fieldwork results: the in-depth interview process and analysis. Based upon the ten successful artists' campaign experiences revealed through the RAINBOW analysis framework, the fieldwork results are divided into three parts – i.e. an 'interpersonal' circle, 'social media' circle, and 'business' circle. Together, they serve as the foundation from which I will present solutions to my research questions.

This approach feeds into the four main components underlying this research project, namely: (1) data collection, which included an analysis of the art market and the social media ecosystem, in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators, and the identification and analysis of successful Kickstarter campaigns; (2) changing the researcher's position from an 'outsider' to an 'insider' through launching the campaign, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*; (3) applying the RAINBOW analysis framework to deeply analyse the results of the successful Kickstarter campaigns and the researcher's own campaign; and (4) reflecting on the successes and challenges of each campaign (including the researcher's).

With that in mind, this chapter will elucidate findings from the data, offer a critical analysis to support reflections, and identify solutions to some of the real-life problems confronted by emerging artists.

6.2 The RAINBOW's Structure

As mentioned above, this project contains three layers of research questions which further serve as thematic categories, i.e. an 'interpersonal' circle, 'social media' circle, and 'business' circle. The 'interpersonal' circle bears on the artists' connections with their professional role, life stories, and their audience. The 'social media' circle attempted to

unearth the impact online networking has had on their careers; that is, why artists use it to support their careers, its (dis)advantages, and whether and how it helps to build their influence and impact their creativity. The 'business' circle drew focus to the tangible results of successfully establishing a social media presence, a following, and using it for the purposes of attracting backers.

The figure below demonstrates the relationships between the three areas of exploration. The centre – where the circles overlap – is the heart of each creator's Kickstarter campaign. This is followed by a graphic illustration of the (iterative) RAINBOW analysis framework.
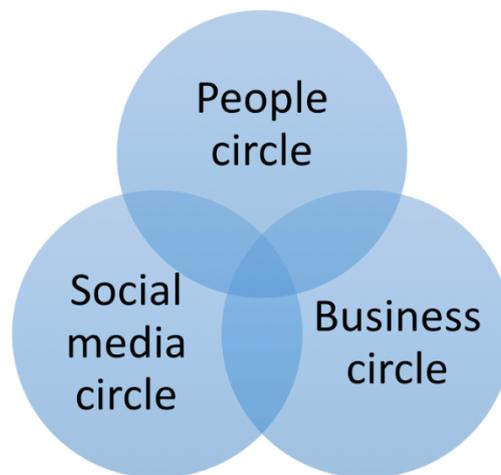

Figure 1: The structure of the research analysis
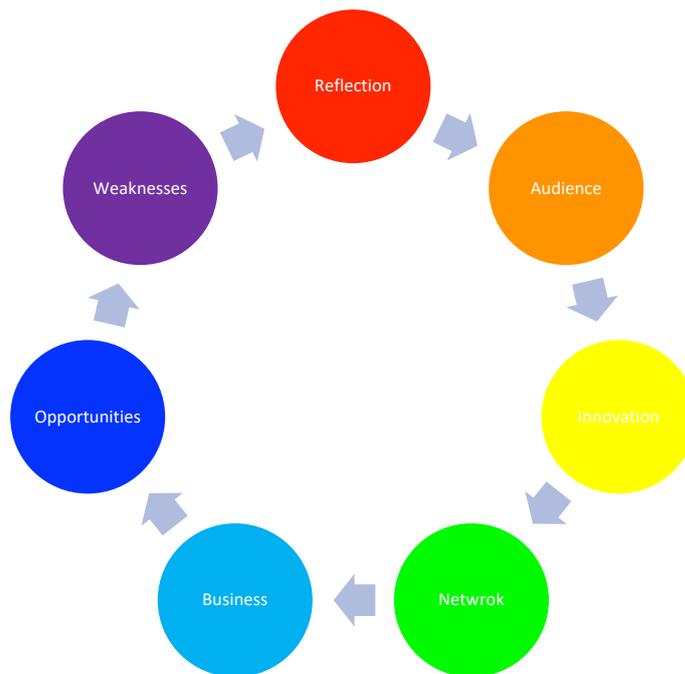
Figure 2: The RAINBOW analysis framework

6.3 Bridging divides: my formative experiences

A significant aspect of this research project involved understanding what my interview participants wanted to share with me about their work and how it informed their approach to their art and the business world. Based on my previous experience as a professional journalist, my goal going into each interview was to be a facilitator who encouraged self-reflection. This goal was based on my belief that people's ideas and behaviours are strongly linked to their backgrounds, which, in turn, powerfully shape their identities.

Using one of my own memories as an example, I had a very close relationship with my grandfather when I was a child. At that time in my life he was newly retired, bored, and often sought out little adventures for the two of us. This included taking me to galleries.

While we were there, my grandfather would tell me stories about various artists' work, though sometimes I was not very interested in learning about them.

When I reflect back, I can appreciate how formative these experiences were; they have deeply impacted my professional development and my career trajectory. Truly, they are at the core of my enduring interest in learning about artists' lives and their work. Appreciating the role that these seminal experiences came to play in my life also informed my understanding that self-identity is a bridge that connects our past and future selves.

Artists' reflections

During my in-depth interview with Lucy Sparrow – the creator of *The Corner Shop* – it was apparent that she had clear expectations of herself as an artist and the support she required from her backers prior to launching her campaign. In her words,

> since I was tiny, like three or four years old, I was always making stuff, and I knew that from that age, I wanted to be an artist…You're on this path of… I didn't go to university I think that some art can't be taught. They tried to encourage me to make things that I didn't want to make…They tried to make me like everyone else, and I didn't understand why.They sort of took creativity and made me hate it. And it took me quite a while to get back on track and want to do it again… And I think if you're that young, and you know what you want to do, there's no stopping you, really.

When I pressed Sparrow for more detail, she remembered that she was four years old the first time she attempted to sew and that it came naturally. 'I remember doing it for the first time… I made a felt star to hang on the Christmas tree and my mum has still got it'.

Peter Driver shared a similar narrative when I asked him to reflect on his childhood, explaining

> I used to draw birds as a fairly young boy. I found that I was quite good at it. When you find you're good at something, you like to pursue it, so I did that. I did quite a lot of drawing, painting – mostly figurative landscape and nature… We lived up in Cambridge shire, so trips to London were pretty rare, but when we came down, we would go to museums and galleries…**.**

From my in-depth interview with Sophie Giblin, I learned that her artistic career could also be traced back to her formative childhood experiences. Giblin recalled her childhood with her mum, saying

> my mum is very outgoing, but she speaks a lot about her trauma… I think about everything she's gone through, you know, she had a very strange way to bring me up... When I was younger, I was quite noisy and playful… She would give me a pen or pencil and paper and say, "Just draw. No more speaking. Just draw." So drawing became a type of discipline but also became the thing I loved doing… She is the reason I do everything creative. Pretty much every project that I have done is about her, and her relationship with her mother, and the death of her mother and how she brought me up… My dad is very supportive of my art… He is involved in my art very much on the commercial side, but he would also say things like, "It is very nice – you drawing – but how can you make money from it?" He was always talking to me, even at a young age, about the importance of money. He cares too much about money.

Katrin Albrecht's mother also played a significant role in her art career, but as a negative force. In Albrecht's words, 'she never wanted me to become an artist but she took me to all the exhibitions… she introduced me to art but then she didn't want me to become an artist'. I asked Albrecht to repeat her mother's words to me that she had stored in her memory. She closed her eyes and said

> You will never earn enough money and you will have to marry a dentist… I mean… my mother has an image of me, but it's not *me*, so I have to tell my mom "this is my life and I have to do what is right for me, not what is right for you".

It is not uncommon for artists' close friends and family members to be concerned about their financial well-being. Yet, in Albrecht's case, her mother's concern did not impact her decision to pursue her passion. Perhaps this is because she is strong-willed and independent, above and beyond loving what she does. It may also be because Albrecht's father assumed a more neutral position on her art and career choices. Though he was 'not encouraging', he also did not hold her back.

Dianne Bowell also spoke about how her relationship with her parents influenced her artwork. 'When we start to be interested in art, we always seek our parents' approval, don't we? So I probably made things that my mum was going to go, "oh, that's nice." And I did so repeatedly so that she would continue to support me'.

Peter Driver shared the following about his formative experiences:

> my relationship with my father wasn't ever very strong. He was a very quiet and reserved man, and I was a very quiet and reserved boy… At art school I remember gravitating towards sculpture, because my dad was a carpenter and he worked with his hands, and he made things. I felt like making stuff, constructing things out of wood but from an artistic perspective might somehow be more in line with what my dad would appreciate or value. Like a lot of children, I always wanted my dad's approval, which was quite hard to get. I started painting again after my father died… One of the things that, I guess, as part of the response to that grief, I took up the two things that I was doing when I was a child, which was birdwatching and art. I took them both on as activities and went for them thoroughly.

My interview with Emily Brown presented a different relationship dynamic. Rather than having a formative relationship with a parent who inspired her artwork, her dad was

> liberal and would say stupid stuff that would annoy me… He is sort of supportive but… I don't know how to describe it… He is an attention seeker… My mum is very positive about it (my art), but she always questions my views and tries to get to the bottom of why I think this way and that… She is always interested in my ideas. So our conversations are very rewarding… I think that influenced me quite a lot while I was growing up, and she's always been really interested in my art. She's actually quite creative as well but she's never really put the time into it. She is always focused on doing other stuff, like having kids.

Even though Mike Spence did not attend art school or earn good grades in university, his parents encouraged him to become a graphic designer so that he could teach undergraduate students how to make video games. During our interview, Spence told me about his parents.

> My parents are from a working-class background. My mother worked in retail and my dad worked as a carpenter… My mum would sing all the time, and my dad could make anything out of wood. He is quite a creative man. I learned quite a lot from both of them – from their attitudes and their approach to work. I suppose they did influence me in that sense. Maybe even from a socio-economic standpoint as well,

insofar as how I grew up and that I was allowed a kind of freedom, I suppose, to be able to be creative and to try ideas out…

During my interview with Diane Bowell, she shared the following about her relationship with her parents:

> my mum is incredibly supportive, but also, she is quite a negative person… I don't show her most of what I do because she's like "that's not a pretty flower, I don't like it" or "Why do you keep doing people's faces?" I don't really talk to her much about my practice, unless it's something big, or something that I think she'd be like, "oh that's really good", then I'll sort of show her. She is always asking me, "When are you going to get a proper job?"

On the struggle to balance being an artist with earning a living wage, Albrecht shared:

> my dream was always to make a living with my art and to have a sort of career that makes me slightly famous… not famous, but I wanted people to give me enough exhibitions to keep on working and earning money. That was my dream, and then it becomes smaller and smaller from there.

Following her successful Kickstarter campaign, Albrecht attempted to continue working on art full-time but was unsuccessful. Her frustration is evident from her choice of words

> I really, really tried to sell my bricks and even went to local markets to sell them. I told people "you can use it as a door stopper or a book stand" and so on… I really tried everything to make people treat it as art… but nobody bought it … I think maybe it is because they are composed of the clothes somebody else wore, or people do not know what to do with them.

Through my interviews I came to appreciate just how many artists struggle to earn living wages, even when they have had successful exhibitions and campaigns. For example, before Sparrow's two successful Kickstarter campaigns, she also struggled to find the time and resources to sew.

> I was working a full-time job and doing art in the evenings, on weekends, and any time that I could spare. There was certainly no money being saved or anything like that. It was all going to rent, back into projects, and just sort of breaking even… That

seems to be the only way. Hopefully, by the end of this, I will have raised enough to actually pay myself… I think when you're self-employed, when you're starting out, it's so rare that you get a wage as well. You need to do two jobs, three jobs just to sort of keep the household running.

Echoing this sentiment, Bowell said

I need to prove that it's going to work... I've given myself a deadline, which is in about a years' time from now. If I can support myself, it's great. If I can't, I'll think of getting another part-time job, and, at the moment, she [my mum's] good with it… I usually do all my parceling up at home, and she can see that stuff is getting shipped out. She can see the movement in the art.

Brown's experience was similar in this regard,

I work and earn money for myself, so I am quite driven and independent… I have never been like "Oh, I just want to be a full-time artist, and float around and dream… I always do part-time work, or work for someone else. I am quite practical. I've just been glad to be that way, like always. It is like you can have dreams but also have a plan – how are we going to survive and not end up living on the street?

Indeed, through my interviews, I found that most artists have had to work two jobs to support their art, or they would have to give up on being an artist altogether. Sparrow is a case in point.

When you're an artist you have this – slightly delusional – way of thinking, of wanting to do everything, but at the same time having these moments of crippling self-doubt. It wasn't until two years ago that I gave up working so that I could go full-time as an artist. Before then it was a case of juggling the two worlds. I think a lot of people believe they can go straight into working full-time as an artist, but realistically you have to juggle the two for a while and work your ass off!

Bowell echoed these sentiments:

of all the people that graduate from a BA in Fine Arts, there's a very, very, very tiny percentage of people who can continue to do it for ten years or so... There were thirty-five people who graduated at the same time as me in Fine Arts, but there are three of us still doing it.

Moore shared a similar experience, claiming

lots of artists end up working in coffee shops to support their art… I did that too… I worked at bars and built up my clients gradually... It took me ten years to get to the stage where I don't need to do irrelevant work to support my art career.

At the same time as these interview excerpts highlight the challenges of establishing an art career, they also demonstrate the determination and drive that many artists have to see it through and make a career in the art world. This is aptly characterized by Menger (1999) as 'shadow pricing', meaning artists are willing to take on lower-income work because they feel self-actualised through their artwork and are fulfilled by their artistic community. This explains why Sparrow was willing to take on two jobs and complete her art on the side and why Moore devoted eight years to working in cafes and bars to develop her art career. Truly, these artists valued their creative work more than financial stability.

6.4 What does it mean to have an 'audience'?

What it means to have an audience has changed because of the relationship dynamics and ways of connecting that social media has made possible. The same relationships that used to be built and maintained *on behalf of artists* by galleries and affiliated organisations and were, for all intents and purposes at arms' reach, are now cultivated directly by the artist. Gallery representatives do not have the same influence over art patron's purchasing decisions or whose artwork is promoted. Those who appreciate art and creative works are now empowered to seek out talent online and can decide which artists they want to follow, buy from, and support in a variety of ways.

By that same token, artists can now brand themselves to the public, build their own following, oversee the pricing of their work, negotiate directly with potential buyers, and even discuss what they will create for potential buyers. In the past, when artists wanted to create pieces and sell them in the art market, they had to focus on the types of art that galleries would appreciate and be willing to physically present and promote it during exhibitions. Nowadays, artists have more power to decide their style, whether they want to

establish their career through social media and online platforms, and focus on their social media audience's interests.

Although the artists I interviewed appreciated the opportunities crowdfunding platforms opened up for them to showcase and fund their work – empowering them to pursue non-traditional art careers – they also expressed frustration over the challenges they encountered finding and building relationships with potential audience members. When I asked her to reflect upon how she felt during the launch of her first Kickstarter campaign, Lucy Sparrow remarked

> it feels like you don't know until you put your work out there… You have no idea how many people are out there looking at it. Since I last looked, Kickstarter has an audience of like 3 million people, and it's almost as much of a social platform as Facebook. And they've even got their own forums and places to discuss projects. So it's a social media thing but just with a bit of a different focus.

Indeed, the role of the audience is an important issue for businesses that rely on social media for growth and reach. Giblin's audience circles – which she worked on during the RAINBOW analysis component of our interview – revealed that she is highly active on social media platforms precisely because she recognises their value for her Kickstarter campaigns. Even so, she took a balanced approach, in that she had a presence but preferred to keep her personal life private. In Giblin's words,

> It is cool that you are interested but I don't care too much. I never put much pressure on it. I think I care less than other people do about their fans [audience]… My sister [who also has a campaign] will write back to every single review or comment, and she is very dedicated to thinking about her followers and her customers. I do not think about my followers very much.

Hence, even though Giblin understood the opportunity to reach and make a strong impression on her 'imagined audience' through tailored social media strategies (Litt, 2011), she did not want it to influence her work. To the contrary, Giblin preferred to grow her 'actual'

audience at the grass-roots level. Her audience circles revealed: 'I want galleries and curators to know about me and support my artwork… and I can get inspiration… they will inspire me to make new artwork and we will encourage each other'.

Albrecht's attitude towards her audience was largely informed by her previous professional experience in fashion design. She shared:

> when I was working as a tailor… I felt actually quite neutral about them [customers]… When I was a craftsperson, I didn't care about them… When I was a designer, I became more critical of people who buy fashion… When I think about my current audience, I think I want to reach people or provoke them.

Despite the fact that Albrecht was keen to reach and provoke her audience, she was unclear about where and how to locate them. She explained

> when I did my Kickstarter campaign, I linked everything I had… I was looking for a bigger audience for my art… I sent emails to all of my friends... I linked Kickstarter to all of my platforms. At that time, to be honest, most of my audience were my friends and family.

Albrecht then offered a deeper analysis, suggesting that the main difficulty artists confront is learning how to grow their audience. It is not enough to just link all of the platforms with the art, she suggested. Having a clear communications strategy goes a long way, and is not something most artists know how to develop or have the financial means to pay for.

> When I asked Davies to reflect upon her Kickstarter experiences, she told me that
>
> doing a crowdfunding project is more interesting than other types of funding, because you can get more people involved in your art or project… The difficulty is that, for example, there are around 8.7 million people in London, so it looks like we can draw enough audience members to our campaign. But it is actually very difficult to connect and bring everybody together to enjoy our campaigns.

