

THE STRENGTH REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE HEROES IN DOTA2

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Abstract

DoTA2, a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) video games, is a power struggle game involving two teams using heroes as their avatars. DoTA2 shows limitation in the role of female heroes, but they are more widely used and have a high level of victory. This study is conducted to determine the portrayal of female heroes in DoTA2 to identify the visual elements that show power features. Mixed methods research through questionnaire, structure analysis and semiotics used to identify the content of visual features of female heroes. The result shows a strength female character displayed through skill and agility that serves to survive and win the game rather than showed physical strength attributes. The study provides references for further research in character design improvements as well as a visual recommendations in female design characters in video games.

Keywords: online game, visual design, character design, visualization, representation.

1. Introduction

DoTA2, a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) video games, released by Valve Corporation in 2012. There are 718.867 DoTA2 active players worldwide. High participation of players and sponsors, make DoTA2 as a successful game tournament with the largest award in the world in June 2014 (Hofmann, 2014). Player use avatar as a representative in game called “Hero”. There are 107 heroes in game, 17 of them are female heroes. Data from dotabuff.com shows the average win rate if DoTA2 heroes are 48.90%, but the female heroes have 49.97%, higher than the average win rate. In addition, female heroes are more played with average means 43 million games, compared with all heroes are just 38 million games (Dotabuff, 2014). It means, the player showed interest to entrust the victory towards female heroes, while the high level of victory shows the female hero capable to shown the strength.

However, previous studies shown that the female characters in video game are very unhelpful with provocative sexual content compared with male characters, strong and aggressive. Male characters are powerful with the relevant action and female characters are hyper-sexual (Burgess, 2007: 419– 433). In addition, the behaviours and personality characteristics assigned to

female characters in digital games usually render subordinate to male characters (Reinhard, 2006)

It is interesting to study because the players have considerations to choose a hero in the game, especially female hero who have the strength features. The purpose of this study to determine the visualization of strength and what elements of visual that make up the strength of the female hero in DoTA2, also what is the myth behind of visualization.

2. Materials

According to Crawford, 1982, players generally have motivation to make changes their behavior that occurs in the game. The player ability has increased when the stimulus capable to triggering a quick response. In addition there are other motives, for example fantasize freely without restriction, proving himself to finish the game well, presence of social lubrication, and the need to be recognized. Thus, a strength hero is a best choice in dota2.

The meaning of the word 'strength' is attached to the power, style, dependability, is associated with physical. There is also 'magic', have outstanding supernatural powers are considered to be in nature, in objects, in plants, in animals, or certain humans. Strengths include the power, force, energy, muscle are words synonymous with big, solid and massive. Big, strong and muscle in heroes character visualization have a monster shape with a great body, it indicates a capable defense. Moreover, the upper body is the most relevant components of the power to win fights, because it is associated with strength training in the gym will include four basic exercises to increase strength. (Sell, 2009)

DoTA2 can be reviewed through the theory of MDA, Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics. Mechanics describes the components in the game at the level of representation as a hero. Dynamics shows how the system produce an outputs and player relation to another, while the Aesthetic is a desired emotional response from the player when they interact in the game. Mechanics will be closer as a representation of game developer idea. The idea realized by a computer graphic simulations, as female heroes. Female heroes in DoTA2, as a representative player in the gaming world, are simulacrum. Signs referring to himself, there are not a reality references for heroes. They created a fantasy, but it can be found virtually. So the codes and meanings that occur constantly negotiated among the community or the network itself. (Piliang, 2010)

Female Heroes have a wide variety of visual forms and ability / skill. They can build a myths, which is ready to circulate or reinforce the existing myths. The artificial truth of image possessed by the myth become generic within each player because players will have an image that is capable of perceiving senses, especially the strength. Strength as a code, as a limitation, will be read as a language. Theory of character visualization from Maldonado and Hayes Roth's used to identify the visual features and the semiotics of Roland Barthes used to interpret the meaning and myths from the visualization of female heroes in DoTA2.

