Confidence and Introspection: A Cultural Discourse Analysis of Fantasy Themes in the Comments Section of 'Black Myth: Wukong' on Weibo

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Abstract: The explosive popularity of the topic 'Black Myth: Wukong' masks a deep-level discourse game and confrontation between contemporary Chinese players' cultural confidence and high demands, mirroring the self-cultural identity and its evolution of Chinese players as China's soft power rises from standing up to becoming stronger. Taking the comment texts on the Weibo topic of 'Black Myth: Wukong' as the research object, and using text mining technology, this study explores the emotional attitudes, cognition, and concerns of Chinese players towards the 'Black Myth: Wukong' topic based on cultural discourse research theory and fantasy theme analysis. It summarizes the deep-seated reasons behind the cultural confidence and introspection of Chinese players in the wake of the 'Black Myth: Wukong' craze. The study finds that the overall sentiment of Chinese players towards 'Black Myth: Wukong' is strongly positive, with a small number of comments showing a negative tendency. The rhetoric in the comment section forms four fantasy types: cultural export supporters, quality-oriented neutrals, game critics, and cultural depth pridesters, which together weave two major rhetorical perspectives: 'Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global' and 'Critics of Chinese Cultural Products.' The differences between these two rhetorical perspectives and their communities reflect the 'cultural confidence' and 'cultural nihilism' of contemporary Chinese players, constructing 'legitimate identity recognition' and 'resistant identity recognition' respectively. Although these two have generally achieved a balance, there is still a need to be vigilant against the potential risks brought by 'cultural nihilism.'
Keywords: Black Myth: Wukong, Cultural Confidence, Weibo Comments, Fantasy Theme Analysis, Cultural Discourse Research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Van Dijk emphasizes that discourse is multi-layered with potential cognitive representations and processes, and can realize social interaction in communicative situations (Van Dijk, 1987). Discourse is not only a form of social interaction but also an expression and reproduction of social cognition (Van Dijk, 2013). At the same time, discourse is also the unity of "text" and "context," possessing characteristics of totality and dialectics (Zheng, 2016). Therefore, by combining context with the analysis of specific discourse texts, it is possible to locate the cognition and identity of discourse subjects. "Black Myth: Wukong" has attracted the attention of gamers nationwide and worldwide since the release of its first trailer in 2020, due to its positioning as the first 3A game based on Chinese cultural classic stories. The discussion about the game reached its peak after its release in August 2024. Chinese gamers are a large group in the global gaming community, occupying a very important position, and they are also the main group for the promotion and consumption of electronic games based on Chinese cultural classic stories. From the perspective of "cultural discourse studies" , (Aiqing & Whyke, 2024; Chen, 2018; Shi-Xu, 2005; Shi-xu & KK, 2016), new media is not only an element of human communication but also has cultural characteristics — that is, there are differences and competitiveness in communication practices among different groups (Zheng, 2016) Weibo, as one of the mainstream new media in China, has also become the main arena for Chinese players to discuss and promote "Black Myth: Wukong." In the narrative field of Chinese players on Weibo, the discussion of "Black Myth: Wukong" has completed the semantic migration process from "literal semantics" to "deep semantics"—the comments not only embed the "literal semantics" that include Chinese players' objective feelings about the game's production and plot, but also embed the "deep semantics" of the contradictory mentality between cultural confidence and introspection due to individual differences in growth and educational backgrounds behind the global popularity of the first domestic Chinese cultural classic story-themed 3A masterpiece. Combining cultural discourse study theory and the rhetorical criticism method of fantasy themes, it is possible to analyze the group comments on Weibo for "Black Myth: Wukong," revealing the differentiation and unification of cultural confidence and introspection among Chinese players, in order to systematically interpret the resistance and constructiveness of Chinese players' comment texts for the promotion and production of cultural products based on Chinese cultural classic

stories in the context of the reality of Chinese culture going global.

2. RESEARCH FOUNDATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cultural Discourse Studies

The modern academic concept of "discourse" originated in the Western academic language of the 1970s and 1980s (such as "discourse" in English and "discours" in French), yet its definition and concept remain relatively vague. Among the various discourse research models that have emerged based on different discourse paradigms, "discourse analysis" (discourse analysis), established by British and American scholars based on modern Western linguistics, is currently one of the most popular discourse research models in academia. However, the research object and goal of this model are often limited to language use or texts, which is "textualism" and has certain limitations (Zheng, 2016). Against this backdrop, Shi Xu proposed the theory of cultural discourse studies, dedicated to identifying, weakening, and neutralizing various forms of ethnocentrism in discourse and communication academic research, developing a culturally conscious critical theoretical framework, and applying it to diverse human discourse studies (Chen, 2018). Cultural discourse studies delve deeper into the whole formed by texts and contexts and their internal relationships, emphasizing their totality and dialectics, and insisting on starting from a cultural (diverse, competitive) perspective. It focuses on discourse as the communication activities of specific groups, characterized by cultural relations, and considers the fundamental attribute of discourse to be cultural. The analytical framework of cultural discourse studies focuses on six elements of discourse: dialogue subjects, speech/actions, media/time-space, purposes/effects, historical relations, and cultural relations, thus possessing universality and comprehensiveness for various types of discourse studies. Some scholars have used this framework to study the communication of government media, such as the reports of "China Daily", "The Washington Post" , and "Izvestia" and other domestic and foreign media reports; some scholars have mainly explored the discourse construction of city images such as Fuzhou , Baoding, Hangzhou, or the external communication of national defense strategies, , "Belt and Road" policy external communication, national security concepts, and other foreign and defense policies have conducted related research and analysis; at the same time, scholars represented by Shi Xu have also continued to explore and study the construction of the cultural discourse system from

