Investigating Marketing Strategies and Consumer Behavior of Chinese Otome Games: A Case Study of Game "Love and Deep Space"

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Abstract:

This study investigates the marketing strategies and consumer behavior associated with Chinese otome games, using "Love and Deep Space" as a case study. Otome games, a genre predominantly targeting female players, have gained significant traction in the Chinese gaming market. This research explores how these games are marketed and how consumer behavior influences their success. Through a mixed-method approach, including market analysis, consumer surveys, the study examines promotional tactics, platform usage, and consumer preferences. Key findings highlight the effectiveness of targeted digital marketing, the role of social media influencers, and the impact of localized content on player engagement. The results provide insights into how otome games can leverage marketing strategies to enhance their appeal in the competitive Chinese market and offer recommendations for developers aiming to optimize their marketing efforts and understand consumer preferences in this niche segment.For example, the popularity of games such as Love & Producer not only shows the commercial potential of B-girl games, but also highlights the specific needs of female gamers for game content and experiences. Therefore, game developers need to have a deep understanding of these requirements and incorporate them into game design and marketing strategies in order to gain a competitive advantage in this growing market.

Keywords: Otome game, The female market, Love and Deepspace, Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behavior.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of Research Background

In recent years, the digital entertainment industry has made rapid development, especially the market scale of the game industry has been expanding. Globally, video games have become one of the mainstream forms of entertainment, and their market covers a wide range of platforms from traditional computers and game consoles to smartphones. According to market research reports, the gaming industry has become one of the highest-grossing entertainment industries in the world, even surpassing the movie and music industries. China, as one of the world's largest gaming markets, has seen particularly impressive growth.

In the Chinese market, otome games (i.e., relationship simulation games for female players) have gradually gained significant attention and development. Otome games originated in Japan and are popular among female players for their unique romantic plots and character interactions. With the growing community of female gamers in China, this genre of game has also gained wide acceptance and popularity in the Chinese market.

In China, the otome game market is experiencing rapid growth. In particular, the popularity of mobile internet has enabled otome games to quickly reach a large number of target users. In addition, game companies are constantly innovating their marketing strategies to meet the needs of different player groups. However, this market also faces some challenges, such as fierce market competition, diversified player needs, and localization of game content.

Among the many otome games, "Love and Deepspace" is a representative game that has achieved remarkable success in the Chinese market. The game has won the favor of a large number of female players through its rich plot design, exquisite character settings and delicate emotional interactions. Therefore, "Love and Deepspace" is used as an example in this paper to provide a valuable case study

on marketing strategy and success factors in the consumer market.

1.2 Research Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to explore the marketing strategies in China's otome game market through a case study approach, taking "Love and Deepspace" as an example to evaluate its effectiveness and success factors in attracting target user groups. This paper We will conduct a detailed study on the behavioral patterns, purchase motives, and game preferences of otome game players, focusing on analyzing the user feedback and behavioral characteristics of "Love and Deepspace" in order to reveal the psychological needs and purchase decisions of players. Further, this paper will evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing strategies adopted by Love and Deepspace, identifying successful practices as well as potential problems, in order to provide a strong empirical basis for future marketing strategies. Through this process, the paper will explore which marketing strategies have been effective in practice and which need to be improved or adapted. Ultimately, based on the results of the study, this paper will provide targeted strategic recommendations for otome game developers and marketers, aiming to help them optimize their marketing strategies, improve user satisfaction, and enhance market competitiveness, thereby expanding market share and promoting the continued development and innovation of the otome game industry.

1.3 Significance of the Study

First of all, this study aims to fill the gaps in otome game market research, especially in the Chinese market, where in-depth analysis of otome game is still insufficient. With the rapid rise of otome game in the Chinese market, systematic research in this field is particularly important. This paper analyzes the marketing strategy of "Love and Deepspace", aiming at revealing the effective marketing methods of otome game, and then improving the scientificity and relevance of the existing marketing strategy. This not only provides game developers with empirical evidence to optimize their marketing strategies, but also provides them with valuable references to enhance their competitiveness in the competitive market.

