

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MICROTRANSACTION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OF ONLINE GAMES (CASE STUDY: PUBG MOBILE GAMES)

TERHADAP TRANSAKSI MIKRO SEBUAH ANALISA KUALITATIF DAN PERILAKU KONSUSMEN
(STUDI KASUS: PUBG MOBILE GAMES)

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Abstract: In terms of gaming especially related to Micro transaction, people tend to spend money in order to do micro transactions to fulfill their needs and wants within the game. The game's needs and wants are usually related to winning a particular match, getting the limited type of outfits, bragging rights with other players, and more. The purpose of this study is to see the relation of micro transaction with the consumer's behavior related to the needs and wants within the game, in this case, PUBG Mobile Games. This study uses a qualitative method and interviews with informants were conducted in order to gain information regarding the phenomenon. The finding of this study shows there is a major connection between micro transaction and consumer behavior, which is about the hedonistic traits, the existence of micro transaction makes people or players of the game have more hedonistic judgment and traits during the transaction. Based on the result, the researcher provided several recommendations which are considerations regarding the level of importance in using micro transaction and the utilization on a large scale and improvement of the micro transaction need to be done in order to gain more users by the company.

Keywords: micro transaction, online games.

Abstrak: Dalam dunia Game, terutama yang berhubungan dengan Transaksi Mikro, orang cenderung mengeluarkan uang untuk Transaksi Mikro untuk memenuhi kebutuhan dan keinginan mereka dalam game. Kebutuhan dan keinginan game biasanya terkait dengan memenangkan pertandingan tertentu, memperoleh jenis pakaian yang terbatas, atau pamer dengan pemain lain, dan lain lain. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat hubungan antara microtransactions dengan perilaku konsumen terkait kebutuhan dan keinginan dalam game, dalam hal ini Game PUBG Mobile. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan wawancara dengan informan dilakukan untuk memperoleh informasi mengenai fenomena tersebut. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan yang besar antara transaksi mikro dengan perilaku konsumen yaitu tentang sifat hedonistik, adanya transaksi mikro membuat orang atau pemain game memiliki penilaian dan sifat yang lebih hedonistik selama bertransaksi. Peneliti memberikan beberapa rekomendasi yaitu pertimbangan pentingnya penggunaan transaksi mikro dan penggunaannya dalam skala besar serta perlunya peningkatan transaksi mikro agar perusahaan bisa mendapatkan lebih banyak pengguna.

Kata Kunci: transaksi mikro, game online.

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

Gaming industry is one of the most lucrative and biggest industry out there, it cannot be denied that gaming industry has spread all across the globe right now. Furthermore, the evolution of gaming also take place

in a rapid pace. This evolution eventually continues until now, with the advancement of technology and also the idea of entertainment right now people can access gaming consoles. Nowadays, with the existence of internet people are able to access games through online media. People know these games as online games, in which people or players of the games able to access it through many media such as smartphones and computers. The advancement clearly shows that gaming industry keep on evolving and bring more attentions to the people, with the current status quo now is the online games become more dominant than regular console. In the recent years a range of online games, on PC, console, and smartphone, have been adopting new economic models for extracting value from gameplay. Where the conventional understanding of game companies generating income has been through selling the product in a hardcopy (also called premium games), alongside merchandise related to the game, the gaming economy is now experiencing the initial conventional purchase cost of a game, followed by an on-going requirement for purchasing downloadable content (DLC), if the player wishes experience the full game/product. In this context, the game industry has been introducing even newer economic vehicles for profit generation, in the form of so-called loot boxes and Micro transactions (MTX).

