Cyber-Traveler, Welcome to Hyperreality: Where Consumerism, Capitalism and Identity Design in Virtual Worlds

Dini Anggraheni[1], Stefani Dewi Rosaria[2], Mustasyfa Thabib Kariadi[3]
{stefani@usm.ac.id[1], dinia85@usm.ac.id[2], mtkariadi_pbi@unsoed.ac.id[3]}

Faculty of Economics, Universitas Semarang[1], Faculty of Law, Universitas Semarang[2],
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman[3]

Abstract. Virtual worlds are a relatively new but rapidly increasing class of complex design and interaction platforms. The first tasks that cyber-traveler must do when entering a virtual world (VW) are to create a virtual representation for themselves. This study is qualitative study, with doing depth observation to explore the Zepeto game with many characteristics and famous brand partners. It enables us to investigate the relationship between the application's real-world identity and its virtual-world identity in their avatar relate to consumerism and capitalism inside. After that, I will attempt to peel Jean P. Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality as well as a hyperreality analysis that reveals social structures that influence self-presentation, consumerism, capitalism, and interaction. I'll argue that identity is linked to the community, and community entails embracing some level of position that already exists. Every cyber-traveler will have to deal with the fact that they are always already in the world at some point; they consider embracing consumerism both in reality and the virtual world.

Keywords: hyperreality; consumerism; capitalism; identity; virtual world

1 Introduction

A virtual world, also known as a hyper-world or a "3-D computer-based platform that allows users to communicate with each other in real-time," is an interactive virtual environment (Hodge; Collins & Giordano, 2013, p. 6). A virtual world is a three-dimensional environment in which one can interact with others and create items as part of that interaction (via an avatar, a virtual version of oneself, such as a virtual ego, which can take any shape one desires). According to Pierre Lévy (1999, p. 12), a virtual world necessitates virtualization, which is the inverse movement to actualization and consists in the passage of current to the virtual, in an elevation to the power. Virtual worlds (VWs) are complex three-dimensional environments in which millions of people can interact. VWs in massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) and others that emphasize more on socializing than gaming, such as Zepeto World, are examples.

1.1 Problem Statements

The power of virtual identity and the effects of embodiment had the freedom to choose an identity that may be a powerful and empowering reflection of their holistic identity, especially in the gaming space. In this study, I have talked about how Zepeto players have an excellent investment in the avatars they create. Players spend their time, month to a year, building their avatars, collecting different clothes, accessories, photos, videos, private rooms, and so on by playing the game. We now live in a world of hyperreality, in which computer simulations of reality appear to be more accurate than reality itself. In the book Simulacra and Simulation, French sociologist Jean Baudrillard invented the term hyperreality for the first time. Hyperreality, according to Baudrillard, is "the generation by models of a real without genesis." When Baudrillard initially proposed the theory of hyperreality in 1981, it was considered an extremely controversial and provocative concept. Hyperreality has become an inextricable part of modern existence. Finally, it is about hyperreality, a situation in which the physical and virtual worlds collide. We've reached a point where we can't tell the difference between the two realities. But, more crucially, the distinction would be irrelevant because the simulated world has similar meaning and worth for everyone. Consumerism and Capitalism design in the virtual world to make virtual identity more perfect. There are 3 Research questions in this study:

RQ1: How do hyperreality, simulation, simulacra, and appearance emerge out of reality?

RQ2: How can a virtual sense of self-representation and identity affect one's ability to access social networks in a virtual world where one can choose an avatar in any form?

RQ3: How does the world brand become a partner in the virtual world? Is it a kind of capitalist expansion?

