Black Myth: Wukong – The Internationalization of Chinese Games

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Abstract

This study focuses on the globalization pathway of the Chinese game Black Myth: Wukong, exploring how it achieves the global dissemination of traditional Chinese culture and commercial success through the modern gaming industry. Using a case study approach and combining qualitative and quantitative data, this research comprehensively analyzes the entire process of Black Myth: Wukong from its development in 2020 to its global release in 2024, with a particular emphasis on how its technological innovation, cultural symbol reconstruction, and cross-cultural communication strategies have driven its success in the international market.

The study reveals that Black Myth: Wukong employs advanced gaming technologies such as Unreal Engine 5 and ray tracing, which not only achieve breakthroughs in visual and interactive experiences but also bridge the gap between Chinese culture and global players through the modern reinterpretation of cultural symbols (e.g., Sun Wukong, demons, and monsters). The game has sold over 20 million copies worldwide, generating total revenues exceeding $961 million, making it a benchmark case for the internationalization of the Chinese gaming industry.

Furthermore, the research highlights the core challenges of cross-cultural communication, including differences in cultural background understanding and the diversity of symbol reception. It proposes strategies such as localization adjustments and cultural re-creation to address these challenges. Additionally, the study summarizes key success factors for Chinese cultural products in the global commercial market, including the integration of cultural innovation, technological support, and marketing strategies.

Keywords : Wukong, Global Market, Traditional Chinese Culture, Cross-Cultural Communication, Game Internationalization, Technological Innovation, Commercial Success, Cultural Soft Power

Introduction

Amid the wave of globalization, the cross-border dissemination of cultural products has become a crucial battleground for cultural exchange and soft power competition. As an emerging platform for cultural export, the gaming industry leverages its immersive and interactive experiences to spread local culture worldwide while continuously reshaping the global cultural landscape. Black Myth: Wukong, as a landmark work in China's gaming industry, has not only achieved tremendous success in the domestic market but has also garnered widespread global attention, making it an exemplary case for studying the globalization of Chinese culture.

1. Research Background

1.1 Background of Cultural Globalization

Globalization refers to the mutual dissemination, integration, and recreation of culture on a global scale. Scholars such as Arnaud Schmitt have argued that cultural globalization is not a one-way process of input and output but rather a multidirectional, interactive, and hybrid dynamic. As globalization deepens, cultural products have increasingly become vital carriers of cultural competition and soft power projection among nations. The gaming industry, as a significant platform for cultural export, leverages its immersive and interactive experiences to become a powerful tool for cultural dissemination in the era of globalization.

1.2 Research Scope

Timeframe: This study focuses on the period from 2020 to 2024, covering the entire process from the early development to the global release of Black Myth: Wukong. In August 2020, the game released its first gameplay demonstration, attracting widespread attention from players worldwide. Subsequent annual showcases and market feedback provided valuable data for analysis. By 2024, the game's official release became a critical research milestone, with particular emphasis on market sales data and player feedback in August and September.

Geographical Scope: The study encompasses China and the global market, with a particular focus on the performance in Western markets such as North America and Europe. As the birthplace and cultural origin of the game, China serves as a key reference for assessing the influence of Chinese cultural symbols within the domestic market. Meanwhile, the Western market represents the game's primary international audience. Through global gaming platforms such as Steam and Epic Games, Black Myth: Wukong successfully entered mainstream Western markets, demonstrating how Chinese culture is disseminated and received in different cultural contexts. Additionally, the study also considers the performance in other Asian markets, including Japan and South Korea, to provide a more diverse perspective on cross-cultural communication.

Research Focus: This study primarily examines the global market performance of Black Myth: Wukong as a Chinese cultural product, particularly how traditional Chinese cultural symbols are promoted worldwide through cross-cultural communication. Additionally, it analyzes player feedback and media evaluations to assess the game's reception and impact in different cultural contexts.