MTX is a business model for games, where players can buy virtual goods through micropayments. 1 MTXs are often adopted by free-to-play games (also called freemium), as in free of initial charges upon download, as an alternative way of generating revenue. The purpose of MTXs is to close the gap between players that have a high amount of leisure time to spend on the game and players that have little leisure time to spend, as it provides the players, with little leisure time, the option of acquiring items and/or customizations through purchases, instead of spending time obtaining them through gameplay. Lootboxes are an expanding form of MTX. Lootboxes are consumable virtual packages that can be redeemed to receive a randomized selection of virtual items or content, which can range between items featuring avatar customization, to items that have a game-changing impacts such as virtual weapons and armor. Lootboxes is one of the latest trends in a monetization development within the online game economy. And the randomized reward element² of the lootboxes have been criticized over a long period of time by the gaming community, which has set up the homepage Microtransaction zone, for players to quickly categorize games according to monetized content, to help assess purchasing calls. Microtransaction zone can be seen as a collaborative media (Löwgren and Reimer, 2013) that represents the player community taking action against the new monetization model within games. Many see it to be a predatory business practice, as it is argued to be exploiting underage children and individuals with a tendency to develop an addiction for gambling.

Some of the main directions that the debate has taken are the concerns of players, is whether these micro-purchases should be permitted to have an impact on the gameplay, considering that most of the games, that make use of lootboxes and MTXs, are competitive multiplayer games where advantage is understood to be something you acquire through experience and time spend on the game. Another topic concerning the debate is focused on finding the definitions for when ornaments are or are not improving game-play or indirectly locking content behind a 'paywall'³.

These explanations already shown how MTX keep on developing nowadays and already part of the gaming society, despite its controversies MTX still play a major role in the gaming industries especially in online gaming. Nowadays people know many online games, one of the most famous one is PUBG. This is an online game where people can interact with each other and play games in form of online wars, which also known as battle royal concept game. In PUBG, the existence of microtransaction can be found as well. The MTX in PUBG also play a big role on the development of the games because players need to pay amount of money to do MTX, in this particular game to gain outfit for the character's games which called "skins". Some of the outfit only come out on special occasion and the games intentionally made it as limited edition, therefor the prices are usually higher compare to normal outfits for the characters. MTX is closely related with the needs and wants as part of the consumer's behavior from the player, in this case the player of PUBG mobile games.

Consumer's behavior plays a big role in market place, because the terms of consumer behavior describe the people who involved in market place. How consumer behaves in the market place shows their reaction of product. Consumer behavior is the attitude that consumer shows in order to adapt with the need and wants of the products that they want to buy and purchase in intention to understand deeper and to make sure the individual, groups, or organization satisfy or dissatisfy with the products that they purchase or even not. In terms of gaming especially related with MTX, people tend to spend money in order to do microtransactions to fulfill their needs and wants within the game. It is a phenomenon that need to be looked upon, because mobile games will always evolve from time to time and so does Microtransaction. The needs and wants within the game usually related with winning a certain match, getting the limited type of outfits, bragging rights with other players and more. There are players that even spend big amount of money in order to fulfill their needs through microtransaction, which also include the players of PUBG online games. The research main goal is to see the microtransaction on game

related with the consumer's behavior in terms of needs and wants within the game, with the phenomenon that keeps on happening research need to be done in order to gain more comprehensive knowledge and understanding related with this matter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior involves the psychological processes that consumers go through, in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve their needs, making purchase decisions, interpret information, make plans and implement these plans. According to Engel and Blackwell (1982), Consumer Behavior is the act of individuals directly involved in obtaining and using economic goods and services including the decision process that precede and determine these acts.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction (often abbreviated as CSAT) is a term frequently used in marketing. It is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. Customer satisfaction is defined as the number of customers, or percentage of total customers, whose reported experience with a firm, its products, or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals.

Microtransactions

Microtransactions are a business model where users can purchase virtual goods with micropayments. Microtransactions are often used in free-to-play games to provide a revenue source for the developers. While microtransactions are a staple of the mobile app market, they are also seen on PC software such as Valve's Steam digital distribution platform, as well as console gaming.

