International Marketing Case Study of the Legend of Shawarma

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Abstract: *In the digital economy era, the online game industry is transitioning from scale - oriented expansion to quality - driven development. The "Online Game Excellence Publishing Project" launched by the State Press and Publication Administration in 2023 represents a significant shift from content auditing to excellence cultivation, guiding the industry towards works with profound thinking, exquisite art, and excellent production. Against this backdrop, Shawarma Game, a small - and - medium - sized enterprise, has achieved remarkable success. Despite the highly competitive market dominated by giants like Tencent and NetEase, which hold 68% of the market share, Shawarma Game attracted 5 million registered users within its first month of operation through unique positioning and innovative strategies, emerging as a benchmark for implementing the excellence strategy. This study, grounded in the dynamic marketing theoretical framework, uses the PEST model to analyse the marketing environment shaped by policy, technology, consumption, and social factors. The STP theory is applied to reveal its precise targeting of Generation Z's cultural needs, while the 4V marketing theory deconstructs the game's innovative design in variation, versatility, value, and vibration. Particular focus is placed on its UGC - driven content marketing ecosystem and the viral communication model of "magic gameplay + social fission". The findings aim to provide replicable marketing methodologies for the industry's high - quality development, contributing to the supply - side reform of the game industry.*

Keywords: *International Marketing, Game Marketing, PEST Analysis, User-Generated Content (UCG)*

1. Introduction

On the one hand, with the fast-paced life and greater pressure in modern society, the demand for casual stress relief games continues to grow, and simulation and management games have become an important part of people's daily life. The revenue scale of the simulation and management category in the mobile game market has grown from 1.85 billion yuan in 2018 to 6.6 billion yuan in 2022, and the user scale is also growing along with the overall market. On the other hand, with the development of the market and the Internet, there are more and more online game products for domestic players to choose from, and the threshold of domestic and international game exchanges has been lowered, which makes the competition more and more intense and directly puts forward higher requirements for China's game manufacturers. Secondly, the further development of technology, especially with AIGC, AR, artificial intelligence and other technologies being applied to game development in an ever-deepening manner, the connotation and boundaries of the game have been continuously extended, forcing game research and development enterprises to continuously make further innovations in gameplay, experience and marketing methods in order to stand out in the industry.

Shawarma Legend, a simulation game based on the making of traditional Middle Eastern meat rolls, was launched on July 19, 2024, and has been downloaded 1,701,000 times in China and 3,454,000 times globally. Its related videos reached 2.99 billion plays on Jittery Voice during the National Day holiday, and the Chinese version of "Shawarma's Song" on B-site had over a million hits. At a time when competition in the digital entertainment industry is heating up, this game has successfully broken through with its innovative marketing model and become the focus of attention in the industry. This successful example not only injects new vitality into the game market, but also provides valuable practice samples and reference windows for SMEs' game marketing. Based on this, this study adopts a similar analytical framework[1][2] and combines UGC (user-generated content) theory[3] to explore the marketing practice of this game in the Chinese market, with the aim of extracting replicable successful experiences and providing theoretical references and practical guidance for the development of SMEs' game marketing.

2. Enterprise Profile and Product Introduction

Shawarma Legend is a cooking simulation game developed by Eyad Alshafei and published by Patates Games on July 19, 2024 on steam. The game is based on the making of shawarma, a traditional Middle Eastern kebab roll, and allows players to run their own shawarma restaurant, striving to make it the best in town by fulfilling customer orders, upgrading various aspects of the restaurant, improving recipes, and upgrading equipment and décor.

Founded in 2021 as a game development company based in Bursa, Turkey, Patates Games, with a size of 2-10 people, has been active since February 2015 and has released 16 games, with its apps totaling around 20 million downloads and 30,000 downloads in the last 30 days, and over 5 million downloads of its Falafel King.

The developer, Eyad Alshafei, has no other previous game masterpieces, but this time, he used AI technology to draw, compose, and voice-over the game at a relatively low cost. Despite its cartoonish and "simple" screen style, the game is loved by players worldwide because of its simple, easy and interesting gameplay, which is easy to share through live broadcasting. The total number of downloads worldwide has reached 3,454,000, of which 1,701,000 have been downloaded from China, and all kinds of derivative videos and secondary creations have been virally spreading on Chinese social media platforms. The game is also spreading virally on Chinese social media platforms with various derivative videos and secondary creations.

3. Marketing Environment

3.1 Political factor

Under the policy background of "Online Game Excellence Publishing Project" and "One Belt, One Road" implemented by the State Press and Publication Administration (SPPA), "Legend of Shawarma" has ushered in a unique development opportunity. The spirit of struggle and labor embedded in the operation of Legend of Shawarma is in line with the mainstream values. At the same time, the cultural elements set against the backdrop of Arabian cuisine have enriched the domestic game market.

