

Cultural representation of Chinese elements in Genshin impact and its influence on player interest

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Abstract:

This study was conducted by using different ways to analyse participant interest through combining qualitative methods that looked at Culture from Traditional Chinese Society and how that reflects on Genshin Impact and Quantitative Methods to determine the overall influence of Culture from Traditional Chinese Society and Genshin Impact. Through this approach, our focus was the visual representations of Lions from Lion Dance Tradition within Genshin Impact, and how these images contrasted to both the narrative storyline and environmental aspects associated with Chinese Culture. Quantitative data were collected through a survey of 65 players to measure their perceptions, interest levels, and engagement with the cultural representations presented in the game. Qualitative analysis was conducted through visual and content analysis of character design, narrative context, and game mechanics to identify how Chinese cultural elements are constructed and communicated. The findings from this mixed methods approach indicate that the visual and narrative representation of Chinese culture in Genshin Impact positively influences player interest and stimulates curiosity about the cultural themes depicted in the game. These results suggest that digital games have the potential to serve as effective media for introducing cultural representation through immersive visual and interactive experiences.

Introduction

In the past few decades, the gaming sector has changed substantially, showing indisputable popularity as an entertainment segment regardless of borders. The most recent report on China's gaming sector reported a significant rise in revenue from domestic-developed games that were exported to the wider marketplace, to the amount of 18.013 billion US dollars in 2021, with a considerable annual growth rate of 16.59%. This demonstrates that games from China are becoming more appealing and marketable worldwide, including in countries where Chinese games have not had prior interest (Fan, 2024). In conjunction with technological advances, games are becoming increasingly complicated and diverse not only in terms of playability, but in terms of narrative and cultural representation (Yan, 2024). Chinese culture is one culture that is very frequently seen in games. It has an expansive history, mythology, and art that has inspired countless game developers (Szablewicz, 2020). For centuries, people have been captivated by Chinese iconic characters including lion dancing performers, and other supporting characters. When these characters are adapted for the gaming world, they serve not only as entertainment, but also as a cultural interface to introduce values and aesthetics and develop a community of fans from around the globe.

Genshin Impact, an open-world RPG game developed by Hoyoverse (Mihoyo), took the spotlight with many games that entered the market. Launched on September 28, 2020, the game spread like

wildfire all around the world, including Indonesia. As discussed by Angelia et al., (2021), Genshin Impact is distinctive for its world setting that draws on the many civilizations around the world. However, unlike other historical games, Genshin Impact presents history 'poetically' and not explicitly. Players are invited to explore this fantasy world while looking for historical references hidden behind the beautiful graphics. One significant cultural representation that exists within the Genshin Impact game is Chinese culture. The game Genshin Impact, a well-known action role-playing game that released in 2020, has spawned a wealth of fan-made content, such as artwork and fan fiction. The aesthetic and narrative background of Genshin Impact draws inspiration from fantasy and is set in the fictional world of Teyvat, a geographic area comprising seven countries, offering a rich amount of lore and storytelling (Siliute & Westberg, 2023). One of the names used to describe one of the locations, Liyue, derives from Chinese culture (Dwi et al., 2024). The aspects of culture representing China are significantly felt, specifically in the character design and landscaping that is influenced by Chinese architecture. The originated structures or buildings through Liyue, such as temples, pagodas, and houses reflect Chinese architecture from earlier periods. The general layout of Liyue is set to mimic port cities found in China with busy docks for shipping or fishing with mountains most likely resembling structures made through nature (Sularjo et al., 2024).

In addition to being depicted in the background, the essence of Chinese culture permeates through the development of the characters themselves. One of the more intriguing elements of the character designs that can be researched deeper is the character representing a morphed version of a lion dance costume inspired by Chinese culture. The lion dance costume's design, consisting of bold colors, fluid silhouettes, and ornate accessory detail is perhaps one of the more striking elements to recognize. The Genshin Impact characters, who are inspired by the lion dance costume design, notionally represent them visually but also carry with them cultural meanings associated with the lion dance costume design, which can include circumstances such as luck, joy, and strength. The design of the lion dance costume affects gameplay also, giving the character abilities to enact as the essence and energy are deliberately drawn from the essence of lion dance (Damayanti et al., 2023). Hence, Genshin Impact, while serving as a source of entertainment for players, also serves as a viable conduit explores and embraces the value of Chinese culture.

