

# ***Analysis of the Marketing Strategy of Chinese Otome Game Industry***

## ***- Taking Love and Deep Space as an Example***

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**Abstract:** The "She Economy" refers to a rapidly growing market driven by an increasing number of women entering the workforce, achieving economic independence, and rising in both social status and consumption ability. This shift has drawn significant attention from major brands and industries, prompt them to invest and cultivate the female economy by developing products and services tailored to women's needs. With this context, this study examines how social factors influence the marketing strategies of the Chinese otome game industry. Using literature review and focusing on the game "Love and Deep Space" as an example, the research integrates the principles of quasi-social interaction to conduct a specific analysis of marketing strategies. The conclusion shows that "Love and Deep Space", as the first company to blend 3D and ethereal games elements, effectively meets women's emotional needs through its gameplay, media marketing, and brand collaboration, while also embodying values of equality and respect.

**Keywords:** She Economy, Otome Games, Marketing, Love and Deep Space, Pre-Social Interaction.

## **1. Introduction**

With the rise of the "She Economy", the strong consumption ability of the female market has been valued by the gaming market. Historically, the gaming market mainly targeted men, but as games developed for male market become saturated, successful ventures into the female market by other brands began to have an influence. Starting in 2017, led by the company Papergames, the phenomenal mobile game "Love and Producer" was launched, completely opening up China's Otome game market. Current research on this market often focuses on the critiques of predictable plots, limited gameplay, "Mary Sue" romance, and homogenized competition. However, there is a gap in studying whether these games meet the needs of women for independence, equality, and respect, as well as exploring how immersive experiences can be enhanced by breaking through the two-dimensional plane. This article is based on the current mobile game market, using "Love and Deep Space" as an example to analyze the formulation of its marketing strategy and the social considerations behind it. Specifically, this study examines marketing strategies aimed at the female market through the lens of the "She Economy", integrating aspects such as consumer groups, game

innovation, game linkage, and a multimedia drainage matrix. It explores how Deep Space operates successfully in terms of quasi-social interaction, and conveys the concept of equality and independence pursued by women in contemporary society. Through the organization and analysis of existing literature, this article provides ideas for how to create differentiation in the domestic mobile game market and offers practical guidance for the future development of female-oriented games and the optimization of marketing strategies in the domestic mobile game industry.

## 2. Development status

In 2017, Paper Folding Company launched the phenomenal mobile game "Love and Producer", completely opening up a new path for otome games and attracting widespread attention and discussion. Its successful business model has attracted a large number of internet companies to enter the market. With a strong game development team and the significant market appeal, Paper Folding Company has gradually established its leading position in the industry, especially its "Love and Producer", which is known as one of the "Four Great Otome Games". The other three games are "Undecided Case Files" by miHoYo, "Travelers of Time and Space" by NetEase, and "Love of Light and Night" by Tencent. [1] However, many consumers criticized the game for its repetitive gameplay and boring storyline, saying that it dumbed down players. As the novelty wore off, many people chose to leave the game, resulting in a situation where the domestic otome game industry struggled to attract new customers while losing existing ones, leading to a decline in development. That changed in 2024 when Paper Folding Company released "Love and Deep Space", another phenomenal mobile game. It became the first domestic company to integrate 3D and ADT gameplay, offering a significant innovative over traditional 2D graphics. This breakthrough allowed for more lifelike character designs and provided immersive interactive experience for female consumers. Data shows that in its first month of release, "Love and Deep Space" generated over 600 million yuan in revenue, surpassing global revenue estimates. Japan has become its largest overseas revenue market, with publisher revenue increasing of 246% compared to the previous period, propelling it into the top 30 global revenue rankings for Chinese mobile game publishers. In addition, "Love and Deep Space" topped the free app charts in the United States, Canada, South Korea, Singapore, and other countries [2]. As a series of "Love and" products, Paper Folding Company's success not only stems from successful marketing strategies, but also from its focus on the social needs and emotional desires of the female market.