multiple disciplines such as communication studies , linguistics, and literature . Although predecessors have conducted research from different dimensions based on the framework of cultural discourse, there is still a vacancy in the research on the comments of the large but easily overlooked group of Chinese players in the internet media. China has a large number of internet users, a rich overall culture, and significant individual differences, which is also a fertile ground for conducting cultural discourse-related research. Therefore, the article adopts the perspective of cultural discourse studies, based on the recently explosive phenomenon-level Chinese cultural classic story 3A game "Black Myth: Wukong" Weibo comment section text as the research object, to explore the complex psychology of Chinese players facing the global outreach of China's excellent culture, and strives to uncover the strengths and weaknesses in the internal and external dissemination of China's outstanding culture.

2.2. Social Media Platform User Comment Text Research

The advent of the mobile internet era has fostered the rapid development of social media. People have achieved cross-regional, full-domain, all-round, and all-time connections. Using social media as a platform, users express their opinions on various topics such as entertainment, sports, current affairs, politics, or social hotspots based on their interests and hobbies, and engage in discussions with other users. This has made the online world an emerging "public opinion field," where user comments are tools for opinion dissemination, and the comment section serves as a platform for opinion exchange. Consequently, user comments on social media platforms have become a hot topic across multiple disciplines, including economics, sociology, linguistics, and communication studies. A significant characteristic of user comments is that they are user-generated, focusing on content practice within social media in terms of practical subjects, and including various forms of interaction such as replies, images, and videos. Therefore, behind user comments, there is often a presentation of individual users' emotional cognition and a display of the emotional opinion tendencies of user groups. Currently, from the platform perspective, the research platforms are mainly concentrated on Weibo, Douban, and emerging short video platforms like Douyin. In terms of research paradigms, they mainly focus on two aspects: the first is research based on the ontological characteristics, linguistic features, and commonalities of comment texts, such as the mechanism study of irony in comment usefulness, the impact of online comment consistency on consumer decision-making; the second is research on emotional tendencies

of comment texts using natural language processing, generative artificial intelligence, and other computer field technologies, such as the verification of online comment oversampling methods based on integrated text emotion transformation and research on user usage scenarios and associated product feature requirements based on Tf-LSTM . In terms of research purposes, on the one hand, it meets market needs by analyzing internet consumer tendencies and satisfaction, such as establishing a mapping model between customer perceptual evaluation and product design elements based on online comment data to provide a basis for product design improvement , mining consumer preferences based on online comments ; on the other hand, it is a mechanistic exploration study behind user comments, such as public opinion risk control, entertainment, and social hotspots, such as exploring the overall emotional attitude and focus of the public on "accompanying diagnosis services" , and research on the public's perception and risk response to subway emergencies supported by social media data to provide references for emergency public opinion guidance and risk response. However, there is still a lack of research on the emotional attitudes of users on social media towards Chinese cultural classic story electronic games and the deep reasons behind them. This article will combine the cultural discourse research framework and fantasy and thematic rhetoric criticism to analyze user comments under the "Black Myth: Wukong" entry on the Weibo platform, conduct case studies and text analysis to explore the emotional factors and deep reasons behind Chinese players.

2.3. Fantasy Theme Rhetorical Criticism

In the 1960s and 1970s, Robert Bales and others discovered the existence of shared fantasies and imagination in small group communication processes(Bales, 1970). Subsequently, Ernest G. Bormann formally proposed the theory of symbolic aggregation and fantasy theme analysis in 1972, pointing out that all communication scenarios involve shared fantasies and convergence insights(Bormann, 1972) . Fantasy theme analysis primarily aims to explore the shared worldview among group members and explain how group communication constructs from the micro to the macro level. The process of fantasy theme analysis involves extracting fantasy themes, inducing fantasy types, and refining rhetorical visions, a research process that moves from the micro to the macro and from the specific to the abstract. It can depict the links and patterns of fantasies among group members and reveal the group's cognition and emotional attitudes towards social reality and phenomena. Therefore, as a

rhetorical criticism method, fantasy theme analysis is widely applied in various fields such as journalism, public policy, and artistic creation. For example, McKewon and others identified and analyzed the anti-climate science fantasy themes created and disseminated by the Australian Public Affairs Institute (McKewon, 2014) (IPA) to reveal how they developed a narrative pattern against human-caused climate change evidence and mitigation strategies (such as Emissions Trading Scheme ETS) ; Thomson and others used fantasy theme analysis to compare the visual images created by the Associated Press in the United States, Reuters in the United Kingdom(Thomson et al., 2018), and Prensa Latina in Cuba, exploring how media systems under different cultural backgrounds convey their potential rhetorical visions, ideologies, and priorities through visual images; Seehuus analyzed and extracted text-based sexual fantasies and conducted fantasy theme analysis to reveal the content of sexual fantasies and the factors influencing the popularity of this content(Seehuus et al., 2019). With the increasing attention and rise of fantasy theme analysis in recent years in China, the academic community in China has begun to widely use fantasy theme analysis in textual analysis, focusing on entertainment works, image construction, cultural discourse, and other areas. For instance, Rong Ting and others analyzed the scale and differences of rhetorical communities and summarized the shared identity recognition fantasies of youth in the discourse of "involution" on Weibo through fantasy theme analysis of the popular internet slang "involution" ; Lin Shengdong and others conducted a cross-cultural interpretation of the fantasy themes of Chinese "sweet pet literature" against the backdrop of its overseas popularity ; Lv Yuxiang and others conducted a layered analysis of the common values behind the Winter Olympic imaging discourse, concluding that the narrative discourse strategy of the Chinese Winter Olympics has a "de-politicization" characteristic(Jia, 2010) . Generally, fantasy theme analysis focuses on in-depth cultural excavation and research behind the research objects and phenomena, making it applicable to combine with the cultural discourse research framework to explore the cultural attributions behind user comment texts related to the theme "Black Myth: Wukong" on Weibo.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Research Approach and Framework