Nevertheless, the character designs in Genshin Impact are styled distinctly, blending cultural aspects with a twist of modernity. Every single character in Genshin Impact feels like a representation of a culture. From costumes to weapons to accessories, every detail has intricateness and is indicative of their cultural identity. For instance, Liyue's characters wear traditional clothing that draws on bold colors and embroidered details for the sake of cultural referent, while Mondstadt characters wore European human aesthetics, enabling a drift away the focus on clothing and wearability while maintaining an air of elegance (Kurniansyah et al., 2024). The effort involves further than the visuals; narration or storytelling and characters also draw on with the culture the referential background as well. The characters denote a distinct multi-faceted nature, drawing on mythology, legends, or even cultural values of the narrative.

This investigation prompts from an interest in how Chinese cultural aesthetics have been represented, and perceived, in a contemporary digital game. The successful global appeal of Genshin Impact, in particular, which discernibly depicts Chinese culture, has generated large interest in researching cultural appeal related to games. Game players exhibit fascination with elements of architecture, costumes, stories, and other cultural practices, further understanding their significance appeals to tens of millions of players across the globe (Wang, 2024) This study arises from a desire to understand how Chinese cultural aesthetics are represented and perceived in a modern digital game.

The rising popularity of Genshin Impact globally, which has many Chinese cultural components, has led to significant interest in understanding what cultural factors induce gaming behaviour from a research perspective. Game players have a fascination with architectural styles and designs, clothing worn by game characters, and the stories told in the games through these cultural practices. Understanding the value of these components to the tens of millions of gamers around the world

(Wang, 2024) will be important in developing an understanding of the success of Genshin Impact on a global basis. Therefore, this research will build upon these insights and define the objectives for this research based upon the insights gained from this analysis:

This study aims to achieve three objectives: first, to examine how Chinese culture is depicted in Genshin Impact, focusing on character design, costumes, architecture, and visual aesthetics; second, to evaluate players' perceptions of these representations, specifically their levels of interest, comprehension, and overall gameplay experience, and third, to analyze the correlation between the game's visual cultural elements and players' desire to learn more about Chinese culture, utilizing both quantitative survey data and qualitative content analysis. Chinese culture influences the character design, clothing, architecture and story aspects of Genshin Impact. The character designs often feature traditional Chinese aspects, including traditional Chinese artwork, as well as folklore. Clothing often includes typical clothing styles of China, including flowing-type robes, elaborate embroidery, etc. All of the game's buildings were based on building styles of ancient China, especially temples and pagodas. Many of the characters in the game's stories are also primarily based from cultural ideas unique to Chinese cultures, including harmony, balance and harmony between human beings and nature. Genshin Impact's representation of Chinese culture is presented in several ways; while the research method employed to examine the representation of Chinese Culture in Genshin Impact is through qualitative analysis, what is included in this analysis includes visual elements (graphics), Character Design and Narrative as the methodologies used for qualitative research, while quantitative themes used for assessing players' perceptions have also been identified through creating Surveys. The surveys and visual methodologies used, when compared, indicated connections between the cultural elements and player engagement. By clearly providing the objectives and research questions of the study, the author provided an in-depth review of the cultural context of Genshin Impact and described players' experiences. Further, the data collected and examined from this study demonstrate how digital games can effectively present cultural information through interactive and visual methods.