3.2 Demographic factors

The game design of Legend of Shawarma is simple and easy to operate, suitable for players of all ages. Busy office workers and after-school students can easily participate in the game during fragmented time to meet their leisure and entertainment needs. Its low-threshold design expands the potential user group, allowing players of different ages to have fun.

In terms of gender structure, the game is popular among female players, which reflects their preference for relaxed and casual management games. The game is attractive to female players in terms of design and gameplay, which is in line with the trend of the growing group of female players and their unique game preferences in the current handheld game market.

3.3 Economic factors

The fast-paced life and greater pressure in modern society have led to a continuously growing demand for casual and stress-relieving games. Legend of Shawarma, with its simplicity and ease of use, fits people's demand for relaxing entertainment in fragmented time and provides players with an effective way to relax. With the development of the economy, people's disposable income has increased, with a certain degree of spending power, providing an economic foundation for profit models such as in-game purchases and paid de-advertising.

In recent years, the market scale of small games has grown rapidly, and the domestic sales revenue in the first half of 2024 has reached 16.603 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 60.5%, maintaining high growth for three consecutive years. As one of the leading players, Legend of Shawarma has fully benefited from this favorable market development trend.

3.4 Technological factors

The Legend of Shawarma deeply integrates AI technology in its game development technology. By

generating art, music and voice-over content through AI, it significantly reduces costs and ensures high quality at the same time. Take the theme song of the game as an example, the melody generated by AI is easy to remember and has a strong spreading effect, and can be generated in multiple languages, which lays the foundation for the global dissemination of the game. In terms of art design, music and voice-over production, the cost was reduced by about 60% and 70% respectively due to AI technology.

3.5 Social factors

From the perspective of time dimension, modern life is fast-paced and fragmented time is prevalent, "Legend of Shawarma" is simple and easy to play and has a short game duration, which can make full use of these fragmented time and provide players with a convenient way of entertainment. This mode of time utilization fits the pace of life in modern society, making the game widely maneuverable and easy to participate.

On the psychological level, the fast-paced life puts people under tremendous pressure and they are in dire need of an effective way to relieve stress. By focusing on the process of making shawarma, Legend of Shawarma allows players to temporarily forget their worries and immerse themselves in the relaxing atmosphere of the game, realizing the release of psychological pressure. This stress-relieving effect prompts players to spontaneously recommend the game to others, creating word-of-mouth communication.

From the perspective of consumption, with the development of social economy and the improvement of living standards, people's consumption demand for leisure and entertainment continues to grow, and they are more inclined to choose easy and convenient entertainment products. Legend of Shawarma caters to this consumer trend with its free download and convenient operation, lowering the threshold of player participation and attracting many consumers. At the same time, players pay to go to ads, internal purchases and other consumer behaviors generated in the course of the game, providing economic support for the development of the game.

In terms of social interaction, people in the modern social environment are happy to share interesting things, and the unique gameplay and easy decompression of Legend of Shawarma have made it a popular topic for social sharing. Players share their gaming experiences and show their achievements through social media platforms, attracting more people to pay attention and try it out. In addition, the social interaction function set up by the game further enhances the communication and interaction between players, realizing a wider and faster spread with the power of social networks.

4. STP Analysis

4.1 Segmentation

4.1.1 Segmentation by Geographical Factors

The game's story is set in the Arabian region, which has a unique cultural landscape and is often regarded by outsiders as having a strong depressive flavor. With its unique cultural connotation and wide audience appeal, the game excels in language support, with a comprehensive coverage of 14 languages, including the mainstream languages of the Asian markets such as China, Japan, and South Korea, as well as common languages of the markets in Europe and the U.S. such as the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, and so on. Language support is excellent.

4.1.2 Segmentation by Demographic Factors

From the age dimension, its simple and easy-to-operate design attracts a wide range of players of all ages. For office workers who work in a tense pace and have fragmented leisure time, without the need for a complicated study process and a long time of energy investment, they can quickly enter the game during a short break to relieve work pressure and obtain instant entertainment satisfaction. Similarly, for students who have limited time after school and are in pursuit of relaxing entertainment, the game's low-difficulty operation and fast-paced gameplay perfectly fit their fragmented time schedule between classes or after school, allowing them to easily get started and enjoy the game. This precise grasp of the leisure needs of different age groups has greatly broadened the boundaries of potential users, allowing players of all ages to find their own relaxing moments in the game, thus building a large and solid user base.

