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Analysis of Character Design in Gacha Games through Manga Matrix Theory

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Abstract

Character design is the most important asset in Gacha Games because we can display complex implied messages in a fictional character in a visual form that is easier to understand. This research aims to determine what makes players want to get this character and whether character design can influence the interest value in a gacha game. This research was carried out using a comparative qualitative method by analyzing the characters through Mounsey's holistic character designs, which were visually deepened by dissecting the characters using three stages of the manga matrix: the Form Matrix, Costume Matrix, and Personality Matrix. The authors will select the character samples taken from different gacha games. The selection of character samples from different gacha games allows research conducted by researchers to reveal comparisons of variations in character designs from different games. Based on the results of the analysis above, it can be concluded that the abilities, design, or background of a character are factors that make players want to get that character. Apart from that, the attributes possessed by a character influence interest in a game. The third thing can influence whether a game is good or bad and attract the attention of players to play the gacha game.

Keywords: Design, Character, Game, Gacha.

Introduction

In this day and age, it is no stranger to hear about Gacha Games. Gacha games are games that apply a gacha mechanism, where players get an item at random. Gacha games cannot be separated from the visual appearance (in this case the characters) shown in the game itself. This visual appearance brings out an important element, namely the player's interest and focus on what is shown in the game itself. These elements create an experience that encourages players to continue playing until they are willing to spend money to get the character they want.

In Gacha Games, characters play unique roles in the game. This is a representation of the player as it happens in a virtual world full of adventures and challenges. Players can find different adventures and challenges at each level of the game. Game characters controlled by

players can be humans, animals, monsters, vehicles, and even robots. Some games today can also control and customize the character's appearance, attributes, and even the player's desired personality.

Character design is the most important asset in Gacha Games because we can display complex implied messages in a fictional character in a visual form that is easier to understand. Implied messages are shown through the characteristics possessed by the characters. A character must have characteristics that make him attractive (Waluyo & Patria, 2022). It can be seen from the various characters in the current Gacha Game, such as Arknights, Blue Archive, Honkai Impact, and Genshin Impact, which tend to highlight their unique qualities to attract players' interest.

Creating a character itself is divided into three matrix stages (Tyagi & Murfianti, 2021). The first stage is the Form Matrix, which is a matrix that describes the entire body shape of a character. The costume Matrix is the clothing and accessories used by the character, be it ornaments, the color of clothing, or the way of clothing worn by the character. Personality Matrix (Personality Matrix) is the traits possessed by a character, namely describing what the character's personality is like.

Currently, there is a lot of research on gacha games and character design in games. However, there is little research that specifically applies the Manga Matrix theory in analyzing character design in gacha games. Although the Manga Matrix theory has proven effective in analyzing character design elements in manga, its use in the context of gacha games has not been widely explored. Moreover, the gaming industry is always changing, and these changes influence the creation of character designs for these games (Febyanti et al., 2022). Research that focuses on character design trends in gacha games related to the Manga Matrix theory can help understand its evolution and influence. With the increasing popularity of gacha games, there is an urgency to better understand the factors that influence character design in this context. With the rapid change in trends in the gaming industry, research identifying character design trends in gacha games has the urgency to guide game developers and character designers.

Based on the background provided, the author wants to conduct research on the topic of Character Design Analysis in Gacha Games through Manga Matrix Theory. The author will collect data qualitatively through documentation studies. The author will collect primary data from game assets and secondary data from journals, books, articles, and assumptions obtained from the game community. After that, the author will analyze the results and strengthen them with manga matrix theory.

Literature Review

Research conducted by (Andelina, 2021) examined tower defense-based games using anthropomorphism techniques. The purpose of this research is to find out whether the use of anthropomorphism techniques can create characters with greater appeal and more love by the audience of tower defense-type games. The results of this research are that the story in the tower defense game is not the main factor that makes a character liked by players, but the factors of their usefulness and strength in missions and making the game level easier are factors why these characters become players' favorites.

