# *The research on game marketing of domestic tourism destinations*

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*Abstract:* Tourism and games, which belong to the category of experience economy, have many common features. What kind of sparks will be generated by the cross-border cooperation between tourism destination marketing and game media? At present, the game marketing practice of domestic tourism destinations is still in the nascent stage, and Cross-border cooperation between well-known game providers and various tourism agencies continues to emerge, but the specific operation mechanism is still relatively old, which fails to effectively stimulate the players' impulse to travel, indicating that the in-depth integration of tourism marketing and game communication still needs to be explored, but in any case, with its unique entertainment, interactivity, sharing and socialization and other native advantages, the game media has shown great communication potential in tourism destination marketing, so, this paper tries to propose some innovative ideas for domestic tourism destination's game marketing.

Online games in which players travel to tourist sites or tourist attractions as a background essentially belong to a form of virtual tourism, but on this basis to add the game's unique entertainment components, competitive elements and socialization mechanism, and virtual tourism in foreign countries appeared earlier and development is relatively mature. For example, potential travelers can travel around the world to more than 1,000 important sites on the largest virtual travel website "Second Life" in the United State. So, imagine what kind of sparks will come out if tourism and games which belong to the same experience economy can be combined? At present, the domestic tourism destination game marketing is still in the nascent stage and its' game marketing ideas are still relatively old, resulting in failure to effectively stimulate players' impulse to travel in the field, indicating that the further exploration to realize in-depth integration of tourism destinations and games is necessary. But no matter what, with its native advantages of entertainment, interactivity, sharing and socialization, game media has shown great communication potential in the marketing mix strategy of tourism destinations, so this paper tries to put forward some innovative ideas for the development of game marketing in domestic tourism destinations.

## 1. The current situation of game marketing development in domestic tourism destinations

Game implant advertising already covered many traditional manufacturing industries such as automobile, cell phone, food, etc. The practical experience of famous brands in the other industries can be fully borrowed by tourism destination marketers. Compared with the negative impact that

traditional advertising may bring to the user experience, the game implantation of tourism destination brand not only can naturally show the brand image and style of the tourist place, but also can maintain a more positive tourist experience with the advantage of high participation in the game media. Marketers should boldly broaden their thinking and try to transplant a series of tourist landmark landscapes as backgrounds into some mainstream games, so that the player group can get the overall experience of the tourist brand in the game and thus be attracted to it.

Games are originally a kind of cultural products, which are given new connotation through integration with tourism and thus more easily accepted by the travel-loving players, and the tourist destination brands can thus obtain the ultimate entertainment effect far better than the general film and television implantation advertisement. The famous game maker "Perfect World" once planned the "Search for Bright Peak" theme activity for its online game "Yitian Tu Long Ji", inviting three celebrities including Chen Tong, editor-in-chief of Sina.com, to be the allies of the three factions in the game, and three teams went to Bright Peak in western Zhejiang Province, Kunlun Mountain and Huangshan Mountain. The whole activity attracted more than 20 media to follow the whole report and nearly 100 media to participate in the report, not only journalists are very interested in this novel way of advertising, even the local government and ordinary citizens are also very concerned about this "alternative" tourism group. Many emerging tourist destinations have also used the advantages of online game communication to significantly enhance their brand image exposure, for example, during the promotion period of its online game "Genghis Khan", Kirin Games organized an expedition fleet to retrace the expedition road of Genghis Khan, which triggered many "donkey friends" to drive themselves to experience the desert scenery, making the original "barren land" a popular tourist destination, and the "World of Poker" themed Macau "Derby" tournament by United Games has created a small climax of tourism in Macau. In order to strengthen the international communication of the city's tourism image during the London Olympic Games, Hangzhou deliberately entered Facebook and launched different versions of the "go to hangzhou" online game for international tourists and Londoners respectively, incorporating the image of Hangzhou's car body advertising in London to deepen their understanding of the city. Through the perfect combination of online game and offline activities, the target tourists can deeply experience the beauty of Hangzhou in a relaxing interactive experience.

