CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Video games are a form of entertainment media, but as time has progressed, they have been created to convey the game creator's message to players about their thoughts. Nowadays video games contain the thoughts of their creators, which can take the form of propaganda, historical narratives, and ideologies. This message is expressed in video games through stories and characters that represent something (Kumoro, 2017). Furthermore, according to Faulkner & Lie (2007) in (Prescott, 2014, p. 99). video games designers who are usually young or middle-aged men when designing for girls/women they tend to build on stereotypical females or females they view aesthetically pleasing.

The presence of female in the media such as video games has created specific images of female, and the media's role in shaping the general perception of female is significant, often resulting in various stereotypes. Female characters in video games are portrayed as supplementary elements or to pique the players' interest, female characters are frequently depicted with large breasts and wearing tight or revealing clothing, emphasizing their body forms in a sensual way (Kumoro, 2017).

Due to this issue, research on female character representation has been conducted by Kondrat (2015) undertook an analysis of female gender representation across various video game genres by surveying both game

players and professionals in game design. Similarly, Fisher (2015) investigated the representation of women in six video game magazines. Furthermore, Ginting, Zein, and Perangin-Angin (2022) conducted a comprehensive analysis of female characters, Ellie and Abby, within the game 'The Last of Us Part II. Based on the previous research, there are several differences with this research, this research focused on League of Legends (Wild Rift), a multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game and This research specifically employs Roland Barthes's semiotic theory focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth that are associated with the representation of females.

Semiotics plays a crucial role in understanding the messages conveyed within video games, encompassing both visual and verbal signs. Semiotics is the study of signs and how they carry specific meanings. According to (Seiter, 1992, p. 31) it encompasses a wide range of elements that can be translated into language, including images, traffic signs, letters, flowers, music, medical symptoms, and more. Roland Barthes, a renowned figure in semiotics, is often associated with both structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, following in the footsteps of Saussure. His semiotic theory, referred to as signification theory, relies on two significant processes to generate denotative and connotative meanings.

Denotation is the straightforward, literal meaning of a sign, such as a visual image, which is universally understood without considering cultural, ideological, or societal influences. (Bouzida, 2014, p. 1005). On the other hand, connotation involves a more complex system that adds extra layers of meaning

to the initial sign. It utilizes the first sign (signifier and signified) as its basis and attaches additional meanings or signified concepts to it. (Seiter, 1992, p. 39). According to (Barthes, 1972, p. 107) the terms of myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. What defines myth is not the content of its message but the way it delivers that message.

The researcher has selected League of Legends (Wild Rift) a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game released in 2020 by Riot Games as the object of this research for being popular free-to-play game has been installed on more than 48 million smartphones worldwide (Nur Sabilly et.al, 2023), it holds substantial influence within the gaming community. The representations of female characters in video games have significant implications, contributing to the shaping of societal perceptions and stereotypes about female. Video games, including League of Legends (Wild Rift), often depict female characters in ways that reinforce traditional gender norms, emphasizing physical appearance. Therefore, this research employs Roland Barthes' semiotics model, specifically denotation, connotation, and the concept of myth, to analyze the meanings embedded within the visual and verbal signs from chooses female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift).

B. Problem Formulation

1. What is the denotation and connotation meaning of verbal and visual sign from the two female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift)?

2. What is the myth of the verbal and visual sign from the two female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift)?