3. Objects and Methods

First of all 80 questionnaires distributed online to get ranked of female hero who favored of the strength / weakness which mentioned from its names by the players. The most appears name given a score of 17, until 1 for the most rarely appears.

Further, interviews are conducted with 10 informants/players, to know the variables that appear according the strength of the female heroes in DoTA2. The consideration of informants selection, they are understand the female characters with long process, with 100 DoTA2 levels or above, it means that the informant has been playing for at least 670 hours until now, they are still playing DoTA2, have special time to depth interview, capable of objectively recounts not fabricate/fake, and the last is able to become a tutor, not previously know each other/ familiar with the researcher.

Interviews were conducted directly by visiting informants, using open questions to capture the elements that affect the strength of female heroes selection. The interview is conducted for approximately 30 minutes, recorded using the Ipad 2 while recorded manually. Furthermore, the results of an audio interview are transcribed into text for further analysis.

4. Results

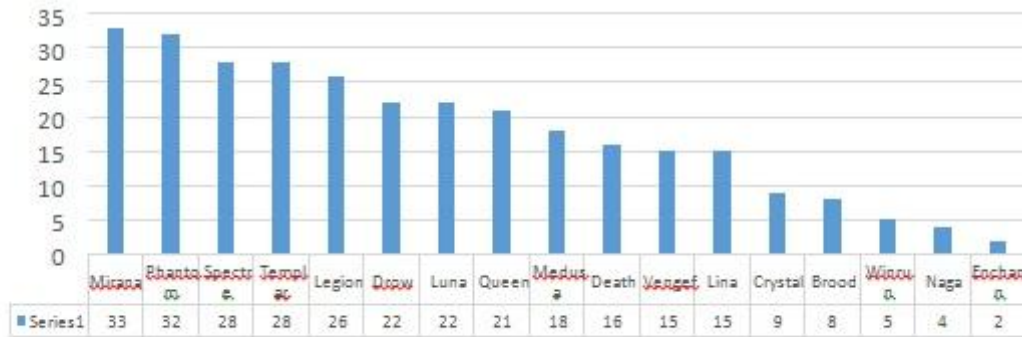


Figure 1. Rank of DoTA 2 female heroes strength(doc)

Players choose Mirana as the strongest female hero in DoTA2 with a total value of 33, followed are Phantom Assassin, Spectre, Templar Assassin, Legion Commander, Drow Ranger, Luna, Queen of Pain, Medusa, Death Prophet, Vengeful Spirit, Lina, Crystal Maiden, Broodmother, Windrrunner, Naga Siren, and enchantress.

1.1 Visualization



Figure 2. Shape of Mirana (2014, dotafire; 1); Mirana with a bow (doc; 2); Mirana with hourglass body shape (doc; 3); Female body shape (2014, fashionbeautyexpert; 4)

Mirana, known as the Princess of the Moon, is a daughter who will continue the throne of the solar system but decided to serve the Moon Goddess. Mirana riding a huge tiger, she is ready, proud, and fearless. Mirana use bow as her weapon, complete with a projectile like an arrows, so she can attack the enemy from a considerable distance. There are gaps in the use of weapons, allowing the character in a safe state. Mirana occupy a group namely the Radiant, it is human class, a white magic, and a kindness. This character is positioned in a good state. It also shows that female character traits in gentle, loving, or even weakly retained in this game.

Mirana, has a hourglass type of body shape. It seen from the size of the stomach and narrow waist, wide chest but sleek abdominal area and enlarged in toe area. Based on this small body shape, it can be said that this character has large breasts with a solid hip. Hips shows, that this character always actively using his body to move. Overall body looks fit with the female form in general.



Figure 3. Mirana and Princes Auroras atributes (a) crown, (b) necklace, (c) royal dress (doc; left);

Asia/Kaukasia and Mirana type of face (a) cheecbones, (b) chin, (c) jaw
 (2014, advancecosmetic; sheron1030; right)

Mirana still shows a royal princess attributes. If compared with Aurora, a Disney Princess character, there are clear same attributes like a crown, necklace, and the royal dress. Although adapted to his activity, Mirana does not use a ballgown, but an open gown on her legs. It makes

easily to ride the tiger. Although Mirana is still synonymous with a royal princess attributes, but the colors are not same as Aurora, which show a low value / bright / tint.

