

# ***Traditional Cultural Elements and Their Modern Adaption in Black Myth: Wukong***

Huiqiang Li<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wuxi Taihu University, Wuxi, 214063, China

a. 15875589936@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** On August 20th, 2024, the highly anticipated release of *Black Myth: Wukong* by Game Science generated significant excitement among players. This paper aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Game Science, using a SWOT framework. Additionally, the 4P theory will be utilized to analyze how *Black Myth: Wukong* contributes to the preservation and development of Chinese culture, as well as its market performance. The game, inspired by the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, not only captivates players with its immersive gameplay and stunning visuals but also serves as a medium for cultural dissemination. By examining the strategic elements such as product design and features, pricing strategy, distribution channel, and promotional activities, this study seeks to highlight the game's role in bridging traditional cultural narratives with modern gaming experiences. Furthermore, the analysis explores the broader implications of its success on the gaming market and its potential influence on future cultural projects within the industry. The paper is expected to provide insights into the intersection of gaming and cultural heritage, demonstrating how innovative game design can foster a deeper appreciation for traditional narratives while driving economic growth in the entertainment sector.

**Keywords:** *Black Myth: Wukong*, Chinese traditional culture, Cultural dissemination, Creative transformation.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, many countries have developed their own AAA games, culminating in the release of China's AAA title, *Black Myth: Wukong*, in August, 2024. Despite its significance, research on this game is still in its early stages, and relevant literature and analyses are relatively limited. Thus, this article aims to examine the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture as embodied in this game. Utilizing the 4P marketing theory and PEST analysis, it will thoroughly explore the strengths and weaknesses of the game company within the market, as well as the potential for cultural creative transformation and development that the game presents. The primary objective of this research is to analyze trends and establish an appropriate direction for the future of China's gaming market. Specifically, it investigates how to effectively integrate traditional Chinese culture with modern elements to promote comprehensive social and economic development. Overall, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the intersection between gaming and cultural representation, highlighting the role of *Black Myth: Wukong* as a significant player in the global gaming landscape. By analyzing its implications for cultural identity and economic growth, this

research aims to provide insights that can inform future developments in both the gaming industry and cultural promotion strategies.

## 2. SWOT Analysis of Game Science Company

### 2.1. Strengths

Game Science has successfully launched the game *Black Myth: Wukong*, garnering widespread attention across various gaming platforms and accumulating a strong brand reputation [1]. This influence not only enhances the company's market visibility but also lays a solid foundation for future product promotion. An improved brand reputation attracts more gamers and potential partners, fostering sustainable development in a highly competitive market environment. Furthermore, heightened brand awareness and prestige directly impact consumer purchasing decisions, thereby enhancing customer loyalty and market share. Through continuous brand development and proactive market communication, the company can effectively elevate its market position and expand its industry share.

Moreover, the gaming industry is currently undergoing unprecedented transformation, and Game Science is at the forefront by integrating technological innovation with cultural innovations. This strategic approach elevates games from mere entertainment into profound experiences that broaden players' perspectives and enhance their intrinsic values. By focusing on innovative game design and storytelling that resonates with cultural narratives, the company not only captivates gamers but also fosters deeper emotional connections. This positions the company as a thought leader in the industry, enabling it to attract a diverse audience and set trends that influence the future direction of gaming. Ultimately, this commitment to innovation nurtures a unique value proposition that differentiates the company from competitors and solidifies its standing in the market [2].

### 2.2. Weaknesses

Game Science faces substantial competition in the gaming market. Domestically, established companies like Tencent have long dominated, boasting a vast user base that poses challenges for the nascent Game Science in establishing its foothold. Internationally, the competition is even more intense; for instance, Rockstar Games maintains a strong global presence with numerous popular titles. Compared to these industry giants, Game Science is clearly at a disadvantage in terms of brand reputation, company capital, and the scale of its internal team.

The company's focus on games incorporating traditional cultural elements also presents challenges in effectively conveying cultural connotations to diverse players. The complexity of reconciling diverse cultural interpretations can hinder the game's ability to resonate universally. For instance, when integrating traditional elements from mythology, it becomes imperative to simplify these concepts to ensure they are accessible and comprehensible to a broad audience. However, this simplification runs the risk of diluting the original cultural essence. Conversely, an excessive emphasis on modernization may lead to a distortion of traditional meanings, resulting in a compromise of cultural integrity. This delicate balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and ensuring player engagement poses a significant challenge for the company, potentially impacting the overall reception and success of its games in both domestic and international markets.

