

VISUAL AVATAR IDENTIFICATION ON ONLINE GAME PLAYERS

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Abstract: There are many game system features in an online game and one of them is the avatar system. Avatar here is a system in the game, that gives player on the game an opportunity to dress up visual of their character according to what they want. Avatar has various types and forms that can be choose. This research aims to learn what kind of visual design avatar is preferred by online game players, which will provide an overview for game designers to create avatars in the game. This study uses a virtual ethnographic method that is connected with dramaturgical theory, how a person plays a role in the world of online games by using this avatar system. The results showed that avatars with style that match in real life are still more in demand than avatars with shapes that tend to be unique. Even though sometimes game players play different roles in the game world, they still tend to dress up their characters with visuals that match their style in real life in terms of avatar.

Keywords: Avatar, visual, character, online game

Abstrak: Game online memiliki begitu banyak fitur dan sistem dalam permainannya, salah satunya ada yang dinamakan dengan sistem avatar. Avatar di sini adalah sebuah sistem, yang memberikan kesempatan kepada pemain di dalam game untuk mendandani tampilan karakter gamenya sesuai dengan keinginannya. Avatar memiliki berbagai jenis dan bentuk yang dapat dipilih oleh pemain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari tampilan visual avatar seperti apa yang disukai oleh para pemain game online, sehingga memberikan gambaran bagi desainer game untuk membuat desain visual dari avatar di dalam game. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode etnografi virtual yang dihubungkan dengan teori dramaturgi, untuk mengungkapkan bagaimana seseorang memainkan peran dalam dunia game online dengan menggunakan sistem avatar ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa desain avatar dengan tampilan yang sesuai dengan kehidupan nyata masih lebih diminati dibandingkan avatar dengan bentuk yang cenderung unik. Meskipun terkadang pemain game memainkan peran berbeda di dunia game, mereka tetap cenderung mendandani karakternya agar sesuai dengan gayanya di kehidupan nyata dalam hal pemilihan avatar.

Kata kunci: Avatar, visual, karakter, game online

1. Introduction

Avatar is a system of dressing up a character in the online game. In the context of gaming in general, an avatar is defined as a visual representation of players in the virtual game environment (Carter, Gibbs, & Arnold, 2012). Avatar customization also allows a player to project their real or ideal self into an avatar (Donovon & Cokki, 2022). Almost all of online games have this avatar system, which sometimes players are free to choose what kind of avatar they want to wear of their game character, but some are determined by the game itself. (Kristanto, 2018). Game players will identify themselves with their avatars so they will feel there interest in the avatar (You, Kim, & Lee, 2017). Ayodance audition was chosen as the online game to be studied, because this game has a complex avatar system. Players have complete freedom to dress their character's avatar from head to toe. Avatars can provide expressive freedom through an anonymous and static online presence. When creating an avatar, users need to be clever to design a unique representation even if ready-made options are available (Morgan, O'Donovan,

Almeida, Lin, & Perry, 2020). Apart from that, Audition Ayodance was chosen because this online game is one of the oldest online games which entered the Indonesian game market, that has been able to survive until now, where many other online games with the same genre have closed down because it's no longer popular.



Figure 1. Avatar preview on Audition Ayodance

Avatar in the online game Audition Ayodance has so many various types that players can choose. Presenting so many choices of avatars in shopping malls makes players happy to explore and experiment with their characters (Mustikasari & Wardani, 2023). The avatars in the Audition Ayodance game are divided into 2 types, the types of this avatar divided based on the currency in how the avatar can be purchased in the game. There are 2 types of currency in the game that are den and mi-cash. Den is ingame money which can be obtained in the game everytime we finished play the game with another player. Another one is mi-cash that can be obtained by purcased with real money and we can get mi-cash after submitted the voucher code in our game account. Mi—cash avatar has more types and forms compared to Den avatar, thats why player prefer to buy Mi-cash avatar even if it means they have to spend real money to buy virtual goods. Player games are more likely to have boosts or motivation to participate in purchasing virtual goods in games for reasons practicality of the virtual goods themselves and not really considering aspects economics of the purchases made (Miriam Destianti & Irwansyah, 2020).