Further, this study will deeply explore and reveal the psychological needs and purchase decision-making process of players by analyzing the user feedback and behavioral characteristics of "Love and Deepspace" in detail. The results of this study will help game developers to more accurately locate their target users and design products and services that better meet their needs, thus significantly improving user experience and satisfaction.

In addition, this study is dedicated to promoting the overall development of the otome game industry. By providing valuable market insights and recommendations, this study not only helps to promote innovation and progress in the game industry, but also provides theoretical support for future market strategy development. The findings and recommendations of the study will be useful for marketing practices in other types of games and related industries, further expanding the scope of application of marketing theories and improving the applicability and effectiveness of marketing strategies.

In summary, this study not only deepens the understanding of the otome game market, but also provides practical strategic recommendations for related companies and practitioners. These recommendations will play an important role in promoting the development of the otome game market, thereby facilitating the long-term development and continuous innovation of the entire industry.

1.4 Research Methodology and Framework of the Posterior Study

The research methodology of this paper is case study type as well as literature review. In the following paper, we will first introduce the basic informations of otome game, study the social media marketing of "Love and Deepspace", the game creation community, the cooperation between the game and others, Consumer behavior analysis. finally, we will talk about some suggestions for the future development of otome game.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defination of Otome Game

Otome game is a type of game specially designed for female players, which mainly focuses on the theme of love, and satisfies female players' fantasies and pursuits of ideal life, including romantic love, through role-playing, falling in love with multiple characters in the game and other interactive ways. It not only focuses on the entertainment and fun of the game, but also pays more attention to the emotional experience and the quality of the storytelling. Otome games usually have plentiful plots, exquisite graphics, and attractive male characters, and this type of game design often builds an emotional world that can arouse the resonance of female players. Through character interaction and plot development in the game, it allows players to feel loved and cherished, and allows them to experience growth in the game, aiming to provide female players with a way to escape reality and experience an idealized life [1].

2.2 Market Status of Otome Game

Existing data from the user scale, China's female game players have reached 300 million in 2019, and has grown by 30% in four years. By the beginning of 2020, the market size of Chinese female player has exceeded 357 million. Among them, female game players accounted for 54.59% of overall gamers, surpassing the proportion of male game players. In terms of market size, the market size was 52.7 billion yuan in 2019, with a compound annual growth rate of more than 20%, significantly faster than the industry's average growth rate. Around 2023, China's otome game market size reached 95.8 billion yuan, with a CAGR of 18.4% from 2018-2023 [2].

In recent years, Chinese otome games such as "Mr. Love: Queen's Choice", "Light and Night", "Tears of Themis" and "Lovebrush Chronicles" have become the leading Chinese otome games in recent years. These games not only made significant progress in the plot setting and characterization, but also breakthroughs in the visual creation and interactive experience, bringing a diverse emotional experience to the players.

With the success of these games, the production level of Chinese otome games is also increasing, and they are winning a lot of attention in the market. On January 18 this year, the game "Love and Deepspace" produced by the same company, Papergame company, as the originator of domestic otome games "Mr. Love: Queen's Choice" was released. Upon its release, the game quickly sparked hot discussions with its innovative content and in-depth plot design, and became a hot topic among the player community. And on the first day of its release on January 18, 2024, "Love and Deepspace" reached #8 on the bestseller charts, reaching as high as #5 on the bestseller charts, with excellent revenue performance. The Chinese version of the game has generated over 3,000 million yuan in revenue on the first day of launch, and 1.620 billion yuan in iOS revenue as of the first half of the year.