### 2.3. Opportunities

The ongoing integration of the domestic gaming industry with the cultural sector presents significant opportunities for growth. As games and their derivative content emerge as powerful tools for cultural communication, the gaming market is expected to expand, allowing the company to leverage its

reputation to launch more games that cater to player preferences [2]. With increasing global recognition of Chinese culture, more international players are discovering the allure of traditional Chinese heritage, enabling the company to enhance promotional efforts and provide richer cultural experiences through its offerings. By effectively utilizing culturally themed content and narratives that resonate with global audiences, Game Science can boost revenue streams and enhance brand visibility in international markets. Additionally, the rising demand for digital education games, characterized by strong interactivity and multiple feedback mechanisms, offers another avenue for growth. These games can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life application, stimulating motivation and engagement across various dimensions. By increasing the development of digital education games, the company can provide enjoyable experiences that also enhance players' critical thinking skills, further establishing itself as a key player in the global gaming landscape [3].

## 2.4. Threats

The gaming industry is subject to stringent policy supervision, particularly in China, where relevant government departments are dedicated to formulating effective industrial policies aimed at ensuring the healthy and orderly development of the online gaming sector. Certain regulations, such as the anti-addiction system and the structured scheduling of gaming time, are designed to encourage players to balance their time between study, work, relaxation, and entertainment. These policies are viewed as critical components of industrial policy improvement, exerting a substantial impact on the entire online gaming industry [4]. Consequently, any new regulations or restrictions that limit the development of games could adversely affect the company's operations and growth prospects. Such policy shifts may lead to reduced player engagement, increased compliance costs, and potential revenue losses, highlighting the importance of closely monitoring regulatory changes to mitigate associated risks.

The preferences of players are evolving at an unprecedented pace, reflecting a diverse range of demands and expectations from the gaming experience. This rapid shift in player tastes represents a significant threat to companies that may struggle to adapt to these changes. If a company fails to stay attuned to the evolving interests of its audience, it risks losing market share to competitors who are more adept at catering to the latest trends and consumer desires. The constant influx of new gaming technologies, genres, and gameplay mechanics further complicates this dynamic as players increasingly seek innovative and engaging experiences. As a result, companies must invest in market research and product development to ensure they remain relevant and competitive in an ever-changing landscape. Failing to do so may lead not only to decreased customer loyalty but also to diminished revenue prospects.

## 3. 4Ps Analysis of the Game *Black Myth: Wukong*

### 3.1. Product and Promotion

*Black Myth: Wukong* is an action role-playing game developed by Game Science Studio, deeply rooted in the rich tapestry of Chinese mythology. As a domestic 3A game, it signifies a high level of investment in development costs, production cycles, and resource allocation. The game's narrative is heavily influenced by the classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, allowing players to embody the "Man of Destiny" and immerse themselves in the fantasy of an oriental heroic epic [5]. This design aims not only to deliver an engaging entertainment experience but also to serve as a profound representation of traditional Chinese culture [6]. Players will encounter the "Eighty-one Trials and Tribulations," a concept that faithfully reproduces the challenges depicted in *Journey to the West* while embodying the spirit of persistence and struggle inherent in Chinese culture. As they navigate vast landscapes and confront various challenges, players must rely on their own wisdom and courage

to defeat the formidable enemy, Erlang Shen, the Manifested True Lord. This journey not only offers excitement and enjoyment but also imparts the traditional Chinese philosophy that "effort yields rewards" [7].

Moreover, every detail within the game is imbued with rich cultural significance, from character design to scene construction, reflecting the unique charm of ancient Chinese myths. This integration of culture transforms *Black Myth: Wukong* into more than just a game; it becomes a medium for transmitting and reshaping traditional culture. Consequently, the game showcases the depth and breadth of Chinese culture on a global scale, attracting increased attention and participation from players worldwide. In the game, players can experience various iconic scenes from the original work, such as Flower Fruit Mountain, Yellow Wind Ridge, and Turtle Back Mountain. The creation of these scenes was not a simple replication; the game team conducted multiple on-site investigations to ensure fidelity to the original descriptions. For instance, the Amitabha Hall of Chongfu Temple in Shuozhou, Shanxi Province, served as the prototype for a palace in the game's combat background. Additionally, the three statues featured in the game are inspired by the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions statues from the Yuhuang Temple in Fucheng, Shanxi Province, specifically representing the Rat of the Sun, the Dog of the Lou, and the Pig of the Room, which are said to have been sculpted by the Yuan Dynasty master Liu Luan. It is precisely due to the emphasis on real-world locations that the various buildings in the game come to life, captivating players. This approach not only demonstrates respect for traditional culture but also represents a creative transformation of it, fostering the innovative development of cultural heritage. Through this method, the game not only provides players with an immersive experience but also opens new avenues for the dissemination and preservation of traditional culture.