Although it is a shared challenge among artists to develop good relationships with their audience members, the salient point is that it helps artists to succeed when they know exactly what their audience likes and how to meaningfully engage them through art. For

instance, apart from stocking *The Corner Shop* with everyday items made out of felt,

Sparrow tried to explore serious issues through her art. As noted in the previous chapter, she

opened a sex shop filled with felt items in Soho, New York to voice serious issues she saw in

the sex industry. Through this experience, Sparrow has confronted her imagined audience

and her real audience, and her online and physical shops now include felt guns and other

weapons.

All of the artists I interviewed said that their perceptions of, and direct

communications with, their audience members have influenced their artwork and creative

processes. Even though artists who have virtual businesses cannot know exactly where their

audience is located, they can still influence their artwork. To illustrate this point, Bowell said

that

> I'm pretty sure that my audience does influence me. I like to make art that people
> like. I really, really, enjoy it when people appreciate my art. If I make one piece and a
> lot of people interact with that and tell me that they like it, I maybe try to repeat
> whatever it is they liked… not necessarily to make the same picture again, but repeat
> whatever elements I think made the audience interact with my art. I think my ideal
> audience, or client, or customer, is somebody who can take ownership, not just of a
> piece of art, but of the whole thing, of my story, a bit of it resonating with them, a bit
> connecting with them.

Similarly, Emily Brown suggested it is necessary to guess what the audience will like

in order to anticipate what they will be willing to support. In her own words,

> I do guess what my audience wants. It is important to be able to work out how you
> can give them something they really want – to tailor to what they want. I have
> opportunities to do some experiments, and if they don't like them, I have to work on
> and improve what I'm developing. For example, I will ask them [a client], "Do you
> want this one or do you want me to do it again?" Trying to make it match their
> interests as much as possible.

Even though creators now have more access to their audience members and

opportunities for interaction, compromising what they *want to create* versus what their

audience *prefers for them to create* is not always easy for them. For example, during my

interview with Kelly Sweeney, she said 'I think, for me as an artist, again, it seems like a very business-related question that I don't really feel is something that I think about, or want to think about for my work'. For Driver, an audience is 'integrated'. By this, he meant 'my art practice and my life are the same thing. People that I'm connected to on social media, I don't see them as the audience for my art practice. I see them as people I am interested in or even my friends'.

Bowell viewed Facebook as key to attracting her audience.

Facebook is where I actually get customers. On Facebook, I try to be more personal and write something about what I am doing and things like that, and people do react to that. For example, when I create an event on Facebook, I know how many people I am inviting, and after the exhibition it is easy to keep in touch with the customers who came to my exhibition. They may ask me about my work. This is why I am very, very active on Facebook. Perhaps too much sometimes... it takes up half of my time.

Overall, the artists I spoke with were either close to their imagined social media audience or kept at a distance from them. These attitudes, in turn, had a direct impact on how they participated and engaged in social media spaces, and how they related to their creative works. Generally speaking, when artists use social media, they are closer to their audience and are thereby more influenced by them.

6.5 Have crowdfunding and social media led to artistic innovation?

Artists now have a variety of platforms that they can use to showcase their work and attract the attention of potential audience members. Those who use social media platforms can also get direct feedback about their work – a kind of peer review – which fosters a greater investment in their broader online community, a different investment in their artwork, and can even inspire them in their daily lives. It is not an overstatement to say that social media and crowdfunding have revolutionised the art market. On the one hand, artists are empowered to pursue their creative outlets through virtual reach and financial backing.

On the other hand, they are confronted with competition from artists worldwide and the challenges that come with their independence from galleries, including absorbing the administrative aspects of their work.

While the themes of reflection and 'audience' fall into the 'interpersonal' circle, 'innovation' overlaps with two circles in my framework, i.e. the 'interpersonal' and 'social media' circles. As described in my introduction, the 'interpersonal' circle reveals artists' views about their own work and the relationships that they have to their art. When it comes to the 'social media' circle, the focus is on the interaction with the broader world.

Here's what Lucy Sparrow had to say about the influence social media had on her innovation:

> I don't think it's a disadvantage at all because at least it's in your hands. If you want a job to be done, do it yourself. At least it's in your control. If anything does go wrong, or you're unsuccessful, you've only got yourself to blame.

This view is reinforced in Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman's research (2014), apparent in their observation that the adoption of social media 'is highly related to innovation uniqueness' (pg. 192). Departing from this view, Giblin shared

> Instagram is my personal website… [my audience] encourages me to add my artwork to it and I enjoy editing my previous artwork books… But I think collective galleries and business social media block my creativity… In some ways, I don't like it. I always have to think about how many schedules and twists I have to do, and how to reach people. There are so many other things involved… you can't just be yourself… You can't be creative.

Giblin went on to explain how different social media platforms play different roles in her creative process.

> I really enjoy visual social media, such as Instagram. I like updating it every day. I want it to be very beautiful and I want somebody on my Instagram page to grab me as an artist. There are so many people using Instagram and you consistently get your 'likes'… But things like LinkedIn, I have my work on it but I don't feel I get much from that.

Albrecht's approach to social media platforms was more cautious, related to her privacy concerns. At the same time, she expressed her appreciation for how social media had enabled her to grow her career and establish herself as an artist in the public domain. Even still, her feelings are complex:

> I had so many shows and people were so enthusiastic. They were so fascinated by my pieces. They would say, "how is it so amazing?" … I could see they really liked my work. Then, after the shows, do they came back? No!

This challenge is common among artists. People often tell artists that they are talented and that they have great potential, but – by and large – customers do not return to purchase their work after their exhibits until they are already famous and have a reputation in the art market. This highlights a critical requirement: artists must discover the connection between their art/innovation and what their customers want.

Bowell's insights are helpful here, in comparing her career successes with and without social media:

> It's really different from 10 years ago when I graduated. When I used to have exhibitions many years ago, the actual exhibitions would make me really anxious because I didn't know how people would react to it [my work]. Now, it is so much better. I make my art and show people, even if I am halfway through the work, I already have people's responses to it.

Unlike the other artists I interviewed, Brown has had direct experience working for a big gallery. She observed that artists have different ways of relating with gallery representatives and a variety of expectations when it comes to the handling and exhibiting of their artwork.

> A lot of artists [in galleries] just gave us the work and weren't very involved in the process. I mean the people who are shown in a big gallery often had a really high, well-paying job, and art was their part-time job. The galleries just loved their work… I don't think they can make a profit from them. It is just their hobby. Galleries are definitely hierarchical. We [non-rich artists] just do what we want, and are motivated [to produce] by financial pressure… now [social media] is a generational thing… Nearly every artist has Facebook and a homepage to show their work. Before work would be more like "oh, go to the gallery and see if they like my work". But

sometimes I think it is ego-driven. A lot of [artists] just have a lot of people saying "Wow that is amazing". It is not necessary.

On the relationship between artists, social media, and galleries, Bowell pointed out that

There are many established artists who don't do social media, and I think they are still living in that *10 years ago*, insular bubble. They're not relatable to a wider audience. I like people to know that I'm a real person. I'm not an artist on a pedestal… the high art gallery, really, it's very elitist. It's very much, "did you know 'Saatchi' when you graduated?" and "were you bought from that point?" There's a very tiny, tiny percentage of people who can make incredible money because they are selling in galleries, but they become quite withdrawn into their [world] ... and they are influenced more by the gallerist than their audience.

While the influence that social media has on artistic creativity and innovation was noted by all of my interview participants, not all of the artists I spoke with cast them in a positive glow. Sweeney, for instance, expressed doubt about social media's positive impact on her work.

I don't know if it [social media] does help creativity. I think it can definitely provide opportunities. For me, I would question what the point is of having 20,000 followers on Twitter. However, you could have one very good relationship with the right gallerist who facilitates you moving forward in a meaningful way. I think it's about the quality [of the relationships] over the quantity kind of argument, isn't it? I just make my work, and if people are interested in that, then great. But social media's not *that* important to me at all in that respect. I would much rather people come and see a show and view the work in-person.

Spence stressed that, to some extent, social media played an important role in understanding how his audience thinks and what their artistic inclinations and preferences are. In turn, this may influence artists' creative styles and their body of work. Speaking in general terms, Spence shared the following, 'you kind of have a look at what works and what doesn't. There were certainly trends there that would influence me to what I would choose as the rewards, and what I ended up with as a product because there are certain things that you can and cannot do'.

Echoing this sentiment, Brown explained: 'I am not sure social media helps my creativity because I can look at what people are doing… and I may find something very interesting and think "Oh, I want to try that technique. It is really cool"'.

In Davies' view, artists can be strategic about how they use social media and crowdfunding to complement traditional approaches to the art market.

> Sometimes artists like to separate themselves from commercial galleries so they have their own personal webpage to show their art or promote their art. They want to have a wider audience… and they [artists] use social media to create more personal relationships with their audience, and identify what they like or what they're up to. Artists also want to be motivated.

Overall, it was apparent from my interviews that social media helped these successful artists to learn what their audience thought, what moved them, and what they preferred from them as artists. At the same time, these artists struggled to navigate their professional roles, professional identities, and what they wanted to create in the era of social media and crowdfunding platforms. The main reason artists' cited to keep a distance from social media was that they could not accept people treating their art as a commodity or as part of a business model. Tied to this, some of the artists I spoke with insisted that they could not (or were unwilling to) make art based on their audiences' wants, but rather their audience had to accept their art for what it was.

6.6 Networks: knowing your objectives and creating opportunities

One of the most important features of social media is that it provides artists with a place they can connect with people to exchange their ideas, feelings, and creative work. Based on an artist's networking objectives, there are different social media platforms to help them meet their needs, including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Kickstarter. For our purposes here, networks are most relevant to the 'social media' circle, as they are made possible by digital technology, popularity, and accessibility.

According to Sparrow, social media can empower artists and creators to do things they may not have otherwise done.

> Social media has captured something in people's minds and their availability that you would never have been able to do [prior to it]. It's made things easier, but has also given more opportunities. It even makes normal, non-creative people more creative. For example, with Instagram and stuff, people would have never taken photos before, would never have gone out with a camera, and now everyone's doing it. And that's amazing. Everyone's out taking photos.

Sparrow also expressed awareness of how social media has changed the role of the artist, emphasising that when you use social media platforms to further your career, you need to play many roles.

> You need to be a producer and a public relations expert who is responsible for your marketing and advertising. As an artist, you need to learn all of these skills, because, until you're successful, you can't afford to pay anyone else to do it, and it will all come from you.

In focusing on the role that networking played in her work, Bowell reinforced Sparrow's views.

> I think if you want to be very successful in this area, you must have a very good network. It wasn't like that before. You just needed to have a good gallery, or a good agent to deal with everything for you, but now things have changed. If you have a very good business mind I think you can get more chances to be successful.

For Giblin,

> the challenge [with networks] is to be heard and to be seen because there are so many pages on the internet. How can you stand out… unless you have amazing publicity to push you to the front page on a website so you can be written about by press time? Standing out can seem so simple, but that is why so many graduates leave school; they become depressed because maybe they start to put their artwork out a little bit but they don't get the response they wanted.

Hence, even though researchers like Morris (2013) claim social media is an incubator for artists to advance their careers – through exposure and connections – Giblin's approach to her virtual network was, at best, hesitant. Although she frequently used social media in her personal life (including using Instagram to edit her 'drawing line book'), she remarked 'I think

there is too much admin involved in it. This is one of the things that I really do not like about collective galleries and curating. You spend too much time doing things with other people'.

Giblin also discussed the competitive environment that social media engenders. 'Just because of too much information, we have to pay attention to what we do… It is like *the competition of eye balls*'. This point strikes at the heart of the 'attention-emotion economy', and is furthered by Giblin's expressed feelings of frustration:

> There are two different worlds for that. With physical exhibitions, you need to have the right gallery so that many people can see your art in the gallery. [For this] you should be really good at networking and getting funding… but it is so difficult to get in galleries, as I think they are only interested in mature and established artists. But if you are an Internet artist, your studio is your laptop.

Among my interviewees, Albrecht found it easiest to share her artwork through social media. She appreciated that 'the social media market is more liberal [than the traditional art market] and [it has] a totally different, flatter hierarchy. Everybody can be their own boss and connect to the world, and social media is non-committal'.

Even though Albrecht integrated her Facebook and website's homepage into her Kickstarter campaign, and believed that social media changes hierarchy, she still expressed doubt about its overall value. As she explained,

> I find connecting through Facebook very strange. First of all, you click on your "friends" profiles, who may be someone on the other side of the world you have never met before. For me, "friends" actually means something else. That is why there is a new term "Facebook friend". That means it is more like you see each other's image once and then you are Facebook friends. It is also a bit weird to deal with what people post. I find it sometimes so embarrassing, to be honest. It is actually easy to share news about my work on Facebook, but I don't have to share my private life with my followers.

Sweeney expressed similar reservations:

> I don't really like it [social media]. I'm a very private person. I have tried to use it in a way that is helpful for my practice. It's like a tool. I see it as a tool to be used in a business sense, if you like, rather than an extension of myself. I see it as something that's quite separate to my everyday reality.

From Driver's point of view, social media is an extension of his real-life network. He said that 'about 90% [of people in my network], I would say, are real friends. Online friends are real people, too'.

Bowell's relationship with social media was also deeply personal and included an educational piece.

> I have my own story that I want people to know. This is where I am going with my website and social media. When I share a piece of work, I don't just say "here's the art". I say, "This is the art and I've done it this way because it relates to something that happened to me at some point"'.

Though Davies appreciated the positive aspects of using social media and crowdfunding platforms, she preferred to keep at a distance from her audience.

> I used Kickstarter to broaden my participants. If I have a wider audience, it means more people are interested in my art, worldwide. It is a good way to make people involved in your project. At the same time, you also position yourself to learn how to interact with people.

Broadly speaking, social media and crowdfunding enable virtual relationships that artists may or may not feel at ease with. Among the concerns expressed by my interviewees were privacy issues and the impact social media had on their artistic integrity. These concerns gave rise to the question of *how close* the artists wanted to be to their social media followers and the perimeters and boundaries they wanted to draw between their personal and professional lives.

It is impossible to make a blanket statement about whether artists should focus more on building a physical network or a virtual network. For Giblin, it was worthwhile to experiment on building her social media network, using platforms like Instagram. This tool served the additional purpose of stimulating her creativity and motivating her to continue creating. At the same time, while we talked, she accepted that it is very difficult for emerging artists to get their work featured in galleries and to develop relationships with agents. Overall, she concluded that social media offers a nice pathway to expanding artist's

communities and opening opportunities for exposure that the traditional market does not allow.

6.7 Business: a changed landscape

We must also examine the purpose and value of social media platforms to emerging artists (i.e. converting audience members into customers, building sound business models, and easing administrative burden). From my interviews I learned that, if the main purpose of a social media platform is to do business, it is not enough for creators to simply engage in an organic conversation with fans and potential customers. The conversation has to be persuasive and action-oriented to sell art and other items. Business plans should, therefore, include tailored communications that engage audience members, encourage them to share pieces with others to help the artists' grow their reach and brand, as well as responding to audience's preferences and perspectives.

Many of the artists I spoke with told me that they often experienced an internal dilemma over whether to pursue creative acts for the sake of the art or for money. Related to this, they questioned whether you remain a true artist if you can successfully straddle these worlds. These issues are deep-seated. So much so, in fact, that artists are often seen, by the public, as the kind of professionals who want to keep away from commercial enterprises, and are commonly regarded as satisfied with lower-income art jobs (Steiner and Schneider, 2012). As voiced during my in-depth interviews, this view tends to be internalised by artists – forming a part of their professional identities.

The emergence of crowdfunding and social media has left many artists and creators confronted with business issues as they attempt to develop their careers independently of galleries. Morris' observation (2013) is illustrative: 'While new technologies are celebrated

for making cultural production more accessible, there is also more pressure on artists, as cultural entrepreneurs, to produce and distribute their own work' (p. 274).

The following 'business' circle shows how the successful artists I interviewed tackled business issues in developing their art careers. Compared to the art world's traditional business environment, artists who rely on social media must adjust their working paradigm. Sparrow explained that the most obvious difference is that

> [galleries] held a lot of power and it is like they held the future of artists… I think it is unfair. The main point is that you can make anything that you want. You don't need to depend on anybody. The Internet Age is quite unforgiving of artists or to anyone really because it's all about giving the best service all the time, instantly… You are your own boss. It's good in a way, but also bad, because, again, you come back to the whole pressure of things. So it can be the best, and it can also be the worst.

> I think part of the reason why *The Corner Shop* has been so successful is the repetition of it… I see it as more of a challenge, with having to make so many things. It echoes what consumerism is. It's the mass-produced thing. It is artists, instead of making one of something, they have to make 100 of something, so I think [*The Corner Shop* is] helping switch those roles around.

It was clear from our conversation that Sparrow appreciated the power of the internet, the new art market, and how Kickstarter accelerated her career. She also recognised that it requires a different approach from traditional business transactions. In her own words,

> You have to provide rewards that people actually want, because, ultimately, people are selfish. You need to offer them something that they want in return [for their financial support]. I mean people aren't stupid. They know what can work. I think there are quite a few people out there who use Kickstarter projects and they haven't raised money because they do not think about what customers can get from them… There are so few people who are unselfish and giving [patrons].

Practically speaking, Sparrow viewed social media sites as offering artists more opportunities to be successful. She explained,

I think: "How can I make the most money for work that I enjoy doing? How can I capture people's imaginations? What works and what doesn't?" I'll sort of test the water with that. If it doesn't get a response, then I'll know it is not what people like. That is to say, through social media you get a much wider audience to test your facts on.

