Thai Gay Men's Behaviors in Choosing to Use VDO Game Character Gender

Nathee Monthonwit, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand
Ophascharas Nandawan, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand

Abstract

It was found in the previous study on attitudes of Thai men choosing to use VDO game female characters that, through sexual desire, they placed emphasis on gazing at female characters' bodies and their imagination revealing the desire to compensate for what they lacked in real life. However, from the researcher's observation of Thai gay men's behavior while playing VDO games and more survey, they tended to behave differently from straight Thai men in choosing genders of VDO game characters. This study, therefore, aims to do a survey study on behaviors of 20 Thai gay VDO game players. A close-ended and open-ended questionnaire was used to obtain data for analysis in comparisons with previous study and to include more various groups of Thai male gamers. Based on this survey results, 65% of the subjects chose to play a male character, showing their sexual preference taste and their appreciation of the male character's figure. 20 % chose a female character, mainly due to their satisfaction with the character's costume. 10 % chose female characters since they were satisfied with their femininity, while 5% chose a female character to make use of physical factors to gain more advantage while playing. These findings led to a conclusion that most Thai male gamers choose genders of VDO game characters that match their different sexual preference tastes. However, Thai gay gamers put more importance on attractive designs of costumes and playing factors than straight Thai men who pay attention to compensation in real life.

Keywords: VDO Game, Gay, Gender, Character, Behaviors

Introduction

Based on the researcher's previous study on Attitudes of Thai male VDO game players choosing to use VDO games' female characters, it was found that most Thai male game players tend to choose the character through their sexual desire for gazing the figures of female characters. This raised questions about, in the VDO game market, the behavior of a homosexual who still considers himself a man, not a transgender, the term referring to the man having a sexual orientation by choosing to love and prefer to have sexual affairs with another person of the same gender or a 'male homosexuality' as for medical term or a more familiar term 'gay' (Pearkao, 2013, pp. 95 -96). What are these people's behavior in choosing characters, that is, what gender of characters and how do they choose it? Such questions, therefore, led to this study aimed to do more generalization on the same issue by investigating a group of subjects to achieve more understanding of their character choosing tendency. Nowadays, it seems that Thai people understand and accept more the sexual diversity as seen in popular culture that there are more third gender entertainment figures and more third gender beauty contests. However, in reality, the third gender people or gay men are still considered to have a stereotypical identity created by entertainment media as being indecently funny. Meanwhile, such media makers often ignore some social facts such as gender right and equality or other roles and social statuses of gay men.

> No matter how a stereotypical image of gay men is created, it will affect more or less, how other people look and think about them. It is especially believed that gay men will be like those in movies, and their movielike identity was overgeneralized and finally become their stigma (Naksing, 2013, p. 37).

This can be seen from a TV reality show, Take Guy Out Thailand, which highlights a sexual activity of a gay dating couple selected in the program to entertain viewers, leading to criticism in online community especially among gay groups.

Figure 1 : Take Guy Out Thailand
https://mgronline.com/live/detail/9590000056418

On VDO game character choosing menu, there are only 2 gender choices to choose: male and female, which means there is no choice for third gender or other options. If a player wants to choose another gender, he or she has to adjust or create on his own to suit his taste. And if the games contain rigidly designed certain characters, players have no other choices but choose only from what given.

Figure 2 : Menu Select the gender of Diablo 3

The LGBT designed characters are usually faced with a lot of controversial social reactions. This usually occur to those with the background made in a form of document or comic revealed after players have played the game for a while. An example is the character Soldier 76 from the game *Overwatch* whose story revealed later to be gay, which caused people in online game community to dispute whether it was appropriate or not for the character to be gay. Meanwhile, the online community on Facebook argued that the character with masculine physical strength should not be gay.

On the other hand, another group's reaction argued that being gay men did not need to possess femininity and delicate manner of a woman. Other unsatisfactory messages were that it was reasonable for the game to fail, the disappointment with their favorite heroes or the posting of messages implying disgusting human filth and the anus. It can be seen that Thai people, though accepting a variety of genders, become biased against it if their favorite characters are presented as being gay. The significance of this study is to investigate gay gamers' behaviors in order to understand them better.

Figure 3 : Soldier 76 and couples
https://kotaku.com/the-internet-reacts-to-soldier-76-and-his-ex-boyfriend-1831557833

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to find out gay men's behavior in choosing to use a video game character to derive more information apart from that of previous study on character choosing of straight men. This, therefore, will help to shed more light on another social dimension of Thai male gamers

Research Question

What is the behavior of gay gamers in choosing to use VDO game characters and is it different from straight male gamers?

Methodology

This study is based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire about the subjects' character choosing behavior were analyzed while the statistics percentage was used with the quantitative data.

Data Collection

The data were collected by administering a questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions to subjects of gay male gamers and a gamer community on social network.

