

Exploration of China's Game Industry's Overseas Strategy Under The "Belt and Road" Initiative

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Abstract

In the era of the deepening implementation of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the "going global" strategy of Chinese culture is entering a crucial period of opportunity. As a core component of the digital cultural industry and an emerging cultural carrier, the game industry's overseas expansion is not only related to the economic benefits of the industry, but also carries strategic significance for cultural dissemination and soft power construction. However, cultural barriers have always been a significant obstacle to the "going global" of Chinese culture. This paper focuses on the international development of China's game industry, selecting the phenomenal domestic game "Genshin Impact" as the core research case to deeply explore its successful overseas expansion strategy in markets along the "Belt and Road" and globally. The research is framed by Professor Shi Anbin's theory of transcultural communication, and by analyzing the specific practices of "Genshin Impact" in content creation, localized operation, global distribution, community ecosystem construction, and technological innovation, it reveals the key factors that have enabled it to achieve breakthroughs in complex international markets.

Keywords

China Youth Daily; Short video; Communication strategy.

1. The overseas Expansion of China's Gaming Industry Under The "Belt and Road" Initiative and Related Research Theories

(I) Research Theory: transcultural communication

With the deepening of globalization, traditional cross-cultural communication theories face practical challenges. Classic theories emphasize "static comparison" and "bidirectional adaptation" of cultural differences. However, in the era of hyper-connectivity driven by digital technology, cultural interaction exhibits characteristics of decentralization, fluid integration, and dynamic co-creation. The "cultural dichotomy" represented by Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory struggles [1] to explain phenomena such as the "coexistence of Eastern landscape aesthetics and Western fantasy narrative" and the "mixing of Peking Opera elements and Japanese anime style" presented in globally popular products like "Genshin Impact".

"transcultural communication" is a relatively new term, first appearing in a paper titled "From 'Cross-Cultural Communication' to 'transcultural communication'" published by Professor Shi Anbin from the School of Journalism and Communication at Tsinghua University in China in 2018. Compared to "cross-cultural communication", it clearly bears more characteristics of the times and has stronger explanatory power.[2]

Transcultural communication is centered around the core concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind," promoting equal exchange and mutual learning among civilizations. "A community with a shared future for mankind" has always been one of the important concepts guiding China's development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, and diversely empowered internet social media serves as the core domain for transcultural communication

practices. Transcultural communication does not prioritize one country's culture over others, nor does it rely on cultural self-replication to achieve invasive dissemination. Instead, it aims to build an "overall globalization" communication system, committed to creating a tolerant, harmonious, mutually respectful, and equal communication environment. It can be said that "transcultural communication" is the specific application of the concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind" in the field of news communication.

(II) Overview of the Chinese game industry's overseas expansion

According to data from the National Press and Publication Administration of China, in 2024, the actual sales revenue of China's independently developed games in overseas markets reached US\$18.557 billion, marking a year-on-year increase of 13.39%. In 2024, the growth rate of China's overseas mobile games in major overseas regions saw a significant improvement. Specifically, the revenue of the game markets in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom shifted from negative growth last year to positive growth, with substantial increases. Among the top 100 products in the Korean mobile game market by revenue, there were as many as 12 domestic new products.[3] Overall, the number of Chinese publishers in major overseas regions has stabilized, and they have accumulated rich experience in research and development and operation in related regions. Works such as "Genshin Impact", "Arena of Valor", and "Black Myth: Wukong" have swept the global market, making Chinese games an important force in the global gaming market. Games are no longer just entertainment products; their cultural, social, and communicative attributes are increasingly prominent. The emergence and success of these games have enriched the narrative that games can carry, building a bridge between China and the world through a path of cultural hybridization. More diversified overseas markets and a more diversified interpretation of Chinese identity have made games an important channel for international communication in the new era.

2. China's Game Industry's Overseas Strategy Under The "Belt and Road" Initiative - Taking "Genshin Impact" as An Example

As a pioneer in Chinese games' "going global", "Genshin Impact", which has achieved unprecedented success in overseas markets, has formed a unique media landscape, and it continues to generate buzz and popularity even today. This is partly due to the strong support of overseas fan communities, and partly due to miHoYo's official overseas expansion strategy and the series of activities it has led. Based on the three important aspects of transcultural communication, this paper will study the overseas strategy of "Genshin Impact" from three perspectives: multicultural integration, localized operations, and participatory interaction, laying a theoretical foundation for other Chinese game industries to expand overseas.

(I) Deconstruction and integration of multiculturalism

Starting from the dissemination mechanism of cultural hybridization, "Genshin Impact" successfully integrates diverse cultures and produces a new "third culture" through deconstructing, adapting, and reconstructing culture. In terms of narrative, "Genshin Impact" constructs a continent named "Teyvat" within the game, which encompasses seven countries, each reflecting aspects of the real world. This represents "Genshin Impact"'s reinterpretation of the cultures of various real-world countries after deconstruction, showcasing the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures.