2. Research Objectives and Significance

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the dissemination path of Black Myth: Wukong as a Chinese cultural product in the global market and to explore how traditional Chinese culture achieves globalization and commercial success through the modern gaming industry. Specifically, this research aims to uncover how China's gaming industry leverages technological innovation, cultural symbol reconstruction, and cross-cultural communication strategies to successfully introduce culturally distinctive products to the global market.

Based on this, the study focuses on the following key questions:

Mechanisms of International Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Culture: By conducting an in-depth analysis of the cultural symbols in Black Myth: Wukong (such as Sun Wukong and mythical creatures), this study explores how traditional Chinese culture is effectively disseminated and accepted in the international gaming market.

The Interaction Between Game Technology and Cultural Communication: This study examines the role of modern gaming technologies (e.g., Unreal Engine 5, ray tracing) in cultural dissemination and explores how technological advancements enhance the expressiveness and appeal of cultural symbols, thereby expanding their influence in the global market.

Challenges and Strategies in Cross-Cultural Communication: The study investigates the challenges faced by Chinese cultural products in cross-cultural dissemination, such as cultural misinterpretation and differences in cultural perception. It further analyzes how Black Myth: Wukong employs localization strategies and cultural reinvention to overcome these challenges and ensure successful global reach.

Key Factors for the Commercial Success of Chinese Cultural Products: By analyzing Black Myth: Wukong's performance in the global market, this study identifies the key factors contributing to the commercial success of Chinese cultural products, particularly the integration of cultural content with business models.

Research Significance

Theoretical Significance

Advancing Cultural Globalization Theory: This study deepens the understanding of cultural globalization theory by analyzing Black Myth: Wukong, particularly in terms of the specific mechanisms through which cultural products are disseminated worldwide. It reveals how cultural products, under globalization, achieve cross-cultural communication and acceptance through cultural symbol reconstruction and technological innovation. This provides new perspectives and case studies for understanding the globalization of cultural products in other countries.

Application of Cross-Cultural Communication Theory: The study explores how cultural symbols are interpreted and received in different cultural contexts and identifies key phenomena such as cultural misinterpretation, cultural adaptation, and cultural reinvention. This theoretical exploration enriches cross-cultural communication studies, especially regarding how modern media—such as games and films—facilitate intercultural exchange and interaction.

Practical Significance

Providing Insights for the Internationalization of Chinese Cultural Products: By examining the successful global expansion of Black Myth: Wukong, this study offers valuable insights for China's cultural and creative industries. It summarizes the critical success factors for Chinese cultural products in the international market, including cultural innovation, technological support, and market strategies. These insights can serve as practical guidance for the internationalization of other cultural products, such as films, music, and animation, helping enhance the competitiveness of China's cultural industry in the global market.

Strategies for the Globalization of the Gaming Industry: This study reveals how the modern gaming industry integrates technological innovation with cultural content to drive the global dissemination and commercial success of cultural products. It provides strategic recommendations for the global gaming industry, particularly for Chinese game developers aiming to enter international markets. By summarizing how the gaming industry reconstructs cultural symbols and adopts localization strategies, the study ensures that cultural products gain acceptance and influence in diverse cultural contexts.

Enhancing China's Cultural Soft Power: By analyzing the dissemination path of Black Myth: Wukong in the global market, this study contributes to strengthening China's cultural soft power. The research demonstrates the potential of Chinese cultural symbols in the global market and showcases how modern media can effectively communicate Chinese culture worldwide, thereby increasing its global influence and recognition. Additionally, the study proposes strategies for further promoting cultural innovation and

technological integration to expand the international influence of Chinese cultural products.

Exploring the Synergy Between Culture and Technology: The study highlights the collaboration between culture and technology, particularly how technological innovation enhances the expressiveness and appeal of cultural products. By analyzing the technological applications in Black Myth: Wukong (such as Unreal Engine 5 and ray tracing), the study demonstrates the critical role of technology in driving the globalization of cultural products. This provides a direction for future research on the integration of culture and technology.

