

An Academic Investigation into Character Imagery in Female-Oriented Games: A Case Analysis of "Love and Deepspace"

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalization, gender concept, as an important part of social culture, is undergoing unprecedented transformation and reshaping. The presentation of gender concepts in entertainment games is highly complex and diverse. This paper aims to deeply analyze the embodiment, influence and future trend of gender concepts in the field of entertainment games from the perspective of women to game characters.

KEYWORDS

Female-oriented games; character design; female character; male character

1 Research Background

In today's globalized world, gender concepts, as an integral part of social culture, are undergoing unprecedented transformation and reshaping. With the improvement of education penetration rate, the reform of economic structure and the deepening of the concept of human rights, the call for gender equality is growing, and the criticism of traditional gender roles and gender discrimination has reached an unprecedented height. However, in this broad social and cultural change, the exploration of gender concepts in entertainment games, a field full of creativity and imagination, is relatively lagging behind.

As an important part of contemporary social culture, the presentation of gender concepts in entertainment games is highly complex and diverse. On the one hand, game content is often deeply influenced by social culture, historical background and market demand, and inevitably integrates gender stereotypes and gender prejudices; On the other hand, according to a report by Niko Partners, a game data analytics firm, women now account for 37% of all gamers in Asia, and female gamers in Asia are growing at an annual rate of 11%, almost double the rate of male gamers.

In China, the proportion of female mobile game users in 2022 will account for 48.6%, which is basically the same as the proportion of male players^[1]. With an increasingly diverse player base and a significant increase in the percentage of female gamers, game developers are trying to break down traditional gender boundaries and create a more equal and inclusive gaming world.

From the perspective of female-oriented game characters, this paper takes "Love and Deepspace" as an example to deeply analyze the embodiment, influence and future trend of gender concept in the field of entertainment games.

2 Literature review

2.1 Research status at home and abroad

2.1.1 Character Design and development

From the early days of video games, where there were almost exclusively male characters, there were gradually female characters, and the image and status of these female characters were constantly changing. For example, Chunli in Street Fighter II became a classic with her unique steamed bun hairstyle and cheongsam image, demonstrating the power and charm of women in the game. In recent years, more and more games have begun to portray more complex and diverse female characters, who are no longer just foil or objects to be rescued by men, but important characters with independent personalities and story lines. Characters in games are the bridge between players and the game world, and their gender characteristics, character Settings and behavior patterns are all influenced by gender concepts. Zhao Bi said in her research on foreign game characters that most Japanese games pursue aesthetic and romantic effects, conveying a poetic and mysterious dreamlike color^[2]. In particular, there is a strong emphasis on idolization in character design, Men are tall and handsome, women are tall and beautiful. Male characters are often portrayed as brave, strong, and leaders, while female characters are often portrayed as weak, dependent, and supportive. However, Europe, America and Japan, as

the powerful countries in the game, still do not pay enough attention to the design of female characters. They designed female characters in the game with exaggerated breasts and very small waists to attract the attention of male players. Lara Croft in Tomb Raider and the Unknown Fire Dance in the classic fighting game Boxing Emperor are the best examples. From a female player's point of view, such characters are not appealing to them. On the contrary, Chinese domestic games "Fantasy Westward Journey", "Jade Dynasty" and "Fairy Sword Legend Series" have more thoughts about women than Japan, Europe and the United States. With the increasing number of female gamers in the game market, the perspective of female character design should change in order to promote the further development of games^[3].

2.1.2 Plot and Narrative

Game story and narrative are also influenced by gender. Traditional games tend to be dominated by a male perspective because they are mostly developed by men, ignoring or downplaying the presence and contribution of female characters. Wang Qing cites media critic Sarkeesian Anita(2013) who pointed out in her "Damsel in Distress" video series that only 4% of modern game works are narrative games centered around female protagonists^[4]. Williams D(2008) et al. found that game designers and developers often leave female characters out of games altogether, or place them in frequently sexualized supporting roles where they are desired, protected, and saved. With the rise of female consciousness, modern games pay more attention to gender balance and diversity^[5]. Through multi-line narration, role exchange and other techniques, players can experience the game world from different genders and different backgrounds, thus enhancing their understanding and identification of gender equality.

2.2 Game experience and interaction

The audience for women games is female gamers, and they design games based on their preferences. Fu Xiaoyi uses charts to show that the characteristics of such games are visually exquisite, auditory, often supported by famous voice actors, emotional, story-setting, and the design of the game's story to give the player a full sense of involvement. Female players are more emotional and have a higher demand for interactive experiences in mobile games. Female players choose games more emphasis on aesthetic and ease of use, the pursuit of emotional pleasure, compared with male players are more likely to produce happiness, enjoy the fun of spiritual activities. At the visual level, the changeable appearance of the game theme, the fine beautification and diversification of the card sketch design, the selectivity and fun of clothing props, etc., create a sense of satisfaction at the visual level. Chen Chen and Zhang Yang explained through individual cases that "Love and Deepspace" "pays more attention to the experience brought by visual scenes to players, using 3D naked eye technology, skin texture, subtle expressions and fine movement models to meet the visual level of immersive text presentation^[6].