Figure 2. Audition Ayodance's shopping mall

Avatar can be purchased from shopping mall in the game. Shopping mall also can be used to dress up the game character. Shopping mall provides all of the avatars from head to toe that can be purchased if we have enough balance. Every avatars item has different prices and types. Avatar also divided for girl character and boy character which we cannot wear the avatar if it is not the same as the gender of the character we are using.

The various avatars presented in shopping malls have various shapes and types. There are avatars that have the same visuals as clothes that are often worn every day, official and elegant avatars that are often used for important events such as parties and others. However, with so many choices, many avatars end up being less popular than other avatars. Every month less popular avatars are given a 30% discount on purchases.

In researching avatars in this game, the ethnographic method will be used, a method where research is carried out by immersing directly into the environment to understand the meaning and actions of people in the environment that you want to research, where in this study the environment is the online game Audition Ayodance itself. The purpose of ethnography is to understand the point of view of the indigenous people, related to life, to get their views about their world (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Ethnography is often applied to collect empirical data about human society and culture. Data collection is usually done through participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc. An ethnographer researcher can be analogous to a forest explorer. The main goal of the explorer is not to find something in the forest but to make a description of an area of the forest (Emzir, 2017).

Avatars that are not very popular will ultimately only fill shopping malls which will impact the size of the game itself. With every update every month, the size of the game becomes bigger and bigger and harder to run. Because of that, it is necessary to identify what kind of avatar visual design is liked by players, so that creating the avatar game is not in vain and can be of interest to the game players.

2. Method

Ethnographic method will be use in the process of collecting data. The steps carried out using the ethnographic method are beginning with determining informants, interviewing informants, making ethnographic notes, and asking descriptive questions (Spradley, 2006). After conducting the interviews, the next stage is carried out, namely analysis of the data that has been obtained by organizing the files, then reading all the information and coding it, describing the social settings and events studied, interpreting the findings, and then presenting a narrative presentation in the form of tables, pictures or descriptions (Creswell, 2018).

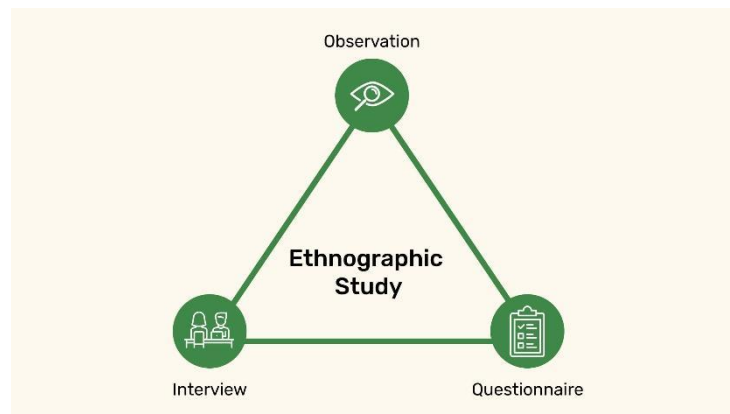


Figure 3. Ethnographic method

Collecting data start with observation and identifying the avatar through the shopping mall in the game. The identification process will be limited to in-game avatars and does not discuss other systems in the Ayodance Audition game. Furthermore, based on the results of this identification, questionnaire will be conducted with the Ayodance players, taking several respondents from player which is not limited by the player's level, because the level in the Audition Ayodance game has no effect to the gameplay. The questions that will be asked are limited to the avatar feature only. About how they choose the visual appearance of the avatar will be the main topic from the question itself.