### 3.2. Price and Place

*Black Myth: Wukong* has demonstrated outstanding market performance, surpassing 1.4 million concurrent players on the Steam platform within just three hours of its launch. As reported by *the National Game Bestsellers list*, the game has sold over 3 million copies on Steam alone, and when combined with sales on WeGame, Epic, and PlayStation platforms, the total sales have exceeded 4.5 million copies, generating over 1.5 billion RMB in revenue [8]. Notably, the game maintains a user review score of over 95% on Steam, indicating a high level of player satisfaction regarding its quality.

In the Chinese market, the standard edition of the game is priced at 268 RMB. While some players consider this price to be somewhat high, it is important to note that in other regions, the game is generally priced about 15% higher. This situation provides a unique pricing advantage for Chinese players, who previously had to pay significantly higher prices for games from other regions. Now, the tables have turned, allowing Chinese players to enjoy relatively lower prices. This pricing strategy not only reflects the game's market positioning but also demonstrates a commitment to valuing and respecting Chinese players.

Long before its release, *Black Myth: Wukong* had already gained significant popularity across major media platforms, being touted as "China's own AAA masterpiece." Digital marketing and distribution have become highly effective channels in today's gaming industry. Unlike traditional media distribution methods, digital distribution leverages the internet to deliver content directly to consumers. This approach not only enhances accessibility but also allows single-player game digital distribution platforms to offer players a richer and more immersive gaming experience.

The game reflects the profound richness of Chinese culture through its translation choices, many of which employ a phonetic transliteration method. For instance, the character "Sun Wukong" is used instead of the more familiar "Monkey King," which maximally preserves the character's original essence. Similarly, names like "Zhuba Jie," "Guangzhi," and "Lingxuzi" demonstrate a meticulous attention to detail. To distinguish from the Western concept of "dragon," the game uses "Loong" to

describe our auspicious dragon, as seen in the term "stormflash Loong staff." Furthermore, rather than simply translating enemies as "monsters," the game opts for the phonetic translation "Yaoguai," which more accurately represents the evil beings that have transformed into human form in the original text. This choice to retain the Chinese terminology reflects a deep respect for Chinese culture and helps establish a profound image of Chinese cultural richness in the minds of international players.

## 4. Market Performance and Cultural Dissemination

### 4.1. Sales, Reviews, and Collaboration

Since its release, *Black Myth: Wukong* has achieved remarkable success in the market. According to statistics, the game surpassed 1.4 million concurrent players on the Steam platform just three hours after its launch, indicating a strong market demand. These figures demonstrate that the game has not only performed exceptionally well in the domestic market but has also gained recognition in international markets. While the game is experiencing remarkable sales success, it is also contributing to the simultaneous development of the social economy. This positive user feedback contributes to enhancing the game's reputation, further driving sales. *Black Myth: Wukong* has collaborated with Luckin Coffee, producing promotional items such as posters and cup sleeves. This partnership not only promotes the game but also boosts sales of related merchandise, stimulating consumer spending [9]. The game controllers associated with Black Myth have even sold out, with pre-orders extending up to a month.

*Black Myth: Wukong* has achieved significant success in market performance, with outstanding sales figures and user reviews. Additionally, the game has successfully reinterpreted and disseminated traditional culture, bringing Chinese culture to the international stage. Its unique cultural elements and marketing strategies have not only attracted a large player base but also provided new insights and directions for the development of the Chinese gaming industry.