Methods

This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine how players experience and perceive Chinese culture in Genshin Impact and how this experience affects them. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods allowed the researcher to provide a comprehensive view of player experiences and perceptions and to analyze patterns and relationships between player experiences and perceptions of Chinese culture in Genshin Impact through observable cultural elements in the game (Janakiraman et al., 2021). The researcher surveyed 65 players to gather quantitative information about player attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of Chinese culture through the game. Likert scale questionnaire items were utilised to examine player interest, engagement, and perceived cultural authenticity toward Chinese culture in Genshin Impact. Due to the small sample size of players surveyed, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were conducted to identify patterns and relationships within the data, but the researchers cannot make strong conclusions regarding the generalizability of their findings.

The players' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards the various representations of Chinese culture within the context of the game were analysed. Additionally, qualitative data were obtained through a content analysis of the visuals, story, character designs, and mechanics of Genshin Impact, identifying recurring motifs, structures, and signifiers representing Chinese culture, along with context-rich insights into each aspect (Bateman, 2021). A combination of surveys, interviews, and content analyses were utilised as methodology in this research:

1. **Quantitative survey:** In order to learn about players' perceptions of the way Chinese culture is portrayed in video games and their subsequent behaviors associated with those portrayals,



researchers conducted a quantitative survey where participants completed a questionnaire as an effort to collect data from 65 player respondents. Responses were entered into statistical software and patterns were sought with regards to any statistically significant associations (Kaczynski et al., 2024).

2. **Qualitative analysis:** Critical content analysis was employed to analyze the content of the games studied for their visual presentations, narrative structures, and game mechanic representations of Chinese Culture. As part of this research methodology, researchers utilized content analysis to find common themes, patterns and meanings, which were present in the content (Daniel et al., 2023).

To integrate the mixed methods approach of this study, the results of the surveys (quantitative) were compared and combined with the findings from content analysis (qualitative). The quantitative method provided the players' perceptions and interests about Chinese culture, while the qualitative method provided a more detailed understanding of the cultural elements influencing those perceptions. Therefore, the two methods, together, provided greater depth in understanding how the representations of Chinese culture are perceived in gaming.

Result and Discussion

MiHoYo's hit game, Genshin Impact, has taken off internationally by allowing individuals to connect through life and culture through play. Players from around the globe can experience and enjoy the virtual world of Genshin Impact's Chinese based area of Liyue a visually stunning location that features references to many aspects of Chinese traditions in their quotes and lore. It has won an abundance of critical acclaim, The Game Awards and acted as an ambassador for Chinese culture across the world (Cai et al., 2023). This will be a deep dive into the cultural elements and cultural mode of presentation found in Genshin Impact with a specific focus on Liyue, to understand the meaning behind the international format of the game and the way it draws in players around the world.

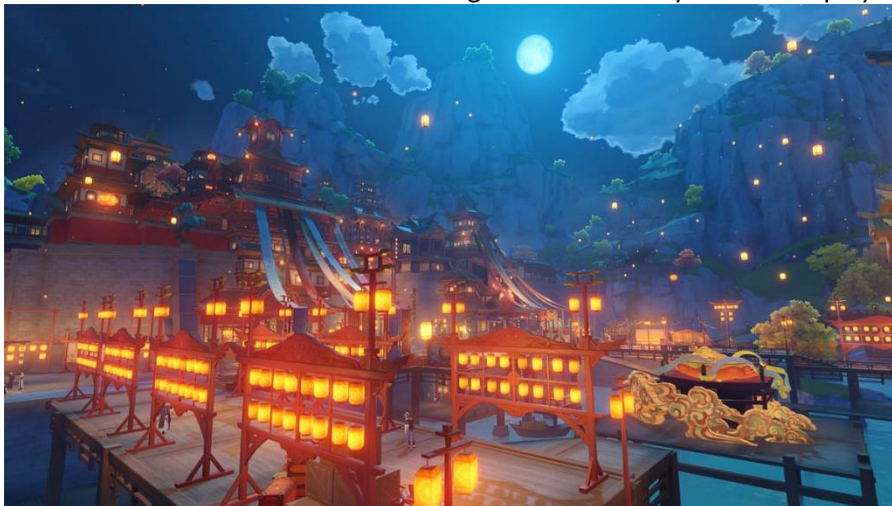


Figure 1. Scene View of Entering Liyue
(Source: PC Invasion, 2023)

Liyue in Genshin Impact is an inspired representation of China, molded in a fantasy world constructed with a Chinese theme, conveying China landscape and culture to players around the world in a way that is acceptable. The country of Liyue in Genshin Impact, as a representation of long-standing traditional Chinese culture mixed with foreign civilizations. When players from all over the world adventure in Liyue as travelers, it is as if they are visiting various places in China. By combining in-game tourism and culture, the virtual and real worlds are connected. Genshin Impact makes the gaming world less of a dream and makes China less of a stranger to the world.