3. Social Media Marketing

3.1 Media Engagement Strategies

"Love and Deepspace" has opened official accounts on Weibo, Bilibili and Little Red Book, which are the most mainstream social media software in China, and all of them have more than 1,000,000 followers (statistics as of August 18th). On Weibo, "Love and Deepspace" displayed the cards' picture of the game's main characters through opening advertisements during the game's release and some games' special events, which directly attracted users' visual attention. This kind of advertisement not only utilized the high traffic time of Weibo, but also deepened players' impression of the game through the distinctive character images. In addition, the game also combines a variety of advertising forms, including graphic ads and short video promos, which are widely distributed on the platform, effectively increasing the game's popularity and users' willingness to download. This multi-layered advertising strategy ensured that the game received the maximum attention and engagement from the target user group. "Love and Deepspace"'s social media software marketing strategy has increased the game's exposure and player engagement through a number of effective means.

3.2 Game creation community

The success of "Love and Deepspace" as a widely popular game not only relies on its excellent game design and characters, but also benefits from its creator incentive program on all major platforms. The program is designed to encourage players and content creators to participate actively by offering generous rewards and a variety of incentives to motivate them to generate and produce high-quality game content on all major platforms.

For the marketing side, the creator incentive program can reduce the cost of traditional advertising investments, as creator content is a form of advertising in itself, often more trustworthy and persuasive than traditional advertisements to enhance brand awareness. By partnering with creators, the game can be introduced to their fan base, thereby expanding the game's audience and building a long-term relationship, which helps maintain continued exposure and publicity for the game's brand.

Specifically, "Love and Deepspace" has created a variety of prizes, including cash, unique in-game props, and in-game merchandise on its platform, which has attracted a large number of creators to participate in the program. "Love and Deepspace" has started a creator incentive program on platforms such as Xiaohongshu, bilibili, and Douyin. Players have also actively created fanfiction novel, fanfiction drawings, fanfiction videos and other excellent works. By working closely with the platforms, game developers ensure the fairness and transparency of the incentive programs, enabling creators to showcase their talents in a vibrant environment. This strategy not only effectively boosts player engagement, but also increases game exposure and community activity. In terms of actual results, these measures have greatly enriched the game's content ecosystem, promoted interaction between players and creators, and further consolidated the game's market position. In the future, as the game industry continues to develop, this incentive program is expected to continue to evolve and optimize, bringing more opportunities and challenges to creators and players.

Table 1. Example of a platform creator incentive program

Platform	Contents	Tags	Selection Criteria	Prize
Weibo	paintings, manga, novels, comics, cosplay, crafts, etc.	＃恋与深空 2.0 交错视界＃ ＃秦彻＃	Comprehensive evaluation based on the overall amount of interaction, reads, and quality of the work	1st place prize: $800 cash + 6480 game diamonds + a game merchandise 2nd place prize: 1000 game diamonds + a game merchandise 3rd place prize: 500 diamonds
Little Red Book	1. In-game video recording, character's video, etc. 2. fanfiction video, cosplay, handicrafts, and game guides, etc.	＃恋与深空 ＃ ＃恋与深空 2.0 交错视界＃	Comprehensive evaluation based on the overall amount of interaction, reads, and quality of the work	Jingdong 1000 RMB shopping card, Huawei phone, random badges, etc.

3.3 Cooperations

3.3.1 Cooperation between games and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Popularizing Intangible Cultural Heritage helps to protect and pass on traditional culture and enhance cultural confidence, while promoting economic development and social cohesion. In this way, it can not only display and promote national culture, but also promote cultural innovation and exchange. Since the publish of "Love and Deepspace", the game has incorporated a series of Intangible Cultural Heritage and cultural content videos in game, "Love and Deepspace" has achieved the popularization of Intangible Cultural Heritage to the players and aroused more young people in China and abroad to the interest of Chinese traditional culture. In March this year, the game and Lianyungang shell carving Intangible Cultural Heritage project cooperation attracted widespread, invited the shell carving artist Zhang Xiyue, with its exquisite skills for the game character Rafayel creation of the deep sea scene. In April, the game and the Weifang kite master Guo Hongli, for the game of the three male protagonists of the game of the customized Intangible Cultural Heritage of the paper kite, the video shows in detail the process of the kite and the cultural background of paper kite production. August, the game with the Jingxi Zhuangzi video, the game is the most popular of non-legacy projects and cultural content, to attract more young people at home and abroad to interest in Chinese traditional culture. In August, the game cooperated with the representative inheritor of the Jingxi Zhuang embroidery ball making technique to customize Intangible Cultural Heritage embroidery balls for the male

protagonists, allowing players to experience the unique charm of these ancient cultural heritage through the game [3].