Mirana has a caucasian faces, it shows large deep eyes, pointed chin, prominent cheekbones, sharp nose, and jaw is not visible. She has a long reddish brown hair which strengthen caucasians. Caucasians found in many areas of Europe, so according to the DoTA2 players in Indonesia indicates the existence of admiration of its beauty.

4.2 Skill

Mirana is an agility hero. The agility is a type of hero in DoTA2 which is capable of playing weapons, relying on hand speed, and has a good movement. This ability increases damage received by the enemy. Furthermore, the combination of attack and escape skills favored by players such as Secret Arrow, a unique skill owned by Mirana only, is able to knock out an enemy, stun, and deal damage as far as the arrow launched. Second, Leap serves as an attempt to save himself or enters into the battle, but many players use this skill to avoid war because Mirana has a little health.



Figure 4. Miranas skills and interaction with another heroes (doc)

Moonlight Shadow, Mirana's ultimate skill, is a hope of the team. This skill is able to eliminate teammates into shadow in the game. This skill can be used to prepare the battle and ambush enemies together. Enemies will not be aware with a sudden attack against his team. Team success depends with this skill. Instead, Miranas player must have a big responsibility because it requires a right time to take advantage of these skills.

4.3 Discussion

Mirana does not show a physical strength, but the strength appears in skills as the role and initiation. If Mirana still seen as a sign, a language, there are syntagm which regulate the sign and paradigm of the choice of sign. Paradigm of skills like attack and escape confirmed as the forms of strength, an agility. Agility shows good ability in utilizing self physical ability. Mirana is associated with the ability like jump to dodge or jump to fight, stunning arrow, or disappear princes. The female character is not always synonymous with weakness, because she actually has the power that is not related to the physical as Mirana. Mirana as a system of "Mirana" has established as one figure itself because Mirana has been used as an object of fantasy, adventure, making friends, self-expression, and hobby.

Players are able to explore and do anything in DoTA2 freely such as jumping, archery, disappeared, or murder without any restriction like in the real world. Shadow, the arketipe side of evil of man, can play an active role and influencing energy of the players. In addition, male players find his anima, because of the beauty of Mirana which is affecting the passion of libidinal. Mirana is beautiful and have a physical weakness, but players enjoy every fantasy to playing this character with her skills.

