Electronic Migration: Cross-media Narrative Construction of Chinese Digital Games in Cyberspace

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Abstract: In recent years, China's representative domestic digital games, with its excellent quality and innovative content, have become the first echelon in the field of global open world role-playing games, and have been greatly welcomed at home and abroad. This article aims to explore how to efficiently and specifically implement cross-media narrative construction in cyberspace through the study of the domestic game "Genshin Impact," providing indirect experience that is convenient for reference in the cultural and creative industry.

1. Introduction

As peoples living standards continue to improve, the demand for spiritual and cultural products is also on the rise. In fact, electronic games have become an indispensable part of Chinas cultural and creative industry. Considering multiple aspects such as market revenue, social impact, and genre characteristics, "Black Myth: Wu kong" and "Genshin Impact" undoubtedly stand out as the most representative domestic open-world role-playing (Role-playing game) adventure games. This article takes the domestic game "GenshinImpact" as an example to explore the methodology and possibilities of constructing cross-media narratives in cyberspace. The research content includes not only the product design and content innovation of the "Genshin Impact" game itself but also the cultural value and dissemination forms of the "Genshin Impact" IP. By combining specific cases with academic theories, it transforms the successful case of cross-media narrative in "Genshin Impact" into more accessible indirect experiences.

2. The Linkage between the Real World and the Virtual World Breaks the "Fourth Wall" of the "2.5 Dimension"

In the ACG (Anim ation, Comics and Games) domain, virtual worlds such as comics, animations, and games are mostly presented in two-dimensional form, hence they are referred to as "two-dimensional." In contrast, the real world is called "three-dimensional." To enhance player immersion, game developers often employ various methods to break down the "fourth wall" that separates these two worlds, aiming to reconstruct a "2.5-dimensional" space. In the domestic game "Genshin Impact", this characteristic is evident not only in the game designs reconstruction of real-world elements but also in the interaction between the real world and virtual characters.

(1) Reconstruction of the real prototype: build a virtual world with a sense of reality

"Genshin Impact" as a role-playing game (Role-playing game), allows players to experience the protagonists adventure across the continent of Tivat through the perspective of a traveler. "The three dimensions of reality are produced in three ways that adjust and ordinary reality: one is by subjecting reality to distorted deformation; another is by introducing an object where there was none before; the last is by subtracting or eliminating all content (objects) from reality, leaving behind only the empty space once filled with objects." Taking the main narrative of "Genshin Impact" as an example, the travelers journey across seven countries is essentially no different from classic RPGs. The players perspective is equivalent to that of a camera, and the narrative progression and pacing transitions are achieved through text, CG (ComputerGraphics) animation, performances, and other forms, ultimately serving to tell the story to the player.

(2) Integration of virtual images: cross-border linkage that blurs the "dimensional wall"

Similar to the "fourth wall," in the ACG domain, the wall that separates players from the virtual world is known as the "dimensional barrier." To build a "2.5-dimensional" world, collaborating with real-world companies and institutions is also a crucial step in shaping Genshin Impacts brand image. For example, the partnership between Shanghai Mihayou Tianming Technology Co., Ltd. and the Sanxingdui Museum: allowing "global netizens to follow the footsteps of Rock King Emperor Zhongli, gazing up at the I bronze divine tree, and looking down at classic Sanxingdui artifacts like the tripod cooking vessel." The campaign achieved widespread recognition through the format of "Sanxingdui + Origin God + Liu Huan + Vincent Fang" on social media platforms, drawing more young people to the rich history and traditional values of Chinese civilization. The high popularity of the virtual character Zhongli attracts many players to visit offline, and the cultural value of the Sanxingdui Museum complements Zhonglis character design beautifully,The virtual role of cultural history not only does not show a break, but also makes the silent relics come to life again, and makes young people have a more specific and vivid understanding of bronze ware.

(3) Innovation and transformation of traditional culture: cultural export in digital space

We should not overlook how "Genshin Impact" has promoted the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinas excellent traditional culture on the basis of achieving commercial goals, facilitating the international spread of Chinese traditional culture through gaming. In terms of the overseas market, domestic game developers have achieved inclusiveness, integrating and drawing inspiration from the traditional cultures and customs of different ethnicities and regions, further expanding the base of overseas game audiences.To better achieve its commercial goals. For example, "Rice Wife," based on Japan, implemented a policy of national seclusion under the rule of the "General of Thunder and Lightning." This is clearly derived from the real history that "from the issuance of the last national seclusion order in 1639 to the opening of the country by the United States in 1853, Japan was completely isolated from the international community for over 200 years" . Through these adaptations, "Genshin Impact" has been able to incorporate as much popular culture as possible, thus creating opportunities for domestic games to enter overseas markets.