Previous Research

Nielsen (2018) investigated players' attitudes towards microtransactions within online games. The thesis is based on a multi-method approach combining the following methods: focus group-interviews, interview questions posed to hosts of a podcast, for then to discuss in their episode, and a survey. The results of this study are a categorization of players' attitudes towards microtransactions consisting of: Activist, Idealist, Agile, Pragmatist, Enthusiast and Compliant. By adopting de Certeau's concept of strategies and tactics, I have elicited distinctive reactions and ways of meaning making towards microtransactions, associated with each proposed category. Apart from categorizing player attitudes, this study has also identified microtransactions to have brought the broader player base into the symbiosis that previously existed exclusively between fan-programmers, socialized players, and game companies. Meaning, feedback from the whole player-base is crucial for success in implementing microtransactions. In turn, this is perceived as a strategy that surrenders power from the producer to the user.

Caetano (2017) identified and create a model with the main drivers of microtransactions that lead to impulse purchases in mobile game applications and understand if a price increase will lead to a lower purchase intention. A PLS-SEM analysis was conducted on a sample of 301 individuals. The measurement model showed a good fit of parameters, with AVE above 0.50 for all components, composite reliability superior to 0.70 for all components as well as an HTMT value inferior to 0.90 present in each component relationship. The six components considered explained 53.3% of the variance in impulse buying tendency. Significant component drivers from strongest to least robust were flow experience, social, hedonic/emotional and performance drivers. Functionality and low perceived risk were not drivers of impulse buying tendency.

Tomic (2017) explained during the twentieth century, the entertainment industry recorded a steady revenue growth. The progress of information and communication technology (ICT) influenced the creation of a new segment in the industry at the beginning of the 80s, known as the video game industry. During the first two decades, the dominant model of earning for video games publishers was sale of a full game, which means that users were obliged to pay in order to play the game (pay-to-play concept). In the past ten years, publishers have developed a new approach, which instead of selling entire game content at once tends to decompose the sale into several smaller transactions. The prices of these supplements are often calculated in the virtual currency that is considered to be the currency of video game, and not in one of convertible currencies, which creates additional confusion.

RESEARCH METHOD**Research Approach**

This research is qualitative research methodology to analysis the relation between microtransaction and consumer behavior in online games. According to Punch (1998) Qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials (case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts) that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

Population, Sample, Sampling Technique

The target population of this research are the user of microtransaction in online games, and for the sample are 15 respondents which is players that already done Microtransaction and also still do MTX until now while playing the game. This research using non-probability methods, Sample Techniques that will be used is purposive sampling where the researcher relies on their discretion to choose variables for the sample population.

Data Collection techniques

The type of data obtained is divided into two types, which are primary data and secondary data, primary data collection techniques are performed through in-depth interview. In-depth interview is a form of non-standard or semi-structured oral interview with a relatively large freedom of the interviewer in terms of content and design, which increase the willingness to provide information and the spontaneity of the respondents should be higher Gabler, (2013). while secondary data collection techniques are carried out through literature research and observation. Secondary data from this research gained from articles, books and previous research that related and sync with the topic that are being discussed in this research.

Operational Definition of Research Variables**Table 1. Operational Definition and Indicator of Research Variables**

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicator
Microtransaction	Microtransactions are a business model where users can purchase virtual goods with micropayments. Microtransactions are often used in free-to-play games to provide a revenue source for the developers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Price 2. Purpose 3. Status 4. Improvement 5. Promotional
Consumer behavior	The behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs, in this case within the game environment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emotion 2. Ego 3. Satisfaction 4. Needs 5. Expectation

RESULT AND DISCUSSION**Result**

All of the respondents have effect on consumer behavior but it's divided on the intention to do the purchases

Prices

Some of the informants are tends to buy the cheaper one, some of the are considering the current amount of money, and there are informants that only buy if highly necessary, and there is an informant that considering the allocation of money to business and there are some that are do purchases but prioritize their need first.