## 2. Analysis of the possibility of combining the game industry with tourism destination marketing

### 2.1 Policy basis for the integration of game industry and tourism industry

The integration is not only limited to the significance of breaking geographical boundaries, but also the development of tourism industry needs a number of industries to cooperate with each other and have a strong horizontal pulling ability. Shao Qiwei, the former director of National Tourism Administration, has highly affirmed the important role of cultural industry in promoting tourism, encouraging the further enrichment and expansion of the cultural connotation of tourism activities in the process of promoting tourism development, and constantly meeting the higher-level spiritual needs of tourists to enhance the overall quality of the tourism industry[1]. It is well known that the urban tourism cities represented by Shanghai generally lack the advantages of tourism resources in the traditional sense, so they must take the road of industrial integration to give full play to the industrial upgrading capacity of "big tourism". Therefore, Shanghai's urban tourism industry has always consciously integrated closely with other industries in the city, and its urban tourism plan clearly states that it will vigorously promote the integration of tourism with related industries such as culture, creativity, communication, convention and exhibition, and leisure. This also provides a solid policy and theoretical basis for the cooperation between the online gaming industry and the

tourism industry, which is included in the pan-cultural industry. Specifically, on the one hand, online game industry and tourism industry are both in the category of experience economy, and the interaction of virtual & real and combination of entertainment & leisure will inevitably lead the experience economy to a deeper field, after all, to enrich tourists' experience by various means is the key to the marketing communication of tourist destinations. On the other hand, the online game industry and the tourism industry need each other, and the union between them can not only find a new profit point for the expansion of the online game industry, but also add a new content product for the tourism industry[2].

## 2.2 Analysis of the motivation of tourism destination marketing mix strategy to pay attention to game implantation

So, why does the game media become an important force in the marketing mix strategy of tourism destinations? For one, users generally like the entertainment element of games. An survey in the US found that 40% of adults are interested in new forms of entertainment, consumers want to see game elements everywhere and 60% play online games every week[3].Chinese online game users are mainly young people with strong buying power, and they are also the quality target group for tourism destination promotion, thus indicating that there is a high overlap between the tourist group and the game fan group, and designing some virtual tourism activities about the tourist destination in the game can fully promote the conversion of online game players to real tourists. Secondly, the strong concealment feature makes the game media an important means for destination marketers to spread the regional culture and even the brand concept of the destination, and the strong entertainment feature also helps to dilute the missionary color of destination marketing, and the destination tourism information conveyed in the game is highly integrated with the game plot and scenes, which can easily make players treat it as part of the game process and look forward to the field experience. Third, the injection of tourism culture makes the game performance more connotation and tension, and the prototype implantation of destination tourism attraction can effectively save the game creation cost. On the one hand, the game creation brings useful ideas to the planning of tourism attraction, on the other hand, the game communication also makes the destination tourism attraction gain popularity and potential tourists. Especially in recent years, the rise of cultural theme tourism makes the combination of games and tourism naturally. Fourth,the intangibility, immovability, and synchronization of production and consumption of tourism products prevent tourists from experiencing tourism products beforehand, and this high information asymmetry can only be solved through immersive, conceptual, and interactive virtual tourism, where potential tourists gain "tourism experiences" through virtual tourism in games, thus this way opens up an innovative idea to solve the native drawback of "not experiencing before consumption" of tourism products.Fifth, games usually have a strong marketing communication function, and the preferences of players in the game truly reflect their aesthetic psychology, making it easy for destination marketers to collect information on potential tourists,to provide reference for their decisions on the construction of tourism attractions, and to promote the interaction of tourism online and offline experiences so as to effectively expand the competitiveness of online marketing of destination tourism products. HP, Sephora and other industry corporate brands have long been gaining attention for their advertising investment in gaming media. Therefore, I believe that with its large user base, high frequency of use, high loyalty and high involvement, the game media also has the potential to become an excellent communication channel for tourism destination experiences.