Research conducted by (Andelina, 2020) examined the creation of character designs in IP Hypnosis Mic. This research aims to raise the popularity of hip-hop music culture, especially rap in Japan, by using one of the pop culture pieces that is popular in Japan, namely anime

music videos. This research was carried out using a descriptive qualitative method by dissecting character design holistically and then strengthening it with the theory of elements in creating character personality. The results of this research are that the use of holistic character design theory can make a design more attractive, and has the potential to be applied in creating any IP based on character design.

Research conducted by (Waluyo & Patria, 2022) examined the semiotics of character design in games. This research aims to learn more about the background of the characters in the game using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The technique used in this research is documentation to collect primary data and literature study to collect secondary data. The primary data used in this research is directly from the object under study. Meanwhile, the secondary data that will be used for this research was obtained using the literature study method through the following sources: journals, books, articles, as well as assumptions obtained from the player community of the game. The results of this research show that character design is the most important aspect in the development process of comics, animation, and video games and plays an important role in the process of considering whether a character is good or not by the audience of the media.

Research conducted by (Tyagi & Murfianti, 2021) examined the character design of Sri Asih in comics. This research aims to get to know Sri Asih more. The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method and three stages of creating a character in Hiroyoshi Tsukamoto's comic called Manga Matrix. The three stages consist of the Form Matrix, Costume Matrix, and Personality Matrix. The result of this research is that we can find out Sri Asih's body shape, clothes, and character traits in detail.

Research conducted by (Salamoon & Muljosumarto, 2020) examined visual colors in post-apocalyptic games. The research aims to find out whether giving color to an object can strengthen the character of that object or object. The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach using critical study methods with image-based research, namely researching and revealing visual images as the basis for research. The results of this research show that color plays an important role in telling the narrative of chaos, emptiness, damage, and gloomy discourse in a story with a post-apocalyptic theme.

In this research, the author will examine the three stages of creating a character in a comic from Hiroyoshi Tsukamoto which is called the Manga Matrix in research (Tyagi & Murfianti, 2021). Apart from that, the author will research the characters through documentation to collect primary data and secondary data through the game as done by (Waluyo & Patria, 2022). There is research using the Descriptive Qualitative method in research (Andelina, 2020; Salamoon & Muljosumarto, 2020) and the Anthropomorphism Technique in research (Andelina, 2021), which are used as references in this research.

Research Methods

This research was carried out using a comparative qualitative method by analyzing characters through Mounsey's holistic character designs, which were then visually deepened by dissecting the characters using a manga matrix (Andelina, 2021). In this research analysis, there are three parts to the matrix, namely the shape matrix, costume matrix, and personality matrix. The personality matrix will be dissected using a holistic character design approach, which explains the background of the character, character traits, audience, and the overall design of the character itself. Character design is closely related to two other matrices, namely the shape and costume matrices.

Character visuals will be analyzed more deeply based on the elements that form character traits. The character visuals that will be analyzed by the author are the appearance, accessories, color, and composition of a character. Deepened with an intertextuality approach, where the basic concept of a character will be linked to things (in the form of text) outside the visual character itself but still have a connection in concept, then the results will be compared with each other.

In research conducted by (Andelina, 2020) it is stated that there are four keys to creating a beloved character. The four keys are the story behind the character, the nature of the character, the audience, and the design of the character itself. When creating a unique character design, some elements form the personality of a character. These four elements are the character's expression, the accessories used by the character, the shape of the character, and the color composition used by the character.

The sample characters taken will be selected by the author, each from a different gacha game. The selection of sample characters from different gacha games allows research conducted by researchers to reveal comparative variations in character designs from different games. Through this research, this research can provide in-depth insight into how a character's design can influence players in playing gacha games.

This research was carried out using a comparative qualitative method by analyzing characters through Mounsey's holistic character designs, which were then visually deepened by dissecting the characters using a manga matrix, similar to (Andelina, 2021). The flow of this research can be seen in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: Comparative qualitative research flow
Source: Author

1. Variable identification

At this stage, the author will determine the variables or design elements that will be analyzed. This element includes aspects such as art style, design complexity, character expression, color, and other relevant visual elements.

