

**CONSUMPTION PATTERN IN DOTA 2 TRADE CENTER INDONESIA:  
A VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY**

**A THESIS**



**BY:**

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UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA  
SURABAYA**

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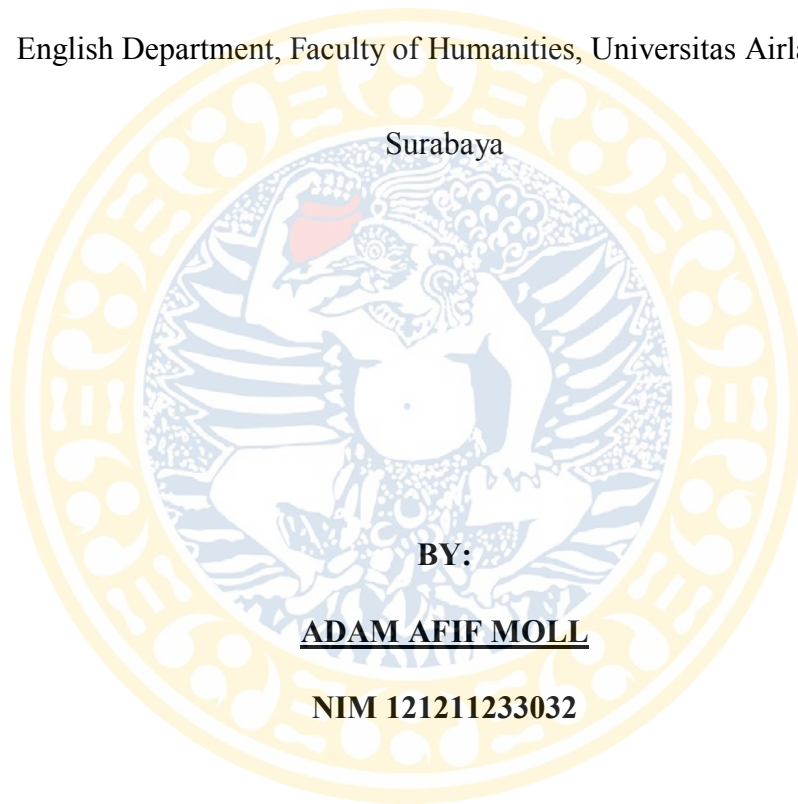
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Bachelor's Degree of  
English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga

Surabaya



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**2016**



## DECLARATION

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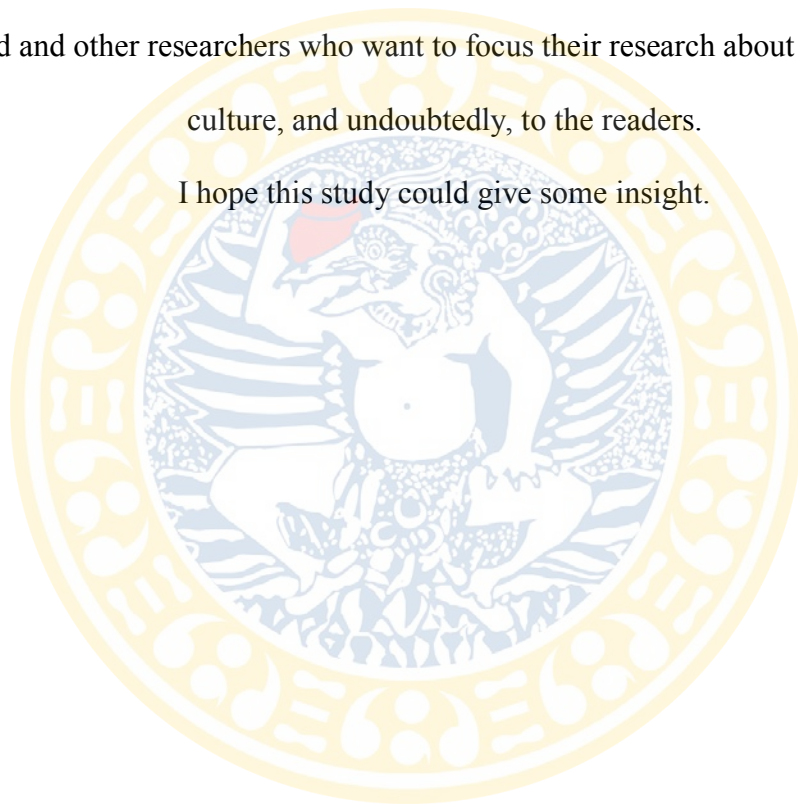
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Adam Afif Moll

I would sincerely like to dedicate this thesis to the *Dota 2* players around the world and other researchers who want to focus their research about gaming and culture, and undoubtedly, to the readers.

I hope this study could give some insight.



**Approved to be examined**

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Surabaya, June 10, 2016

Adam Afif Moll



**(Aomine Daiki)**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Inside Cover Page .....	i
Inside Title Page.....	ii
Declaration Page .....	iii
Dedication Page .....	iv
Advisor’s Approval Page .....	v
Examiner’s Approval Page .....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Epigraph.....	ix
Table of Contents.....	x
List of Tables.....	xii
Abstract.....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of Problems .....	9
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	9
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	10
1.5 Definition of Key Terms .....	10
<b>CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Reviews of Related Studies on Virtual Community	



and Issue of Consumption.....	12
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	17
2.2.1 Consumption Pattern.....	18
2.2.2 Consumption and Everyday Life .....	22
<b>CHAPTER III: METHOD OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Research Approach .....	24
3.2 Data Sources.....	25
3.3 Population .....	25
3.4 Sampling .....	26
3.5 Scope and Limitation .....	28
3.6 Technique of Data Collection .....	28
3.7 Technique of Data Analysis .....	33
<b>CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1 D2TCI's Members' Pattern of Consumption.....	35
4.2 Meaning Making of Virtual Items Consumption as Part of Everyday Life .....	51
<b>CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>WORKS CITED.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>66</b>

**LIST OF TABLE**

Page

Table 1: Profile of the Informants..... 27

Table 2: Tiers of *Dota 2*'s Virtual Items..... 39



## ABSTRACT

The concept of freemium game has been applied in recent years due to the result of intense competition in the online game industry. Consequently, game developers and publishers are having their own way to convince players to use their money on virtual items inside the game. As the best Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game in the world, the freemium video game of *Dota 2* successfully induce its players to spend their money on it as evidenced by its world competition in 2015 with the prize pool of \$18,429,613. This phenomena leads the player to create the virtual community called as online trade community. Established in 2012 with the total of 21,339 members, D2TCI (*Dota 2* Trade Center Indonesia) become the biggest and well known online trade community for *Dota 2* players in Indonesia. Thus, this study is conducted to investigate the consumption pattern of the members inside the virtual community of D2TCI and the meanings they embedded toward the items that they buy for the game itself. This qualitative research used Kozinet's consumption pattern model alongside with virtual ethnography as its method. The results taken from in-depth interview with 7 respondents through online chatting provided by the community show that they consume virtual items in the community to show the display of prestige and wealth as a *nouveaux riches*. Thus, it indicates that the members of D2TCI use the power of anonymity to express themselves through their consumption pattern.

**Keywords:** Consumption, consumption pattern, *Dota 2*, freemium game, virtual community, virtual ethnography



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Video game has become one of the dominant forms of entertainment media and an essential source for social lives and leisure activities throughout the world (Griffiths and Hunt 2). More specifically, young generations ranging from adolescents, school-age children, and young adults (age range 20-39) become the most active consumers of video game which heavily permeate their lives and for which they spend a huge amount of time and effort (Gentile and Anderson 141). In addition, it is asserted that the number of users and estimated profits from video games increases over time in a tremendous way (Ho and Huang 761). Online game is an example of video games concept that brought this success. Worldwide revenue from online games is estimated to go from 15.7 billion US dollars in 2010 to 29 billion US dollars in 2016 (DFC Intelligence 4). Online game itself is defined precisely as a game that can be played in virtual world using internet connection without any limit to the number of players from around the world (Setiawan 16). Thus, it can be inferred that any player from all around the world can join and play the game at the same time without any time and space restriction. Due to its success mentioned above, online games actively keep developing new concepts for the players.

Freemium is one example of many concepts that most online game producers applied into the game itself as part of its development. Specifically, freemium concept has been applied in recent years due to the result of intense competition in the online game industry (Evans 2). Free to download and play, but charged for registered features, functionality, and virtual goods (Ibid), freemium game stands for the combination of the word free and premium. Freemium game comes with the format of never-ending game world. This means that the game has no clear end point and can potentially run, and be played, indefinitely (Evans 5). Consequently, game developers and publishers are having their own way to convince players to spend their money on in-game contents (Cheung, Shen and Lee 3). Precisely, they try to induce players to spend money on subscriptions and virtual items for their game (Ibid). It is because the sustainability and success of an online game have always hinged on players who are willing to constantly invest their time and money in the game (5).

As the most actively played game in the world with the genre of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game (Hing, "Dota 2 Prize Pool"), the freemium online game of *Dota 2* successfully instigates its players to engage in the consumption activity as mentioned in advance which is evidenced by *Dota 2* world competition in 2015 with the prize pool of \$18,429,613 (Valve, "Dota 2 Official Blog"). The prize pool comes from the players' subscriptions in the game which is called as *The Compendium*. Indeed, it is the highest prize pool in the history of gaming competition in the world (Bednarski, "Top 5 Largest e-Sports"). Furthermore, the overall rank of this game is 89, 27% from all the games around

the world (Dota 2 Ranking). In addition, Ars Technica, one of the survey website specialized in technology, conducted a massive research on 172 million random *Steam* accounts to find out which game is the most popular today (Santoso, “Top 20 *Steam* Games”). The result reveals that *Dota 2* is the most popular game in the *Steam* with 25,93 million players—making it number one on the list (with the total of 20 popular games including mainstream games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Half-Life 2*, *Portal* and so on) (Ibid).

*Dota 2* itself is a 2013 MOBA video game and the stand-alone sequel to the Defense of the Ancients or famously known as *DoTa* created in 2003 (Drachen, Yancey and Maguire 1). It is developed by Valve in which they hired *IceFrog* (the creator of *DoTa*, its prequel) to help them shape the game into its original gameplay from the prequel. There are two clans that can be played in this game, namely Radiant and Dire. The teams that play *Dota 2* must represent those two clans and compete with each other until they destroy other team’s base and become a winner. One team consists of five players which makes one match of this game consists of ten players in the same arena. One player must choose one over 111 characters (the game call them as Heroes) to represent him/herself to fight alongside their team who already picked one hero for each player as well. Additionally, heroes can be equipped with a variety of virtual items such as hero’s cosmetics and pet to improve their appearance and add new abilities (Drachen, Yancey and Maguire 3). Also, *Steam* is required to access *Dota 2*. It is a personal computer application that works resembling a portal that allows its users to install and access their game through this application. It also provide social networking



through *Steam* chat application that can be used to interact with other players who installed *Steam* as well.

