

GAME AND DIGITAL CULTURE: A STUDY ON HAY DAY GAME

Mia Angeline

Department of Marketing Communication, Faculty of Economy and Communication,
Bina Nusantara University
Jl K.H. Syahdan No. 9, Palmerah
f.angeline@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Digital games are a commercial product developed and distributed by media companies and often uses characters or scenarios of movies, books, and comics. The digital game play comes from individual media consumption patterns. Playing digital games also offer experience and satisfaction based on interactive communication technologies and immersive gameplay. In this digital age, digital games became more social-based, which means they implement the need to invite friends on social media to come into play and help each other in the game. The problems of this study was to determine what factors make Hay Day popular among the players and to find out how Hay Day changing the social patterns interaction of the players. This study aims to look at the functions of digital games in the context of communication with relations in social media and why certain games can achieve very high popularity, while other games failed miserably. This research focuses on Hay Day. The method used is descriptive qualitative approach with case study method. Data collection is using interviews with players active in the game, as well as observation and literature studies. The results showed that a game may gain popularity if someone has a social media environment prior to play. Interactive concept, simulation, and fantasy game technology are also the reason Hay Day became very popular. The perception that the digital game player who formerly regarded as anti-social experience has shifted in the concept of digital game-based social bookmark. Players who have a lot of friends in games are seen as someone who has a lot of friends and a high social level. This is in line with the functions of a traditional game in Indonesian culture, where the region has a wide variety of games to be played together and motivate positive social interaction. Function of digital games also increased, other than playing the game as entertainment, but also now the game became one of the effective tools to convey the message to the public.

Keywords: digital game, social media, Hay Day

INTRODUCTION

Digital games are commercial products that are developed and distributed by media companies and often using characters or scenarios from movies, books, and comics. Digital game playing comes from individual media consumption patterns and also offers experience and satisfaction based on interactive communication technology and immersive. In addition to the term of digital games, now people also know the term of gamification. The term gamification derives from the tools used in the digital media industry. Gamification own process marked by adding game mechanism, such as a point, badges, levels, and more, into a webpage and application in order to provide added value in terms of user experience (Mahnic, 2014). The aim of the process of gamification among other things, to make a product, application, or the company becomes more attractive in order to motivate users to be loyal to them. According to McGonigal (2011), in the alternative reality, games can function as pacemakers or motivators in real life. The nature of the social-based game can build and enhance traditional relations, this makes gamification process are preferred by the company.

Until recently, digital games are considered to have more negative effects. Society tends to argue the potential negative impact of game play rather than a positive impact, especially with the large number of games that contain violence. But behind it, the digital game industry offers an opportunity and a new experience for its users. Digital games can encourage the user to be a 'co-author' which means designing contents, share and played by other players. Besides this, in the digital era, digital games are more and more social-based, which means players need to invite their friends on social media to come play and help each other in the game. Game players are no longer regarded as antisocial but has quite a lot of friends in the digital world to play with.

From across the social-based digital games, one of them who managed to pull players in 2014 is Hay Day. Hay Day is an artificial game from Supercell, a developer based in Finland. In a week of launch, this game entered the top ten of most applications that are downloaded by the users of iPad. Now, Hay Day is able to attract four million players every day, where 69% of whom are women, and the special as developer get the benefit of about 2.4 million per day (Strauss, 2013).

This research aims to look at the functions of digital gaming in the context of communication in social relations and why certain games can achieve very high popularity while the other games are not at all. The focus of this research is Hay Day game. Formulation of the problem in this research are (1) What Factors make Hay Day popular according to its players? And (2) how can Hay Day change patterns of social interaction of its players? From the outline of the problem above, it can be concluded that the purpose of this research is: (1) to discover what factors make Hay Day popular according to its players, and (2) to find out how Hay Day can change the patterns of social interaction of its players.

The research refers to research that has been done by Wallenius, Punamaki & Rimpela (2007), performed on children aged 10 to 13 years in Finland. The results of the study says violence in the digital game associated with aggressive behavior, especially in boys age of 10 years old. And violence in the digital games have indirect associations with aggressive behavior in children with high social relations level. So it can be concluded that the behavior associated with digital games is affected by individual factors and situational players. In this research, the goal is to know how Hay Day can change the patterns of social interaction of its players. The initial assumption because Hay Day game is social-based and it will affect social interaction and ability of players, also this game will be popular with players that have high social relations level. Individual and situational factors of players assumed can affect the behavior of Hay Day players (Wallenius, Punamaki, & Rimpela, 2007).

In digital era, information flow changes where the audience not only acts as a receiver, but can also act as communicators in the same time. Digital communities began to have a virtual identity that is considered real, and the virtual community also began to form in the digital world. One impact of this change is the emergence of the virtual economy (Branston, 2006). One example of a virtual economy in the digital game is the use of virtual game currency to purchase items in the game. Even now in-game items can be sold with the real exchange rate, in other words the game player will pay "real money" for digital goods that are not real (Anderson, 2010).