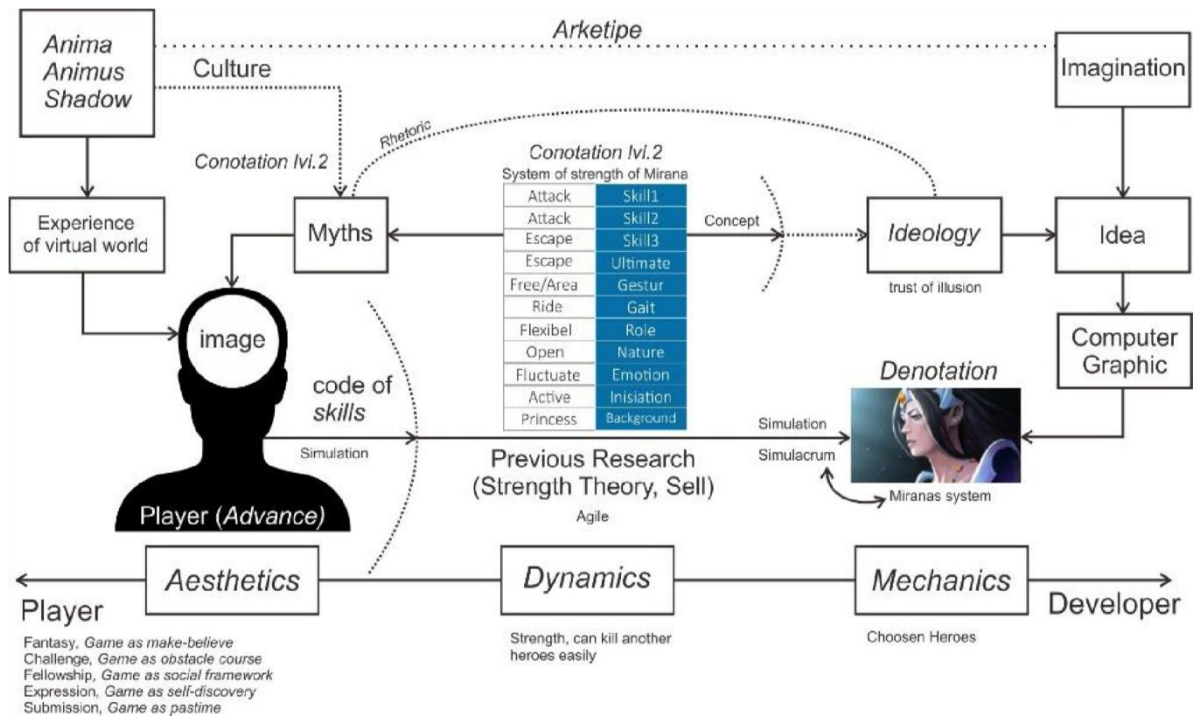


Figure 5. Semiotics chart analysis (doc)

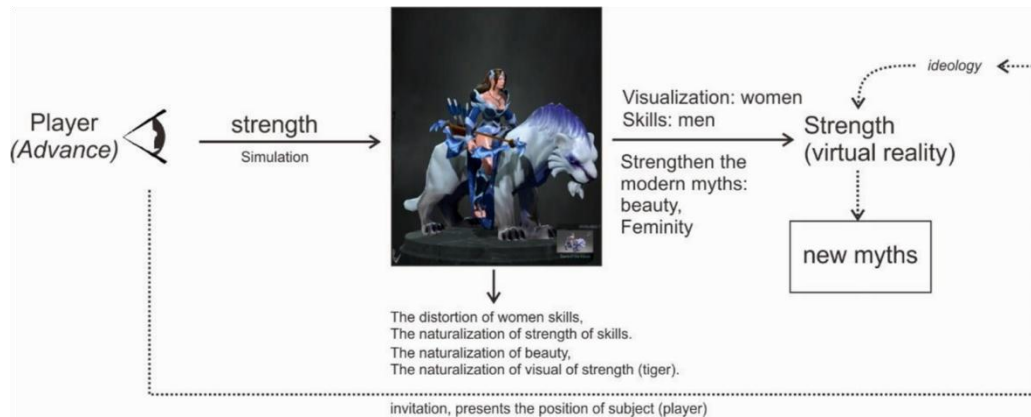


Figure 6. Chart of Myths Analysis (doc)

5. Conclusion

Mirana, the strongest female hero, can lead naturalization the meaning of strength against the skills because she is able to represent the players to win the game. She makes a distortion of the meaning of the possessed skills. The skills such as jumping, throwing spears, or the gesture in riding a tiger are the ability attached to masculinity. In addition, the ability will accommodate the desires of male players. In other side, Mirana has a women representation body shape. The presence of caucasian face types strengthen the myth of female beauty. Brown hair, blue eyes, white skin, and a pointy chin are a mask of a woman beauty. It appears to naturalize and emphasize the myth of beauty.

Modern myths such as masculinity, femininity, and beauty were born from the naturalizations of meaning deception. The trickery of meaning survives in human opinions continuously. On the other hand, strength as a necessity in game dynamics of DoTA2 is an invitation. Mirana offers two invitations, beauty as an invitation of physical admiration and strength as an invitation of admiration skill. The invitation for the subject, the players, to fill the empty space with Mirana as the strongest female heroes. When this is happen continuously, the myths will be solid and irrefutable.

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