

Research on Community Marketing of Online Games under the SICAS Model

--Taking the Genshin Impact as an Example

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Abstract: In recent years, the number of online game players has grown rapidly, the number of game brands has exploded, players have a wide range of choices, and the motivation to consume has become complicated from a single recreational pastime with strong social interaction. Unidirectional game brand promotion has already impressed consumers, and the community-based marketing model has been favoured by many game brands. It is necessary to explore more effective community marketing methods for game players for the development of game products. In view of this, this paper takes the typical representative of Genshin impact as an example and analyses the community marketing of Genshin impact based on the SICAS model applicable in the digital era. The author analyses the operation of the official and player-built communities of Genshin impact, and summarizes the advantageous features of its community marketing and the serious problems it faces. The study concludes that in the era of Internet social media, game communities need to satisfy the three characteristics of diversified content, rewarded discussion and strong interaction. The study also emphasises the official guidance rather than interference, so as to enhance the influence of community communication and the consumption desire of community users.

Keywords: SICAS model, online gaming community, community marketing, Genshin impact

1. Introduction

Social marketing has become a major game brands compete to adopt the marketing approach. Especially in recent years, community marketing is particularly loved by major game manufacturers, forming a unique sales model, ushering in an important window of development [1]. The Internet era, social media gives communities unprecedented space for development, to meet the community's "self-presentation" and the psychological needs of the respected, as well as the "relationship building" and "benefit others" emotional needs, more and more game manufacturers began to take advantage of the game brands to adopt the marketing method. To meet the psychological needs of "self-presentation" and esteem, as well as the emotional needs of "relationship building" and "benefiting others" [2]. More and more game makers have started to promote their brands with the help of communities, so as to increase user loyalty, stimulate user consumption behaviour and attract new users. According to twitter global game insights data, only in the first half of 2022, the dialogue

volume of game-related communities on twitter reached 1.5 billion. And, many game brands have created official community APPs (e.g., King's Camp of King's Glory, Mihoyo Company's Miyoushe, Dungeons & Dragons' DNF Assistant, etc.). By providing players with a unified communication platform to enhance the interactivity between players to achieve the enhancement of the adhesion to the game. With the booming development of the game industry, the community has also been the attention of major game manufacturers, but the effect of the community is mixed, and some of the community and even on the player's consumer behaviour to produce the opposite effect.

At present, community marketing is widely used in digital products, public welfare projects, clothing brands and other categories. Existing analyses of community marketing mainly focus on physical products, and lack of differentiated analyses on gamers, a special consumer group. Moreover, the current research mainly focuses on connect & communication between users and brands and merchants, but neglects the role of community in perception and sharing.

This study takes Genshin impact, one of the fastest growing online games in terms of player size and profitability in the current game market, as an example, advances with the SICAS model, studies the operation and development of online game communities through the method of literature analysis, probes the problems existing in the current online game community marketing, summarises the characteristics of the benign development of the online game community ecology, and puts forward suggestions for the existing problems.

2. Overview of Genshin Impact

2.1. Genshin Impact Product Description

Genshin impact is a domestic original IP open world adventure game, which started public beta in June 2019, and logged into PC, IOS, Android and other major platforms to achieve data interoperability in September of the same year. The game content is FREE + mode, players play the game for free, through the game recharge system to get more game coins (original stone) to extract more characters to get a better game experience. The game has evolved into an independent IP, and has set up official flagship shops on various online shopping platforms to sell its peripheral products, with the main revenue coming from in-game top-ups.

The product has a high degree of freedom and rich storyline, so that players are immersed in the experience of the virtual world, its unique "cell rendering" art technology, giving players a good viewing experience, the combat system using the "elemental theory" judgement, the combat feel The combat system adopts "elementalism" judgement, and the combat feel is excellent and novel.

2.2. Overview of Development of Genshin Impact

SensorTower's stats show that Genshin impact became the fastest game to reach \$1 billion in revenue [3]. Just from its global AppStore and GooglePlay revenue alone. The quality of the game also made him in the The Game Awards (TGA) 2020 best game nomination. According to Mihoyo's official release of the number of players' monthly active users (later referred to as monthly activity), from September 2020 to 2023 January, the number of players' monthly activity rose from 10,147,600 people to 20,122,300 people, in the domestic market where Tencent and NetEase are the only two dominant players, it is rare for Genshin impact to stand out. 2022 Genshin impact on twitter topic discussion degree is also the first breakthrough, its official community "Miyoushe" APP only in the Huawei application market in the download volume reached 100 million times. Genshin impact is undoubtedly a very successful case in current online games.