Focusing on the gender factor, the game is favored by female players, a phenomenon that deeply reflects its precise fit with female players' preferences in game design and gameplay. In the current

handheld game market, the female player group is booming, and they have a unique pursuit of game aesthetics, ease of operation and emotional experience. Legend of Shawarma has successfully attracted the attention of many female players with its easy and casual management gameplay, delicate graphic style and cozy game atmosphere. The process of running a Shawarma store in the game is full of a balance of strategy and fun, satisfying the sense of achievement and emotional attachment that female players seek in the game. This kind of in-depth excavation and presentation of female players' preferences not only conforms to the growing trend of female players in the market, but also opens up an exclusive segment in the highly competitive handheld game market, firmly locking female players as an important market segment by virtue of its keen insight into gender differences, further consolidating its position in the game market, and realizing precise market positioning and efficient user acquisition. It has realized precise market positioning and efficient user acquisition.

4.2 Targeting

The Shawarma Game employs a focused market strategy. Through in-depth market research and analysis, the company has pinpointed specific market segments as the target market for its concentrated efforts, defined based on demographic, psychological, and behavioral factors.

4.3 Positioning

4.3.1 Positioning by Consumer Type

Different game consumer groups focus on different types of games, some people value the competitive nature of the game, eager to show their operational skills and strategic thinking in the fierce battles, and gain a sense of achievement by defeating their opponents; some people care about the quality of the game's graphics and art style, the pursuit of exquisite visual enjoyment and unique aesthetic experience; others focus on the social interactivity of the game, and expect to team up and adventure with their friends, to expand their social circle; while some other players are more concerned about the storyline and cultural connotations of the game, immersed in the rich narrative and deep cultural heritage. Some people focus on social interaction, expecting to team up with friends in the game for adventures, communication and collaboration, and expanding their social circle; while some other players pay more attention to the storyline and cultural connotation of the game, immersing themselves in the rich narrative and deep cultural heritage. Shawarma Legends is targeted at consumers who love casual simulation games.

4.3.2 Positioning by Product

The Shawarma Game is positioned as a food simulation game that showcases the Middle Eastern food culture with distinctive features. From cooking recipes, shawarma burritos, beautiful drawings of Arabian dress-up staff, a large number of orders, picky and impatient customers, intense gameplay, low-cost production of AI painting, AI composing, AI dubbing, to enhance the features, enhance the conflict, and enrich the in-game experience.

5. 4V Theory Marketing Strategy Analysis

5.1 Variation

The basis of differentiated marketing is irreplaceability in terms of product features, quality, service and brand. Legend of Shawarma's game graphics and sound effects, the game's storyline and the game's socialization and interactivity differ significantly from similar games in terms of product differentiation, and are irreplaceable in terms of game features, quality and services.

In terms of game graphics and sound effects, Legend of Shawarma uses AI painting, AI composing and AI dubbing, which is known as a "3A" game, creating a magical dubbing with accents, magical brainwashing melodies and crappy Chinese lyrics.

In the game storyline, the game developers set up a large number of orders, only for the player to prepare a variety of difficult customers, such as thieves steal gold coins, beggars eat king's dinner and taunting, adding the game's unexpected, humorous elements and challenging, triggering players to discuss. These two prominent images and distinctive character settings not only increase the challenge of the game but also add a certain level of conversational depth to it. It makes the game different from other products in terms of plot and strengthens the irreplaceability.

5.2 Versatility

In the usual sense, products generally have core functions and extended functions.

From the viewpoint of the core function of Legend of Shawarma, as a food simulation and management game, it plays an important role in daily life in terms of fragmented time and leisure play; from the viewpoint of the extended function, as a small game of curiosity, it has a certain degree of extended functions such as social topics and live content.

5.3 Value

Added value is embodied in the newly created product value of economic subjects, and Legend of Shawarma has prominent social attributes. In today's college campus social scene, there are big differences between college students' interests and life backgrounds, and they often face the dilemma of finding common topics at the early stage of socialization, so how to quickly and effectively establish social connections has become a major challenge in the field of college students' socialization.

As a simulation game with both high topic and playability, Legend of Shawarma meets the social needs of college students. Its features are easy to attract the attention of college students, such as the unique design of the game characters, which can trigger discussions and break the communication deadlock in social occasions. Its high topicality provides rich discussion material for college students to socialize. Various elements in the game, such as the difficulty of the game levels, the strategy of store management, and the interesting phenomena arising from the game's popularity, such as the game's magical AI Chinese theme song and dubbing, can become the topics of discussion among college students.