Currently, *Dota 2* has a total of 12,506,680 players (at the time of writing) (Valve, "Dota 2 Official Blog"). When it was first released in 2011 through beta testing, *Dota 2* was purely a free-to-play game which every players in the world can join and test their skill again the others. They play for their personal enjoyment (Wu and Liu 130). In addition, they believe that *Dota 2* is part of their life which make them feel worse when they have not played the game once in a day (Akbar 29). They even created an online fan community. It is type of virtual community where *Dota 2*'s players gather in a forum and share their ideas about the game itself, its strategy, patches, bugs, heroes' combo and many more. They also build a good friendship in there which enables the players to get to know each other better. In short, this community focuses on the game strategy, development, and amity. Afterwards, *Dota 2*'s favorable outcome with a lot of players and fans from all around the world and high prize pool in its 2012 world championship made Valve as the developer of this game changed the concept of *Dota 2* from free-to-play game to freemium game in 2013. Since then, some of its online communities started to shift their role from fan-based community to an online trading community.

Online trading community can be considered as a community for transaction. It is type of virtual community which involves the activities of buying, selling, bartering, and trading among its members. Specifically, Armstrong and Hagel argue that this community primarily facilitate buying and

selling of products and services and deliver information related to those transactions (5). Generally, it has simple design with a lot of message boards from members' post. Message board allows its members to post their needs in the community so others can interact, reply, or ignore the post itself (Setiawan 29). This community does exist in the world of *Dota 2*. It may appear so because it is one of Valve's ways in improving the gamers' loyalty to the game that they played (Hsu and Lu 1642). In this kind of community, the players are no longer asked about the game strategies. Instead, they asked for the in-game content (such as heroes' cosmetics, weapon, etc.), the membership subscription of the game, and anything that may be related to the issue of consumption. In the same way, it can be inferred that they create their own virtual world of marketing. Because of this, some players change their gaming habit from play for fun to buy for fun (Evans 4). This phenomenon makes the players become not only members but also consumers inside the community (Hsiao and Chiou 3). Indeed, they interact each other within the community itself as consumers with the same interest through the internet (Ibid).

As the time goes by, many online trading communities emerged following the successful journey of *Dota 2* as mentioned previously. Most of them become well known for their item betting and trading system, making their members able to bet or trade the items when the competition of *Dota 2* is held. Some examples of these community are *JoinDota* and *GosuGamers Dota 2* from Germany, *Reddit's Dota 2 Betting Lounge* which is originated from a social media named *Reddit* and *Dota2Lounge* from England. Other communities besides those

mentioned also apply the same system since it also gains profit for them. However, others provide their members either with trading system or betting system only. In Southeast Asia, the emergence of *Dota 2* communities does not seem to be significant since *Dota 2* itself is more famous in most Europe countries and China rather than in Southeast Asia (Strom, “The \$18 million Dota 2”). However, each country in Southeast Asia has its own well known community among the players.

Thus, for this study, the researcher specifies and chooses *Dota 2* Trade Center Indonesia or known as D2TCI by Indonesian *Dota 2* players. Beside from its popularity as one of the biggest and most trusted *Dota 2* community in Indonesia, D2TCI works as the main trading center for *Dota 2*'s in-game content in Indonesia with the total current of 21,339 members (Sanjaya, Wijaya and Mahendra “D2TCI”). The members come from various cities in Indonesia, such as Surabaya, Jakarta, Mojokerto, Bandung, Balikpapan, Manado, Jayapura and etc. It is semi-private online community which means that all players from Indonesia can join this community only if they accept the invitation sent by the existing members with or without the permission of the administrator or the leader of the community. Also, there is no age restriction in this community which means that players from any range of age are welcome. This community was founded on 14 June, 2012 by Arif Mahendra and Eka Sanjaya. They aim to provide a place for the Indonesian players to trade with or sell their virtual items to other players. As the number of its members keeps growing, the community starts organizing many events such as items giveaway, trading tutorial and many more. It also has its own

message board displaying the list of scammers and cheaters. This message board is always updated by the members themselves every time they are cheated by someone else in the group. However, D2TCI does not fully help its members when the cheating act happen. In this matter, D2TCI's policy obliges every individual to have their own responsibility in the community.

Here, the researcher looks at the issue of consumption inside the community mentioned previously. As stated earlier, the community provides an in-game content and it comes in the form of virtual items. Virtual items are non-physical objects provided by digital brand creators for use in online games or online communities to enhance players' gameplay or simply for customize the game in order to get new experience rather than casual gameplay (Barr, "Digital goods"). The users can purchase the items by paying for it using virtual money or in-game currency. Since virtual items is categorized as objects, it can be assumed that its meaning is dispersed among the community thus produces a culture. Raymond Williams states that culture is description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meaning and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior (qtd. in Permata 1). The consumption itself emerges as cultural concern which relate closely with meaning. Cultural study discerns consumption as an issue because it deals with how products are consumed and meanings are attached toward the objects through the consumption processes (du Gay et al. 95). This argument supported by Certeau's idea of consumption which states that cultural studies concerned with the issues of consumption because it deals with the 'social' meanings of a text, how text is



appropriated and used in the consumption of everyday lives (qtd. in Permata 17). Because of that, it raises a presumption that the members of D2TCI do an active process in attaching meaning on the virtual items they consumed in the community.

One of the approaches to look at the consumers' consumption activity is by analyzing its pattern. The consumption pattern itself is a particular actions, which have some kind of general, constant character and it can be identified with its "intellectually coherent" feature that can be expressed "as a single system of beliefs and values." (Peterson 422). It is also asserted that consumption pattern defines the aspect of lifestyle that linked to the goods and services which the households consider as adequate for fulfilling their needs (Boulanger 1). In short, it deals with how people usually consume their needs as part of their lifestyle. It can be perceived so because consumption may be related to the culture and it is a powerful force in regulating human behavior (Nayeem 78). In addition, Van Eijck scrutinizes that consumption pattern is manifested through certain interests for certain status groups (Eijck 210). Furthermore, consumption pattern may be related to the online trading community since Kozinets categorizes it as virtual community of consumption in which their consumers continuously interact online because of their shared enthusiasm for and knowledge about specific consumption activities ("E-Tribalized Marketing" 254). Therefore, the consumption pattern is considered as the main topic of this study.

Hence, from the explanation elaborated above, the researcher's aim for this research is formulated as follows: to reveal the issue of consumption from the

members of D2TCI through the application of consumption pattern and their attached meanings toward the virtual items they consumed in the community. The researcher applies Kozinet's concept of consumption pattern within virtual community due to its conformity in clarifying consumer's pattern of consumption especially in online trade community. The researcher attempts to link the members' consumption pattern and virtual community in order to reveal the meaning of consumption in their everyday life. Furthermore, the researcher conducted virtual ethnography with the practice of in-depth interview for each informant selected with purposive sampling method in order to effectively point out the consumers' consumption pattern discussed for this study. Thus, the members' pattern of consumption in online game trade community can be used as a way to see their true intention in consuming virtual items.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

1. How is the consumption pattern manifested in the virtual community of D2TCI?
2. How do the members of D2TCI give meanings toward the virtual items they buy in the community?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This research is conducted to identify the consumption pattern of the members inside the virtual community of D2TCI and the meanings they embedded toward the virtual items that they buy inside the community itself.

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study gives benefit to the readers in understanding the consumer's consumption pattern in the virtual community and how virtual items can fulfill their pleasure as they have their own intention in consuming these items. In addition, this research may encourage the readers to understand what actually drives them in consuming certain things in general since not every single thing people consume in daily life is really useful and matches their purposes. Moreover, it may also give a new perspective to the readers that virtual community does exist and its members do consume things that some people think may not be useful but in fact it is part of their lifestyle. Lastly, this study is expected to give a more significant involvement and information toward the further studies concerning consumption especially for those who want to observe gaming and its cultural involvement as their object of study.

#### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Consumption : The act of consuming, spanning conscious and unconscious levels (Baudrillard 193).

Consumption Pattern : A set of items, which has some kind of general, constant character and it can be identified with its "intellectually coherent" feature that can be expressed "as a single system of beliefs and values." (Peterson 422).

- Dota 2* : MOBA video game created in 2013 and the stand-alone sequel to the Defense of the Ancients or well known as *DoTa* created in 2003 and tells the story about the clash of two clans which are Radiant and Dire (Valve, “Dota 2”).
- Freemium game : Free to download and play, but charged for registered features, functionality, and virtual goods (Evans 2)
- Virtual Community : A social network of individuals who interact through specific social media, potentially crossing geographical and political boundaries in order to pursue mutual interests or goals (Nwokeafor 21).
- Virtual Ethnography : An ethnography that developed as a response to the need to study communities in which the use of electronic communications such as provided by computer networks are routine (Hine 1)



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Reviews of Related Studies on Virtual Community and Issue of Consumption

Numerous studies on consumption pattern and virtual community have been done by several researchers with the application of various methodologies. Specifically, this kind of study can be observed with either quantitative or qualitative approach. However, there are less researches regarding consumption pattern and virtual community as the object of analysis in cultural studies viewpoint. Hence, the researcher opts out two related studies from cultural studies point of view and the rest from other majors that enlighten this study. The first and one of the most significant works for this study comes from Robert Kozinets' study in 1999 entitled "E-Tribalized Marketing?: The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption." Kozinets aims to give deep and coherent explanation about the relation between consumption pattern and virtual community of consumption which is different from other type of community. He tried to analyze how the members' consumption pattern works inside the community and what benefit that the marketers got from this pattern. According to Kozinets, the members of virtual community of consumption depend on two non-independent factors which are the relationship that the person has with the consumption activity inside the community and the intensity of the social relationships the person process with other members ("E-Tribalized Marketing"

254). These factors become the theoretical basis in Kozinets' research because both factors can affect members' consumption pattern.

These factors also become the key for Kozinets in determining the member 'types' and it becomes the strength of this study. Those are *tourist*, *minglers*, *devotees*, and *insiders*. The result found that all types of member are active online participants as a consumers in which they have different consumption pattern based on their category. However, the *insiders* become the most prominent type as a consumers since they have strong ties in both social relationship and personal consumption activity ("E-Tribalized Marketing" 257). They tend to have a good communication with others and also consume more than others (Ibid). Therefore, they could help the marketers grow the community and it became the most influential aspect since they helped the community to survive. Meanwhile, the weakness of this study is that it was not specified since Kozinets only discussed the community in general, not specifically said what community he observed. In addition, his method was a little bit unclear since he only mentioned that he used qualitative approach without any further explanation about it.

Hence, this study will complete the gap from Kozinets' study by specifying the community which is D2TCI and the application of virtual ethnography as the method. It could be more comprehensive since it implements the theoretical basis for the consumption pattern analysis that Kozinets proposed in his study. However, the different lies in the context itself. This study is conducted in Indonesia which belongs to Asian context while Kozinets refers to the western context. Additionally, the year when both studies are conducted become another

distinction in which this study is conducted in 2016 while Kozinet's is in 1999. Therefore, the results might be unlike in particular ways.

