INTRODUCTION

Massive multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPG), which combine internet technology and computer techniques to create a digital graphic world, allow a large number of players to interact with one another. Role-playing games are their most popular genre. MMORPGs originate from the Anglo-American cultures and were originally designed for young male players. Now, in the Asian market, online digital amusement has prospered better than in the Western market. Great mass fervor arose firstly in the South Korean market, then spreading to other Asian game markets.

According to the Japanese magazine, Enterbrain, the sale of global game products in 2006 was US$ 23.2 billion. North America, Europe, and Japan are the top three markets in the gaming industry (cited in Xinghau, 2007). However, the trend has changed since 2008, when Asia became the biggest online game market, followed by North America, with Europe as the third (digi capital cited in FT, 2011). It is worth noting that China has developed into the biggest online gaming (OLG) market, with a double digit annual percentage growth during these years. It is predicted that the Chinese games market will be a quarter of the world’s total by 2014, from around 12 percent today. During the same period, the US’s share of the games market is expected to fall from 26 percent to 22 percent (FT, 2011).

According to a survey by iresearch, the Chinese OLG market in 2010 reached RMB$ 32 billion, with a slowed-down increase of 26.3 percent over the previous year, compared to 52.2 percent in 2008 and 77.7 percent in 2007 (iresearch, 2007; 2008; Moneydj, 2011). Furthermore, the development of the Chinese OLG market can be divided into three phases: (i) the burgeoning phase (1999–2000): very few game titles were operating in a small number of Chinese cities, (ii) the fast growing phase (2001–2005): when South Korean-produced games started to enter the Chinese market and quickly gained a dominance, (iii) the competing phase (2005–now): the Chinese OLG industry has emerged and almost immediately had control of 60 percent of the national market (KGI, 2009; iresearch 2007; 2008). The Chinese online gaming (OLG) industry was started by operators such as Shanda and The9. In 1999, Shanda released a Korean-produced MMORPG, Legend of Mir, which enjoyed great success in the domestic market, and Korean games have since gained huge popularity. In 2004, the Chinese government took action to promote local games development and limited publication of imported game products. The General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) began to monitor and regulate the publication of online games. To obtain general distribution units for publications, imported ones require at least a
six month wait for strict examination and publication approval. However, the same limitation is not applied to locally produced publications. GAPP also initiated the China National Online Game Publication Project in 2004. The intent of the project was to promote local game development through government subsidies to game developers (Sina, 2005). After a year, Chinese-produced games began to dominate, with at least half of the local market. Now, local game firms, such as NetEase and Tencent, are able to develop appealing game products that attract more Chinese users than do Korean-produced games.

According to iResearch (2007; 2008), Chinese-oriented games accounted for a majority market share. However, World of Warcraft (WoW), a global cultural product, widely accepted by users in the big Chinese cities. It further raises the question as to whether China can be seen as part of the global market, or whether it shows more complex dimensions. Answers can be pieced together by an examination of why some types of games operated successfully within the Chinese market. Besides this, as online games have become a popular form of entertainment in China, the research here tries to examine how media consumption presents special features in the Oriental cultural market, while being based on Western established game studies, which stress the interaction between the medium, the game’s contents and the players themselves.

**GAME STUDIES AND MEDIA STUDIES**

Key theories that are used to understand digital games are debated between narratologists (who use narrative theories to examine digital games) and ludologists (who look to play and game theory for inspiration). As the long tradition of studying narrative attests, there are a number of approaches one can take in the analysis of narrative, each having different merits that depend on the form of text that is under discussion. Subsequent treatment of narrative will thus be kept within the scope of the current model: the role narrative plays in involving players with digital games; Other researchers, meanwhile, argue that game studies need to be adapted to specific characters, such as game rules and the involvement of players, as these are considered to be important factors in the shaping and formation of a digital world.