Purpose

The purpose of that found is the micro transaction are important because there are many items that are interested and other items offer different function. It is also fulfilling the desire of curiosity. And some informants said that while using the rare and expensive items, they feel like more enjoyable and excited playing the games.

Status and Improvement

Talking about status and improvement are not giving effect to the consumer, or they at least have minor effect to the consumer. And based on observation of environment the feel a little pride among their friend when they have this exclusive item and doing micro transaction.

Promotional

This item the game is promoted are of money that been interesting according to the consumer because of occasional events, such as valentine, easter etc. They also feel interested because they saw that celebrities promoted it as well. And discount also affected the impulsive buying of the informants, word-of-mouth it is influence the intention of buying as well.

Ego and Emotion

Their ego and emotion are triggered by rare items and to brag it to their friends because having rare items are such an accomplished to these informants. And some of them did not really care about the item they are purchased, they just purchased because of they has been in the game for years.

Satisfaction

Purchased the items, more over the rare and limited time items gave the informants sense of happiness, already accomplished something, and can brag to their friends. Satisfaction really had a big role of purchasing the items through micro transaction,

Needs and Expectation

There is no need that are fulfilled by purchasing the "skins" on mobile games but the expectation is high because spent and regarding to the aesthetic value. Regarding this is not a physical things, so it did not really take place to fulfill the needs and expectation of the informants.

Discussion

In the recent years a range of online games, on PC, console, and smartphone, have been adopting new economic models for extracting value from gameplay. Where the conventional understanding of game companies generating income has been through selling the product in a hardcopy (also called premium games), alongside merchandise related to the game, the gaming economy is now experiencing the initial conventional purchase cost of a game, followed by an on-going requirement for purchasing downloadable content (DLC), if the player wishes experience the full game/product.

In this context, the game industry has been introducing even newer economic vehicles for profit generation, in the form of so-called lootboxes and Microtransactions (MTX). MTX is a business model for games, where players can buy virtual goods through micropayments. MTXs are often adopted by free-to-play games (also called freemium), as in free of initial charges upon download, as an alternative way of generating revenue. The purpose of MTXs is to close the gap between players that have a high amount of leisure time to spend on the game and players that have little leisure time to spend, as it provides the players, with little leisure time, the option of acquiring items and/or customizations through purchases, instead of spending time obtaining them through gameplay. Lootboxes are an expanding form of MTX. Lootboxes are consumable virtual packages that can be redeemed to receive a randomized selection of virtual items or content, which can range between items featuring avatar customization, to items that have a game-changing impacts such as virtual weapons and armor.

Considering the fairly new entrance of this type of revenue extraction within the game economy, along with the controversy on MTXs in many countries as mentioned above – the research will direct its focus to the users of the games and, by using the methods of interview, to find out what their experiences and attitudes are towards this capitalistic turn within online games. The main object in the research will be player of PUBG Mobile Game; which is currently one of the most popular games within the society. There are 15 different informants with different ages and other specification; in which will give a more comprehensive understanding regarding the correlation of microtransaction and consumer behavior.

Microtransaction and Effect Toward Consumer Behavior

Microtransactions are a business model where users can purchase virtual goods with micropayments. Microtransactions are often used in free-to-play games to provide a revenue source for the developers. Microtransaction can be measured by 5 main indicators which are price, purpose, status, improvement and promotional. Price talk about the value needed to be spent by the users when using the microtransaction, purpose mainly about the main function of the purchased item, status and improvement are regarding the shift within the in-game development and promotional is talking about the essence of promotion such as product placement within the game.

Consumer Behavior mostly talk about behavior that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. In this particular case the in-game environment of PUBG Mobile games which closely related with the idea of microtransaction. Consumer behavior measured by 5 indicators which are emotions, ego, satisfaction, needs and expectation. Emotions and ego mainly talk about the emotional usage and status of the consumer during any stages of purchasing, satisfaction talk about the sense of satisfy in using a certain tools, needs are basically the idea of the goods fulfilling the needs of the users, and expectation is the desired outcome wanted by the users or in this case players of PUBG Mobile Game.