Giblin's business circles revealed that she is not relying on social media to develop her art career. She is straddling the two worlds – i.e. the traditional and the social business side – in an effort to harness the benefits of each. During our interview, she shared 'I want to have my own studio and invite the press over… I want to be recognised… I want to share my stories and I want to teach… I really want to be represented by galleries worldwide… It is my dream'.

Of course, Giblin recognised that these spheres are different. Her choice to divide her time and attention between them was financially motivated. 'These two are quite difficult… It is totally financial… This is also why I don't have the confidence and also don't have time to really do it because I still have to look after the gallery'. Above and beyond the business side, Giblin expressed that she wanted the approval and validation that traditional galleries offer 'despite knowing full well that it is very difficult to be accepted by them'. (She mentioned this above in the 'network' circle, wherein she compared the advantages and disadvantages of traditional galleries with social media platforms).

Bowell spoke about the same theme, but drew focus on the pressure of having to acquire a broad variety of skills. 'As artists, it's really hard to do that stuff. You have to become your own social media team, web developer, advertiser, publicist, and still make the art'. Alternatively, some of the artists I spoke with drew clear lines between their art and business sides. Driver said,

> I don't think of my art practice as a business. I'm not about making business contacts and gallery contacts and all that stuff. I don't feel comfortable with that idea – my art as a business – which is probably why I don't make enough money. I just do a little better than break even.

Sweeney also expressed discomfort with the connection between her art and business. During our interview she explained:

When I did my Kickstarter campaign, I felt uncomfortable about it, because I was asking for funding to support something personal, rather than a business venture. I was kind of aware that I was asking for funding for something that was really, essentially, self-indulgent.

As Sweeney put it, even though developing an art career through social media can be a pathway to sustainability and profit, she preferred working with galleries. She claimed,

it's not about the money. It would be great to show with a gallery or space that is about integrity, rather than money. Most galleries have to make money because they are a business, and I think to see them as this big bad wolf who takes half of your money is quite a naïve view, because it's actually their premise. It costs an awful lot of money to run a gallery.

Taking a different tack, Sparrow viewed the art market ecosystem through the lens of a power relationship. Based on her experience,

galleries decide what light your work is cast in, absolutely… But social media has changed the way the whole art world works… The people dictate what is popular now… I think the way galleries are related to artwork has completely changed because of social media.

Sweeney also highlighted the positive aspects of growing a career through social media platforms, claiming

[crowdfunding platforms] completely facilitate the process of having money to continue making art. People can support you in a way that doesn't feel weird… I got *kind of* offers from friends before, who said, "I'll buy you some canvas, let me pay for some stretchers or whatever". And as a person I have to say, "No, I'm not comfortable with that. I will never take money from you. That's just not going to happen". And what was great about Kickstarter is that it just created that platform, where it felt okay for people that I knew to pledge money.

As she conceived of the art world, it is full of rules; 'to be too commercial is something you don't do… You know people judge you on it'. Albrecht also informed me

that she is making a conscious effort to overturn this view for the sake of artists' establishing their careers through non-traditional platforms:

> if artists do not change the stereotype, they cannot see or have the opportunities and, in the end, galleries are the only place they can go. But it is not very easy to reach them [galleries]. It is another hierarchy; you don't go there. If they want you, they will come to see you. The whole system is set up to make artists be in a very passive position. That is why social media and Kickstarter is liberating, supporting artists in being proactive and doing things for ourselves.

Even though Albrecht, by her own admission, has not come up with a good business strategy or model for her art, she has tried to grow her business skills – including using crowdfunding platforms and social media – to gain support. I was struck by her insight that social media can be liberating and 'flatten out the hierarchy' of galleries.

Even still, for most of the artists I spoke with, galleries remain the primary source for establishing their careers and making them known. Artists, like Giblin, have managed to straddle the two worlds to the benefit of their careers and have positioned themselves to attract online and offline audiences. True, Giblin had a successful Kickstarter campaign in *Kollective gallery*, yet she told me that the administrative social media 'chores' she had to manage reinforced her commitment to set her sights on exhibiting in galleries.

6.8 Opportunities

With ever-growing numbers of social media platforms focused on business needs and transactions, the relationships between the businessperson and his or her followers has fundamentally changed, insofar as artists now have more opportunities to become empowered and independent. The other side of this coin is that artists also have to consider how to create more opportunities to support themselves and nurture their businesses.

In the 'business' circle of this research project, the discussion included artists' views on business conducted through social media. A common theme that was expressed was that,

because of social media's near constant evolution and reach, artists are continuously forced to reconsider the opportunities that they can attain elsewhere, not to mention what they are lacking.

During our interview, Sparrow described the opportunities social media and crowdfunding have presented to artists, and suggested that

> if you've been given this opportunity with social media, there are a lot more people that now have control to advance their careers. But when there are more people, you need to be better at it in order to get to be the best. With galleries and stuff, you wouldn't need to. You wouldn't necessarily know where you were going. It's okay to go into a gallery and say, "I want this, this, and this". But it's up to them whether they say "yes" or "no". There's a lot of pressure on the internet, and because there are more opportunities, there's more pressure. Everyone's like, "Oh, the opportunities are there". But the reality is that you need to be the best and create content constantly and please your backers because there's no excuse.

According to Giblin's RAINBOW analysis, two of her Kickstarter campaigns brought opportunities not only for herself but also for other emerging artists. With respect to the opportunities this opened for their creative processes, Giblin explained, 'very often, we share our experience… at the same time, I also educate myself… my performance is about motivation, discipline, and hard work. This can also educate young people to be more enthusiastic'. In terms of her general strategy, Giblin told me that she used her art as a type of reward, which indeed made her art well-known and also opened pathways for discussion in her *Kollecktive gallery*.

In reflecting on the themes of artists' work and their expertise based on the combined RAINBOW analyses, it is evident that artists who know their skills as well as their gaps are able to create more business opportunities and build stronger relationships. Taking Giblin's art as paradigmatic, she uses drawn lines to express emotions on her subjects' faces and bodies, and told me that she experiences catharsis while doing so. When she is engaged in her artwork she does not rest and will experience a range of feelings, such as being tired,

angry, and sad. From our discussions, it was clear that Giblin knows her artistic style and

voice well, and that this comes out in her determination, work ethic, and performance. This

also gives her a competitive advantage in the market. Irrespective of this, Giblin told me that

she still needs to learn how to connect her art – her adeptness at drawing 'emotional' lines –

with people's lives and experiences to grow her business and career. Otherwise, like many

other talented artists, her work may continue to be appreciated but not financially supported.

> Spence told me that social media's wider audience gave him new opportunities to

establish his career. In more detail,

> straight away you can speak to people from around the world. There are no barriers.
> It's the internet. People from anywhere can have a look at what you're doing, and
> you can talk to them. It makes a giant world the size of your PC. That's incredible…
> incredibly powerful. There are so many opportunities there. Then you have to learn
> to speak to a global audience as well in different ways. You're not going to appeal to
> everyone all at once, but if you're confident in the things that you're doing and your
> style, then people that are interested will follow you.

Aligned with this, Bowell suggested 'in social media, you can start to put things out there

straight away and sell things, even if you've got a very small amount of work'. By contrast,

in the traditional art market, you had to build a body of work, exhibit it, and then sell it.

> For Moore, social media created opportunities, insofar as it made her aware of what

is trendy and well-received in real-time and from a broad variety of perspectives.

> In terms of future opportunities, Sweeney remained steadfast that she wanted to

work with galleries.

> I mean the opportunities are there if you want them. Definitely. You could sell work.
> You can upload an image of your work, and you've got a good chance of selling it on
> the right sites. And you package it up and you send it… but… I think the situation is
> grey. Not black or white. If I could choose what would come in the future for me, at
> some point, I would want to work with a reputable gallerist who supported the
> integrity of my practice over having lots of online sales.

In keeping with this theme, Albrecht told me that she has the ability to create something that

will attract people, but she still cannot find the linkage between her art and her consumers'

preferences. On the one hand, she said 'I have the gift that I can do things that fascinate people… I have the gift to create things to make people enjoy them'. On the other hand, Albrecht appreciated the fact that her art (fabric bricks) does not connect with many people.

It was not surprising to learn that Albrecht ultimately lost her interest in selling the four hundred bricks that she had used in her Kickstarter campaign. This is a problem that other artists have also had to sort out. In the beginning of their careers, artists are often very confident in their art until they are confronted with challenges in monetising it. After a while, some artists will lose their energy and, in the end, may even give up.

On a broader scale, as more and more artists struggle, it will have an influence on the art environment generally. This is the reason why it is so important for artists to infuse a business model into their career trajectories, and be guided by it throughout.

6.9 Weaknesses: the critical role of attitude

Even with all of the advantages social media platforms offer, artists' business models, administration, promotion, communications, and branding remain their own responsibilities. While artists have creative control over their careers, they must also identify the *right time* to engage fans and customers and know how to do so through tailored communications to convert fans into customers. Through my interviews, it was clear that the time and effort these pieces take cut into artists' time to devote to their creative pursuits.

In the 'weaknesses' component of the 'business' circle, there were connections between artists' relationships with the audiences, their networks, and the analysis from the business side. Artists reflected on the use of social media and crowdfunding for their career purposes and aspirations. For example, Spence used the metaphor of 'fishing in a very busy sea, with lots of other people fishing as well'. Sparrow suggested that opportunities and weaknesses can go hand-in-hand. Social media can be

good, but also slightly bad, because, in the Internet Age, people expect things very fast. They're expecting things instantly. It's like instant gratification because they're used to businesses providing that. When you're an artist, I think there's that confusion between business and art that you have to provide it in exactly the same way. However, there's no reason why you shouldn't. If you want to be the best, you need to provide the best. There is no time off and there is no down-time with social media, because it is available all over the world and you have all kinds of different time zones… meaning you also have the pressure of providing things.

I discovered through my in-depth interviews that, for artists who want to set up their own business, the greatest challenge has less to do with the art itself and more to do with their attitude and business mindset. Giblin offered a prime example, when she explained

> my weakness is maybe trying to do too many things on my own. I don't like to be bored. I can get bored very easily and I need to be "looking after sheep" all the time… It is difficult for me to start doing the same thing again.

Indeed, many artists want to be creative all the time, yet *creating* business opportunities requires dividing focus away from their art and adopting a different frame of mind. For instance, if Giblin wants to be more successful on the business side, she may have to choose to create one item that she is enthusiastic about, and then refine her approach from there.

In describing social media and crowdfunding, Sweeney often used the word 'uncomfortable'.

> It's something [social media] I try not to think about when I do the work. I like the fact the work is, or all art really, is open to that reaction, and everybody brings their own personal opinion to it. I don't know if it's a weakness. I don't feel comfortable with it… But do I see that as a bad thing? I don't know... That if social media didn't exist, I'd still be making my work. Probably wouldn't have the Kickstarter funding. But I'd still be making work. So even if nobody knows what I'm doing, I'm still going to be doing it. [That said] once the work's been photographed, it then becomes a representation of the work, not the work itself. I think that's a problem, and it works both ways. Sometimes I see a piece of work digitally and kind of go, "Oh wow, I really want to go and see that piece of work". Then I might go and see it, and it's disappointing. I hope that people have an awareness that they're looking at a digital version of the work, not the work itself. Of course, now we're so bombarded with it, and people just go, "Oh yeah, I've seen that person's work". You *have*, but you haven't really if you haven't been in front of it.

Moore also used the word 'uncomfortable' to characterise the process of promoting work and asking for money, though she – pragmatically – acknowledged that it is a necessary feeling to work through. In her words, 'asking is difficult, but, if you don't ask, you don't get… especially on crowdfunding and social media sites'.

Given these considerations, there are no black and white answers when it comes to the value of social media for supporting the careers of emerging artists. For artists who focus on how their work is represented in a virtual form, these platforms can be viewed as destroying the authenticity or realness of their art. For artists who are keen to gain independence from traditional galleries, social media and crowdfunding platforms tend to be seen as enablers, incubators, and a source of empowerment. That said, these platforms are also known to invite more competition, because artists worldwide can access and harness them to showcase their work.

6.10 RAINBOW Analysis Framework: Summary Conclusion

The RAINBOW analysis framework detailed above drew from artists' backgrounds and expressed views to capture different perspectives on their relationships with other artists, their professional identities, and the art market in the context of the new social media environment. Emergent themes included:

(1) New opportunities. Artists can use social media (Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook) to gain a wider audience and advance their careers by promoting their artwork. These social media sites help artists to break the boundaries between themselves and their audiences. For instance, in launching new campaigns or hosting exhibitions, artists can announce the particulars on social media sites and encourage their followers to attend through direct communication. Through this process they can attract potential audience members (backers) from different backgrounds – from all over the world. Even though

artists must manage the administrative components of their work and strategise to continue

to connect with and grow their audience base, there is value in this insofar as the more

people who know about their campaigns, the more opportunities artists will have. In turn,

this can give artists more freedom and power to develop their careers. Instead of relying on

galleries, artists who use social media become responsible for promotions, marketing, and

sales in addition to creating their art and thereby controlling their brand. As Sparrow

mentioned during our in-depth interview, the new opportunities brought about by social

media mean that artists have no excuses to not be successful and take sole responsibility for

all of the activities related to their businesses. This implies that when artists fail in *making it*,

they have nobody to blame but themselves. The flipside of this is that those artists who

develop successful careers through social media can be particularly proud of themselves,

recognising that they are primarily responsible for their accomplishments.

(2) More conversations with like-minded professionals. Artists have greater access to

people with shared interests to discuss trends, the art market, and creative methods, even

though some artists do not feel very confident in using social media. For example, Sweeney

expressed feelings of discomfort with using social media, and Albrecht shared that she is

still hesitant to use social media and does not like to be *too close* to her Facebook followers.

Having said that, Sweeney was quick to admit that she enjoyed exploring other artists' social

media profiles and websites to know about their art, and that she used these platforms to

exchange ideas. Based on my interview findings, no matter whether artists are 'social media

doubters' or 'social media in-betweeners', they can still see its value in facilitating them to

know about other artists' work and enabling knowledge exchange.

(3) The influence of social media on the creative process. Artists are able to identify

potential audience member's preferences and adjust their artwork accordingly. This

constitutes the main difference between the traditional art market (relying on galleries) and

the social media art market. In more detail, when artists cooperate with galleries, they focus on making their art instead of interacting with their audience members (as galleries deal with these 'chores' for them). On the one hand, by working with galleries artists can reserve more time to focus on their artwork and are not as influenced by their audience's preferences in their creative processes. On the other hand, artists may not have direct access to their audience base, and so cannot learn about what they want and will respond to. Social media has dramatically changed this dynamic, in that artists can be online all the time to interact with their audience and get a firm understanding of what they value. Over time, artists who successfully tap into this market can become independent enough to have private audiences that will enable them to develop their careers.

(4) Crowdfunding enables different pathways towards career development and sustainability, in addition to community support from online audiences. Traditionally, artists have had to work two jobs in building their careers, given that their artwork is often not well compensated. While galleries can help with this process, my interviewees all shared in the view that it is very difficult for emerging artists to have their works accepted into galleries. Proactively responding to this, crowdfunding provides artists with a pathway to obtain financial support to continue their careers. It has the further virtue of taking the 'weird' factor out of requesting money, according to Sweeney. Moreover, artists can use crowdfunding platforms to launch multiple campaigns, as Bowell and Sparrow each benefitted from.

To allow for a well-rounded analysis, this chapter began with the artists' reflections on their careers because I believe that these sentiments are at the heart of the art market ecosystem. I say this because their reflections helped me, as a researcher, to identify where their creativity comes from and the influences that affect their art lives and what they produce. This also has a galvanising impact on the artists' views of their professional roles. I

came to see that the critical analysis made possible by the RAINBOW framework reinforced how the artists saw themselves, how they wanted to relate to their audience members, and how they felt about the changed art market and their new responsibilities.

In our discussions concerning the 'interpersonal' circle, it was evident that some artists benefitted from the support of their families – especially their parents – while others were discouraged or had self-doubts that arose through their formative relationships. On a positive note, several artists commented that they were able to transfer their insecurities to their creative work, fueling their creative drive and determination. Giblin is a prime example here. Although she had always believed that her father focused too much on money and did not value her artistic talent enough, her overall takeaway was that 'thankfully, my father snuck business into all conversations about art, for survival purposes'.

In terms of artists' broader relationships, the 'audience' component of the interviews revealed difficulties connecting with their imagined audience via social media. There is also apparent tension in terms of the relationships artists *want* to have with their audiences. While there was universal agreement among the artists I interviewed that they wanted their work to be appreciated and valued, many struggled to maintain authenticity in their creations amidst the pressure to produce according to timelines and taste. Driver, for instance, likes to draw according to his taste rather than for others. Bowell falls on the opposite end of the spectrum, in that – first and foremost – she enjoys making art that people will like, and her perception of her imagined audience influences her creative process.

As noted above, the innovation component fits within two circles (i.e. both the 'interpersonal' and 'social media' circles). To an extent, it was shown that social media empowers artists to take control of their art and to build relationships with potential customers who appreciate their work. However, this also means that artists feel sole, and rather acute, responsibility if they do not attract enough attention to sustain their work. For

that reason, many artists still see value in galleries and agents, even though they may not attract as many followers as they can through social media platforms.