**Western-oriented Game Cultures**

The most common narratological approach dates back to Aristotle. According to Aristotle, narrative has a beginning, middle, and end, which are sometimes called the crisis, the climax, and the resolution respectively (Kerr, 2006: 22; Ndalianis, 2004).
Janet Murray (1997) identifies digital games as one new type of ‘storytelling format’ or ‘narrative art’, while seeing a loosening of boundaries between stories and games. For Murray, digital games are always a ‘story’, and can be seen as a new term, which provide an agency, a virtual world, for the player to make believe, termed as ‘cyber-dramas’ (Murray (1997) cited in Kerr, 2006: 23; 24). Marie-Laure Ryan (2007) provides another possibility for categorising the game genres. From the narrative perspective, these are the embedded story, the emergent story and the pre-scripted, but variable story. The participation of users is also very important because it is part of the story and moves the plot forward, rather than being solely a means through which to develop more of a story (Ryan, 2007:9-10; 25).

Games are, at the least, not primarily textual. Ludologists, emerging towards the end of the 1990s, attempted to decode games and to extract meaning from games, because they considered that narrative and other theories were proving unsatisfactory to anyone who actually played the games. Espen Aaresth (2004) argues that theorists need to study the ‘game-world-labyrinth’ dimension of cyber texts. This consists of three aspects: rules, a material semiotic system (a game-world), and game-play (the events resulting from the application of the rules of the game-world) (Aaresth (2004) cited in Kerr, 2006: 47-48).

However, digital games are more a game than a mere story. The difficulties involved in translating a narrative from a film or novel into a game lie in the notion that narrative features are less important in digital games (Kerr, 2006: 34). Jesper Juul’s game study (2001) focuses on different elements in a game, of which narrative, time and, particularly, player-game relationships, are the most important. A game provides a rule-based system in which a player can invent a fictional world and negotiate with other players. While theorizing games and gameplay, gamers should be considered active creators of meaning around games, in terms of actively reading the media text, constructing media text and sharing with other players (Consalvo, 2003: 321; Juul, 2005: 197-200).

Actually, a combination of narratology and ludology could provide a solution as either can provide a useful source for analysis. Gordon Calleja (2007) terms the expansion of the game world as incorporation that results from a series of complex syntheses: designed narrative and game rules and the involvement of players, including their cognitive and affective expectation and communication and the presence of other agents during the game play. Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska (2002) divided games studies into four levels: platform, genre, mode, and milieu. Certain types of
games are solely applied on certain platform due to technological limitations and the
genres that exist and are adapted from certain types of games. For instance, the action
and fighting games type consist of first-person shooters and third-person games. This
distinction is made along the lines of the mode of the genre. When tracing back the
development of video games, the foundation of video games based on arcade games
and support from the US military have been designated as being limited to the
shooting and fighting genres (Kline et al., 2003: 179-181). In addition, ‘milieu’ is
used to describe the types of virtual worlds within games in terms of location and
atmospheric or stylistic conventions. Several distinct established game milieu genres
exist, with science fiction, fantasy and war being prominent. The effectiveness of a
different milieu is enhanced by using particular mechanical and structural rules (King

Cultural studies’ researchers also analyze how media texts give our experience of the
world meaning through the representations and patterns of narratives. They provide an
approach to explain how things are in the world at large (Kline et al., 2003: 43).
Almost all researchers agree that computer and console games are
technology-oriented and this embodies game culture, which thus presents excessive
masculinity (Schott and Horrell, 2000; Dovey and Kennedy, 2006). In the USA
particularly, gaming culture based on the support of the US military and the defense
industry can be termed ‘militarized masculinity’. Ranging from shooting and fighting
skills to strategic and tactical war games, the US game industry is creating a new
configuration of virtual power, a combination of advanced military planning,
computer simulation, and the visual media (Kline et al., 2003: 249).