This article integrates the basic framework of cultural discourse studies with the fantasy theme analysis method. Based on theoretical foundations

and previous research experience, it establishes a micro, meso, and macro analytical pathway for fantasy themes within the cultural discourse research framework, moving from the specific to the abstract (as shown in Figure 1).
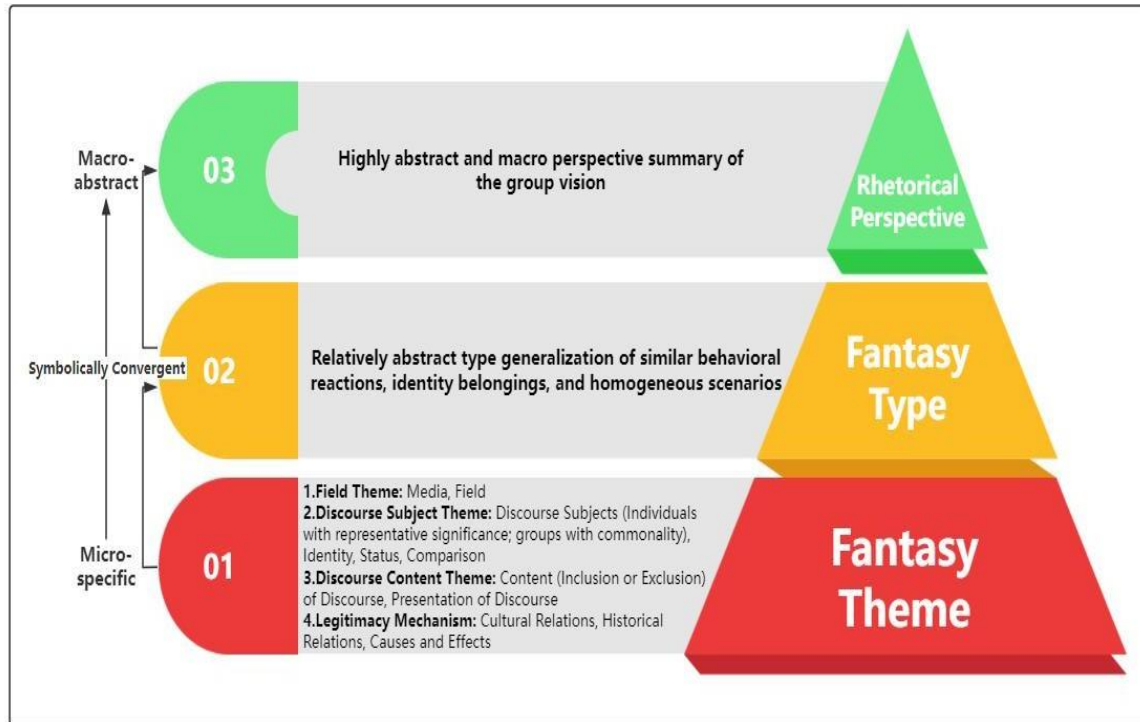
Figure 1: The Path of Fantasy Theme Analysis under the Framework of Cultural Discourse Studies

Step One, Micro-analysis: Identification and Analysis of Fantasy Themes, which primarily examines the topics discussed by users under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic at the most specific level, including 1. Field themes, such as how users employ media and the context in which they do so; 2. Discourse subject themes, including representative individuals and collectives with commonality, as well as the identity, status, and comparisons among these discourse subjects; 3. Discourse content themes, including the content contained or omitted in the discourse and the methods of conveyance and presentation; 4. Legitimacy mechanisms, exploring the reasons and impacts behind the emergence of discourse, as well as the deep historical and cultural relationships that underpin it. Step Two, Meso-induction: Summary and Induction of Fantasy Types, which are based on the field, discourse subjects, discourse content, and historical cultural relationships of fantasy themes. This step analyzes and categorizes the commonalities and correlations of user fantasy themes, representing a relationship between the whole and its components, formed by the aggregation of a series of shared fantasy themes among members. The

Final Step, Macro-generalization: Generalization of Rhetorical Visions. Rhetorical visions can predict and persuade members to take certain actions through inherent rhetorical motives (Olufowote, 2006) , and represent the final step in the cultural discourse fantasy theme analysis pathway, characterized by high condensation and abstraction. The generalization and construction of rhetorical visions require not only logic but also a comprehensive analysis of the deep underlying causes across various categories such as social environment, historical background, and cultural relationships to avoid subjectivity. These categories are not opposed to each other but are dialectically related. The primary reason for adopting the fantasy theme analysis method within the framework of cultural discourse studies is its good adaptability for analyzing the differences and commonalities among user groups.

