

A Study on the Mechanism of Traditional Chinese Culture Propagation Facilitated by Chinese-Style Games—Illustrated by the Game *Black Myth: Wu Kong*

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Abstract:

With the accelerated development of cultural globalization, exchanges and competitions among various cultures have become increasingly fierce, making the inheritance and dissemination of ancient Chinese culture particularly important. This study takes the role-playing action game *Black Myth: Wu Kong* as a case study, combining first-hand interviews and second-hand news materials, to explore how games drive the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture. In the context of the integration of culture, tourism, and technology, games have emerged as a new pathway for cultural dissemination. By integrating excellent traditional culture into various aspects of the game, players are provided with a multi-faceted cultural audio-visual experience, attracting them to actively explore and experience culture. This study aims to explore the mechanism of Chinese-style games in effectively disseminating traditional Chinese culture, analyze the main existing problems, and propose suggestions for the benign development of game creation and the market, in order to promote the synergistic development of the game industry and the cultural industry.

Keywords: Chinese-style games, Traditional Chinese culture, Cultural dissemination, *Black Myth: Wu Kong*

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly globalized world, culture, as the country's most significant soft power, has received widespread attention regarding its inheritance and dissemination. Games, as an emerging creative industry, are playing an increasingly important role

in the process of the cross-integration of technology and culture. Chinese-style games, as game types with Chinese cultural heritage and characteristics, are not only popular in the domestic market but are also gradually making their mark on the international game market. This study takes *Black Myth: Wu Kong* as a research case to deeply analyze the

mechanism of Chinese-style games in promoting the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, aiming to provide a new perspective for the modern dissemination of traditional culture and promote the progress of the game industry and related cultural and creative industries.

2. Introduction to the Thesis

3. Literature Review

Electronic games, capable of interacting with humans, gradually emerged with the development of computer technology in the 1960s. After the 21st century, the popularity of electronic games has made them an increasingly important component of cultural, social, and economic life, and academic researchers have also increasingly engaged in activities to interpret culture and conduct social research through games. Some scholars have summarized it as: It is an art form based on computer technology and digital devices that allows players and users to experience the virtual world through electronic devices, interact with the virtual world, obtain immersive experiences, and create entertainment and disseminate culture according to game rules and settings, through a multi-dimensional sensory experience [1]. Chinese digital games have also made rapid progress in recent years, gradually gaining popularity by incorporating topics such as mythology, martial arts, and history. In the early 1990s, original games from Taiwan, China, such as *Xuan-Yuan Sword*, *Chinese Paladin*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, initiated the exploration of Chinese-style digital games. Chinese-style games primarily refer to those that integrate Chinese cultural traditions into the background and storyline of the game in diverse ways, not only in aesthetic design but also in the story and spiritual core, drawing on many essential elements of traditional historical stories. They are an artistic form that combines traditional culture with modern gaming technology.

Domestic and foreign research provides diversified perspectives covering sociology, communication studies, aesthetics, and other fields. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese-style games in promoting traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, many studies use empirical data to analyze the impact of games on cultural dissemination, which can be sourced from user interactions, shares, and comment analysis on social media platforms. However, existing research also has some deficiencies, mainly manifested as follows: Firstly, since Chinese-style games are a very novel topic in recent years, current research on Chinese-style games is scarce and not in-depth enough,

and some of the referenced cases are relatively singular. Secondly, some studies are relatively weak in theoretical frameworks, lacking systematicness and depth. Especially when explaining the relationship between Chinese-style games and the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, it is sometimes difficult to form a complete and coherent theoretical system. Thirdly, most researchers do not view cultural dissemination from the perspective of players or media audiences. Fourthly, few researchers have studied the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture through games against the backdrop of policies promoting culture and tourism through technology. Accordingly, this project intends to explore the ways in which Chinese-style games impact the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, based on interviews with game players and sharing information from players' social media, using the popular game *Black Myth: Wu Kong* as an example, in the context of technology empowering culture and tourism.

