

# The Globalization of Chinese Games from Perspective of Cross-Cultural Communication: Taking Genshin as an Example

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**Abstract.** This study aims to explore the current status and historical significance of the Chinese RPG mobile game “Genshin” as a carrier of Chinese culture going global. This paper first investigates and analyzes cross-cultural communication in Genshin, delving into the ways in which the game facilitates cultural exchange. The main purpose is to determine the feasibility of using games as a novel cultural exchange medium and to provide practical suggestions and feasibility references for the development of Chinese two-dimensional mobile games and cultural industries. By doing so, it aspires to contribute to the global promotion of Chinese culture. Research findings highlight that video games, serving as conduits for culture to “go global”, can take advantage of their unique strengths to enhance cultural acceptance. This not only enriches the content of culture but also aids in the dissemination of Chinese cultural elements. Through this examination, the study demonstrates how the gaming industry can play a pivotal role in advancing cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

**Keywords:** Globalization; Chinese mobile game; Cross-cultural communication; Cultural exchange.

## 1. Introduction

The globalization of Chinese pop culture has captured widespread attention in recent times. As contemporary technology advances, innovative methods for projecting Chinese culture onto the global stage have emerged as a critical area of exploration and development [1]. Among these, two-dimensional games have arisen as a burgeoning and potent medium for the dissemination of Chinese popular culture, holding the potential to enhance China’s cultural influence in the world.

This paper centers its focus on the Chinese culture embedded within China’s emerging RPG mobile game, “Genshin”, and the localization cultural policies that harmoniously integrate elements from diverse cultures worldwide. It also introduces the current situation of cross-cultural communication of within the game, which features five distinct cultures. Through a meticulous analysis of these present dynamics, the paper explores new strategies for both contemporary and traditional Chinese culture to expand its global footprint. It further clarifies the future direction of Chinese mobile games as a carrier of cultural communication.

Notably, scholars like Tan Xinyu conducted a study on the issue of overseas two-dimensional games from a cross-cultural perspective in 2022. He believes that “Genshin” has successfully bridged cultural differences and achieved effective international communication—a remarkable feat that carries profound implications for the global expansion of two-dimensional game cultural content [2]. His research further confirms the research value of games as a carrier of cultural communication.

## 2. The Success of the Game “Genshin”

“Genshin” is an open-world role-playing game developed by Shanghai MiHoYo Company in 2020. The game is about a fictional continent called Teyvat. This continent is intricately divided into seven unique countries, each having its distinct cultural characteristics. At the same time, within the game's immersive world, players can have the opportunity to encounter and explore elements of real-world national cultures. For example, “Liyue” in the game corresponds to Chinese culture, while “Daoqi” reflects Japanese cultural influences. Remarkably, as of January 2023, Genshin had amassed a

staggering global revenue across all platforms exceeding US\$4 billion, standing as a testament to its triumph as a pioneering example of Chinese gaming endeavors on the international stage [3].

The central focus of this paper revolves around delineating the research significance inherent in the model of Chinese culture's global dissemination, using games as a transformative medium. Through a detailed description and analysis of the cross-cultural and localization strategies employed in "Genshin", this study aims to shed light on the profound implications of these strategies and provide valuable insights for China's overarching global cultural outreach endeavors.

### **3. Factors Contributing to the Success of Genshin**

#### **3.1. Localized Marketing Strategy of Genshin**

Genshin is currently the most prominent success among Chinese mobile games in the global market, and a substantial part of its success can be attributed to its marketing strategy. In the current era of globalization of popular culture communication, localization theory plays a pivotal role in shaping effective strategies. The theory points out that in the process of exporting popular culture, the local conditions of the target country should be considered and adjustments should be made to the cultural products [4]. In the case of Genshin, a mobile game developed by Shanghai MiHoYo Company, this principle has been meticulously integrated into both its game design and cultural transmission strategy.

Genshin unfolds within a vast virtual realm known as the Teyvat continent, which is further divided into seven different countries. In order to better integrate into overseas markets, "Genshin" thoughtfully incorporated cultural symbols from seven countries that exist in the real world into the different countries of "Teyvat" from the beginning of the design. For example, the game recreated various ancient Roman architectural marvels within "Mondstadt", incorporated traditional Arab culture elements in "Sumeru", and even infused the traditional Middle Eastern music in the score [5]. This thoughtful design approach serves a dual purpose: not only does it immerse overseas players in a world with a greater sense of cultural belonging, but it also makes "Genshin" a more readily embraced and celebrated gaming experience among international players.

#### **3.2. The Integration of Traditional Chinese Culture in Genshin**

Genshin, serving as a new carrier for Chinese popular culture to spread to the outside world, has incorporated a lot of traditional Chinese culture into the game design. This infusion has created a wave of a distinct "Chinese style" in the world of Genshin fan community.

