

With the rise of Internet, Web and new media technologies come increased opportunities for audience to recreate media content and influence its flow across different media platforms. The fan as a demanding yet enthusiastic consumer has become a centrepiece of media industries' marketing strategies. On the one hand, this qualitative change often described as participatory culture means a giant leap forward for fans, who can now serve new roles within the media industry. On the other, it represents a potential exploitation of media users, as unpaid volunteers do the labour professionals are paid for. This study investigates this tension in a case of videogame fans. On their official websites, videogame developers encourage fans to contribute with their fan art harnessing fan creativity for their advertising purposes. Convergence culture raises conflicts and compromises between creators of fan art (fan artists), and the owners of the copyrighted works they appropriate (game companies). This study addresses three main issues: (1) the way and circumstances under which game companies are displaying fan art on their official websites, (2) how fans understand the tensions between empowerment and exploitation, how do they address the issue of free labour, (3) how fans view issues concerning intellectual property rights taking the derivative nature of fan art. These three topics were analyzed using the method of description (1), and the qualitative content analysis of the fans' comments on official Facebook profiles of the chosen game titles (2), (3): World of Warcraft (Blizzard Entertainment), Mass Effect 3 (BioWare), and The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (Bethesda Softworks).