3. Research background significance

3.1 Research Background

In recent years, with the rapid development of technology, people have personally experienced changes in tourism methods and deeply appreciated how technology has provided a broader space for the integrated development of culture and tourism. Technology has injected new vitality into the deep integration of culture and tourism. General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out, "Culture and tourism are inseparable. We must adhere to the principle of shaping tourism with culture and highlighting culture through tourism, promote the integrated development of culture and tourism, and let people appreciate the beauty of nature, culture, and the soul."

The integration of culture and tourism is an effective scenario for technology application and an important engine for technological innovation. In today's rapidly changing technological landscape, the deep integrated development of culture and tourism requires enhanced technological support and a greater focus on major strategies and practical needs for the integrated development of culture and tourism, comprehensively enhancing technological innovation capabilities in culture and tourism.

In recent years, continuous breakthroughs and rapid iterations in digital intelligence technology have provided technical support for the development of new spaces that shape tourism with culture and highlight culture through tourism, promoting the in-depth advancement of the integrated development of culture and tourism and gradually becoming an important engine for driving its development. ("People's Daily")

Games, as one of the emerging creative industries in re-

cent years, have undoubtedly become the most prominent cultural phenomenon in contemporary society with the promotion of capital and technological innovation. Policy dividends, the development of “new infrastructure,” and the COVID-19 pandemic have promoted the deep integration of culture and technology. In this process, online games, as an important cultural new format with high activity, prominence, and coverage [2]. According to CN-NIC surveys, show that as of December 2021, the scale of online game users in China reached 554 million, accounting for 53.6% of internet users. Digital games have played an increasingly important role in the social media landscape and personal information access. Incorporating traditional Chinese culture through technological means subtly disseminates traditional culture to players, thereby driving the local culture and tourism economy and achieving a win-win cooperation.

3.2 Research Significance

With the continuous deepening of the integration of culture and tourism, Chinese-style games, as emerging media for cultural dissemination, are gradually becoming an important force in promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture. This research holds significant theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretically, this research engages in a dialogue with existing communication theories and social theories in traditional disciplines such as communication studies and sociology, while extending them into the domains of digital cultural industries and technology. It appropriately expands the existing disciplinary theories. Although research on online games has been increasing in recent years, studies focusing on the function of online games in disseminating traditional Chinese culture are insufficient. Meanwhile, there is scant research exploring this topic against the backdrop of the current popular integration of culture and tourism. Addressing these deficiencies, this study examines the role played by Chinese-style games in traditional culture and the methods they employ to broaden the dissemination of traditional culture, thereby filling the gaps in existing research. Furthermore, with Chinese-style games as the primary focus, this research enriches the research carriers concerning the dissemination of traditional culture. It provides a new interpretive perspective for studying how traditional Chinese culture leverages the digital cultural industry to enhance its dissemination effectiveness.

Practically, with globalization advancing and the demand for national rejuvenation, excellent traditional Chinese culture needs to be understood and inherited by more people. Leveraging emerging technologies in conjunction

with the policy of integrating culture and tourism can encourage more game creators to focus on traditional Chinese culture, turning it into a window for showcasing and disseminating traditional Chinese culture. In the context of the integration of culture and tourism, encouraging local governments to consciously link traditional attractions with games can promote the development of local tourism while fostering people’s preservation of ancient architectural traditions. This offers meaningful references and guidance to the cultural tourism and gaming industries, thereby facilitating the better dissemination of traditional Chinese culture.

4. Research Methods and Approach

This study primarily adopts the method of case study. Case study analysis is a qualitative research method that employs diversified data to systematically explore groups, individuals, or certain social phenomena through a systematic approach[3]. To delve deeper into the dissemination mechanisms of culture through the case game and its impact on people, the author employs the interview method to conduct semi-structured interviews with 18 players or non-players, obtaining first-hand interview data. Additionally, the author selects interviews with the producers of *Journey to the West: Monkey King* and official videos after the game’s launch, acquiring sufficient second-hand data. The author will utilize content analysis to examine the primary Chinese elements involved in *Journey to the West: Monkey King*, and further analyze how these cultural elements are disseminated.