The second is Paul Lawton's research in 2005 entitled "Capital and Stratification within Virtual Community: A Case Study of Metafilter.com." This research focused on the forms of active capital in Metafilter virtual community in order to see how it structure its social space (Lawton 3). Generally, it could be said that Lawton's research dealt with class issue by observing the capital systems in the community and its stratification. He applied Pierre Bourdieu's Capital and Social Stratification theory which represent economic, cultural and social capital. He believes that virtual community has similar social class inside it but it may form differently from real world community (21). Qualitative approach was adapted by him along with the application of virtual ethnography. He observed the community for eight months and conducted focused discussion threads (similar to focus group but in online mode) to gain the informants. The result showed that the users of Metafilter had their stratification based on virtual capital. It came from the combination of economic, cultural, and social capital. The virtual capital worked by looking at the users' posting frequency. The user who posted a lot in the community would be called as 'celebrity' since he or she caught others attention. This attention made them gained high status in the Metafilter since they were universally known throughout the community (114). He also mentioned other groups which called as 'notorious', a type of users that only hit the *Love* or *Hate* button at others' post and 'anonymous', a type of users that considered as silent reader (Ibid).

It is clear that Lawton's research does not allude anything about consumption pattern nor the meaning of consumption. However, Lawton's explanation about virtual ethnography in general is very helpful for this study since he breaks down all the specific things about this certain method. In addition, he mentioned a lot about the virtual community as well as the things that usually happen inside it. Furthermore, both studies use qualitative approach. These similarities enrich this study in defining the virtual ethnography itself in a comprehensive way and give supportive argument in the analysis regarding the community itself. On the other hand, the difference can be seen clearly in which the issue discussed is totally different. Also, his virtual ethnography involved focus group discussion instead of in-depth interview. In addition, he did not mention how many informants he got in the data collection section which become its weak point. There is no technique of data analysis, therefore this study is ambiguous since the exact theory applied is unclear as he also mentioned CDA in the framework. Nevertheless, he successfully applied Bourdieu's theory and answered the research question with fine and logic explanation. He proves that virtual community like Metafilter has their own class stratification and those in higher class got special treatment and respect just like the real world community does (Lawton 117).

Bharti Keswani, Sourabhi Chaturvedi, and Sumeet Gupta's research from India in Management Major is chosen as the third related studies entitled "Online Communities: Investigating & Exploring Classification Schema on the Basis of Consumption Pattern." They examined various classifications of virtual



community proposed by different researchers to prevent the adoption of a standard terminology (Keswani, Chaturvedi and Gupta 7). Additionally, the classifications that they proposed could help other researchers in classifying each virtual community through their consumption patterns. They applied quantitative approach which was supported by graphs and statistic data they gathered from virtual community's researchers around the world. They found that the consumer's inside the community and their relationship with each other become the key point for the researchers who want to study about consumption pattern (15).

The last related study is a thesis by Akbar Arsyie who also take *Dota 2* as the object of his research. He comes from Anthropology Major in FISIP UNAIR (Faculty of Social Science and Politic of Airlangga University) with his thesis entitled "Makna Game Online Bagi Gamers di Surabaya." Unfortunately, he did not mention his object specifically in the title of his thesis. Still, he did describe the object, *Dota 2*, in his introduction. He examined what kind of meaning that online gamers especially *Dota 2* players give toward the game itself. He applied qualitative approach which was strengthened by participant observation and in-depth interview to collect the data. He targeted gamers club in Surabaya called ARMY from ARMY's internet café in Panjang Jiwo, Surabaya. As a result, *Dota 2* become their way to fulfill their hobby and relieve them from stress (Akbar 29). They found happiness, pleasure, and comfort when they compete each other in the game itself (Ibid). In addition, they see *Dota 2* as a tool to interact with each other

and create a good synergy among their teammate since togetherness is the key to win the game in *Dota 2* (30).

From the related studies that the researcher mentioned above, it is clear that all of them mostly talk about consumption patterns and meanings, which is similar to this research objective. Qualitative approach is mostly applied, however, one of them use qualitative approach. Various methods of study mentioned above are different from researcher's method of study in this project. In addition, some of them lack of specific details such as Akbar's research that forgot to mention *Dota 2* as its object in his research's title and Keswani's study that did not provide any data analysis technique in the journal. Still, they manage to provide a lot of understanding about *Dota 2*, its consumption pattern and its concept. For example, Keswani's classification of virtual community based on consumption pattern helps the researcher to scope and limit the discussion argued in this research. Furthermore, Akbar's thesis research helps the researcher to define *Dota 2* and gather information regarding both the players and the game especially in Indonesian context. Additionally, some of their explanation about the grand theory of consumption are helpful to expand the view of consumption pattern in relation to the issue of consumption in online community itself.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to explain the concepts of both consumption pattern and its meaning, which is going to be applied in the study of D2TCI and its consumer. Cultural studies approach is used in this study based on Kozinet's Consumption

Pattern theory and Mark Paterson's book entitled *Consumption and Everyday Life* which focused on the meaning of consumption from the point of view of consumer's habit. The researcher breaks down both theories below to get better understanding and comprehensive analysis. In addition, the researcher provides some theoretical arguments of cultural consumption in order to give more explanation about consumption practices from cultural studies point of view.

### **2.2.1 Consumption Pattern**

Consumption defines precisely the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as a sign, as a sign value and where signs are produced as commodities (Baudrillard 193). Where consumerism is the idea or ideology of the consumer society, consumption is the act of consuming, or of being consumed (Ibid). It is consumption that marks the consumer society's behavior. The consumers need to satisfy themselves through the enjoyment with the thing they want, which they find it in the process of consumption (Ibid). The objects of enjoyment that they consume are no longer purchased for their use value (Ibid). Rather, these objects could have attached meanings which given by the consumers themselves (Permata 7). If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'— in other words, consumption deals with meaning (14).

The meaning-making process itself usually comes with the production of consumption which the producers their part in giving the meaning toward the product and lead the consumer to become 'passive' (16). However, the consumption practice nowadays gives the consumers the privilege to attach

meaning through their consumption (Ibid). This process is produced by the consumers through the use of objects in the practice of their everyday lives (qtd. in Permata 17). Furthermore, Bocoock in his book entitled *Consumption* emphasizes that consumption has been seen as exemplifying the post-modernity, for it implies a move away from productive work roles being central to people's lives, to their sense of identity, of who they are (Bocoock 4). Also, consumption can be seen as predominantly active rather than passive process in which goods were translated from mere commodities into meaningful objects of cultural life because it involved people in making it meaningful through their use in the practice of their everyday lives (du Gay, Hall and Janes 119). According to Peterson, consumption in cultural point of view often empirically analyzed in the form of its patterns (Peterson 424). It is because the consumption pattern helps to bring forward the predominant features of consumption and its objects, as well as consumers' relationship to those objects (Virtanen 2). Such patterns also help to define the members of a status group, to preserve its status-honor, its social and cultural esteem, in its own eyes, and in the eyes of others in the social formation who share the same cultural values (Bocoock 6).

Kozinets, in his research about virtual communities of consumption, defines online trade community as a specific subgroup of virtual community that explicitly center upon consumption-related interest (262). The community itself manifests two factors related to the consumption activity and the members (Ibid). Both relations can be observed using consumption pattern (Ibid). Consumption pattern in online trade community is one in which consumption knowledge is



developed in coordination with social relations (Walther 53). According to Kozinets, consumption knowledge inside the community is its cultural norms, specialized language and concepts, and the identities of experts and other group members ("On Netnography" 367). Hence, this kind of knowledge can be gained through the research question, which is important in understanding the consumption pattern inside certain virtual community ("E-Tribalized Marketing" 254). It involves who the consumers are, what they consume, where they consume, when they consume, how they consume, why they consume, and what their opinions are toward the things that they buy (*Marketer's Secret Weapon* 6). Those seven major questions work as a model that can be selected based on what is needed from one to seven themes to point out the members' pattern of consumption (Ibid).

Furthermore, Kozinets also point out four category of online trade community members who can be the target to conduct consumption pattern study. The first is the *tourists* who are lack of strong social ties to the group, and maintain only a superficial or passing interest in the consumption activity ("E-Tribalized Marketing" 254). This type is not significantly interested in bonding with the other members nor in the consumption activity. The second is *minglers* who maintain strong social ties, but who are only perfunctorily interested in the central consumption activity (Ibid). This type is tend to be devoted to social bonds with other members rather than to consumption related activities. Next, we got *devotees* who have strong interested in consumption related activities, but less involved by the relational aspects of the community. They maintain strong interest

and enthusiasm in consumption, while having few social attachments to the group (Ibid). The last type is called as *insiders* who have strong social ties with other members and active consumption doings inside the community (255). They are deeply involved with the consumption activity that happens in the community. They also maintain good relationship with other members in order to stay in his or her position gained in the community such as its administrators and editors.

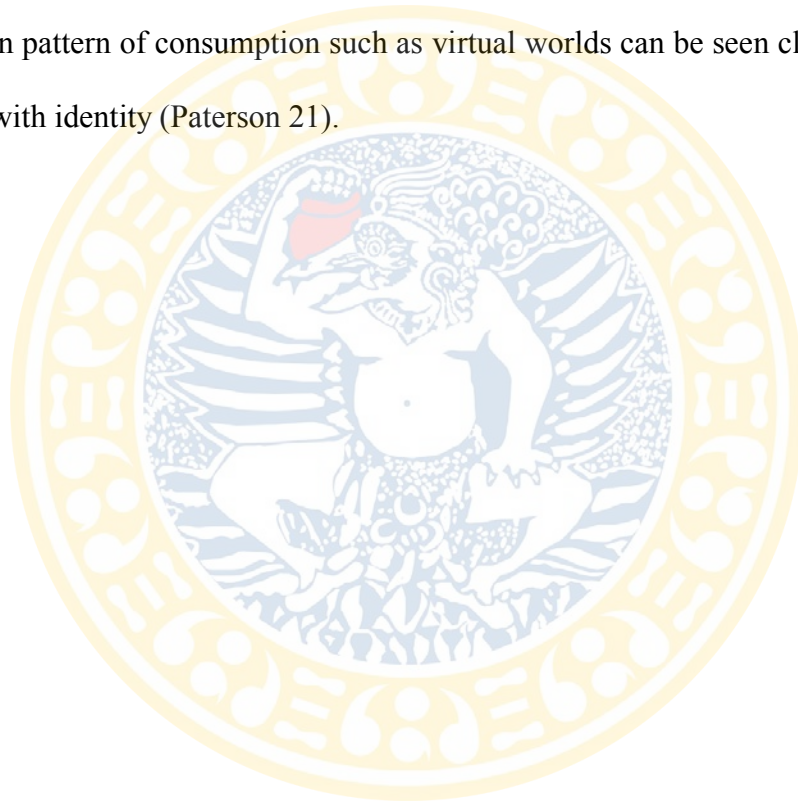
Indeed, each category has its own pattern of consumption. Additionally, the virtual community itself may propagate the development of loyalty and heavy usage by reinforcing consumption culturally and socially (“E-Tribalized Marketing” 256). Hence, *tourist* and *minglers* could be ‘upgraded’ to *insiders* and *devotees*. (Ibid). In short, it can be said that one could become *insiders* and *devotees* if they already gained online experience and discovered things in the community that assuage their needs on and on again. Also, good bonding with other members considered as the success factor as well. In order to form alliances with them, Kozinets argued that it is useful to understand their forms that affect their consumption activities in the first place (257). They usually formed in what so called as *Board*, which is perhaps the most directly consumption-related communities (262). Their membership includes a respectable concentration of *insiders* and *devotees*, and few *minglers*. They post a thread which contain information about their needs, waiting for someone who may respond and offer what they looking for. This detailed information provided by themselves could lead to their consumption pattern (Ibid).