Discussions about networks also fell into the 'social media' circle. It is worth emphasising that – although artists had positive attitudes towards crowdfunding and social media (particularly the opportunities they facilitate) – they struggled in knowing how to harness these platforms for promoting, managing expectations, and administration. This is not surprising, considering public relations is a skill set that requires mastery, and there are formal educational programs devoted to just that. There were also concerns raised about *how much* to share and whether to adopt a particular persona to connect with one's audience members. Hence, at the same time as an artist can feel more confident communicating virtually than face-to-face, there is a range of thinking about sharing personal information. Some artists are fine with sharing details about their everyday lives, while others want to maintain a strict divide between their work and their personal lives.

In the 'business' circle – which included discussions about business, opportunities, and weaknesses – interviewees focused, primarily, on how they interacted with (and felt about) social media and crowdfunding in comparison to agents and galleries. While many interviewees relished the idea of creating their own brand, challenges remained in terms of how to effectively do this. In other words, creators must multi-task and acquire a broad range of skills to ensure that their work gets noticed, that transactions occur, that relationships are managed, and that timelines are met. These activities – promotion, marketing, communications, and customer service – were traditionally absorbed by galleries and performed by the agents who worked within them. Now, artists have to perform all of these activities on top of creating artwork, unless they work with galleries.

With respect to opportunities and weaknesses, I learned that artists are struggling to adjust their attitudes and relationships between their art and the business side of their work.

Sparrow, for instance, observed that social media may cause confusion among artists in considering the 'business side' of their work, particularly insofar as they may underestimate how challenging it can be to build a following and monetise their work.

Chapter 7 Reflection and Analysis: The Researcher's Successful Kickstarter Campaign, Mr. Dash's Inspiration

7.1 Introduction

As articulated in Chapter 3, during interviews it is imperative for researchers to be mindful of the possibility that they may hold implicit biases towards being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in a research project. It is only by being aware of this possibility and managing it that a researcher may exit an in-depth interview with well-rounded and comprehensive data.

Guided by my ten years of experience working as a professional journalist and the experiences I have had throughout my lifetime as an artist and a creative type, I recognised going into my interviews that it would be possible for me to strike a balance between taking an 'insider' and an 'outsider' perspective. This enabled me to frame my questions in such a way that I could explore a wealth of data that ultimately informed the action of this research project. It also enabled me to *set the stage* with my interview subjects by being relatable and anticipating the lenses through which they would be viewing my questions. The pragmatic suggestions that the artists offered me during our interviews helped me to launch my own successful crowdfunding campaign, and to avoid the challenges that they faced because I possessed their insider knowledge.

When I began to formulate my campaign ideas based on the insights my interview subjects had shared with me, I was (perhaps) most challenged by the notion of using a thinking tool to nurture my reflective process. Seeking inspiration, I turned to my doctoral supervisor, Professor David Gauntlett, who suggested that I could use LEGO models and configurations to 'represent abstract experiences, feelings, or ideas— and… think through the implications of those things… to build alternatives or solutions

to what was shown, either as an individual process or in groups' (Gauntlett, 2015, p. 103).

This suggestion – combined with attending a workshop that Dr. Gauntlet led on exploring creative visual research methods – motivated me to use LEGO as a tool to develop my campaign and establish a bridge between data from my interviewees and *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*. Complementing this process, I decided to write a LEGO diary on a daily basis from the dual perspective of being a researcher and a creator. I believed that this would assist me in deeply exploring what I wanted to communicate with my potential audience members and that it would help me to understand how I could best convert them into campaign backers. Therefore, before I launched my Kickstarter campaign, I spent approximately 3 months using LEGO as a reflective tool.

7.2 Taking a page from the researcher's LEGO diary

My LEGO dairy was, primarily, a tool to support critical reflection. I realized early on in this process that different pieces of LEGO came to play different roles in facilitating me to make connections between my research and my campaign. What I eventually dubbed my 'LEGO trials' began on 12 February, 2015 and ended on 14 April, 2015.

Before I began using LEGO, I was stuck. I could not choose the theme of my Kickstarter campaign, I could not see how I could best connect with my audience and potential backers, and I did not have clear ideas about what my creative outputs should be. On a typical day – through unstructured reflection – I had hundreds of abstract ideas about my campaign that I ruminated on. As inspired and motivated as I was, I also quickly lost confidence in bringing these ideas to life because I realised that they were not anchored. One idea seemed to be as good and workable as any other.

Eventually, I used LEGO models to clarify the fundamental concepts I wanted to work with and to help keep my thoughts on track. Using different colours, pieces, and configurations helped me to ground and physically represent my ideas. Moreover, it made me feel like I had the freedom to carry out this experiment, and to express my ideas free of anyone else's judgement or outside interference.

My journaling process took the form of using the diary app, DayOne each day over the course of 3 months. On each day, I reflected on a topic that was significant to me – whether it was clarifying ideas that I had considered on previous days, or working over an inspired idea about my research and Kickstarter campaign generally. The following excerpts are from my LEGO diaries, and served this research project as a component of fact-finding in deeply reflecting on my research project and campaign design.

My fist LEGO set (as an adult). I selected a small Lego set (of 57 pieces) to complete my trial. I did this in an effort to test my creativity by working with fewer options and seeing how many models I could make with limited choice. I focused on representing different feelings and experiences through this creative visual research method.

In writing my corresponding diary, I chose to focus on how I conceptualised Kickstarter and the relationship dynamics between artists and the platform that they expressed during my in-depth interviews. This was part of my larger objective to use LEGO to seek solutions to my main action in this project. Specifically, I sought to identify how I could create a successful project on Kickstarter based upon what I had learned during my in-depth interviews.

For example, I reflected on how I could attract potential backers and motivate them to support my campaign. While many ideas came to mind – from promotions and marketing to word of mouth – when I worked with LEGO, I was forced to think in the most concrete terms, given that I was translating ideas into a physical form and had very few pieces to work with. The metaphors I came up with enabled me to get rid of rough ideas so that I could focus, instead, on the most compelling reasons underlying them. This pairing of limited physical resources and my sustained focus to express my abstract ideas in a physical form brought out my creative thinking and clear-headedness.

The following LEGO configurations demonstrate the reflections I made based on my interview data and Kickstarter campaign.

16 February, 2015   17 February, 2015   18 February, 2015
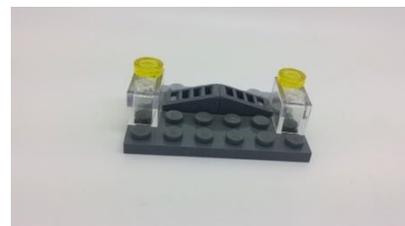
On 16 February, 2015 I wrote: 'This is the first LEGO which is really "my own." Of course, it was more challenging than making a LEGO design based on instructions, but I enjoyed it. It illustrates what I think about Kickstarter and its connection with my campaign.

For example, I used wheels, the light, and cone shapes of my LEGO pieces to represent comfort, or at least a new opportunity for creators to establish their businesses. I built up a small place with cushions (the black shelves) for creators to rest. Also, this design represents a centre (yellow light) for creators to show their ideas and a place to protect (the black umbrella in the centre) creators who have not had enough support during their creative process. Then, the wheels suggest the platform can move and connect creators from all over the world'.

In short, in making this LEGO model, I used wheels and an umbrella to depict the advantages of crowdfunding platforms – i.e. the connection with backers from all over the world who support artists and thereby enable them to work outside of traditional agencies, such as galleries.

My diary entry on 16 February, 2015 marked the beginning stages of my growing comfort with this thinking tool. From my writing, it is clear that I felt inspired by the possibilities of assembling LEGO pieces and assigning meaning and metaphors to my configurations. Through the process of assembling LEGO models, I felt the freedom of being a creator, working without any rules. Following this positive and expansive experience, I continued to make LEGO models to reflect on and guide my Kickstarter campaign strategy.

On 17 February, 2015 I questioned: 'How can I set up a successful Kickstarter project? I think the most important thing is to draw people's attention, so the project must be creative and move people'.

Here, the role of my LEGO model was to convert the abstract concepts into real physical constructions in a more methodical way than before. In other words, the model was the bridge between my reflections and my actual formative campaign ideas. Hence, I made a simple and small LEGO model to illustrate this idea. The square indicated my ideas for a

Kickstarter project and the two yellow lights represented followers' eyes (attention). The red part represented a heart, suggesting I had to make followers' or customers' hearts turn like a wheel. I ended up using the yellow dot as metaphors in many of my LEGO models (recall, it represented the artist's ideas in my previous diary entry). I positioned the wheel higher than the yellow lights in a deliberate effort to show that *moving* people through their emotions is more important than catching their attention. On that note, this LEGO model inspired me to expand my thinking about the attention-emotion economy, and the role I wanted it to play in my campaign.

In my previous diary entries, I focused, primarily, on the content creation for my campaign, with the objective of finding a creative outlet that inspired me and that would also catch people's attention and warm their hearts. In the diary entry that follows, I worked to assemble the LEGO model so that I could focus my thinking about the steps required to have a successful campaign and the milestones that would show me that I was on target.

On 18 February, 2015 I had this to say: 'When you can have a project which draws customers' attention and moves them, the next thing is to make the project well-known, so creating more connections with more people becomes important. The yellow lights and the transparent bricks indicate two components of this process – i.e. creators and customers (followers). The grey bridge serves as the communication pathway. Furthermore, I added yellow lights to the top of the transparent bricks, which represented the idea that artists have to be very close to their customers in order to build strong relationships that will translate into sales. The transparent parts are the metaphors for how creators and customers know each other better through the bridge and clear communications'.

Overall, I came up with three different metaphors related to the yellow lights. More than any other piece in my LEGO set, the lights captivated my attention and inspired me to work creatively and uninhibitedly towards my goals.

On a deeper level, in each of my configurations, I was guided by my belief that it is necessary as an artist to reflect on preferences, values, and creative sources of inspiration to know what moves you so that you can effectively engage with others. Using LEGO as my thinking tool encouraged me to unearth my motivations, aims, and passions. I learned that one of my most sincere convictions is that creativity can not only change my future but also change the world. However, I also realised that being a creative person or doing creative research is not always easy. These diaries helped me to reflect on some of the obstacles and explore solutions to help channel my creativity and free my creative process. To facilitate this process, I posed the following questions to myself: 'What is a creator? How can I be a creator? Why do I want to be a creator?'

| 22 March, 2015 | 23 March, 2015 | 24 March, 2015 | 31 March, 2015 |
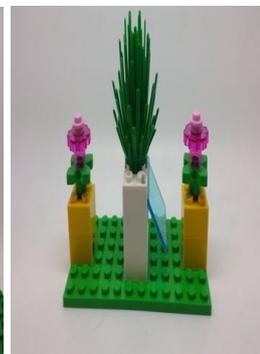
On 22 March, 2015 I wrote: 'What are the requirements for being a creator? "Creativity" seems to be the simplest answer. But there must be more to it than that. Based on my understanding, creating also requires courage and enthusiasm. Creators must consider that their art may not be appreciated by customers, but they must still believe in themselves and endure precarious financial and living conditions'.

Referring to the images above, the flower on top of the LEGO man's head represented enthusiasm. The small red car indicated a creators' courage to go forward in

pursuit of creative works and ideas. The small brown door suggested financial instability (poor living conditions), while the larger door represented the public's interests. In more detail, creators/artists may vacillate between creating something the public likes and creating for its own sake. The transparent door helped me to express the concept that it would be better for creators to keep a safe distance from poor living conditions and believe in a bright future ahead.

Reflecting more deeply on this LEGO configuration and diary entry, I came to appreciate that sometimes creativity is a mysterious process, leaving me unable to locate its source or harness it at will. This engenders feelings of both fulfilment and frustration. Tied to this, I discovered during my in-depth interviews that many artists often find it challenging to convey meaning to others, and there is no guarantee that creative work will resonate or even be appreciated by an audience.

Through my in-depth interviews and literature review, it was evident that most artists have to face the following dilemma: Either experience financial instability to single-mindedly pursue their art/creativity, or compromise to help pay their bills by working at art *on the side* or creating works *because* they will be popular or have commercial appeal.

Continuing my reflection process in lead-up to launching my Kickstarter campaign, I gave thought to the kind of creator I wanted to be. On 23 March, 2015 I questioned: 'Why do I want to be a creator? In my past, I was taught to use my creativity to *do* things, such as writing or drawing. When I consider this deeply, I keep returning to the idea that I like the feeling that I can create something using my hands, and I know I am very special in the world and I may be able to change the world even a little'.

LEGO: The tree and the flower in the images above were used to reflect items created and nurtured by my hands. The square represented the world. I conceived of myself

as standing on top of the square because I am very special and use my creative ideas (i.e. yellow, gray, and dark yellow bricks) to change the world.

Taking a step back, it is worth noting that when I began my LEGO diary, I had already started to think about creating my Kickstarter campaign. I thought a lot about my goals, especially whether I wanted to become very successful through it, or whether – more modestly – I wanted to validate and apply my research findings.

On 24 March, 2015 I reflected on the following: 'What do creators hope to accomplish through leading "creative lives"? After all, there are many artists who do not care about being successful or earning a lot of money. From my point of view, I value the reactions that I get from others, especially when they appreciate my work. Intimately connected to this, I believe that the more support I have for the work that I do, the more influence I have to change the world through my artistic platform. Apart from that, financial issues do influence how I create and what I am moved to create. This was also common amongst my interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators'.

LEGO: Famous people (creators) stand out in the world (on top of the tower) and use creative ideas to share (the ladder) with people (three little LEGO men). They may escape their stresses (the gray chain) through acts of creation.

Indeed, while making my LEGO configurations and keeping my diary, I (repeatedly) focused my reflections on my Kickstarter campaign and how to ground my abstract concepts in concrete ideas and measurable steps. I then extended this visual thinking tool to explore the theories I considered applying in my research and throughout my campaign.

On 31 March, 2015 I wrote: 'In my research, I use physical things to explain abstract concepts, such as self-identity and the relationship between creators, their professional roles, and social media. My aim is to know how creators' self-identities influence their creativity and how they maintain a clear sense of self-identity in the social media era. The fundamental

question should be how to know a creator's self-identity. Here, I will try to use physical items to make self-identity clearer through my LEGO pieces, making circle connections'.

LEGO: The tree indicates physical objects. The two flowers serve as a metaphor for self-identity. The transparent window represents self-reflection and self-awareness.

After exploring various Kickstarter projects, I started thinking about how to tackle more challenging topics. I grew increasingly confident, like Dr. Gauntlett, that LEGO could be used as a thinking tool for exploring self-identity (Gauntlett, 2006, p. 85; 2015, p. 101). Synthesising ideas, in 2015, I read Giddens' theory of self-identity, which I eventually applied to the last stage of my Kickstarter campaign (i.e. the reflection analysis). I also used this theory to coax out more nuances, using LEGO as a tool to explore my thinking deeply, as demonstrated in the images that follow.

28 February, 2015   26 March, 2015   1 April, 2015

My diary excerpt from 28 February, 2015 reads: 'Today I read *Conversations with Anthony Giddens,* which focused on the concept of social reflexivity. I got to thinking that if I could combine social reflexivity and self-reflexivity, their relationships may be explained in the following way: Society is bigger than the individual so very often self-reflexivity takes place in the context of social-reflexivity'.

LEGO: The grey bricks represented social reflexivity. The transparent brick with two yellow lights was meant to signify the individual. The transparent brick, together with the

flat red brick, was a metaphor for self-reflexivity. The entire set tells the story that self-reflexivity is included in social-reflexivity, and it is reflexivity that encourages people to be authentic and transparent.

From 26 March, 2015 (after further reflecting on Giddens' theory) I wrote: 'It turns out that Giddens was born in North London. Later, his parents moved to Palmers' Green, more of an up-market neighbourhood. His father was a clerical worker who refurbished carriages and was a vandal in the underground. Through self-reflection and my in-depth interviews, I came to see that relationships with family members always influence creators' drives and inclinations. Aligned with this, Giddens' family memory inspired me to express these dynamics in LEGO form'.

LEGO: Specifically, Giddens' father talked to him about how railway passengers were often rowdy on trains. Hence, the white LEGO man standing on the train represented Giddens' father's work. I also used the black cover and the LEGO man wearing a blue shirt to allude to the challenges Giddens' father confronted.

Carrying this theme forward, I made another diary entry on 1 April, 2015. It read: 'Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the job of a clerical worker in the abstract is to begin with the creators' self-identity. The critical questions to ask include: 'What is self-identity and what is a creators' self-identity?' According to Anthony Giddens (1991), self-identity is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self-identity has continuity – that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will – but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography (p. 53). In other words, self-identity is the process of how people reflect on their histories and understand their biographies.

LEGO: The yellow bricks with eyes represented people, and the pen referred to their individual biographies. Through the process of self-identity (i.e. the large door), people reflect their biographies (i.e. the transparent LEGO).

Prior to beginning my Kickstarter and in-depth interviews with my cases, I spent over ten months researching the topic of artists' lived experiences (Chapter 6). After completing my LEGO diary, in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter artists, and my RAINBOW analysis framework to organise the interview data and results, I began analysing the content of each campaign. I then conducted another round of interviews with each artist based on the results of their campaigns. Following this, I designed my Kickstarter campaign to act on the results of the data collected in this research project.