2.3. Community Categories of Genshin Impact

Genshin impact has maintained a rich community ecosystem throughout its operation. While domestic game makers are relying on the game's internal social system and trade union system to create player interaction, Genshin impact simplifies the game's internal social system and abandons the creation of in-game trade union communities, instead focusing on the development of mass social media and other Internet communities to attract potential users and enhance the adherence of the old user's purpose. For online, it has set up official communities on microblogging, jittering and other social media platforms with huge user numbers, and subsequently launched "Miyoushe" to establish an independent official player community software. In addition to the official community, Genshin impact encourages players to set up their own community, head players (such as famous netizens, top ranking players, etc.) in short video platforms such as Jittery Yumming to establish a fan base, in the regular creation of videos or fan groups to start the community interaction, the head of the anchor of the number of discussion of each video in the 10,000; in the microblogging, posting and other online platforms, there are also the role or weapon discussion of the hypertext, and each of them have not bad discussion. In Weibo, Postbars and other online platforms, there are also discussions on characters or weapons, and each of them has a good degree of discussion. Offline, the official FES Genshin Impact Single IP Comic Show held from 10th to 13th August had more than 50,000 attendees, and there are official Genshin Impact community booths at various offline comic shows. Official game tournaments attracted many players to participate. Players will also have spontaneous offline group building, street sweeping and so on. Mobile social games not only satisfy the entertainment needs of young people, but also allow them to establish a diversified social virtual community in their interactions [4].

3. Community Marketing for Genshin Impact in the SACIS Model

3.1. Attract New Users for Brand Perception

The first stage is brand-user mutual perception (sense), which allows users to perceive the existence of a product or brand as the beginning of marketing [5]. For game brands, in this stage, the main goal is to attract the attention of players, make them interested in the game and create a desire to learn more about the game content. Most game makers choose traditional advertising for basic promotion at that stage. But Genshin impact utilises communities in social media for larger scale promotion. As of June 2022, China has 1.051 billion Internet users and the average Internet user spends 29.5 hours per week online [6]. Clay Schecky, in *The Age of Everyone*, argues that there are three foundations of community: a common goal, efficient collaboration tools, and concerted action [7]. Social media platforms are a highly efficient tool for collaboration, and the power of community communication cannot be underestimated.

Genshin impact players are divided into "Strength Party" (focusing on character strength), "Plot Party" (focusing on game plot), "XP Party" (focusing on character appearance), and others (e.g., focusing on scenery). personality and others (e.g. focus on scenery, gameplay, etc.). In the stage of brand-user mutual perception. Genshin impact focuses on XP party and scenery party. By inviting famous cosplayers to play the characters in Genshin impact, and inviting game anchors to promote the game, it advertises and promotes the game style and game content according to its own fanbase and community, and doesn't brag about the game content, but focuses on the highly visualised part of the screen character for promotion within the community. Moreover, as the opinion leader in the community, the anchor has great influence on the potential users, which makes the community members positively perceive the brand and become interested in the game.

In addition to relying on KOLs to promote the game within the fan community, Genshin impact has also established official communities on social media platforms such as Taptap, Weibo, and Twitter. Relying on the fast spreading social media platforms, the huge volume of communities has attracted a number of senior gamers' attention since the early days of the game.

3.2. Stimulate the Interest of Users

The second stage is interest & interactive. For game brands, in this stage, it is necessary to guide or encourage players to interact, so that players and players, players and brands can establish a close relationship.

At present, the official online community of Genshin impact maintains the frequency of updating interactive content every day, sometimes updating multiple interactive content in a day, and basically synchronised with multiple community platforms to meet the demand of players on different platforms for community discussions. During the summer, holidays and other periods when comic shows are held frequently, Genshin impact will gather its own community to open booths at large comic shows, further stimulating the frequency of community interaction. Stimulate players to keep communication and discussion between players all the time.

Genshin impact players' self-built community also continues to be active by virtue of the huge volume, a variety of Genshin old and new exchange groups, for the role of the character, intensity, the plot of the endless discussion, there are many old players and new players to discuss, this kind of community interaction often allows the first experience is not yet firm pan players to continue to play; in addition, the head anchor created the community and the fan group can also maintain daily interaction more than 99 The community discussions of players, in-game challenges, and the community of fans.