3.3.2 Game and brand cooperation

On July 6th of this year, "Love and Deepspace" announced a series of brand collaborations with the new version 2.0 of the game. Themed stores with Apple, co-branded food products with KFC, billboards in subway stations, and co-branding with the "General Administration of Sport and the Paris Olympics". These branding campaigns are widely spread and popularized on a daily basis. They not only enrich the game content and player benefits of "Love and Deepspace", but also effectively combine the game with real-life consumer experiences. This cross-border cooperation not only brings more participation and rewards to gamers, but also provides brand partners with new marketing channels and audience contact points. In addition, this cooperation model demonstrates the trend of integration between the gaming industry and other business sectors, highlighting the deep interaction between entertainment and consumption [4].

4. Consumer Behavior Analysis

4.1 Users' Motivation Strategies to Increase Users

One of the most noticeable marketing strategies of "Love and Deepspace" is to incorporate "softcore pornography" into the advertisements of the game, such as the protagonist's abs, bathing scene, bathrobe style and kissing images. This content greatly enhances the game's appeal. These

details are carefully presented in promotional materials and advertisements, utilizing visual sex appeal to capture the player's attention. By displaying these seductive images, the game was able to arouse players' curiosity and emotional engagement, especially among the target group of female players and young people. This strategy not only makes the game stand out in a competitive market, but also prompts players to share and discuss it on social platforms, thus increasing the game's exposure and word-of-mouth.

In addition, the use of this content created a large number of discussion topics within the game for players, which led to frequent appearances in the player community and media outlets, which in turn expanded its visibility. The game's marketing team skillfully combined these elements with the depth of the characters' settings and emotional stories within the game's dating storyline to create a unique selling point. In this way, the game not only attracted a great deal of attention, but also promoted player engagement and loyalty, further driving the game's success and market share.

4.2 Strategies to Increase Player Interest and Freshness and Expectations

Before "Love and Deepspace" 2.0 was released, the modeling and characteristic of the new main character, Sylus, was stolen in advance, spreading widely on the internet, and once dominated the trending ranking, so Papergame company had to take advantage of the trend and release Sylus's character PV. This character laid many foreshadows at the beginning of the game, arousing players' speculation and expectations about the image and character of Sylus.If it weren't for this unexpected event, Sylus' debut would surely have brought a sense of stunning beauty and value.

However, based on the reactions of players and netizens, this character has received an excellent response and subverted people's perception of traditional otome game male protagonists. Prior to this, game developers always followed a tendency towards homogenization in their designs for male characters in games. Such a monotonous routine will inevitably make players feel tired and aesthetically fatigued. Those characters are relatively 'safe' or 'decent' [5].

The appearance of the new male lead Sylus, officially announced in "Love and Deepspace" 2.0, was a surprise to everyone. He is the boss of the dangerous forbidden zone in the game and the criminal with the highest reward amount. This wild, dangerous, and tough villain male protagonist brings players an unprecedented level of ex-

citement. The new character Sylus undoubtedly satisfies their need for autonomy and a sense of control. Moreover, data shows that in just one week of official announcement, "Love and Deepspace" 2.0 has 22 trending ranking and 44 real-time trending topics related to it. Within a month, the related Weibo generated over 2 billion views, and the entry related to the new character Sylus once topped the trending ranking. This new character is not only refreshing for old players, but Sylus has also become an opportunity for many new users to experience "Love and Deepspace" and join the game. In addition, there is another male protagonist in "Love and Deepspace" that has not yet been announced, and players speculate that he is the older brother of the players in the game, Caleb. Now, players' speculations and expectations about him remain high. It is predicted that when this male lead appears in the future, it will also generate a lot of traffic. By continuously introducing new characters and lowering the threshold of the plot, Papergame company not only successfully maintained the interest of old players, but also effectively attracted a new group of players, thus exploring a new path for the expansion of otome game.