C. **Objective of the Study**

1. To analyze the denotation and connotation meaning of verbal and visual signs from the two female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift)

2. To analyze the myth of the verbal and visual signs from the two female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift)

D. **Scope of the Study**

This research focus on how female represented through game characters and their skins. The analysis in this research includes signs that represent how female represented. This study only analyzes two female characters with the most skins in League of legends (Wild Rift). The researcher only took data in the form of verbal and visual signs, which included written language, gestures, pictures and expression, which were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

E. **Review of Related Studies**

The first previous research on female characters representation which was conducted by Kondrat Xeniya (2015) discussed "Gender and video games: How is female gender generally represented in various genres of video games?" which aims to This research focuses on the current representation of female gender in video games and how they are represented, stereotyped and used as characters in games. The study utilizes

a Mixed Method approach, employing player questionnaires and interviews with game design professionals, while drawing from theories like Cultivation Theory, Gratification Theory, and Feminist Theory. The findings reveal persistent negative stereotypes associated with female characters in video games. However, the responses from survey participants also indicate that the gaming audience is seeking enhancements in both female and male character representation.

The second research was conducted by Rahmadani Fahmi Reza, Tandyonomanu Danang (2020), discussed the women representation characters in a quite popular online Game, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. This research aims to review how the representation of women from characters called heroes in the game Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. This research used qualitative descriptive approach. This research analyzes five heroes that are often used in the fighter, marksman, assassin, and tank roles using the semiotic method theory proposed by Roland Barthes. This research found that the representation of women after being analysed through their visual design is represented as a figure who does things done by men and still thinking about masculinity and femininity simultaneously by the Roles they have.

The third research that was conducted by Fakhri Rafi Zikrul, Prasetio (2022). Discussed representation of female characters in the Genshin Impact game which aims to know the representation of sensuality and the meaning of sensuality. This research used critical paradigm Method

to analyze Three female characters that represent sensuality using the theory proposed by Roland Barthes semiotics. This research found that in denotation step, this game wants to attract player by showing tight clothing as a charm. In connotation step this game purpose is to attract player by showing tight clothing as a charming. In myth step this study found that the purpose of the sensuality that showed in Genshin Impact as an addiction for the player so the player feels comfortable when playing Genshin Impact so players will spend their money for the character they wanted.

The fourth research that was conducted by Yuwono Ardian Indro (2022) discussed Women's representation in Dead or Alive 6 which aims to understand how female characters are represented in Dead or Alive 6. This research used descriptive analysis Method to analyze screenshot of 4 female characters in the game using the theory proposed by Roland Barthes semiotics This research found that for the result, from four picked characters, Kasumi, Honoka, Marie Rose, and Momiji represent signs of sexualization such as their fashion, innocence, legal character but looks like an underage, or a paradox between sacredness and taboo.

The fifth research that was conducted by Ginting Riza Fahlevi, Zein T. Thyrhaya, Perangin-Angin Alemina BR (2022). Discussed women masculinity in video game The Last of Us Part II which aim to s to interpret the signs of semiotics in the videogame which reflect the values of female masculinity initiated by Judith Halberstam (1998). This research used qualitative descriptive approach to produce explanations and descriptions of

the research data. The data of this research were in the form of visual signs which are the pictures of game scenes and verbal signs which are the characters dialogues which is focused into 12 data, using the theory proposed by Roland Barthes' (1977) semiotics theory. This research discovered that the two characters examined, Ellie and Abby, embody multiple aspects of the five categories of female masculinity outlined by Judith Halberstam, which include Butch Realness, Femme Pretender, Male Mimicry, Fag Drag, and Denaturalized Masculinity. They manifest these categories through visual and verbal cues within video games, encompassing aspects like appearance, behavior, identity, culture, and ideology related to female masculinity.

The last research that was conducted by Kurniawan Muhammad Hafiz, Gunawan Wawan, and Sudana Danang (2023). Discussed about the portrayal of female characters in three popular video games, specifically focusing on the use of both visual and verbal data. The verbal data consisted of 470 instances, while the visual data included 294 visuals featuring four characters from three games: Quiet in MGSVTPP, Ora in MOTN, and Sakura and Hinata in NUNS4. The analysis was conducted using Haliday's Social Semiotics and the techniques proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen to study visual semiotic elements. The research discovered that the leading female characters were often depicted wearing revealing and provocative clothing, despite possessing the ability to influence the main character.