1.2 Literature Review

With all of these characteristics, a virtual world is also known as a digital, simulated, or hyper-world world, in which derealization affects both the subject and the object of the experience. It changes one's sense of self-identity. Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche debate this idea of derealization. However, Nietzsche refers to existence as the final breath of a vaporizing reality and the disintegration of the distinction between the real and apparent worlds. The Twilight of the Idols, by Nietzsche, traces the evolution of this division from Plato to his time; the natural world has devolved into a meaningless and needless concept (Nietzsche, 2007, p. 22). Since modern media facilitate our existence in a simulacrum, hyperreality is a means of derealization, a "loss of the real" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). However, it appears that understanding such a tendency or movement toward hyperreality is more important because the medium of our electric technology time, according to McLuhan, "is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life," and it is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate every thought, action, and institution that we previously took for granted because everything is changing dramatically. "The nature of the means through which men communicate has always shaped societies more than the content of the communication" (McLuhan, 1967, p. 8). As a result, technological devices condition us to think and act in specific ways automatically. According to Byung-Chul Han (2017, p. 27), images are no longer merely likenesses but also models, and we "flee into images to be better, more attractive, and more alive." "The digital technology is bringing about an ironic reversal, making images appear more alive, more beautiful, and better than reality

itself," says the author (Han, 2017, p. 27). On the one hand, reality appears to be flawed, argues Byung-Chul Han, but on the other hand, "we are now producing images in enormous quantities through digital media," which means that i) we are producing more spectacle; ii) we are becoming increasingly familiar with the profusion of images (including shock images), and iii) we are living according to these images.

a) Zepeto

Zepeto is a game application that lets you create a 3D animated version of yourself to use in chatrooms. Cyber-traveler can take a picture of themselves, or they can use the avatar from the application. After cyber-traveler take the picture, it will create a personalized character for them. Cyber-traveler can re-edit to make themselves as cute as their wish. Quoted from the Play Store, Friday (11/30/2018), Zepeto turned out to be the same company as the famous chat application Line. Zepeto was made by a South Korean developer named Snow Corporation, a subsidiary of Naver Corporation. The name Naver itself is familiar because the company is the developer of Line. Snow Inc. was established in September 2015 and is headquartered in Seongnam, South Korea. According to information compiled from the official Snow website, the company makes communication fun and easy. Besides Zepeto, Snow also actually mentioned a number of other applications that are closely related to photography, especially selfies. Some of them are B612, Line Camera, and Looks. For your information, the application made by Snow Inc. itself is growing rapidly. Since launching in 2015, the company has managed to capture more than 100 million registrants over a year and a half. Most users of the application made by Snow come from Asian markets, including South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. However, now with the Zepeto application, there is a possibility that Snow products have started to reach a larger market. According to Apps store (2021), Zepeto is the three top-grossing in entertainment. It has 1 million reviews and more than 50 million downloads. This game offers to bring your ideas to life at ZEPETO because it provides the tools you need to create your item, world, and streams. Easily create fashion items, from hats to shoes, that drive sale; create your own world through unity for other users to explore; host live stream with your avatar to communicate with other users. This game can make you become a creator. Since the launch of ZEPETO studio, it has grown to more than 1.5 million creators. Zepeto has a new feature to make sales and monetize your profile by creating various content to make a profit. The first thing to do is Sign up for Zepeto. Anyone able to do it with an email or social media account to get a ZEPETO account.
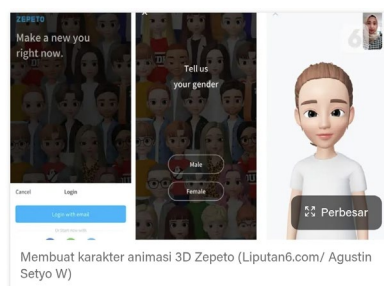

Membuat karakter animasi 3D Zepeto (Liputan6.com/ Agustin Setyo W)