The character progression in Genshin Impact which is established in the context of China goes beyond the creation of cities and spaces to include the various characters that inhabit the world of Teyvat. For example, there is Xiangling, a young chef from Liyue, who is enthusiastic about making great food. Xiangling's character design is heavily Chinese-related in nature, with the representation beginning with her character design she wears a traditional Chinese chef outfit, as well as having a weapon that represents a spear-nabbed utensil. Xiangling's character is characterized by a happy, innovative, and passionate personality that coincide with ideas related to Chinese culture, such as family-orientated values, and hospitality (Que et al., 2024).



Figure 2. Xiangling Banner
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

Genshin Impact has effectively succeeded in creating an enjoyable representation of Chinese cultural food through its characters. Xiangling is a representation of both a chef as well as the young generation of China themselves based on creativity and innovation. Players are forcefully led to reputation through the plane of Teyvat but also closer to a nuanced Chinese culture through the unique and charming characters. Also, the visual design is very stylized even with cultural mixing with a contemporary spin (Que et al., 2024).

Another character which displays authentic Chinese traditions and cultures is Yip Gaming from Genshin Impact. Even the character's outfit is Chinese inspired in some aspect, with some traditional elements, such as a long jacket-like silhouette in a darker color with golden highlights, and an oversized pant, and jewelry, such as an arm and neck bracelet, that are common for Chinese outfit. The jacket can be seen in a dark color but paired with graceful subtle hints of gold and red throughout the design, bringing the fabric altogether. The sleeves and other sections have multiple visible aspects, such as buttons, embroidery, and asymmetries in the design that gives elegance and luxury in the traditional sense of each aspect. The shirt is made to be worn and styled as a long t-shirt and consists of a mandarin-colored collar at the top, which is a very common Chinese style fashion element, as well. The pants of the outfit have a loose collar at the top that come in at the bottom, like the design of traditional Chinese pants. There are also a visible waist strap and more ornamentation that presents other aspects of Oriental style and characteristics. The shoes he wears also feature a unique design with a thick sole with a curved toe with the allusion to traditional Chinese shoes. Taken together as a whole, the components provide a unique and visually appealing look while having a distinctly Chinese cultural influence (Ratera Gracià, 2022).

Yip Gaming's costume ensembles in Genshin Impact combine modern and traditional Chinese costume design in interesting ways. His green and black outfit with red embellishments commonly seen in Chinese culture signifies prosperity, life, and good fortune. You can see traditional aspects of

the design such as mandarin collars and ideals of Chinese flora and fauna. Furthermore, green has a deep symbolic meaning in Chinese culture as one of nature, growth, and harmony. This color choice describes Yip Gaming in terms of his character having a very close relationship with nature as well as his easygoing nature as a calm and peaceful character. Yip Gaming exemplifies traditional Chinese values in living his life. He transitioned from a small village to a professional Wushou dancer, and a loyal guardian, symbolizing the value of determination and perseverance that has been instilled in Chinese culture (Yap, 2024). In addition, Yip Gaming is introduced as the guardian of Sword and Iron Box Safe Transport Agency, reflecting duty and responsibility in Chinese culture. Finally, his discourse of hard work and friendliness have shielded him and made him well known in the community, demonstrating the positive virtues of compassion and honesty that are intrinsic to Chinese culture.



