

In-Depth Exploration and Integration of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements in Game Design and Practical Applications: Postprint

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Abstract

【目的】 This paper aims to explore the integration and innovative application of traditional Chinese cultural elements in game design, and through the combination of education and games, promote the comprehensive development of individuals in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor aspects.

【方法】 This study adopts a combination of theoretical analysis and practical exploration. Firstly, it conducts an in-depth analysis of the integration of excellent traditional Chinese cultural elements in game design; then, combining core concepts and theories of game design theory, it proposes an integration framework that draws upon the “cultural iceberg” model; finally, it applies the methodology of the Octalysis framework to analyze and construct specific gamification strategies.

【结果】 The research results demonstrate that integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements into game design not only enriches the cultural connotation of games but also enhances their educational value. The proposed integration framework effectively guides the specific application of traditional cultural elements in games, while the cultural iceberg model helps reveal the deep-level roles of cultural elements in game design. The methodology of the Octalysis framework provides strong support for constructing attractive gamification strategies.

【结论】 Applying traditional Chinese cultural elements to innovative game design is an effective approach to realizing the combination of education and games, while simultaneously injecting new vitality into the development of cultural and creative industries, and holds significant positive meaning for promoting cultural inheritance and innovation.

Full Text

Preamble

Deep Exploration and Integration of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements in Game Design and Practical Application

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Abstract

[**Purpose**] This paper explores the integration and innovative application of traditional Chinese cultural elements in game design, promoting holistic development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education through the combination of education and gaming. [**Method**] This study employs a combination of theoretical analysis and practical exploration. First, it conducts an in-depth analysis of the integration of excellent traditional Chinese cultural elements in game design. Then, drawing upon core concepts and theories of game design, it proposes an integration framework based on the “cultural iceberg” model. Finally, it applies the Octalysis Behavior Analysis Framework methodology to analyze and construct specific gamification strategies. [**Results**] The findings demonstrate that integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements into game design not only enriches the cultural connotation of games but also enhances their educational value. The proposed integration framework effectively guides the practical application of cultural elements in games, while the “cultural iceberg” model helps reveal the deep-level functions of cultural elements in game design. The Octalysis Behavior Analysis Framework methodology provides strong support for constructing attractive gamification strategies. [**Conclusion**] Applying traditional Chinese cultural elements to innovative game design represents an effective pathway for combining education with gaming, injecting new vitality into the cultural and creative industries while playing a significant positive role in promoting cultural inheritance and innovation.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese cultural elements; Game design; Practical application; Cultural inheritance; Fusion innovation

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1. Opportunities for Integrating Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements with Game Design

In the tide of globalization, cultural diversity and uniqueness face unprecedented challenges. As the spiritual lifeline and cultural foundation of the Chinese nation, the protection and inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture have become particularly important. With the advent of the digital age, games have evolved beyond mere entertainment tools to become important media for cultural dissemination. Gaming is human nature, and human cultural history is essentially a history of human play [1]. Traditional Chinese culture plays a pivotal role in modern game design, and the integration of its elements transforms games from simple entertainment into opportunities and challenges for traditional culture protection and inheritance. This integration not only expands game content and forms but also significantly influences design philosophy and cultural transmission pathways.

1.1 The Influence of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements on Modern Game Design

In the selection of game themes and story backgrounds [2], elements from traditional Chinese culture—such as historical warfare, mythological legends, and classical literature—provide rich and diverse materials for game content, enhancing appeal and offering players immersive cultural experiences. Popular games like *Honor of Kings*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Black Myth: Wukong* predominantly draw from Chinese mythology and heroic narratives, elevating the cultural depth of games. American anthropologist Edward Hall's iceberg theory posits that in cultural systems, the relationship between visible surface elements and hidden deeper layers is known as the cultural iceberg [3], meaning that events require deeper exploration to discover changes beneath the surface. The creative transformation of cultural inheritance elements—such as character, scene, and plot design—constructs game worldviews. By combining faithful representation with secondary creation and deeply exploring underlying cultural values, this theory serves as a crucial medium for cross-cultural communication.

The integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements into modern games promotes digitalization and innovation in cultural transmission. Game developers utilize technological means to present traditional culture vividly and intuitively. In 2023, the global mobile gaming market reached \$76.7 billion, with China's gaming market continuing to develop as gaming becomes a fixed lifestyle habit. Projects like the "Pixel Forbidden City" in *Minecraft* use pixel blocks to recreate the architectural style of the Forbidden City, allowing players to experience the grandeur and exquisite beauty of traditional Chinese architecture within the game. Against the backdrop of globalization, games rich in Chinese culture have achieved international success, enhancing the influence of Chinese culture and promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

1.2 The Necessity of Integrating Game Design with Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture

Traditional culture [4] refers to the unique and continuous cultural system formed by a nation or region through long-term historical development, encompassing language, literature, art, and other aspects, characterized by historicity and regional features. In the context of globalization, protecting and inheriting traditional culture and promoting cultural diversity and sustainable development have become global cultural strategies and missions. Excellent traditional Chinese culture embodies the linguistic habits, cultural traditions, ideological concepts, and emotional identity of the Chinese nation, representing a moral code, ideological character, and value orientation that have gained widespread recognition and acceptance among the Chinese people, with extremely rich ideological connotations [5].

Traditional cultural elements are diverse, and those suitable for game integration include classic literary characters, artistic styles, architectural aesthetics, philosophical ideas, festival customs, martial arts, costumes, mythological legends, intangible cultural heritage elements, and traditional games. Integrating these elements can enhance a game's cultural connotation, educational value, artistic quality, and innovative potential, thereby promoting the dissemination and inheritance of traditional culture. In game design, beyond content borrowing, developers can also draw from traditional culture in character design, artistic style, and dialogue, such as applying character images, costumes, and architectural elements to enhance visual artistry and cultural characteristics. For example, *Justice Online* draws inspiration from *Auspicious Cranes* [6] to create fashion items that are deeply loved by players.

In summary, the influence of traditional culture on modern game theory is multi-level and comprehensive. It not only enriches game content and forms but also profoundly impacts design philosophy and cultural transmission methods. In the future, with continuous technological advancement and ongoing cultural exchange, the integration of traditional culture and modern game design will become increasingly close, bringing broader development space to the gaming industry and cultural dissemination.

2. Strategies for Integrating Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements into Game Design

The integration of traditional Chinese culture and game design aims to enrich game connotation and extend its lifecycle. Drawing upon the cultural iceberg model, it is necessary to integrate both surface-level and deep-level culture, moving beyond superficial phenomena to achieve deep-level integration of traditional culture in game design philosophy.

2.1 Deeply Mining the Story Core of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture (Implicit)

According to China Daily’ s annual “Top Ten Cases of International Communication of Chinese Culture,” which selects influential major events, projects, hot topics, outstanding works, and advanced models to establish paradigms, encourage innovation, and promote Chinese culture to the world, “Chinese-style sci-fi” games have achieved global sales success through their unique combination of traditional Chinese culture and modern sci-fi elements. In April 2023, the typical representative of “Chinese-style sci-fi” —the two-dimensional game *Honkai: Star Rail*—was launched and won the annual Best Mobile Game award, known as the “Oscar of the gaming industry.” However, for traditional Chinese culture to have international influence, it is essential to deeply mine its story core by selecting important historical periods such as the Spring and Autumn Period, Warring States Period, Three Kingdoms, Tang, and Song dynasties as backgrounds. Utilizing historical themes, mythological legends, classical literature, and other traditional cultural elements, historical figures are established as key game characters to drive plot development through their stories, enabling players to learn about historical culture within the game.

Core values of traditional culture, such as Confucian and Daoist thought—including benevolence, loyalty, wisdom, and harmony—should be integrated into game plots. These values are conveyed through game narratives and character behaviors to guide players toward correct ideological concepts and values [8]. For example, *Black Myth: Wukong*, launched on August 20, 2024, uses *Journey to the West* as its blueprint, representing a global expression of traditional Chinese culture that opens a new path for cultural export. Through modern game technology, this classic story is reinterpreted, allowing players to experience the charm of traditional culture within the game. This game does not simply copy the original plot; in the age of artificial intelligence, game design requires meticulous craftsmanship. What technology cannot replace is the unique value that humans can impart to games. Only by organically combining internet technology with traditional culture can traditional culture radiate more splendid brilliance in the new era.

2.2 Innovating Cultural Narrative and Media Narrative Methods (Innovation)

Modern game design employs diverse methods to inherit and promote traditional Chinese culture through storytelling. These approaches not only provide immersive experiences for players but also deepen their understanding and recognition of Chinese culture. On September 20, 2020, the academic salon “Young Generation vs. Chinese Narrative: The Legendary Interpretation of *Black Myth: Wukong*,” hosted by the National Spirit and Quality Research Center of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, was held at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences headquarters, focusing on the game’ s influence among young generations and its 承载 of Chinese narrative [7].