Based from the previous research above, there are several differences with this research, first this research is focused on League of Legends (Wild Rift), a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game, while some from previous research above also uses theories like feminist, and masculinity or using different semiotic models, Although the second research also used the theory of Ronald Barthes on the same genre type of game which is (MOBA) it only reached the denotation and connotation, not the myth, while this research specifically employs Roland Bartes semiotic theory that focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth associated with the representation of female characters in League of Legends (Wild Rift).

F. Method Of Research

The method of this research is qualitative. Creswell defines qualitative research as an approach that delves into exploring and comprehending the significance found within individuals or groups, as well as human issues within social contexts (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The qualitative design primarily centers on gathering data, analyzing it, and presenting the findings in alignment with the research process. The collected data then will be analyzed using Roland Barthes Semiotic theory. And employing sexism theory from Lynch et al. (2016) and adjusted criteria from Downs and Smith (2010) to analyze the sensuality of each character's skin by ranking every criteria that the character's skin meets on a scale from 1 to 3; 1) Low: clothing that covers most of the body such as arms or neck, such as long-sleeved shirts, 2) Medium: clothing that covers half the body,

such as a sleeveless t-shirt or crop top, 3) High: clothing that shows a lot of skin, such as a tank top.

There are 3 main steps to gathering and analyzing data for this research. There are Data and Sources of data, Methods of collecting data, and Methods of analyzing data. The details are explained in the subheading as follows:

1. **Data and Source of Data**

   The main data for this research are 14 screenshot pictures and 14 sentences from skin descriptions or the costume variants of the female characters. These data were collected from the game itself League of Legends (Wild Rift). Book and journal article also chosen as supporting data of this research. From those supporting data, it will help the researcher to explain the objective of this research. Based the theory in this research that already discussed in book or journal article which have relation with the theory.

2. **Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

   According to Creswell (2007, pp. 129-144), various data collection methods, including interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials, are employed in research. Researchers also utilize different approaches to record information, such as interview or observational protocols. Therefore, the researcher followed these procedures to gather data.

a. The first step researcher chooses the game League of Legends (Wild Rift) as the main source of data.

b. The second step researcher played the game, and choosing two characters with the most skin, then taking screenshot to get the visual data, and taking note for verbal data from the skin descriptions in form of phrase or sentence.

c. The third step researcher taking the data sample includes verbal and visual data from those recorded play.

3. **Method and Technique of Analyzing Data**

According to Miles and Huberman (1984), as cited in Sugiyono (2013, p. 246), propose that qualitative data analysis involves an ongoing and interactive process until data saturation is achieved. This process comprises activities like data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/validating conclusions. In analyzing the collected data, the researcher uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to help understand the meaning of the sign, which is divided into denotation, connotation, and myth, the researcher will do the following steps:

a. First the researcher selects the female characters with the most skins

b. Second the collected pictures and the skins description of the two female characters and their skins are compiled into a table for presentation

c. Third each visual and verbal sign associated with the female characters is individually analyzed for Denotation and Connotation. The analysis involves identifying the direct representations (denotation) and the potential layered or implied meanings (connotation) behind the visuals and verbal data

d. And last steps, analyze the myths of each data by describing the cultural aspects that show the representation of women.

G. Significance of the Study

Through the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to the semiotic analysis, this research can assist students in comprehending how to analyze signs in video games. The findings of this study can help to clarify how females are portrayed in video games through signs. Using a semiotic theory other than Roland Barthes', this material can be utilized as a guide for future study by examining the signs on various things or issues.

H. Presentation

This undergraduate thesis has four chapters that have previously been subdivided. The first chapter is an introduction that includes the study's history, problem formulation, research objectives, scope of this research, review of related studies, research methodology, and presentation. The theoretical approach and framework are presented in the second chapter. The third chapter is finding and discussion, which

includes an explanation of the research aims as well as data from the findings. The fourth chapter offers a conclusion and recommendations to complete this investigation.