2. Cases Selection

At this stage, the author will compare or select a selection of cases (in this case characters) to be collected and analyzed. Researchers will choose one character from two different gacha games. The first character is W who comes from the game Arknights, and Wanderer comes from the game Genshin Impact. The reason the author chose these two characters is because they are the characters the player fights against during the story, and they can then be played as the story progresses in their respective games. These two

characters have their uniqueness which makes them much sought after by players long before they were released as playable characters.

3. Data gathering

At this stage, the researcher will collect data on the two characters for analysis. Researchers will collect pictures of the two characters which will then be analyzed for their descriptions, backgrounds, personalities, and abilities.

4. Data codification

At this stage, the researcher will code the data that has been collected. A code can be analogous to a marker, and this marker usually tells a unit of meaning in one to two words (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). The code is in the form of accessories and personalities used by the two characters studied by the researcher.

5. Comparison analysis

At this stage, researchers will collect and compare character reports and compare one character with another (Dina Lathifa, 2021), as mapped by the manga matrix theory.

6. Theme development

In this stage, the researcher will develop themes that emerge through character comparisons carried out by the researcher. The intended theme is communicating with readers on an intellectual and emotional level (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). This theme reflects the influence of the Manga Matrix Theory on character design in gacha games.

7. Finding conclusion

In this stage, the author will conclude two character designs from different gacha games, and then provide information and opportunities for readers to briefly find out the final results of the research conducted by the researcher (Hanindita Basmatulhana, 2022). The author will identify elements that fit the Manga Matrix Theory and elements that need to be changed or improved in the character design.

8. Result report

In this stage, the researcher will present the results of the analysis in the form of a research report. The author also explains the results of research on the relationship between gacha game character design and Manga Matrix Theory.

Data Gathering

The technique used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method by conducting a documentation study, namely collecting primary data and secondary data. The primary data collected in this research comes from the object under study, namely gacha game assets collected from the game files. Meanwhile, secondary data in this research was obtained using the literature study method through journals, books, and articles, as well as assumptions obtained from the player community to support this research.

The objects that will be researched by the writer will be two characters. The two characters studied by the author each come from different gacha games. These objects are W from Arknight and Wanderer from Genshin Impact. These two characters are one of the

characters that players will fight against and can then play later according to the progress of the story in their respective games. Both characters have unique qualities that make them popular, even long before they can be played.

Results and Discussion

The objects that will be researched by the author will be two characters from different gacha games. These objects are W from Arknights and Wanderer from Genshin Impact. The following characters are analyzed by the author :

Character Analysis 1: W (Arknights)



Figure 2: W (Elite 0/1)

Source: <https://gamepress.gg/>



Figure 3: W (Elite 2)

Source: <https://gamepress.gg/>

W is a character from Arknights. She is a character who was born in Kazdel and has the Sarkaz tribe. W is a 6-star character who is included in the Sniper Artilleryman class and

specializes in providing high damage and crowd control to enemies in AOE (Luninareph, 2021). W is one of Sarkaz's mercenaries.

W's past is a little murky, she was born in Kazdel, a place full of war, and didn't know her real name. She took the W name when she took the previous W title as well as its equipment. After that, W then met W's previous comrades in arms, namely Ines and Hoederer. They then continued fighting in their city until they were finally overwhelmed and were saved by a Sarkaz queen named Theresa. They were then taken to their base called Babel to be given recovery. After that, Theresa offered them to work together long term. Ines and Hoederer rejected the offer which resulted in W parting ways with Ines and Hoederer. During her life in Babel, W's life changed drastically in that she had a purpose in life and established very good relationships with the people in Babel. However, the reality was very disappointing, one day the person he longed for, Theresa, died during the war. Theresa's death changed W's character very drastically, she became a sadist and a person full of revenge. While she was executing the person involved in Theresa's death, she reunited with her old colleagues, Ines and Hoederer when they approached her. They then reunite and discuss leaving their old city to do their work as mercenaries on Ursus. Upon arrival on Ursus, they joined Reunion, which several years later led to the start of the story in the game Arknights.