Successful cultural export requires not only a strong story core but also dual progress in technology and content, making innovative cultural narrative and media narrative methods particularly important. Excellent cultural narrative is an indispensable and important component of the comprehensive gaming experience. Game developers can borrow narrative techniques from classic literary works to construct game storylines and character relationships, deeply mining the story core of traditional culture while combining the unique interactivity of media narrative methods. This enables players to participate more deeply in game stories and experience the charm of traditional culture. Innovative expression of traditional culture in game design will give new vitality to Chinese classic culture.

2.3 Emphasizing Cultural Education and Game Community Construction (Integration)

The values and moral standards in traditional culture also have profound influences on modern game design. Game developers need to convey positive energy and advocate for uplifting values in games while respecting and inheriting the moral standards of traditional culture. Built-in cultural education modules can be established within games to introduce traditional cultural knowledge to players through text, images, videos, and other forms, covering historical backgrounds, folk customs, and artistic characteristics. These modules can be designed as part of game missions, allowing players to learn traditional culture while completing tasks.

Building an active player community encourages players to share traditional cultural knowledge and exchange gaming experiences. Community managers can regularly organize traditional culture-themed activities, such as poetry competitions and calligraphy exhibitions, to enhance players' cultural sense of belonging and community cohesion. Through cultural education and community construction, games can become effective platforms for spreading traditional culture, allowing players to not only enjoy entertainment but also improve their cultural literacy.

2.4 Combining Modern Aesthetics and Technology (Explicit)

As times change and modern technology advances rapidly, modern aesthetics have also undergone earth-shaking transformations. When integrating traditional cultural elements into game design, developers should combine modern aesthetics and technological means while retaining the essence of traditional culture to create cultural experiences that meet contemporary players' tastes. By integrating traditional and modern aesthetics, game designers can incorporate classical artistic conception into games through digital animation while reflecting modern characteristics, breaking traditional design norms.

With the aid of AR/VR technologies, game characters and scenes can be designed creatively, or regional culture can be integrated into levels to set up cap-

tivating game plots, enabling better cultural immersion and interaction. This approach boosts “cultural export” and demonstrates the inheritance and innovation of traditional aesthetics integrated with modern aesthetics [9].

2.5 Cross-Border Cooperation and Cultural Dissemination (Sustainability)

Through cross-border cooperation between games and traditional Chinese culture, modern game design is combined with traditional cultural elements, such as integration with intangible cultural heritage and the use of digital game technology to revive ancient intangible heritage, further promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. First, cross-border cooperation between digitalization and game design can promote the digitization and networking of traditional culture, making traditional cultural resources widely accessible and convenient for preservation, management, and application. Second, it can enhance the interactivity of cultural dissemination. Cross-border cooperation with new technologies, especially AR/VR simulation technologies, makes games more interactive and significantly improves player engagement and experience.

Third, it can broaden the channels of cultural dissemination through cross-border cooperation. Through cross-border interpretation and integration, the presentation of multiple art forms makes cultural dissemination more diversified. Finally, it promotes cross-border cooperation between culture and technology, giving birth to new forms of cultural expression and driving cultural innovation and revival [10].

3. Practical Application of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements in Game Design

In game design practice, the integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements has become a trend that not only enriches the cultural connotation of games but also promotes the inheritance and development of traditional culture.

3.1 Combining Traditional Festivals with Game Activities

The combination of traditional festivals and game activities is extremely common in game design, particularly in online and mobile games. Games frequently launch events tied to traditional Chinese festivals such as Spring Festival and Dragon Boat Festival to enhance fun while transmitting festive atmosphere and cultural connotation. *Happy Elements* introduces special gameplay for Mid-Autumn Festival and Spring Festival, continuously updating its elimination levels and features. *Genshin Impact* incorporates various traditional cultural elements including lion dancing, tea culture, and Huizhou-style architecture. Some games draw inspiration from traditional Chinese festivals like the Sea

Lantern Festival, allowing players to fly kites painted with koi fish, dragons, and phoenixes to experience the festive atmosphere of traditional culture.