Data analysis

Related to general information of the subjects, 20 gay male gamers, from figure one concerning average age, it was found that 50% were aged between 26 – 30, 25% aged between 18 – 25, 15% aged between 31 – 35, 5% aged between 36 – 40, and 5% aged over 40 years.
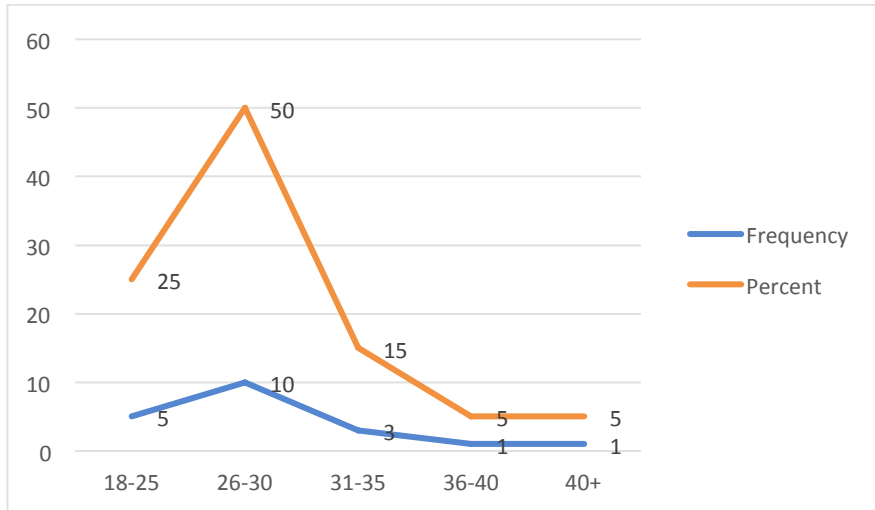
Figure 4 : Age

Concerning education, from table1, it was found that 80% (16 people) received bachelor's degree, 10% (2 people) higher than bachelor's degree, 5% (1 person) diploma and 5% (1 person) secondary school level.

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary School / High School	1	5
Diploma	1	5
Bachelor's degree	16	80
Higher than bachelor's degree	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 1: Education

Concerning playing device, 60% (12 people) used multiple device, 35% (7 people) used mobile phone, and 5% (1 person) used game consoles.
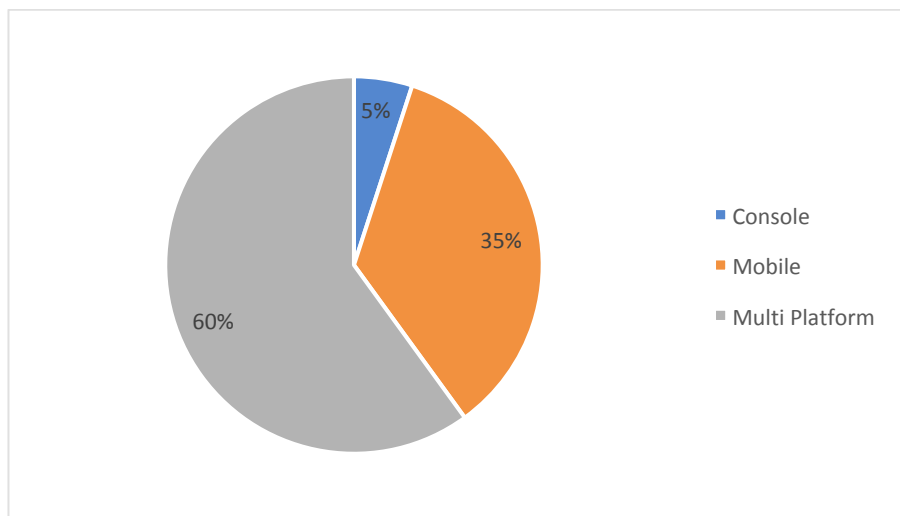

Figure 5 : Device used

About the list of favorite games of gay gamers, it was found that the most popular game was RoV: Arena of Valor with 60% (12 people) of the subjects playing it, 10% (2 people) played

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege, 10% (2 people) played PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS, 10% (2 people) played Extraordinary Ones, and the least was 5% (1 person) playing Dragon Quest Builder and 5% (1 person) played OVERHIT.

Game title	Frequency	Percentage
RoV : Arena of Valor	12	60
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege	2	10
PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS	2	10
Extraordinary Ones	2	10
Dragon quest builder	1	5
OVERHIT	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 2: Popularity of games

