Charitable e-Skimming

Near-future optimistic scenario

Facing pushback from anti-consumerism groups, the biggest web retailers partner with not-for-profits to make Black Friday and Singles’ Day the biggest charitable events of the year. By adding the equivalent of a few pennies to every transaction, and directly routing those pennies in support of altruistic causes, these sites are able to add a feel-good aspect to occasions that are otherwise capitalist bonanzas. The charitable aspect incentivizes purchasing, increasing overall sales, and the cumulative funds raised amount to significant contributions to the partnering not-for-profit organizations—a win-win situation. Shoppers can choose from a list of causes to support for the day, and every purchase they make adds to their total donation—at the end of the event, customers are automatically emailed forms documenting their donations, which can be submitted for tax deductions. Opting to up one’s donation unlocks exclusive deals, creating a flywheel that benefits all parties.
Distributed Computing for a Cause

KEY INSIGHT

Large computer problems can be broken down into smaller portions and solved using processing power of multiple standard computers, rather than with centralized supercomputers. Distributed computing technology lets people donate idle processor time on their personal laptops, cellphones, and other digital devices to support causes or solve socially relevant problems.

EXAMPLES

Folding@Home lets consumers donate idle processing power to fuel disease research via their computers, PlayStation 3s, and some Sony smartphones. In 2020, Folding@Home became one of the fastest computing systems due to increased interest during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since its launch two decades ago, the project has led to 225 scientific research papers. Another project, the Golem network, uses Ethereum blockchain and lets people rent out idle computing resources like storage, processing power, or bandwidth to render computer-generated images, conduct DNA analysis, and tackle machine learning tasks.

DISRUPTIVE IMPACT

Distributed computing systems will drive down prices for developers and those with greater processing power needs, and they will provide the average device owner with a new source of income and a novel way to support purpose-driven initiatives. Expect to see more platforms that monetize idle computer resources, allowing consumers to earn income from underutilized devices they already own.

EMERGING PLAYERS

- Amazon Web Services
- Einstein@Home
- Folding@Home
- Golem network
- The Great Internet Mersenne Prime Search
- TheSkyNet

The Golem network monetizes your downtime.
Fractional Ownership

KEY INSIGHT
Fractional ownership, commonly associated with time-shares, allows unrelated parties to divide costs and risks in order to collectively own an asset. Now that the concept is being applied to blockchain and digital platforms, it can unlock new ways to purchase and own assets, whether they’re in fine art, stocks, or other markets.

EXAMPLES
Fintech company Fundrise organized the first crowdfunded real estate development project in the United States. Otis Wealth and Masterworks.io offer fractional ownership for works of art, while Schwab and Robinhood now let investors purchase fractional shares of stocks. Typically registered with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, fractional ownership companies undergo considerable regulatory oversight.

DISRUPTIVE IMPACT
Fractional ownership democratizes investing. While the sharing economy prioritized access over ownership, people still want ways to create and preserve wealth. In theory, more people participating in value creation would lead to more equitable distributions of wealth in the long term. On the other hand, as more people participate in speculative markets, we may see an increase in speculative bubbles and economic instability.

EMERGING PLAYERS
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- Ernst & Young
- Fundrise
- MachineryLink Sharing
- Maketto
- Maecenas
- Meridio
- Masterworks
- Otis Wealth
- Property Share
- Roofstock
- Robinhood

Maketto in Washington, D.C., is the first crowdfunded real estate project in the United States.
Self-Funding Digital Infrastructure

KEY INSIGHT

Some corporations now “sponsor” developers so that they can dedicate their time to development, and new mechanisms are emerging to enable sustainable digital infrastructure.

EXAMPLES

Although much of the internet relies on free open-source software, people are more inclined to use it than maintain it—which is difficult and often leads to burn-out of key contributors. Gitcoin, which caters primarily to the Ethereum blockchain community, created a marketplace of bounties for open-source developers who want to contribute to projects and earn income for their work. Since 2017, Gitcoin has facilitated $10.6 million open-source software projects. Other crypto projects, such as Zcash, earmark a portion of each “block reward”—the amount of new coins that enters circulation as the crypto is mined—to go toward community development.

DISRUPTIVE IMPACT

Many crypto-currency and blockchain projects depend on open-source development, and the pioneering of new funding models could result in more sustainable and more robust digital infrastructure.

EMERGING PLAYERS

- Gitcoin
- Bitcoin
- Ethereum
- Zcash
KEY INSIGHT

Blockchains enable digital tokens that are provably unique and scarce. As a result, digital collectibles are now a growing feature of eSports, online gaming, and social networks. These unique tokens have a variety of applications—from personal expression to commerce to investing.

EXAMPLES

Ethereum-based collectibles game CryptoKitties started in 2017, allowing people to collect, breed, and trade silly looking cartoon cats. Each kitten, a non-fungible token, came with 12 "cattributes," such as fur color to "purrstige." Its popularity nearly stalled the Ethereum network—the priciest kitten sold for $100,000. Its creator, Dapper Labs, launched NBA Top Shot, the Samsung Galaxy store’s first blockchain-backed digital collectibles set. Nifty Gateway and Rarible let people buy digital art that’s tracked and verified using blockchain. Roblox and Fortnite allow gaming players to customize their avatars with digital accessories and skins. People can collect and trade digital versions of luxury brands, such as LVMH and Gucci.

DISRUPTIVE IMPACT

As more aspects of our lives shift online, demand for digital status symbols and personal expression will increase. Digital collectibles will be portable from one online platform to another, allowing people to create a full picture of their digital selves no matter where they exist online. Already, digital collectibles include personal tokens, which let people tokenize their time, future salary, and even influence over major life decisions. French developer Alex Masmej raised $20,000 in a ‘human IPO,’ raising U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission red flags.

EMERGING PLAYERS

- NBA
- Roblox
- Nifty Gateway
- Rarible
- Gucci
- LVMH
- SuperRare

At the height of its popularity, CryptoKitties nearly stalled the entire Ethereum network, and the most expensive digital kitten sold for more than $100,000.

1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

Non-Fungible Tokens and Digital Collectibles