"Black Myth: Wukong," as the first domestic electronic game based on Chinese cultural classic stories, has been widely discussed and welcomed by people of all ages and both within and outside the gaming community in China. The emotions and cognitions of this group towards "Black Myth: Wukong" have commonality and individuality, and the deep cultural and historical backgrounds behind these commonalities and individualities make it suitable for cultural discourse fantasy theme analysis research; another reason is that the explosive popularity and international outreach of "Black Myth: Wukong" hold significant milestone importance for the "going global" of China's excellent culture and the enhancement of soft power. Amidst praise and pride, there is also criticism and negation, making the fantasy theme analysis method, as a rhetorical criticism tool, well-suited for analyzing and understanding different emotional comments; finally, the concept of cultural discourse studies, though proposed relatively recently, has a complete and rational framework, and the fantasy theme analysis method benefits from extensive previous experience, making the combination of the two theories into a new model and method academically valuable and in line with the times.

3.2 Sample Selection and Processing

The Weibo platform is a social networking site that allows users to instantly publish and share personal thoughts and experiences through images, music, and videos online. Users can also interact socially with others by replying, forwarding, commenting, liking, and following, characterized by low barriers to entry, real-time capabilities, and strong interactivity. As a key platform for the development and promotion of

gaming IPs, according to Weibo's financial report for 2024, by the end of the second quarter, its monthly active users reached 583 million, and daily active users reached 256 million. The integration of Weibo with various gaming IPs is increasing, and the core user base for games on Weibo has exceeded 130 million. Therefore, analyzing user comments under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic on Weibo is feasible and representative. Thus, this study focuses on comment texts about the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic on Sina Weibo, using Python to collect over 10,000 comment texts from August 2020, when the first trailer of "Black Myth: Wukong" was released, to September 2024, one month after its release. After manual screening to remove invalid and duplicate texts, a total of 5,232 valid texts were obtained. The processing of the texts is primarily manual coding, with two researchers conducting remote synchronous coding and mutual verification to ensure that the analysis errors due to individual subjectivity are minimized. The specific steps follow the cultural discourse study fantasy theme analysis path shown in Figure 1, creating a three-level coding sheet from micro, meso, and macro analysis approaches. Different levels of fantasies are categorized and summarized into corresponding fantasy themes, types, and rhetorical visions through manual coding; finally, the texts are re-coded, and the proportion data of different fantasy types are statistically analyzed. Based on this, the scale of user groups under different rhetorical visions is also statistically analyzed, to examine the rhetorical community differences and causes among Chinese players under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic.

3.3. Research Questions

What kind of mentality and fantasy themes do the user comments under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic on Weibo reveal about Chinese players regarding cultural export, what types of fantasies are aggregated, and what rhetorical visions are constructed? In the rhetorical practice of user discourse under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic, how do "cultural confidence" and "cultural inferiority" collide and reconcile among Chinese players? Behind the balance of discursive power, is the overall sentiment of Chinese players towards "cultural export" positive or negative? The popularity of the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic and the cultural identity of Chinese players constructed through comment discourse—does this reflect a confident advocacy for the phenomenon of "cultural export," or does it convey doubt and denial under "cultural nihilism"? If some Chinese players exhibit "cultural nihilism," how should this be addressed?

4. THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHINESE PLAYERS' SELF-IDENTITY RECOGNITION AND RHETORICAL VISION IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

This article selected the following five topic keywords related to "Black Myth: Wukong" (#（黑神话悟空）Black Myth: Wukong#, #（黑神话悟空在线人数）Black Myth: Wukong Online Player Count#, #（黑神话悟空销量）Black Myth: Wukong Sales#, #（黑神话悟空总收入超 67 亿）Black Myth: Wukong's Total Revenue Exceeds 6.7 Billion#, #（黑神话悟空 steam 销量或达 2000 万份） Black Myth: Wukong's Steam Sales May Reach 20 Million Copies#) from the Weibo hot search ranking list and conducted a public sentiment analysis on the topics using Weibo's information retrieval service "Weibo Smart Search (Beta)".

Table l: Specific Pro Ortions of Public Emotions Related to 'Black M th: Wukon

Emotion Tendency	Public Emotion	Weibo Trendin Topics				
		Black Myth: Wukong	Black Myth: Wukong Online Player Count*	Black Myth: Wukong Sales	Black Myth: Wukong's Total Revenue Exceeds 6.7 Billion	Black Myth: Wukong's Steam sales Could Reach 20 Million Copies
Neutral	Su rised		5%	7%		6%
	Calm	37%	46%	47%	44%	38%
	Anticipati ve	8%	13%	8%	9%	11%
Positive		11%	12%	11%	9%	13%
	Affection	10%		7%	19%	8%
	Confused	9%	7%			
Negative	Sad				8%	
	Dislike				9%	
		140/0	11%	9%		13%
	Amount	89%	940/0	89%		89%

Note: The topic keywords are selected based on the Weibo Hot Search list. The total percentage of emotions is less than

100% because there are other emotions that account for less than 1% and are not displayed by 'Weibo ZhiSou (Beta)' From Table 1, it is evident that the public sentiment for all five topics is predominantly characterized by neutrality, with "peaceful" being the most represented emotion. Moreover, the proportion of positive emotions, represented by anticipation, happiness, and liking, is greater than that of negative emotions, represented by confusion, sadness, dislike, and anger. This indicates that Chinese players generally hold an affirmative and positive attitude towards the overseas expansion of "Black Myth: Wukong." Discourse always reflects a certain intentionality and, within this intention, endows discourse with a certain power to achieve its purposes and interests.