For rationale of choosing a character, it was found that the majority, 65% (13 people) based on the masculinity of characters, 20% (4 people) favored costume, 10% (2 people) used femininity as criteria, and 5% (1 person) focused on advantageous playing tactic.
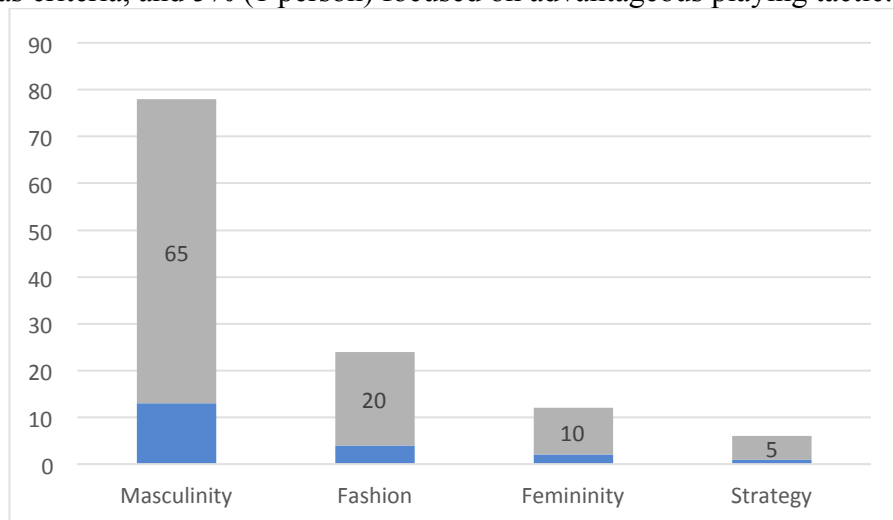

Figure 6 : Behaviors in Choosing to Use Character

Figure 4 presents the behavior in choosing to use characters. It was found that 13 subjects pointed out the relationship between character choosing and masculinity. The analysis of data from open-ended questions reveals that most of them associated themselves with the characters, that is, they felt like taking an adventure themselves in the virtual world of video games. They were satisfied by the masculinity of characters. For example, they tried to create a similar face to their own faces, thinking that they and the characters share similarities in voice, manner and ways to express themselves. On the other hand, one of the subjects who based his choosing of male character on outfit said that in the game there was diverse outfit for him to opt for to dress as a female character. Such an idea is related to the other 3 players choosing female characters to play.   They thought the outfit of female character in that game was more attractive than of male characters. Choosing to use female characters of the other two subjects is related to femininity. They expressed their opportunity to be feminine and achieve imaginary beauty of a real woman. The last subject who based his choosing of character on playing tactic explained that the femininity could help other players to be more lenient toward him.
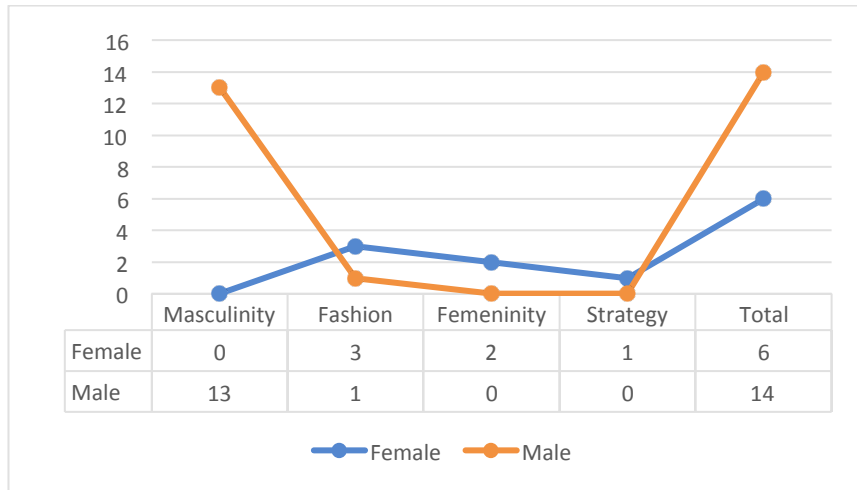
	Masculinity	Fashion	Femeninity	Strategy	Total
Female	0	3	2	1	6
Male	13	1	0	0	14

Figure 7 : Behaviors in Choosing to Character Gender

Conclusion

Based on the above study results, there is a better understanding of the behavior of gay male gamers in choosing characters to play on video games. The difference between straight male gamers and gay players is that the gay gamers chose the male characters to play, which indicates their sexual orientation and satisfaction of male physical appearance assimilated to themselves. However, their gazing at the characters' figures showed less sexual desire than straight male gamers as they imagined that the characters represent themselves. They also put emphasis on other factors in choosing characters such as costume, attractiveness and playing tactic. Overall, this study brings about a better understanding of gay men as a group of consumers in game industry in terms of their taste, gender equality and social acceptance

References

MGR Online, (2016). Take Guy Out Thailand! Gay sex abuse !! Become a clown Yearning for sex sluts. [Weblog]. Retrieved from https://mgronline.com/live/detail/9590000056418
Naksing, P. (2013). Construction of Gay Identities in Thai Films. Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. (39)2, 35-53.

Nathan Grayson, (2019). The Internet Reacts To Soldier 76 And His Ex-Boyfriend.[Weblog]. Retrieved https://kotaku.com/the-internet-reacts-to-soldier-76-and-his-ex- boyfriend-1831557833

Pearkao, P. (2013). Stress and Depression among Thai Gay, Kathoey (Transgender). Journal of Nursing Science and Health, 36(2), 95-104.

Contact email: nathee_monthonwit@yahoo.com