

JERMANIA – An interactive journey to Germany

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Abstract:

JERMANIA is a non-commercial Cultural Gaming App for young Indonesians who are interested in German culture and language in the age group 16-25 years. Produced in a fruitful collaboration between Goethe-Institut Jakarta's library and game designers from both Indonesia and Germany, players interactively explore five German cities like Cologne or Dresden in this app. Mini games provide a lot of fun and variety, while at the same time enabling a playful introduction into getting to know Germany.

Aside from monumental buildings and touristic sites, regional diversity and local cultural characteristics are a recurring theme in the game. In Berlin, for example, the player can prepare local food specialty "Currywurst", while in Cologne, "Halve Hahn" and carnival-celebrating folks can be discovered. The storyline is accompanied by a wonderful Japanese-RPG-style soundtrack. The trailer of the game gives an impression of the artistic approach and the general storyline of the game.

For the past years, games and gaming has been a focal point of the programmatic work at the library of Goethe-Institut Jakarta. Providing services equally for clients interested in German culture and

students of German language, Goethe-Institut Jakarta has built up a wide range of experience with gaming and gaming events. Based on previous experiences like the “Game Mixer” and in order to add further to its services, the library team set out in 2016 to develop a playful and inspiring cultural app for young Indonesians that form the great majority of its patrons.

JERMANIA is now an integral part of every library tour offered and it has contributed a lot to shifting the image of our library towards a modern and innovative learning facility. Likewise, by proving that a library can have successful intersectoral collaboration with creative industries, our library succeeded in gaining reputation among its stakeholders and partners.

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Keywords: mobile app, gaming, development, library, travel

JERMANIA – AN INTERACTIVE JOURNEY TO GERMANY

With the development of the interactive video game app *JERMANIA*, the Information & Library section of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia explores an innovative format in the framework of international cultural work while contributing to the process of making libraries modern centres for education and communication in the 21st century. The development of *JERMANIA* marked a preliminary highlight in the activities of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia in 2016 and 2017 in which the focus was on creativity and games. This focus began with the project [Game Mixer](#) in 2015 and continued in 2017 with the transnational project [Art Games](#) as well as the travelling exhibition [Games and Politics](#).

Introduction

JERMANIA is an educational game for young Indonesians interested in German language and culture. The players can interactively tour five German cities and explore their points of interest, for example the Cologne Cathedral and the Dresden Semper Opera. Mini-games provide a diversity of playful activities while introducing gamers to learning German.

The educational game takes the players on virtual tours around Berlin, Dresden, Freiburg, Cologne and Stuttgart where they experience the fullness of Germany’s regional diversity and cultural hallmarks. For example, in Berlin you can prepare *Currywurst* and admire the symbols of the modern Federal Republic, while in Cologne you can learn about *Halve Hahn* (rye rolls with cheese and sausage) and marvel at the city’s famous carnival clowns. The game is accompanied by a delightful soundtrack reminiscent of Japanese role playing.



[JERMANIA trailer](#)

Players assume the role of Indonesians who, while visiting their home town library, stumble by chance upon a book about Germany. In their excitement they decide to travel to Germany with a friend and then make their way to the airport. Upon arrival in Germany they find themselves in a colourful pixel version of Cologne. The players can now wander around, visit museums, take photos and gather fun facts about the city's sights. By playing mini-games and through conversations with passers-by, they go hunting for in-game achievements and are rewarded with game money. Once they have collected enough travel money, they can go to the next city.



The mini-games also include small language elements on the A1 beginner level. If players are interested in learning more about the German language, they are guided via embedded links to the website of the Goethe-Institut and the free *Deutsch für Dich* learning portal.

The game is designed in particular for young Indonesians aged 12 to 25 who are interested in Germany and the German language. This group comprises the main target group for language courses and the library of the Goethe-Institut.

JERMANIA is the product of a collaboration between Indonesian and German video game developers that was initiated by the Goethe-Institut Indonesia and was funded by special resources from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. The *Nightspade* studio was supported by the German studios *kunst-stoff GmbH* and *the Good Evil GmbH*. The game can be downloaded free of charge in Indonesia from Google Play and Apple's App Store. To date the app has been released exclusively for use in Indonesia.

Project genesis and background: Why does a Goethe-Institut library develop a game?

In the 21st century the cultural and creative industries are amongst the fastest growing sectors in the world economy. In order to ensure the competitiveness of these industries in Germany and to increase the opportunities for innovative cultural organisations, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany launched the Culture and Creative Industries Initiative in 2007. The initiative is coordinated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Foreign Office are also involved.