After the first interview identified, then continued with a more in-depth interview regarding character avatar selection in the game. Through this interview, it is hoped that it can produce more accurate data regarding how players choose avatars through their visual appearance in the game. Interview result will will be examined from that perspective using Dramaturgical theory. Dramaturgy is a theory that explains that social interactions are interpreted the same way with theatrical performances or drama on stage. Humans are actors who make efforts to convey personal characteristics and goals to others, through performance the drama itself (Widodo, 2010). Dramaturgy used to see how far a game player plays his role in the online game world through the form visual of an avatar.





3. Results dan Discussion

3.1 Avatar classes

The data obtained by the players is known to have a division of classes based on the avatar used by the character. The terms HC and SHC appear, HC is High Class, which means players who use avatars with prices of 6800 and above (for 1 week), SHC, namely Super High Class, which are players with avatars that cost 10,000 and above (for 1 week). There are also players who use the mi-cash fashion avatar at a standard price (3000-5000 for 1 week), players like this are players with the usual class. Meanwhile, players who use fashion den avatars are

often referred to as aliens. The term Alien also applies to players who often chat in unclear languages and topics. Usually these aliens are new players who don't understand the game as a whole. This class division appears and is agreed between players itself. From the publisher and developer Audition Ayodance, there has never been a division of this classes.

Table 1. Players classes by avatar

	Avatar display	Avatar price in total															
Alien		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Shaggy Blue</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>20,000 Den</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heart Black Shirt</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>198,000 Den</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hot Pants</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>150,000 Den</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gypsy Red Shoes</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>150,000 Den</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: right;">Total Den(4) : 518,000 Den</td> </tr> </table>	Shaggy Blue	Permanen	20,000 Den	Heart Black Shirt	Permanen	198,000 Den	Hot Pants	Permanen	150,000 Den	Gypsy Red Shoes	Permanen	150,000 Den	Total Den(4) : 518,000 Den		
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Standart		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Lita Style</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>28,200 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dark Heroine Ears</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>18,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avril Style Top</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>31,800 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black Dress Bottom</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>18,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: right;">Total Cash(4) : 96,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> </table>	Lita Style	Permanen	28,200 MI-Cash	Dark Heroine Ears	Permanen	18,000 MI-Cash	Avril Style Top	Permanen	31,800 MI-Cash	Black Dress Bottom	Permanen	18,000 MI-Cash	Total Cash(4) : 96,000 MI-Cash		
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SHC		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Super Pink Candy Girl</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>360,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shy Eyes</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>28,200 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Super Pink Candy Sho</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>360,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Super Pink Candy Dre</td> <td>Permanen</td> <td>360,000 MI-Cash</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: right;">Total Cash(5) : 1,162,200 MI-Cash</td> </tr> </table>	Super Pink Candy Girl	Permanen	360,000 MI-Cash	Shy Eyes	Permanen	28,200 MI-Cash	Super Pink Candy Sho	Permanen	360,000 MI-Cash	Super Pink Candy Dre	Permanen	360,000 MI-Cash	Total Cash(5) : 1,162,200 MI-Cash		
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3.2 Avatar identification

Analysis of the avatar then continued by distributing questionnaires to players at various levels. The questions given in the questionnaire are how the game player looks in the real world and how his avatar looks in the online game. The analysis of avatars is reviewed in terms of the visual appearance of the avatar itself. Such as the casual/trendy/simple fashion appearance and so on as well as the tendency for neat/messy/simple avatar displays, and others. The results are then compared, whether their performance in the real world and in the game world is the same or the opposite which are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. How player choose their avatar