7.3 The researcher turned practitioner: *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*

After a year and a half's worth of preparation, on 21 July, 2017 I launched *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* – the main action in this research project. As detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, in lead-up to my campaign's launch, I performed ten in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators, developed a systematic analysis framework (RAINBOW), and used LEGO as a creative reflection tool to identify my goals, beliefs, and feelings about being a creator, and the steps I needed to take to realise my goals. Much of my time was actually invested in learning and clarifying my thinking about what I *did not* want to do, and the kind of creator I did *not* want to be. On the surface, this could be viewed as wasted time, but – ultimately – I found it was necessary to ground my ideas and ensure my success when my ideas were put to the test. This sentiment was also expressed by my fellow artists during their in-depth interviews.

Based on what I learned through my in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators, I focused my energy on navigating the challenges of developing my

network, building my audience base, creating a video, and tailoring content to appeal to people's emotions. As described in Chapter 4, my border collie (Dash) was at the heart of my campaign, and I built storylines around what he has taught me during our time together.

For this, I worked with other professionals to fill in my skills gaps and to help ensure that my campaign would be polished and professionally packaged. Specifically, I had to take on the role of businessperson in considering the costs of developing and promoting my materials, as well as carrying out strategic thinking to develop a successful business plan. This process enabled me to empathise with my interviewees, thinking about how – like them – I did not enjoy the business side of launching my creative project. By that same token, I learned a lot about what I could and could not do on my own, and how important and valuable cooperation can be.

As this research project evolved, my perspective changed from an 'outsider' to an 'insider'. In learning other perspectives and challenges voiced by my interview subjects, I was an 'outsider'. However, in applying what I learned I became an 'insider' by taking a reflective approach and working to launch my own campaign. For instance, my thinking changed from 'How can *artists* use crowdfunding platforms and social media to develop their careers?' to 'How can *I* have a successful Kickstarter campaign fostered by social media?'

7.4 Taking Action: Campaign Results

During this stage of my research project, my primary task – as a campaign creator – was to make *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* successful. I am now pleased to share that my campaign was a success. I received £3523 pledged from my original goal of £1500, from 43 backers (i.e. I was funded 234% over my original goal). I believe that these results were largely due to the connections I made with other professionals and taking the risk to fail by

setting a higher fundraising goal (i.e. from £300 to £1500). My decision to cooperate with other professionals was inspired by my research that showed that campaigns with quality content and rewards were significantly more likely to succeed. Many campaigns showcased the talents of their creators and yet still failed, because they did not have good videos or page designs.

It stands to reason that, through social media, people are exposed to so many photos every day that visual impressions are becoming increasingly important to capture attention. Accordingly, I worked with professionals to make sure that my videos, rewards, and content design were delivered to a high standard. Setting a higher financial goal also encouraged me to be resilient, creative, and engage my network of family members and friends regularly, while also reaching out to cultivate new 'friends' who shared my passion and interest in what animals can teach us about happiness.

Indeed, after launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I focused exclusively on developing my network and potential audience. This process made me appreciate the two main difficulties that artists had expressed during our interviews, i.e. deciding what to share with others and growing my audience.

In more detail, like most other successful Kickstarter campaign creators, I began thinking about my campaign by sharing ideas and strategies with my friends and social media followers. I worked to strengthen my real relationships and build virtual relationships from there. I struggled with knowing how to ask my friends to support my campaign. Frankly, I needed them to financially support me to make my campaign successful. I, therefore, had to force myself to become more active with my real relationships than before. Admittedly, I felt quite disappointed when I did not get support from some of my friends who I had considered my most likely backers, and this made me question the strength of the relationships independently of the project.

When it came to my virtual relationships on social media sites, I developed different kinds of relationships on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, respectively. Overall, I used these platforms to collect useful information about my potential audience. It was motivating to attract more followers who liked Dash. The positive responses I received throughout my campaign encouraged me to change my attitudes and behaviors in my real life to try to achieve different results for my Kickstarter campaign.

In terms of growing my audience base, prior to launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I did not pay attention to (or care about) how many followers I had attracted on social media. But when I realised that I had to grow my base to have a successful campaign, it was much more difficult than I had imagined it would be. My main challenge was identifying my target audience – i.e. the *right* people to attract to expand my network and buy into my ideas.

Based on my efforts, my followers on Facebook grew from 40 to 700 (17.5 times) in one month. Knowing what I do now, to have greater success I should have expanded my audience base much sooner in the process. It is not easy to grow, let alone build, good relationships with followers in one month. Developing good virtual relationships is comparable to developing real relationships; they require time, effort, and nurturing. Numbers alone do not make the difference, but rather the quality of the relationships and the depth of their investment in your idea. Had I started developing my network a year earlier, I could have grown deeper and more quality ties with potential backers. One conclusion I drew from this experience and my research generally is that the scale of my audience could have been bigger and my relationships with my audience could have been stronger to propel my campaign's success.

7.5 *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, post launch

After dealing with the production process, the most important step I encountered was trying to raise awareness about my campaign. This meant I had to confront the business side of my project, which many creators do not like (myself included, I now realise). For this, I took two main actions, which were basic but critical in the social media world: Asking friends for their support, and developing broader connections through social media platforms.

Before I launched my Kickstarter project, even though I already had most of the possible social media accounts – such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, and LinkedIn – I used them, primarily, for exploring information or getting caught up with friends rather than connecting to people en masse. Hence, before I started *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* I only had 40 Facebook followers, 5 Twitter followers, and 10 Instagram followers. Growing my network and raising awareness was the primary challenge I encountered in making my Kickstarter campaign successful. I invested a lot of time and effort into this because I recognised, from my interviews and research, that it would be virtually impossible to be successful on Kickstarter without social media support.

To help me develop connections with the social media world, I created three different accounts for this campaign on 10 July, 2017 – i.e. a Mr. Dash's Inspiration page on Facebook, a Mr. Dash's Inspiration page on Twitter, and a Mr. Dash's Inspiration page on Instagram.

Even though I was confident about the content I was sharing with potential followers, I was unsure about the best way to spread it. I wondered how I could develop relationships with people who might appreciate the content I created. To facilitate this process, I planned to make three posts daily on each social media platform, so that interested people could gradually get to know Dash. Following this, my plan was to subtly introduce my Kickstarter campaign and eventually heavily push and promote it. I,

therefore, divided my posts into five topics – #motivationmonday, #healthytuesday, #wednesdaywisdom, #throwbackthursday, and # happyfriday. Each post had a related sentimental statement and corresponding photo of Dash.

To build my network of new followers, I had to know how to find them, connect with them, and engage them. Considering the main themes of this campaign – how we are inspired by our pets and how they influence our lives – I targeted 'friends' who were obvious dog lovers, knowing it would be easier for me to introduce my campaign to them and that they would likely be engaged by it. Furthermore, I believed that once the dog lovers knew more about my campaign, they would be more willing to support it and share it with their like-minded friends. My strategy was to join 10 dog lover groups – 'Border Collies Rock', 'Border-Collie Love!', 'Border Collie Lover', 'Border Collie-Kisses', 'Border Collies', 'Border Collie Lovers UK', 'Dog Quotes', 'Dog Photographers', 'Dogs Make Me Smile', and 'Puppies Daily'. On Twitter, I used my *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* account to follow 232 people or groups, and 298 people on Instagram.

The process of connecting was not straightforward. After connecting to the dog lover groups, I discovered that they had mentioned – up front – that they did not want any types of advertisements or solicitation. Respecting this, I came to believe that even though the members of the groups were not warm to ads, they wanted to have friends to share direct stories and information about dogs with. I also found that, although I had set up Dash's Facebook page to connect people, it was very slow to make people get to know Dash and my campaign.

To overcome these challenges, I posted Dash's beautiful photos on different Facebook dog lover groups, Twitter, and Instagram. Then, I replied to most of the comments that appeared below them and, in the process of doing so, invited

commenters to be my friends on my Facebook site. When they followed me on Facebook, I invited them to join Dash's Facebook page. Then, they could get to know more about my campaign and about Dash generally. At this stage, Dash's information became the bridge between Facebook dog lover friends and me. This served as an ice-breaker in cultivating relationships through social media and respecting advertisement best practices.

After launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, the connections I made as the result of my campaign actually changed my real life network because it made me and Dash more visible. I spent three weeks (almost every day) connecting people to my Facebook account, and then introduced them to Dash's page. The number of followers on my Facebook site rose from 40 to 700 (growing by 17.5 times).

When I was focusing on building my network across various social media sites, I also discovered that I needed to work on my real relationships. I contacted most of my friends through social apps, such as email, Messenger, and Line to let them know about my campaign. Some of them even volunteered to help me post my campaign information on their personal Facebook pages. In particular, I talked with my closest friends about my campaign, knowing I would have their strong support and encouragement.

7.6 Reflection: successes and opportunities

As noted above, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* was launched on 21 July, 2017 and was completed 20 August, 2017. It was a successful campaign, considering it achieved 234% (£3523) of my original goal (£1500).

As a researcher and practitioner, the reflection stage is one of the most challenging aspects of any project. There are several 'voices' involved in this stage, such as the critical

reflexive 'I', the dialectically critical 'I', and the meta-reflexive 'I'. By using these different 'I's' in my reflection process, I was able to analyse my relationships as foundational for campaign success.

As detailed in Chapter 4, in this research project I developed and applied the RAINBOW analysis framework to conduct in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators. RAINBOW was also used in the reflection stage of my action research. It is worth mentioning that even though I used the same analysis framework in multiple phases of this research project, my roles were significantly different and how I used the framework differed accordingly.

For example, in the stage of my project where I explored artists' different experiences through the seven different analytic lenses, I assumed the position of an outsider because I used RAINBOW to collect data in an objective way. Following the main action, i.e. launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I used the same RAINBOW analysis framework but my role had changed. Therefore, in this stage of my project, the RAINBOW framework enabled self-reflection for my own benefit as a would-be Kickstarter.

As the creator of my Kickstarter campaign and an insider in this research project, I explored potential solutions to how artists could successfully use crowdfunding platforms to develop their art careers. For this, I integrated the different 'I's' into my framework to connect with the entire picture of the auto-ethnography action research project, as well as anticipate and identify potential solutions.

Specifically, I used cut-out circles of coloured paper to guide my self-reflection process. Ultimately, I wanted to reflect on how my background and previous life experiences influenced my relationship to my career and this research project. The 'audience' circle proved to be the most relevant to illuminate my relationship to my creativity and the followers I wanted to gain through it. My innovations consisted of

developing and designing the main action. Through my network, I explored the connections I had made during my campaign, including through social media sites and the real part of my life. When reflecting on the business aspects of my campaign, I focused on the opportunities and weaknesses related to the main action, once again *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*.

Hence, the RAINBOW analysis framework provided me with a logical pathway I could use to explore the relationships between artists and relevant features of their art careers. Moreover, it validated my experience of social media's value in the art market for facilitating emerging artists in establishing successful careers.

In sum, during this stage of my research project, I used the RAINBOW analysis framework as an insider artist to integrate different perspectives into my reflection process. Following the rubric I had set out in my research framework, I reflected on the 'interpersonal' circle (reflection and audience), 'social media' circle (innovation and networks), and the 'business' circle (business, opportunities, and weaknesses).

7.7 Interpersonal Circle:

7.7.1 Colour-coded reflections:

Upon reflection, when I was eight years old, my teacher suggested that I ask my parents' permission to take part in a drawing competition. From that day forward, I was treated as a talented illustrator by my teachers, peers, and parents. In fact, my parents even

sent me to a private tutor to advance my skills and let me participate in a special art class during high school. Over time 'artist' became a part of my identity.

Eventually, I began to compare my skills to those of my talented peers, and started to wonder whether I was *good enough*. On an especially memorable day, my art teacher held up my drawing as one of the 'worst in the class'. Soon after, I asked my father if I could take the entrance exam to a high school that was dedicated to training artists. I was very surprised by his response. In the past he had been very supportive, but it was clear from his reaction and what he said to me that he did not believe I should attend a school dedicated to art over a 'normal' school. He expressed the view that it was challenging to be a successful artist, and that I did not have remarkable talent. I walked away from that conversation convinced that my father was right, and that he was the only person brave enough to tell me the truth. So I decided to give up pursuing art.

Even though I gave up on the idea of becoming a career artist, I still enjoyed doing creative things, such as writing articles. I even continued to find private teachers to instruct me in drawing instead of dreaming about becoming an artist.

Apart from parents, my sister (Heather) influenced my creative life. We were very close growing up – we shared a room and talked every night. Often, my sister would ask me to tell her stories to help her fall asleep. Telling these stories helped me to expand my creativity and improve my communication skills. Later in life, after deciding to give up on being an artist, I was drawn to a career in journalism and pursued this. I worked as a professional for over ten years.

Here, it is worth mentioning that – after I reflected on my formative experiences and reviewed my red circles – I was surprised to realise that I had not spoken about the role that my mother played in inspiring me to become an artist. My surprise was due to the fact that I have a very good relationship with my mother. She is the most important person in my life.

Yet, I did not have a strong memory associated with my mother and my artwork, despite the fact that I could clearly see my father's influence and even my sister's encouragement for me to create stories.

More deeply, my RAINBOW analysis drew my focus to how often my mother's voice was absent over the years (and remains so) in important decision making. To some extent, therefore, the reflection circles helped me to map the power structure within my family unit. My father has always assumed the highest position, whereas my mother's role is blurry. That is not to suggest that my mother is in a lower position in my family, but rather she is not as vocal with her opinions and tries to be accepting of everyone's decisions.

7.7.2 Audience: relating with Dash's followers

Before I began developing my Kickstarter campaign, I did not fully consider my audience or that it would be necessary to attract new eyes to my work. For example, when I worked as a journalist for a weekly financial magazine, I had to publish my articles every week. At that time the internet was not mainstream and Facebook had not yet been created. It was, therefore, challenging to measure the impact of individual contributors, apart from the volume and sales of our magazine. Even though I knew that our magazine had many

followers, I did not know whether they were following *my* stories. Understandably, I did not have a strong feeling of connection with our magazine's readership.

After leaving the magazine, I became more isolated from *my* audience than ever before, because I was no longer publishing articles and putting ideas *out there* for others to consume. Although my work was no longer under scrutiny, I felt a bit weird knowing it also meant my ideas were not reaching anyone. I came to realise just how much I loved writing and creating, and helping others connect with me through ideas.

When I decided to become a Kickstarter creator, I began thinking about my relationship with my audience/followers again. I began to care about who would like my ideas and what would move them. For my actual audience (my real-life relationships), I had to strengthen our connections by sharing personal information. To let even more people know about my creativity and my campaign, I also had to consider my imagined audience that I would grow virtually.

Over time, my attitude towards my audience has changed, as have the ways that I interact with them. Though I still like to keep some distance, I now enjoy exchanging my feelings and ideas with my broader community of virtual friends. I grew increasingly comfortable with developing my relationships by updating my information on social media sites and sometimes using email for direct communications. Through my Kickstarter campaign – *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* – I significantly expanded the scale of my audience and my ability to have an impact in the real world through exchanging ideas.

Thinking back to when I was a journalist in Taiwan, my audience was located exclusively in my country and most of them were actual audience members. In contrast, when I started to develop my relationships with my social media audience based on my Kickstarter campaign, I appreciated that the scale of my audience was not bound to one geographic location. They came from all over the world, such as the United States, Poland,

and Holland to name but a few countries. This realisation was encouraging but also intimidating. It meant that I had to be online for the better part of the day to keep in touch with people from all over the world (living in different time zones).

How my campaign changed my lifestyle

Through launching my Kickstarter campaign, my lifestyle changed. I began to spend more time on social media sites, and focused a lot of time and effort on responding to messages and seeing what other people liked and how they lived. Now, I have more dog lover friends and they live all over the world. I also have greater access to information about how people relate to their dogs, and what makes for the happy moments between them.

Moreover, Facebook alerts have come to serve as reminders for significant dates and events that are important for me to acknowledge in other people's lives. For example, without Facebook alerts, I could have easily forgotten my friends' birthdays. Now that I have 700+ new friends that I have never met in real life, I am able to leave messages to wish them 'happy birthday'.

## 7.8 Social media circle

7.8.1 Innovation

Even though it was difficult for me to find followers for my Kickstarter campaign, I still enjoyed knowing where they were located and whether they liked my work. I felt happy and excited to know that people appreciated my creativity. By that same token, I also experienced frustration at the uncertainty – not knowing whether or not my work would be well received. When this occurred, I tried to relax and create more opportunities for conversations to learn from people and cultivate a growth mindset. These conversations became sources of energy, giving me a renewed sense of purpose that I could use to continue expanding upon my creativity.

Thanks to social media, my creative motivation is higher now than it was before, and it has also changed the way that I innovate. When I first launched *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* and throughout my campaign, I reflected, considerably, on the best way to use social media to support my efforts. I viewed its relevance, primarily, as a platform to connect to people and make my Kickstarter campaign well-known, rather than effectively changing my creative content.

I now see that social media has motivated me to improve my skills and expand outside of my comfort zone. For example, in the past, I was not in the habit of uploading photos and sharing them via social media, because I had no inclination to share part of my life with others. Accordingly, I did not view it as necessary to improve my photography skills and I was not a confident (or a competent) photographer. Based on the positive interactions I had with my Facebook followers, I started to become aware of the importance of a good photo on social media sites. So much so, in fact, that photos have become my preferred communication medium for engaging with the social media world.