### 4.2. Integration of Culture and Tourism

*Black Myth: Wukong* features 36 filming locations across the country, with Shanxi province alone accounting for 27 of them. One notable site is Xixian County, which serves as the backdrop for the game's "Little Western Paradise." Prior to the game's release, Xixian was considered a poverty-stricken area. However, thanks to the promotion and visibility generated by Black Myth, the county now experiences an average daily visitor count of 20,000. During this summer, ticket orders for Shanxi's Little Western Paradise saw a remarkable year-on-year increase of 236%, significantly boosting the local economy [10]. Moreover, some travel agencies have even developed themed travel routes that allow tourists to "travel with Wukong," creatively transforming and innovating cultural experiences while simultaneously driving local economic growth. This synergy between culture and tourism not only enhances the cultural landscape but also fosters sustainable economic development in the region [11].

## 5. Conclusion

Through a SWOT analysis, it is evident that Game Science possesses significant growth potential. The Chinese gaming market has a notable gap in the single-player game segment, and the release of *Black Myth: Wukong* effectively fills this void. As the game skyrocketed in popularity, numerous co-branded merchandise items were quickly snatched up, and an increasing number of tourists flocked to the original filming locations, thereby stimulating both the commercial and tourism sectors. Drawing inspiration from the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, the game has captivated audiences both domestically and internationally. Upon its launch, the game attracted over two million



concurrent players, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in the richness of Chinese traditional culture and experience its allure firsthand. This phenomenon not only promotes the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese culture but also enhances its global visibility. Furthermore, the success of *Black Myth: Wukong* serves as a testament to the potential of integrating traditional cultural elements into modern entertainment. By leveraging the rich narratives and characters from Chinese folklore, the game has not only entertained players but also educated them about the depth and diversity of Chinese heritage. This cultural exchange fosters a greater appreciation for Chinese traditions among international audiences, paving the way for future cultural collaborations and exchanges.

In conclusion, Game Science is well-positioned to capitalize on the growing interest in single-player games and the global appeal of Chinese culture. The company's strategic focus on high-quality game development, combined with its ability to resonate with cultural themes, will likely lead to sustained success in the competitive gaming landscape. As the company continues to innovate and expand its offerings, it has the potential to become a leading player in the global gaming industry while simultaneously promoting and preserving Chinese cultural heritage.

## References

- [1] Li Chuang. *The Symbiotic Evolution of Culture, Technology, and Industry from the Perspective of Cultural Materialism: A Case Study of Black Myth: Wukong* [J]. *Journal of Beijing University of Technology*, 1-21.
- [2] Wang Yudi. *An Analysis of the "Cultural Outward Expansion" of the Video Game Black Myth: Wukong from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication* [J]. *Science and Technology Communication*, 2023, 15(13): 115-119.
- [3] Zhang Shuqin, Fan Jiarong, Zhong Shaochun. *The Impact of Digital Educational Games on Higher-Order Thinking Development: A Meta-Analysis Based on 28 Empirical Studies at Home and Abroad* [J]. *Digital Education*, 2024, 10(3): 28-37.
- [4] Shen Mingwei, Kong Qingfeng. *The Mechanism of Action of Online Game Policies* [J]. *Journal of Shandong Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2005, 50(6): 79-82.
- [5] Xie Meichen, Wang Yihan. *The Global Expression of Chinese Games: Analyzing Chinese Cultural Output from the Game Video of Black Myth: Wukong* [J]. *Science and Technology Communication*, 2023, 15(21): 112-115.
- [6] Li Guo. *Domestic Game Developers Strive to Explore the "True Essence" of AAA Games* [N]. *Workers' Daily*, 2024-09-24(007).
- [7] Tu Ziyi. *The Application of Traditional Chinese Architecture in Game Scene Design: A Case Study of the Black Myth: Wukong UE Test Version* [J]. *Footwear Craft and Design*, 2022(4): 138-140.
- [8] Wu Kezhong, Xu Xinyi. *"Black Myth: Wukong: How a Game Became a Global Sensation?"* [N]. *China Business Journal*, September 9, 2024 (D04). DOI: 10.38300/n.cnki.nzgjy.2024.002112.
- [9] Wang Ruihong. *The Birth of "Wukong" Stages a Commercial "Black Myth"* [N]. *Jinan Daily*, 2024-08-23(003).
- [10] Wang Yang. *Surge in Summer Tourism Orders in Shanxi* [N]. *Consumer Daily*, 2024-08-26(A04).
- [11] Yang Yi. *Can "Hit" Games Continue the Cultural Tourism "Myth"?* [N]. *Southern Daily*, 2024-09-08(008).