### 2.2.2 Consumption and Everyday Life

In general, the term 'everyday life' relates with a common activity, things that happen with great frequency (Paterson 5). However, the notion of consumption as part of everyday life is more than just the simplicity of our daily needs. De Certeau argued that consumption in everyday life appears in form of creative appropriation which intensify buying and using an object for a purpose other than the intended one (qtd. in Paterson 7). Mark Paterson in his book entitled *Consumption and Everyday Life* explains that consumption emulates both conscious and unconscious processes which reveal very complex dialogues and transactions to do with identity, status, aspirations, cultural capital, and position within a social group (Ibid). The consumers usually make a bond with others in doing those actions. The more wants that are satisfied, the more new ones are born (qtd. in Paterson 1). In addition, the most consumer issue that happens in the everyday life is that the consumer in lower socio-economic positions wish to eat and dress in a way that emulates the trendsetters and carried away by fashions and fancies (18). The differences in the ability to consume based on the income distribution have no impact toward the differentiation in consumption itself (Ibid). In the same way, it can be said that despite the social position and income levels, by and large people often desire and aspire the same things which has something to do with the identity (Ibid).

The various commodities in our life increase the competitive consumption as a marker of social status throughout the hierarchy (Paterson 20). Thus, the demand prefers to the terms of choice in the consumption of goods rather than the

taste (Ibid). This condition increases the customers' standard of living of as well as reasserting their individuality and sense of identity to be noted as an elite class (Ibid). The deepest problem of modern life derive from the claim of the individuals to preserve the autonomy and individuality of their existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of external culture, and of the technique of life (Farganis 136). Thus, the connection between new urban forms of life and modern pattern of consumption such as virtual worlds can be seen clearly, since it deals with identity (Paterson 21).





## CHAPTER III

### METHOD OF THE STUDY

#### 3.1 Research Approach

Since the target of this research is a virtual community, the researcher conducted virtual ethnography research toward *Dota 2* Trade Center Indonesia. Virtual ethnography is considered to be a variant of traditional ethnographic techniques which involve observational and interviewing methods to inspect the ways in which meaning is constructed in online environments, and assemble its systematic framework from the sources of conversation analysis (Cavanagh 4). According to Hammersley and Atkinson, the ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned (1).

Furthermore, this research is part of qualitative research which study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1). In addition, most published research on virtual community have used qualitative approaches, seeking mostly from ethnography and conversation analysis (Kinnevy and Enosh 121). Qualitative approach is used for deeper analysis to reveal the meaning that consumer embedded from their consumption pattern. The researcher also believes that this research is part of interpretive approach since it deals with how the reality

experienced by people (Jackson 9). The results of the interviews are described and explained in the form of explanations and description based on the researcher's interpretation from the data that have been gathered.

### 3.2 Data Sources

The primary data of this research is the responses from D2TCI members who have been interviewed from April 14-30, 2016. Specifically, the data came from the question they answered during the interview through the chat logs provided by *Steam* since it becomes the only way to access the community itself. The researcher also took screenshot of D2TCI, *Dota 2*, *Steam*, informants' profile, and the preview of chat logs as the appendix for this research in order to give clearer image of the issue being discussed. For the secondary data, the researcher used articles, journals, books, websites, and related studies that are associated with the applied theory and also support the analysis of consumption pattern and the meaning given by the consumers in order to make this research reliable.

### 3.3 Population

*Dota 2* Trade Center Indonesia current members become the population for this research with total of 21,339 account from many countries in Indonesia (Sanjaya, Wijaya and Mahendra, "D2TCI"). Some of them are not active members. Yet, their activeness still can be seen from its discussion thread. Hence, the researcher chose them regarding their popularity in the community and also their consumption activity in order to get valid data. Specifically, the researcher

selected them as the data population based on their good reputation among other members and well-experienced ones. The good reputation can be earned through the successful transaction with other members. Furthermore, well experienced members can be seen from their time period in the community and their understanding about the community. These criteria are created based on the belief that they have more knowledge and consumption activity in the community rather than the new users, who are mostly expected as scammers or cheaters. It is also suggested by Kozinets since such criteria are representative enough to be observed as the most active consumers in the community (*The Marketer's Secret Weapon* 6). There are no limitation regarding age, gender, or place in this study because the researcher used virtual ethnography which is able to interact with any kind of people through virtual world. Thus, the data taken from them are based on their lot of experience and transaction in the community.

### **3.4 Sampling**

The researcher used purposive sampling in order to get the data from informants. It started with field investigations on some group, in order to ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study (Berg 33). From 21,339 members, the researcher narrowed down the sample into 11 informants that fit well with this study's criteria as it mentioned above in the population section. However, the researcher determined 7 informants for this research and they are sufficient enough to be analyzed and become sampling in this study. It was because the researcher had limited time and

fund in approaching the informants and conduct the interview. The informants were not available every day since they have their own business in the real world. Thus, the researcher found it hard for to approach them. Some of them were also not available in the community due to their “offline” profile status, which indicates that they will not be active for some time. Furthermore, the researcher had to spend IDR 150.000-350.000 to buy the virtual items from each informant since it was their demand to the researcher so they want to be interviewed. Here, the researcher has already joined D2TCI since July, 2015. At that time, the researcher began to explore the community, studying its features, members, and relations to the game itself which is *Dota 2*. However, the researcher began to conduct the interview in early April, 2016. Specifically, the informants’ profile and their interview date can be seen in the table below:

No	Informant’s name	Informant’s account name	Occupation	Age	Position in the community	Joined date	Interview date
1	I Made Yance Wiryanata	[81]kke	College student	21	Member	February, 2015	April 14, 2016
2	Jevry	Keepsmile	College student	21	Member	Early 2015	April 20, 2016
3	Wira Wijaya	-Wr-	Freelance	30	Co-Founder and Administrators	Early 2013	April 20, 2016
4	Arif Mahendra	Shadow_bike [csgotrade.com]	Freelance	25	Founder and Administrators	June 14, 2012	April 20, 2016
5	Lutfi Herlambang	Risdi	High school student	18	Member	January, 2014	April 20, 2016
6	Bima Kuntoro	BERUBO [WTS/WTB/MM]	Private employee	25	Member	November, 2013	April 20, 2016



7	Anton Faisal Fidiyanto	Sigmund Freud	High school student	18	Member	March, 2014	April 30, 2016
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**Table 1: Profile of the Informants**

### 3.5 Scope and Limitation

This research focuses only on D2TCI as an online trading community and its members. Therefore, this research does not discuss only on the game, the community, and the members in particular but how the relationship is made between those three factors toward the pattern of consumption which later reveal the meaning of consumption in relation with everyday life.

### 3.6 Technique of Data Collection

In order to collect the data, the researcher adopted virtual ethnography from Lawton's research as it has been mentioned above in the reviews of related studies. Lawton's virtual ethnography comes with the primary considerations for the researcher in which they are dealing with nothing except text and images (Lawton 38). This argument is supported by Thomson et al. who claims that virtual communities serve the researcher with nothing but text, making the ethnographer cannot observe people other than through their textual contributions to a forum (4). It means that virtual ethnography in virtual communities only deal with verbal form of text since there are no other matters to be analyzed other than text itself.

The virtual ethnography, that Lawton proposed, considers online in-depth interview with each informant as it way to collect the data. In-depth interview, as part of qualitative research, is very helpful for this research because it provides the detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or to explore new issues in depth (Boyce and Neale 3). It is supported by Sugiyono who states that in-depth interview is used with the aim to observe the issue blatantly, in which the interviewee is asked the opinion and idea about certain issue (Sugiyono 233). Here, the researcher used *Steam* online chat system as a tool for the interview. It is a built-in chat system which is provided by *Steam*. This application becomes the members' way to interact with each other within the community. Accordingly, the researcher assured that the data collection would be easier and faster since it conform the advanced technology we are living to now (Roesdiono 26).

However, the researcher found difficulty to search the members based on this study's criteria since D2TCI does not provide the data of joined date of its members. There are no option to sort the joined date, transaction that has been done by the members, and member's reputation in the community. Still, the members' joined date can be obtained by asking them directly through the chat box provided by *Steam* or through the administrators. Yet, this condition makes the members feel insecure since they easily compromised by the scammers and cheaters who mostly come as newcomers but act like they have joined the community for long time (Sanjaya, Wijaya and Mahendra, "D2TCI"). Thus, the researcher introduced himself and explained his intention about this study to all the informants to avoid any possible misunderstandings.

The researcher began to observe, learn, and interact with the members in D2TCI since July 2015. It is when the researcher joined the community at the first time. Then, in March 29 2016, the researcher asked Arif as one of the administrators in D2TCI about the members' data that suitable with this study's criteria mentioned above. The researcher also asked if he was willing to be interviewed or not. It is because he is one of the administrators. It is expected that the administrator is also suitable with this study's criteria since they are certainly well reputed and well known in the community. Nevertheless, he said that those data were classified to be given and shared to the public. Yet, he provided names of the members that have big influence in the community. Most of them are suitable with the criteria for this study. However, he did not answer the researcher's question regarding the interview and went offline directly from *Steam*.

Then, the researcher began the first interview in April 14, 2016 with Yance since the researcher already known him from the transaction that we made in the community regarding heroes' cosmetics. He also stated that the researcher had to buy other members' items as well to trigger their eagerness in responding the interview. Because of that, the researcher delayed the other interviews that were supposed to be in the same date with the first interview in order to collect some money. The researcher began to conduct the interview again in April 20, 2016 in which Arif suddenly replied researcher's question about the interview. After that, the researcher conducted the other interviews with the other members mentioned above.

Here, the interview was conducted by the researcher according to the schedule that has been negotiated by both researcher and informants. However, the researcher let the informants decide the time. The researcher believes that such condition could make the interviews going smoothly and enjoyable for informants without being ordered or controlled by the researcher. Fortunately, all of the informants were available to be interviewed at the moment the researcher asked them to do so. However, only 7 informants were available at that time since the 4 others refused and ignored researcher's chat because of the reason mentioned in sampling above. The interview in April 20, 2016 began from 11.13 WIB until 19.35 WIB. In addition, it took 40 minutes – 1.5 hours for each informant. The last interview ended with Anton in April 30, 2016. Actually, the researcher already contacted him in April 20, 2016 like the others. However, he said that he was still busy at that time regarding national exam and other school concerns.

The interview itself aims to answer Kozinet's model regarding consumption pattern in virtual community which involves about who the consumers are, what they consume, where they consume, when they consume, and how they consume (*Marketer's Secret Weapon* 6). Here, the researcher only chose five out of seven question from Kozinet's model because those are considered sufficient to analyze this case. In addition, the researcher used field notes during the interview in order to transcribe the important discussion in the interview that came out from the online chat. This note may come handy for the researcher's analysis process. The researcher used Bahasa as the primary language during the interview to make the informants easily understand every questions and answer it precisely. The



researcher has already prepare the essential questions to be asked during the interview and it can be seen from the following list:

1. Since when have you played *Dota 2*? Why?
2. Where is the first time you play *Dota 2*?
3. How many times do you spend to play *Dota 2*? Why?
4. Since when do you join D2TCI? Why?
5. What activities do you do inside the community?
6. How much do you spend your money in the community? For what if I may know?
7. When do you usually buy the items?
8. Where do you get the money to maintain your *Dota 2* account for the community?
9. What do you feel when you play *Dota 2* with the heroes' cosmetics, weapon, music pack, *Compendium* or any virtual items that you buy in the community?
10. Do you usually use those items when you play? Why?
11. Are there any other online games that you play? If yes, do you buy the *in-game content* in the community just like *Dota 2*?
12. What kind of contribution that you have given for the community regarding your activity?
13. Could you give your opinions regarding the community and its system in serving its members?

