

Application and Innovation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Games - Take “Jianxia Qingyuan Online III” As An Example

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Abstract:

China has a rich resource of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which is an important component of our traditional culture and carries unique regional cultural and historical inheritances. The gaming industry has enormous market and consumption potential in modern society, and games such as “JX3” have incorporated elements of Chinese traditional martial arts culture, costume culture, and traditional music. This integration not only enhances the viewing and playing experience of the game but also promotes traditional culture to the public. This article aims to analyze the innovative application of traditional ICH in the gaming industry using “JX3” as an example, and explore the significance of the gaming industry in protecting and inheriting ICH.

Keywords:

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Gaming Industry, Innovative Application

1. Introduction

In modern society, with the development of information technology, traditional handicrafts are facing problems such as poor timeliness, difficult inheritance of skills, and low economic benefits. The fragmented and labeled information acquisition characteristics presented by modern society are both opportunities and challenges for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). How to use emerging industries to promote local ICH and transform it into effective economic benefits is the direction for the inheritance and protection of ICH in the new era. Enriching and developing traditional ICH and innovating and applying it on new platforms based on tradition is the key to maintaining the vitality of ICH. The booming development of the gaming industry provides a broad platform for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese traditional ICH. The gaming industry is an important component of the modern cultural industry, with high economic benefits, strong social attributes, globalization, and other characteristics and advantages. With the continuous development of digital technology, the development prospects of the gaming industry are very broad. The market size of the gaming industry has been increasing year by year and is expected to

continue expanding in the future. In addition to the traditional PC and console gaming markets, the mobile gaming market is also showing a rapidly growing trend. At the same time, the development of technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality has not only brought new opportunities to the gaming industry, but also attracted more attention to traditional Chinese culture, such as traditional costumes, handicrafts, and ethnic minority folk culture. The gaming industry is also integrating with other industries such as education, health, and tourism, which will bring more possibilities for the future development of the gaming industry. China's gaming industry has grown rapidly in the past decade, with an expanding market size that not only creates enormous economic benefits but also provides a large number of employment opportunities. This article will take the difficulties encountered in protecting and inheriting traditional intangible cultural heritage as the starting point, analyze the advantages and application schemes of the modern gaming industry, and combine with the policy of adhering to cultural confidence advocated by General Secretary Xi Jinping, to propose the value of applying and innovating intangible cultural heritage in the gaming industry.

2. The Current Situation and Challenges of Traditional Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance

Intangible cultural heritage is an important part of the traditional Chinese culture. Different ethnic groups and regions have their unique intangible cultural heritage, which collectively form the vast, profound, inclusive, and diverse Chinese civilization. However, with the replacement of traditional agricultural civilization by modern mechanical and information civilization, the inheritance of traditional intangible cultural heritage has suffered a huge impact. Currently, there are mainly three problems in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage:

2.1. Inheritance of traditional skills without successors

Firstly, the development of modern society has brought about significant changes in people's lifestyles, resulting in many traditional skills and cultures gradually being phased out or forgotten. In this context, young people's understanding and awareness of traditional skills are gradually decreasing, leading to less interest and enthusiasm towards traditional skills compared to the older generation of inheritors. This makes it difficult to attract more young people to learn and inherit traditional skills, resulting in a serious challenge to the inheritance of these skills. Secondly, the inheritance of traditional skills requires a certain amount of time and effort, as it requires continuous accumulation and summarization of experience through long-term practice, as well as learning the essence of the skills through communication with older generations of inheritors. However, in modern society, people's pace of life is very fast, and young people often do not have enough time and energy to learn traditional skills. In addition, since the inheritance of traditional skills requires long-term practice and patient cultivation, many young people are unwilling to engage in such work. Finally, the inheritance of traditional skills also requires certain financial and resource support. However, in modern society, many traditional skill inheritors are poor farmers or artisans, lacking sufficient funds and resources to sustain their livelihoods and the inheritance of traditional skills. This also forces many traditional skill inheritors to abandon their traditional skills and instead engage in other work to support themselves.