Fig. 1. Making 3D Zepeto Avatar
Liputan6.com/Agustin

The registration has an easy way and able to do for eight years old children. But it needs parents' attention to use this game.
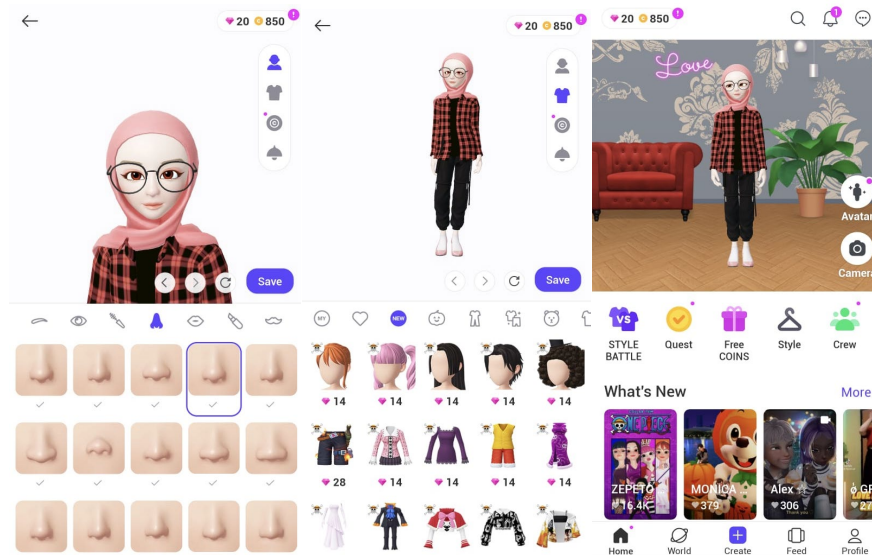

Fig. 2. Choosing style on performance, fashion, and room

b) Zepeto World Games

Zepeto has a world game that provides more than a hundred games from Zepeto officials or creators. Zepeto has its tagline, " Another me in another universe." It means that Zepeto focuses on creating another universe for the cyber traveler to play, live, express themselves and create something there.
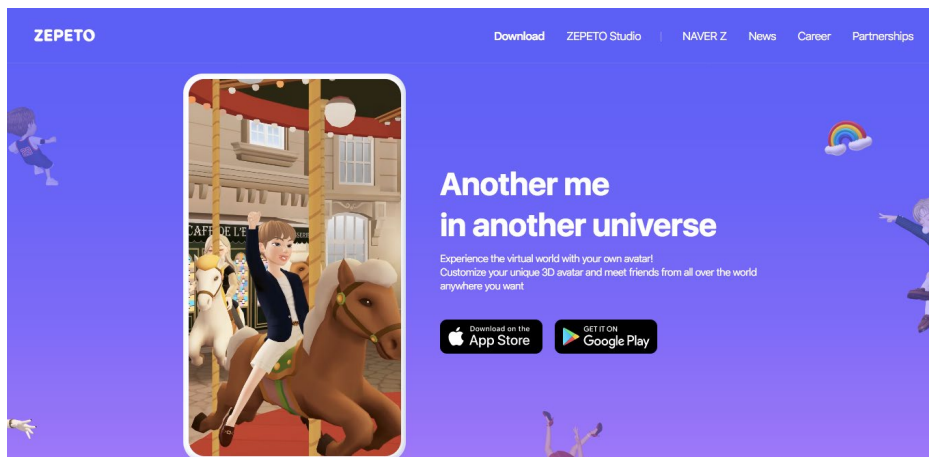

