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INTERNATIONAL ONLINE GAMING BUSINESS FOR NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILENNIALS AS A FORM OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The Objective of the study was to examine the development of the creative economy sector and the potential of online gaming, not as a game developer, but as a gaming operator using the skills for playing these games as a livelihood and for career development. The Research Design was a qualitative descriptive study based on three different concepts: (1) the creative economy, (2) the interest in becoming an online gaming operator, and (3) a SWOT analysis. The three concepts were used to analyze the potential for becoming online gaming operator. Findings showed the potential of the creative economy in the area of online gaming, the needs and skills of individuals as a driving force in them becoming online gaming operators, and a strategy to develop the business of online gaming operators to take advantage of global demand. Theoretical contributions of the study were an increased understanding of online gaming businesses and online gaming operators as part of the creative economy. This study could also act as a good reference point for business advisors working with creative businesses that have not gained popularity but have considerable potential.

KEY WORDS

SWOT, online gaming, creative economy, business operator, games, qualitative descriptive study.

New technology and resources to improve the quality of life have encouraged people to develop new skills to fulfill both their social and economic needs. People adapt by finding new sources of income and learning new skills, such as the ability to use technology. For example, in Indonesia, taxi bike riders have used applications developed by their partners to attract customers online. These taxi bikers used Android-based cellphones to download the application such as Gojek to do online bookings, take orders, and complete orders. Their ability to adapt to the emergence of new technology has affected their welfare.

An online game is a software application that runs on a computer or mobile phone and requires a connection to the internet to play (IGI-Global, 2020). Various types of online games are available, such as Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMO), First Person Shooters (FPS), and Role-Playing Games (RPG). People of all ages and backgrounds love to play online games since so many different types of games are available, and this has led to the formation of various clusters of online gamers based on the types of games they play. The most popular type of online game is the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG). The latest global data for MMOs for the first quarter of 2020 showed that there were 114 listed MMORPGs and approximately 11 million gamers (MMO-Population, 2020).

Figure 1 shows five age groups, from 18 to 64, which cover the working-age population (OECD, 2018). These people have earned money from their job, yet they only have seven hours per week to play and develop their character in the online games that they play. This does not leave them enough time to develop their character in the way they would wish. Nevertheless, there are services for those wanting to improve their game characters. The service provider works to improve the character being played in an online game while the

client is working or taking a vacation. When the client returns to the game, the character will be at a higher level, have a better reputation or have collected more wealth.

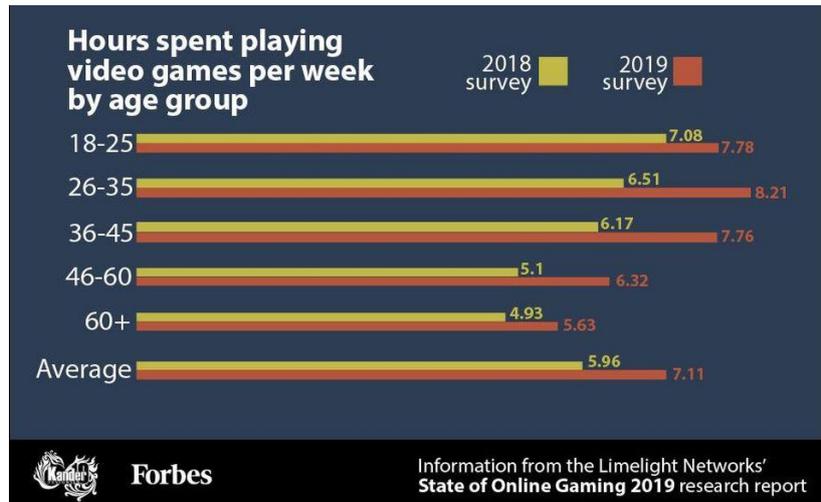


Figure 1 – Hours Spent Playing Video Games per Week by Age Group Source: (Anderton, 2019)

Online games are the starting point for identifying the needs of gamers and were the focus of this study. As an example, almost 460,000 people play the popular MMORPG Guild Wars2 each day. It takes a gamer 29 weeks or seven months to obtain the legendary armor in the game (Ananeos, 2019). Gamers with surplus money but little time may use a professional game operator to obtain the legendary armor. Becoming a game operator needs specialist skills because many types of games are available. So, a game operator job created by a service such as MMOPilot requires specialization. For instance, a game operator experienced in racing games may not perform well in adventure games. Thus, the job of game operator covers a range of different specializations.