**Media Globalization and beyond**

Video and computer games did indeed originate in the USA’s market, and they then
became a popular form of entertainment spreading to other markets. Media
globalization is also an explanation of the acceptance of Western cultural products by
the populations of non-Western markets. It is true that the USA is the biggest market
for cultural consumption and US’ media companies have a larger budget and better
technological techniques with which to produce cultural content (Hoskins et al., 1997).
Hamelink (1993) contends that the globalization process undeniably affects the
communications industry as it extends its activities geographically to reach toward
‘statelessness’. For instance, *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard) presents a good example
considering its acceptance by 11.5 million global players in 2009 (nowews, 2009).
The US-based game title which takes Tolkein’s *the Lord of the Rings* as a primary
source (Krzywinska, 2007) can be seen as a global cultural product. This game has been ranked as one of the most popular selling game titles in the Asian market, including China, South Korea, and Taiwan. Interestingly, China has become WoW’s biggest market, while there are more subscribers in China than in the United States (NY Times, 2007).

Under the globalization system, cultural production has moved to the capitalist system, Western market to non-Western market, since capital is globally mobile (McChesney, 2004). Contemporary markets are more or less dominated by global cultural products that have been hybridized in order to adapt to local cultures (Robertson, 1995). Today, globally recognized cultural artifacts are not designed for any particular national market and this may produce greater profits. The entirety of production is either location-specific or the process of production is broken into different segments and locations according to prevailing advantageous conditions (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 71). As a result, cultural hybridity is hard to identify as belonging to any particular national culture, due to its presentation of new practices of cultural and performative expression (Lull, 2001).

However, when Western-centred cultural content is exported to developing countries, state power still plays an important role in supporting media at national level (Sparks, 2007). The globalization of local cultural products takes place in a social context and involves agents at various levels. Annabelle Sreberny (1994) illustrates the global and local from a capitalist point of view: the ‘global’ means the actor of the North, rather ‘universal’; the ‘local’ is ‘national’. Another point of direct relevance to the ‘localism’ claim is that the level of media production is at the level of the nation, either through state supported or national corporate networks (Sreberny, 1994: 621; 651).

The researchers Fadul, Mitra, and Kottak, individually conducted their research on the content of soap operas in Brazil and India. Their findings reveal that soap operas in the developing countries became prime vehicles for the creation of elements of a ‘national’ culture and for spreading them among localized and regionalized audiences that had not always shared a great deal of common culture (Kottak, 1990; Fadul,1993; Mitra, 1993; cited in Straubhaar, 2002: 691). National television systems have become independent markets, in which locally produced programs dominate, such as those in India, China, and South Korea. This trend is partly because of government intervention, ranging from the banning of ownership of satellite dishes, to censorship and the imposition of quotas on imported programs with the aim of resisting the invasion of foreign media and content (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000: 22;

China is widely known as a country which has developed extensive gate-keeping policies designed to limit Western media and the import of foreign cultural artifacts. Media in China has played a role in conveying ideology and traditional values to the audiences. As economic reform has taken place in China, it has also brought Chinese society nearer to Westernized modernity since 1978. At the same time, China’s media policies have changed to encourage the media industry to develop beyond the control and propaganda modalities. The media industries in China have played a role in contributing to China’s economic growth (Weber, 2003: 277-278). By 2005, the Chinese press and broadcast conglomerates have developed an increasing domestic market while providing a service to the entire Chinese urban population of some 500 million. At the same time, some 800 million rural residents have become more dependent on the CCTV (China Central TV) television system from Beijing (Tunstall, 2008: 228; 230).

Now, China has grown into a huge media consumption market, with growing economic power and a large middle class. Chinese audiences have increasingly showed a preference for national and regional productions, especially in news, talk shows and a variety of drama formats (Curtin, 2007: 9-10; Keane, 2006). Comedies, gangster movies, and action films with special effects, all have a market niche in the current Chinese commercial cinema market (Chen, 1996: 157). At the same time, it has become hard for Western competitors to enter this enormous market as Chinese audiences show distinct cultural consumption habits. For instance, Hollywood films still have only a very small fraction of the Chinese market due to political and cultural influences (Tunstall, 2008: 228; 230). This happens not only in the consumption of traditional media but also in new media.
A homogenous game consuming market

For some researchers, genre can be seen as having been relatively theorised in game studies. There have been some attempts to define what lies behind the generic categories. Game genres can be distinguished depending on the balance of narrative, game-play and simulation in a game (Kerr, 2006: 38-39). Grouping games together into genres, defined by core characteristics, might be a solution to game theories. Borrowing from the concepts of media studies, genre should also be understood in cultural practice, a sort of social contract between industry and audiences, and a specific enactment or production of the genre (Straubhaar, 2007:134-135).