7.8.2 Networks: their vital role
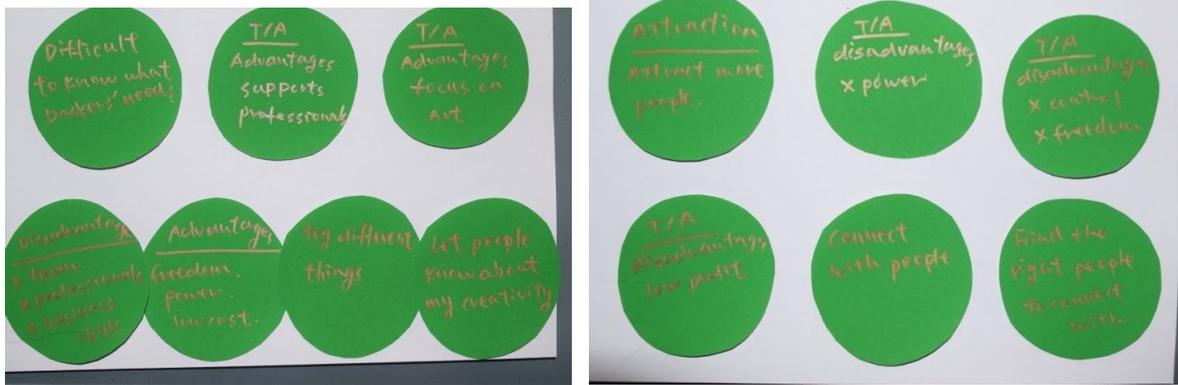
Networks are becoming increasingly important to success as a businessperson. Based on my experience launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I came to appreciate the importance of both the virtual and real networks I had. Eventually, I acquired Kickstarter backers from each realm. Even though my Kickstarter campaign was well supported by social media followers, my traditional network also went a long way in helping me to succeed.

When I developed my network, the main challenges I confronted included finding people who would appreciate my campaign, connecting with them on a personal level, and anticipating their needs and what would attract them to my rewards. I knew that if I did not find and engage the *right people*, it would be impossible to get enough backers to make my creative ideas successful.

In the lead-up to launching my campaign, I found it best to cooperate with professionals who had complementary skills to my own. At the same time, I reflected on the proposition that had I worked with galleries or other agencies, I could have just focused my attention exclusively on my innovation and let them deal with the business side and administrative aspects of my work. Of course, I would still need to sell my creative ideas to the agents and galleries and convince them to exhibit my work. Having said that, there are clear disadvantages in taking the traditional approach – which came out during my in-depth interviews and are described, at length, in Chapter 6. For example, galleries would decide

how much I would profit from my own work and I would not have the power to state how my work would be presented and branded.

My strong preference was to use social media to launch my own campaign rather than work with a gallery, even though I knew I lacked business, administration, and public relations skills. The tradeoff was that I had to fill them by working with (and compensating others). The upside of this was that I also knew I would have more freedom to do things my own way and seek out professionals who could support my efforts based on my direction and creative control.

All of that being said, I still appreciate and value traditional media. Throughout the process of launching my campaign, I did not contact relevant traditional media outlets, such as magazines or newspapers. Based on my campaign results and in-depth interviews with other artists, I missed opportunities for building connections through traditional media agencies. For example, if I had successfully connected with pet, lifestyle, and inspiration magazines or newspapers, my campaign would have most likely achieved better results. Moreover, I have the writing skills and insider experience, after working as a journalist for ten years, which would have enabled me to do this with relative ease.

7.9 Business circle: artists and their e-customers

7.9.1 Business
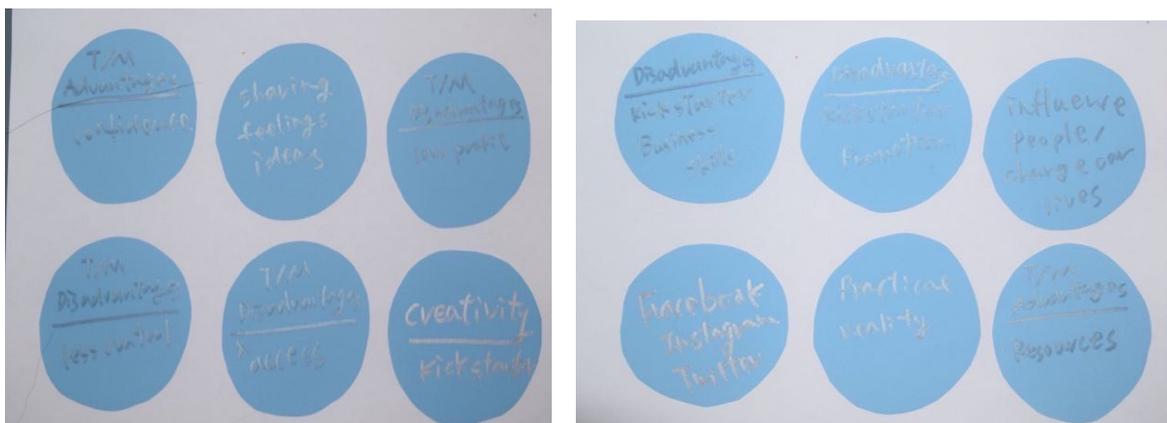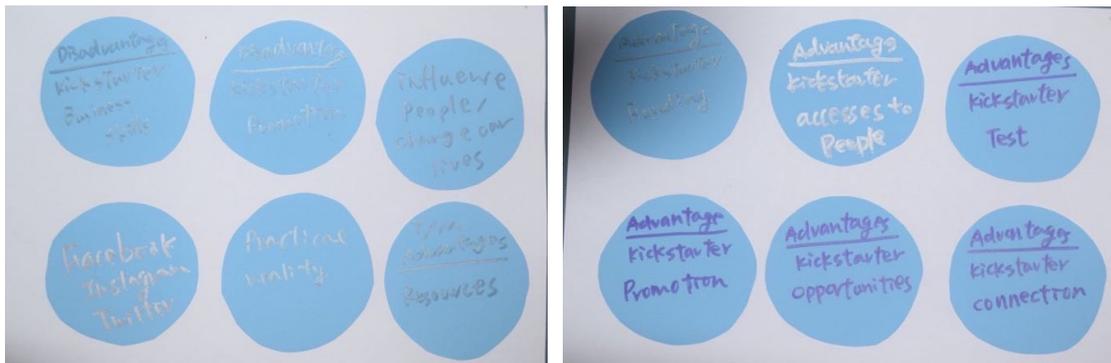
Having a campaign on Kickstarter and social media brought me new opportunities to promote my creativity. I enjoyed using my creativity to influence other people, share feelings and ideas, and (hopefully) even change lives throughout the process. My (lofty) goal was to use *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* to encourage people to reflect upon what makes them happy. Kickstarter's role in my creative process was to help me test the market, learn what customers like, and build connections and grow my virtual network.

In my experience, the most challenging side of the business conducted on crowdfunding platforms and social media was being able to identify what people wanted. But this is a challenge that is not exclusive to social media, it also occurs with respect to the traditional business model. The major difference is that social media provides art professionals with better access to information, tools, and resources. Ultimately, however, we are left to capture attention through our own efforts and creative works.

Based on the experience I gained through launching my campaign, I learned that the strategies starters use to attract audience member's attention have changed over time. People have become much more selective about where they focus their attention and what they are willing to fund, so it becomes all the more difficult to capture that attention and monetise relationships. Consistent with this, I realised that potential backers expected campaigns to inspire emotional reactions and/or cater to their needs. Knowing that we all desire happiness,

I believed that making this the theme of my campaign would be an effective medium to use to attract people's attention, stimulate their emotions, and encourage them to support and follow my work.

7.9.2 Opportunities: What were my (missed) opportunities in this campaign?

The primary opportunity in my campaign came in the form of connecting a basic human need – the need for happiness – with my creative products to move people to support and follow my work. I also learned that people empathise with others who have similar experiences, so sharing my stories about my experiences in the UK helped people to connect not only with my campaign, but also to me on a personal level. It was clear from their feedback and encouragement that they wanted *me* to succeed.

I learned that being a successful Kickstarter means balancing creativity with the business side of your work. This was the most difficult component of my campaign that I had to work to overcome. I realised that if I did not push my Kickstarter campaign broadly, I could only depend upon my family members' support. To gain more supporters, I had to push my campaign *all the time*, and sometimes I felt frustrated when it did not yield

measurable results. I, therefore, resolved to treat myself as a campaign manager to push my campaign to look out for my own best interests.

Through this process, I sympathised with my interview participants who expressed discomfort using social media to promote their campaigns. Before I launched *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I presumed that using social media would be an easy way to help me monetise my work and help other aspiring artists develop their careers; that promoting art and asking for support behind a computer screen would somehow minimise feelings of discomfort and replace them with confidence. However, this was not the case for me. Just as the computer screen protected me from feeling awkward about asking for support, it also protected potential backers from giving support – they could easily and anonymously ignore or refuse to support my campaign.

Given these considerations and the changed business circumstances brought about by social media and crowdfunding platforms, artists need to know more about marketing and project management. Artists must appreciate the fact that they are now responsible for not only making art, but also marketing, selling, promotion, and even customer service when they do not work with galleries.

7.9.3 Weaknesses: appearance and reality

To become a successful Kickstarter, people often use their social media platforms for promotions. While launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I tried very hard to develop my network, and it certainly helped in achieving my campaign's success. That said, I still have not gotten used to being connected on social media sites all the time. I now explore my social media platforms – Twitter and Facebook – everyday, and reply to most of the comments and friend requests that appear there. I also regularly send out friend requests to other people. In this respect, I figure that I am better suited for these activities than many other artists due to my previous working experience as a journalist.

Having said that, upon further analysis of the process and results of launching my campaign, I know that I still have to come up with more efficient ways to develop good relationships with my audience in order to have continued success on Kickstarter. Specifically, knowing how to move people does a lot of heavy lifting in a campaign's success. When people feel touched, they spread information automatically, meaning they can help a starter's network grow faster and do the work that the starter often has to do in promoting.

Generally speaking, my experiences launching my own campaign also reflected the common weakness starters face in making their real and imagined networks stronger.

Conclusion

My LEGO diary, the results of *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, and the RAINBOW analysis framework I developed and used for data collection and reflection each played significant roles in this research project. The LEGO diary served as the thinking tool that inspired the main action, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* and that bridged my findings to validate my solutions. Launching this campaign led me from an outsider perspective (of collecting data) to an insider perspective (of being a Kickstarter creator), and provided me with an in-depth

analysis of how other emerging artists could succeed in using these platforms to support their work.

The RAINBOW analysis framework was the map I used to guide this research project, directing my efforts in interviewing artists about the art market, their aspirations, motivations, and self-images.

My LEGO diary supported me in expressing abstract feelings and ideas to clarify next steps and how I felt about the creative process generally. For example, I began to focus on the value of connecting with people's experiences and memories, represented by the LEGO's yellow lights. Later in my Kickstarter campaign, I used my LEGO insights to focus on Dash's good heart and happiness as the main themes to move people to support my campaign and inspire them in their own lives.

The process of launching a Kickstarter campaign provided me with a greater appreciation and understanding of how emerging artists can develop their careers and establish themselves through crowdfunding and social media platforms. Indeed, this was the main advantage of being an insider in this research project.

Last but not least, the RAINBOW analysis gave me a systematic approach I could take to explore the results of the Kickstarter campaigns and my thoughts surrounding them. In the earlier stages of my project, the analysis assisted me in developing my in-depth interview questions and facilitating my interviewees to deeply reflect upon and explore their personal and unique experiences.

Based on the results of the RAINBOW analysis framework, this research project will now synthesise data from all of the successful starters (myself included) to draw a systematic conclusion. Thus, Chapter 8 will provide more detail about the findings of the RAINBOW analysis framework, and offer validated solutions that artists can use to empower and establish themselves in the social media art market.

Chapter 8

Coming full circle: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore how crowdfunding and social media platforms are being used by artists to establish their careers – particularly, whether and how artists are empowered through these platforms, what new opportunities have been fostered through them, and how artists have come to reflect upon their related work, professional identities, and lifestyles.

It is generally held that there is an imbalance between artists' compensation and the time that they invest in their work. In responding to the question 'Why are artists poor?' Abbing (2002) points to the art market's 'winner-takes-all' approach. She observes that customers frequently congregate around and purchase famous artists' pieces, despite the fact that other talented artists have quality pieces that go unsold. Indeed, many artists experience financial hardships for long periods of time and are confronted by instability and precarious living arrangements because they are not in the limelight.

It is worth noting that the artistic landscape Abbing described was pre-2002, when the art market was mainly controlled by galleries who could position certain artists above others by featuring their work and promoting it among their networks. A paradigm shift occurred in 2007 with the combined accessibility of the internet and the proliferation of social media platforms. This powerful combination brought decisive changes to the art ecosystem and the hierarchy of the art market generally. The changed power structure also brought corresponding changes to artists' internal and external relationships with their art, their patrons, and their peers.

In an effort to learn more about these changed relationships and identify opportunities and strategies to further empower artists to establish their careers, this study

adopted a multi-methods approach – including a systematic analysis framework I developed, RAINBOW. This framework enabled me to describe how artists relate to one another, the art market, and to their work through seven different lenses: Reflection, Audience, Innovation, Network, Business, Opportunities, and Weaknesses.

By using the RAINBOW framework, this study successfully identified the connections between artists' life stories and their art careers, the influence their attitudes have had on their audiences and corresponding relationships, as well as how the market influences their work and creative forms of expression.

A secondary goal of this study was to narrow the gap between the researcher and interviewees to obtain valuable, and more organic, information that could not be captured through a review of the literature alone. This project, therefore, offered an original presentation of the value of social media to artists, answering the primary research question: Why and how can creators/artists use crowdfunding platforms (supported by social media) to develop their art careers instead of relying on galleries?

8.2 Key findings

The conclusions of this study are divided into two parts: empirical findings and their theoretical implications. As mentioned above, this study focused on exploring artists' internal and external relationships related to social media in order to identify potential solutions to empower them and bolster their careers. Hence, the empirical findings were based on in-depth interviews with the cases (i.e. successful Kickstarter campaign creators) that focused on their relationships. Through becoming an 'insider' in this study – to obtain meaningful and deeper information – my experience of launching a Kickstarter campaign (*Mr. Dash's Inspiration*) validated and consolidated the strategies I had identified with the

help of my interview subjects.

The theoretical implications mostly bear on the obvious trends of the social media economy, i.e. how it has created an 'attention-emotion economy'. Briefly here, and in more detail below, when attention becomes scarcer – in this context related to the wealth of information that is now available online – it is not enough to present an idea or a product that stands out from the crowd. It becomes imperative to organically connect with an audience base through emotion, so that you can hold people's attention and eventually motivate desired action (i.e. in this case, financial support).

8.2.1 Empirical Findings: the necessity of organic connections

Through the design and use of the RAINBOW analysis framework, this study aimed to provide a systematic analysis of the research results. The main empirical findings were divided into internal relationships and external relationships, which facilitated me in exploring how creators and artists developed bridges to the outside world (the art market) to establish their careers. The overall findings are based on the information gathered and presented in chapters 5 (identifying and analysing successful campaigns), 6 (the RAINBOW analysis framework), and 7 (reflection and analysis on the researcher's Kickstarter campaign). Taken together, these findings answered the study's main question: Why and how can creators/artists use crowdfunding platforms (supported by social media) to develop their art careers instead of relying on traditional galleries?

Who can most benefit from the study's results?

Even though artists are, increasingly, aware of social media and crowdfunding initiatives, many remain skeptical about using these platforms as incubators for their careers.

Based on the attitudes artists have been known to assume in this domain, this study divided their approaches into three, i.e. 'social media believer', 'social media doubter', and 'social media in-betweener'. (For more information about these three approaches, see Chapter 6, the RAINBOW analysis framework.)

Some artists do not fall into any of these categories, however, and the results of this study do not apply to all artists. For instance, some artists are not willing to create for the sake of business, audience's interests, and do not care whether their art is accepted by others. There are also artists who believe that galleries can do a better job marketing, presenting, and connecting their work with their clientele. Given their preferences and values, these artists would not be interested in the topic of how to grow their online audience and develop their careers using social media and crowdfunding sites.

Making an organic connection: how to

Through the RAINBOW analysis framework, it was apparent that artists' life stories and internal relationships influenced their art careers. This showed especially in terms of how the artists' related with their audience members through successful Kickstarter campaigns. For example, artists may have different attitudes towards their potential audience members or backers, so they – in turn – obtain different results. Consider Lucy Sparrow and Katrin Albrecht, who both used felt material to create their artwork, yet had different attitudes towards social media. Whereas Sparrow was a 'social media believer', Albrecht was a 'social media in-betweener'. In Sparrow's words, 'social media has captured something in people's minds and their availability that you would never have been able to have [before]. It's made things easier, but has also given more opportunities'. Alternatively, Albrecht shared 'I am actually quite reluctant and careful… I don't actually want everyone

to know everything about me'. In the end, the results of their campaigns were markedly different. Sparrow had two successful campaigns – one received £10,744 and another received £40,519 in backing – and Albrecht had one successful campaign, which obtained £2,911.

Additionally, the ways that artists thought about their roles, their work, and the value they could bring to potential backers strongly influenced how they went about attracting their attention. This fed into their overall campaign results. Those artists who successfully attracted and continued to engage backers were better able to carry that support forward and continue growing their base for subsequent campaigns – commanding greater financial success in the long term.

Hence, in answering the question 'how can artists effectively use social media and crowdfunding platforms to establish their careers?' one of the best pathways is by building *organic connections* over time and creating value for their audience. By 'organic', I mean natural and everyday relationships that are grown, tended to, and that eventually blossom over time, in contrast to relationships that are stagnant and superficial. For example, it is not uncommon for social media users to attract a few thousand 'followers', but that need not entail that followers are supporters of each project or of the artist generally. To convert followers into supporters (i.e. art patrons), it is critical for artists to establish connections, which are 'living' and that develop continually over time.