3. Identity and Role Shaping: the Main Axis of Transmedia Narrative

In "Genshin Impact", players take on the role of "travelers" in the virtual world, directly participating in the games narrative. Meanwhile, the official game refers to players in the real world as "travelers," meaning that "traveler" is an identity bestowed upon players by the game. Specifically, in "Genshin Impact" s cross-media narrative, player identity recognition is positively correlated with the gaming experience, while character development impacts game revenue.

(1) Content guidance with identity as the goal

Aesthetics scholar Yi Si posits: "The reader is itself an active creative force in history. The historical life of literary works cannot be imagined without the proactive participation and involvement of the receiver. In domestic games represented by "Genshin Impact", the protagonist exhibits the following characteristics: ① the gender of the protagonist is not specified (self-selectable); ② the background of the protagonist is unknown; ③ the protagonist does not have a clearly defined personality; ④ the protagonist has few or no established social relationships. Taking "Genshin Impact" as an example, players assume the role of an unidentified, character with traits that align with their inner expectations, traveling across dimensions on the virtual world of Tivat. The players sense of identity intensifies with the progression of the game, gradually becoming a deeply ingrained subconscious, ultimately blurring the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds, making oneself part of "Genshin Impact".The target of cross-media narrative is the "traveler" defined by the manufacturer.

(2) Cross-media creation centered on character shaping

American literary theorist Abrams defines narrative perspective as: "the method of telling a story —— the way the author presents or views it, through which readers learn about the characters, actions, scenes, and events that make up a fictional novel." "Genshin Impact" designs a large number of dialogue branches and interactive options that require player involvement, guiding players to actively participate.Centering on character development, cross-media narrative creation effectively links the game with comics, enriches the world-building, enhances character portrayal, and completes the logical development of the plot, embodying what scholar Zhao Shuwan mentioned: "multiple carriers, diverse forms, multidimensional methods, achieving cross-platform extension of shared stories, constructing cross-media narratives."State cultural landscape

4. Topic Center and Agenda Setting: the "Queen" Status of Manufacturers

Secondary creation is a vital component of the cultural and creative industry, encompassing both official derivative works, sequels, adaptations, and collaborative creations, as well as fan-generated fan fiction. To meet this demand, companies that hold the "Queen Ant" position often set agendas and guide topics to cultivate "worker ants," or secondary creators, who fill the gaps in cross-media narratives.

(1) Official secondary creation: an effective way to achieve story linkage driven by revenue generation

RPGs brought to mobile platforms by domestic games, thus they became an instant hit upon release, elevating Mihayou to the top tier of domestic game developers. Notably, although "Bekk" and "Genshin Impact" do not belong to the same IP, there are still intricate connections between them, with some players viewing them as different "world bubbles" similar to the world tree —— "Urokaze"in Norse mythology. As evidence, characters Kiyomi and Fisher from "Genshin Impact" were featured in "Bekk: The Final Chapter", appearing as self-controlled characters. Through the synergy of these IPs, Mihayou managed to reignite interest in their lesser-known games and mitigate player loss. The shift in player base between old and new games is more evident in another Mihayou title, "Bekk: Star Rail".

(2) Collaborative creation: the backbone force that fills the gap of cross-media creation under the guidance of the official

Mihayou closely ties the IP collaboration and commercial objectives of its products. For example, the collaborations between "Genshin Impact" and KFC, as well as "Shikigami: The Rail of Stars" and Cosmax, all aim at marketing and revenue generation. These collaborations mostly provide physical consumer goods that carry cultural attributes of the IPs, rather than cultural products that meet spiritual needs. This gap is being filled by a large number of fan creations. These fan works precisely address the aspects that manufacturers cannot cover due to

limited productivity and provide an open and inclusive community interaction environment. Under the intentional guidance and deliberate restrictions from the official side, fan creations have become a key force in effectively filling the narrative gaps across media, while also being strictly regulated to prevent them from undermining the dominant position and agenda-setting power of manufacturers.

(3) The tripartite relationship between the official, the player and the player

In the realm of secondary creation, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between fan creators and official parties; both ultimately serve players (i.e., the audience). The commercial value of IPs is hard to quantify, but IP products themselves are capable of guiding and constraining. Through effective guidance and reasonable restrictions, Mihayou has leveraged a large number of fan creators to fill in the gaps in cultural products under the cross-media narrative construction of "Genshin Impact". By creating fan novels, fan comics, and fan short videos, these works enrich the character development of "Genshin Impact" as the core. At the same time, fan creations based on "Genshin Impact" provide a wealth of "topic centers" needed by player communities, thereby fostering a positive community atmosphere and maintaining long-term discussion enthusiasm.