The interactions of players' community discussions, in-game challenges, and offline fan meet-ups not only enhance players' loyalty to the game, but also promote the establishment and expansion of the community.

3.3. Timely Communication Between Brands and Users

The third stage is to establish connect & communication, to maintain timely and effective communication with players, so that players can learn about the latest news and activities of the game. Whether in the official jittery voice, microblogging, Miyoushe community, or in the player's fan group, discussion group community, there is official communication with the players.

In Miyoushe, players can freely publish game troll post, opinion post, and as long as it is a reasonable request, the official will give a timely reply, and the quality of the opinion of the proponent will send a certain game gift package rewards; in the other community platforms, the player sent out the views of the feasible programme will also be reacted to in the game content. The game brand in the major communities will also be released in real time new version of the content, bug fixes and other content. This makes players feel valued. This kind of communication improves the players' sense of participation and trust, and enhances the cohesion and interactivity of the community.

In the "Genshin" players offline meeting and Comic Con, the "Genshin" CEO will often appear, in person, to communicate with the players, for the head of the community is also a certain amount of publicity and rewards, the formation of a win-win situation between the player community and the game brand.

3.4. Rely on Community to Inspire Product Purchases

The fourth stage is the actual action-purchase (action), in which the community still plays an important role. The products of Genshin impact are mainly raw stones (virtual game coins in Genshin

impact, which can be used to buy character skins or extract characters). Players in the community to exchange the strength of the new version of the character exchange extraction advice, to a large extent, affect the flow of the version of the water. For the “strength party”, most of them ask community members or opinion leaders for their opinions on whether or not to make a purchase.

Because of the special nature of game products, whose products are often used to extract the corresponding characters and equipment at a limited time rather than directly purchasing them, the core path plays an important role in players’ decision-making. The role of the community in the purchasing process is not to sell the product directly, but to analyse the pros and cons of the newly launched product among players and to shape the image of the official characters in the community, which is often more effective than the implantation of advertisements in the community.

3.5. Incentives for Sharing Within the Community

The fifth stage is mutual experience-sharing. Consumer-initiated communities are more effective than company-initiated communities in terms of information quality, system quality and interactivity [8]. The final stage of the brand’s SACIS marketing model is to guide players to share the product on their own initiative, and often this kind of sharing achieves better and more effective results. Excellent game quality and distinctive gameplay are naturally the most important factors for players to experience or share with each other, but as far as the brand is concerned, giving certain incentives can undoubtedly add more stability to self-propagation.

Like most gaming brands, Genshin also has activities where inviting friends can be rewarded with in-game rewards, but this does not meet the need for players to spread the word within the corresponding community for a long period of time, and the scope of impact of this type of community spreading is relatively small. Therefore, Genshin impact has set up a “Creator Incentive Mechanism”, which encourages players to continue to post content on social platforms and speak in the corresponding communities through game gift packs and corresponding lucky draw rewards, so as to achieve communication and exchanges between players and potential players. In this sharing mechanism, veteran players gain a sense of achievement from bringing in new people and are rewarded with gift packs, while new players are provided with more information to optimise their pre-game experience.

4. Characteristics and Recommendations for Gaming Communities

4.1. Diversification of Content

Game brands should use the principles of social classification, social comparison and positive differentiation from the perspective of social identity to create unique products and services. Thus, guiding the community consumption behaviour that contributes to the benign development of the brand is a proven thinking mode in the process of brand community marketing [9]. Actively differentiating between player types and creating different classified communities can to a certain extent better expand the scale of the community and attract different types of players to purchase, and this segmentation can also make the brand’s stimulation of interest-interaction process better attract to the potential players. Potential players. Currently, players have rich game motives, and pure competitiveness can no longer satisfy the needs of all players; the beauty of the characters, the delicacy of the picture, and the richness of the plot have all become important criteria for players to evaluate the game and generate purchasing behaviours.

Therefore, the official needs to subdivide the community category, establish different content, different nature of the discussion group. For example, in Miyoushe, the community is divided into cosplay zone, plot zone, drama zone, etc., which has gained a good response, and players can obtain the information they need more efficiently and get a higher sense of satisfaction.