Consideration of these developments led us to become interested in exploring the opportunities for millennials and business owners in building a career in the field of online gaming. Online gaming is part of the creative economy and has a promising future. Although many people still underestimate the potential of the online gaming business, the sector is developing and offers a promising career path. In this study, we focused on the following questions:

1. How can international online gaming become a good career opportunity for millennials?
2. How much interest do millennials have in international online gaming as a future career?
3. What does a SWOT analysis reveal about the business of gaming operators?

This study sought to assist researchers and entrepreneurs in the creative economy as well as millennials wanting to enter into a business in the creative. This paper first discusses the concepts and theories used in developing the creative economy. This is followed by a description of the research methods, the findings and their theoretical and practical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bocella and Salemo proposed that the creative economy is closely related to the creative industry and culture. Culture-based industry has been developing since the 1980s producing consumer products that represent certain cultures. UNESCO has also disseminated the concept of culture-based industry, and it has gradually begun to be used in several types of cultural products, including music, arts, writing, fashion, design, media, and crafts. Bocella and Salemo suggested that the creative and cultural industries are the main drivers of economic growth as a result of global demand (Bocella & Salerno, 2016). Thus, it

can be concluded that the creative economy relies on creativity and innovation. Experts have put forward several definitions to the creative economy. In short, the ability and skills of an urban community in producing innovative and attractive cultural products or activities can be the main capital for the economic growth of a region. One example of a creative city is London, where the creative industry is one of the biggest contributors to the economy. From 1995–2001, the creative industry grew faster than other sectors (UNCTAD, 2008).

The aforementioned definitions would help us to analyze current economic phenomena. Creativity, skills, and professionalism are the driving force for the emergence of businesses in the creative economy, especially in urban areas. Economic growth in the online gaming sector is evidence that technological development can trigger the growth of new business sectors and, at the same time, open up a new profession that has not existed before. For example, an online gaming operator is a new job that requires creativity and skills in playing online games.

Interest may refer to the motivation force that impels as to attend to a person, thing or an activity or it may be the effective experience stimulated by the activity itself. In other words, interest can be the cause of an activity and the results of participation in the activity. Interest is an intermediary between the motivational factors that influence decisions, and it indicates the degree of willingness to take action (Setiawan, 2017). Crow and Crow in Gunarto (2007) proposed that:

- 1) The Inner Urge Factor comes from within due to the compatibility between an individual's needs and willingness and the existing circumstances.
- 2) The Social Motive Factor arises from the influence of the social environment—the desire to do something emerges because someone hopes to improve themselves socially.
- 3) The Emotional Factor arises from feelings such as pride and confidence in one's ability to do something better.

SWOT is a strategic planning technique used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It compares the external factors of opportunities and threats with the internal factors of strengths and weaknesses. SWOT analysis is the systematic identification of various factors (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and is often used to formulate a company strategy (Rangkuti, 2013). Companies try to maximize strengths and opportunities but minimize weaknesses and threats. The analysis produces four groups of alternative strategies called the Strength-Opportunity Strategy (SO), the Weakness-Opportunity Strategy (WO), the Strength-Threat Strategy (ST), and the Weakness-Threat Strategy (WT) (Kuncoro, 2006):