Fig. 3. The tagline of Zepeto

Table 1. The list of Zepeto games

No	Popular Official Map (Zepeto Global)	Let's Play (International Creators)	Zepeto At Indonesia Creators
	Zepeto World		
1.	Lotte World	Animal Adventure Camp 2	SD dan SMP 1
2.	Halloween Party	Jump! Master	SMA 1 Zepeto
3.	Haunted House	Party Game	Indonesia NKRI
4.	Spooky Classroom	Magic Tree	Masjid
5.	Jump Master	Toy Story 4	Mall Indonesia
6.	Animal adventure	Zombie Run	Bali Indonesia
7.	Classroom 2	Ski Jump	Ubud Record
8.	Peaceful Hill	Squid Games	Pasar Tradisional
9.	Camping	Squid Bridge	Lapangan Upacara
10.	Knowing Bros	Squid Game Zone	
11.	Gucci Villa	Squid Games New Update	
12.	Yumi's Cell	Red Light Green Light	
13.	Milky Way	Squid Zone	
14.	Downtown	Squid Play	
15.	Driving Zone	Squid Fight	
16.	Four Seasons café	Squid Game Z	
17.	LOUBI Boutique	Racing Park	
18.	Gentle Monster	Racing 1	
19.	World of Ralph Laurent	Speed Run	
20.	The Little Mermaid	The Enchante	
21.	Hang Park	Jump Race	
22.	Magic Tree	Run Race	
23.	Galaxy House	Halloween Jump Map	
24.	Airport	Halloween Jump Map 2	
25.	PLAYLIST	Halloween	
26.	Garden Wedding	Halloween Party	
27.	Garden Wedding Night	Ghost funhouse	
28.	Hello World	Haunted Hotel	
29.	ITZY Desert	Happy Halloween	
30.	Cookie Run Kingdom	TheDinner Party	
31.	ZEPETO Awards		
32.	Blackpink House		
33.	Blackpink House Night		
34.	Shopping Mall		
35.	BT21 Zepeto Park		
36.	BT21 Zepeto Park 2		
37.	SNOOPY house		
38.	Alice in Wonderland		
39.	LOUBI Disco		
40.	LOUBI Terrasse		
41.	Ice Cream		
42.	Ocean Cruise		
43.	Beach Town		
44.	Beach Town Night		
45.	TOYSTORY		
46.	Subway Station		
47.	Sacred Pond		
48.	Stage		
49.	Ski Jump		

	Zepeto World		
No	Popular Official Map (Zepeto Global)	Let's Play (International Creators)	Zepeto At Indonesia Creators
50.	Beauty and The Beast		
51.	Epic Village Night		
52.	Epic Village		
53.	Cherry Garden Night		
54.	Cherry Garden		
55.	Sacred Pond Night		
56.	Prison escape		
57	Cherry Garden		

c) Consumerism and Capitalism in the Game

According to Tamola (2021), Italian fashion label Gucci is partnering with social app Zepeto in its latest gaming-centric push to engage consumers. The collaboration will allow users to dress their Zepeto 3D avatars in pieces from Gucci's latest collections. More luxury brands have been teaming with games and other interactive platforms to expand their brand reach.

Zepeto users are able to fashion their avatars in different Gucci clothing through in-app purchases. Image credit: Zepeto

Fig. 4. the sample of Gucci clothing in Zepeto

Kinds of Brand Partners in Zepeto :
1. Ralph Lauren
2. Samsung
3. Pinkfong Baby Shark
4. NARS
5. Hyundai
6. Blackpink
7. ITZY
8. TWICE
9. Gucci
10. MLBTXT
11. SF9
12. Yumi's Cell

According to Muzna (2021), in Hybrid rituals, stated that With its partnership with big brands, Zepeto aims to amplify its presence in the social app market and enhance its longevity.

However, Zepeto is not the only beneficiary in these partnerships; big brands get to reach younger audiences through apps like Zepeto. Most of Zepeto's user base is Gen Z, ages 6-24. This is the audience the big brands want to target.

2 Theory and Methodology

The theory used in this study is Simulacra and Hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard. The researcher gathered from observation through the Zepeto game. I made an avatar and took part in Zepeto world to learn more about how the games work. This study used descriptive qualitative to answer the three Research Questions below. Data were obtained from observations and grouped into primary and secondary data. The primary data considered several Zepeto scenes done by the researcher in the Zepeto world, whereas the secondary data included relevant references and internet sites. Visual data were obtained by the screenshot of the scenes in the game indicating hyperreality traits.

3 Hyperreality

This universe is described by Baudrillard as hyperreality. For instance, the media ceased to be a reflection of reality and instead became a reality or even more real than reality (Ritzer,2009:678). Hyperreality is the impact, state, or material experience, and or space produced by simulation if the simulation is a method or intellectual technique (Piliang,2003;p.150). What is recreated in the world of hyperreality, according to Baudrillard, is not only the lost reality but also the unreal world: fantasy, dreams, illusions, hallucinations, or science fiction. Hyperreality is a duplicate or copy of reality that has been decoded (Piliang,2003: 152). When someone sits in front of a television, 3D movies video, video games, or virtual reality via computer, the same thing happens.