Besides that, game culture has indeed become a male-dominated world, since it was originally developed by males and so was designed to appeal to male users (Kline et al, 2003; Dovy and Kennedy, 2006). In the USA, the game consuming market reflects this as its audiences are disproportionate in terms of gender, as previous literature has shown, where males made up 75 percent of the game market (Cassell and Jenkins, 1998). Even recently, playing video games, especially those loaded with graphic violence, is still a male pursuit. Some 81 percent of video-game players were male, according to the NPD Group (cited in NY Times, 2004). Different genders show different game-playing interests: men’s top three genres are sports, action/adventure and simulation; and women chose puzzle-solving, platform and sports genre (cited in Royse et al., 2008). In China, young males in the 19 to 35 age group are the main users of online games. Their top three game genres were role-play (31 percent), fighting/shooting (24 percent) and strategy games (17 percent) (iresearch, 2008).

Besides that, the Chinese OLG consuming market, it is worth noting, is formed of a homogenous gamer base, which is distinguished by two trends. First, genuine western popular game products, due to cultural barriers, find it very hard to attract Chinese users, except for World of Warcraft (WoW). At the same time, it means that Western game firms find it very hard to compete with Chinese firms. Secondly, specific genres have an appeal to Chinese players. An analysis of the top ten selling online game titles in the Chinese market in 2007 and 2008 reveals that almost of them are based on either specifically Chinese topics or are Asian style fantasy epics (iresearch, 2007; 2008; moneydj, 2011). The Chinese topic games mean that the ideas of these Chinese oriented games come from Chinese classics or popular Wuxia fictions. Asian style epic games, mainly from South Korea, are based on Western medieval-age story and the preferences of Asian users. The trend has never changed since then. For instance,
in 2011, four of ten top selling games, including the top one Dungeon Fighter Online (produced by Korean Neople) and top seven WoW, are based on medieval fantasy. Beside that, five of them are Chinese topic games, including Westward Journey series, Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils and Zhengtu Online. It is worth noting that these popular online games took account more than 70 percent of market share (Aipai, 2011).

**Asian Fantasy Games**

Today, epic games have become a popular genre with the global male players. Eddo Stern (2002) points out that the narrative complexities of MMORPG are created by interactions of computer technology, the medieval fantasy that is central to the genre and the emergent nature of the online player society. Besides that, many myths are characterized by the creation of extended imaginary terrains, which either intersect with the ‘real’ world, or bear a mixture of familiar geographical features. These mythical worlds extend beyond a single story, providing the basis for a range of stories over a number of years. World-creations within MMORPG footsteps are frequently forged into mythical systems such as Celtic, Greek, and Nordic (Krzywinski, 2006). For the American industry, it is Majestic Europe which provides an acceptable lineage for the creation of game culture, combining an age of magic and computer and internet technologies in a digital world (Stern, 2002:257-259).

However, very few genuine Western online digital games can cross cultural borders to be accepted by Eastern users, for instance, the case of the failure of Everquest (EQ), developed for the Chinese market by Sony. Despite being one of the most successful games in North America (NY Times, 2007), the Chinese version failed to attract a market share in China. The game was shut down in 2006 as only a small number of Chinese game players subscribed to the game and this failed to off-set its heavy operating costs, according to its operator Gamania. Comparatively, in the Chinese market, Asian style fantasy games attract more male players than Western games.

