

Research on the Development Strategy of Mobile Game Honor of Kings Based on 4C Theory

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Abstract: With the upgrade of mobile phone internal storage and chips, more and more games are moving from computers to mobile phones. The mobile games market is gradually growing and demonstrated strong profitability in the application market. So it is necessary to explore the marketing strategy of mobile games. In view of that, this paper takes Honor of Kings, a typical representative of mobile game, as an example, analyzes Honor of Kings' marketing based on 4C marketing theory. The author explore the transform of the marketing strategy of Honor of Kings, summarize the success and shortcoming of Honor of Kings, in order to discover the problem of customer turnover of Honor Of Kings, the problem arises in part from quality of paid content, assurance of gameplay, and fairness of the game. Finally, it is conclude that mobile games place great emphasis on convenience and communication, therefore, the development of contemporary mobile games needs to rely on the community and develop more concise and convenient pages.

Keywords: mobile game, honor of kings, 4C marketing strategy

1. Introduction

The mobile game app store has an average of over 500 new games on the global market every day. The App store has 510000 games, accounting for 29.8% of the total number of applications. And the domestic "top ten online games", led by Tencent, NetEase, Changyou, Shanda, etc., have all entered the mobile game market, and mobile games are becoming a new battleground for domestic game manufacturers to fully compete. As early as 2016, the market value of mobile games exceeded that of PC games, reaching 56.3%. The continuous expansion of the mobile game market has become unstoppable.

Moreover, the acceptance of mobile games in the current society is also increasing year by year. Due to low download costs, strong convenience, and good social attributes, the number of mobile game users has increased exponentially in recent years. In 2022, the global mobile game download volume was 55.4 billion times, a 31% increase compared to 2019. According to the data released by Niko Partners, China has more than 600 million mobile game players, More than 2.2 billion mobile game players worldwide. Therefore, there are huge business opportunities in the mobile game market.

Honor of Kings in Seven Years of Development, The peak online users of that reached 2.01 million. During the Chinese New Year in 2022, the daily average viewing amount of Honor of Kings Live reached 23 million yuan.

However, mobile games generally exhibit the phenomenon of "short life", Honor Of Kings current monthly user attrition rate has reached 11%, solving the long-term development problem of mobile games is crucial. There are few articles analyzing the problems existing in the mobile game marketing strategy.

The existing literature has analyzed in detail the reasons why Honor of Kings achieved such a great success, but few articles have analyzed and studied the plight of Honor of Kings and the current mobile game market development.

This article takes the game Honor of Kings, a leading enterprise in the mobile game market, Tencent, as an example, based on the 4C marketing theory, and through documentary analysis, studies the development of the mobile game market in China, explore the problems in mobile game marketing, and explores future development strategies. This article introduces the development of Honor of Kings, analyzes the advantages and problems of Honor of Kings marketing from the perspective of 4C marketing theory, and proposes solutions to the existing problems.

2. Overview of Honor of Kings Marketing

2.1. An Overview of the Development of Honor of Kings

Honor of Kings was launched in public beta in October 2015, It is a MOBA mobile game from Tencent, Tencent's official statistics show that on July 23, 2016, the e-sports mobile game Honour of Kings reached 200 million registered users, the size of 45 million daily active users and that in 2017 there were more than 200 million registered players, on average, 50 million people are online every day; in October 2018, there were about 60 million daily active players, far more than any other mobile game in the country, it is also the only monthly active users in 2018 the only mobile game over 100 million. On November 1, 2020, the official microblog of Honor of Kings announced that 100 million active users were on game day, So far, according to the sensor tower, the 2023's top-selling mobile games have earned \$225m in the Global App Store and Google Play in February. It is undoubtedly the most popular and profitable game in China today.

2.2. The Market Position of Honor of Kings

Due to Honor of Kings's short playing time, straightforward game content, and mobile MOBA game mode, which are all benefits of the game based on Tencent's user base, influence, and good corporate reputation and resources, the game initially attracted a lot of players who came to try it out. Honor of Kings addresses the hardware, time, and location restrictions that players encounter when playing the game. On the other hand, it provides users with a similar battle experience to a computer game, allowing it to quickly win over a big number of players. Glory of Kings was also a MOBA game on mobile devices. It has a mobile version that is comparable to League of Legends. It filled a void in the home market where there were no high-quality MOBA mobile games, and it also became a strong point and an advantage in the game's marketing and promotion [1]. As a product of Tencent, a leader in the Chinese gaming market, it has also transformed from a market pioneer to a far ahead in two years.

2.3. The Target Market of Honor of Kings

According to data released by Tencent, players aged 18-23 account for 37.38% of the total number of Honor of Kings players. Young people, led by college students, are undoubtedly the main target of Honor of Kings. Students today lack after-class communication, have poor friendships, and the social scene has drastically altered. The virtual scene now includes interest groups, online games, WeChat groups, and other common locations of connection. Due to its low entry barrier, great

player collaboration, multiple gameplay mechanics, and other features, the mobile game Honor of Kings has swiftly occupied the market [2]. But the advent of the Anti-addiction-prevention system of teenager has also led to a slight change in the target market. Strengthen the development of the market for college students, but also enhance the market for office workers attention.