2.2. The regional characteristics of traditional intangible cultural heritage are a double-edged sword for its development

One region's geography and climate nurture its people, and the people develop unique customs and cultures, which not only become cultural symbols of the region but also an important support for the rural revitalization strategy of the new era. On the one hand, the regional characteristics of intangible cultural heritage help to inherit and protect local culture. Intangible cultural heritage is often closely related to local history, geography, and humanities, forming unique regional cultural characteristics. When inheriting and developing intangible cultural heritage, it is necessary to preserve these unique regional cultural characteristics, making them an important part of local culture, thereby inspiring local residents' cultural identity and pride. On the other hand, the regional characteristics of intangible cultural heritage also bring some disadvantages. Firstly, the regional characteristics make it difficult for intangible cultural heritage to be promoted and popularized nationwide, affecting its inheritance and development. Secondly, as a cultural resource, if intangible cultural heritage remains within a limited area, it is difficult to fully realize its value and role and to maximize its economic value. Finally, regional characteristics also limit and influence the development of intangible cultural heritage by local governments and people, making it difficult to obtain fair evaluation and recognition nationwide.

2.3. The strategy of rural revitalization and the construction of new villages have a great impact on traditional folk art

Traditional intangible cultural heritage originates from the lifestyle of agricultural civilization, while the new era of rural revitalization aims to build modern new rural areas, which inevitably requires a change in the traditional rural way of life. One focus of the infrastructure construction in the new rural areas is the development of the tourism industry, which is undoubtedly effective for the economic development of rural areas. However, the influx of foreign tourists and commercial development have had a huge impact on the local culture and customs of the countryside.

Firstly, there is a lack of market demand. With the change of modern lifestyles and the diversification of cultural consumption, the market demand for traditional folk art is gradually decreasing. In addition, as traditional folk art is mostly handmade, the cost is higher, and the price is also higher, which makes more people prefer to buy cheaper industrial products, leading to a decrease in market demand for traditional folk art.

Secondly, there is insufficient funding. Traditional folk art usually requires a large amount of human, material, and financial resources to complete, but in rural areas, the supply of these resources is relatively limited. Moreover, the inheritance and development of traditional folk art also require a lot of financial support. However, the current support from the government for intangible cultural heritage is limited, and the financial support from local governments and social organizations is also insufficient, which makes the development of traditional folk art face difficulties.

3. Development Status of China's Game Industry

The Chinese Game Industry Association's Game Publishing Work Committee and the China Game Industry Development Research Institute released the "2020 China Game Industry Report", which showed that the size of China's game market reached 278.15 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 22.3%. The game live streaming and

e-sports market also showed a rapid growth trend, reaching 27.68 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 67.5%.

Additionally, the report pointed out that the gaming industry has also made contributions to employment, with the total number of gaming industry employees exceeding 6 million in 2019, including game development, operations, art design, and other fields.

However, as the game market continues to expand, the gaming industry also faces some problems. Firstly, there are issues with game industry regulation, including game content review and restrictions on minors' game time. Secondly, there is the problem of gaming addiction, where some players may become addicted to games and negatively impact their education, work, and health. Finally, some gaming companies engage in unethical business practices, such as false advertising and forced consumption, which not only harm players' rights but also affect the overall development and innovation of the gaming industry.

With the proposal of General Secretary Xi Jinping to "strengthen cultural confidence and consciousness", more and more game developers are integrating traditional Chinese culture into game content through innovation. As a form of cultural entertainment product, games can spread traditional intangible cultural heritage through the game format. By integrating traditional cultural elements into games, younger generations can learn and understand traditional culture, thereby promoting and inheriting traditional intangible cultural heritage. For example, by incorporating traditional music, dance, and opera elements into games, it becomes easier for young people to accept and enjoy these traditional cultural forms, which can help promote and inherit traditional intangible cultural heritage. Game developers can incorporate traditional cultural elements into game design to create innovative gameplay and experiences, increasing the fun and appeal of games. For example, incorporating traditional intangible cultural heritage elements such as traditional crafts, architecture, and customs into game scenes and missions can create gameplay with unique charm and cultural significance, attracting more players' attention, creating higher economic value, and promoting the promotion of traditional intangible cultural heritage in China.