Figure 3. Gaming Combination Costume
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

Additionally, parts of Yip Gaming's costume design were inspired by his own work as a Wushou dancer and guard. Certain elements of the costume body, such as the loose sleeves and stretchable substance of the pants, allow Yip Gaming to work well in Wushou dance movements. Other elements of the costume body that are more protective in nature such as the belt or either boots or shoes represent his responsibility to serve as a guard. The costume represents both traditional Chinese culture and modern elements. As great as the costume looks visually, the costume design creates interesting symbolism and represents ideas of Yip Gaming's identity. Elements of the costume also reflect aspects of modern builds of contemporized popular culture. Elements such as the approximate silhouette, bold shapes, and contrasting colors give the character more of a modern impression and appeal to younger gamers. This juxtaposition of traditional and modern elements allows the character of Yip Gaming to stand out and be identifiable to gamers of Genshin Impact. The modern style of costume design allows gamers to relate more closely to the character of Yip Gaming and to think more deeply about his background and attributes. The unique costume design also gives players the opportunity to learn more about Chinese culture, especially Wushu martial arts, along with colors and motifs in Chinese culture.

Studies indicate that gamers playing Genshin Impact generally fall between the ages of 15-24, with most players falling at the age of 20. The developmental period of age span of 20-40s is also referred to as young adulthood. Young adulthood is a time for significant growth and transitions. Young adulthood is a time where individuals experience major, rapid changes that can manifest in various life domains, and serve as a foundation for the rest of the life that occurs. Young adults, according to Erikson, (1966), tend to be in pursuit of meaningful relationships with others. Cultural games, such as Genshin Impact, usually bring a transaction while playing which enhances and reinforces a social experience. The players are able to engage with other players socially, form communities, and even certify emotional relationships with the characters in the game. Thus, this experience of a social transaction can represent a shift in nature and mindset given the ongoing developmental change of young adulthood.

Seberapa menarikkah Anda dengan penggambaran budaya Cina dalam game?

65 responses

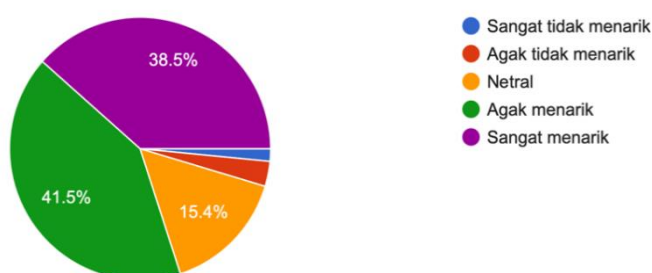


Figure 4. How interesting the depiction of Chinese culture is to Genshin Impact players
(Source: Author's documentation, 2024)

This diagram presents the survey results regarding how interesting the depiction of Chinese culture in a game is to 65 respondents. According to the chart, just over 80% of respondents appreciated the representation of Chinese culture in the game, indicating that the developers succeeded in creating interest in the game's Chinese cultural elements. Meanwhile, the neutral, somewhat disinterested, and very disinterested percent was 15.4%, 3.1%, and 1.5% respectively, meaning that a smaller percent of players are still somewhat less interested or not interested at all in the game's depiction of Chinese culture. The parsing results of this survey show that, in general, the depiction of Chinese culture in the game has been well-received by players.



Figure 5. Character Display in Liyue
(Source: PC Invasion, 2023)

Examining survey data from 65 individuals who self-reported playing Genshin Impact yielded some interesting findings concerning their perceptions and impressions of Chinese culture representation, within Genshin Impact. Specifically, the results in terms of the overall effectiveness

indicated that most (71.9%) of the respondents rated the game as being "effective" or "very effective" at depicting cultural values of China. While, in general, players rated the game well, there were several points of contention among respondents regarding some of the nuances in depicting aspects of Chinese culture. In general, there was positive agreement regarding the overall effectiveness of Genshin Impact at representing Chinese culture. This shows that Genshin Impact as an interactive medium has been able to entice its players to engage and enjoy the cultural values and aspects of Chinese culture that were embedded in the game from its storyline, character development, to the world-building. Which would indicate that the game presents and facilitates key elements of Chinese culture within the game. The survey suggests a positive inclination to using Genshin Impact as a means to assist in raising awareness of Chinese cultural values. This reinforces the argument that games can effectively introduce a country's culture to a larger audience, particularly the younger generation who are more accustomed to this digital technology (Cesaria et al., 2020).