Individuals or groups often express, shape, and establish their subject identities through discourse. The comment discourse under the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic is a sensory and evaluative semantic component. There are local differences influenced by different cultural and historical relationships, with discourse subjects of varying identities and statuses forming their subjective experiences in this field regarding the phenomenon of "Black Myth: Wukong's" popularity. In the process of producing and echoing commentaries on this topic, players construct different fantasies of self-identity recognition

4.1. Types of Fantasy Identity Recognition of Chinese Players in the "Black Myth: Wukong" Theme Comment Discourse

Based on the experience and feelings of the "Black Myth: Wukong" as a representative of the heat of Chinese culture going global, Chinese players have established four types of fantasy identity recognition through the rhetorical practice of the "Black Myth: Wukong" theme comment discourse.

Fantasy Type One: Cultural Export Boosters - Supporting the overseas popularity of "Black Myth: Wukong" to promote the external dissemination of Chinese culture In the gaming industry and academia, there is a consensus that domestic digital games are an important way to inherit, innovate, and externally disseminate the excellent traditional culture of China, and this view has been widely recognized and understood by the public.

The social reality that domestic digital games represented by "Black Myth: Wukong" are warmly welcomed overseas constitutes the scene

theme of Fantasy Type One, namely, "The Craze of Chinese Culture Going Global."

The role theme of game players who hold this self-identity recognition can be divided into two categories: One is the group of Chinese cultural confidence players who purchase and spontaneously discuss and promote "Black Myth: Wukong" to increase the game's popularity and sales rankings, ultimately aiming to attract the attention and discussion of overseas players and media, thereby achieving the successful export of Chinese culture.

Black Myth: Wukong has sold 20.4 million copies on the platform, and the total revenue from the game has exceeded $978 million (about 6.89 billion yuan), nearing the $1 billion mark, with 25% of sales coming from overseas. It's truly a dark myth, these sales are incredible, Chinese games and culture are making their way to the world!" (Original text No. 834)

The second type is players who, by supporting "Black Myth: Wukong," increase the discussion and profit for the game's developers. This indirectly promotes attention and production within the industry for high-quality games themed around traditional Chinese culture, thereby driving the creation of more domestic digital games and expanding the community of gamers engaged in the cultural export of games.

"The game is amazing, not only does it have significant economic benefits, but it also spreads traditional Chinese culture. It lets the whole world learn about Wukong, the Journey to the West, and the Four Great Classical Novels. I've bought it, and I hope more games like this come out to help the world understand Chinese culture even better." (Original text No. 1554)

The emergence of these two role themes stems from gamers' cultural confidence in the excellent traditional Chinese culture and their optimism about the prospects of the dissemination of the symbolic realm "presenting a credible, adorable, and respectable image of China to the world(Chen, 2021)," the knowledge realm "clarifying what kind of civilization and country China is," and the conceptual realm "explaining the Chinese worldview, perspective on the world, social view, and moral view" through the overseas success of domestic games that integrate excellent traditional Chinese culture (Zhang & Frazier, 2017). Both expect, through different avenues, to support "Black Myth: Wukong" in the same way and achieve a common ultimate goal—namely, the overseas dissemination and external output of excellent Chinese culture, with their fantasy theme elements as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Fantasy Type One: Cultural Export Boosters - Promoting the Overseas Promotion of Chinese Culture by Supporting the Global Success of 'Black Myth: Wukong

Fantas Theme	
Field Theme	**Overseas Promotion of Chinese Culture**
Discourse Subject Theme	I.Game players who enhance the overseas popularity of 'Black Myth: Wukong' to promote the export of Chinese culture. 2.Game players who support 'Black Myth: Wukong' to encourage the production of more outstanding domestic electronic games and drive cultural export.
Discourse Content Theme	Support 'Black Myth: Wukong' and promote the cultural export
Legitimacy Mechanism	1.Trends in International Cultural Dissemination 2.The Need for Cultural Confidence

Fantasy Type Two: Quality-Oriented Neutrals - Advocate for game quality as the priority, with the game's storyline and production determining their stance. The phased success of Chinese digital games going global stems from the active participation of Chinese game developers in core business segments such as research and development, distribution, production, and operations in global competition. Society and academia, by focusing on successful cases in China's gaming industry(Feng, 2024), attribute the success of these digital games to competitive strategies such as product quality, investment in user acquisition, technology integration, market segmentation, and localization adaptation. Accordingly, some gamers tend to be neutral when facing domestic digital games that reflect China's excellent traditional culture, represented by "Black Myth: Wukong," and form the scenario theme of Fantasy Type Two. The quality of the game determines whether these players choose to support "Black Myth: Wukong." The role theme of those who identify with this fantasy type also presents two corresponding types: First, there are those who recognize "Black Myth: Wukong" as a medium for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture but have stricter requirements for game quality. If the game quality meets their standards, they will support and promote "Black Myth: Wukong" with a more active attitude.

" *I tried it out for a day to see if it's all hype. After playing, I decided to buy a copy for each of my studio mates, which I consider the greatest support for domestic quality productions. The market won't let down any team that develops with heart. Black Myth has set a great benchmark with this. Tomorrow, we should get back to our work and life. Games are a luxury for men our age, mainly due to limited time and energy. I wish the best for domestic online games and for Chinese culture to spread all over the world!"* (Original text No. 1842)

The second type is players who focus on their personal gaming

experience and maintain a neutral stance towards the cultural export function of "Black Myth: Wukong." They base their decision to support the game solely on factors such as the game's interactive experience, graphic quality, and storyline.