The researcher also asked some additional questions such as name, occupation, age, and anything related to the topic during the interview to make the conversation in great atmosphere for both researcher and informant. It may also support the analysis of the data. Indeed, the researcher asked for their permission if their profile data and the screenshot of their transaction could be showed in the thesis or not as part of ethical consideration. Fortunately, all informants let the researcher show and screenshot their profile data. However, none of them allowed the researcher to screenshot their transaction in the community. Still, there were no problems at all during interview since all of them were cooperative with the researcher. Finally, the researcher translated the data collected from Bahasa to English. All of these questions are placed in the appendix along with the screenshot.

### **3.7 Technique of Data Analysis**

The analysis is done based on the data that has been collected with the consumption pattern theory for virtual community developed by Kozinets as it mentioned above. The output of this research is prepared in form of qualitative data which is written text. It is expected to get inclusive understanding of the topic in this study with an interpretative analysis. Its conceptual framework is develop through Kozinets' model that correlate with its explanation as the following:

- Who the consumers are → characteristic of the members
- What they consume → types of things that they buy
- Where they consume → location of the things that the buy

- When they consume → the time consuming
- How they consume → the way they consume the things

From there, chronologically the researcher did the analysis as following:

- 1) Convert the interview data from *Steam* chat logs into Microsoft Word's document.
- 2) Divide the analysis into two parts.
- 3) The first part contains pattern of consumption from each informants in form of explanation. Specifically, it described the conceptual framework developed by Kozinets that is mentioned above. The data were categorized into five themes namely consumer groups, type of items consumed, location of consumption, time of consumption, and ways of consumption which represent each informant's pattern of consumption. From there, the informants were categorized whether they are tourists, minglers, devotees, or insiders based on their pattern of consumption along with its case discussion.
- 4) The last part contains researcher's interpretation for the findings taken from members' pattern of consumption in relation with social emulation, meanings of consumption and the context of everyday life.
- 5) Draw conclusion.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 D2TCI Members' Pattern of Consumption**

This chapter discusses about the findings of the study regarding D2TCI members' pattern of consumption and the discussion in which completely elucidated the analysis. The researcher categorized the data taken from D2TCI members regarding their consumption pattern into five themes that represent Kozinets' model. This study has total numbers of 7 informants from D2TCI members that suit well with criteria explained above. It is true that each informant comes from different background. This lead to their different pattern of consumption. Thus, the researcher breaks down the categorized data as following:

##### **1. Consumer Groups**

Consumer group deals with the characteristics of the member (Khongtong, Ab Karim and Othman 128). It comes from the question who the consumer is. D2TCI members in general are the consumers in this case. Specifically, they consist of new and existing members who look for specific items they want, sellers, traders (members who look for trade items activity rather than buy and sell), and even cheaters and scammers who usually lie and fool the members when they have transaction with them. From the interview that the researcher conducted with the informants, it can be asserted that they come from different age, region, and occupation. Indeed, they are all the most significant members in the D2TCI.



The first group is high school student aged lower than 20 years old. They are Anton (18) and Lutfi (17). Anton who comes from Surabaya told that he joined D2TCI at the first time because he looked for cheap and negotiable items (Fidianto). Before he knew about the community, he wanted to buy directly through *Steam* but the price is relatively higher than the items in the community and it is not negotiable (Ibid). He joined as the new members in the community in March, 2014 when his friend told that the community provide better transaction system (Ibid). Now, he become constant buyer in D2TCI and also a trader (Ibid). In the other hand, Lutfi who comes from Depok said that he joined D2TCI to find rare items that are not available in the *Steam* store (Herlambang). He joined two months before Anton which is in January, 2014 (Ibid). Just like Anton, he is a constant buyer in the community who hunt for the rare items only but he is not a trader (Ibid). He tend to be a collector of rare items (Ibid).

The second group comes from college students. They are I Made Yance (21) and Jevry (21). Both of them are 6<sup>th</sup> semester student. Yance who originates from Bali asserted that he joined D2TCI in August, 2014 because of his eagerness to find cheap items from Indonesian sellers there (Wiryanata). He also said that the Wi-Fi feature that has been installed in his home recently become one aspect of his items consumption (Ibid). It is because his gaming schedule was not as often as now when he got the Wi-Fi (Ibid). However, Jevry comes with different case. He joined D2TCI in early 2015 to buy items and sell it again there with higher price (Jevry). In the same way, we can say that he is a seller. He asserted that he

can get easy money from this way since the consumers' demand on the D2TCI is very high regarding heroes' cosmetics item.

The last group is the elder that mostly come from the administrators of the community. They are Wira Wijaya (30), Arif Mahendra (25), and Bima Kuntoro (25). Both Wira and Arif are freelancer. Their job mostly deal with internet stuff in which they make money from it. One of their most profitable job comes from selling *Dota 2* items and *Steam Wallet* (an in-game currency to buy games, virtual items, and downloadable contents from *Steam*). Wira stated that he began to join D2TCI in early 2013 because he wanted to give Indonesian people a place for trading and sharing anything related to *Dota 2* items (Wijaya). He did it together with Arif and Eka Sanjaya as the founder of this community (Ibid). Wira's arrival in the community influence its development until it become as famous as now. As an administrator, he got crucial position which involve anything related to the cybercrimes inside the community (Ibid). He is the one who busted all the cheaters and scammers that have been found by the members. He also settled the problem that occur between sellers and buyers inside the community (Ibid). Even though he did that jobs, he still play *Dota 2* and buy the items from the community. Moreover, he usually keeps rare items until its price get higher than before so he can sell and get profit from it.

Likewise, Arif has the same background like Wira. However, his position in the community is different from Wira. Arif acts as the person who give new information regarding *Dota 2* items and establish an event for the community such as giveaway items, lottery, and so on. His "buy and sell" activity in the

community also greater than Wira since he said that he focus a lot on this job because of the huge profit that it can gain (Mahendra). He also said that he is the one who invent the idea of “*Suntik Wallet*.” It is a system in which the buyer sell his or her items in the *Steam* market, then ask the seller from the community to buy his items with the determined price from both party so the buyer can get full fund from it (Ibid). This system makes him get a lot of money from his buyer and then he uses it for buying the items in the community (Ibid).

In the other hand, Bima who already joined the community since November, 2013 said that D2TCI is interesting community because he can find a lot of items that he wanted for so long (Kuntoro). In addition, he convinced that the members consist of good sellers, buyers, and traders until cheaters and scammers came into the community in 2014 (Ibid). He said that he is cheated by two sellers already in 2014 which made him lost Rp 500.000,00 (Ibid). Because of that, he tried to become cheaters once in order to revenge his bad luck before. (Ibid). However, his attempt was unsuccessful after his customers reported his bank account and it is blocked by the bank because of allegations of fraud (Ibid). 5 months after the case, he said that he went back to D2TCI and become constant buyers as he did before until now (Ibid). He spent more money than before to keep up with the new items that he has been missed in 5 months ago (Ibid).

## **2. Type of Items Consumed**

This section deals with the answer from the question what items they consume. Here, the researcher tries to explain the virtual items of *Dota 2* first

before break down the informants' pattern of consumption regarding their preferred items. In general, the virtual items in *Dota 2* aim to give its players various customization when they played the game. The customization itself can be used in some aspects of the game itself such as heroes, terrain, players' toolbar or usually called as HUD (Head-Up Display), the pet or heroes' companion, emoticons, music, and so on. It may be expected that this items could give the players different sensation and scenery that make them more excited to play rather than in its default form. In addition, the items have their own rarity and quality value. While rarity represents the type of items in the gameplay, quality act as its price determiner. The higher the rarity is, the more you get your game customizations will be. Similarly, the higher the items quality, the more you must pay for that items. These conditions make those two aspects become tradable and marketable since they have price based on the range from low to high between quality and rarity. The price itself comes in form of players' country's currency. For example, the player who registered his or her account in Indonesia will automatically applied Rupiah as his or her *in-game currency*. Furthermore, these items can be found easily in *Steam* market. It is also *Steam* that determine the fixed price of all the items. The tiers of items' rarity and quality can be seen in the table below:

No.	Rarity	Quality
1	Arcana	Genuine
2	Immortal	Elder
3	Ancient	Self-Made
4	Legendary	Exalted
5	Mythical	Heroic
6	Rare	Auspicious



7	Uncommon	Frozen
8	Common	Cursed
9		Unusual
10		Corrupted
11		Autographed
12		Ascendant
13		Inscribed
14		Normal

**Table 2: Tiers of *Dota 2*'s Virtual Items from High (No.1) to Low (No.8 for Rarity and No. 14 for Quality)**

Hence, D2TCI adapts the same concept above regarding items' rarity and quality. However, the different between D2TCI and official market of *Steam* located in their payment system. While *Steam* market set their payment system using virtual money in form of *in-game currency*, D2TCI let the sellers inside it to give option toward the players regarding the payment system. They can buy the items by directly transfer the money to the sellers' bank account. They also can make an agreement for both sellers and buyers to go for cash on delivery system in which they must meet in the real world to do the transaction. In addition, the sellers in D2TCI provide equal or lower price than *Steam* market. It is because D2TCI does not prohibit its sellers in terms of price. The sellers have their own right to decide the price no matter what rarity or quality of that items. Yet, most of them still refer their price according to the *Steam* market since it is the official market of the items.

Indeed, just like the researcher mentioned before, the informants have their own preferred items that they usually consume. Their explanation about it can be seen from the informants' excerpt below:

“Well...basically, I love any items especially heroes cosmetics and couriers.....I got full cosmetics collection of them from Arcana to Common. I always buy Compendium too. I have spent IDR 1.500.000 more or less for all of those items if I am not mistaken.” (Fidianto)

“I do love rare items.....Usually, these items have Auspicious, Frozen, and Unusual quality..... I have spent IDR 11.000.000 more or less in D2TCI. The most expensive item that I ever bought is Unusual Gold Baby Roshan. I bought it for IDR 6.000.000 from the community. Now, I can sell this item for up to IDR 15.000.000 if I want hahaha. I rarely bought Compendium, only some of them if they offer great prize.” (Herlambang)

“I usually buy support heroes' cosmetics. The most expensive items that I ever bought in D2TCI was Crystal Maiden's Arcana named Frostbite Avalanche with Genuine quality. It was cost around IDR 500.000. For total of my consumption activity, I have spent around IDR 2.000.000. Also, I bought Fall Season and Winter Season Compendium 2016 this year because they have a lot of support heroes' cosmetics as its prize.” (Wiryanata)

“Hmm....I actually buy every items no matter what its quality or rarity.....I am not quite sure about the most expensive items that I ever bought since I usually buy a lot of expensive items such as Ursa's Alpine Stalker Set for IDR

5.000.000 and The Defense Season 2 War Dog courier for IDR 3.500.000.