3 In the game "Love and Deepspace", the experience and interaction that can reflect gender concepts mainly include the following aspects

3.1 Role selection and customization

3.1.1 Gender selection

Although Love and Deep Space, as a female oriented game, is primarily aimed at female players, the gender selection of characters in the game (such as the portrayal of the heroine) still reflects respect for gender diversity. Players can create a unique heroine image by pinching the face, choosing clothes, etc., and this customization process itself contains respect for individual gender expression. For example, at the beginning of the player can pinch their own face, many players will import their own face to make themselves more involved, as a player, I entered the game is also free to pinch the face of this function surprised, he made the game more diversified, the female is no longer all the copywriter described a plain look but the truth is perfect delicate baby face, It is a special unique player fabricated image, the image of their own decision, is the appearance of ordinary people, a single female image has been in other B game players feel that the heroine in the game is not related to their own not to enter, and even have the feeling of outsiders, so you can freely pinch the face is also "Love and Deep Space" to attract players an advantage.

3.1.2 Image building

The characters in the game are designed in detail and not limited to traditional gender stereotypes. Female characters can show a variety of qualities such as strength, wisdom, and independence, which helps to break gender stereotypes and convey the concept of gender equality. (The heroine of love and deep air is a deep space hunter, and the description

of deep space hunters in the game is "usually with excellent physical fitness and wisdom, including Evolver with strong combat effectiveness")

3.2 Relationship between storyline and characters

3.2.1 Equal relationship

The relationship between the hero and heroine in the game is based on equality and respect. The interaction between them is not only a simple pursuit and being pursued, but also contains elements such as common experience, mutual support and common growth. This pattern of relationships helps to convey the values of gender equality. (The relationship between the player and the hero is absolutely equal)

3.2.2 Character personality

Each leading man has his own unique personality and backstory, which often has less to do with gender role positioning and more to do with the character's personality, emotions, and growth. This design helps break down gender stereotypes and gives players a more realistic and diverse representation of their characters.

3.3 Gameplay and interactive experience

3.3.1 Two-player fighting system

The game introduces a two-player fighting system in the combat gameplay, emphasizing the side-by-side fighting and communication between the player and the male protagonist, and also reflecting the power of the female character (who can fight alongside the male). This kind of play not only meets the needs of the female theme for emotional companionship, but also reflects the equal cooperation and mutual support between the sexes.

3.3.2 Emotional interaction

There are rich emotional interaction scenes in the game, such as dating (claw doll, meow Meow card), selfie, cafe interaction in the main interface, etc. These interactions allow the player to deeply experience the emotional exchange between the hero and feel the warmth and intimacy between the sexes. At the same time, these interactions in Love and Deep Space also break the traditional gender role positioning, and women are no longer only able to listen to the image of men, so that female players can play a more active and active role in the game. (As the game is dominated by the player, most of the interaction is initiated by the female protagonist, the player's operation determines the plot direction and the male protagonist's reaction, which breaks the stereotype that the male dominates the relationship, in love and deep space, the female is the dominant leader of a relationship, the male will also respect the female intention, rather than simply "bully" "forced love")

3.4 Worldview and themes

3.4.1 The concept of gender under the cloak of science fiction

The world view of the game combines science fiction elements with themes such as destiny and reincarnation, and there are many discussions on gender concepts. For example, some plots in the game may involve themes such as female characters' self-redemption and resistance to patriarchy, which all help to convey the values of gender equality. (The master and his brother were adopted by his grandmother, and women are often more able to raise children well)

3.4.2 Multicultural integration

The game may also incorporate multicultural elements, making gender concepts more widely reflected and discussed in different cultural backgrounds. This design helps broaden players' horizons and promotes understanding and respect for gender diversity. (Cross-border art integration, cooperation with intangible cultural heritage, etc., such as October 16, 2024, one of the male lead Shen Xinghui's birthday special project cooperation intangible cultural heritage paper carving lamp)

"Love and Deepspace" embodies gender concepts through character selection and customization, storyline and character relationships, gameplay and interactive experiences, and worldviews and themes. These elements together constitute a rich and diverse game world, allowing players to enjoy the fun of the game while also feeling the values of gender equality.

4 Conclusion

The success of the game "Love and Deepspace" holds significant value for the development of the otome game industry.

4.1.1 Validation of the Commercial Potential of the Female Consumer Market

The game has demonstrated the substantial market potential among female users. This is evident through direct observations of in-game purchases and consumption of derivative products related to the game characters.

4.1.2 Cross-Media Expansion

"Love and Deepspace" has ventured into VR product development, which not only enhances user experience but also innovates the application of VR technology. This cross-media approach broadens the industry's technological and experiential horizons.

4.1.3 User Research and Insights

By analyzing user behavior, the game has uncovered counterintuitive findings. For instance, the unexpected surge in revenue following the male protagonist's injury in the game has provided deeper and more comprehensive insights into user preferences. These insights can inform future targeted content creation.

4.2 Catalyst for Future Industry Development

The game has spurred advancements in various aspects, including technological innovation, content themes (particularly those appealing to female audiences), and commercial and offline integration (e.g., through comic conventions and pop-up stores).

However, beyond these commercial values, the game also faces challenges. These include the aesthetic differences among players of different generations and the increasing attention to gender issues in modern society.

For future development in the otome game industry, the focus should be on the following aspects:

4.2.1 Interactivity

Modern players highly value immersion and a sense of presence. The success of features like the "accompanying sports" and "accompanying study" in "Love and Deepspace" reflects this. The anticipation for the game's planned VR product development also indicates a strong interest in more interactive experiences.

4.2.2 Narrative Structure

Innovation in narrative techniques is crucial. Most otome games currently use a first-person perspective combined with multiple narrative threads. Experimenting with new narrative structures can provide fresh and engaging experiences for players.

4.2.3 Cultural Integration

When developing across different media, it is essential to maintain a high level of fidelity to the original source material. This ensures that the cultural and thematic elements are accurately represented, enhancing the overall experience for fans and newcomers alike.

By focusing on these areas, the industry can continue to evolve and meet the expectations of its audience.

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