In actual educational and teaching activities, teachers select appropriate festivals based on children's age characteristics and design game activities related to traditional festivals, such as lion and dragon dances, yangko dancing, and other Spring Festival folk activities; stilt-walking for Lantern Festival; mooncake-making for Mid-Autumn Festival customs; and diverse game activities in language, music, society, and art to allow children to experience the charm of traditional festival culture in game contexts. Through making mooncakes, role-playing, and personal experience, children's understanding of traditional festivals evolves. Through traditional festival activities in games, players can personally experience the charm of traditional culture. The integration of these cultural elements narrows the distance between global players and Chinese culture, allowing more people to feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture.

3.2 Integration of Traditional Art and Game Design

The integration of traditional art and game design is a multi-dimensional, cross-disciplinary process. The incorporation of traditional art elements such as storylines, characters, artistic features, and styles, as well as the application of traditional art forms like Peking Opera and folk arts in game design, adds unique charm to games. Typical cases include *Westward Journey Online* integrating Peking Opera elements, *Egg Party* integrating Miao culture, and *Black Myth: Wukong* applying grotto architectural art. Game art and music also frequently draw from traditional culture. For example, *Painted Truth: A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains* incorporates scenes from *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* to create a strong cultural atmosphere [11].

In educational game design, the embodiment of traditional art is also subtle, generally through transplantation and grafting methods that integrate folk songs and nursery rhymes into traditional folk games. Activities such as bamboo pole jumping, hopscotch, and rubber band jumping often incorporate and transplant some traditional folk songs and rhymes, making games more interesting and children's movements more rhythmic. This allows children to naturally encounter and experience traditional art in games. Through the integration of traditional art and game design, not only can players' interest in traditional culture be enhanced, but it can also promote their comprehensive physical and mental health development and improve their comprehensive qualities.

3.3 Digital Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Paper-cutting art and Chinese knots, as intangible cultural heritage, can be integrated into educational game activities. Having children engage in paper-cutting and Chinese knot-making activities can cultivate their hands-on abilities and artistic appreciation while inheriting traditional crafts. In the new era, the collaboration between intangible cultural heritage and mobile games or e-sports

is also well-received, becoming a new platform for cultural dissemination that is both educational and entertaining while promoting the digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage [12]. Typical cases include *Honor of Kings* integrating traditional heroes and costumes; *Happy Elements* cooperating with the Dunhuang Museum to launch special gameplay; and *Jianghu Youyou* showcasing China's traditional martial arts culture and intangible cultural heritage crafts.

The Peking Opera costume in *Farewell My Concubine* represents both a national treasure and intangible cultural heritage. Emerging technologies such as AI painting technology also play important roles in the digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage culture, helping game developers create culturally rich game content more efficiently. The digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage is a product of the new era that helps with preservation and dissemination, provides internal motivation for the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage culture in contemporary times, and also provides energy for rural revitalization. It is an important pathway for protecting and inheriting cultural heritage, promoting cultural diversity, facilitating exchange and understanding, enhancing cultural confidence, and stimulating innovation, and will play an increasingly important role in the future.

3.4 Traditional Culture Enhancing Gaming Experience

Traditional culture plays a crucial role in enhancing gaming experience. It not only strengthens the cultural connotation of games but also allows players to feel the charm of traditional culture while being entertained. By integrating traditional cultural elements into games—such as the reproduction of architectural styles, costumes, and arts, and the reenactment of myths and legends—games can enhance their appeal and innovate gameplay, allowing players to experience the unique charm of traditional culture. Hosting in-game activities related to traditional culture increases interactivity and participation, promotes cultural inheritance, and enhances immersion and interactivity. Players can experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture in aspects such as scenes, atmosphere, music, and sound effects, creating a deeply immersive experience.

Traditional culture can add unique charm and value to games, especially for children, helping them learn the value of traditional culture while playing, thereby promoting cultural inheritance and development. In summary, the integration of traditional culture and games can not only enhance the entertainment and educational value of games but also promote Chinese culture globally and strengthen cultural confidence.

As a medium known as the “ninth art,” the exploration and integration of traditional Chinese cultural elements in game design has profound significance. It not only provides rich materials and sources of inspiration for game content but also enhances the diversity and depth of games. This integration not only improves the appeal and market competitiveness of games but also promotes

cultural dissemination and inheritance, endowing games with stronger vitality. However, achieving deep integration of traditional culture and games is not easy—it is both a test of traditional cultural inheritance and innovation and a challenge for the deep exploration of the relationship between modern technology and culture. Looking to the future, we need to further deepen research and practice in this field, commit to promoting the perfect fusion of traditional culture and modern technology, and contribute more wisdom and innovative strength to the inheritance and development of Chinese culture.

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