The Foreign Office considers the promotion of the creative industry part of German foreign policy. As a cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany and as a partner of the Foreign Office, the Goethe-Institut has a broad range of activities and includes implementing projects that promote the creative industry in its host countries. In this context, creative industries are understood to mean those creative enterprises that are predominantly commercially oriented and are engaged in the creation, production and dissemination of cultural and/or creative goods and services.

Since 2016, under the umbrella of the large-scale project *International Creative Industry 2016*, which is funded by special resources of the Foreign Office, Goethe-Instituts all over the world have initiated regional sub-projects and measures through which artists and other creatives from Germany have been brought together with their peers from the respective host countries.

Beginning in 2016, the video game *JERMANIA* was developed and produced in the Information & Library section of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia in cooperation with the language department in the framework outlined above under the project title *Ayo Jerman (Come to Germany)*. With the participation of German and Indonesian game developers, the objective was to create a mobile gaming app for smartphones and tablets that allows a young Indonesian target group to become acquainted with the German language and culture in a playful way. On 7 March 2017 the app was released in the Indonesian Google Play Store as a free download. It was made available in Apple's App Store on 4 April 2017.

Libraries as hubs for digital natives

In the age of digitization, libraries must continue to attract and bond visitors as opposed to simply collecting and lending books. A future strategy for libraries is to establish themselves as modern community hubs for the generation of digital natives. Particularly in emerging and developing countries, libraries can engage larger target groups by providing internet access and modern entertainment media while guiding their visitors to 'traditional' media holdings. The library of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia was able to continuously increase its number of visitors in recent years with this strategy. In the meantime, the library provides its visitors with Apple iPads, Sony PlayStation 4, Nintendo Wii, Microsoft Xbox, and virtual reality devices. The library also organizes attractive framework programmes. In 2016 and 2018, for

example, online video tournaments using PlayStation were hosted in which language learners of different Goethe-Instituts around the world competed with each other.

With the project *Ayo Jerman* and the development of the app *JERMANIA*, the library goes one step further by cooperating directly with the gaming industry of the host country.

Project history and milestones

The project was initiated and managed by Christel Mahnke, Head of the Information & Library section at the Goethe-Institut Indonesia. The core project team consisted of in-house staff of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia, the game development studio *Nightspade* (Bandung, Indonesia) and the German studios *kunst-stoff GmbH* and *the Good Evil GmbH*, as well as an external project manager for Germany and Indonesia.

In cooperation with the project partner *Stiftung Digitale Spielkultur* (Digital Games Culture Foundation), the Goethe-Institut hand-picked the studios *kunst-stoff* from Berlin and *the Good Evil* from Cologne for the project. The open call to tender for the Indonesian game developers, who would shoulder the main development workload, was made public in June 2016. Eight Indonesian development studios applied.

After examining the submitted applications, a jury consisting of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia staff and external experts awarded the tender to the *Nightspade* studio from Bandung to participate in the *Ayo Jerman* project. The jury deliberately selected a studio that had comparatively little experience with transnational project work.

The studios

kunst-stoff GmbH

The Berlin company *kunst-stoff* is an independent game developer and producer of games, interactive installations, gamification, serious games as well as virtual and augmented reality. The studio currently has sixteen employees and covers a wide range of competence fields. *kunst-stoff* has won the German Developer Award and the German Computer Game Award several times in recent years. The awards cover, among other things, educational games for target groups comparable to that of the *Ayo Jerman* project.

the Good Evil GmbH

the Good Evil GmbH is an independent game studio specialising in the design and development of digital educational games and serious games. In 2013 the studio was the winner of the competition Cultural and Creative Pilots Germany of the Culture and Creative Industries Initiative of the federal government. In 2014 the studio's language learning game *Squirrel & Bär* received the German Developer Award, and in 2015 it was nominated for the German Computer Game prize as the best children's game. For the Goethe-Institut Moscow, *the Good Evil* studio developed an application with four mini-games concerned with environmental topics for learning German.

Nightspade

Founded by Garibaldi Wibowo Mukti and Teddy Pandu Wirawan in Bandung on the Indonesian island of Java, the *Nightspade* studio has been developing games for mobile platforms such as Apple's iPhone and iPad as well as Android smartphones and tablets since 2010. In recent years the *Nightspade* team developed the video games *Nuclear Outrun*, *Give a Damn* and *Mad Warrior* amongst others. Thanks to the partnership with the Goethe-Institut Indonesia, *Nightspade* gained experience for the first time in the development of educational games.

Initiation workshop

The initiation workshop in August 2016 marked the start of work on the development of the gaming app; it took place 1–5 August 2016 at the Goethe-Institut Bandung. Joining the game

developers in the workshop were staff and teachers of the Goethe-Institut as well as Indonesians learning German, who represented the target group.