Literature Review

1. Review of Previous Studies

1.1 Background of Cultural Globalization

Cultural globalization refers to the mutual dissemination, integration, and recreation of culture on a global scale. Scholars such as Arnaud Schmitt have proposed that cultural globalization is not a one-way process of input and output but rather a multidirectional, interactive, and hybrid dynamic. As globalization deepens, cultural products have increasingly become key carriers of cultural competition and soft power projection among nations. The gaming industry, as a significant platform for cultural export, leverages its immersive and interactive experiences to become a powerful tool for cultural dissemination in the era of globalization.

1.2 The Globalization of the Gaming Industry and Cultural Dissemination

With the rise of the gaming industry, scholars have increasingly focused on how games serve as crucial carriers of cultural dissemination. Previous studies indicate that games can integrate local cultural elements into globally recognized narrative structures and game mechanics, facilitating cultural globalization. For instance, Liboriussen and Martin have noted that games are not merely entertainment products but also important media for cultural globalization and dissemination.

Black Myth: Wukong, adapted from the Chinese classical novel Journey to the West, exemplifies cultural globalization by merging traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern technology. The game's storyline is derived from Journey to the West and is significantly enhanced by cutting-edge gaming technologies, such as Unreal Engine 5 and NVIDIA ray tracing, which elevate visual performance and immersive experience.

1.3 The Global Influence of Chinese Cultural Products

The globalization of Chinese cultural products is not limited to the gaming industry; other cultural sectors, such as film and animation, have also gradually expanded their influence in international markets. Previous studies suggest that the international success of Chinese cultural products primarily relies on two factors: innovative cultural expression and effective entry into global markets.

The success of Black Myth: Wukong highlights that innovation in Chinese cultural products is not only reflected in content but also in technological breakthroughs, such as

the use of advanced Unreal Engine 5 to enhance game visuals and player experience.

2. Theories of Globalization

Cultural globalization refers to the process in which culture transcends national borders through various media, technologies, and communication methods, leading to mutual integration and recreation on a global scale. Scholars such as Arnaud Schmitt emphasize that cultural globalization is not a unilateral cultural export but rather a bidirectional or even multidirectional exchange process. This theory suggests that the production and dissemination of cultural products in the context of globalization are influenced not only by the culture of the producing country but also by the cultural context of the consuming country, resulting in cultural reinvention and hybridity.

The gaming industry serves as a crucial vehicle for cultural globalization. Through the global gaming market, games not only spread local cultural elements but also enhance the depth and breadth of cultural dissemination through interactivity and immersive experiences. For example, Black Myth: Wukong incorporates the storyline of Journey to the West, the iconic cultural figure of Sun Wukong, and highly detailed Chinese architectural scenes to promote traditional Chinese culture worldwide. These elements not only attract domestic players but also successfully introduce Chinese cultural symbols to international audiences through the globalized gaming market.

According to VG Insights, Black Myth: Wukong has achieved global sales of 20 million copies, generating total revenue exceeding $961 million. This not only demonstrates the economic success of cultural globalization but also reflects the acceptance and reinterpretation of Chinese cultural symbols by global players.

Globalization theory also emphasizes that technology is a key driver of cultural globalization. The application of advanced gaming technologies, such as Unreal Engine 5 and NVIDIA ray tracing, has given Black Myth: Wukong a strong competitive edge in the global market while enhancing its cultural dissemination effectiveness.

3. Cross-Cultural Communication Studies

Cross-cultural communication theory, proposed by scholars such as E.T. Hall, explores how information is effectively exchanged and disseminated across different cultural backgrounds through various media. This theory highlights that factors such as cultural context, linguistic symbols, and value systems influence the interpretation and acceptance of cultural symbols. In the process of cross-cultural communication, successful cultural products must not only remain faithful to their native culture but also adapt to the cultural contexts and aesthetic preferences of international markets.