When compared with the case of EQ, South Korea’s Mu Online (Webzen) and Legend of Mir (WeMade) present very different result. The two epic game titles in the Chinese market have become very popular. Stressing intense combat, Legend of Mir has recorded a consistently high number of ‘hits’: 600,000 players can access the server at the same time (Pictorial Korea, 2002). The Chinese enterprises Shanda and The9, two of the first tier game providers and operators, are significant because they introduced and operated these two Korean-produced epic games. Until today, Shanda’s main revenues still come from the Legend of Mir series, even acquiring
other game products at hand. Until today, Shanda’s main revenues still come from the Legend of Mir series, even acquiring other game products at hand (KGI, 2009, Aipai, 2011).

However, some of the Korean-produced games solely attract Chinese youth as their game content specifically fits the preferences of Chinese players. For instance, Legend of Mir is only well accepted in China, while Lineage is widely circulated in the intra-Asian market. In 2009, the Lineage Series ranked as the fourth most popular OLG in the global market, accounting for sales of US$ 270 Million (udn, 2010). By stressing virtualized social competition and individualism, Legend of Mir allows intensive combat and PK (player killing) and these have become the preference of the core Chinese players, probably because they are facing a lifestyle where they have to ‘fight for survival’. By contrast, Lineage encourages competing quests in groups and mutual aid, which are well accepted by other Asian users. The Chinese users, especially those who are in the second-tier cities, whose social and economic foundation comparatively lags behind, have different game preferences, while Asian gamers in wealthier areas are looking for entertaining content, according to the observations of Wang Le, a senior Chinese news reporter.

Actually, South Korea is indeed expert at molding a format of Western medieval age stories into Asian style MMORPG. Their fantasy games focus on fighting and competition, attracting a great number of Asian young males. For instance, the success of Dungeon Fighter Online in China in 2011 is due to its hybridity which combine a Western fantasy back story and the use habit of Chinese players who prefer competition rather than entertainment. On one side, the game roles are designed based on Western cultural and social backgrounds, ranging from Magician, Fighter, Thief, Gunner, Slayer and Priest. For leveling up, the players have to destroy hordes of monsters through traversing different dungeons. On another side, hack and slash and close combo, the skills of beat’em up video and arcade games, one of the most popular genre in China, are applied during the gameplay. Based on cultural hybridity, it can explain why the game product can appeal to a large number of Chinese players.

**Chinese Topic Games**

Although the quality of Chinese oriented games still lags behind Korean and US ones, they have dominated the Chinese OLG market since 2005. The local game products are adapted from Chinese culture, ranging from mythology, legends, literature to popular culture, and gain the interests of Chinese users, Westward Journey series and
Zhengtu Online, for instance. These two oriented games are only successful when circulated within the Chinese market. This is due to the topic, which is hard for non-Chinese players or the game environment, originally designed for the tastes of a lower economic consuming market, to accept.

The Westward Journey series (WJ), developed by NetEase, was the first oriented game and has gained great market success since 2003. The game’s background story is adapted from a Chinese classic novel referring a fictionalized account of the legends surrounding a Buddhist monk’s pilgrimage to Indian during the Tang Dynasty. Many key characters, such as the Monkey King, are well known by the Chinese players. Actually, NetEase acquired the game from a Chinese game studio, mixing and re-modelling the content to suit the preferences of local users. Its market popularity is due to the design of games that are based on the taste of Chinese users. For instance, its in-game chat boxes, which normally appear as a small window in other games, are magnified and easy to use. The chat function also appeals to another large group of users who prefer online chat and social interaction to fighting enemies. In 2005, Westward Journey and Fantasy Westward Journey (FWJ), alone accounted for 20 percent of the market share, and they have been the hottest sellers in China since then (Xinhau, 2005). In August 2009, FWJ’s record peak for concurrent users reached 2.56 million (Zhang, 2009). The great success of its oriented game has made NetEase rank as one of the largest game firms in the Chinese OLG market.