The power of games as a means of learning had already been examined by many people. Digital generation was born and raised to learn using visual means, this generation prefers an active learning pattern than a one-way learning pattern or passive learning (Branston, 2006). The game became a proper means to convey a message to the digital generation. One example of the power of the games was a game player has logic and the ability to problem-solving that is better than any other person who is not a game player (Kirkpatrick, 2012). While the potential negative impact of the games is can cause aggressive behavior on the player (Wallenius, Punamaki, & Rimpela, 2007). According to Kerr (2006), game player usually has to cultivate information, interact with other players to get the best strategy in defeating a game. It is these things that became a major supporter of the games as a means of learning. The players also have critical thinking patterns that are useful in real life.

In the world of gaming, some particular stereotype still applies. For example, the stereotype that gamers are men aged 12 to 18 years old. But in reality now, women game players also are not inferior to men. It is also a challenge for developers or the gaming industry to reach among women and adults in order to be interested in games that they developed. Digital games are currently divided into several genres, one of which is a Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) that takes the player's time. MMO genre is a type of game that is very social-based, because the player must defeat enemies or adventuring together in order to be advanced to the next level. In addition, there is also a casual game genre, which can be played in a short time of about 5 to 10 minutes per session. According to Winn & Heeter (2009), women spend more time in this casual game genre than men, who spent more time in other genres. Although today's digital game development leads to a hybrid genre, so players profiles no longer can be grouped based on genre.

Other research says that in United Kingdom, middle-class working families who have male children are more likely to have game consoles than any medium family who have female children (Kerr, 2006). The number of players has increased with the demographic data that is outside the general stereotype. A game cannot be devoted only to men or to women, this apply to social-based digital game. Years ago, game player was identical with teens, male, bespectacled, and socially isolated. But now this game is evolving towards home entertainment where families play together. The game became the adhesive in the family and became an important factor in social relations.

Social-based digital games are the type of games that are played online via social networks, and usually are multiplayer games whose mechanisms and features are asynchronous (Koistila, 2001). This type of game is usually played via a browser or downloaded via a mobile device. According to Radoff (2011) social-based digital games has the following characteristics: (1) Has the concept of asynchronous games so that players don't have to be online at the same time. (2) The community, which can increase network or partnership of players. Goals in social games can usually be achieved if players share with their friends who are also playing the same game. The more friends will increasingly facilitate reaching the goals. (3) There is no concept of win or lose. Game developer wants his players to continue to play their game so they do not make the concept of win or lose. But to make the game remains interesting, the developers make "quests" which can be completed in a short time. (4) Virtual currency, i.e. Special currency used in the game, but can be purchased. Some of the items in the in-game virtual currency can be purchased with it.

Social gaming has a challenge less than with other types of games, because it required certain ways to attract players to be able to continue to play it. How to increase engagement with players, among others (Watkins, 2009): (1) Continuous goals, namely the increasingly difficult goals along with the player's progress in the game. (2) Gaming capitals: the player is given a trophy or a badge if managed to reach certain criteria. By collecting this gaming capital, players can show off their achievement. Gaming capitals are a very good way to attract the players, because the players' engagement will feel their egos fulfilled when they managed to get a difficult achievement. (3) The time of the event compared to the real world, it means the player must wait for the time to be able to continue to play, usually in the form of energy which can be depleted and will repopulate within a certain period.

Criticism of social gaming, among others, can increase spam and phishing as much as 50% on social media platforms. This is possible because of a lack of rules in making the new player profile. The hackers can create fake profiles and send messages to other players. In addition, virtual currency features also become critics of social gaming. In contrast, according to studies carried out by Watkins (2009), gamers say digital gaming is currently the liaison of social relations, and makes the game player can add new friends. Social games are a bridge to meet new people both online and offline, as well as being a topic of conversation when friends gather together in the real world. The game became a top seller at the moment is the game features multiplayer game, where players can play with their friends. The term social gaming has a different meaning this time, for some people, it means friends

are getting together, face-to-face, and play together. As for the other part, it means they log into a virtual world and interact with other avatars without meeting face-to-face (Watkins, 2009).

METHODS

This research used qualitative approach with a descriptive type. Qualitative research is a research that uses inductive way of thinking, that departs from empirical fact towards things which are common (landscape concept). As for the descriptive type of research, it aims to make the description in a systematic, factual, and accurate about the facts and properties of an object to a particular population, it is also explained that this type of research usually already had the framework of its own thought to get the desired variable (Kriyantono, 2012). Research method used is case studies. Crabtree & Miller in Ahmadi (2014), set forth that case study was the potential aspects of a particular case and clearly demarcated. Such cases include the case of individuals, families, communities and organizations.