4 Finding and Discussion

The study starts with three questions to investigate the relationship between the application's real-world identity and its virtual-world identity in their avatar relate to consumerism and capitalism inside. The questions as follows:
RQ1: How do hyperreality, simulation, simulacra and appearance emerge out of reality?
RQ2: How can a virtual sense of self-representation and identity affect one's ability to access social networks in a virtual world where one can choose an avatar in any form?
RQ3: How does the world brand become a partner in the virtual world? Is it a kind of capitalist expansion?

4.1 Hyperreality in Zepeto World

RQ1: How do hyperreality, simulation, simulacra, and appearance emerge out of reality? Based on the works of the Zepeto game, the avatar can create a movement, join in every game, and communicate with other avatars from all over the world. The avatars can dress perfectly based on their wish. The simulation starts on an avatar that their own style can create. The picture of them can be brought their reality in the virtual life with many additional items such

as accessories, the tone of skin colors, the hairstyle and colors, etc. Virtual life was more perfect than reality.

4.2 Simulation Presence

RQ2: How can a virtual sense of self-representation and identity affect one's ability to access social networks in a virtual world where one can choose an avatar in any form? Being present when playing a game has become a more important aspect of video game study. Continuous advancements in video game technology have maintained a long-standing tradition of making games more vivid and engaging; two qualities thought to elicit sensations of presence (Steuer, 1992).
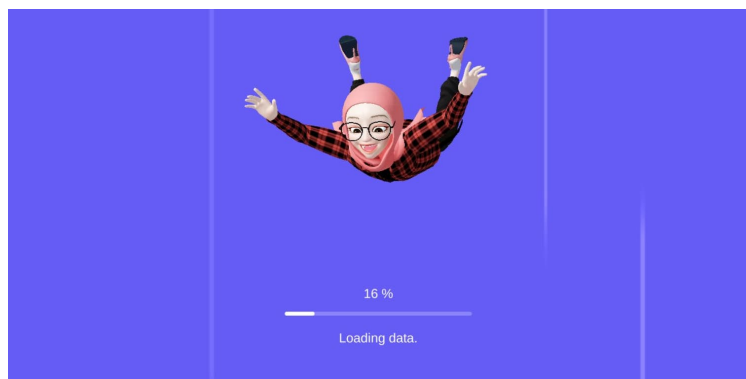
Fig. 5. The way to move in every world in Zepeto

Zepeto has become the perfect simulation presence because cyber-traveler are able to choose any avatars in any form. In the virtual world, users can create their own identity that must be superior or equal to their identity in real life. The avatars can obtain access to social networks in a virtual world with doing communication while they play in the Zepeto world. Every avatar must feel like being present there because each avatar has their room to express their style, photo booth, doing editing with special effect in the virtual world.

Fig. 6. The simulation in Zepeto world

Picture 5 shows the simulation in Zepeto world. Each avatar can communicate by activating the microphone icon, taking a picture with the camera icon, and chatting with another avatar with chat space. More than 100 worlds available to play in Zepeto world.

4.3 Consumerism and Capitalism

RQ3: How does the world brand become a partner in the virtual world? Is it a kind of capitalist expansion? Different factors influence customer participation in video games, which can be investigated from several angles. Zepeto gives a daily bonus for the newbie avatars who attended for seven days. On the first day, the new avatars will get 50 coins, 200 coins for day 2, 500 coins on day 3, 100 coins, and special items on day 4, 100 coins on day 5, 100 coins on day 6, and 1000 coins on day 7. The daily bonus gave to make the newbie avatar explore the fashion and facilities there.
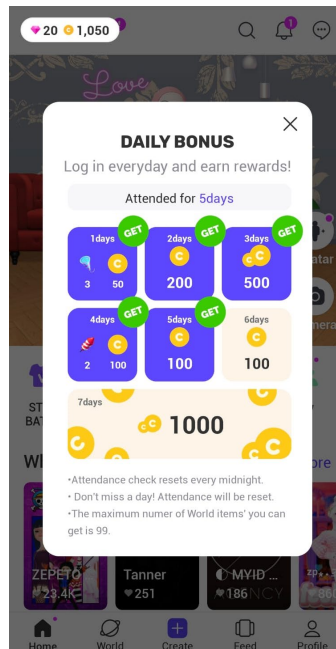