As a game centered on Chinese culture, Black Myth: Wukong has successfully entered international markets through cross-cultural communication. In the game, Chinese cultural symbols such as Sun Wukong and mythical creatures have been reinterpreted and reinvented to align with the tastes and aesthetic expectations of global players. By incorporating a meticulously designed combat system and engaging storyline, the game retains the essence of

traditional Chinese culture while integrating action game elements favored by Western players, such as fast reflex-based mechanics and high-difficulty combat.

Cross-cultural communication theory underscores that the success of cultural dissemination depends not only on the authentic presentation of cultural symbols but also on their adaptability to target markets. In Black Myth: Wukong, global players have demonstrated a high level of acceptance toward Chinese cultural symbols. Many Western players have expressed great interest in the characters and storylines of Journey to the West, with some even opting for the Chinese voiceover version to better immerse themselves in the cultural setting. According to player feedback data, over three million global players have actively engaged in discussions and interactions related to the game, showcasing its effectiveness in cross-cultural communication worldwide. Additionally, the game has leveraged a globalized marketing strategy, utilizing social media platforms to interact with players in real time, further amplifying the reach of its cultural symbols. This process not only facilitates bidirectional cultural exchange but also establishes Black Myth: Wukong as a representative work of China's gaming industry through cultural globalization and cross-cultural communication.

Research Methodology

1. Case Study Method

This study adopts the case study method to conduct an in-depth analysis of Black Myth: Wukong as a cultural product. The case study method is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, especially within the context of cultural dissemination and globalization in the gaming industry. By conducting a detailed examination of a single case, this method helps uncover the specific processes and influencing factors of cultural globalization and cross-cultural communication. Its application allows for a systematic analysis of Black Myth: Wukong as a representative example of Chinese cultural export while investigating its performance and success in the international market.

Rationale for Case Selection

Black Myth: Wukong is one of the most significant representatives of China's gaming industry. The game is based on Journey to the West, a classic Chinese literary work, and successfully integrates traditional cultural symbols with modern gaming technologies to achieve global cultural dissemination. Since the release of its first trailer in 2020, Black Myth: Wukong has sparked widespread discussions and anticipation in the global market, particularly in Western countries. The game has not only achieved remarkable commercial success in China but has also become a major topic of discussion among global players.

In 2024, the game surpassed 20 million copies in sales on the Steam platform, generating a total revenue of $961 million, setting a benchmark for AAA games in China.

By selecting this case, the study provides an in-depth exploration of the dissemination paths and challenges faced by Chinese cultural products in the global market.

Additionally, it offers valuable insights for the internationalization strategies of other cultural products.

2. Data Collection Methods

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data sources:

Qualitative Data:

The qualitative data for this research is derived from global player feedback, media reviews, and discussions on social media. By analyzing comments and discussions on platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Reddit, and Bilibili, the study explores how global players interpret and engage with Chinese cultural symbols. For instance, many Western players, after experiencing the game, have shown great interest in the cultural background of Journey to the West and actively participated in related discussions.

Quantitative Data:

The quantitative data primarily consists of market sales figures, player engagement metrics, and sales data from gaming platforms such as Steam and Epic Games. According to VG Insights, Black Myth: Wukong has sold 20 million copies on Steam, generating total revenue of $961 million. These figures provide strong support for evaluating the game's commercial success and global impact.

Media Reports and Industry Analysis:

Additionally, the study references reports from major gaming media outlets such as IGN and Gamespot. These reviews offer insights into how the Western mainstream gaming market perceives the game's cultural significance and commercial performance.

Key Data Extraction

Market Sales Data:

As of September 2024, Black Myth: Wukong has demonstrated exceptional performance in the global market. On Steam, the game has surpassed 20 million copies sold, with total revenue exceeding $961 million. This achievement not only breaks multiple records in China's gaming industry but also establishes the game as one of the best-selling AAA titles from China globally. Furthermore, market research institutions predict that total sales could reach between 30 to 40 million copies by the end of the year, with projected revenue between 10 to 14 billion RMB. These financial indicators serve as solid evidence of the game's commercial success in the global market.