Also, I have spent more than IDR 150.000.000 in the community.” (Jevry)

“Yes, I do buy items in my own community. I buy everything that is popular at that time. For example, heroes like PA, Axe, LC, and OD are very popular right now. The Compendium is also very popular especially when the major tournaments are coming.....I won't tell you about how much I spent, but I got more than IDR 50.000.000 from this job. Not to mention my Suntik Wallet job which become very popular right now in the community that makes me get money easily.” (Mahendra)

“I buy items that provide good visual and a lot of customization such as Mythical, Immortal, and Arcana-type. I have spent IDR 3.000.000 for the items but I have spent more of my time, internet and electrical fee than the items for the sake of the community to be better than before.” (Wijaya)

“I do love unique items that give me new sensation so I can't get bored easily. For example, the music pack...I love Heroes Within music pack, it spurs my adrenaline when I play. Heroes' cosmetics that have glowing effect like Terrorblade's Arcana with Genuine Prismatic Gem, Immortal Treasure Box that contains a lot of bling-bling and shiny items like Rubick's Staff of Perplex and many more. I also buy every Compendium in Dota 2 because I want to support its major tournament. Well, I guess I have spent more than IDR 100.000.000 in D2TCI and I won't stop here. I believe the creators still have a lot of items that can satisfy me.” (Kuntoro)

### 3. Location of Consumption

This section deals with the source where the informants get their items. Basically, they can get *Dota 2* items by buy it from the *Steam* market. However, they can acquire the items in D2TCI through the traders, sellers, and giveaway events. Traders is someone who offers an items-with-items trading system with other members. In the other hand, sellers is someone who sell the items to other members and only accept money by transfer it to their bank account or use *cash on delivery* system mentioned above in 4.1.2 as the payment method. Then, giveaway events is held by the administrators of D2TCI in which they ask the members to buy the items inside the community using middleman system. The middleman system allows the members to transfer the money to the administrators first rather than the sellers. The sellers must then send the items in order to get the money from the administrators. This payment system can be used to reduce the risk of fraud and also become one and only criteria in every giveaway event in the community. The more they buy using this payment method, the more they get items from the events.

The researcher found that they get their items from different sources. The following excerpts show their preferred source where they get the items:

“I prefer to buy the items from trusted sellers that I know. I got a lot of them in my contacts. The reason is because they provide lower price than any others in the community. They also give discount and free items to sometimes.”

(Fidianto)



“I usually buy the items from various trusted sellers in the community since I know most of them, even the cheaters and scammers. Some while, I also trade one of my collection with the traders who got the items that I want.”  
(Herlambang)

“I get my items from the Denpasar’ sellers and traders who also join the community. However, I like to buy more than trade. It is because I want to keep my items as much as possible.” (Wiryanata)

“I’m a seller myself and I get my items from other sellers indeed. I usually buy from the sellers who sell the items cheaper than the market. I also do trade but only few times.” (Jevry)

“I buy from the any trusted sellers in the community. I also trade my items with any negotiable traders. It is because I can sell my items again later.”  
(Mahendra)

“I get my items from the sellers and traders that I know in the community. I also buy it directly through the market sometimes.” (Wijaya)

“Most of my items come from the trusted sellers that I know since I join this community. I also trade with the traders few times. Moreover, since I usually use middleman system, I got a lot of items from giveaway events that has been held twice in this community.” (Kuntoro)

#### **4. Time of Consumption**

This section deals with when the consumer consume their needs. The consumer's time of consumption does matter in the consumption pattern. It shows their preferred moment of consuming the products. Indeed, this preference comes with reason. In general, members in D2TCI consume their needs at any time they want. They can buy the items in the morning, afternoon, night, or even midnight if the sellers still up at that time. However, the data taken from the informants showed that they have their own specific time of consumption. It can be seen from the following excerpts:

“I usually shop in D2TCI when I got home from school because it is also the time I play Dota 2.....When I first joined D2TCI, I can buy up to 12 items each week. However, I only buy 15 items in a month recently since I must focus on my study as well.” (Fidianto)

“My shopping time is uncertain actually. I usually collect money first before shopping. It is because rare items have higher price compared to other items. When I got the money, I can buy up to 7 rare items in a single day.” (Herlambang)

“I always buy support heroes' cosmetics whenever the new items appear. Especially if it deals with my preferred heroes, I'll go buy it directly.....I can buy up to 6 items each week only for support heroes.” (Wiryanata)

“I play Dota 2 for 7-10 hours in a day. It is because I am a seller as well. Hence, buy and sell activity become part of my daily life. I can buy up to 45

items in the community each week. Also, my consumption activity getting higher when major tournament of Dota 2 are being held by Steam. It is because I can buy and sell the items at that time since there are a bunch of new items come up later than usual day.” (Jevry)

“I buy 5-6 items in the community in two weeks. Then, I sell it again in the next week or wait until customers’ interest on that items are getting high so I can sell it with higher price. Currently, I rarely buy items since I have a lot of them already. I am focusing my time for selling and Suntik Wallet activity right now.” (Mahendra)

“I rarely buy any items these days. I want to focus on my job in D2TCI as a middleman and seller. However, I bought up to 15 items in a week back then.” (Wijaya)

“I play Dota 2 every day around 7-8 P.M. So, I buy the items in the community at that time as well. I can buy up to 30 items in a month.” (Kuntoro)

## **5. Ways of Consumption**

This section deals with the answer from the question how the consumers consume their needs. Specifically, consumers’ step in using the items they consumed become the main topic in this section. It is important to understand the step because the function of the items can be seen clearly from it. The data taken

from the interview showed that the informants make use of the items in totally different way to each other. It can be seen from some of the following excerpts:

“Actually, my allowance is uncertain. It can be IDR 500.000, 650.000, 700.000...it’s really up to my parents. I never asked them to give certain amount. From my allowance, I usually buy the items from many sellers so I can know them well. I have so many friends in the community and I do love trading my item with them also.” (Fidianto)

“I got IDR 300.000 each week from my uncle who work in Singapore. I always save this money until I can buy the items. Then, I play the pub match directly to test the items that I buy. I love it when people that play with me give commend towards my items.” (Herlambang)

“I got only IDR 500.000 per month from my parent. Since I use that money not only for items but my daily life as well, I always save the money to shop in D2TCI. After I buy the items, I feel happy to be the one whom different from the other in the game. I also get a lot of friends because I make transaction with a lot of members there.” (Wiryanata)

“My main source of fund is the allowance that my parents give to me each week. It’s about IDR 800.000-1.000.000. I do save my money so I can buy more expensive items than I’ve bought before. I sell the items as well so I get double source of fund. I have been cheated once, so I focus only on buy the items right now rather than interact with people inside D2TCI.” (Jevry)



“I got my money from middleman service in the community and buy and sell activity. I also get salary from my freelance job. I receive up to IDR 2.000.000 each month from both source. From my 3.200 hours record of playing Dota 2, I use the items I bought to get visual satisfaction. I always heroes cosmetics whenever I play. However, I still focus to my job as an administrators in D2TCI because the members need me to solve the cheating problem among them. By solving the problems, I met new people from different areas in Indonesia.” (Wijaya)

“I got a lot of profit from buy and sell activity inside the community. I can't tell you how much I got from it but I feel proud to show this to the players in the game and the members inside the community. They all know me well. Because of that, I also build good relationship with others in the community.” (Mahendra)

“I got IDR 5.000.000 each month from my salary. Then, I go directly open Steam app from my phone and shop in D2TCI afterward. My items are for collection. I collect these items so people will know that I am a collector and possessed most of Dota 2 items. Basically, these items are part of my identity. Its customization always impress me and it will always be....sound weird, eh? But yeah, it's important for me.” (Kuntoro)

From those pattern, the researcher found that the informants belong to three type of members namely minglers, devotees, and insiders. However, none of the informants are belong to tourist type of members because they already done the

consumption activity and interaction with other members. There are three points that become major concern found in this research regarding those types. The first is minglers that is occupied only by Anton. As it already stated above, minglers focus more on the relationship with the members inside the community than their own consumption activity. It is false if we say that they do not involve in any consumption activity. They still do it but for the sake of good relationship with others. Anton's pattern of consumption has proven that. He spent IDR 1.500.000 from lot of trusted sellers in the community. He only buy 15 items each month which mostly consist of heroes' cosmetics that suit his needs. He got the money from his parents to do all that and he spent it for the items because he wants to get a lot of friends inside the community. He wants to play *Dota 2* with them so he can get commend from the item he bought. Indeed, he knows a lot of sellers inside the community and usually play with them. Here we can see that Anton actually performs the conspicuous consumption as it stated by Veblen. The consumption pattern that he does inside the community is nothing but to gain the respect and admiration from others. The items that he bought actually become a sign for other members or players to praise him. Here, the minglers are actually pursued luxuries in place of decencies (Storey 5). Their good attitude and approach when doing the consumption activity attract other members' attention to be friend with them. Hence, it may be asserted that the minglers' consumption pattern strongly associated with idea of prestige.

The second point is the display of wealth by the members that considered as devotees namely Lutfi, Bima, and Jevry. From all of the informants, they

possessed more consumption activity than the others. They buy a lot of high quality and rarity items that considered expensive in the world of *Dota 2*. They spent more than IDR 10.000.000 in the community. They also collect more than 50 items already if we see from their location and time of consumption. In addition, their ways of consumption have proven that they proud of showing their items and be different from the others. Furthermore, they believe that these items give them their own pride because they can show the expensiveness of their items. Actually, it is what so called as display of wealth. They show that they capable of buy goods that can increase their authority over the society both socially and economically (qtd. in Paterson 21). Moreover, they consume the items that considered as the most amazing items in the game because of its visual effects, making them become famous at first glance in the game. It indicated that their expression of wealth represented through the virtual items that resemblance with the function of costume or cloth in the real world. Indeed, this become their exhibition of individuality as the result of consumption (Paterson 22).

The last point is the insiders' type of members that represent the combination between display of wealth and prestige. The informants that considered as mentioned type are Wira, Arif, and I Made Yance. Actually, their display of wealth and prestige are even and link each other. For example, both Wira and Arif consume and sell the items in D2TCI. Their "consuming part" become the display of wealth. It can be seen from their consumption pattern that more likely to spend average amount of money between the minglers and devotees. Still, they want to buy the items that give them pleasure when they use

it in the game. However, their “selling activity” become their display of prestige since they must interact with the other members and consumers inside the community. Indeed, they must have decencies in order to gain a lot of customers inside the community which show the sign of prestige itself as it mentioned in the minglers section above. Moreover, both of them are administrators that obviously well-known in the community. In the same way, I Made Yance also does the same thing. He spent IDR 2.000.000 just to get good visual on his gameplay. It is because he love to be different from others when he played so he got the center of attention. Nevertheless, he got a lot of friends from his transaction since he considered as good buyers in the community as well. Hence, the insiders represent the act of conspicuous consumption that preserve status and legitimate position within a hierarchy and also display of material as something to be adored and rewarded by commend (qtd. in Paterson 21).