The costume analyzed for character W is her default costume. Overall, W's character design is dominated by red, black, and white. W has silver hair with a little dark gray in some parts of her hair and red eye lenses. On the side of her head, W has two antennae and two red horns, emphasizing that she is a Sarkaz. In terms of accessories, W wore a black scarf and a four-key chain hanging on the right shoulder of her black jacket. In the weapons she uses, W uses two of her modified weapons, namely the M320 Grenade Launcher Module, and the MK18 Close Quarters Battle Receiver (although she never uses it in the game). W also carries various kinds of explosives such as grenades, stun grenades, C4, and Remote Detonators which are shown in **Figure 2**.

Based on the background above, W has a crazy, heartless, and vengeful personality. It is seen that after Theresa's death, she killed enemies in a very sadistic way because she had a deep grudge against the people involved in Theresa's death. W is also a character who likes to speak bluntly in an unpleasant tone so that most of those around her don't like her (including after she rejoined Rhodes Island). Despite her nature, W is a very loyal person. This was caused by Theresa, the person who changed W's life for the better while she was still alive. This loyalty is what makes W continue to collaborate with Rhodes Island (the new name of the Babel organization) when she still plays the role of antagonist.



Figure 4: Character Tier W in the Arknights game

Source: <https://gamepress.gg/arknights/tier-list/arknights-operator-tier-list>

Character Analysis 2: Wanderer (Genshin Impact)



Figure 5: Wanderer

Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/deg5270/art/>

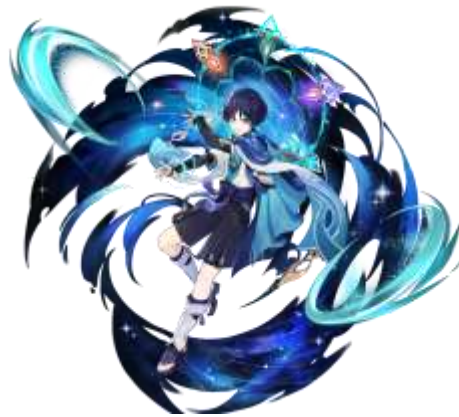


Figure 6: Wanderer (Gacha Splash Art)

Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/deg5270/art/>

Wanderer is one of the Anemo characters that can be played in Genshin Impact, armed with a Catalyst. Before he became a playable character, Wanderer was an antagonist who had many nicknames, including Kunikuzushi, Kabukimono, and Scaramouche (codenamed The Balladeer).

Wanderer itself is a doll prototype created by Raiden Ei to serve as a test and proof of concept for creating an indestructible Gnosis-carrying doll. Once her creation was accomplished and successful, Ei's initial plan was to simply throw it away. However, Ei may have found him too cruel, and in the end, she chose only to seal the power within him and free him after leaving him asleep in the Shakkei Pavilion. After awakening, he wanders Inazuma as an ordinary human boy, with his consciousness, until the Fatui takes an interest in him. Some eccentric genius in the Fatui ranks made some adjustments to the prototype, not only unsealing its power, but most likely making it even more formidable than its original specifications, and the object of the god's creation became known thereafter as "The Balladeer".

When Wanderer was still Scaramouche, Wanderer had a cunning nature. This is shown when he disguises himself as a vagrant from Inazuma, he can easily manipulate Traveler (Player) until he shows his true color when he attempt to kill the Traveler. Wanderer is also a heartless person, as he is seen when someone interrupts his words, he berates his subordinates which causes many Fatui members to dislike him. Wanderer also didn't have any feelings when several soldiers died due to the side effects of the goods distributed by Wanderer and his subordinates, namely Delusion. When he removed himself from Irminsul, Wanderer became a friendly person but lived an unsatisfying life because he didn't have a human heart and name. Not having a heart caused him to long for a goal he didn't have and willingly received his memories back to reclaim his sins and become himself once again. After he receives his memories back, Wanderer retains his character from when he was still Scaramouche.