Fig. 7. The Daily Bonus is given by Zepeto for the Newbie avatar

The simulation presented in this game is the avatar of the use of fashion, lifestyle, dance, and lovely pose that is quite a lot because each fashion, accessories need zam (red diamond) and coins collected through active join Zepeto world games or create something. To get the perfect avatar based on their need, they have to play actively in the game or buy it in real life. Zepeto world is very open to avatars who want to be a creator of fashion to sell their clothes. It means that avatars must work to make a style or fashion creativity and sell to the other avatar. The symbol C is the fashion made by creative avatars.
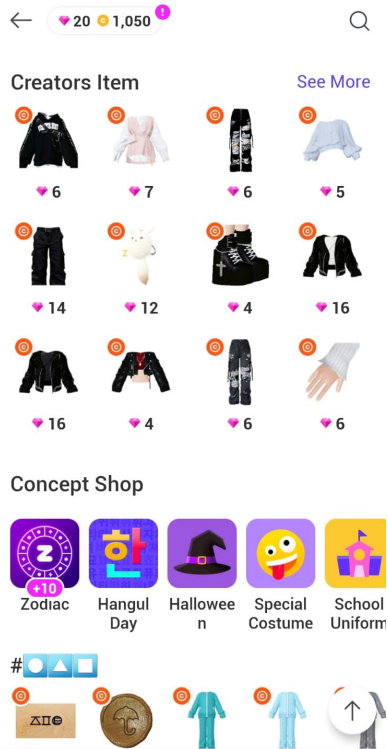
Fig. 8. The sample of fashion items that available to buy in Zepeto

Codashop is one sample of online shop in the real life that sells zams and coins to use in virtual life. The price start from 7.500 rupiahs for 7 Zams to 690.000 rupiahs for 770 Zems. The coin price starts from 15.000 rupiahs for 4680 coins to 590.000 rupiahs for 234.000 coins. If the avatars didn't have enough money, they can play game and win the game to get free coins. Famous brand took a part in the viral of Zepeto game. With the rising challenge with pandemic restrictions still in place, brands continue to pay attention to new ways to appeal to social media users. Based on virtual world experience , While their grandparents may have invested in legacy brands such as Chanel and Buick, millennial and Gen Z buyers are more interested in luxury as it relates to status and experience, rather than a product. These generations show off their entire lives on social media – and experiences carry a more one-time-only feeling.
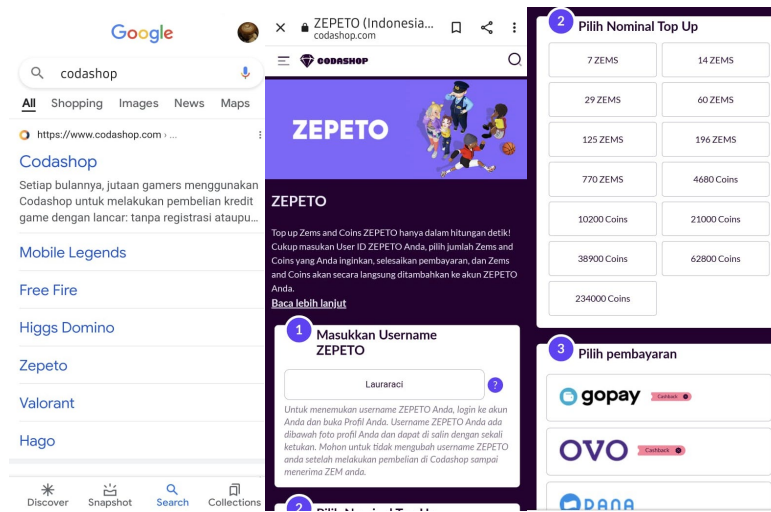
Fig. 9. The shop that sell Zems and Coin for Zepeto

The pictures of codashop and how to buy zams and coins through online shop. It can shows that the avatars in virtual life also become consumerism and capitalism become the king in virtual life. Every single avatars must be want to get beautiful clothes, a nice room, extraordinary accessories and didn't want to be the usual or standard avatar to life and make communications with others.

