The Background, Objectives, and Audience of the *Black Myth: Wukong* Campaign

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1. Introduction

Black Myth: Wukong is an action-adventure game developed by the Chinese company Game Science, inspired by the classic Chinese novel Journey to the West. Drawing from the legend of the protagonist, *Sun Wukong*, it tells a new story set in a world of darkness and mystery. Hailed by the media as China's first "AAA game" (a high-budget, high-scale, and high-quality single-player game), *Black Myth: Wukong* effectively combines traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern game design. The game features visually impressive combat sequences and a well-crafted mythological storyline, creating a captivating experience for players (Corporation, 2024). Upon release, *Black Myth: Wukong* became an instant sensation, continuously setting new records for AAA games. Within the first hour, its concurrent player counts on Steam surpassed one million, making it the single-player game with the highest concurrent player count in history (Times, 2024). The core audience for *Black Myth: Wukong* consists of young gamers from around the world who are passionate about high-quality graphics and action-packed gameplay. These players are highly active on social media platforms and enjoy sharing their gaming experiences and anticipation for the game. Based on social media user data, approximately 73% of those following *Black Myth: Wukong* are male, while 27% are female. The largest age group is 24-29 years old, accounting for about 35% of the audience. This demographic, part of Generation Z, is known as "digital natives" and "young professionals" entering society (Dataeye, 2024). Additionally, the target audience includes a broader group of entertainment enthusiasts interested in Chinese mythology, Eastern culture, and visual arts. While they may not be hardcore gamers, they are captivated by the game's cultural elements and artistic style and are eager to engage in secondary dissemination and discussions related to official content. In terms of overseas market promotion, Game Science collaborated with Mindshare Media, aiming to "bridge cultural barriers" as their communication objective. Wang Bolin, head of Mindshare Media's overseas marketing agency, noted that Game Science is an idealistic company that, beyond focusing on sales data, places greater importance on overcoming cultural obstacles to communicate and connect with global players through their game (man, 2024). Promoting in foreign markets is more challenging than in domestic ones, as international players lack the cultural foundation of the game's story background, making it difficult for them to emotionally resonate with the music, story, design, and visuals as Chinese players do (man, 2024). Therefore, Mindshare Media united international teams from China and the UK, striving to explore the best global promotion strategies to introduce this culturally rich game to the international market.

2. Strategies and Tactics

2.1 Content Curation

The marketing team of *Black Myth: Wukong* discovered through research that awareness of Journey to the West is very limited overseas, with 6 out of 8 people having never even heard of it. Even though awareness of the game was almost nonexistent in the international market, both domestic and international players tend to dislike being overwhelmed with too much complicated information all at once (man, 2024). As a result, the marketing team decided not to create social media content explaining the extensive story of 'Journey to the West'. They understood that players are not obligated to learn the game's background, so the initial promotional efforts had to focus solely on the game itself (man, 2024).

The social media campaign for *Black Myth: Wukong* also demonstrated a transition from content production to content curation. According to an interview with a marketing representative from Mindshare Media, the focus of *Black Myth: Wukong*'s content production on social media was to showcase the game's combat experience (man, 2024). By highlighting gameplay mechanics and unique features, the team created high-quality, original content. In the early stages of promotion, the campaign relied on visually stunning trailers, gameplay demonstrations, and behind-the-scenes development stories to build brand awareness. These high-quality, original pieces immediately captured the attention of the core target audience with their visual impact and cultural depth. Since the release of the final trailer, "Revisit Journey to the West," *Black Myth: Wukong* has garnered 417,331 views on YouTube (YouTube, 2024). Additionally, in less than four days, the trailer surpassed 10 million views on the Chinese video and social media platform Bilibili, reaching 10.285 million views, indicating a high level of audience interest (Baijing, 2024). Through repeated communication with overseas players, the *Black Myth: Wukong* marketing team discovered that content that sparks discussion and captures players' attention often includes not only the highly anticipated gameplay demonstrations but also more relatable and humorous material. As the brand's reach expanded, the focus of the social media campaign shifted from purely producing original content to curating content. This involved highlighting user-generated content (UGC), showcasing fan creations, and sharing cultural insights and industry discussions related to the game. For instance, the team collaborated with international media outlet Fandom to release a humorous video featuring a streamer playing *Black Myth: Wukong* alongside a monkey. This light-hearted, entertainment-oriented content generated significant engagement on the platform and effectively spread among the

gaming community (man, 2024).