Successful crowdfunders are, therefore, individuals who are highly interactive, communicate directly with their base, choose strategic topics to discuss, and know how to create value for their potential backers.

In order to achieve the organic campaign connection, the important part is for starters to find the seed that will grow into a bridge between the artist and the audience member. Once established, the seed enables the artist to grow his or her network and begin

developing a career that will endure. Specifically, the artist's seed can relate to shared experiences, cultural narratives, and themes that engage all of us as human beings. Once this relationship is forged, people become motivated to support the campaign to help the artist bring the shared goal to life. The challenge, therefore, is identifying the seed that will facilitate the organic connection. The following successful Kickstarter campaigns are illustrative in how to do this well.

Organic Connections and Successful Kickstarter Campaign Creators

Let us now take my initial case, Lucy Sparrow's *The Corner Shop* as our primary example. Even though Sparrow was certainly not the first artist to perform sewing art (as she calls it), she succeeded in finding the seed to connect with her audience that enabled her to have two successful campaigns. Rather than focusing her attention on gaining material support to exhibit work like many other starters, Sparrow emphasised the nostalgia of missing her local corner shop and its general significance to every community.

Complementing this narrative, Sparrow refurbished an old house to harken back to a different time in people's shared memories. In tandem, Sparrow lined the shelves with felt products similar in appearance to those people could buy in an actual corner shop and invited people to stop by and experience them first-hand. When web visitors and those who visited her store's physical location associated the felt goods with their memories and past experiences, they became engaged and the seed of the organic connection started to grow.

Following this, Sparrow's audience began sharing photos and updates with their friends on social media sites, and even began purchasing her felt items. Building upon this, her corner shop was picked up by mass media reporting, which had a snowball effect.

In terms of the items showcased in Sparrow's campaign, there were hundreds of products sold in past corner shops that Sparrow could reproduce in felt form.

Through the seeds of the memories associated with the felt items, Sparrow developed a successful organic connection with her audience base, and therefore created a great opportunity to develop her career through social media and crowdfunding platforms instead of depending on traditional galleries.

Given these considerations, when artists are able to find the seed that nurtures organic connections in their campaigns and careers, they are given a new life and new opportunities to grow – sometimes in the same direction and other times in new directions. Sparrow's seed was so rich – i.e. using memory and sentiment in the form of felt items – that she was able to use this same approach to make her next campaign two times more successful than her first. Indeed, Sparrow eventually opened a convenience store in the United States, where she sold not only her staple of corner shop items, but even created a felt lottery machine and deli section, where customers could order customised fabric sandwiches.

It is evident that Sparrow made her campaign so successful by planting and tending to its seeds – using memory and sentiment as inspiration for her artwork and remaining 'on brand' during her communication and promotion strategies with her growing audience. In other words, Sparrow made her 'sewing art' extend, become limitlessness, and responsive to her audience's interests and preferences, which translated into significant success and likely career longevity.

Other campaign creators that I interviewed did not find as strong of a seed to nurture their success and build organic connections. For example, Dianne Bowell requested campaign support to back an exhibit of her work on body portraits. Kelly Sweeney asked for backers to fund her first solo show. Compared with Sparrow's campaigns, Sweeney and Bowell's did not establish an organic connection with backers, and did not adopt themes that engaged memory or shared experiences. Rather, their campaigns were targeted to those who

appreciated their artwork on its own merit and who wanted to support these artists in exhibiting their work. That is likely the reason why they did not build large audience bases, convert their followers into backers, and have very successful campaigns.

The other successful Kickstarter campaigns featured in this study also focused, primarily, on raising funds to support exhibitions and other works of personal meaning to the respective artists. For example, Sophie Giblin's campaigns were developed with the intention of helping other emerging artists exhibit their work and organise community workshops.

Even though Albrecht – like Sparrow – used felt material to make her art, the memories, experiences, and subject matter she drew on to inform her products were connected to her personal experiences, not a shared experience of broader meaning. In that same vein, Mike Spence, Peter Driver, and Emily Brown's campaigns did not create organic connections with their audience bases, because they did not centre on a shared experience or shared focus.

When a potential audience member cannot see the campaign's relevance to them (having the organic connection), the campaign cannot have large-scale success. Instead, backers may only lend their support once, if at all. For example, if a campaign is not relevant to a potential backer's experiences or memories, he or she *may* visit the campaign and buy a product to encourage the artist to continue their work. Without the organic connection, however, the backer will not become a part of the artist's base network, and will not follow and evolve with them over time.

Though Jane Moore and Gabriela Davies' campaigns saw better results, they still did not come close to the success of Sparrow's campaigns. Moore's campaign focused on sticking to her New Year's resolution to draw every day for one year. Even though her campaign included a component that would allow for an exhibit at the end of the year, it was

not her primary focus. Moore's organic connection was clearer than many of the other starters, in that most people like to make a resolution at the beginning of a new year, and tend to give up not long after. Moore tapped into this and gave her potential backers a strong reason to support her, one that they could relate to. Davies' campaign was about personal identity, a topic of great interest that impacts us all. In Davies' words, 'I have this never-ending passion to understand how people are shaped by the external influences they have undergone'. I think we all share this interest, and it is directed not only at others but also towards ourselves. Overall, Davies attracted 35 backers (for a total of £3,941) and Moore obtained 113 backers (for a total of £8,556).

Having said that, even though creators and artists sometimes find the seed of their organic connection with their audience members, this does not guarantee a campaign's success. In fact, the organic connections must transfer to the art product to have the 'limitation-less' extension needed to propel the campaign's success into the future. That is to say, creators and artists need a limitless supply of content that they can use in their artistic products. For instance, Sparrow can make hundreds of different types of products that would appear in a corner shop and use them to fulfill her audience's needs – extending her organic connection almost infinitely.

The Researcher's Successful Campaign: Mr. Dash's Inspiration

Apart from doing case studies and in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators, one of the research methods I employed in this study was auto-ethnography action research to launch my own campaign. This decision was guided by my assumption that auto-ethnography action research could help me to identify and validate solutions that creators and artists could use to empower themselves and establish their careers on Kickstarter. Launching my own campaign also helped to validate one of the main

themes of action research – learning by doing. I learned how to overcome the fear of doing things I was not familiar with, and what artists most struggle with – administratively and philosophically – in using crowdfunding platforms. I vividly recall how challenging it was to narrow the scope of my project, identify my value proposition to my imagined audience, and launch my project, in addition to how hard I worked to create and nurture my campaign.

In the lead-up to launching my campaign, I appreciated that there were two pathways available for me to meet the needs of my field work. One was to simply examine artists' campaigns through case studies and a review of the literature without launching my own campaign. The other option was to launch my own campaign to acquire a deeper understanding of artists' careers. Frankly, I knew that in choosing the second option, I was putting myself in a precarious position as a researcher and creator. I knew that I might fail and that this could undermine the results of my research, and my very confidence as a researcher. In making this decision, my supervisor David Gauntlett's example encouraged me to press forward:

> Doing things, and so eventually coming to feel competent at those things, feels much better than not daring to even try to do them...When we make things and put them out there, that is already a brave thing to do. We are allowing ourselves – directly or through our work – to be seen, and judged (Gauntlett, 2018, p272-273).

Even though I am not a 'pure' artist – insofar as I am not professionally trained and art does not occupy much of my life – it was rewarding and gratifying to complete my project. I felt brave and experienced a sense of pride when I launched my project, precisely because I had challenged myself and gave others permission to judge my work. My own experience was similar to what artists have to deal with in promoting, marketing, and having their work scrutinized, and so I could speak with more authority and provide more practitioner-based experience in my research project after launching my own successful campaign.

Based on my in-depth interviews with artists and the process of the entire action

research – from data-collection through to critical reflection – I found that building organic connections was the most critical component to achieving a successful outcome and supporting next steps in career building.

The reader will recall from Chapter 7 that *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* was successful in obtaining £3,523 in funding from 43 backers (i.e. 234% of the campaign's original goal). In reflecting on the organic connection underlying the campaign's success, I wondered whether it was the best result I could have had. My short answer is 'yes, it is the best result I could have obtained at the time'. That is because I measured my success through the connections I built with backers by communicating Dash's story and the quality of my campaign's design. On the other hand, there are a few lingering questions I am now reflecting on with respect to the organic connections I built.

In hindsight, in the first and second steps of doing auto-ethnography action research – i.e. data-collection and planning action – I began exploring the connections between my project and its potential audience (backers). In particular, I wondered how to engage them in my campaign. Based on my personal experiences, I was guided by the belief that everyone tries to find happiness in their lives. This belief was my seed in building my organic connection with my audience base throughout my campaign.

Acting on this, I began to explore different approaches, including creative visual research methods, like the LEGO diary. By making LEGO diaries and thinking about my campaign from different angles and in a physical form, I found that the key to attracting the audience's attention and encouraging their campaign involvement was connecting to their hearts. In my diary, I used LEGO wheels as the metaphor to represent moving my audience's hearts. My thinking at the time was that if the audience's hearts moved in pace with my campaign, the connection would be alive and organic. In that same way, I found that Dash's happiness made my heart move, so I shared my stories about how Dash made

me happy, and the concept of happiness generally.

Overall, I am confident that I found the seed of the organic connection in my campaign by facilitating and participating in discussions about relationships between people and dogs, particularly how much happiness dogs can bring to us. While launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I felt very satisfied with the content and design of my campaign and was happy with the overall results.

However, when I reflected more deeply on my campaign, I felt that there was something missing in my organic connection, something that took away from me getting as many backers and as much funding as Sparrow did in her campaigns. To unpack this, I compared my content with Sparrow's (which, the reader will recall, was nostalgia art in the form of felt products displayed in a physical corner shop). My approach was to connect to others based on the shared need for happiness and through the love of dogs, but I was not aware of what, exactly, would make each person happy with respect to relating with their own dogs. Like most other creators and artists, I focused too much on my own memories and experiences, and did not pay enough attention to interacting with the audience member's or backers' own experiences and memories.

Alternatively, Sparrow successfully transferred hundreds of felt recreations of traditional corner shop items into a real corner shop, enabling her audience and backers to touch and purchase real items and bridge to their shared pasts. My products – which I offered as rewards – included mugs, greeting cards, wall art, diaries, as well as real experiences walking with and taking photos of Dash. I realised that, because my stories were all about me and Dash, audience members and potential backers had to use their imaginations to connect, rather than using their own memories. I believe this limitation was at the heart of why I could not motivate more backers or audience members to support my campaign.

Although *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* was a successful campaign by its own standards, I believe that I only made the seed of my organic connection *start* to grow, but it was not mature enough to make the campaign more successful. If I were to re-launch my campaign, I would focus more on tapping into the audience's memories and experiences to develop organic connections through my rewards. Knowing what I do now, I may not have made mugs or greeting cards for my rewards, but instead spent that time using my creativity to find out the seed that would expand the reward design and make my campaign more relevant to the audience's lives. For example, I found that the images on my mugs and greeting cards – that were meant to inspire happiness – were not highly relevant to other people's experiences. Additionally, my explanations were rather self-centred, in that I shared my motivation – and recipe for happiness – which was my relationship with Dash. I neglected to realise that my experience was singular and not of broad relevance. Unless my potential backers were already dog lovers, the connection would not be strong at all.

I came to realise that I could have created more appealing items through a broader theme of happiness, as well as more creative items than mugs and greeting cards. Sparrow's art and her theme – which is of broad significance – is a case in point for creating the foundation for a successful campaign.

8.2.2 Theoretical Implications: Attention-emotion economy and Kickstarter campaign trends

While there are social media platforms for general purposes, they also each serve specific functions, including motivating 'collective action, communication, communities, connecting/networking, co-operation/collaboration, the creative making of user-generated content, playing and sharing' (Fuchs, 2014, p. 36). When creators or artists apply social

media to their career strategies and working processes, these functions become part of the process of developing their careers. For example, artists may use social media to collaborate and create shared artwork, or exchange information and share experiences.

It is worth stating the obvious – where more social media sites are now used to find support, rather than simply exchange information – new definitions are becoming popular, including 'the ask'. With respect to crowdfunding platforms, 'the ask' is obvious – i.e. financial support. On Kickstarter, people develop campaign strategies to attract financial backers. Indeed, crowdfunding platforms begin by *asking* for attention, and then *asking* for support. More deeply, this points to changes in the economy, business transactions, and raises the question about the role of galleries in the new art market.

The importance of capturing attention

To be sure, the internet has changed virtually every facet of our daily interactions, including the economy. Davenport and Beck (2001) explain that attention is a new currency, emphasising how easy it is to 'start a business, get access to customers and the market… What is short in supply is human attention'. Consistent with the observation of the attention economy in the social media era, this study conceived of the developing social media economy as the 'attention-emotion economy'.

The question, therefore, became: How do you capture and maintain attention online to establish a business? This, of course, bears directly on our main research question, i.e. Why and how can creators/artists use crowdfunding platforms (supported by social media) to develop their art careers instead of relying on galleries? Merging the two questions, we are left with the following for our final discussion: if it is becoming more difficult all the time to keep people's attention, what is the best step to take to draw it back again on social

media to support a business?

Matthews and Well (1994) proposed that emotions have a 'framing power... and emotion serves as one of the chief mechanisms to constrain and direct our attention and hence frame our decisions' (2009, p. 32). Accordingly, in my study, emotion was taken as one of the main ways to draw people's attention back to assisting creators and artists in developing their careers.

A Key influencer: the 'attention-emotion economy' and artistic success

In more detail, the 'attention-emotion economy' describes a process whereby, when people are able to access a wealth of information and from thousands of websites, they are actually incapable of paying attention to all of it. This explains why people may spend countless hours reviewing hundreds of websites but without acting on what they discover. Under these circumstances, *asking* for the audience's attention has to be about more than providing information; it has to also inspire an emotional connection.

Turning to crowdfunding platforms, campaign creators use visual elements to attract their potential audience base and motivate their involvement in the project, and/or financial support. From the content designs of this study's successful starters, capturing audience attention was highly relevant to stimulating an emotional reaction. To be clear, the audience does not need to feel a specific emotion, such as happiness, but rather experience a general sentiment of being touched, transferring that sentiment to the campaign, and, ideally, financially supporting it. This is also the main reason why the organic connection can grow slowly and continue to bear fruit over time.

As noted above, different starters took different approaches and had mixed successes. The emotional component of my campaign came out in reminding people of the meaning of happiness through the experience of spending time with Dash. For this, I made a

video of me and Dash, and added a photo library of Dash from the time he was little until present-day. Quite simply, I used the stories and videos as the seed that inspired emotion. Moreover, I incorporated my visual materials to each of my social media sites. In one month, I had attracted over 600 Facebook followers to my personal account, and approximately 200 followers joined my Facebook business page, *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*. Each day, I posted Dash's photos on these sites to connect with my audience and encourage them to care about Dash's life and our shared stories. Indeed, Dash's stories attracted quite a few followers from the United States, Taiwan, Holland, and the United Kingdom.

In the process of developing my own campaign, I paid attention to how other Kickstarter campaign creators caught their audience's attention and forged an emotional connection with them. Following my in-depth interviews, I found that it was easier to arouse people's emotions and persuade them to support the campaigns when creators' campaign stories closely paralleled those even strangers could share.

More to the point, the following three campaigns – Sparrow's *The Corner Shop*, Moore's *Sketch a Day Project*, and Davies' *Identity/ Memory* – were the most successful. Their campaign content also most closely resembled other people's life experiences and aroused emotion. Sparrow's *The Corner Shop* stimulated nostalgic emotions, and these emotions extended to the items that stocked the real corner shops she opened in London and New York City. In terms of Moore's *Sketch a Day Project*, people could share in her frustration at breaking previous New Year's resolutions and hope that – through their collective efforts – they could help her succeed in her resolve to complete one sketch per day. Moore used this story to connect with people and even the mass media to develop her organic connection. Similarly, Davies' campaign used the themes of personal identity and memory as the medium to arouse people's emotions.

Conversely, Spence, Driver, and Brown's campaigns lacked a commonly held theme

and did not arouse people's emotions. While Bowell's campaign set a clear theme about body and hidden female consciousness that could appeal to many women, she did not use this as a focal point in her communications. Instead, Bowell only asked for support for her exhibition, but did not emphasise the importance of this work for women or create an emotional pull to organically connect with her potential support base.

Granted, it is challenging to arouse emotions through a campaign, because audience members can come from all over the world and have different backgrounds and interests. According to my in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter creators and my personal experiences launching *Mr. Dash's Inspiration*, I have demonstrated that the best way to capture broad audience attention and foster an emotional connection is to focus on two basic steps. First, artists should, themselves, be moved by their own stories, and then consider whether these stories would move others in the same way.

It is common for creators to focus only on the stories that they feel moved by, all the while failing to think about whether the stories will touch their potential backers. After all, one's audience is only willing to give their attention to what moves them and what engages their involvement. Consistent with this, creators and artists should develop organic connections in their campaigns, sowing seeds through stories that can connect and resonate with the audience member's memories and experiences to capture attention and obtain financial backing.

As noted throughout, the elements of organic connections—i.e. extension, response, and lack of limitations—are essential to an organic connection for a successful campaign launch. When the proper seed is identified in the process of developing an organic connection, campaigns function organically too: growing through nutrients and care and blossoming into limitless resources. Without integrating these three elements into the process of launching campaigns, creators will not be supported enough to flourish in their

careers and may have to rely on more traditional practices, including working with galleries.