Game characters serve as crucial intermediaries for players to interact with the game, and to a certain extent, they influence players' cognition of the real world. Each character embodies a specific cultural background and story, carrying the weighty responsibility of conveying rich cultural connotations. "Genshin Impact" portrays characters from multiple perspectives, fully integrating elements of diverse cultures, making the characters' personalities three-dimensional while also deeply reflecting the distinctive culture of each region. For instance,

Zhongli, the Rock God of Liyue, embodies traditional Chinese culture. From his hairstyle and attire to his character dialogue, even his skills are imbued with a strong Chinese flavor. In terms of dialogue design, the game frequently references ancient poetry and allusions, presenting rich cultural connotations while meticulously portraying the character's image, highlighting the three-dimensional character and attracting players' affection.

In addition to character design, "Genshin Impact" has taken into account the historical backgrounds of various countries while constructing their cultural contexts

Delving deeper into the cultural backgrounds of categories such as art, we find that the design inspiration for Mondstadt originates from medieval Europe. The tall windmills, vineyards, and Westwind Church all exude a strong Western European charm. In Mondstadt's architecture, tall windmills are not only found within the city of Mondstadt but also in the town of Qingquan outside the city. The design of these cultural backgrounds incorporates the distinctive cultures of different regions, enhancing the cultural connotation and historical depth of the game. This allows players to enjoy the fun brought by the game while also experiencing the local customs of different regions and understanding the cultural traditions and characteristics of various countries. Thus, "Genshin Impact" has also constructed a "third culture" that encompasses the cultures of various regions.

Additionally, "Genshin Impact" has crafted exclusive in-game festivals based on regional special festivals, bolstering players' sense of belonging to new cultures. These in-game festivals not only offer players a more diverse gaming experience, allowing them to bridge the gap between different cultures within the game, but also enable players to learn about cultural customs of various countries while playing, enhancing their understanding and respect for different cultures. Consequently, this has attracted a vast number of players from diverse cultural backgrounds globally, effectively propelling the game's overseas dissemination. "Genshin Impact" extracts cultures from different countries and regions, and through re-creation, perfectly integrates them into the game

The profound cultural connotation of the game has established a cultural exchange platform for global players. This strategy has made "Genshin Impact" stand out among other games and attracted a large number of overseas players. Players are not only enjoying the fun of the game, but also engaging in a cross-cultural exchange. While experiencing the cultural charm of different regions, they establish a deep connection with the game, laying a solid foundation for the game's long-term development in the overseas market.

(II) Localized operations break cultural barriers

In the complex context of "Belt and Road" communication, mere content output has become difficult to penetrate cultural barriers. Localized operation is essentially a cultural transcoding practice based on deep localization. The core strategy lies in transforming Chinese cultural elements into universally applicable "transcultural symbols" through refined and multi-level localization operations, thereby reducing "cultural discount" while activating cross-cultural resonance. "Genshin Impact" has undergone comprehensive localization in language translation based on the cultural characteristics of different regions. For example, the English version adopts an epic tone reminiscent of "The Lord of the Rings" to cater to Western fantasy audiences, while the Japanese version invites top voice actors such as Yūki Kaji and Saori Asami to enhance the immersive experience of the two-dimensional world. More innovative is the localized translation of cultural symbols: taking the Chinese-style architecture and landscapes of the "Liyue" region as an example, the design team did not directly copy the Forbidden City or Huangshan Mountain, but extracted visual genes such as "cornices and brackets" and "sea of clouds and stone forest", and recoded them in combination with the fantasy aesthetics of an open world, making Japanese players think of the forest mysteries in "Princess Mononoke",

while European and American players think of Minas Tirith from "The Lord of the Rings", forming an aesthetic synesthesia of "strange yet interpretable".

The profound significance of localization lies more in the precise capture of regional social psychology. In the Southeast Asian market, "Genshin Impact" collaborated with the Indonesian traditional festival "Hari Puja" to launch a limited-time meditation gameplay. In Islamic cultural regions, the clothing design of the character "Dilhi" actively avoids exposing the body and adjusts combat movements to reduce religious sensitivity. Such operations go beyond the adaptation of superficial cultural symbols and directly point to the flexible negotiation of values - by embedding local cultural logic into game mechanics, players unconsciously complete the migration of cultural identity. This localization strategy is neither the forced output of cultural hegemony nor the submission and compromise to foreign culture, but rather the construction of a "third space" that allows for multicultural coexistence in the virtual space of the game.

(III) Participatory interaction fosters cultural ecology

The ultimate value of this participatory ecosystem lies in realizing the core proposition of transcultural communication theory—the decentralization of cultural flow. In the global community of "Genshin Impact", Chinese culture is no longer the object of "communication", but rather continuously collides and recombines with elements such as Japanese anime, American humor, and Latin American music, ultimately generating a "cultural hybrid" with no traceable single source. For example, the Chinese-style afterlife hall setting of the character "Hu Tao" has been secondarily created by European and American players, evolving into a new Halloween "trickster" image, which has been absorbed by the Japanese fan community as a shrine witch character. "Genshin Impact" has transformed global users into co-producers of cultural meaning through a systematically designed player co-creation mechanism, promoting the game to evolve from a "product" to a "cultural ecosystem". The construction of this ecosystem begins with the transfer of narrative power: the game adopts fragmented narration and open endings.