In the course of the workshop, ideas were collected for an educational game whose purpose was to convey information about Germany, its culture and its language to a young Indonesian target group. The collected ideas formed the basis for developing a concept for a game entitled *JERMANIA* (derived from the Indonesian word 'jerman' for Germany and the ancient Greek word *maniā* for madness). These ideas were then compiled in a game development document to serve as a blueprint for subsequent development work.



The game development document stipulates that players of *JERMANIA* can choose amongst various German cities on a virtual map of Germany and can then tour them virtually.

The following features were to be implemented in the game:

- Touring several German cities
- Interaction and information by taking photos
- Interaction and information by playing mini-games
- Interaction and information by virtually entering buildings (e.g. museum, opera house, library)

All participating stakeholders considered the workshop a quite successful and constructive event by triggering the decisive impetus for launching the development of *JERMANIA*. In particular, the fact that the game developers from Indonesia and Germany as well as the in-house project team could meet face-to-face was commended and identified as a key factor in the success of the project. The kick-off workshop, follow-up workshops and test plays provided direct input from the target group. The feedback was remarkably honest and thus extremely useful during the development process of the game.

Study trip

Garibaldi Wibowo Mukti and Teddy Pandu Wirawan from *Nightspade* visited Germany from 31 October to 7 November 2016 for the Creative Gaming Festival Play16 in Hamburg. At Play16 the Indonesian game designers met with like-minded peers from all over the world and presented the current development status of *JERMANIA* to an international audience of professionals. They also gained first-hand personal impressions of Germany which they could incorporate into the development work after returning to Indonesia.

Test plays

On 9 December 2016, another focus group workshop took place in the Goethe-Institut library in Bandung. The workshop was attended by the developers of *Nightspade* as well as the teachers and students who had participated in the first workshop in August. The developers first reported the current development status of the game to the participants, who then formed groups to play *JERMANIA* on an Android tablet. Each group was accompanied by a member of the *Nightspade* development team. The developers observed the reactions of the workshop participants to the individual elements of the game and documented the feedback. Afterwards, impressions were shared and discussed amongst all participants, developers and the project management.



About a month before completion and release of *JERMANIA*, another play test with the target group was conducted in the library of the Goethe-Institut Bandung. As an event frame, 4 February was selected as game day. On game days once a month, German language learners and others who may be interested gather at the library to play social games and speak German with each other. The students were able to play the latest version of *JERMANIA* while their responses to the game were observed and documented by the *Nightspade* developers. The development of the game was finally completed by the launch date on 22 March 2017.

Conclusion and lessons learned

With the implementation of the *Ayo Jerman* project and the development of *JERMANIA*, the Information & Library section of the Goethe-Institut Indonesia successfully presented itself as an institution that promotes modern forms of cultural and creative industries in Indonesia. In doing so, the Goethe-Institut network could be extended within the industry. Further, up-and-coming game designers from Indonesia were given the opportunity to work in a larger international project collaboration and to network with colleagues in the industry from Germany. The project thus marks the preliminary highlight of a development that was accompanied by the already mentioned introductory projects *Game Mixer*, *Games and Politics* and *Art Games*, all of which will continue to be valued in the libraries of the Goethe-Institute in Jakarta and Bandung.

The kick-off workshop was expressly praised by all participants and considered a successful project platform. Focusing on the target group proved to be a key factor in the success of the project. *JERMANIA* could thus be geared to the needs of those who would later play it. The feedback from the target group provided by further test workshops gave the *Nightspade*

developers the decisive impetus for completing development work. In retrospect, both the Indonesian and German developers credit the integration of the focus group as an innovative component of the entire project.

Crucial for the success of the project was also that many of the stakeholders already had experience in project management and could inject their competence into the project. In addition, the German and Indonesian game designers applied their expertise from project management of games development. This compensated for the library team's lack of competence in this area, hence making it possible to maintain the very ambitious project timetable.

In addition to their hand in project coordination, the involvement of the German developers proved to be especially advantageous during the initiation workshop: Linda Kruse and Moritz Lehr were able to ensure that a realistic and current image of Germany was integrated into the design of the game.

It should be mentioned at this point that despite the overall very good communication, personal meetings between project stakeholders cannot be fully replaced by virtual meetings. In hindsight it would have been a good idea to arrange additional meetings between the Indonesian and German game designers in the course of the development phase. Due to financial resource restraints, however, this was not possible.

There were some difficulties during the development process in acquiring the licences necessary to use picture and music content. The procurement of licences should not be underestimated: it is a time consuming and resource intensive process. Licences were also granted only to a limited extent, which ultimately meant that *JERMANIA* was allowed to be published for the present only in Indonesia. For the future it should be taken into account that the acquisition of licences with the goal of releasing a game worldwide requires greater financial flexibility and increased personnel workload than originally planned.