" It's the first time I've seen a discussion about the game without talking about its quality. If the game is of high quality, it will definitely make money both domestically and overseas. With later optimizations and a release on consoles, it could earn even more. Don't always make excuses that piracy affects sales; it's 2022 now, not the era of making money on physical copies. On the contrary, high game quality can attract some pirates to pay for the game later. So, whether this game can break even depends solely on its quality and has nothing to do with whether it's a domestic or Western title." (Original text No. 2203)

The construction of the self-identity recognition of game players in Fantasy Type Two is highly consistent with the mainstream discourse's preset identity for game players. They view the promotion and overseas expansion of domestic digital games made with the background of excellent traditional Chinese culture from a more rational and objective perspective(Kong, 2024). Particularly, the first type of game player not only embeds the mission of inheriting and reviving traditional Chinese culture into the identity recognition of game players through mainstream discourse but also avoids blind support for domestic digital games. This ensures supervision and correction of their production teams, which will ensure the benign development of this type of domestic digital game and the sustainability of excellent cultural exports. The elements of their fantasy theme are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Fantasy Type Two: Quality-Oriented Neutrals - Advocating for Game Quality as the Priority, with Game Story and Production Deciding Their Stance

Fantasy Theme	Elements
Field Theme	Domestic Di ital Game Develo ment
Discourse Subject Theme	I.Game players who acknowledge 'Black Myth: Wukong' as a medium for promoting Chinese culture overseas but have stricter requirements for game quality. If the game quality is recognized, they will support and promote the game more actively. 2.Game players who focus on their own gaming experience and have a neutral attitude towards the cultural export function of 'Black Myth: Wukong', deciding whether to support the game based solely on factors such as interactive experience, graphic quality, and storyline.
Discourse Content Theme	Quality First, Experience Supreme
Legitimacy Mechanism	1.Pursuit in the Gaming Industry 2.The Need for Personal Fulfillment

Fantasy Type Three: Game Critics - Starting from different points of departure, they launch critiques, questions, and negations of the game from multiple aspects. In contemporary society, an important characteristic of post-industrialization is individualization, where individuals continuously disengage from societal "discipline" and "presets," constructing identity meanings based on their own subjectivity. The identity recognition of some players thus tends to be more free and independent. Therefore, in response to the mainstream discourse's praise for the overseas enthusiasm of "Black Myth: Wukong," some players exhibit attitudes of criticism, questioning, and negation that contrast with the mainstream discourse(Jaguścik, 2016). This forms Fantasy Type Three in terms of self-identity recognition, with its fantasy theme elements as shown in Table 4. Among the player groups that criticize, question, and negate "Black Myth: Wukong," their starting points and reasons vary. This fantasy type includes two types of role themes: First, there are game players who are strict in their demands for game quality and offer criticism with the purpose of urging improvement.

"Don't end up being the second 'Dou Shen Zhan' (Fighter God), can we have some innovation and do a better job? From the demo, it feels like a reskinned 'Sekiro'. When it's released, are foreigners going to laugh at us? And with Journey to the West as the theme, can foreigners understand it? Don't end up being just another game that preys on national pride and makes money off Chinese people's patriotism." (Original text No. 4745)

The second type is cultural nihilists who hide behind the guise of freedom of speech. Cultural nihilism is divided into endogenous and exogenous types. The endogenous type is characterized by "a break in internal cognition, that is, severing the connection with local traditional culture"(Wang, 2019). The exogenous type, on the other hand, "is caused by external forces to the culture, leading to cultural nihilism" (Wang & Zhong, 2020). With the development of information technology, social platforms represented by Weibo have become important media for disseminating information and expressing opinions. Some cultural nihilist gamers(Song, 2017), under the cloak of freedom of speech, launch criticisms, questions, and negations against "Black Myth: Wukong" from various aspects.

"I haven't played this game yet, just checking in. I still prefer games like God of War and Watch Dogs. Moreover, isn't the earliest culture of Journey to the West derived from Indian Buddhism? Strictly speaking, it's not really Chinese culture, is it? It's kind of boring. Can we create something new like Spider-Man? Of course, fans, don't get mad at me; without the freedom to criticize, praise is meaningless." (Original text No. 1834)

Table 4: Fantasy Type Three: Game Critics - Starting from Different Perspectives to Criticize, Question, and Deny the Game from Various Aspects.

Fantas Theme	Elements
Field Theme	A Iatform to showcase individuali and freedom of s eech
Discourse Subject Theme	I.Game players who demand strict quality and criticize the game for the purpose of encouragement 2.CuIturaI nihilists who cloak themselves in the guise of freedom of speech
Discourse Content Theme	Unpopular, with incorrect values
Legitimacy Mechanism	1.Strict requirements for the game 2.Excessive self-awareness

Fantasy Type Four: Cultural Pride Enthusiasts - Possessing cultural confidence and enjoying the craze of Chinese culture going global behind the popularity of "Black Myth: Wukong".Culture is the intrinsic factor that connects the past, present, and future of a country and a nation, manifesting as a way of life condensed from history. Contemporary China is at a critical moment of reshaping cultural confidence and promoting national rejuvenation. This confidence is rooted in the cultural characteristics nurtured throughout the long history of the Chinese nation. It transcends the cultural and national self-doubt that arose from backwardness and economic disparities in modern history and is based on a profound understanding and recognition of the value of Chinese culture, providing a sense of cultural pride rooted in culture(Du, 2022). This supports the construction of a powerful country and enhances national cohesion. Against the backdrop of "Black Myth: Wukong" capturing global attention and narratives praising and adoring Chinese culture, Chinese players build their self-identity recognition in Fantasy Type Four, with its fantasy elements as shown in Table 5. Within Fantasy Type Four, there are the following two types of role themes: First, there are game players who feel a cultural superiority due to their inherent cultural and knowledge base that allows them to experience "Black Myth: Wukong" without the need to catch up on the cultural background and settings of "Journey to the West," breaking the long-term monopoly of Western cultural values in the gaming industry, and in contrast to Western players who need to study "Journey to the West" to understand the cultural context and settings(Dong, 2023).