5   Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on RQ1-RQ2 in Zepeto game, the researcher made structure of individual level to answer the 3 questions and make it simple.
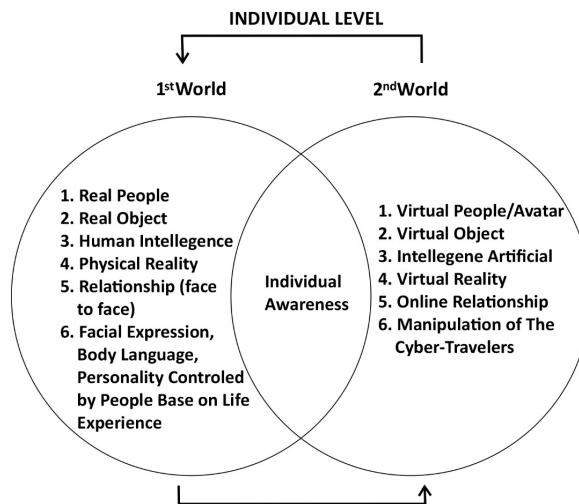

Fig. 10. The Structure of Individual-Level conducted by the researcher

Simulating reality in artificial (virtual, digital) media assumes that we are just replicating or inventing signs that communicate but whose referents do not exist in the real world, and we must be mindful of the image's realistic character. I'll argue that identity is linked to community, and community entails embracing some level of thrownness that already exists. Every cyber-traveler will have to deal with the fact that they are always already in the world at some point, they consider embraced consumerism both in reality and virtual world. The awareness of individual level is completely need to exist in the two different worlds.

References

[1]   Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

[2]   Han, B.-C. (2017). In the Swarm – Digital Prospects. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

[3]   Hodge, E.; Collins, S. & Giordano, T. (2013). The Virtual Worlds Handbook – How to Use Second Life and Other 3D Virtual Environments. Massachusetts: Jones & Bartlett Publishers.

[4]   LÉVY, P. (1999). ¿ Qué Es Lo Virtual? Barcelona etc.Introna, L. (1997). On Cyberspace and Being: Identity, Self, and Hyperreality. *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, *4*(1), 16–25. https://doi.org/10.5840/pcw199741/22.

[5]   McLuhan, M. (1967). The Medium is the Message. New York: Bantam Books.

[6]   Nietzsche, F. W. (2007). *Twilight of the Idols with the Antichrist and Ecce Homo*. Wordsworth Editions.

[7]   Piliang,Y.A. (2003). Dunia yang Berlari, Mencari Tuhan - Tuhan Digital. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.

[8]   Ritzer,G.R. & Douglas J. G. (2009). *Teori Sosiologi*: *Dari Teori Klasik sampai Perkembangan Mutakhir Teori Sosial Postmodern*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.

[9]   Struer,J. (1992). Defining virtual reality: Dimensions determining telepresence Journal of Communication, 42(2), 73-93.

[10]   Damar, Agustinus. (2018). Ini Dia Sosok di balik Aplikasi Zepeto yang Fenomenal. https://www.liputan6.com/tekno/read/3795804/ini-dia-sosok-di-balik-aplikasi-zepeto-yang-fenomenal (accessed 23 October 2021)

[11]   Muzna. (2021). Zepeto's Growing Metaverse And What It Means For Fashion. https://hybrid-rituals.com/zepetos-growing-metaverse-and-what-it-means-for-fashion/ (accessed 23 October 2021)

[12]   Tamola, Kathie. (2021) Luxury Daily, https://www.luxurydaily.com/gucci-and-zepeto-offer-consumers-stylish-avatars/ (accessed 23 October 2021)