With the rise of China's comprehensive national strength, the demand for Chinese traditional intangible cultural heritage at home and abroad is also continuing to grow, bringing new opportunities and challenges for traditional non-legacy breakthroughs and innovations. In the early stages of development, Chinese game developers face many problems. Some game developers, in pursuit of short-term economic benefits, lack an understanding of Chinese traditional non-legacy, resulting in games lacking a true spiritual core, which is also not conducive to the promotion of non-legacy. Therefore, game developers need to work hard to give their games cultural connotations. In order to create high-quality games, developers should carry forward the craftsmanship spirit, deeply understand the connotations, characteristics, and historical origins of Chinese traditional culture, and explore its deeper value and meaning in order to better integrate traditional cultural elements into games and open up international markets through high-quality games. Secondly, game developers need to design a unique game world based on the selected traditional cultural elements, constructing a game world with a strong traditional cultural atmosphere that allows players to deeply feel the charm of Chinese traditional culture in the game. Of course, when integrating traditional cultural content into online games, developers also need

to ensure that it is interesting and easy to understand. The most basic attributes of games are leisure and entertainment, so how to enrich game content while satisfying gameplay and unique features, and showcase Chinese traditional cultural characteristics to differentiate it from other similar games in the market is the direction that game industry professionals need to explore together.

4. Analysis on the Innovation and Commercialization of Traditional Intangible Cultural Heritage in “Jianxia Qingyuan Online III”

“Jianxia Qingyuan Online III” (referred to as “JX3”) is an online game developed by Xishanju Studio of Kingsoft Corporation. The story of “JX3” is set in the Tang Dynasty, from its peak to its decline, and the game's storyline and major historical events are highly unified through iterative updates while respecting historical background. “JX3” places the perspective of the main storyline on ordinary people, and through experiencing the joys and sorrows of the common people in troubled times, players grow from nameless small soldiers to heroic warriors in the midst of power struggles. The question players must consider while experiencing the game's storyline is how to maintain their “chivalry” and “righteousness” in the midst of a chaotic world. This also expresses the central game concept put forward by the developers of “JX3”: “The greatness of chivalry lies in serving the country and the people.” The game incorporates multiple elements with traditional Chinese cultural characteristics, such as poetry, dance, casting, construction, and martial arts, attracting and retaining a loyal player base and creators of game-derived works. These creators not only gain income through their own abilities, but also stimulate the vitality of the game, creating a platform for players and the game to grow together, and allowing more people to learn about traditional Chinese culture through game content.

4.1. The Representation and Application of Traditional Intangible Cultural Heritage in JX3

In “JX3”, the modern expression of traditional costumes has become an important game feature. The Wudu Sect, a minority style faction based on Miao totem culture, is established based on Miao traditional embroidery and silverware patterns. One of the most typical patterns in Miao embroidery is the butterfly pattern. The butterfly pattern in Miao embroidery not only has a unique ethnic style in the pattern image, but it is also the spiritual totem of the Miao's long history, and it is the most common and important element in Miao decorative culture. In the hearts of the Miao people, the butterfly mother is the ancestor of the Miao people. In Miao culture, the butterfly pattern is a pattern full of auspicious meaning, widely used in folk costumes, bed curtains, hats and other items, expressing people's yearning and expectations for a better life. The aesthetic characteristics of the butterfly pattern in Miao embroidery are mainly manifested in its smooth lines, rich colors, beautiful composition, and strong three-dimensional sense. Miao silver jewelry is elaborate and complex in style, and its aesthetic features of beauty in size, weight, and number are widely recognized and appreciated. All of these can be seen in the Wudu Sect's special costumes in “JX3”. The Wudu Sect is based on the Miao people as its faction prototype, based on Miao totem culture, and takes the “butterfly”, which the Miao people regard as their ancestor, as its exclusive feature. The color scheme of its faction costumes is mainly purple, red, and blue, and traditional Miao embroidery patterns such as butterfly, dragon, snake, and floral are integrated into the design. As one of the few healing schools in the “JX3” game, the Wudu Sect has a large player base, and more and more