Zhengtu Online (Expedition in Chinese), another successful oriented game in the local market, was introduced to Chinese gamers in 2005. The strategy MMORPG, developed by Shanghai Giant, overturned old in-game systems and provided a free to play model. At first, players can register and play the game for free. However, many gamers find it impossible to play without paying, as they can gain a competitive advantage if they purchase virtual items, such as riding animals, armour and weapons. Based on Chinese mythology, the success of Zhengtu Online (ZT) is due to the design of the game rules, which have caught up with Chinese players’ willingness to pay for higher positions within a hierarchical Wuxia virtual world. This Chinese game has challenged the accepted notion that graduating to the next level, which can often take an extended period, remains the sole reward for players. In ZT Online, gameplay has become a contest in which the winner is the one who is willing to pay the most. This contrasts with Western, or other Asian games, where the winners are either those with the best skills, or those who dedicate the most time to mastering the game. In May, 2007, the concurrent users of Zhengtu broke 1 million ant this was the second Chinese oriented game title to attain that figure in the domestic market (Digital Media Wire,
Besides that, popular *Wuxia* (swordsmanship) stories have frequently been adapted into games in the Greater Chinese market. Before this type of game was invented, the *Wuxia*-themed genre already took a huge market share in the Chinese film and TV drama market. There is a substantial audience in the Chinese cultural sphere ready for *Wuxia* culture, chiefly because a large reading public enjoys the genre. It is worth noting that all of the hot selling Chinese Wuxia games are adapted from the very popular *Wuxia* novels--Jin Yong, Huang Yi or Ku Long’s works--rather than being specially written. After 2005, Chinese game firms consecutively developed Jing Yong’s works into games, including *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils* and *The Legend of the Condor Heroes*. Without exclusion, all became hits in the Chinese market. For instance, Sohu’s *Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils*, launched in May, 2007, had wide appeal, with 870,000 concurrent users in the Chinese market and 50 million global subscribers (Baudu, 2009).

**A DIFFERENT GAME CONSUMING TASTE IN CHINA**

It was indeed a truth that the Chinese OLG market presents different preferences in media consumption from the Western market in which online gaming is thought of as a modern entertainment which always stresses speed and sophistication. A very large of Chinese players select the Chinese oriented products, despite their presentation is inferior in terms of art, content design and technological skill when compared to Korean and US’ games. Actually, Korean epic games and Chinese topic separately appeal to different groups of Chinese users. It is worth discussing the different characteristics of the two types of games and the level levels of players and, furthermore, the connotation of the hidden genres.

**Tech innovation lying behind**

While other Asian markets can accept the same game titles with localized adaptations, China has been inclined to being a self-sufficient market. It is worthy of note that foreign produced games only attract certain group in China. For instance, the players of Korean produced games in China are those who are residents in big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, with a higher educational background and economic status. By contrast, Chinese topic games spread very quickly among the mass of Chinese. To encourage their market expansion, sometimes, these Chinese game developers remodel content as an easier rather than a new version, for instance, a 3D game title
operated in first-tier cites, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, and another revised 2D
technology product for a greater number of users in the second-tier and third-tier cites,
like ChongQin and Wuhan. This shows that a large national market does indeed exist
in China as the Chinese oriented game products which originate from genuine
Chinese social and cultural spheres can easily penetrate the mass of core users, who
effectively have cultural and economic barriers that stop them accessing foreign
cultural products.

Furthermore, while examining how the existing genres are adapted in the Chinese
OLG market, we should understand it from a broader prospective, not only through
technological influences but also through a more complex set of cultural elements.
From the socio-cultural context we can find the answer to the question: why do
Orientalised or Chinese topic games have an appeal to the mass of Chinese players
who are able to discover their identities in the connotations of game texts.

**Game worlds embedded on predestined cultural values**

The Chinese-oriented MMORPGs have a bigger market share as they provide content
which fits local demands. For instance, Chinese *Wuxia*-themed games constitute
one-third of the online games played in the local market (People’s Daily, 2004). In
contrast to Western gamers, who normally play the roles as a knight travelling in
conquered land constructed in a fantasy narrative, Chinese players prefer to pretend
they are swordsmen in ancient China seeking to become a martial arts champion,
according to the observation of Eric Chen, a senior Taiwanese game producer.
Different game preferences lead the players from different cultures following very
diverse game rules which are shaped by their priori experiences and understandings.
In the Western game world, a player in a game such as *The Age of the Emperor*
(Microsoft) can hold a decisive advantage once he gets technology faster than that of
other gamers who may stay in the Stone Age or the Bronze Age. In the context of the
gamer mindset, Chinese gamers believe that the traditional ancient weapon, the
two-handed sword, like the Heaven Sword and the Dragon Sabre (from Jin Yong’s
*Wuxia* novel) are, in their imaginary world, much more powerful than arrows and
bullets.