- 1) The Strength-Opportunity Strategy (SO) takes advantage of the strengths and opportunities of the company.
- 2) The Weakness-Opportunity Strategy (WO) takes advantage of the opportunities while minimizing the weaknesses.
- 3) The Strength-Threat Strategy (ST) focuses on using the strengths to overcome the threats.
- 4) The Weakness-Threat Strategy (WT) involves being defensive by minimizing existing weaknesses and avoiding threats.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This was a descriptive qualitative study. Descriptive research uses data collected in the form of images and words rather than numbers, so the results are in the form of quotations (Moelong, 2009). This study used a qualitative approach to understand the experience of the research subjects within natural contexts, such as their motivation and behavior, through descriptions and various scientific methods (Moelong, 2009). Research problems in qualitative studies arise from phenomena and are associated with theories and literature review. This descriptive qualitative approach was used to investigate the international online gaming business as a new career opportunity for millennials as part of the creative economy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MMOPilot offers skills in international online gaming. MMOPilot focuses on online games in the MMORPG genre. These games combine role-playing games and interactions between many players in a virtual world in a computerized ecosystem. In role-playing games, players have control over one character. In MMORPG, the higher the level of the character, the stronger the character is. The strength of the character affects the reputation of players and their ability to complete the given missions. Unfortunately, in the real world, MMORPG players have responsibilities and limited time or limited game skills and find it difficult to level up the characters they build. Game operator companies such as MMOPilot were created to help players with such limitations and to increase their character's level easily.

Richard Caves (Levickaitė R. , 2011), in his paper entitled *Economic Properties of the Creative Industries in Levickaitė*, described seven indicators as properties of the creative economy:

- 1) *Nobody knows principle*: demand depends on creative ideas. MMOPilot is a business providing online gaming operators. Fajar Buchori (the owner of MMOPilot) has said that “time constraints” and a sense of “not wanting to be left behind” are motivations that give rise to demand from consumers and potential consumers for operator services to help them build their characters or to obtain certain items in the game. MMOPilot accommodates this demand.
- 2) *Arts for art's sake*: this deals with originality and technical professional skills. The MMOPilot web page states that the game operator services are run by professional employees who are experts in their fields and without the help of illegal programs or scripts. MMOPilot has more than seven years of experience with a good market reputation (MMOPILOT, 2020). Fajar Buchori has said that his employees are individuals whose hobby was playing online games, and this ensured their professionalism.
- 3) *Motley Crew Principle*: for relatively complex creative products, the production requires diversely skilled inputs. Each skilled input must be present and performed at some minimum level to produce a valuable outcome. MMORPGs combine role-playing games and interactions between many players in a virtual world in a computerized ecosystem. RPGs are games where the player controls the actions of a character (or several party members) immersed in some well-defined world. As an example, in Guild Wars 2, players can choose a profession for their character, such as a *Guardian*, who protects all the team members or a *Ranger*, who is experienced in using traps and attacking enemies. Therefore, employees of MMOPilot as game operators must master the skills of the character's class or profession in the game and work together to raise the character's level or complete certain quests to obtain the in-game items that the consumers want.
- 4) *Infinite Variety*: products are differentiated by quality and uniqueness; each product is a distinct combination of inputs leading to an enormous variety of options. MMOPilot realized the vastness of the online game market and the limited time that consumers have—these became the basis for the development of the business. Currently, MMOPilot has three main divisions, which it offers to potential customers. MMOPilot also offers custom order services according to consumer demand (MMOPILOT, 2020).
- 5) *A-List/B-List*: skills are vertically differentiated to produce quality products. MMOPilot was founded in 2011, and, since then, it has been expanding its services and experience. An interview with the owner revealed that MMOPilot had a good reputation in the online game market. Trust was important within the business since consumers needed to provide the online gaming operator with their account credentials. As a business unit, MMOPilot is not only able to play games but also to play them effectively and efficiently as desired by consumers.
- 6) *Time Flies*: adequate time is essential in developing innovative products. MMOPilot has 40 employees with fixed salaries and regulated leave. This demonstrates its

professionalism in managing its business, in comparison with many other online gaming operator businesses that do not give their employees fixed salaries. This professionalism has led to employees working efficiently and effectively. By considering market trends and consumer demand, MMOPilot has been innovative and now comprises three divisions and also accepts custom order requests.