5. Future Development Suggestions for Otome Games

Firstly, the otome game industry needs to constantly explore innovative ideas and gameplay to maintain players' interest. For example, innovative approaches similar to the character Sylus can be borrowed to introduce unique character settings, storylines, or interactive mechanisms. This can not only bring freshness to players, but also enhance the attractiveness of the game. In addition, regularly releasing limited time events, special holiday plots, or content related to the real world can continuously provide novel experiences and stimulate players' continuous participation.

Secondly, strengthen community building and enhance player stickiness. Establishing a strong player community is the key to enhancing player stickiness. By setting up official forums, social media groups, and regularly hosting online or offline events, players can establish connections, share experiences, and enhance their sense of belonging to the game. The utilization of social media platforms cannot be ignored. Interactive content such as live streaming, Q&A, and player feedback activities are used to pay attention to players' demands and suggestions. These demands and suggestions are valued and rectified and strengthened to maintain good communication with players.

Thirdly, game developers need to pay attention to the female economy and launch products and services that cater

to women's preferences. The main audience of otome game is female players, so their needs and preferences need to be fully considered in game development and marketing. By delving into the consumption habits and interests of female gamers, develop products that meet their aesthetic preferences and needs. For example, more characters that embody the power of women can be designed, and plots and activities that are close to women's lives can be launched. At the same time, considering the influence of "her economy", otome game can promote more value-added services that meet the needs of women both inside and outside the game, such as personalized customization, virtual items, etc., to enhance the overall experience of players.

Finally, game developers can consider developing VR technology. Through head mounted and interactive devices, players can fully immerse themselves in a virtual 3D environment and experience an immersive gaming world. This immersion not only enhances players' sense of immersion, but also allows them to interact with game characters in real-time, improving the authenticity and fun of the game.

6. Conclusion

As "Love and Deepspace", it adopted a multi-channel marketing strategy in the market promotion, including social media advertising, collaboration partnerships, online activities, and offline promotion combined with in-game and high-quality visual and sound experiences. Effectively increased brand exposure and user engagement. Through this multi-level marketing strategy, the game can reach potential users on different platforms and expand its market influence. And "Love and Deepspace" focuses on establishing and maintaining an active player community, promoting interaction and communication among players through online forums, social media groups, and in-game activities. This kind of community building not only enhances players' sense of belonging, but also improves the reputation and loyalty of the game.

This study mainly takes "Love and Deepspace" as an example to explore the marketing strategies and consumer behavior of otome games in China. However, due to the limited sample size, it may not fully represent the entire otome game market. Although "Love and Deepspace" has certain representativeness in marketing and user behavior, other otome games such as "Light and Night" also need to

be included in the analysis in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of market dynamics.

In terms of the limitations of this article, this study mainly focuses on the Chinese market and has limited in-depth analysis of the international market. Although "Love and Deepspace" has achieved some success globally, there may be significant differences in consumer behavior and preferences among users in different regions. Therefore, future research should increase its examination of the international market in order to better understand the diversity and complexity of the global otome game market.

With the continuous development of the otome game market, future research can further refine market segmentation and explore the specific needs and consumption behaviors of female players of different ages, professions, and income levels. This will help game developers and marketers develop more precise marketing strategies to enhance user experience and satisfaction.

In depth research on the psychological motivations and consumption behaviors of female gamers can help reveal the reasons why they choose and continue to use otome games. For example, factors such as fan economy and community effects are particularly evident among female players. Future research can combine psychological theories to explore how these psychological factors affect consumers' purchasing decisions and long-term engagement.

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