

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Video games are considered as part of entertainment industry and the advancement of the world gaming industry in Indonesia proceeds to advance very quickly. Based on that survey conducted by Newzoo (2015), the result shows that the market estimate of the entertainment industry in Indonesia itself has reached USD 181 billion. Video games are offering a gaming experience presented within the frame of a play concept or we can call it as a gameplay and narrative substances (story, plot, situation, etc.), especially in the role-playing video game genre. Role-Playing Game is a genre where players are placed in a role (role), and with this role, the player will be exposed to the story scenario (narrative) and various assignments given by video games based on role-playing games. Barton (2008) noted playing an RPG may at least be seen in two important things, namely exploration-oriented or assignment-oriented (goal-oriented, example: quest, achievement). Then, a game player will interact with the game system, this interaction is called Game-playing, Game-Playing is considered as a process of solving problems (quest/goal) with the player is as a problem solver, so the player will be confronted by interactions to complete goals such as defeating monsters or completing challenges/quests (Choi and Kim, 2004).

One of the most salient elements in RPG is the characteristic of the avatar. How it defines in the games is how users are represented, which means that the

user representation in game defines by the user character or we familiar with the term “avatar”. The players create an “avatar”, a virtual figure fabricated by the users to expect their identity to the virtual world. Avatar is a visual representation of the user, a “tangible” embodiment of their identity (Ducheneaut et al., 2009) in their journals entitled “Body and Mind: A Study of the Avatar in Three Virtual Worlds”. For some players, the avatar becomes the project of the idealizations of their own identity, while for others, the avatar is an experiment with new identities (Yee, n.d.). Players are free to customize their avatars to represent themselves in the virtual world. Based on their various perspective projection it will formulate a thousand unique avatars only in a single game so the writer made his mind to explore more about this customization based on the gender perspective (male and female).

Male and female have unique projections or idealizations of an avatar creation in the virtual world, while in the virtual world there are so many female’s avatar rather than a male avatar. Yee (2006) claims that the most pragmatic reason that female avatar treated better and more likely to receive gifts and help from other players (who are mostly men). In other words, men gain a functional advantage when they gender-bend whereas women lose that advantage. According to the writer's experience of playing an RPG, almost in every game which has a role-play gameplay, the avatar itself is so fascinating. When the writer selects beauty and outstanding female avatar and has a further customization the avatar into the next level beauty, it is somehow more interesting than customizing the male avatar.

In almost every RPGs based platform players need to create their unique avatar to support their idealization of the virtual world. In this case, whether men or women have their style of character creation, many aspects affect this character creation based on their fantasies and emotions, depending on the relationship between the player and their in-game avatar. Then, in-game characters can be categorized as an “image” so it can influence the player’s existence and his/her development of life, even more, the gender role plays an actual meaning to the player experience in the virtual world.

The writer sees that gender plays an important role in RPGs and it influences the player’s choice in character creation. Using *Fallout 3* as an object, the writer will find out the customization of the female or male avatar character creation. There are reasons that influence the female and male players for customizing their characters.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of the study is pop culture and gender studies which will be particularly focused on character creation in virtual world RPG genre.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the RPG character creation especially the customization of the female and male avatar based on the gender roles in the virtual world of *Fallout 3* by the players.

1.4 Problem Formulation

This research has purposes to answer these following questions:

1. What are the players’ reasons for choosing the avatar in *Fallout 3*?

2. What are the differences between male and female players in choosing the avatar in *Fallout 3*?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Concerning the problems mentioned above, this research is conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the reasons the players of *Fallout 3* choose their avatars.
2. To find out whether males or females make a difference in the choice of avatars in *Fallout 3*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research makes connections between the gender roles of the players and the Avatar formulation in *Fallout 3*. Hopefully, this research will provide information on how gender is connected to the virtual world, in this case, is avatar creation.

1.7 Definition of Terms

A. Gender

Generally, Gender roles parts in society imply how people are anticipated to act, talk, dress, prep, and conduct themselves based upon their sex. For illustration, young ladies and ladies are for the most part anticipated to dress in ordinarily ladylike ways and be courteous, pleasing, and sustaining. Men are generally expected to be solid, forceful, and bold. Gender roles are “shared cultural expectations that are placed on individuals on the basis of their socially defined gender” (Williams et al., 2009).

Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role desires, but they can be exceptionally distinctive from group to group. They can moreover alter within the same society over time. For case, pink was utilized to be considered a manly color within the U.S. whereas blue was considered ladylike or feminine (Frassanito, 2008, as cited in Young, 2018).

B. Avatars

In general, an avatar can be associated with the image that represents a personal perspective in such a virtual world. The avatar is the link between the player of the game and the virtual game world (Friedberg, 2015). Similar to established, or playable, video game characters, the player is able to control the avatar within the game world. Lim and Harrell (2015) defined avatars to be “associated with a player’s virtual representation through characters” (p. 1). The difference between playable characters and avatars is that the player customizes avatars before the game starts. Since the avatar represents the player’s role and perspective in the game’s narrative, the avatar’s demeanor could become a factor in how that player behaves in that virtual world (Friedberg, 2015).