4.2. Discussion of Incentivisation

The spontaneous discussion of players is limited, its coverage is small, and the advantage is that the dissemination effect is stronger. However, as a new game, if corporations want to play a stable role in attracting new players to the community, it need to set up a certain official incentive mechanism for community organisers, builders, excellent speakers of the community to provide a certain in-game incentives, which will enable players to be more sustained and more satisfied with the community interaction and publicity. And it potentially creates a connection between new players and old players.

The brand side of the player discussion of the reward is necessary, is the lower cost to guide the player to speak the way, for the reward amount of control also need to pay attention to, so as to achieve the voluntary interaction of players, voluntary establishment of the community purpose, to attract more players to establish a potential connection.

4.3. Strong Interactivity

Gaming brands need to make the interactions within the community stronger and implement them. According to anthropologist Ralph Linton, strong tribal groups must have three characteristics, namely similar cultures, frequent interactions and common interests. Frequent interaction does not only mean communication between players within the community, but also includes timely feedback from the brand to the player community. Mutual communication, cooperation and competition between players strengthens the connection between players, and the communication and feedback between officials and players is more conducive to the updating of game content, and also makes players feel the attention of their needs, thus enhancing the connection between users and brands and strengthening user loyalty.

Game brand community marketing needs to pay attention to the user's reaction in the community, the establishment of contact between the brand and the players - communication can rely on the community as a convenient communication measures, on the one hand, reduces the cost of communication within the community, on the one hand, a more convenient way of communication also makes the link between the personnel more closely, passive enhancement of the community personnel interaction, so as to maintain the player's enthusiasm for the game.

4.4. Regulating Community Speech

Authenticity and emotional attachment positively influence the outcomes of word of mouth and purchase likelihood as consumers follow celebrities on social media [10]. Large communities are also prone to content that may be offensive to community members or potential users. In a recent article published on the Internet, "Vagabond's Drama, China's Tumourous Community", it was complained that the domestic Genshin impact community's obsessive and uncomfortable derogatory statements about certain characters had caused many players to be dissatisfied and even withdraw from the game, and that the "Door Sauce" and other human components of the community had been self-reported as being "too much". The bad interactions of the self-built clubs such as "Door Sauce" and others have even labelled gamers as "greasy" and "shady", resulting in a massive loss of potential users.

Therefore, the official guidance of community speech needs to be careful and standardised. Neither can overly make the community to lose the free speech of the active ecology, also cannot let the smear brand speech wantonly exists, to strengthen the account of this type, especially in the community of opinion leaders in the speech of the supervision, for the malicious black powder behaviour to take certain mandatory measures.

5. Conclusion

The community of Genshin impact is characterised by diversity, strong interaction between enterprises and users, and the combination of online and offline. It can be further summarised as the construction of a community with diversified content + community management by official guiding opinion leaders = better control of game content by the official + rapid expansion of the number of gamers + loyalty of old players to the game content. This community includes not only gamers, but also developers, content creators, community managers and other different roles, it is a community made up of people from various aspects. In this community, the interaction between users and enterprises is very close. Enterprises communicate with users through various channels to understand their needs and feedback, and continuously improve and optimise their games to make them more in line with users' needs and preferences. At the same time, users also communicate with each other and share their experiences and tips, forming a good interactive atmosphere. In addition, this community is also characterised by the combination of online and offline. In addition to online exchanges, the company also organises various offline activities, such as game exhibitions, fan meet-ups, themed events, etc., which allow users to get to know the game and the developers more deeply, and enhance user stickiness and loyalty. In short, the community of Genshin impact is characterised by diversity, strong interaction between the enterprise and users, and the combination of online and offline, which makes it a very dynamic and cohesive community.

Genshin impact community marketing is undoubtedly successful. Game Brands not to symbolise the community guide is worth all kinds of game brand reference, which adds more fun for the game customers. Players gain a sense of community and identity in such communities, so as to enhance the user stickiness. Diversified community marketing models also gain more traffic in the Internet era, adding new users to the game. In between, it focuses on the management of community speeches and further refines community classification. In the future, it may be an important reference to extend the life cycle of the game. The viewpoints in this paper provide new ideas for more efficient landing of community marketing in the game industry, and add to the content of community/communication strategy in the game industry. With the rich variety of current online games and the wide variation in the level of in-game purchases, this paper lacks differential research on the community impact of different categories of online games. Summarising the commonality of different categories of online game communities on players' consumption behaviour is a future research goal.

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