What is even more revolutionary is the ecological empowerment of User Generated Content (UGC). Mihoyo officially lowered the threshold for creation by releasing 3D model resources of characters, supporting commercial licensing of fan-made music, and developing a custom map editor for "Teyvat", a game by miHoYo. These creations were once again aggregated at the official global carnival, forming a circular flywheel of "creation-dissemination-re-creation". It is worth noting that the sustainability of this ecosystem stems from the underlying design of emotional connection: the game utilizes "emotional hooks" such as character birthday emails and player anniversary videos to transform users' projection of virtual characters into a sense of belonging to the community.

3. Issues and Countermeasures of Chinese Game Industry Going Global under the Background of "Belt and Road Initiative"

(I) Existing issues of Chinese game industry's overseas expansion under the "Belt and Road" background

Despite the breakthroughs achieved by leading products represented by "Genshin Impact" in the "Belt and Road" market, the overall overseas expansion of China's gaming industry still faces structural challenges. These challenges are particularly prominent in areas such as cultural conflicts and industrial ecosystem dimensions, urgently necessitating the construction of systematic solutions that are compatible with the complex context of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

When the simultaneous online player count for "Black Myth: Wukong" on the Steam platform set a record for domestic games, overseas players' understanding of important symbols such as the "Golden Hoop" was found to be lacking; while the Eastern aesthetics of "Liyue" scene in

"Genshin Impact" have been widely praised, the concept of "unity in diversity" it embodies is often misunderstood. [4] This gap between the effectiveness of "industry going global" and "culture going global" exposes the cultural divide hidden behind market data. Such conflicts reveal the cognitive gap in enterprises' understanding of the deep logic of regional culture - simplifying "localization" to language translation and festival marketing, while ignoring the embedded risks of values, historical perspectives, and ethical taboos. Deeper still is the constraint of technological sovereignty and infrastructure fragmentation: there is a significant gap in digital infrastructure along the "Belt and Road" route, with Southeast Asian mobile game users accounting for over 80%, but 4G coverage in countries such as Cambodia and Laos is less than 40%, forcing high-quality games such as "Genshin Impact" to be watered down in gameplay; meanwhile, Russia requires user data to be stored locally, and Indonesia mandates the deployment of game servers within its borders, significantly increasing operational costs due to fragmented compliance requirements.

(II) Suggestions for improving the Chinese game industry's expansion overseas

To address the aforementioned challenges, it is necessary to establish a three-dimensional support system that integrates policy coordination, technology empowerment, and ecological co-creation, with "transcultural communication" as the core concept.

At the policy coordination level, we should promote the implementation of the "Digital Silk Road" special mechanism. Governments need to upgrade bilateral digital trade agreements: establish a joint review whitelist for game content, simplify the mutual recognition process of game licenses in countries such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia; establish a regional data flow safe harbor, allowing enterprises to centrally process ASEAN user data in data center hub countries such as Malaysia, thus avoiding fragmented compliance costs. At the same time, games should be included in the "Silk Road Cultural Heritage" project, supporting the cooperation between AAA masterpieces such as "Black Myth: Wukong" and Central Asian museums to develop cultural relics-linked copies, thereby eliminating political misunderstandings through cultural co-shaping.

At the level of ecological co-creation, we should build a decentralized industrial community. We should encourage small and medium-sized manufacturers to abandon the skin-changing model and turn to deepening their focus on vertical tracks: drawing on the example of "A Hundred Scenic Views of Jiangnan" to open the Indonesian market with "Chinese ancient architecture simulation", or "Pascal's Pact" to enter Eastern Europe with a mix of "Cthulhu + Miao witchcraft" themes. Platform enterprises need to open up ecological resources: reusing Tencent GCloud's global distribution channels to lower the threshold for mid-tier enterprises to go global, and Mihoyo can share the overseas compliance database of "Genshin Impact". The ultimate goal is to form a culturally symbiotic community - establishing a "Belt and Road Game Innovation Fund" to fund Thai developers to embed Kong Opera culture into domestic martial arts games, or support Iranian players to create Persian fine art style skins, so that Chinese culture is no longer a one-way export symbol, but a catalyst for regional civilization dialogue.

4. Conclusion

The in-depth advancement of the "Belt and Road" initiative has provided unprecedented strategic opportunities and cultural platforms for the globalization of China's gaming industry. This article, using the theory of transcultural communication as an analytical framework, deeply deconstructs the overseas strategy of "Genshin Impact" to reveal the core mechanism by which Chinese games break through cultural barriers and achieve global resonance: content innovation centered on cultural decoupling and recombination, deep localization through flexible negotiation of values, and the construction of a transcultural ecosystem driven by user co-creation, which together constitute a "trinity" paradigm of cultural overseas expansion in

the digital era. This paradigm has helped "Genshin Impact" achieve commercial success along the "Belt and Road" and in global markets, highlighting the unique value of games as "cultural decoders".

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