This research collects data through interviews, identifying 18 interviewees through searches on social media platforms. They include nine game players and nine non-players but individuals who are aware of the game or have visited locations related to the game. The interviewees are predominantly young. By setting some fixed themes, the interviewer guides the interviewees to express their feelings while maintaining openness. The interview content mainly covers several aspects: first, inquiring whether the interviewees like the game and whether there are any impressive cultural details in the game; second, whether they have gained a deeper understanding of Chinese culture after playing the game. For those who have visited locations featured in the game, the discussion focuses more on their travel motivations and cultural feelings before and after the trip. The researcher tries to evoke players’ memories and stimulate them to recall relevant experiences and insights using information and materials related to *Journey to the West: Monkey King*.

5. Case Analysis

this study takes *Journey to the West: Monkey King*, a highly popular AAA game in recent years, as a specific case to analyze the dissemination mechanism of Chinese culture through games. AAA games refer to high-cost, high-volume, high-quality single-player games, a concept originally arising in the United States. As China's first AAA game, *Journey to the West: Monkey King* marks a milestone in the development of the Chinese gaming industry and has gained popularity among players from various countries. On its launch day, according to platform statistics, it had over 2.2 million concurrent users, breaking records on the leaderboard. In domestic live streaming platforms, the live streaming rate of *Journey to the West: Monkey King* approached 100%. *Journey to the West: Monkey King* won two awards, Best Action Game and Voice of the Players, at The Game Awards (TGA) 2024. TGA is one of the most influential awards in the global gaming industry, known as the «Oscars of the gaming world.»

Culturally, *Journey to the West: Monkey King* provides players and viewers with a stage showcasing the classic Chinese mythology *Journey to the West*, an immersive virtual world where they can experience multi-faceted culture, attracting widespread attention from gamers worldwide. The explosion in popularity of *Journey to the West: Monkey King* has raised a series of thought-provoking questions: What role does culture play in games? How does culture influence people through games? Taking *Journey to the West: Monkey King* as a typical case study, this study reveals how culture spreads through this new medium in the new digital media era and provides ideas for innovative cultural inheritance[4].

6. Element Analysis

The profound culture of ancient Chinese architecture is vividly embodied in the game *Journey to the West: Monkey King*. Through one-to-one replication and modeling of original Chinese ancient architectural sites, statistics show that the game features architectural models sourced from as many as 72 locations across China, nearly half of which are from Shanxi Province. For instance, Chapter 3, *Night Dew Brings White Frost*, heavily incorporates Buddhist elements, with the setting of Xiaoxi Tian (a Buddhist temple) inspired by Qianfo'an Temple, located west of Xicheng in Xi County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province. This Buddhist Zen temple, with thousands of Buddhist statues in various poses, immerses players in a cultural baptism. Moreover, during the game scene where Monkey King battles Kang Jinlong, a small temple appears on a

lake, resembling Shuijing Tai at Jinci Temple in Taiyuan. Shuijing Tai, an ancient building within Jinci Temple, features two round windows on its body, known as flower windows or lattice windows, resembling human eyes and exuding a sense of dynamism. This flower window design is common in traditional Chinese garden architecture, reflecting the unique charm and aesthetic taste of ancient Chinese architecture. Although the main hall at the rear of Xiaoleiyin Temple in the game is fictional, the design of the two plaques and the main gate at the entrance is inspired by the Daxiong Baodian Hall of Huayan Temple in Datong, Shanxi. Huayan Temple is divided into upper and lower temples, with the upper temple centered around Daxiong Baodian Hall, featuring architectures from the Jin Dynasty, statues from the Ming Dynasty, and painted sculptures also from the Ming Dynasty, possessing high historical and artistic value. Huayan Temple is one of the three existing Liao Dynasty monasteries in China and served as the family temple of the Liao Dynasty emperors, embodying the unique style and imperial grandeur of Liao Dynasty Buddhist architecture.