#### **4.2 Meaning Making of Virtual Items Consumption as Part of Everyday Life**

The case of meaning making in the consumption issue has brought the two concept of consumers namely ‘savvy’ and ‘sucker’. While ‘savvy’ consumer is able to creatively read and interpret signs, creating their own ways of consumption, ‘sucker’ consumer is duped by media, fall into what so called as passive consumer (Paterson 6). In the case of D2TCI, the members are considered as ‘savvy’ consumer since they make use of virtual items for various purposes if we see it from their consumption pattern above. Hence, it can be said that they



form meanings from their various purposes that deals with everyday life. Indeed, the meanings are related with forming identity.

The meanings can be seen from the three major points explained in the findings above. It can be inferred that the members' consumption is used to be a recognition. The items consumed are used to signal other players or members to recognize them with higher social status. Indeed, their consumption pattern prove it just like Simmel states that the individuality and sense of identity can be seen through pattern of consumption (qtd. in Paterson 21). Their items make them look different than others and even become well-known in the community. It is asserted that they ignore their source of the wealth and prefer to signal prosperity, authority, and taste to others (Paterson 18). They want to be considered with higher social status in the community through the distinction that they made. Some of their responses regarding this case can be seen from the each type of members' excerpts:

“I do love my life inside the community. First, it is because the items which are mostly available there from the old until the newest one. Second, I feel that D2TCI introduce me to new person that I considered as my friend in the community. It gives me happiness since I do not interact much with my own friend in real life.” (Fidianto).

“Actually, I get bored easily in this life because my daily activity is not as interesting as in D2TCI. In D2TCI, the members know me so well, act nice to me, and even some of them always praise me for my items collection. The activity that I do in this community is an escape for my real life. To be honest,

I can't get this kind of fame in the real life since I don't have many close friends." (Kuntoro)

"I have so many friends both in real life and D2TCI. Still, because playing Dota 2 is my passion, I know more about my friends in D2TCI rather than in real life. As the members, I feel pleased because my friends treat me like their own brother here. Also, by having the items that they consider as spectacular one, I can get compliment from them. I rarely get any compliments in real life since I cannot really do something useful hahaha..." (Wiryanata)

It may be happen because the contradictory of their social class in the reality. Their source of wealth to accommodate their needs on virtual items may not considered as the upper class in their real life. Also, they may not satisfied with the real life experience since their desirable needs are available in the community. However, through the process of consumption in the D2TCI as it explained above, they are recognized by other members as special and exclusive members in which they gain trust from them. They got higher social status in the community where they are welcomed and included. This status create a brotherhood and friendship among them in which they got better connection with others in order to establish their identity there. Thus, it can be stressed that the consumption in virtual community allows the members to position themselves in different connection with other humans from what they had in everyday life of their reality.

Next, their consumption made them become what so called as premium user in the game. As a premium user, they often show that they are different from free

user. It is because they have what free user cannot afford, which are the items and popularity among the players. This argument is supported by Veblen who stated that good reputation in any organized community ultimately rests in pecuniary strength and it can be shown to gain or retain a good name by leisure and conspicuous consumption of goods (57). They subscribe to the game itself by give donation in form of *Compendium* that can be bought in the community. It indicated their seriousness as the premium user of *Dota 2*. Also, they do the spectacular consumption that conveys the cultural meaning of rich, complex visual images and environments into their understandings of reality (Paterson 121). It can be proven from all of their preferred items that present good visual and animation within the games. At glance, it might be argued that those action that they do represent their identity in the real life. Turkle argues that the virtual can be used to reflect constructively on the real (*Second Life* 288). In addition, the virtual also teach one to enhance him or her lives in the real through the information gathered there (*Alone Together* 324). However, one might consider that their conspicuous activity show the different cases in term of everyday life. It can be seen from some of each type of members' excerpt below:

“In the real world, I do not spend as much as in the game. It is because I have no favorite things there compared to the virtual items that I consumed. Also, if I buy the precious things in real life, I doubt that it may introduce me to a lot of new friends like in the game. Rather, people around me may consider me as cocky because I still get the allowance from my parents” (Fidianto)

“I am a college student. Therefore, I usually live like them. I always look for cheap or free food, save money as much as possible, and so on. If I may say, my real life is totally different with my life as a Dota 2 players. Actually, I want to spend so much on the real life as well like hang out in the expensive café, buy some branded clothes and etc. But, I cannot do it since I do not feel pleased by doing that.....My life within the game not only gives me satisfaction, but I can also gain profit from it compared to life in the real world.” (Jevry)

“Actually, I used my daily activity in real life to support my activity in the game and community. I need to pay electricity and internet bill in order to maintain my status as an administrator in the community as I stated before. Apart from that, I just live normally like other people. Since my main source of fund is in the world of Dota 2, I dedicated myself to work hard there even though I must spend much money. Beside, some of the people I know in the real life come from the community.” (Wijaya)

From the excerpts, the members suggest that they are more satisfied with their life in the game and community rather in the real life. It can be inferred that their activity in the game do not represent in the same way as in their everyday life. Rather, they want to show to the reality that their life in the game and community are much better. People always look for pleasure and through the escapism of gaming, they are able to do things that they could not normally do when they are not pleased of what they doing in the real life ("Video Gamers Play to Adopt a New Identity" 3). In addition, consumption can be called conspicuous



if other people see the product of yours ("Conspicuous Consumption" 5). Therefore, the members' consumption activity in the community and the game represent their desired identity that they want to show in the real life since they cannot afford it there.

Above all, it may be argued that the meanings produced by the members is the real fact that happens in the virtual community of consumption such as D2TCI itself. Specifically, it is the relation between the members, the game, and the community that shape the two meanings above. D2TCI become the members' instrument in order to achieve their pleasure. Then, the virtual items that they get there become the products which signal their status when they play *Dota 2*. The signal of their status shows that they can afford the lifestyle of higher social class in contradictory with their everyday life. Their account become the prove of their identity in the community since it is considered as valuable account because of their precious items collection and the popularity gained from the process of consumption. Therefore, they use the power of anonymity to express their identity through the massive practice of consumption. Turkle states that anonymity means universality (*Alone Together* 240). In addition, it also becomes a social location for the projection and exploration of human self (*Second Self* 3). Once an individual become anonymous, it might be asserted that they form a new identity in which only the virtual world recognize the identity itself. The life of an individual in virtual world never reach the real one's life since there are boundaries in it (Agustino 94). Those involve spaces, bodies, and so on (Ibid). However, the members of D2TCI prove that they can blur those boundaries

through the meanings they produce as it mentioned above. Their anonymity introduce themselves both in virtual and real world that they exist as different image from their reality and it is their desired identity. Thus, it can be argued that members' pattern of consumption show their true intention in consuming virtual items, making them live the life they really want which can only be realized in the community and not in their reality of everyday life.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study results in a conclusion of consumption pattern of D2TCI members that could lead to their meanings of consuming the virtual items in relation with everyday life. The virtual ethnography in form of in-depth interview has been done in this study with seven informants from D2TCI members. The result found that they consume virtual items in slightly different way from one another, making them have their own consumption pattern. The pattern comes with five themes taken from Kozinet's model namely consumer group, type of items consumed, location of consumption, time of consumption, and ways of consumption. From those pattern, the researcher found that they belong to the three type of members namely minglers, devotees, and insiders. They also perform the idea of conspicuous consumption. For instance, the researcher categorized Anton as the minglers in which he showed the display of prestige. His consumption pattern stressed on the relationship with other members rather than his own consumption activity. In short, the display of prestige that the researcher found in him is nothing but to gain the respect and admiration from others. Next, the devotees that belong to Lutfi, Bima, and Jevry showed the display of wealth. They believe that these items give them their own pride because they can show the expensiveness of their items. Last but not least, Wira, Arif, and I Made Yance are categorized within the type of insiders. They perform both display of wealth and display of prestige. They spend their money in the community to show their

capability of buying the items and gain admiration from their friends in the community.

The next major points found in the analysis and discussion of this study is the meaning of consumption. The researcher found that they produce a strong connection with other members in the community which result with a brotherhood among them. This lead to their own intention that become their decision making in buying the items. In addition, their consumption show that they want to be considered with higher social status by ignoring their source of wealth and prefer to show their capability of buying items to signal their social status. It can be say so due to the contradictory of their everyday life in which they fall into the lower class. Also, they become the premium user through the conspicuous consumption as well. Because of that, the players or other members may see them differently from free user since they have what free user cannot afford. However, this condition does not represent their identity as same as in the everyday life. It means that they do not perform such consumption in the real life. It happens because they found their desire in the game and the community and not in the real life. They use their anonymity to express their desired identity and show themselves as different image to the people who live in virtual and reality. As a result, the researcher believes that the consumption in virtual community allows the members to position themselves in different status from what they had in their everyday life and it also represent their desired identity that they want to show in the real life since they cannot afford it there.



Overall, D2TCI members' pattern of consumption proves that they have the true intention in consuming the virtual items which relate with their life in the real world. Their lifestyle is not represented in their daily activity of everyday life. Rather, they present it as the players of *Dota 2* and the members of *D2TCI* through their consumptive behavior. Thus, it may enrich people's understanding that such consumption does happen not only in the real world society, but in the virtual community as well. From this result, the researcher hopes that it will be useful for the readers to understand the reality of virtual community of consumption and help the other researchers to develop more toward the issue being discussed. The researcher also assure that this study still have many gaps here and there, such as the results in terms of relation between consumption and gender, religion, specific places, and many other cultural studies' issues that can be used to understanding the members of virtual community of consumption like D2TCI. The researcher hopes that these gaps could be discovered and presented by other scholars and academicians in advance.