Player	Real Life	Game Life	Comparison
Achel (advanced Lv.37)	Simple, Casual	Elegant, Trendy	contrary to real life
Alex (senior Lv.61)	Casual, Trendy	Casual	the same as real life
Andri (top Lv.90)	Random	Cool, Keren	contrary to real life
Ardiansyah (senior Lv.65)	Simple, Casual	Elegant, Trendy	contrary to real life
Ari (senior Lv.64)	Neat, Casual	Neat, Casual	the same as real life
Ario (top Lv.96)	Casual	Simple, Casual	the same as real life
Asriani (newbie Lv.5)	Hijab, Simple	Simple, Unique	contrary to real life
Azizah (senior Lv.71)	Feminim, Elegant	Simple, Elegant	the same as real life
Celly (senior Lv.73)	Sexy, Trendi, Elegant	Sexy, Trendy	the same as real life
Chenna (advanced Lv.43)	Simple, Cute	Cute	the same as real life
Chila (newbie Lv.5)	Simple, Cute	Imut, Sexy	the same as real life
Cyintia (intermediated Lv.10)	Simple, Cute	Cute	the same as real life
Devie (top Lv.99)	Modis, Elegant	Elegant, Trendy	the same as real life
Fang (top Lv.99)	Sexy, Fashionable	Elegant, Fashionable	the same as real life
Fathia (advanced Lv.54)	Hijab, Tomboy	Sexy, Elegant	contrary to real life
Ferry (senior Lv.81)	Neat, Formal	Suit, Formal	the same as real life
Han (top Lv.91)	Simple, Elegant	Simple, Elegant	the same as real life
Ilham (senior Lv.62)	Simple	New, Simple	the same as real life

Intan (advanced Lv.40)	Feminin, Simple	Tomboy, Casual	contrary to real life
Laura (intermediated Lv.28)	Hijab, Modis	Sexy	contrary to real life
Mega (top Lv.96)	Simple, Casual	Cute, Sexy	contrary to real life
Merry (senior Lv.62)	Tomboy, Casual	Casual, Simple	the same as real life
Naira (senior Lv.67)	Simple, Trendy	Elegant, Sexy	contrary to real life
Raymond (top Lv.99)	Luxury, Elegant	Elegant	the same as real life
Revalina (intermediated Lv.6)	Simple, Cute	Cute, Sexy	the same as real life
Riyan (senior Lv.76)	Simple	Simple	the same as real life
Rizal (top Lv.91)	Simple, Casual	Simple, Casual	the same as real life
Siti (advanced Lv.31)	Casual, Simple, Tomboy	Simple, Casual	the same as real life
Selly (top Lv.91)	Cute, Sexy	Sexy, Feminin	the same as real life
Steven (intermediated Lv.28)	Simple, Casual	Polos, Simple, Casual	the same as real life
Susan (senior Lv.86)	Simple, Casual	Unique, Cute	contrary to real life
Xintia (newbie Lv.5)	Cute, Simple	Cute, Simple	the same as real life
Alvin (top Lv.96)	Simple, Casual	Casual, Trendy	the same as real life
Viani (newbie Lv.5)	Simple, Tomboy	Simple	the same as real life
Yesi (intermediated Lv.9)	Sexy, Dress	Simple, Cute	contrary to real life
Yosua (intermediated Lv.26)	Sporty, Trendy, Simple	Simple, Sporty, Trendy	the same as real life
Yovita (intermediated Lv.18)	Feminin, Sexy	Cute, Sexy	the same as real life
Xia (advanced Lv.41)	Simple, Sexy	Sexy, Cute	the same as real life

Yuliana (senior Lv.63)	Casual, Cute	Cute, Casual	the same as real life
Zahra (newbie Lv.5)	Hijab, Simple	Simple	the same as real life

The questionnaire data is then analyzed to compare the players' performances in the real world and the game world, the summary results of which are in the table below

Table 3. How player choose their avatar

No	Comparison	Players	percentage
1.	The same as real life	29	72.5 %
2.	contrary to real life	11	27.5 %
		40	100 %

Based from this data, then conduct more in-depth interviews with several players, with the aim of finding out the reasons for choosing visual avatars in the online game Audition Ayodance. The following are the results of in-depth interviews regarding the reasons for a player identifying himself as an A/B figure in the game, presented in the following table:

Table 4. How player choose their avatar

Reason to choose game avatar	
Raymond	<i>"I like items that are not marketable in games, and every time I play a game it's always totality, so I prefer items that look glamorous and elegant compared to ordinary casual items"</i>
Laura	<i>" Explore avatars freely in the game, because in the real world you can't dress up like the characters in the game"</i>
Ari	<i>"Before working as a security guard, I was used to the neat style, so I was carried into the game"</i>
Chila	<i>"Basically, I like cute fashion styles with mini skirts/hot pants, but because the hijab cannot be applied in the real world, game characters are created according to the preferred style"</i>
Xintia Lie	<i>"So that if you're on a small level, you use pretty Ava so you won't be mistaken for an alien"</i>
Han Tan	<i>"I'm carried away by style in real life, and basically don't like complicated things, so avatars in games tend to be simple like fashion in my real life"</i>
Icha	<i>"Like one that looks elegant, so it's not like most girls who like cute avatars"</i>
Ferry	<i>"Because it looks cooler and even in real fashion that is used like that, so in the game it also carries over"</i>
Steven	<i>"Prefer ava that fits personality in real, doesn't really like weird things, prefers plain ones"</i>
Ilham	<i>"Avatars in games that are current like in the real world, simple and not ridiculous"</i>
Xin	<i>"So far, I like avatars, which are cute and cheap, of course, especially when there are discounts"</i>
Susan	<i>"Like cute and unique avatars, which are definitely nice to look at, even though they are far from real life"</i>
Andri	<i>"No special reason, just random in choosing an avatar"</i>
Gio	<i>"I like avatar which is simple and not alay, more likely to look like real life make-up"</i>
Ryan	<i>"Like simple things, don't really like complicated ones, like makeup in real life which is also simple"</i>
Zahra	<i>"Like cute and funny avatars, especially those that can't be used in real life"</i>
Yuanita	<i>"Already like cute items, so in real and in games I always wear an avatar like that"</i>

Judging from dramaturgical theory, online game players are not like players in the world of the drama stage where they play very different roles between the front stage and back stage. In the game world players have a tendency to identify their own character in the avatar display according to how the avatar (appearance) in their real life. There are times when someone actually plays their back stage and the front stage which are very much different and even contradictory when the player is in the game world and in real life, but this is more for special

reasons, such as players who in real life wear hijab, so only in games they can explore wearing sexy clothes and so on.

The factor of "inability" to use make-up in real life is one of the factors that supports how a person identifies himself by freely exploring his game character avatar. However, for players who can dress up freely (without being bound by religious issues, etc.), their game life style is sometimes similar to their real life. Therefore, the visual appearance of an avatar with a style that is similar to clothing in everyday life is much more popular than an avatar with an unusual model.

4. Conclusion And Recommendations

In the Ayodance Audition game, online game players are not like players in world stage plays where they play very different roles between the front stage and back stage, in the game world players tend to identify their own character in the avatar display according to how their avatar (appearance) is in real life. There are times when someone actually plays the back stage and the front stage which are very much different and even contradictory when the player is in the game world and in real life, but this is more for special reasons, such as players who in real life wear headscarves, so only in games they can explore wearing minimal clothing and so on

Factors that affect a player in identifying his character include real life factors, avatar exploration that cannot be used in real life, the price of the avatar, the uniqueness of the avatar itself, the avatar that is different from other players, the avatar style that is current, the habit of using the avatar and the ratings from other players. Therefore, suggestions for first-time game makers in creating game avatars, styles with simple clothing models and are widely used in real life will be more in demand by players. although maybe an avatar that looks unique will be more interesting, but in reality, most players prefer to use an avatar that is similar to themselves in real life. Avatars with casual clothes, jeans, shirts, and other everyday clothes are more in demand by the players.

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