

= Cow Clicker =

Cow Clicker is an incremental social network game on Facebook developed by video game researcher Ian Bogost . The game serves as a deconstructive satire of social games . The goal of the game is to earn " clicks " by clicking on a sprite of a cow every six hours . The addition of friends ' cows to the player 's pasture allows the user to also receive " clicks " whenever the player 's cow is clicked . A premium currency known as " Mooney " allows the user to purchase different cow designs and skip the six @-@ hour interval between clicks .

In the wake of a controversial speech by Zynga 's president at the Game Developers Choice Awards in 2010 , Bogost developed Cow Clicker for a presentation at a New York University seminar on social gaming in July 2010 . The game was created to demonstrate what Bogost felt were the most commonly abused mechanics of social games , such as the promotion of social interaction and monetization rather than the artistic aspects of the medium . As the game unexpectedly began to grow in popularity , Bogost also used Cow Clicker to parody other recent gaming trends , such as gamification , educational apps , and alternate reality games .

Some critics praised Cow Clicker for its dissection of the common mechanics of social network games and viewed it as a commentary on how social games affect people .

= = Gameplay = =

The player is initially given a pasture with nine slots and a single plain cow , which the player may click once every six hours . Each time the cow is clicked , a point also known as a " click " is awarded ; if the player adds friends ' cows to their pasture , they also receive clicks added to their scores when the player clicks their own cow . As in other Facebook games , players are encouraged to post announcements to their news feed whenever they click their cow . A virtual currency known as " Mooney " can be bought with Facebook Credits ; it can be used to purchase special " premium " cow designs , and the ability to skip the six @-@ hour time limit that must be waited before the cow can be clicked again .

= = History = =

= = = Creation and development = = =

At the 2010 Game Developers Conference , Zynga 's game FarmVille was awarded the " Best New Social / Online Game " at its Game Developers Choice Awards . Ian Bogost ( who was also in attendance ) was critical of Zynga 's success , as he felt that its business model was focused on convincing users to pay money to progress further in their " freemium " games rather than treating gaming as an artistic experience . He also believed Zynga 's vice president Bill Mooney was trying to attack " artistic " gaming during his acceptance speech for the award when he personally invited independent game developers to join his company . After the conference , Bogost coined the term " cow clickers " to describe games such as FarmVille which only involve performing tasks at certain intervals , since in these games , " you click on a cow , and that ? s all you do . " Bogost compared the players of Zynga 's games to the rats in B. F. Skinner 's operant conditioning experiment , often receiving variable reinforcement rather than regular rewards . As one of the most vocal critics of Zynga 's practices and business model , Bogost made further appearances at various events and panels to discuss his views on social gaming .

In July 2010 , Bogost was scheduled to make an appearance at a New York University seminar , " Social Games On Trial " , to discuss the controversial aspects of social network gaming . To clearly demonstrate what he felt were the most commonly abused mechanics of these games , Bogost quickly developed a Facebook game entitled Cow Clicker . The game was designed to be a satire of what Bogost personally believed were the only points of FarmVille : to encourage users to continue playing by inviting other users into the game , and to provide incentives for those who purchase

virtual goods .

= = = Updates = = =

Unexpectedly to Bogost , Cow Clicker became a viral phenomenon , amassing over 50 @, @ 000 players by September 2010 . In response to its sudden popularity , he committed to improving the game with new features . Updates to the game added awards for reaching certain milestones ( such as the Golden Cowbell for 100 @, @ 000 clicks ) , the ability to earn Mooney by clicking on other users ' Cow Clicker news feed posts , and the chance to randomly gain or lose Mooney on every click . New cow designs were also introduced , such as an oil @-@ coated cow to commemorate the BP oil spill , and the " Stargrazer Cow " , which was only a mirror image of the original cow that cost around \$ 20 's worth of Mooney .

Although continually disturbed by its popularity , Bogost also used Cow Clicker to parody other recent gaming and social networking trends ; such as the addition of an API to allow websites to have their own clickable cows ( in a process he dubbed " Cowclickification " ) , the spin @-@ off game Cow Clicker Blitz ( co @-@ developed with PopCap Games co @-@ founder Jason Kapalka ) , " My First Cow Clicker " for iOS ( a parody of simplistic education apps ; designed to " train " children on cow clicking and add the resulting clicks to their parent 's total ) , and a " Cow Clicktivism " campaign where users could click on an emaciated cow to donate to Oxfam America ? with a goal of donating an actual cow to a third world country . The cow , known as the " Cowclicktivist Cow " , could also be unlocked for the player 's pasture with a \$ 110 donation .

= = = " Cowpocalypse " event and conclusion = = =

In 2011 , an alternate reality game known as the " Cow ClickARG " was held , where a series of clues from the " bovine gods " eventually revealed that a " Cowpocalypse " would occur on July 21 , 2011 ( exactly one year since the original release of the game ) . From then on , every click made by players would deduct thirty seconds from a countdown clock leading to the Cowpocalypse . However , players could extend the countdown clock by paying to supplicate with Facebook Credits : paying 10 credits would extend the countdown by a single hour , while 4 @, @ 000 would extend the countdown by an entire month . After \$ 700 worth of extensions , the countdown clock expired on the evening of September 7 , 2011 . At this point , the game remained playable , but all the cows were replaced by blank spaces and said to have been raptured . Bogost intended the Cowpocalypse event to signal the " end " of the game to players ; when addressing a complaint by a fan who felt the game was no longer fun after the cow rapture , Bogost responded that " it wasn 't very fun before . "

= = Reception = =

Cow Clicker received critical attention soon after its release . One early commentator was Alexia Tsotsis of TechCrunch , who acknowledged the game 's intent as a commentary on the impact of social network games . In an interview , Bogost foresaw the transformation of the internet into a " compulsive virtual dystopia " through Zynga 's use of social gaming .

Nick Yee of the Palo Alto Research Center compared the players of games which do not provide " meaningful opportunities for achievement , social interaction , and challenge " to rats in a Skinner box . Accordingly , he compared Cow Clicker to being inside an " incredibly clear Skinner box " ? acknowledging how little effort the game took in order to keep users playing the game . Jason Tanz of Wired considered Cow Clicker as an example of the growth in the trend of gamification ? where developers introduce elements influenced by games into their services without providing the normal " experience " a game traditionally incorporates .

PopCap Games co @-@ founder Jason Kapalka praised Cow Clicker for being the type of " ironic , satirical , self @-@ referential " game that Facebook 's game ecosystem was lacking , as he felt there were too many commercially driven games on the social network . Playdom 's Scott Jon Siegel

criticized the game for not going far enough in its satire , and putting too many highlights on the " absurd monetisation practices and meaningless clicking which social games are all too well known for . "