The principle of quasi-social interaction is manifested in the fact that some audiences, especially television viewers, often develop a sense of attachment to their favorite television characters or roles (including announcers, celebrities, and fictional characters, etc.), developing an imaginary interpersonal relationship. This principle can be further explained as the one-sided dependency that female players often develop on their virtual boyfriends in otome games. This phenomenon is largely driven by the fast-paced nature of modern society. Players living in first- and second-tier cities are often worn out from work and study, leaving them with little time for socializing. Meanwhile, real-life relationships and marriages can be filled with uncertainty. In order to avoid conflict and find emotional solace, many turn to otome games, where they can interact with idealized boyfriends who have diverse appearances and distinct personalities. These games serve as a utopia tailored specifically for women, serving as a substitute for romantic relationships [3]. In respond to women's emotional needs and desire for social connections, "Love and Deep Space" developed a companion system that simulates human-like interaction. Through this system, players can engage in conversations with their virtual boyfriends, and as intimacy increases, they will receive more rich and affectionate replies. The system simulates different stages of a romantic relationship, from holding hands to hugging and even kissing. Additionally, the companion system offers options for learning, exercising, or working together, mimicking real-life couple activities.

The emergence of the companion system has deepened the bond and attachment between players and virtual boyfriends. Players invest time and money to nurture these relationships, can interact with their virtual partners whenever they miss them, and receive comfort when needed-always met with positive feedback. The healthy romantic relationships that players establish in the game, along with the emotional resonance with their virtual boyfriends, help them develop independent and self-respect in real life. This virtuous cycle increases player engagement and loyalty, leading to sustained economic benefits for "Love and Deep Space."

### **3. Viewing the marketing strategy of Love and Deep Space from the perspective of "She Economy"**

The "She Economy" refers to the unique economic circle and phenomenon centered around women's consumption, also known as the "women's economy". This concept reflects the important role and influence of women in the consumer market. As women's economic and social status continues to rise, so does their purchasing power, making them a key driving force in the market [4]. This article will discuss the marketing strategy of Love and Deep Space from the perspective of "She Economy". It will explore the target audience, innovative gameplay, multimedia drainage matrix, and brand linkage, in order to investigate how Deep Space effectively captures the preferences of female consumers.

#### **3.1. Target Audience**

In terms of user demographics, the majority of users of "Love and Deep Space" are female, with a high proportion of female users aged 20 to 24, and they mostly live in first and second-tier cities, have received a good education, and seek a high quality of life and personal fulfillment.

In terms of age, deep space users are mainly young unmarried or single women. They are part of a generation increasingly conscious of female independence and advocates for gender equality. This means that they are unwilling to rely on men and will put more energy into academic achievements or career success. They often have an open-minded perspective, are willing to accept new things, and women's empathy is often higher than men's, which often leads them to prefer entertainment, and they enjoy filling their free time through social activities.

From a regional perspective, the customer base of Deep Space is concentrated in first and second-tier cities. They have the highest frequency of accessing social media. However, most users are busy with studying or working during the day and can only log in to the game during lunchtime or in the evening using fragmented time. The login rewards for Deep Space are available from 12:00 to 14:00 and 18:00 to 20:00, which coincides with these time periods. Additionally, both the storyline and combat levels have an automatic mode, which improves customer engagement, extends online time, and enhances the gaming experience.

In terms of consumption capacity, users in first and second-tier cities have good economic conditions and higher consumption capacity. They are open-minded, have a high acceptance of new things, and pursue spiritual satisfaction, often being the main force in consuming virtual products [5].

#### **3.2. Innovative Gameplay**

With more and more women entering the workforce, the proportion of women in senior positions continues to rise, and the importance of women's independence and gender equality awareness in society is increasing.

Based on social cognition, the Paper Folding Company has changed the weak and delicate image of relying on the male protagonist to complete tasks in the Deep Space control setting. It adopts a

dual strong setting, where the control is portrayed as a deep space hunter with an excellent personal background, independent self-awareness, and a powerful core.

In terms of gameplay, compared to the previous experience of a single card battle mode, Deep Space has developed a novel combat mode, which is a two-player battle, and players can use energy backtracking to release different damage skills to clear the level. The combat power not only needs to upgrade the card's appearance, but also tests the player's ability to match the skills and attack power of the card with the level requirements of different stages, while also requiring the player to improve their own skill level. Impressive two-person fusion skills and challenging gameplay attract more women to experience the game, allowing players to personally experience the concept of equality and respect conveyed by the game.

In addition, this game provides the right to build self-image. The main character's appearance can be adjusted through face customization. Most of the story is usually told in the first-person perspective, and in scenes where the character's face is shown, the game will automatically read the facial data. Players can modify the main controller based on their own appearance or preferences, in order to interact with the male protagonist in an ideal state of self. This not only enhances the player's sense of immersion, but also avoids the division of players into female protagonist factions due to the uniformity of the main controller's image. Deep Space's approach allows each player to have uniqueness, while increasing their sense of identification and satisfaction with the game [6].