"Black Myth: Wukong, haha, do these foreigners even understand what a 'Pansi Cave' is? Although it's common knowledge to us, without having read Journey to the West, can they comprehend the love story between Zhu Bajie and the Spider Spirit? Finally, I understand the feeling of playing God of War and not getting their references." (Original text No. 3932)

The second type is gamers who feel a sense of cultural pride because "Black Myth: Wukong" is warmly welcomed by overseas players and the excellent Chinese culture it contains is loved and recognized by others.

"Support for Black Myth: Wukong, relying solely on Chinese players wouldn't be able to sustain such high sales and online numbers, proving that there indeed is a significant number of overseas players who also enjoy this game. Who says the world only has Sekiro and Watch Dogs? Youku proves that our Chinese culture is just as popular and charming." (Original text No. 1792)

Although the two types are respectively an endogenous cultural superiority stemming from one's own knowledge advantage and an exogenous cultural pride arising from the recognition and affection of one's culture by others, the essence of both is based on cultural confidence in the excellent traditional culture and values of China.

Table 5: Fantasy Type Four: Game Critics - Starting from Different Perspectives to Criticize, Question, and Deny the Game from Various Aspects

Fantas Theme	Elements
Field Theme	1."Black Myth: Wukong" becomes a hit overseas 2.0verseas players read "Journey to the West" to learn about the game's background knowledge
Discourse Subject Theme	I.PIayers who feel a sense of cultural superiority due to breaking Western monopolies and having the advantage of cultural background 2.Players who feel a sense of cultural pride because the Chinese culture contained in the game is loved and recognized by overseas players
Discourse Content Theme	Overseas players, Chinese culture
Legitimacy Mechanism	I.CuIturaI confidence brought about by cultural export 2. The need for res ect

4.2 Rhetorical Visions of Chinese Players' Self-Identity Recognition in the "Black Myth: Wukong" Theme Comment Discourse

Fantasy themes interweave with each other to form certain fantasy types, and these fantasy types are interconnected, ultimately forming rhetorical visions. When a shared rhetorical vision emerges, it indicates the formation of a rhetorical community, where members share the same symbols and recognize each other. The comment discourse in the "Black Myth: Wukong" section constructs two different rhetorical visions, representing two different ideological orientations and value choices.

4.2.1 Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global

The rhetorical vision of "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" is constructed based on Fantasy Type One: Cultural Export Boosters who support the overseas popularity of "Black Myth: Wukong" to promote the external dissemination of Chinese culture, and Fantasy Type Four: Cultural Pride Enthusiasts who possess cultural confidence and enjoy the craze of Chinese culture going global behind the popularity of "Black Myth: Wukong." This vision integrates gamers' support for "Black Myth: Wukong" into the necessary path of cultural confidence against the backdrop of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In this context, the discourse of comments is closely linked to cultural confidence, interpreting support for "Black Myth: Wukong" as an expression of support for cultural output and a display of cultural confidence, endowing gamers who support "Black Myth: Wukong" with a legitimacy mechanism and clearly defining their identity coordinates as possessing cultural confidence and promoting the charm of excellent Chinese culture to the outside world. According to Abraham H. Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid, human needs are divided into seven levels, with "self-actualization" and "esteem needs" at the highest and middle levels, respectively. "Self-actualization" is the process where, after all other levels of needs are met, individuals desire to fully realize their potential, strive to achieve personal ideals and social aspirations, and find the common ground between personal and social values. "Esteem needs," on the other hand, involve receiving recognition and respect from others, as well as self-confidence and self-esteem from within. Under the rhetorical vision of "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global," gamers' self-identity recognition presents a fusion of "self-actualization" and "esteem needs." The two fantasy chains of gamers' self-value and social value, rooted in a "utopian self-imagination," interweave, achieving the maximization of gamers' own gaming experiences and contributions to the nation. In this rhetorical community, gamers inherit the identity labels of "game players" and "disseminators of Chinese culture," being entrusted with the mission and responsibility of promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, spreading Chinese culture abroad, and telling Chinese stories well, unifying gamers' self-value with national value in the action of external cultural dissemination.

4.2.2 Critics of Chinese Cultural Products

Fantasy Types Two and Three represent the collection of judgments and criticisms from Chinese players towards Chinese cultural products

represented by "Black Myth: Wukong." They jointly construct a rhetorical network through keywords such as "game quality," "game values," and "game culture," forming the rhetorical vision of "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products." Although both are critics, Fantasy Type Two is characterized by objective and neutral judgments and criticisms based on quality and experience, while the essence of Fantasy Type Three is cultural nihilism, which implies the players' self-inferiority towards their own culture and the adherence to Western culture as the standard. This rhetorical vision incorporates the rhetorical landscape of players in Fantasy Type Three who face a "contradictory comparison" when Chinese culture is welcomed overseas and their "Western cultural superiority" is challenged.