The content mix strategy for *Black Myth: Wukong* carefully balances original content with curated content. For example, the brand regularly publishes new trailers and developer materials, organises fan art exhibitions or cultural analyses of the game. This mix of content not only keeps the hype around the game alive, but also encourages fans to engage in secondary creativity, fostering a self-sustaining community of enthusiasts. On established international platforms such as Reddit, Black Myth: Goku has become a popular topic among gamers. Players actively share official trailers and gameplay demonstrations, engaging in in-depth discussions about the game's graphics, combat experience, and storyline. Given that the game is based on the classic Chinese novel 'Journey to the West', Reddit users express significant interest in its cultural elements and background, sparking further conversation. Even beauty influencers have joined in, recreating makeup looks inspired by the game's female characters. These makeup tutorials have sparked widespread imitation and discussion across beauty-related social platforms (Sohu, 2024).

2.2 Multi-channel Publishing and High-frequency Interaction

Black myth: Wukong The content of the campaign was designed *based on the* strengths of different social media platforms to create anticipation for the game amongst gamers. For example, on Bilibili, a Chinese video sharing platform, the team organised live streaming of the game and influential reviews to appeal to the core players of the game community. Before the game's release, the *Black Myth: Wukong* team created a dedicated section for the game on the Bilibili social platform, featuring media reviews and influencer gameplay videos to attract more core players. After the official launch, top and niche gaming content creators on the platform spontaneously livestreamed their full playthroughs of *Black Myth: Wukong* (Bilibili, 2024). According to data, as of noon on August 20, over one million people were watching the livestreams, even surpassing the peak number of concurrent players on Steam (Bilibili, 2024).

On the Chinese platform TikTok, *Black Myth: Wukong*'s social media campaign emphasized user interaction and engagement. The campaign collaborated with TikTok Games to launch the "First Clear Livestream Competition," where players could earn cash prizes by completing the game during their TikTok livestreams. This strategy aimed to encourage more players to purchase the game and join the livestreams. Additionally, TikTok curated and integrated exciting content into a dedicated page. When users searched for 'Black Myth: Wukong," they were directed to this special section, which featured game guides, creative crossover content, and prize draw events, with gameplay options designed to be more accessible for new players (Bilibili, 2024).

2.3 The Success of Campaign

I believe one of the most commendable aspects of *Black Myth: Wukong* 's social media campaign is their understanding of user heterogeneity, allowing them to attract different audiences through varied content strategies. Research shows

that user heterogeneity affects the effectiveness of brand communication, as different user groups may respond differently to the same brand message (Solomon, 2009). As analyzed in the first part of the article, *Black Myth: Wukong*'s social media campaign targets an audience with diverse interests and cultural backgrounds, each engaging with the game in different ways. However, *Black Myth* successfully employs a diverse content strategy to attract various types of players. For instance, gameplay demonstrations appeal to action game enthusiasts, while cultural background explanations captivate those interested in Chinese mythology. For non-core audiences, *Black Myth* collaborates with influencers, expanding brand reach to a broader, entertainment-focused group.

The success of *Black Myth: Wukong* 's social media campaign is also attributed to the creation of a highly interactive online brand community that appeals to a diverse audience. Researcher Puneet Kaur's research applies Consumption Value Theory (CVT) to analyze why people continue to use online media brand communities (Kaur, 2018). CVT comprises five types of consumption values: functional value, emotional value, social value, epistemic value, and conditional value (Kaur, 2018). The success of *Black Myth: Wukong*'s brand community on social media platforms fully reflects the impact of emotional value and social value. First, the brand successfully created excitement and anticipation among gamers by releasing high-quality game trailers, behind-the-scenes content and cultural insights on internationally renowned gaming discussion platforms. These materials not only showcased the game's stunning visuals and rich cultural background, but also provided players with a deep emotional experience. Fans shared their love and excitement for the game within the community and engaged in discussions about Chinese mythology, creating a strong emotional bond. Second, the Black Myth community created significant social value. Fans actively posted fan art or game analysis and received numerous likes and comments. This social recognition and interactive experience encouraged more users to participate and contribute content, further increasing community engagement and user retention. By continuously providing entertaining content and encouraging user interaction, the Black Myth brand community has successfully maintained user interest and enthusiasm. At the same time, the community has demonstrated user-driven innovation and cultural dissemination, providing strong support for the game's global promotion and further solidifying the brand's influence in the international market.

3. Shortcomings of the Campaign

Although Black Mythos: Wukong has gained significant social media exposure through gameplay videos and high quality trailers, its approach to community engagement and interactive operations has been relatively one-sided. The development team has had limited interaction with players and lacks sophisticated community management. For example, on platforms such as Reddit, where Western players are very active, most discussions are initiated by the players themselves, with little official involvement or guidance. This lack of engagement could lead to some players losing interest in the game during the long wait.

4. Suggestion

For *Black Myth: Wukong* to strengthen its connection with global players, especially in Western markets, it would be beneficial for the development team to consider participating in community discussions, addressing player questions, and providing more frequent updates on the game's progress. Additionally, hosting social media activities such as Q&A sessions or player creation contests could help maintain interaction and foster a sense of belonging among players.

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