In terms of food culture, Genshin has constructed a country "Liyue", inspired by China. The cuisine in "Liyue" fully draws on traditional Chinese cuisine featuring delectable delights like "Fried Noodles", which is derived from the traditional Chinese dish "Buddha Jump Over the Wall". "From then on, I can't forget that". The game succinctly described these special cuisine in very concise language, allowing overseas players to learn about traditional Chinese cuisine in an easy-to-understand way.

Genshin also pays great attention to costume design, recognizing that clothing is crystallization of a nation's culture. Characters hailing from "Liyue" showcase this fusion of Chinese and international influences. Although the clothing of ordinary residents in Liyue is relatively simple and plain, the styles are still quite diverse. According to different status, they can be roughly divided into long gown, mandarin jacket, cheongsam [6]. Many traditional Chinese colors and layouts are used in the costumes of the characters in "Liyue". For instance, consider the character Zhongli in "Liyue". On the basis of the suit and tuxedo, traditional Chinese buckle design is added, with a color palette dominated by brown and black. These hues symbolize Zhongli's deep and clam personality. This design harmoniously combines Chinese and foreign cultures and is more easily accepted by overseas players.

In addition, the musical form used in the game further underscores its commitment to cultural richness. In early 2022, the opera aria video "Goddess Pi Guan" released by Genshin on the official website

captured countless players, and has been played more than 30 million times on Bilibili so far [7]. On the overseas live broadcast platform Twitch, the live broadcast of the trailer of “Goddess Pi Guan” attracted 600000 netizens, equivalent to 30% of the platform audience watching Genshin channel. It has also been played more than 5 million times on the YouTube [8]. It is worth mentioning that in all language versions of the game, Goddess Pi Guan has maintained Chinese dubbing. This choice affords overseas players an intuitively experience the charm of traditional Chinese opera, and has also attracted many overseas players to learn to sing Goddess Pi Guan. This phenomenon more specifically demonstrates the practical significance of Genshin as a medium of cultural communication.

The perspective of event theory points out that in a certain historical stage, events that had an impact on the development track of the historical development are labeled historical events. The global development of Genshin exemplifies this theory. Since its release in 2020, Genshin has significantly shaped the gaming industry around the world. According to data recently released by Sensor Tower, MiHoYo has cumulatively generated a revenue exceeding US\$4.1 billion (approximately RMB 28 billion) globally since the official release of Genshin in September 2020, securing a prominent third-place revenue ranking [9]. Genshin has effectively punctured the domain of two-dimensional game world, historically dominated by Japan, and broke Japan’s monopoly on this kind of games, thus yielding profound international influence.

#### **4. Genshin’s Pioneering Success and the Path Forward for Chinese Game Developers**

Genshin has created a successful precedent for Chinese games to go abroad, casting Chinese traditional culture onto the global stage in a refreshing manner. This has not only explored a more practical trail for cultural dissemination but has also offered a pragmatic blueprint for China’s cultural outreach. However, if other Chinese games intend to imitate Genshin’s success and aim to become a carrier of culture exchange, several key elements must be realized.

To start with, game design should integrate Chinese and other cultures. The reason that Genshin has achieved great success globally is that it cleverly combines Chinese and foreign culture when designing characters and scenes, thus creating its distinct “Genshin culture”. This “third culture” proves pivotal in rendering Genshin readily accessible and appealing to international players. However, this “third culture” remains a conspicuous deficiency in many other mobile games in China. If China’s game industries want to successfully go overseas, they need to craft games that overseas players can understand and are willing to play.

Furthermore, Chinese game developers also need to pay attention to overseas marketing strategies. The success of Genshin overseas is not solely attributable to the game’s excellence but also to the astute overseas marketing campaigns undertaken by MiHoYo Company. MiHoYo Company has been generous in investing in overseas marketing of Genshin. In 2020 alone, a substantial six million RMB was spent on promotional endeavors spanning subway stations and mobile advertising units. Later, in the 2021 anniversary, Genshin invested an astounding 20 million RMB in subway car body advertisements and in-station AD advertisements, not to mention original content initiatives. Over two years, Genshin has invested a whopping 50 million RMB for fixed advertising spaces in Akihabara, Japan, underscoring the magnitude of MiHoYo’s investment in overseas marketing [10]. This audacious financial commitment represents a bold investment courage that eludes many mobile game companies in China.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In the current era of rapid media development, video games, as a typical contemporary cultural content product, have transcended their role as mere entertainment tools to emerge as influential medium for cultural communication. As a Chinese two-dimensional mobile game, Genshin has exemplified this transformation, effortlessly conquering the global gaming market with its novel format and has been loved by young players from all over the world.

Genshin's global triumph is both an inspiration and a challenge for Chinese game developers. It skillfully integrates Chinese culture and foreign culture in the game, enabling international players to easily immerse themselves in its narrative. This strategy reduced the discount on cultural output. The success of Genshin has also provided valuable experience for China's cultural communication efforts, particularly in using games as a cultural exchange carrier. As the gaming industry continues to evolve, Genshin stands as a resounding testament to the boundless possibilities of cultural exchange in the digital age.

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