The costume analyzed from Wanderer is his costume. Wanderer has a slim figure and a beautiful face. He has indigo-colored hair that covers his ears, and indigo eyes with thick red eyeliner. The clothes worn by Wanderer are dominated by navy blue. On his head, Wanderer wears a large, round hat inspired by the Kasa hat, which is one of the traditional hats worn by Japanese people. The accessory used by Wanderer is a shakujo stick hanging from a piece of light blue cloth worn by Wanderer. Wanderer also wears a tight, high-collared black bodysuit with long, split sleeves and a gold ornament stuck in the middle just below the collar, over which he wears a loose white tunic with wide sleeves that fade in cyan. Wanderer wears a pair of fingerless metallic gloves on each arm that consist of black straps that go around the wrists. Wanderer also wears a thick black obi belt with indigo-colored lining, decorated on the front with a large black ribbon. Wanderer wears these over dark-colored shorts with pleats, with a pair of white knee-high gaiters, black knee-high toeless socks underneath, wearing black geta sandals on the feet, with both feet secured at the top with indigo. the strap is held together with gold trim with a single tassel pinned to it. Wanderer wears a blue patterned half-robe of various colors that hangs over his left shoulder, on which a large golden ornament containing his Anemo Vision is embedded along with a single golden feather, which resembles the Plume of Luxury.

In terms of character abilities, Wanderer is an Anemo element character who specializes in DPS through Normal and Charged Attacks when in Windfavored condition which is triggered through his Skill. Wanderer's preferred teams to support him in this role focus on buffing or supplementing his damage output while spending little time on the field. In Windfavored mode which is triggered through his skill, Wanderer can fly, where this skill can help exploration which is the main element in the game Genshin Impact. His ability to do DPS and make exploration easier makes Wanderer rank A. Plus, he is a former fatui harbinger (one of the evil organizations in Genshin Impact) which has made him much in demand since he was first introduced in version 1.1.



Figure 7: Tier List Wanderer in the Genshin Impact game

Source: <https://genshin.gg/tier-list/>

Results

Based on the results of the analysis above, the basic elements based on holistic design theory for W (Arknights) and Wanderer (Genshin Impact), have a big influence on the creation of their playing mechanisms. The abilities of W and Wanderer are by their respective backgrounds and personalities in the game. Players' preferences vary because there are players who prioritize ability and there are those who prioritize character design and story. You can see from W that even though he has abilities and archetypes that make him a situational character, many people are targeting W because of his attitude and design which attracts the attention of players. Plus, W is a limited character which means players can only get it at certain times. Likewise with Wanderer, who in terms of abilities looks ordinary, but many people are targeting him because of his introduction since version 1.1, his background, and the uniqueness of his abilities, which makes exploration, which is the main element in Genshin Impact, easier. This causes Mounsey's holistic theory to be unproven in gacha games, even though these elements are influencing factors, they are not the main ones (Andelina, 2021).

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research analysis, it appears that players tend to have preferences for characters in gacha games based on three main factors, namely the character's abilities, design, and background. These factors directly influence how players perceive the quality and appeal of a gacha game. For example, in this study, the sampled characters W and Wanderer show that although they may not have particularly superior abilities in their games, they have backstories and quirks that attract players' attention. The implication of this research is that gacha game developers need to seriously consider these factors in designing new characters. Apart from paying attention to character abilities, aspects of character design and story also need to be given special attention. That way, developers can increase the appeal of their games and increase player participation. For further research, it is recommended to expand the analysis to characters from different gacha games, as well as compare characters from the same game. This can provide a deeper understanding of player preferences and what factors are more dominant in determining character choices in gacha games. When it comes to character development in games, developers should focus on creating characters with interesting elements, such as a strong backstory or unique design, in addition to the character's abilities. Thus, they can build gacha games that are more interesting and competitive in the market.