## 3. The specific ideas of tourism destination's game marketing

### 3.1 Content level—Integrate destination tourism resources and tourist role experience deeply into game design

Through story-based game design, players can learn about the customs of the background destinations in the game, for example, the famous "Brave and the Bold" series of games are designed based on Japanese national life scenes. From the perspective of specific game implementation steps, first of all, players choose the destination, game designers can implant local folklore, brand identity, architectural landscape, food, festivals and other elements into the background city, so that players can visually experience the tourism style of different destinations in the game, so that the destination is no longer just a background place name but the detailed embodiment of tourism components, the game's environmental space settings should be consistent with the real situation, and the image of the background tourist places should be consistent with the image of the real tourist places and updated in real time to give the players a more realistic sense of the scene. Secondly, the players participate in the tourism activities in the virtual context with the role of tourists in the life of the tourist places, and use this role to in-depth experience the landscape, economy, culture, folk customs and other tourism resources of the background tourist places. Finally, players should be given corresponding rewards and rights according to the level of playing games, in order to stimulate their enthusiasm for subsequent participation and recommend the game to others, such as allowing high-level players to carry out higher-level tourism development planning for the virtual tourist places. The union between Hangzhou Songcheng and Shanda is a successful case of bold innovation, and the combination of the two is to achieve complementary advantages. In order to match the culture of Shanda games embedded in Hangzhou Songcheng, the main body of Hangzhou Songcheng's scenic spot is transformed according to the Zhongzhou Imperial City in Shanda's game product "World of Legends", and the game's blacksmith store, pharmacy, grocery store and other scene elements are truly reproduced, and even hired a number of Mongolian knights to perform the classic guild "sand city" siege battle in the game[4]. This win-win cooperation obviously opens up an innovative idea for tourism destination's game marketing.

### 3.2 Channel level－based on social mechanism to effectively enhance the sharing and recommendation of virtual tourism activities by tourists

According to Lightspeed's survey results, 55% of users have more than 10 friends in the game, 59% have invited friends to play with them, 15% have invited strangers to play with them, and more than 1/3 of users initially played the game because they were invited by their friends, indicating that the game itself has a clear social nature and thus has a strong word-of-mouth power for tourism destinations[5].Initially, social games were mainly used by white-collar workers, and then gradually spread to all kinds of people and led to the rapid expansion of social networking site users. This new media form combines the dual characteristics of online games and social networks. Compared with a single online game, its user base is stronger, and compared with a single social network, it has more fresh and exciting game fun, which not only has a huge user base favored by various consumer brands, but also significantly reduces the consumer resistance because of its novelty and fun. If tourism destination marketers can make good use of this new communication channel, they will effectively promote the two-way interaction between destination brands and young travelers, and enhance the intimacy and fun of destination brands to travelers through the real-time interaction and competition mechanism of the game, thus effectively enhancing the sharing and recommendation of virtual tourism activities by travelers. Overall, the gamification

mechanism does give travelers an opportunity to easily spread the good reputation of tourism destinations, and with the help of social mechanism tourism destination marketers can easily make the background tourism place brand integrated into the game gain the recognition of target travelers. With the increasing similarity of tourism products and services, providing a unique virtual travel experience has become a new point of appeal for destination brand differentiation strategies. By participating in the design of virtual travel experiences in the game, destination marketers can guide and enhance users' on-the-ground travel experiences, and help enhance users' awareness and preference for the destination brand[6], and then easily share and recommend the destination brand implanted in the game with the help of social relationship resources.

## 4. Conclusion

As a new media type that users must pay attention to and highly participate in, the marketing communication function of games is mainly originated from the product implantation advertisement in film&television works, and there are some common attributes between games and tourism, thus integration of both can be found on many levels, including content, participants, presentation and communication channels. Therefore, tourism destination's game marketing should never be satisfied with simply implanting the background tourist places in the game, but should promote the deep integration of game and tourism through various means such as elaborate game plot design and tourist role experience, and should not simply emphasize the sharing degree of the virtual tourist experience in the game, but should make full use of the social nature and the social mechanism to enhance the recommendation of virtual tourism activities, so as to give full play to the competitive consumption advantage and social communication power of the game itself. It can be expected that, as tourists increasingly value the entertainment element in destination marketing activities, and the motive of integration between game industry and tourism industry is further strengthened, the application space and information dissemination of tourism destination's game marketing will be greatly expanded.

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