people are getting to know the exquisite Miao traditional embroidery patterns and silverware techniques through the game, feeling the unique charm of Miao traditional intangible cultural heritage.

“JX3” incorporates traditional intangible cultural heritage elements such as Guqin and Cantonese opera into its background music, adding more ancient charm. Guqin, also known as the seven-stringed zither, is a traditional musical instrument of the Han ethnic group with a history of at least three thousand years. The weapon of the “Changge Sect” in “JX3” is the guqin, and the appearance of some NPC (non-player controlled character) is accompanied by the melodious guqin music. The soundtrack is played by famous musicians with excellent sound quality, making players feel more immersed in the game while enjoying themselves. Additionally, in reality, “JX3” has created a musical drama called “courage of a warrior and the soul of a musician” which gathers famous names in the ancient style circle. Its expansion packs involve numerous research on sects, cultural inheritance, and scene realization. The recordings of Guqin master Zheng Yunfei's “High Mountain” and Gui Zhenyu's “Winter Snow” are also integrated. For example, in the Cantonese opera “The Battle of Tiancefu”, by using Cantonese opera's unique singing and fighting techniques, and lyrics and melodies, it enriched the traditional Cantonese opera themes with the classic game plot of “JX3”. In “The Battle of Tiancefu”, it highly restores the fighting actions in the game, coupled with grand music, and has been performed at various “JX3” offline game culture festivals with warm responses.

“The Battle of Tiancefu” is a Cantonese opera based on the storyline of the game “JX3”. In terms of music, singing, recitation, scenes, costumes, and actions, it uses a lot of game elements and makes some dramatic modifications to present the storyline and animation art of the game to the audience through the traditional form of Cantonese opera.

First of all, in terms of music, “The Battle of Tiancefu” uses a combination of traditional and modern music. Due to the slight differences in the instrument arrangement and melody between the game music of “JX3” and the traditional Cantonese opera music, the drama re-arranged the original game music to preserve the artistic characteristics of traditional Cantonese opera, and also made reasonable allocations in the design of the music segments.

One is to directly use the scene music from the game, which is closely related to the regional scenes in the game and easily evokes players' memories. The second is to adopt new tunes and singing styles in Cantonese opera to better cater to the viewing habits of young audiences. The drama has made innovations and concessions while preserving the overall musical characteristics of Cantonese opera. However, the audience of Cantonese opera cannot only be limited to middle-aged and elderly people or a certain region. It needs to be passed on to younger generations, and this painful change is more in line with the trend of the times and is also the necessary path to promote and develop traditional culture.

4.2. The cultural and aesthetic consumption phenomenon in "JX3" and its positive implications for promoting intangible cultural heritage

In the game “JX3” players spend a lot of time and energy accumulating virtual cultural capital, with appearance and accessories being the most significant capital expenditure. Through the symbolic meaning of owning these appearances and accessories, the consumer group of the online game redefines their social identity

through interaction within the game, where a virtual hierarchy exists that differs from real-life society. These players are commonly referred to as “cosmetic consumers” as they derive aesthetic pleasure and a sense of identity from visual symbols, and symbolic consumption becomes a vital part of their virtual life.

Role-playing games are distinguished from other types of games by their strong social characteristics. By cultivating virtual characters that cater to players’ aesthetic and social needs, the pursuit and display of character appearance become the primary cultural consumption activity in their virtual world. Character appearance is not only a significant source of revenue for online games but also the core content for players to reshape their characters and express their personal aesthetic preferences, which is one of the symbols of constructing players’ virtual identities.