3. 4C Marketing Strategy of Honor of Kings

3.1. The Combination of the Pay Model and the Free Model

Honor of Kings has done well in handling the cost of buying for consumers. It use the model “Free +”, under this payment model. Game firms pay players to "Join" the game so that they may experience their own game products, rather than leaving it up to chance that players would run across game items [3].

The operation of Honor of Kings is also the use of this model. Players can start the game indefinitely without any cost. But millennial players play mobile freemium games and spend money to enhance their mood and signal to their peers that they are better or in competition [4].

Under this mode, a large number of players would be attracted to download the game and start playing it for free. Then, they would be tempted by the outside world, such as the need to compare themselves with others, the need to improve their strength, etc.

“Free+in-game” greatly reduces the cost that the consumer is willing to pay, while at the same time potentially inducing consumption, which also brings great benefits to the Honor of Kings.

For enterprise, In recent years, Honor of Kings gradually take a low-cost and high-income way, constantly introduced new clothing and characters, which are relatively low quality. Although the game can still be played for free, it still attracted a large number of players’ dissatisfaction, and a large number of players’ lost. Because they think they have been treated unfairly in the games they put a lot of energy into. This will give the Honor of Kings in the short term higher receivables, but for the long-term development of the game is quite unfavorable.

3.2. Categorize Players and Launch Different Types of modes with Different Difficulties

The Honor of Kings divides players into different ranks based on their level: Stubborn Bronze, Order Silver, Glory Gold, Noble Platinum, Eternal Diamond, Supreme Master, Strongest King, and etc. According to data released by Tencent in 2022, the proportion of Stubborn Bronze players is 6%. The proportion of Silver Players in order is 7.44%. The proportion of Glory Gold players is 20.83%. The Proportion Noble Platinum players are 25.14%. The proportion of Eternal Diamond players is 28.77%. The number of Supreme master players is 9.57%. The proportion of the Strongest King players is 3.19%. The Segment system allows players to experience a fairer competitive game and allows pure entertainment players to have a good gaming experience.

Currently, a lot of players open some subsidiary accounts. The reason these players establish a subsidiary account is due to the establishment of their sense of achievement. As a game that requires technical manipulation, some players are prone to continuous failures when encountering bottleneck periods. A subsidiary account allows these players to perform technical exercises without losing ranks, and on the one hand, it also allows players to experience the sense of achievement of leaders who lead teams to victory. Besides, the ladder player industry makes the subsidiary account a necessity.

When ordinary players encounter a subsidiary account and are frustrated, they begin to generate methods for establishing a subsidiary account, which creates a dead cycle. To some extent, undermines the classification of the game and undermines fairness. According to statistics, eight out of every ten players have at least one subsidiary account. They have strength far beyond rank. The segment system exists in name only, players continue to fail due to level gap, seriously affecting the

gaming experience of players, and also causing Honor of Kings to face a large number of player withdrawal issues.

3.3. Fast Paced Games & Get Start Easy

Unlike the game duration of the League of Length, where the hand moves for more than half an hour, the average duration of a game of Honor of Kings is around 15 minutes. "Fragmentation" is the inevitable trend of social development in China at present, Honor of Kings satisfying the player's fragmented entertainment mentality.

Honor of Kings also fills the market gap for people who cannot play MOBA games because Dota is too difficult to operate due to its simpler operation. Currently, the operating difficulty of Honor of Kings is also further decreasing, which also makes players express a decline in the game experience. However, Players below Eternal Diamond indicate that the game is an entertainment item, While other players are very concerned about the competitiveness of the game. Honor of Kings constantly emphasizes that it is an electronic sports game, and repeatedly simplifies the game playing methods to enhance its entertainment. This is very contradictory, and it also causes people who are hesitant about the inherent needs of the game to retreat.

3.4. Huge and Diverse Group Communication

Honor of Kings is a multiplayer mobile game that emphasizes cooperation between teammates, and the game has its own sociality. Moreover, as a mobile game under Tencent, Honor of Kings brings his own QQ and WeChat social circle. It also keenly discovered this and directly connected QQ and WeChat friends to the game.

Traditional game marketing model is based on B2C model. The network game manufacturer throws the game propaganda advertisement, the slogan indiscriminately to the user. This kind of non-distinctively puts the mode to make the user arrives the efficiency to be low, the user stickiness is also relatively low. Currently, based on social media marketing, mobile game manufacturers can target the user base, accurate promotion and operation [5].

In addition to their competitive nature, MOBAs are renowned for the sophisticated social interactions they enable. Toxic player behavior is one of the main causes of unpleasant interactions. For example, players have identified their teammates' inappropriate behavior as a reason to stop playing MOBA games, even though most players eventually stop playing for reasons unrelated to the game. In contrast, the chance to play with friends is a major incentive to begin and continue playing MOBAs [6].