Data collection was done through interviews and literature study. As a first step, the research activities were carried out by formulating the issue that will be examined as well as the objectives that will be achieved. References from previous research were also collected before making the interview questions. Interviewees from this interview are men and women players of Hay Day game, and have been playing for at least 6 months. Data analysis techniques used in this research are based on three (3) phases of Huberman & Miles, i.e. (Gunawan, 2013): (1) Data reduction which is summarizing, choosing things, focus on the important things, and look for themes and pattern. (2) Data Display where research data is presented and supported by matrix networks to further improve the understanding of the case and as a reference to take action based on an understanding and analysis of the data. (3) Conclusion drawing/verifying from data analysis result which are presented in descriptive form. Summary of the research obtained after processing the data, and end with academic journal writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interview about social game Hay Day was conducted in November 2014 in Jakarta. Hay Day was chosen as the focus of the research because since it was first launched, it successfully attracts millions of players and survive on the top ten of the most downloaded games in the whole world. By their very nature of social-based, Hay Day successfully brings Ranch type game in mobile devices.

Respondent was selected by using a snowball technique, i.e. a game player recommends other players who are willing to be in the interview. As many as 10 players were elected who has played Hay Day for at least 6 months. Within 10 people, there are only two men and the rest are women. As many as 5 people are private-company employees, one is self-employed, and the rest are college students.

The result of the interview is as follows: the average respondents played about 10 times per day with a total duration of about 2 hours. When being asked about the reason why they started playing Hay Day, most of them answers because a lot of their friends started playing first and invite them to try out the game. The second answer is curiosity, since Hay Day is being the most viewed and top downloaded game for weeks. Another reason that makes them prefer to play Hay Day is because Hay Day is the type of games that refers to everyday life, casual, and there is no excessive pressure in playing it. One of the interviewees said it felt like a real farm, so before bed or before doing other activities, he always checks Hay Day first. Even after getting up in the morning, the first thing he does

is to check the Hay Day game. Thus, it can be concluded the Hay Day game has a very high retention rate. Retention within the game means that the players who want to play the game again on the second day and beyond (Koistila, 2014).

A few ways to get a high player retention rate, according to Koistila (2014) and approved by the respondents, were: (1) the phase is very well designed with tutorial, (2) the player are made busy, there are always things to be done in Hay Day, (3) the existence of a notification system that reminds players on activities in Hay Day, (4) bidding for a certain period games, players get a special offer if they often read "newspaper" in the game, (5) the existence of the time to produce something, for example players must wait for producing cheese, and (6) the existence of the new items can be accessed at certain levels, allowing the player to be curious about items that will be fully accessible in the next level. It can be concluded that Hay Day already meet the theory of how social game is supposed to raise the level of retention of players, namely: (1) the conceptual goals, (2) gaming capitals, and (3) the time adjusted to the real time (Watkins, 2009).

Since Hay Day is a free social game, then the developer should use the system of monetization to gain profit. The existing system of monetization on Hay Day is the developer sells diamonds that must be purchased using a credit card. This diamond can help a game player improve their level. The other monetization system is as follows: (1) the limited storage space, which can be extended with diamonds or collecting materials that is hard enough, (2) using system level and achievement, (3) time is widely used for core activities, unless the player is willing to use diamonds for a faster process. When asked if the speaker ever bought diamonds to speed up the game, all the interviewees answered had never bought it. The most varied reasons is the process of using a credit card are complicated and they do not have credit cards. But when asked if the process of payment were easier, for example, players can pay by using a phone credit, then nearly all the interviewees say they definitely would buy the diamonds, leaving only two people who do not want to buy the diamonds.

When respondent sasked about the social factors of Hay Day, their answers are they are not irritated with the social system. From Hay Day, they get new acquaintances both online and offline. During the early play of this game, the topic of Hay Day becomes a topic of conversation when friends gather together. A respondent acknowledges to be closer with some coworkers at the office because of Hay Day. In Hay Day updates, the developer added feature of "neighborhood chat", so players can chat with their friends in the game.

This game was an example of socially based game that capable of approaching the relationship between players. The formation of a community of players to help each other is one of the characteristics of a social based game. The respondents were also given questions about the similarity of social games such as Hay Day with traditional games, they agreed that both of these games, although one is analog and the other is digital, turned out to be similar in terms of social interaction. Traditional game in Indonesia has been a game that must be played with friends and provide entertainment. Through Hay Day, they have entertainment and social interaction as well, which can aggravate the relationship between family or friendship.

CONCLUSIONS

The results shows that a game can gain higher popularity if the player's social media environment has played too. Interactive concepts, simulations, and imaginary technology are also the reasons why Hay Day became very popular. The perception of digital games that players who once were seen as anti-social experienced a shift in the concept of social-based digital game. From the results of the research, it can be concluded that Hay Day is more favored by women of any age.

Players who have a lot of friends in both of these games was viewed as someone who has a high social level. This is in line with the functions of the traditional games in Indonesia, where many regions have a variety of games to be played together and motivate positive social interaction. Function of digital games has also increased, first playing the game as entertainment, but now the game becomes one of the effective tools to convey messages to the community. Further research is needed to focus on other game genres, such as browser-based online games or video games that support multiplayer.

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