The utilization of architectural culture makes this game more attractive, allowing players and viewers to experience the profoundness of culture. Simultaneously, it complements the storyline, costumes, and props, becoming a powerful channel for cultural dissemination.

The interactive mechanism in games refers to the process by which players communicate and interact with items, characters, environments, and other elements to advance the game. Interactive mechanisms are very common in games, including basic actions such as jumping, fighting, climbing, as well as collecting game resources and materials, solving puzzles, conversing with NPCs, examining items, and other common interactive forms. Compared with other Japanese-made games set in Chinese history, such as *Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty*, *Journey to the West: Monkey King* offers a purer Chinese cultural experience in terms of interactive mechanics. For example, the most common save points in the game allow players to save their progress by interacting with them. In *Journey to the West: Monkey King*, a folk tradition-inspired setting and action are chosen: a monkey offering three incense sticks to a small land temple. Or, alchemy and leveling up are set on NPCs corresponding to the zodiac attributes, such as the Monkey, Dog, and Dragon. These culturally themed interactive designs make the overall game more three-dimensional, which is one of the reasons why this game is loved by many, as the producers fully respect all aspects of traditional culture.

The narrative that runs throughout the game “Black Myth: Wukong” conveys the unique spiritual values and core of Chinese culture. If the game's artistic design and charac-

ter settings can be likened to the skin, then the spiritual philosophy and cultural viewpoints conveyed through the game's narrative constitute its bones. The reason "Black Myth: Wukong" has achieved such success and popularity in disseminating Chinese culture is primarily due to its ingenious integration of the spiritual core of Chinese culture into the game. The game is structured around six major chapter mainlines, with each chapter transitioning to the next through a short animation that serves as a bridge. These animations not only present mythological stories imbued with Chinese culture but also impart Buddhist ideas of "cause and effect." The story of the fox and the scholar at the end of the second chapter, for instance, aligns with Chinese cultural sensibilities and borrows elements and settings from "Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio." In the fourth chapter, titled "Melody of the Purple Kite" (a translation inspired by the line "The wind blows the green lute away, the melody reaches the purple mandarin ducks" from a poem by Li Bai), it conveys the concepts of "waiting" and "endurance" in Chinese culture. Compared to the more open Western culture, Chinese culture is more reserved. In Chinese culture, the deep affection between lovers often revolves around waiting and staying together, with more emphasis on silent gazing than on verbal expression. There are many more cultural ideas and cores in the game that are distinctly different from Western culture, and they form the most crucial part of sustaining the overall cultural atmosphere and experience of the game.

7. Exploration of the Mechanism of Action

Games allow players to experience participation, fully interacting with the game. In this process, a strong emotional identification with Chinese traditional culture is constructed, thereby enabling culture to spread more broadly and deeply. The spirits and ideologies of Chinese traditional culture, including characters, poetry, cuisine, attire, and more, are all symbols and carriers that transmit culture. *Black Myth: Wukong*, through gameplay, models, music, dialogue, and other elements, brings these symbolic carriers to life. During interaction with the game, players' attention to culture, cognitive understanding, and emotional resonance are enhanced. The theory of the interaction ritual chain explains that the participatory mechanism of interactive engagement is based on "mutual attention and emotional connection" [6]. Even though the roles in online games are virtual, players' bodies in cyberspace are indeed present, so the sense of immersion is intensified during interaction with game content, prompt-

ing players to understand and appreciate the essence of Chinese traditional culture through gaming[7].

Black Myth: Wukong creates many vivid characters. In the fourth chapter, Bajie constantly accompanies the protagonist in storytelling and battles. As the protagonist walks, he mutters words as if directly conversing with the player, preventing the player from feeling bored. During battles, he will comment on the player's mistakes. Such detailed interactions vividly portray the image of Bajie, allowing players to understand the details behind the story through a character like a friend. His lively image overlaps with the image in *Journey to the West*, echoing people's collective memories of this classic Chinese literary work.