Honor of Kings Transform the E-sports center into a social center It has developed intimacy systems, combat team systems, and team systems that are highly social nature.

From Penguin intelligence data, 52.2% of male and 61.7% of female were influenced by friends to download the Honor of Kings. It can be seen that the spread of Honor of Kings is greatly influenced by the community.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Optimize the Quality of Paid Content

Integrate paid content that more closely matches game characters, rather than blindly stacking various elements Addition is necessary. Players subconsciously believe that the quality of paid content in a game is closely related to the overall quality of the game, and high-quality paid content can better retain players.

There are three superordinate purchasing motivations: hedonistic, social and social payments [7].

In order to satisfy the hedonic thinking of players, higher quality paid content can attract a larger base of purchases, High quality paid content is also more likely to attract public attention, thereby expanding potential consumers. From the statistic of Penguin intelligence, 43.6% of female players have higher demand for the improvement of Hero's appearance. Therefore, the quality of the role of clothing and design are worthy of attention, After all, the quality of the product is the core of sales.

4.2. Improve ELO Rating System and Enhance Game Fairness

Honor of Kings needs to optimize the matching mechanism, especially the current ELO mechanism. The ELO mechanism is an important model that affects the game experience of players. It optimizes the ELO mechanism to balance, fair, and rationalize the player's winning and losing. Avoid the situation where players withdraw from the game after losing in a row despite their technical proficiency.

The ELO rating system, or just "ELO," is a method of assigning ratings to players based only on the outcomes of games, in order to assess their relative skills [8].

The current ELO rating system lags behind the game version. In this section, players are prone to continuous failures that affect their gaming mood and ultimately lead to players' withdrawal from the game. While a large number of small players can win in a row, their revenue is very limited.

Therefore, it is necessary to optimize the mechanism by developing new matching algorithms to rationalize the ratio of loss to win for players, make the opponents and teammates players match more evenly, and improve the game experience of players, making the game fairer.

4.3. Maintain the Competitive Nature of the Game and Develop Entertaining Gameplay Methods

The overall game of Honor of Kings needs to be competitive and entertaining, creating more matchmaking models.

Conceptualizing e-sports players as athletes can also lead to increased methods of support being used by traditional athletes (mental training, optimal self-esteem, coping strategies under competitive conditions).

The present study has highlighted a number of new discoveries that help move the field forward and suggests a number of practical and policy implications [9].

Honor of Kings in the current constantly emphasize its competitiveness, but the play tends to be simple, this is a very contradictory phenomenon. The Honor of Kings needs to first combine its entertainment and competitiveness and then separate, to satisfy the psychology of two different players. This will maintain user stickiness, and increase the desire to consume players.

4.4. Enhance the Social Nature of the Game

Although Honor of Kings already has social attributes, it still needs to further expand its social communication function through social media.

A study based on the Kano model showed that the order of importance is sociality greater than usability greater than sensuality greater than gameplay. Social factors are attractive qualities [10].

The social nature of the current Honor of Kings has been very strong, but the spread of personal circle of friends is still limited. Therefore, Honor of Kings needs to seek a larger community, such as the short video anchor community or the community of opinion leaders of all kinds. In addition, the team incentive mechanism can also enhance the effect of group communication. Communication and incentive mechanisms in larger communities can also enable the rapid diffusion of game brands.

5. Conclusion

In the seven years of development, the marketing strategy of Honor of Kings has shifted. It has shifted from focusing on the quality of paid content to focusing on quantity. Games have also shifted from the product concept of creating 5v5 fair competitive games to "social games". This transition has not had a significant impact on the overall revenue of the game in the short term, but it has also caused many problems, especially in terms of the quality of paid content and fairness of the game. The decline in the quality of paid content and the unfairness of games caused by matching mechanisms, as well as the decline in game experience, have become a serious injury to the Honor of Kings. This has led to the decline in the reputation of Honor of Kings and a massive loss of players of Honor of Kings. In the long run, if Honor of Kings continues to indulge, problems can lead to the destruction of products. This also reflects the common problems in the current mobile game market. All these problems are caused by the difficulty of mobile game product innovation, and also related to national policies. The author concludes that the development of this type of competitive game requires the power of the community. Social media can be used to create a larger community. Because of the overly powerful social functions of current mobile games. In addition, the pursuit of game product quality cannot be abandoned. Quality is always the soul of products. Spending more cost on the quality of paid content than just the quantity. Game companies need to pay more attention to the fairness of competitive mobile games. Mobile game manufacturers finding a balance between the competitiveness and entertainment of mobile games. This can bring a better gaming experience to players. The research in this article uses 4C theory to analyze the development difficulties of representative applications in the mobile game market and puts forward the author's suggestions, which can help mobile game manufacturers, especially competitive game manufacturers, in their long-term development to a certain extent. This study still fails to define the relationship between the competitiveness and entertainment of mobile games. In the future, it is necessary to analyze more competitive mobile games, discover the entertainment and competition of games, and better analyze the development space of the game market.

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