By integrating traditional handicrafts or artistic features of traditional culture into the game ecosystem, adding innovation based on the traditional art styling, and creating clothing styles that are more easily accepted by young people today, not only is the digital application of traditional intangible cultural heritage being realized, but it is also injecting new vitality into traditional clothing and handicraft designs and reflecting the aesthetic needs of young people in the new era.

There are a large number of artistic works and game peripherals that involve secondary creation based on the game theme in “JX3” These game derivative works not only enrich the content of the game itself, but also promote the game to potential consumers who have not experienced it, allowing consumers in various industries to understand and innovate traditional intangible cultural heritage through the game. In order to promote the new version of “JX3” the official website cooperated with the Longquan Sword Factory, a national intangible cultural heritage inheritor of Longquan Sword forging skills, to invite Zhang Yesheng, the inheritor of Tang Dynasty horizontal sword forging skills, to design and forge a real Tang horizontal sword weapon for the new faction Daozong based on the Tang horizontal sword blueprint. This brings the Longquan Sword making skills back into people's view and becomes a model of the combination of “JX3” game and traditional intangible cultural heritage.

5. Reflections on the Innovation of Combining Intangible Cultural Heritage with Games

Intangible cultural heritage refers to the non-material assets created and passed down by certain social groups in their production and life practices, with historical, cultural, artistic, technical, social significance and other aspects. With the development of modern society, intangible cultural heritage is constantly facing the threat of change and extinction. Therefore, how to combine intangible cultural heritage with modern technology to enable it to be inherited and innovated in new forms has become an important issue. The gaming industry, as one of the popular cultural forms of contemporary society, can provide new ideas and means for the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage. Games can expand the channels for the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage and target audience. As a new cultural form, games have a wide audience and strong dissemination capability. By integrating intangible cultural heritage into games, these cultural heritages can be more widely disseminated and recognized. At the same time, games can present the content of intangible cultural heritage in a more intuitive and vivid form, making it easier for audiences to understand and accept. “JX3” has incorporated a large number

of traditional cultural elements into the game, including poetry, martial arts, calligraphy, music, and more. These elements are not just the decoration and background of the game, but are deeply integrated into all aspects of the game, becoming one of the core elements of the game. Through the dissemination of the game, these traditional cultural elements have gained wider dissemination and recognition, while also bringing new opportunities and challenges to the development of the gaming industry.

However, the application of traditional culture in games often fails to reach the deeper spiritual core, which is a problem that urgently needs to be solved in the integration of intangible cultural heritage into the gaming industry. Domestic game companies, in order to pursue short-term commercial value and economic benefits, only apply a “skin-changing” ancient style packaging to the game’s graphics and names, merely possessing cultural elements in appearance, but lacking substance. This fast-food consumption mode not only fails to contribute to the promotion of traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage but also loses the spirit of Chinese traditional culture, causing consumers’ resentment. Most games only bring the form of Chinese traditional culture into the game, and players can feel the visual impact of Chinese traditional culture, but they cannot deeply appreciate the charm of traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage. It is also difficult for games to actively assume the responsibility of promoting traditional culture. Therefore, we need to explore how to apply the excellent value orientation of Chinese traditional culture to domestic games, so that players can feel resonance in the game and actively promote the elements of Chinese traditional culture.

6. Conclusions

This paper takes “JX3” as an example to explore the dissemination of Chinese intangible cultural heritage in the game industry. Due to the limitations of the author’s abilities and time, this paper’s discussion on the connotation of Chinese traditional intangible cultural heritage and the cultural commonalities in the game industry is not sufficiently in-depth, and some suggestions and measures need to be verified in practice. It is hoped that this research can provide a reference for the further development of the dissemination of Chinese intangible cultural heritage in the game industry and make some contributions to promoting traditional Chinese culture.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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