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## Appendix 1

### GALLERY OF INFORMANT'S PROFILE, *STEAM*, *DOTA 2*, AND *D2TCI*

1<sup>st</sup> informant: **I Made Yance Wiryanata**

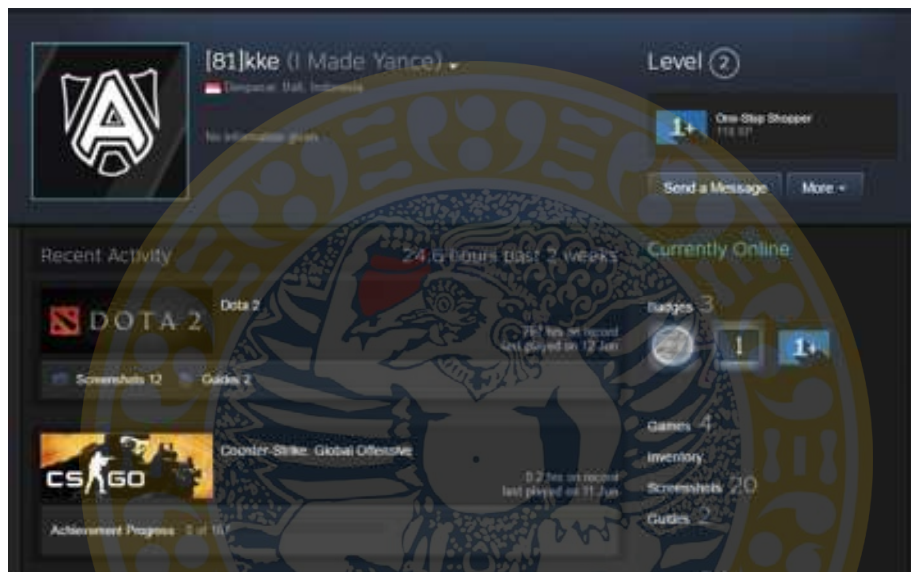


Figure 1: Yance's *Steam* profile

2<sup>nd</sup> informant: **Jevry**



Figure 2: Jevry's *Steam* profile

3<sup>rd</sup> informant: **Wira Wijaya**



Figure 3: Wira's *Steam* profile

4<sup>th</sup> informant: **Arif Mahendra**



Figure 4: Arif's *Steam* profile



5<sup>th</sup> informant: **Lutfi Herlambang**



Figure 5: Lutfi's *Steam* profile

6<sup>th</sup> informant: **Bima Kuntoro**

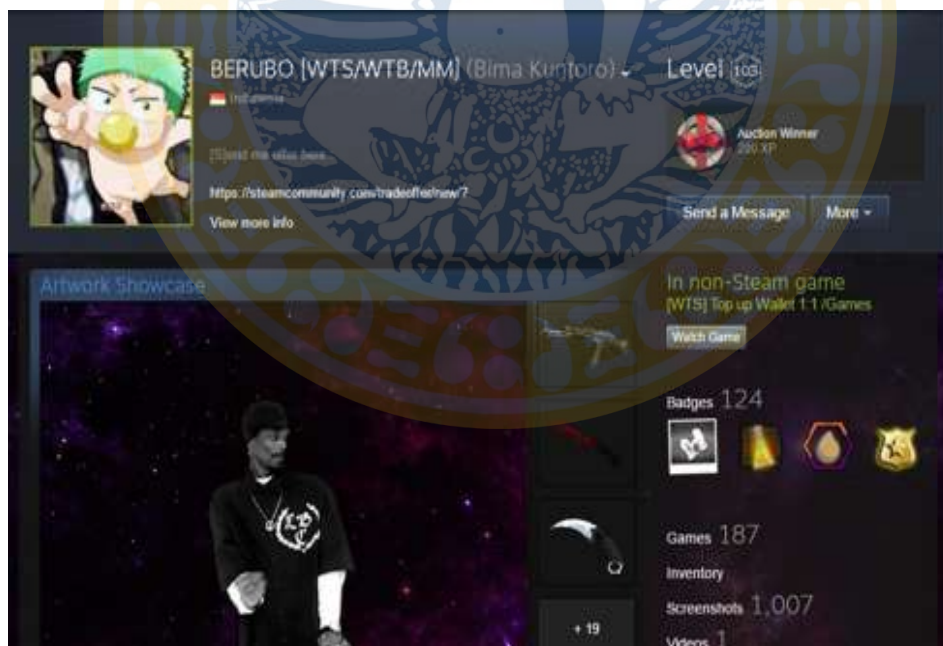


Figure 6: Bima's *Steam* profile

7<sup>th</sup> informant: **Anton Faisal Fidianto**

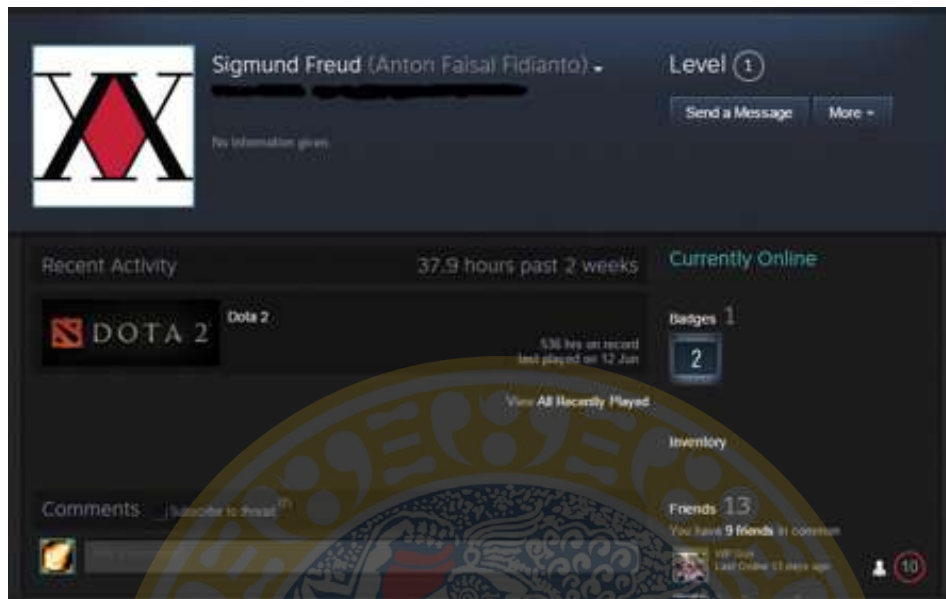


Figure 7: Anton's *Steam* profile



Figure 8: *Steam Library* to access *Dota 2*

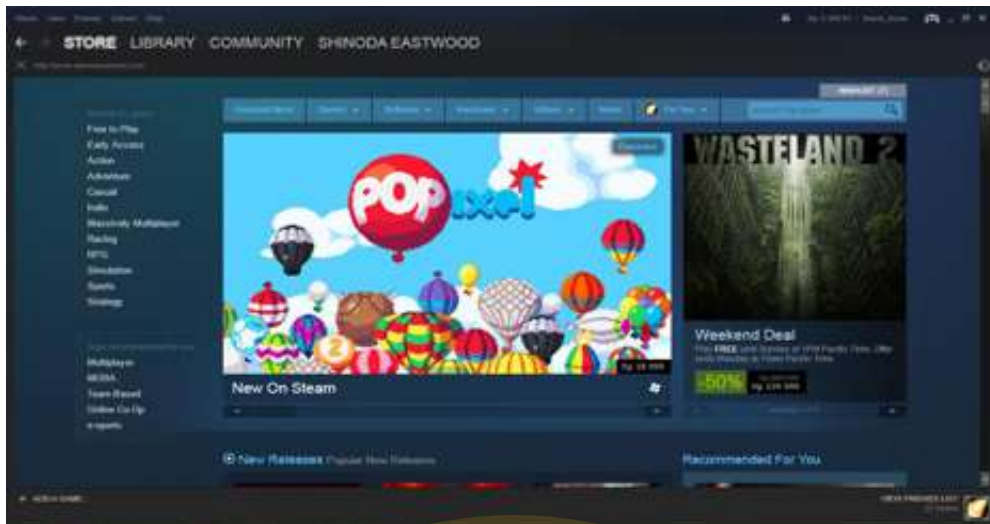


Figure 9: *Steam Store* which become its default homepage



Figure 10: *Dota 2's* Main Menu





Figure 11: *Dota 2's* gameplay

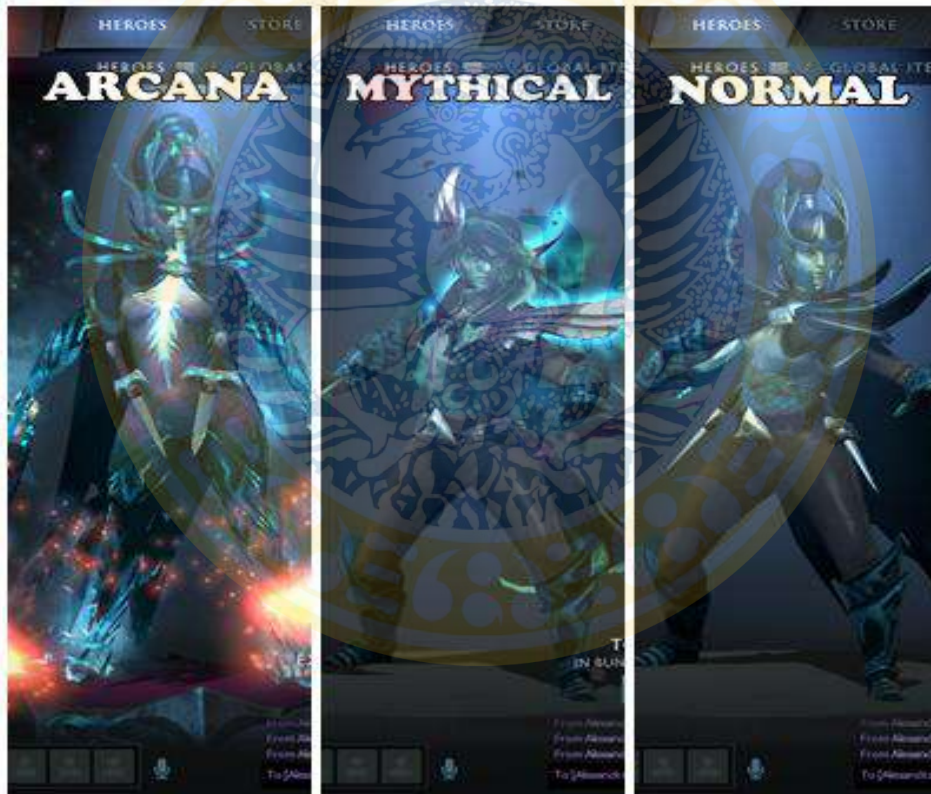


Figure 12: *Dota 2's* item comparison on Phantom Assassin





Figure 13: D2TCI's overview page

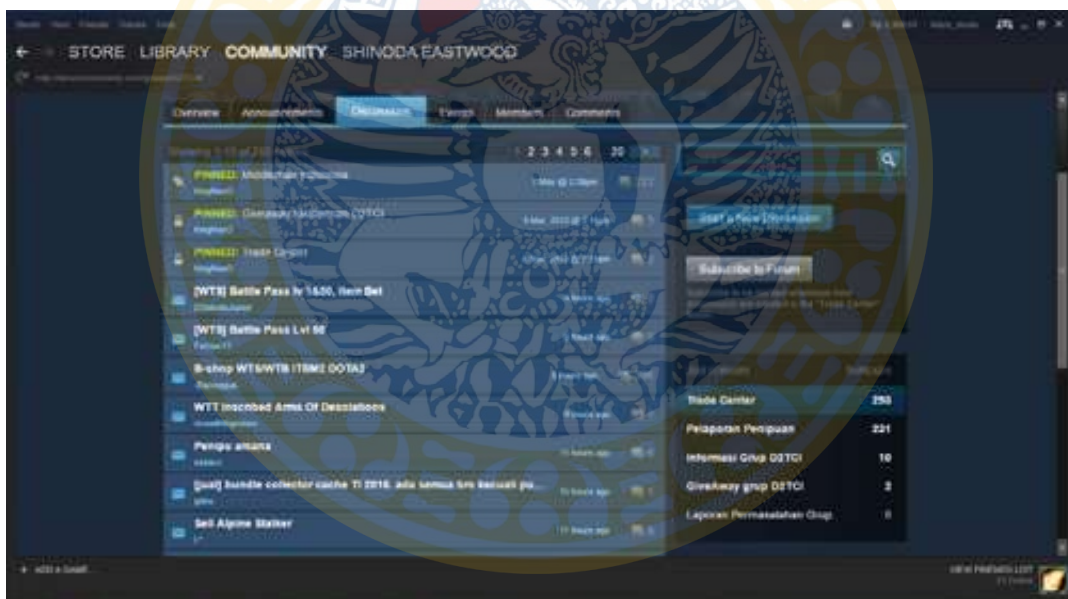


Figure 14: D2TCI's forum which shows the buy and sell activity