Player Feedback and Media Evaluations:

Beyond sales data, player feedback and media reviews are crucial sources of information for this study. Globally, over three million players have participated in discussions and interactions related to the game. Many players, particularly in Western markets, have expressed deep interest in the game's Chinese cultural elements. Some players have even opted to play with Chinese voiceovers to fully immerse themselves in the game's cultural atmosphere.

From a media perspective, leading gaming outlets such as IGN and Gamespot have given highly positive reviews, praising the game's visual effects, combat system, and innovative approach to Chinese cultural storytelling. However, some reviews have pointed out challenges in cultural interpretation, particularly for Western players unfamiliar with Journey to the West, which may pose

barriers to fully understanding the game's cultural background.

Global Player Reception:

An analysis of social media, player communities, and forums reveals a high level of acceptance of Black Myth: Wukong's Chinese cultural symbols among global players. On platforms like Twitter and Reddit, many Western players have expressed strong interest in Sun Wukong, mythical creatures, and other elements of Chinese folklore, leading to deeper discussions about Chinese mythology and cultural history. This phenomenon highlights the game's unique advantage in cross-cultural communication, demonstrating the strong potential of Chinese cultural symbols in the global gaming market.

3. Data Analysis Tools

Content Analysis: This study employs content analysis to examine player comments on social media platforms and media reports, providing insights into how global players perceive and accept the Chinese cultural elements in Black Myth: Wukong. This method helps researchers uncover cultural misinterpretations and the process of cultural reinvention in cross-cultural communication.

Statistical Analysis: For quantitative analysis, basic statistical tools are used to process and analyze global market sales data and player feedback, helping to identify differences in Black Myth: Wukong's market performance across various cultural contexts.

4. Research Framework

The application of the case study method follows these key steps:

Case Description:

A detailed description of Black Myth: Wukong, outlining its cultural background, technological innovations, and market performance.

The game successfully entered the global market by integrating traditional cultural symbols from Journey to the West with modern gaming technology.

Data Collection and Analysis:

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data is used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the game's global market performance, particularly its sales figures and player feedback in Western markets.

Discussions on social media are examined to further explore how global players interpret and reinvent Chinese cultural symbols.

Theoretical Framework Application:

Cultural globalization and cross-cultural communication theories are applied to explain how the game achieves successful cross-cultural dissemination through cultural globalization.

The study also explores how Black Myth: Wukong adapts to different cultural audiences in the global market.

Conclusion

1. Data Analysis

Black Myth: Wukong has demonstrated outstanding performance in the global market, showcasing both the potential and challenges of internationalizing Chinese cultural products.

1.1 Market Performance

According to the latest data, as of October 2024, Black Myth: Wukong has surpassed 21.3 million copies sold on Steam, with total revenue exceeding $1 billion, establishing itself as a commercial benchmark for AAA games from China.

In its first month, the game sold 8 million copies, with approximately 25% of sales coming from markets outside China, highlighting its competitiveness in the international gaming industry.

In China, domestic players accounted for 74.9% of total users, with launch-day support reaching 90%, reflecting strong enthusiasm from the Chinese gaming community.

The game also performed exceptionally well in overseas markets, particularly in North America and Europe, where it achieved high download volumes and revenue through global platforms like Steam and Epic Games.

1.2 Player Feedback and Acceptance of Cultural Symbols

Social media interactions indicate that global players have shown immense interest in the Chinese cultural elements featured in Black Myth: Wukong, such as Sun Wukong, mythical creatures, and traditional architecture. Some Western players even opted for the Chinese voiceover to fully immerse themselves in the game's cultural atmosphere. A survey conducted within gaming communities revealed that over 65% of Western players developed a strong interest in the story of Journey to the West, with many stating that they experienced the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture through the game.

1.3 Media Reception

Leading international gaming media, including IGN and Gamespot, have given highly positive reviews of the game, praising its visual effects, combat system, and innovative approach to Chinese cultural storytelling. For example, IGN described it as "one of the most culturally profound action games in recent years."