This kind of game-based interaction can greatly enhance the sense of closeness and familiarity between each other, quickly bring students closer to each other, and help college students establish new social connections and integrate into new social circles. In addition, the game is highly playable, and students team up to run the store in the game, which can not only relax and entertain them, but also cultivate team spirit, enhance friendship and trust, and strengthen social bonds by cooperating to deal with challenges.

5.4 Vividness

Resonance is the value innovation that allows a company to continue to capture the market and remain competitive, maximizing the value it brings to the consumer and the resulting profit maximization for the company. The message of resonance involves information about values, needs, desires and aspirations. Legend of Shawarma, by virtue of its ingenious design, precisely touches the emotional pulse of consumers' lives and successfully creates a deep resonance with their real-life experiences, and its players' secondary creative content also triggers a wide range of emotional resonance among young groups.

The game design of Legend of Shawarma skillfully integrates many real-life elements, especially the simulation of the workplace and busy daily life, which triggered deep resonance among players. The game simulates the workplace and busy daily life. For example, managing complex customer requirements in a shawarma store—such as precise sauce ratios and ingredient processing standards—reflects the challenges of the service industry. Meanwhile, unexpected incidents like beggars demanding royal banquets or thieves committing theft mirror real-life unforeseen troubles, keeping players constantly tense as they strive to cope. This is not only entertainment, but also vividly portrays the reality of busyness, pressure and challenges, so that players can find emotional catharsis and comfort, and produce deep empathy.

Under the current fast-paced, high-pressure social and employment environment, young people struggle hard in the workplace, mocking themselves as "being a cow and a horse", with high-intensity work, fierce competition and complex interpersonal relationships causing them to be physically and mentally exhausted. And "Legend of Shawarma" provides them with a virtual space to escape from the chaos of reality. In the game, players independently run their stores, becoming masters of the virtual world. Netizens joke, 'Struggling to make a living during the day in reality, worrying about the store at night in the game,' which actually reflects how the game has become a way for young people to relieve stress, pursue an ideal life, and realize self-worth. This has triggered widespread resonance and strengthened the game's bond with young player groups.

6. Implementation Effects

6.1 Game launch and initial dissemination

On July 19, 2024, Legend of Shawarma was officially launched on the Steam platform. After the game was launched, it attracted some players by virtue of its unique food theme and easy-to-play gameplay. Some game anchors discovered the magical nature of the game and used it in live broadcasts to create programmatic effects, thus letting more people know about the game.

6.2 Heat surge and rapid diffusion

On platforms such as Jittery Voice and Station B, a large number of players make funny videos and strategy videos related to the game, and there are also powerful choreographies that restore the degree of fullness, smooth and cute animations, re-creations fused with other hot terriers, as well as creations such as ghost animals, food, and food-testing vlogs, etc. These secondary creations have not only increased the game's exposure, but have also attracted more players to understand and try the game.

6.3 Sustained popularity and broad impact

As the game spread, its popularity continued to climb, with more and more anchors joining in, and more fans following suit, creating a snowballing effect, and the game gradually became a hot topic of discussion across the internet. Even after the game was taken off the shelves of all platforms in China on September 10th due to suspected violations, its Baidu index declined briefly, but soon ushered in several rounds of new growth peaks. During the National Day holiday, the game's related videos were played 2.99 billion times on Shake Shack. In addition, the game's popularity also drove the attention of food like shawarma in reality, from street stalls to restaurants, all began to play "shawarma" signboards, and some stall owners will also be combined with the game's gameplay, to increase the curiosity of customers and a sense of belonging.

6.4 Multiple monetization and profits realization

The Legend of Shawarma utilizes a variety of methods, including ad cash, paid de-advertising, and paid in-game purchases. Ads provide developers with a stable source of income, paid de-advertising meets players' demand for an ad-free gaming experience, and paid in-game purchases provide players with personalized game content, enhance player satisfaction and loyalty, and bring the game a good prospect of profitability.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The legend of shawarma: a coincidence and a necessity in the rapid breakthrough of chinese netizens' second creation

From a casual perspective, the Internet is now filled with a large amount of homogenized content generated by AI, covering a wide range of styles from abstract to well-produced, but there are few cases like the secondary creation of Legend of Shawarma that have successfully broken the circle of dissemination.

However, the game's developers have shown some foresight by taking full advantage of AI's strengths in rapid content production and actively promoting the localization of the game, including the artwork, language, and soundtrack. At a time when many large game makers have yet to incorporate Chinese into their standard language support system, such a small game has achieved basic localization. Although the presentation effect is a little rough, it is also this imperfection that provides a broad space for secondary creation and the opportunity to play with the stems for the majority of netizens, so that it can stand out in the competitive game market with its unique user-generated content, and realize the unexpected spreading effect and influence expansion.