4.3 "Cultural Confidence" and "Cultural Nihilism": The "Self-Confidence" and "Self-Reflection" in Chinese Players' Self-Identity Recognition

This section delves into the dichotomy of "cultural confidence" and "cultural nihilism" as it pertains to the self-identity recognition of Chinese players. It explores how these players navigate between a sense of pride and confidence in their cultural heritage and the critical self-reflection that can sometimes lead to feelings of cultural inadequacy or the dismissal of one's own culture in favor of perceived superior foreign cultures. The discussion aims to understand the complex interplay of these attitudes and their impact on the players' sense of self within the context of gaming and cultural discourse. Based on the coding and analysis of 5232 valid texts, it was found that the rhetorical community of "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" exceeds that of "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products." This implies that in the proportion of weight in constructing the "identity recognition" of Chinese players, the subjective experience of "cultural confidence" far outweighs that of "cultural nihilism." The self-identity recognition of gamers aligns with the mainstream social values. "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" represents a "spiritual rhetorical vision" that deeply embeds itself into the spiritual core of Chinese players, triggering a strong rhetorical motivation with the emotional implications of the cultural powerhouse strategy against the backdrop of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, stimulating the expansion of cultural confidence and constructing an identity recognition that resonates with social identification. Although the rhetorical community of "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" is larger than that of "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products," the latter still wields a certain influence. This community, stemming from "cultural nihilism," often adopts an attitude of "self-reflection" or even "inferiority" towards Chinese

cultural products. Driven by dissatisfaction with their own national culture and extreme admiration for foreign cultures, players in this rhetorical community inflate their self-subjectivity, constructing an identity isolation zone that goes against the mainstream social identification—resistive identity recognition. Despite the spontaneous support and promotion of "Black Myth: Wukong" by players under "cultural confidence" and the supervision and criticism by players under "cultural nihilism" achieving a general balance in cultural output, and to some extent, providing objective and reasonable supervision and criticism that reduces blind following and support for "Black Myth: Wukong," and promotes the rationalization of the social atmosphere, fostering the benign development of excellent traditional Chinese cultural video games, the "cultural nihilism" group mixed in the rhetorical community of "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products" remains highly detrimental. These players, under the guise of neutral criticism and the cover of freedom of speech, engage in "belittling China and worshipping the West." By advocating and promoting Western cultural values, they maliciously belittle and even nihilize Chinese culture, denying the cultural transmission role of "Black Myth: Wukong," thereby dissolving cultural identification and undermining the construction of socialist culture. The excellent traditional Chinese culture remains fresh and vibrant over time, serving as a precious source of inspiration for game creation and the foundation for people of all ethnicities in our country to maintain cultural confidence. Faced with "cultural nihilists" among the "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products," we should stand firm in our cultural confidence, resist cultural nihilism with that confidence, recognize the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and treat our own national culture correctly. By identifying with our culture, we can filter out the mixed quality of culture on the internet. Only by strengthening cultural confidence and consolidating the community of "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" can we correctly view the rich and colorful culture created by the Chinese nation's five thousand years of history, inherit and promote the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and promote more domestic digital games like "Black Myth: Wukong," which are representative of China's excellent traditional stories, to go global and engage in external cultural output.

5. CONCLUSION

Taking the Weibo comments on the topic of "Black Myth: Wukong" as

the research object, using the framework of cultural discourse studies, and employing the method of fantasy theme analysis, this study dissects the self-identity recognition constructed by Chinese players through rhetorical interaction in their discourse. Through the analysis of the recitation of comments on "Black Myth: Wukong," it is found that Chinese players, based on the aggregation of "cultural confidence" and "cultural nihilism," share four major fantasy types of self-identity recognition: "Cultural Export Boosters who support the overseas popularity of 'Black Myth: Wukong' to promote the external dissemination of Chinese culture," "Quality-Oriented Neutrals who advocate for game quality as the priority and decide their stance based on the game's storyline and production," "Game Critics who start from different points to launch multifaceted criticism, questioning, and negation of the game," and "Cultural Pride Enthusiasts who possess cultural confidence and enjoy the craze of Chinese culture going global behind the popularity of 'Black Myth: Wukong.'" These four types interweave to form two major rhetorical visions: "Supporters of Chinese Culture Going Global" and "Critics of Chinese Cultural Products." The division of rhetorical visions reflects the legitimate identity born of "cultural confidence" and the resistant identity recognition that deviates from social identification due to "cultural nihilism" among Chinese players in the context of the overseas dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture represented by "Black Myth: Wukong." Combining the above analysis of the cultural discourse fantasy themes in the comments on the "Black Myth: Wukong" topic, although the resistant identity recognition based on "cultural nihilism" and the legitimate identity recognition based on "cultural confidence" among some Chinese players have formed a rough balance and have kept support for "Black Myth: Wukong" within a rational range, the essence behind it, "cultural nihilism," is an attempt to negate and deconstruct Chinese culture and cultural identification. We need to resist "cultural nihilism" with "cultural confidence." Chinese players with "cultural confidence" will not only be a strong force behind the overseas dissemination and cultural export of excellent traditional Chinese culture represented by "Black Myth: Wukong" but also a constraint on Chinese players under "cultural nihilism." This study also has certain limitations. First, Weibo is only one of the mainstream social media platforms in China, so this study can only represent the ideology and self-identity of gamers on the Weibo platform and not all Chinese gamers. Second, the internet is also a frontline battlefield for public opinion, and it is not ruled out that there may be purposeful smearing and attacks on "Black Myth: Wukong" supported from abroad and for commercial purposes.

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