### **3.3. Building a multimedia drainage matrix**

To enhance player retention and further expand the game's popularity, Paper Folding Company usually takes multiple approaches, setting up official accounts on platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili. They release card-based storylines and PV videos to build anticipation for new activities in Deep Space in advance. At the same time, they support users to make modifications and creations. For loyal fans with editing experience, they actively collect storylines and combat special effects from the game as editing materials for secondary creation. Through big data push, they present more exciting content and cool battle scenes to potential users, bringing more traffic to the game [7].

### **3.4. Multi-party linkage**

Since the launch of the game, Love and Deep Space has been collaborating with multiple brands and events to achieve mutual traffic exchange, increasing the exposure of the game or brand. For example, in KFC, purchasing certain products earns customers game-related merchandise. Most users are not interested in the package content, but in order to get the peripherals with the style of the male protagonist of Deep Space, they spontaneously make purchases, bringing economic benefits to the brand. Additionally, but Deep Space also focuses on promoting traditional culture. This year, for the Qixi Festival, it collaborated with "Jingxi Zhuang Embroidered Ball", a traditional Chinese cultural element. The colors and pattern designs of the embroidered ball were selected to match the characteristics of the game characters. Innovative ways to interpret the skills and culture of intangible cultural heritage embroidery balls, arousing users' attention to traditional Chinese culture, allowing more players to experience the beauty of intangible cultural heritage. In addition, Deep Space is collaborating with the General Administration of Sport of China to promote the Paris Olympic Games, promote sports culture and sports spirit, encourage more people to participate, actively pay attention to sports events, and cheer for the Olympic athletes. The series of interactions in Deep Space through the game+ mode involves all aspects of players' lives, satisfying both material needs and spiritual elevation, greatly increasing users' sense of identification with the game.

It is not just a leisure activity, but a more practical integration into players' lives, increasing player retention [8].

## **4. Measures and suggestions**

### **4.1. Amplify Emotional Consumption**

Compared to males, females place more emphasis on social and entertainment activities, and have stronger empathy and perceptual abilities. In the rapidly changing society, economic pressure, job pressure, fast food love, and a series of social problems have led to more and more women holding negative attitudes towards the opposite sex, unwilling to invest time and energy to further connect with each other. Women's romantic needs cannot be met, so otome games have become an emotional outlet for women. In addition to designing different types of perfect boyfriends that women love, the game also needs to constantly expand on players' purchasing preferences. As a romantic game, important festivals, anniversaries, couple photo modes, new interactive storylines, romantically charged card designs, and new costumes all need to be improved and enhanced in the game, encouraging in-game purchases by satisfying emotional values and increasing player participation and favorability.

### **4.2. Promote the spread of long-tail content through collaboration**

The official game needs to rely on fan-created works to maintain vitality. In addition to joint package giveaways, Deep Space can attract potential customers by opening offline pop-up stores and themed stores in first and second-tier cities. They could set up game trial areas, or create experiential zones, where professional cosplayers interact and take photos with players in the identity of Deep Space's male protagonist, greatly increasing engagement. At the same time, it may also be possible add an interactive area, where players can obtain game-related merchandise by participating in the game. A series of activities not only increases public attention, but also provides players with a space for secondary creation.

### **4.3. Social Media Marketing**

As a game, the online platform is the main promotional channel. The game should also include related online activities and establish a robust reward system to encourage player participation. For example, players can edit and create content related to the game, and after posting on social media platforms, rankings can be based on the number of likes and views, motivating players to actively participate in the activities [9].

## **5. Conclusion**

"Love and Deep Space" is the first domestic otome game that combines traditional gameplay with 3D elements. By incorporating features like a battle mode, customizable appearances, and a companion system, it addresses women's desires for equality and independence within the framework of the "She Economy," creating a distinctive experience. Compared to other domestic otome games, it stands out and has attracted a large number of potential customers. For long-term development, the game can be further optimized in terms of emotional consumption, co-branding promotion, and social media marketing. This article, however, draws primarily from the integration of existing literature and theoretical perspectives, lacking sufficient data integration and analysis. To validate these findings, future research should focus on market surveys and data analysis related to the "She Economy" to provide effective support for the long-term development and practical application of otome games.

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