Manakah dari elemen budaya Cina berikut yang menurut Anda paling menarik dalam game Genshin Impact?

65 responses

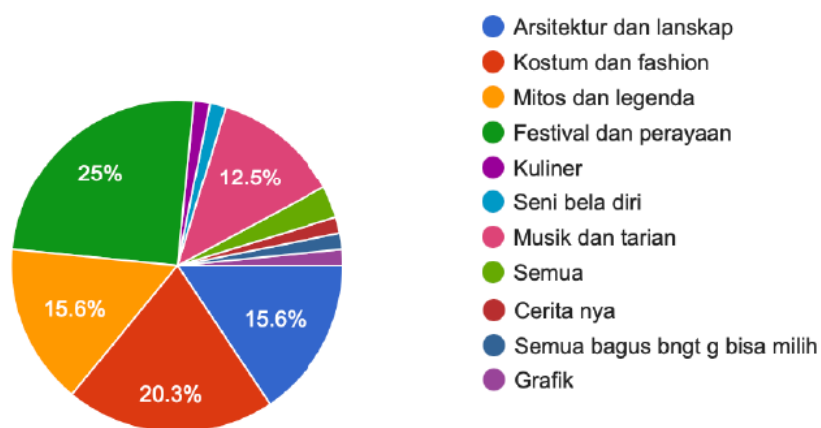


Figure. 6. The Most Interesting Cultural Elements According to Player
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2024)

The results of the survey revealed that the most appealing elements for players were festivals and celebrations (25%). Players were drawn in by the elaborate and visually attractive display of festivals in various regions of Teyvat, the world of Genshin Impact, while providing strong immersive experiences. The other feature which players found interesting was costume and fashion display (20.3%), which also received a considerable amount of attention. Genshin Impact has successfully showcased different styles of traditional Chinese clothing in an engaging way, to players from diverse backgrounds. Myths and legends (15.6%) and architecture (15.6%) are both in the same first position, indicating the importance of the history of the imagined Chinese world of the game, or the background for the story of the game, to players. Music and Dance (12.5%) is the last aspect placing as the next most enjoyed but still important to players, which explains the importance of music to help invoke the player's imagination. This illustrates that the game is successfully engaging players in a wholesome story, and the distinct aesthetic of Genshin Impact's world successfully incited players to have an interest in learning more about Chinese culture. The data collected to present in the survey shows that Genshin Impact does successfully convey a variety of Chinese cultural aspects in a way that instructs and captivates players. The visual aesthetics, interesting and engaging story, and holistic appropriation of cultural aspects of China the game offers are the central tenant to the attractiveness of the game.

Genshin Impact's ability to engage player attention through Chinese culture is due to its ability to seamlessly blend visuals, music, and story. Beautiful visuals, such as festival celebrations and

extravagant costumes, create a strong first impression, which will lead players to continue to experience and explore Teyvat. Music played an important role throughout the game because it enhanced the emotion of every scene through a specific sound and emotional tone that helped create an emotional link between the player and the game's characters and narrative. Furthermore, engaging stories with rich mythological elements, combined with the music and visuals, enhanced the overall depth and meaning of the entire game experience.