7.2 AI Can Enhance the Efficiency of Game Material Creation and Presents Extensive Applications in Game Localization

In the field of game development, Legend of Shawarma has demonstrated its unique value and

potential with the application of AIGC technology, which provides a reference idea for low-cost game creation.

In terms of visual material generation, AI painting quickly produces elements, reduces art design costs, and ensures content supply and iteration. In terms of audio production, AI realizes theme songs and voices in 13 languages, and its "AI style" matches the exotic theme, which enhances the game's dissemination.

For low-cost creators, AIGC is significant. It improves creative efficiency and helps developers focus on gameplay optimization; promotes low-cost localization of games and breaks down language limitations; and inspires creativity to help games rise above the competition.

7.3 Enriching Game Details, Fostering Emotional Resonance, and Facilitating User - Generated Content (UGC) Creation

The Legend of Shawarma has achieved wide distribution and great success by basically relying on UGC in its communication process. Some elements of the game, such as the character design of thieves and beggars, skillfully hit the emotional points of players in real life. These game elements just hit the consumer's psyche, in the values and experience of psychological resonance, triggered a strong emotional resonance. These small troubles and problems that may be encountered in life are integrated into the game situation, which makes players empathize with them as if they have seen the shadow of their own lives, thus stimulating their deep emotional waves, making players willing to actively share their own experiences in the game, whether it is to cope with these situations in a humorous and witty way, or to spit out interesting comments on the situation, which all become UGC material, and strongly promote the spread of the game's fervor. The game is gaining widespread popularity.

For SME game developers, they should learn from the successful experience of Legend of Shawarma and actively stimulate users' spontaneous creative impulses and self-expression. To do this, developers need to enrich the game content and carefully design elements that can stimulate emotional resonance. Through in-depth understanding of the life experiences, interests and emotional pain points7[4] of the target user groups, they can skillfully integrate them into the game, such as designing some challenge levels related to the players' daily work pressure, or scene elements that can evoke the players' childhood memories, etc. When these elements touch the players' hearts, they will be able to create their own games. When these elements touch players' hearts, they will actively share their unique experiences in the game out of the desire for self-expression. These UGC not only enhance the game's popularity and influence, but also strengthen the adhesion between users and the game, forming a virtuous cycle that provides strong support for SME games to stand firm in the market and continue to develop.

8. Conclusions

This paper focuses on the game marketing strategy of Shawarma Legend, as a simulation game with the background of making traditional Middle Eastern food Shawarma, in the period after the game was launched, its global downloads amounted to 3,454,000 times, of which 1,701,000 downloads were made in the Chinese region, accounting for almost half of the total global downloads. The game also created a strong traffic storm on domestic social media platforms, with the number of plays soaring to 2.99 billion on the Jieyin platform. On Station B, which is famous for its young people and secondary culture, the game has also gained a high level of attention. Against the backdrop of increasingly fierce competition in the digital entertainment industry, Legend of Shawarma has successfully broken through with its innovative marketing model, realizing a double breakthrough in user traffic and commercial value, and providing the industry with an example of innovative marketing that can be used as a reference.

This paper firstly introduces the company and its products, and in sorting out the marketing strategy of the game, it applies PEST theory, STP analysis, 4V marketing strategy and other methods, pointing out that the marketing strategy is worth studying and learning from, including the unique Arabic cultural connotation, simple and easy-to-operate design to attract a wide range of players of all ages, the use of AI to create a differentiation in the game graphics and sound, the game design cleverly integrates real-life elements to trigger resonance, and the spontaneous content marketing of game bloggers, and so on. This study traces the implementation effect of the game marketing strategy of Legend of Shawarma and summarizes the selection, formulation, implementation, and safeguard measures of the game marketing strategy on the basis of this study by using the STP strategy analysis method and the 4V model, which include: there are contingency and inevitability in the rapid breakthrough of Legend of Shawarma by

virtue of the Chinese netizens' two creations, the fact that AI can increase the efficiency of game material creation and has great application in game localization, and the use of AI to create differentiation in game graphics and sound effects, and the spontaneous content marketing by game bloggers. game localization has a huge application space and enriching game details, increasing emotional resonance, and leaving creative space for user-generated content (UCG).

The results of this study are based on the marketing strategy and implementation effect of Legend of Shawarma to sort and analyze, which is of reference significance for companies in the gaming industry that have a similar background with Legend of Shawarma and also face similar problems and challenges in the same market environment.

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