Generally speaking, the roles of crowdfunding and social media platforms are becoming more significant to artists who are working to develop their careers independently of galleries. Moreover, even though Kickstarter is primarily used by creators and artists to launch their creative projects and acquire funding, its business model could also be applied in different disciplines for a similar purpose – i.e. creative ideas and undertakings. For instance, scientists are, increasingly, turning to crowdfunding platforms to advance their ideas without having to wait on funding agencies and boards to approve their projects or compete with other scientists for scarce funding. This also holds true to other professions, including engineering, medicine, and journalism.

8.3 Recommendations for future research

Through the process of exploring thousands of Kickstarter campaigns, reviewing the literature, conducting in-depth interviews with successful artists, and launching my own Kickstarter campaign, it is evident that there is a need to conduct further research on how social media and crowdfunding platforms can best be used by emerging artists who want to work outside of the traditional art market and change the power hierarchy. In what follows, I propose practical suggestions for future research:

1) During the research process, the investigator's insider role should be considered alongside discussions that are directed at obtaining objective data. Even though insider and outsider perspectives both serve a clear and valuable purpose, when the researcher is in an insider position, they will be motivated to think deeply about the research subjects and themes explored.

For example, when I launched *Mr. Dash's Inspiration* as a research insider, the experience helped close the experiential gap between me and my interview participants. I obtained valuable and privileged information that I could not have captured otherwise. It was easy to see, even prior to my interviews, that in order to launch a successful Kickstarter campaign, the most important thing was to have a professional video and a good network with your potential audience. However, I did not realise how difficult it was to make a good video and develop a good relationship with my potential audience until I spoke with, and learned from, other successful starters who were artists and creators. Knowing their collective experiences was important for analysing the literature, in-depth interview data, and identifying practical solutions that I could use to ensure my own campaign's success and share with others in this chapter.

This practice also aligned with my philosophical approach to academic research. I believe that it is not enough to contribute to the literature, but to also use findings to resolve real-life challenges through proposing validated practical solutions.

2) Throughout this research project, the RAINBOW analysis framework was used to provide a systematic approach to analyse the relationships between artists and the art market. Given that social media influences a broad variety of domains and disciplines (including the hard sciences), the RAINBOW analysis framework can be applied more broadly to explore other professions. Indeed, the RAINBOW analysis framework could play an important role in providing a well-rounded picture of professionals' virtual and offline relationships, and help researchers explore potential solutions to re-balance the power structures within different domains.

Consistent with this view, Richard Grey published an article in *The Guardian* (January, 2015) wherein he proposed: 'Faced with the threat of budget cuts and intense competition for the money that remains, scientists around the world are… turning directly to

the public for the help they need. In the process, they are unlocking millions of pounds via crowdfunding websites'.

3) Based on my in-depth interviews with successful Kickstarter campaign creators and the results of their campaigns, it was clear that connections and networks are now more important than ever before. My study noted three characteristics of an organic connection in an artist's career, i.e. extension, limitlessness, and responsiveness. I believe that this same recipe for an organic connection can be applied to help other professionals develop their careers in the social media era. Of course, different professionals will have different pathways to developing organic connections with their audience base. In the scientific sphere, for instance, investigators do not have to *move* people in the same way to get their financial backing, as science serves a more useful purpose (as opposed to, say, an aesthetic or a concept-driven purpose). Broadly speaking, my research suggests that the more empirical experiences that are used to explore the nature of an organic connection, the more solid data and practical solutions that will follow and serve to support professionals in developing their careers.

4) In this study, the role of the RAINBOW analysis framework served to illuminate artists' relationships with the art world generally, and provided a well-rounded picture of their lived experiences. Specifically, this research project looked at artists' careers through seven lenses, namely: reflection, audience, innovation, network, business, and the artists' opportunities and weaknesses. There is also an opportunity to apply this same framework to analyse the organisation's side in the art market ecosystem. In more detail, it is worth exploring (1) how galleries cultivate relationships with artists and creators in this changed social media ecosystem, (2) how galleries establish networks and audiences, and (3) how social media and crowdfunding platforms have impacted galleries' business models. As increasing numbers of galleries begin applying social media to their business strategies, it is

worth analysing what opportunities and weaknesses follow from adopting this practice.

5) This research focused mainly on artists' perspectives about how crowdfunding and social media platforms are used for developing or supporting their careers. If researchers would like to explore this issue further, it is worth closely reading the successful starters' perspectives detailed herein. This research area could be further developed by investigating what motivates audience members to support individual projects, and continue to support specific artists. Whereas this research project focused on the perspectives of creators and artists, future research could explore this issue from the perspective of funders. It is worth exploring the motivations for supporting a particular campaign, above and beyond having established an organic connection with a creator or artist. Knowing this could help artists to further refine their approaches and establish their careers by reducing the gap between artists and their audience.

(6) Because this research mainly explored how creators and artists 'can' use social media and crowdfunding platforms to develop their careers, this study focused exclusively on lessons learned from successful campaigns. However, I believe there are further learning opportunities in unsuccessful Kickstarter campaigns. There were Kickstarter campaigns that, on the surface, were high quality and yet could not achieve their goals. Understanding the 'why' could help creators and artists who already have a good product to achieve success.

In more detail, future research could focus on the relationships between starters, their campaigns, and social media platforms by drawing on the 'RAINBOW' analysis framework. Assuming this framework, researchers could start with the starters' reflection (R-reflection); proceed to identify how they interact with their audiences on their social media and crowdfunding platforms (A-audience); how they create, launch, and market their projects (I-innovation); assess their art network and the role of the network in their campaigns (N-network); undertake an analysis of the campaigns themselves and how they develop their

careers (B-business); and perform an analysis of the results of their campaigns (O-opportunities and W-weakness).

8.4 Limitations of this study

This research project did not delineate or define what *types* of artists were chosen based on their expertise, professional training, or how many years they had been working as artists. Consistent with the Kickstarter platform itself, I did not see a need to set up strict requirements, and I viewed success on the platform as a testament to the worth of the art and the artist's ability to succeed outside of traditional galleries. After all, any type of artist can launch a campaign; all that is required is an internet connection and a creative idea that people are drawn to. Moreover, I believe social media and crowdfunding platforms should be open to, and can be a useful facilitator for, every artist.

Each work of art is valuable unto itself, and every artist can organically connect to their potential audience base if they learn how to present their art in a way that moves them and continues to engage them in this attention-emotion economy. Apart from Lucy Sparrow's campaigns, I found that the other creators and artists I interviewed are *on their way* to growing an organic connection with their potential audience, but have not fully established the bridge between their work and their audience's hearts. This is not to suggest that these creators and artists' campaigns were not *good enough* to attract a large audience base who would back their current and future campaigns. Rather, I am suggesting that the main reason why they did not develop an organic connection was that these creators and artists did not know their potential audience well enough to cater, and speak directly to, their values, emotions, and preferences. Once these artists and creators focus on their potential audience in a holistic way, they will be positioned to create more opportunities to find their organic connections.

Although this study offered insights into social media and crowdfunding success for artists through a systematic analysis framework, it should be noted that this study does not provide more detail about how individual creators and artists can improve or tailor their connections with their specific audience members.

Indeed, there are many contingencies that do not enable me to offer prescriptive and tailored advice to artists. For example, in order to know how creators and artists can improve their connections with their audience members, they must launch a second campaign. This can be prohibitive for some artists, as it takes time and energy away from other activities they may wish to pursue – including exhibiting and creating. It also takes resources to launch a second campaign. For example, it is very likely that the creator will have to redesign or produce new rewards to attract backers, and designs and production fees can be costly. Given that this is ultimately an experiment, the costs, time, and energy it would take to improve upon the first campaign can be viewed in a negative light.

Moreover, the identity of the researcher (me) may have influenced the results of the interview data. For example, in those cases where my background was similar to my interview subjects, they may have been more willing to share deep thoughts and true feelings with me and vice versa. Knowing this, I felt the need to assume an insider position in conducting the research and launching a campaign to obtain privileged information to guide my study and enable me to propose validated practical solutions.

This project focused, primarily, on exploring how creators and artists use crowdfunding and social media sites to bolster their careers and gain independence through establishing their own networks and audience bases. For this purpose, my study selected one of the most successful and known crowdfunding platforms – Kickstarter – as paradigmatic. Other platforms, such as Indiegogo or GoFundMe, are also used by creators and artists, but were not included in this study because the main purpose of this research project was not to

explore different platforms but to focus on creators' and artists' relationships in the context of social media. That being said, exploring different crowdfunding platforms may bring more depth to future studies.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

This research project identified how creators and artists can use crowdfunding and social media platforms to develop their careers. To enable a well-rounded analysis, this project explored various methodologies and applied a systematic analysis framework (RAINBOW) to seek potential solutions for creators and artists to develop their careers.

In terms of creators and artists' relationships with the art world, my research demonstrated that developing organic connections is one of the best approaches to take, even though the process of finding the seed of the organic connection may be a complex process. During the process of developing an organic connection, one of the most important components is to focus on the audience's attention and their emotional connection to the artwork. Tied to this, the artist should be active – positively communicating with the audience, and reinforcing the emotional connection. Once artists establish the organic connection and begin to see it grow, it will not only help them to develop their careers but also empower them to become independent in the art market. This further entails that artists will be able to have more power in the art market ecosystem.

I am confident that the power structure of the art market can be changed, and that it is already changing thanks to social media and crowdfunding platforms. Even though I believe that the emergence of social media and crowdfunding sites have brought artists more opportunities to empower themselves and develop their careers, this does not mean that galleries are no longer of value. To the contrary, I believe that galleries play a significant role in providing artists with a sense of security in developing their reputations in the art

market. Especially if artists are 'social media doubters', galleries remain one of the most valuable access points to the art market and establishing their careers.

Index A. 'Mr. Dash's Inspiration' campaign: Process

Following the planning phase of my research project, it was time to act on the facts and data I had gathered. In this stage, I divided the action into two parts in two periods of time—before and after launching 'Mr. Dash's Inspiration'. Appreciating that rewards and incentives should connect to people's hearts to inspire action, my brand was to show potential clients the value of learning from animals. I launched my Kickstarter campaign on 21 July, 2017.

The following outlines the reward structure, and how this project engages potential followers/ backers.

- Before launching my campaign, I designed a logo for the purpose of branding. I worked with an American designer, Niko to give it a professional edge.

Photo 1—twelve logo samples
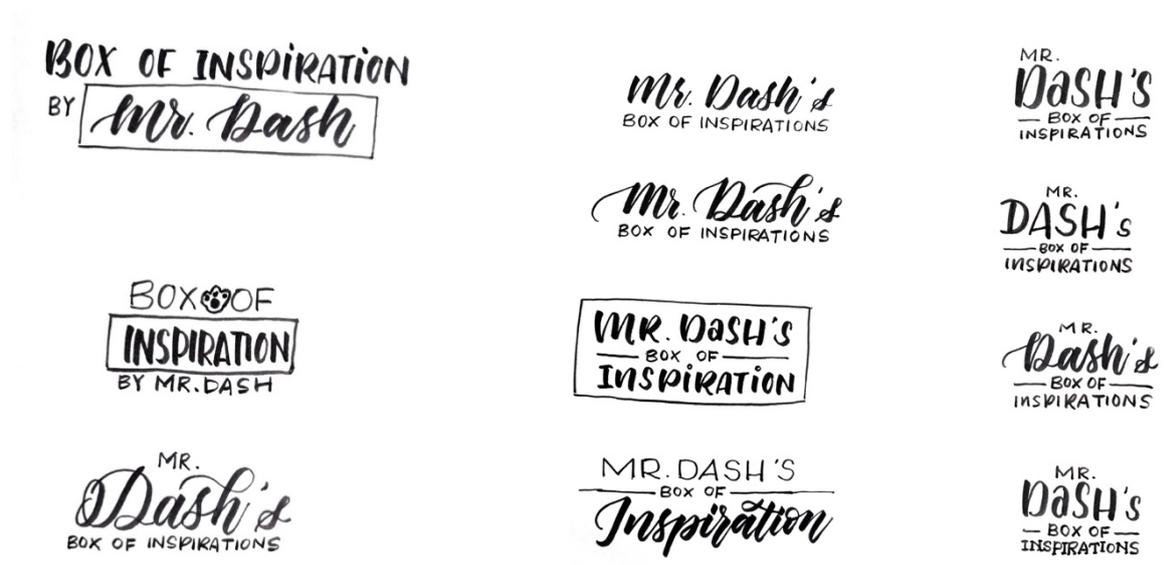
After choosing the logo, we applied the graphic to everything relevant to the campaign, including the banners on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Photo 3—The banner that runs on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram

As noted, there are three rewards in this campaign, i.e. mugs, wall art, and greeting cards. In the process of designing the mug, I explored a broad variety of designs (below).

To inspire backers, I decided to place the logo on the rim inside the mug, paired with an inspiring quote. Next, I selected from a range of watercolors for the calligraphy. For example,

The beginning of locating Mr. Dash's 'Heart'

Running Content: Have you ever felt unhappy or without a purpose, or lacked the motivation to do what you planned? That's how I often feel as a foreigner in the UK.

In 2014, as I was beginning my exploration of digital media development and its impact on our lives, I got a British Border Collie puppy, whom I named "Dash." As soon as this lovely puppy pranced into my life, he brightened my days—he made me happy more than any online experience ever could. Dash finds his happiness in each and every moment, and he shares it freely with every person that comes across his path. It's not complicated or demanding, or intellectual—it's simple, it's basic, and it's right here, right now, free for the taking. He helped me understand that happiness is a choice that's waiting to be seized. It's not about the gains of the future or the triumphs of the past. It's about the wealth of joy inherent in the present, if only we choose to acknowledge and appreciate it. What Dash teaches me daily motivated me to start this project, "Mr. Dash's Inspiration," which aims to share his simple secrets to happiness with everyone.

I believe that to some extent, dogs are our therapists - and even mentors. Dash has taught me that by having modest needs and being satisfied with a simple life, one can achieve lasting happiness. I hope there are more people like me who can be inspired by Dash's canine wisdom to seek and find the joy of living in every moment.

I remember the moment I discussed the project with my friend—Ting Fan, a New York-based filmmaker and how she told me that our art designer, Sheauling Soo, found that the pattern on Dash's head resembles a "heart" shape! This was something I'd never noticed, so I looked at Dash's "dash" carefully, and I was so moved. Yes, Dash does have a heart on his dash - he was born with a beautiful "heart" to inspire people, especially me.

Sheauling incorporated the "heart" shape into "Mr. Dash's Inspiration" logo and came up with more, such as mugs, special cards, and wall art, and then her sister, SheauYunn Usmanova, who is a calligrapher, has done all the calligraphy handwork for the quotes inspired by Dash.

I want to say, 'thank you' to SheauYunn on behalf of Dash. Although she is pregnant and must look after her lovely daughter at the same time, she did her best to spare her (very limited) time to support this project. I believe SheauYunn finished it because of her enthusiasm. Dash is such a lucky boy to have the Soo Sisters to help him to achieve the purpose of his life - spread happiness.

Inspirational cards

Do you have friends who are a bit depressed or feel unhappy without any reason like me? Dash's cards with inspirational quotes will motivate them to find purpose.

Mugs

Would you like to have a cup of coffee or tea with Dash every day? That would make Dash very happy.

Wall Art

With this lovely wall art, you can have Dash to inspire you wherever you like.

Video

Dash is keen to learn new things. If you want to know more about Dash's experiences and

happy moments, Dash will share his videos with you.

Secret Diary

Apart from the six quotes, Dash has more stories to share with you. From his secret diary, you will discover Dash's deepest thoughts. Remember he is a clever dog and will have something special to surprise you with.

Hampstead Heath Walk

If you would like to walk with Dash in his favourite place, Hampstead Heath, you will interact with Dash, and get to see how he catches a ball, frisbee, and plays other games. On top of that, you can own one of Dash's inspirational mugs, and a photo of Dash playing with you in Hampstead Heath.

Have a drink with Dash in his favourite pub

Sometimes happiness is simple. Just having a drink can make us feel relaxed. Dash has his favourite pub and always visits there after playing in Hampstead Heath, and he would be very happy if you could join him. You will also get a photo of both of you having a drink together.

The future of Mr. Dash

In order to continue to let Dash inspire people all over the world, I will keep exploring the relationships between pets and humans in a creative way so as to respond to people's sadness, and more importantly, find more positive approaches to give people energy. The aim of this project is to develop space and networks to connect with people all over the world to seek inspiration in our lives, especially from Dash. Therefore, this

Kickstarter project—Mr. Dash's inspiration—is not the end of Dash's inspirational story. On the contrary, this project is just the beginning. In the near future, you can find more lovely photos, videos, stories and creative products on Mr. Dash's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. I believe the more support we get, the more meaningful things we can do. If you believe our lives should be inspired all the time or agree that we should keep thinking about how to change our world by supporting each other, please support this project. You will find more inspiration through Dash in your world.

Risks and challenges

Supporters could be sure of getting some of the rewards of their choice. With other rewards, however, there was an element of uncertainty. For example, one of the rewards - to walk with Dash in Hampstead Heath – was more uncertain, given the unpredictability of England's weather. However, it was important to me to do my best to follow the forecast carefully to arrange a good day to enjoy the walk.

As with many other projects, the biggest challenge was meeting the manufacturing cost of the items and the cost of delivery. Some items, such as mugs, were fragile, so the packaging cost was higher and the delivery was more challenging. To meet this challenge, I kept in touch with supporters by email. In addition, all of the social media sites and the Kickstarter pages assisted in addressing our supporters' questions or issues.

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