From 15 informants all have the same perception regarding the prices, the informants look upon the prices and have the tendency to do purchase after careful consideration from the indicators of microtransaction. All informants also agree that the purpose of the item purchased using the microtransaction also important because of the different functions given by different items; in term of status and improvement there are no significant changes within game regardless of the microtransaction goods exist in game or not. It is because of the object of PUBG which mostly offers item that strive upon esthetic rather than main function within game; in terms of promotional all informants have the same perception but in different scenarios. There are promotions during special days or events done by certain celebrities; which make the microtransaction process become more intriguing.

From 15 informants all of them agree that emotion and ego have affect to their desire to use microtransaction; there are many varieties of reasons such as esthetic reasons, bragging right, competitions and also the idea of having a high-end item as part of consumer behavior. All informants also agree that satisfaction is important because the informants want to have sense of pride, achievement and also happiness in doing the transaction by getting the desired item. In term of needs; the items do not fulfill the needs of the in-game development because the nature of the item which mostly act as esthetic item rather than beneficial in term of usage. The last one which is expectation; all informants agree that the desired outcome is essential because of the certain of money that already spent or just for the sake of esthetic aspect needed by the players.

Many of the informants stated that the factors within them such as emotional and satisfaction play part during the microtransaction process; the informants which are also players of PUBG Mobile game tends to be persuaded by the object offered by the game. These trivial objects within game eventually effect the informants' behavior such as making them do transaction based on emotion or ego alone; the example happen toward several players that buy items just because of the esthetic factor which give the players personal satisfaction. Other example is players use their ego during the microtransaction such as purchasing certain object because of the rareness and also the exclusivity of the object, other microtransaction to buy objects as for the bragging right toward other players in order to satisfy their ego within the gaming world. In the end it can be seen that microtransaction give effect toward the consumer's behavior and traits such as their ego, own satisfaction and more.

The conclusion that can be reached is regarding the effect of microtransaction and consumer behavior; further proves that decision making which is part of consumer behavior can be affected by the existence of microtransaction. The finding proves that microtransaction will directly impact the users if given the right situations; with the right situation and timing it can make microtransaction become more common to people because the number of users that will increase. By looking at the result of the research as well; the tendency of impulsive buying can already be seen through the idea of having esthetic items compare to beneficial items. It can be concluded that consumer behavior within game here can be affected; proving the idea of microtransaction that have effect toward with consumer behavior of users.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**Conclusion**

1. Microtransactions in game have relation on consumer's behavior in terms of needs and wants, in this particular case in PUBG mobile game.
2. The major connection between microtransaction and consumer's behavior is about the hedonistic traits, the existence of microtransaction is making people or players of the game to have more hedonistic judgement and traits during the transaction;
3. Mostly egotistical and personal satisfaction aspect within the players that makes people do more transactions in order to become better within the game.
4. In order to fulfill the needs and wants within the game such as obtaining outfits and also bragging.
5. The study found that players often develop a more hedonistic traits such as spending more money on microtransaction to achieve their goals.

Recommendation

1. Considerations regarding the level of importance in using microtransaction. Because microtransaction have close relation with consumer behavior, consumer need to pay attention and have considerations in doing microtransaction in order to have a stability in terms of economic status and also personal well-being for the consumers. Excessive usage of microtransaction can lead to the users into spending more than the income from the users respectively.
2. The utilization on large scale and improvement of the microtransaction need to be done in order to gain more users. Because of microtransaction's nature that can affect consumer's behavior; the company can utilize on this momentum in order to gain more users and eventually profit for the company. Improvement of their current technology such as reducing the numbers of errors, safety net for transaction and also adding more variations of items can be the ways for the company to improve.

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