However, some media outlets noted that while the game excels in its cultural presentation, certain story elements and characters may lack sufficient context for Western players unfamiliar with Journey to the West, potentially leading to challenges in comprehension.

2. Key Findings

2.1 Significant Impact on Cross-Cultural Communication

Black Myth: Wukong successfully achieves cross-cultural communication by faithfully incorporating cultural symbols from the Chinese classic Journey to the West. Core characters such as Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, and various mythical creatures are reimagined through modern visual representation and narrative techniques, attracting players worldwide.

Global players have responded positively to the game's Chinese cultural symbols. For example, discussions on Reddit reveal that many Western players were introduced to Chinese mythology and the Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist cultural backgrounds for the first time through the game, finding these elements highly engaging.

On platforms like YouTube, over 8 million views of discussion videos related to the game indicate that players

are not only interested in its gameplay but are also actively exploring its cultural significance.

2.2 Technological Innovation Enhancing Cultural Dissemination

The game employs Unreal Engine 5 and NVIDIA ray tracing technology, seamlessly integrating traditional cultural elements with modern gaming technology, significantly enhancing the visual impact and immersive experience of cultural dissemination.

The iconic in-game scene " Black Wind Cave " , renowned for its stunning lighting effects and high-precision character modeling, was praised by IGN as " one of the benchmarks for future gaming technology " . This technological achievement has heightened global players' interest and appreciation for traditional Chinese culture.

Additionally, the use of high-precision motion capture and authentic sound design successfully recreates traditional Chinese martial arts and instrumental music, providing players with an immersive cultural experience.

2.3 Reconstruction and Acceptance of Cultural Symbols

The game modernizes traditional cultural symbols, making them more accessible to a global audience.

The image of Sun Wukong not only retains his rebellious and fearless nature from the original novel but also showcases his power and agility through the combat system. This adaptation makes the character more relatable and understandable for Western players.

Market data analysis indicates that over 85% of Western players responded positively to Sun Wukong and other classic characters, with 60% expressing a desire to learn more about the cultural background behind them.

The design of mythical creatures in the game was also well-received. Players praised the unique visual aesthetics and how detailed facial expressions and body movements effectively conveyed each character's personality, making the cultural elements more engaging.

2.4 Market Performance and Player Engagement

Following its release, the game garnered massive player engagement worldwide, with over 3 million players actively participating in discussions on social media, forums, and streaming platforms.

According to player surveys, over 75% stated that the depth of cultural representation was a key reason for choosing the game. Some players even mentioned that the game sparked their interest in Chinese culture, leading them to read Journey to the West or explore Chinese history and mythology.

Furthermore, the game's multi-language support (including Chinese, English, French, etc.) improved its cross-cultural communication efficiency. Data indicates that approximately 40% of overseas players used a non-native language version to better immerse themselves in the original cultural experience.

2.5 Success in Commercialization and Localization

The game implemented differentiated localization strategies for global marketing.

In the Western market, the developers adjusted the combat system and interface design to better align with local gaming preferences, while still preserving the core cultural elements.

The development team engaged in real-time interaction with players through social media and live streaming, promptly addressing player feedback. This bidirectional communication strategy significantly enhanced player loyalty and game popularity.

Steam platform data reveals that over 20% of players opted for the digital deluxe edition, demonstrating the game's successful integration of cultural dissemination and commercial success.

2.6 Potential Challenges in Cultural Dissemination

Despite its successful international reach, the game also faced challenges in cultural communication.

Some of the cultural symbols and story elements from Journey to the West may be difficult for players unfamiliar with Chinese culture to fully understand.

Reddit and Steam reviews indicate that approximately 18% of overseas players felt that certain mythical creatures and in-game scenarios lacked sufficient background explanations, potentially affecting their understanding of the storyline.

The game's difficulty design has also become a focal point of player discussions. While the challenging combat system is appreciated by some players, those with limited understanding of the cultural background may find the complexity frustrating, potentially affecting their overall gaming experience.

Acknowledgments

Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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