- 7) *Ars Longa*: some creative products are protected by copyright, allowing the creator to collect royalties. The gaming-operator business involves online games and the provision of “time” that consumers do not have. Playing games is a hobby, and people can only play games from time to time. Many online games have gone out of business in Indonesia and internationally due to a lack of players. Consequently, the number of players is a crucial factor and determines whether an online game will survive. Together with the dynamics of people’s everyday activities, gamers have limited spare time in real life because they are busy working or spending time with their families. Therefore, MMOPilot and other game-operator businesses make an important contribution to the game creators by maintaining the existing players that the online game needs to survive.

MMOPilot believed that the online gaming business would last for the foreseeable future due to the vast market it had in Indonesia. The company now has three divisions to serve the customers, and its vision is to enable as many young people as possible, who are interested and expert in MMORPG, to earn money from their hobby. Millennials are seen as the capital for online gaming businesses, not only as service users but also as developers and service providers. Since the emergence of MMORPG in 2001, more and more young people are playing this genre of game. Thus, it is understandable that these young people have become very skillful in playing these games. The vast market and the interest in not only playing but also being the best in the games opens up a significant opportunity for millennials to succeed in this new type of job.

Employees of MMOPilot gave the same answers—they were interested in online gaming as a career, but they had different reasons for becoming a pilot in an online game. The differences were seen in their answers to questions about the interest factors (Inner Urge Factor, Emotional Factor, and Social Motive Factor).

Almost all research informants were happy to join MMOPilot. They were interested in improving their skills and their understanding of online games. Online-gaming businesses were able to provide millennials with their dream job, and the government had also provided support to online gamers. They had different reasons for wanting to be part of the online gaming business as a pilot—some wanted to take this as their main job, some only wanted to challenge their skills in playing games online, and some only looked for an alternative to release their energy and overcome their stress.

Their Inner Urge Factor led them to join MMOPilot to gain popularity, pride, appreciation from others and to prove that online businesses offered good career opportunities for millennials. Crow and Crow (Setiawan, 2017) stated that people had a unique ability to make a decision and to live their decision as well as to be free. They were also motivated by the fixed salary offered by MMOPilot and gifts from their customers or the owner of MMOPilot.

The most common Emotional Factors were that the research informants wanted to hone their skills in playing online games, to develop their potential in the online gaming business, and to pursue their hobby. This was consistent with the work of Crow and Crow (Gunarto 2007), which proposed that hopes involve three variables or relationships. First, hopes are felt to represent opportunities—doing certain actions will help to fulfill their needs. Second, confidence and ability to do certain jobs are the way for someone to achieve what they want. Third, rewards and prizes are seen as potential achievements in the workplace.

Most of the informants also acknowledged that they had gained more friends by becoming a pilot in MMOPilot—this became a community where they felt accepted and appreciated. This was consistent with the argument of Bocella & Salerno (2016) that motivation is the main characteristic of the creative industry, and culture is the main driver of economic growth based on global demand. Motivational factors also affect the decisions

taken to channel and maintain behavior. The phenomenon, people love to play games yet they do not have enough time to play, represents a potential business for millennials—online games can become a career, not just a hobby.