5. Cross-media Narrative Assembly Based on Linear Narrative: Dynamic Presentation of Virtual World

"Genshin Impact," as an IP, has created a virtual world that captivates players through various cross-media forms, both in cyberspace and the real world. However, for players, the game itself is the medium that makes them most engrossed and committed. What sets "Genshin Impact" apart is its use of the game as a medium to control the players terminal, turning it into a screen for the manufacturer to play pre-produced works from other media forms independent of the game.

(1) Return to the game itself: linear storytelling within traditional games

"The part similar to traditional narrative" is the main component of the plot structure in "Genshin Impact", where characters advance the story through dialogue and monologues. In this activitys plot, visual storytelling, image-based narration, and textual narration together form the part of "Genshin Impact" that resembles traditional narrative. Specifically, "Genshin Impact" constructs simple shot relationships through montage, forming traditional visual storytelling.

Game behavior selection section. Interactivity is considered a core component of games, as mentioned earlier, player participation is a unique advantage that distinguishes games from other media forms. Among all games, there is a category that places great emphasis on "game behavior choices." In a narrow sense, these are known as interactive film games. The purpose of playing for players is to explore different options within the game, watch and read various plot developments, thereby enhancing their gaming experience.

The middle part between the two. In the game "Genshin Impact", this section is specifically manifested in combat, map running, material collection, quick time event, and other parts. This type of narrative often serves as a bridge throughout the games progression. The open world is what allows "Genshin Impact" to provide numerous such "bridges," thereby enriching the players experience.

(2) Games as carriers: windows to cross-media narratives

As an emerging medium, mobile terminals do not confine themselves to just one or a few media characteristics like traditional media; they are inherently composite media platforms. "Genshin Impact" leverages the immersive experience provided by games to skillfully achieve cross-media storytelling. Throughout the actual gameplay, a large amount of animation and performance is interspersed, with no interactive elements. Players become spectators in front of the screen and audience members in the theater, free from the constraints of game mechanics on

presentation forms. Meanwhile, "Genshin Impact" s excellent soundtrack has garnered significant attention, leading to multiple offline concerts that were often sold out. The music design also adopts a unique style, allowing players to recall various experiences from the game while enjoying the music, even when they are detached from the game itself.

6. Technology Iteration and Virtual World Upgrade: Prospects for Cross-media Narrative

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology and the concept of Meta-universe (metaverse), peoples imagination of virtual world has also changed. In view of these cutting-edge technologies, domestic game manufacturers such as Mihayou have also conducted research and application, and expounded their imagination of the future virtual world.

(1) Hardware upgrade: make a more realistic cyberspace possible

As technology advances, the virtual world of cyberspace will increasingly resemble the future form of human life, much like what renowned American science fiction writer NealStephenson (NealStephenson) described in his novel "Snow Crash" (SnowCrash): "Put on your headphones and goggles, find your connection terminal, and you can enter a virtual space that is computer-simulated and parallel to the real world." With the maturation and continuous development of VR and AR technologies, along with the emergence of brain-computer interfaces, some internet companies are dedicated to creating more immersive worlds. For example, Mihayou writes on its homepage: "Our vision: By 2030, create a virtual world where one billion people around the globe would be willing to live." According to this vision, the boundary between reality and virtuality may be completely blurred, but whether players at that time can reach the conclusion that "only reality is real," as Wade Woz from "Ready Player One" (ReadyPlayerOne), remains open to debate.

(2) Artificial Intelligence: provide pathways for more diverse interactions

The emergence and development of Internet technology have brought about earth-shaking changes to the world over the past half-century, while artificial intelligence is seen by some industries as the protagonist of the next technological revolution. Currently, the release of generative AI models such as ChatGPT, Sora, and Deepseek has garnered widespread attention from all sectors globally, showcasing the possibility of achieving "a comprehensive integration of blockchain technology, interactive technology, video game technology, artificial intelligence, network, and computing technologies, forming an ultimate digital medium that integrates and fuses all current and future digital technologies."The iteration of technology and the upgrade of virtual worlds provide the means to realize these visions. With these technologies, the boundary between reality and virtuality will be further blurred. How to narrate in a world infinitely close to reality? Cross-media narrative works like "Genshin Impact" may offer insights into world-building and character creationSome indirect experience that is easy to refer to.

7. Conclusion

The popularization of mobile internet terminals has accelerated the decline of traditional media. The prosperity of fan economy represented by "Genshin Impact" and the flourishing of IP brands have drawn our attention to the "third space" that is both a living space and an imaginative one, which transcends media boundaries. Domestic games like "Genshin Impact", through cross-media storytelling, construct virtual worlds in cyberspace that immerse players, breaking down the "fourth wall" to manage a massive fan economy, and exploring a new path for cultural creativity that bridges reality and virtuality. The creation of cross-media narratives that blend cultural production with real life is some of the experience that "Genshin Impact" offers to real-life cultural creators.

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