A study was conducted to look at the effects of Genshin Impact on players' interest in Chinese culture. Most respondents of the survey indicated that they experienced increased interest in viewing and learning about Chinese culture after playing Genshin Impact, as 70.2% expressed increased interest after playing Genshin Impact (35.9% slightly increased interest; 29.7% increased interest; and 4.6% increased interest a lot) play of Genshin Impact. This finding suggests that Genshin Impact may stimulate and spark players' interest and curiosity in engaging with Chinese culture. However, it is also relevant to note that 29.7% indicated that their level of interest in Chinese culture after playing Genshin Impact stayed the same, and a very small number of respondents (1.5%) indicated that their interest in Chinese culture decreased after they played Genshin Impact. This finding through the survey illustrates how the Genshin Impact phenomenon affected people's perceptions of interest with Chinese culture in some nice ways. Genshin Impact seems to be successful in creating a unique legitimacy and level of detail in representation of various aspects of Chinese culture, as architecture, mythology, traditions and other elements, that captured the player attention and thirst to explore the culture further. In fact, survey data confirmed that most respondents indicated satisfaction with Genshin Impact's effects in communicating elements of Chinese cultural values, felt that it messages elements of Chinese cultural values were at least moderately embodied through the experience of playing Genshin Impact. Multiple respondents explicitly indicated that their interest in learning about Chinese culture was heightened as a result of playing Genshin Impact.

Furthermore, the secondary data analysis highlights the immense potential of this game as a means of both showcasing and sharing Chinese culture with a previously unaware audience, i.e., those individuals who aren't native/heritage-based citizens or immigrants from China and who will probably be primarily comprised of younger demographics. Genshin Impact presented an accurate and enjoyable portrayal of varying components of Chinese Culture, which were shown through architecture, clothing and costumes, celebrations, festivals and events, as well as the myths, legends and folklore associated with each of these areas. As a result, the players became interested and curious about many components of Chinese Culture through the gameplay experience and how these aspects relate to both the game itself and their lives. These players' experiences were primarily driven by the games' visually appealing aesthetics, masterful storytelling and overall immersive nature; therefore, one could assume that the introduction of an Aesthetic/ Narrative driven framework will allow for players to learn about different cultures, including those of China, and ultimately build a deeper understanding of these cultures. Players desire to obtain a more complete picture of Chinese people, their culture and history. Players showed that not only did their engagement with the game correlate strongly with their real life interest in understanding Chinese culture but also provide positive evidence to support the theory that both games are vehicles for discovering the historical and cultural landscape of China through varying levels of gameplay (entertainment) The majority of those surveyed expressed being satisfied with the game's portrayal of Chinese culture.

Conclusion

The Genshin Impact player survey results show that Genshin impact has a positive correlation to friendly representation of Chinese culture and increase players' engagement, mainly for young



players. This supports our idea that Digital Interactive Media provides a medium for representing and learning about other cultures. Players were encouraged to engage with the wide variety of Chinese culture represented within Genshin Impact, including architecture, clothing, festivals, myths and legends through the detailed representation, enhanced feeling of curiosity, and desire to learn more because of the large representations of all these characteristics. By focusing specifically on visuals, music, and immersive gameplay, it has been established that visual, musical, and narrative design prompt not only player interest, but also facilitate the exchange of cultural understanding to assist in a more educational approach for the transmission (transfer) of culture through interactive media (games). The research also found that most players who expressed an interest in learning about Chinese culture as a result of their involvement with the video game engaged with online resources or literature pertaining to Chinese culture after their play experience. Given that the gameplay of Genshin Impact allows for this interest to develop, it is believed that games such as this provide players a source of Entertainment as well as an outlet for informal Learning about Different Cultures, therefore improving Intercultural Communication between Cultures.

The research provides evidence that interactive media can enhance culture learning and engagement and provides new insight into how players respond to cultural representations of cultural elements presented in games. Due to the small sample size of this study and reliance on self-reported data, these results may not reflect the wider population of gamers. Future research should examine how gamers perceive culturally relevant games from diverse cultures, long-term cultural learning and outcomes from culturally themed games. Additionally, these results could inform game developers/educators/media design professionals on best practices for using immersive and interactive play to create culturally relevant and engaging educational tools. For instance, Genshin Impact-like experiences could also be incorporated into curriculum offerings for Cultural Studies/Educational Media Design classes, as a way to improve cultural literacy and understanding. Ultimately, Genshin Impact demonstrates the ways in which entertainment and educational goals can be combined and lends insight into not only the academic world but the real world application of cultural education and media design.

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