Table 1 – SWOT Matrix for MMOPilot

Identification of SWOT	Analysis	Actions
SO	SO was possible because the strengths (S) were greater than the opportunities. The SO Strategy could be implemented. MMOPilot had quality human resources organized under good management to take advantage of opportunities: a bigger market for the existing services through massive marketing strategies and promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Service Quality Services must be improved because of the tighter competition caused by the demand for game operators. Quality services help to retain the costumers' trust lead to sustainable cooperation between MMOPilot and its customers—this will have a positive impact on the company. • Improving Promotion In addition to service quality, promotion is also crucial for online gaming companies. It can be done during an event or through the community of online gamers in Malang. A massive promotion is expected to improve demand from customers.
WO	Using opportunities in minimizing weakness A turnaround strategy must be designed. External opportunities must be taken, but the internal problems (weaknesses) must first be resolved; thus, the company needs to lower the marketing target. In short, fixing the internal problems allows the company to be at its best when engaging with external opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Business Scale There must be a constant urge to improve the business. This obviously needs the capital to provide better facilities to improve performance. With the best facilities available, the company will find it easy to improve services to customers. • Improving the Quality of Human Resources This can be done by having employees attending training or online-gaming events to improve their skills. The company also needs to cooperate with the government.
ST	The strength of the company lies in overcoming threats. This strategy is also known as the diversification strategy. That is, no matter how big the threat is, panic and haste only worsen the atmosphere. Thus, any organization having independent power (strength) must be able to identify its power (strength) to tackle external threats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Entrepreneurial Interest of Millennials The government can encourage millennials to become entrepreneurs, especially in the online gaming business, by becoming a game operator. The support shown by the president through the creative economy in E-sport has helped businesspeople to open up online gaming businesses. Other parties can also help millennials to become interested in becoming an entrepreneur. • Improving Creativity The use of the internet and other social media platforms is an effective means of promotion, so costumers know more about the service (online gaming operators); giving a special price or discount is also an effective promotional tool. • Cooperation with the Government This must be done since millennials are so technologically literate—the help of the government will make things easier, for instance, by introducing millennials to online businesses and entrepreneurship.
WT	This is defensive as it tries to minimize weaknesses and avoid threats. Organizations may face external threats while struggling with internal weaknesses and problems. Failure to choose the right strategy will only lead organizations to fail or lose prestige. Thus, every part of the organization or company has to work together to solve the internal weaknesses and tackle external threats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Cooperation There must be better cooperation among online-gaming business people. They can work together on promotions, training for employees, and coaching for a start-up online gaming business. • Anticipation There must always be the anticipation of competitors, such as bigger companies, by maintaining and improving the quality of services, such as good prices, discounts, and special service packages.

A SWOT analysis was used to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for MMOPilot. A SWOT analysis allows the systematic identification of important factors in the formulation of a company strategy based on maximizing strengths and

opportunities and minimizing weaknesses and threats. The analysis produces four groups of alternative strategies called the Strength-Opportunity Strategy (SO), the Weakness-Opportunity Strategy (WO), the Strength-Threat Strategy (ST), and the Weakness-Threat Strategy (WT).

The SWOT analysis shown in Table 1 allowed us to identify the strategies for all situations (SO, WO, ST, and WT):

- 1) MMOPilot offered good quality services and a strong brand image to support business development and increase its market share of the online gaming business. A trend of good market growth makes it possible to develop new businesses in such a wide-open market. In other words, MMOPilot must seek a larger market share for existing service products with a massive marketing and promotional campaign.
- 2) Since the market keeps growing, MMOPilot must have more employees and train them to have high standards of skills and professionalism. One of MMOPilot's biggest assets is the special service it offers to customers.

Overall, the matrix showed that there were more strengths than opportunities; thus, the company should implement an SO Strategy. MMOPilot had quality human resources organized under good management, which could be used to take advantage of opportunities, such as a bigger market for the existing services through a massive marketing and promotional strategy.

CONCLUSION

The development of national and international online gaming businesses has been due to global demand and triggered by the need for online game players. Both the growth of the market and the continuing interest of the community (gamers) have made the online gaming business into a creative economic phenomenon—it offers a great opportunity for businesses focusing on game operators. Currently, the online gaming business is very promising for millennials—in addition to channeling hobbies, the online gaming business also provides lucrative financial benefits. Market opportunities are still considerable due to the lack of businesses in this field, and this type of business is suitable for millennials as their lives are closely linked to technology and entertainment.

MMOPilot offers good quality services, a strong brand image, and competent employees, compared with its competitors. To support business development, target market segments, and take advantage of online business opportunities, MMOPilot needs to keep abreast of developments and the emergence of the latest online games.

This study investigated the emergence of new businesses in the creative economy, but the analysis was limited to one company in one particular area, MMOPilot, in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Since various businesses engaged in the same field exist in Indonesia and abroad, there is a possibility for the same research to be done. New topics and themes for studies appear every year, both novel developments and extensions of existing studies. This research provides a basis for further studies to expand the scope of research in this area to subjects and samples in other regions of Indonesia and internationally. There has been little research on this type of business (online gaming operators), so there are plenty of things to improve.

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