With the rise of the internet, social media has gradually become a common source of information and social interaction for people. The production company of *Black Myth: Wukong* has opened its official accounts on multiple social platforms and started releasing videos related to the game during its production phase. On social platforms, there are also many discussions about *Black Myth: Wukong*, including gameplay details and strategy guides, with the officials engaging in various forms of communication and interaction with players. These exchanges and interactions greatly enhance players' participation in Chinese traditional culture. In the realm of user-generated content, players act as creators and disseminators, providing popular science about cultural details in the game, comparing the poetry and content of the game with the classic *Journey to the West*, inspiring more people to learn about and revisit this ancient classic novel. This interactive sharing strengthens the resonance and memory of cultural symbols between the game and players.

Besides interacting with people in the virtual online world, the game also breaks barriers to engage with players in closer real-life interactions, greatly promoting the dissemination of traditional culture and fostering further emotional resonance and perception among people towards Chinese traditional culture. For instance, after *Black Myth: Wukong*'s popularity surged, it made significant contributions to the cultural tourism industry. Following the game's release, search popularity for Shanxi Province and Shanxi cultural tourism topics surged across the internet. The Shanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism released promotional videos related to the game and organized a series of co-branded promotional activities. The 2024 Digital Cultural Tourism Brand Innovation Conference and the event "Follow Wukong to Tour Shanxi" were held in Taiyuan, where the "Follow Wukong to Tour Shanxi" cultural tourism route and surrounding cultural and creative products were unveiled. Many people have shared on social media their visits to the classic scenes in Shanxi linked to *Black Myth: Wukong*, learning about

traditional culture and further experiencing the charm of Chinese traditional culture. Such activities connect the virtual models and landscapes in the game with real-life attractions, achieving a beneficial two-way promotion between the cultural tourism industry and the gaming industry. Simultaneously, it allows people to gain a more vivid understanding of Chinese scenery and places of interest in the most efficient manner. According to interviews, people generally believe that offline tourism provides a more impressive and memorable way to learn about Chinese traditional culture compared to learning from books and classrooms alone. It also enhances the fame of local tourism and disseminates Chinese traditional culture in an immersive manner.

8. Strategies and Suggestions

8.1 Enhance In-depth Exploration and Creative Integration of Cultural Elements

Game developers should strengthen the in-depth exploration and creative integration of traditional cultural elements to enhance the cultural connotation and artistic value of games. By drawing on classic elements and symbols from traditional culture and combining them with modern aesthetics and technological means for innovative design, unique and charming Chinese-style game works can be created.

8.2 Expand Dissemination Channels and Strengthen Interactive Communication

Game developers should expand multiple dissemination channels and strengthen interactive communication with players to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural dissemination. Social media, offline events, and other means can be used to enhance contact and interaction with players. At the same time, actively listen to player feedback and suggestions to continuously optimize game design and dissemination strategies.

8.3 Guide Players to Actively Participate in Cultural Dissemination Activities

The government and relevant institutions should guide players to actively participate in cultural dissemination activities, fostering a positive atmosphere for cultural dissemination. By organizing cultural exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and other activities to attract player participation, and strengthening cooperation and collaboration with game developers, the modern dissemination of traditional culture can be jointly promoted.

9. Conclusion

As an emerging medium for cultural dissemination, Chinese-style games play a significant role in promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture. Through measures such as in-depth exploration and creative integration of traditional cultural elements, expanding dissemination channels and strengthening interactive communication, and guiding players to actively participate in cultural dissemination activities, Chinese-style games can effectively disseminate traditional Chinese culture and promote its modern development. In the future, with the continuous advancement of technology and the in-depth development of cultural and tourism integration, Chinese-style games will play an even more important role in the field of cultural dissemination.

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