Having a 2000 year history, *Wuxia* culture promotes a concept of knightly virtue in
which roaming swordsmen represent a symbol of defenders of right and justice,
especially during corrupt and tyrannical regimes (Wu and Chan, 2007: 206). As the
culture of Chinese chivalry has became popular in the imagination of the Chinese, it
has become a game genre which is specifically designed for the Greater Chinese cultural arena. Now, China tends to have the largest market scale to produce, circulate, and consume these specific types of game. Simultaneously, Chinese oriented games are strongly shaped by cultural forces that have hindered the penetration by non-Chinese-speaking audiences.

**Chinese game market: a national market**

Outwardly, the Chinese game market presents a two-layered body: regional (sub-global) and national, while Korean fantasy games and Chinese topic games have become the mainstream in the Chinese OLG consuming market. Factually, the two level markets should be defined as a whole national rooted in Chinese cultural heritage and Chinese usage preferences solely exist in China.

Nowadays, Korean has become a game based for their Asian style fantasy games are more widely accepted in the intra-Asian market if compared to US fantasy games. This is because Korean-produced games involve an Oriental style, with in-game narratives, characters, and imagery. The Eastern version of the medieval epic game can be termed an example of cultural hybridity: demonstrating East Asian preferences but based on Western narratives with sophisticated art design. Most importantly, these Korean-produced games have to be extensively revised before entering the different local markets, revealing a different market strategy from that of *WoW*, which presents the same version to the global market. The process of localization cannot simply be seen as the provision of a language translation. It is indeed involved in a series of pre-production activities, including the adjustment of the back-story, the remodeling of characters and dubbing that are based on local players’ preferences. Furthermore, the success of a Korean game in the Chinese marketplace does not depend on its original design, but on how it is localized, and this is tied to Chinese local operators who have control of its distribution and who understand the users’ tastes.

Therefore, no matter whether it is an Asian style game or a Chinese topic game, we find that their popularity is based on ‘chinalization’, where the local level equals the national level. Evidences show that most Chinese players are only attracted by a familiar user environment and/or a widely known story. MMORPGs allow a great number of players to participate and interact with others in real time, at the same time, the game world, including the game rules, the narrative, and milieu, has to be established based on a predestined values and understandings which are shared by
the target users. It can further lead participants naturally following the rules and extending the story-telling. Differently from traditional media, the role of the players is active, participating in the texts’ structure, rather than as a passive audience, while the text develops instability. Most importantly, the user preferences are not only shaped by the content given, but also become a driving force in reshaping it, in a complicated reciprocal process.

**CONCLUSION**

The research reinforces that media consumption is influenced by cultural and social factors which have shaped the audiences’ use habits, not only those reflected in traditional media (Straubhaar, 2007), but also in internet media. Evidences shows that these game products in the Chinese market, no matter whether they are Korean fantasy games or Chinese *Wuxia* games, all of them have the connotation of ‘Chineseness’, which has been deeply shaped by a complex set comprised of traditional culture, social custom and ethnicity. The form of MMORPGs in China has now been transformed into a genuine Chinese style entertainment, which can be seen as part of Chinese popular culture. The Chinese OLG market is therefore a national market, rather than a part of the integration into the universal entertainment market.

Meanwhile, the whole OLG market is also entirely in the hands of Chinese firms, no matter whether in the development (NetEase and Shanghai Giant) or operation sector (Tencent and Shanda). It is true that the Chinese government plays an important role in interfering with the development of the Chinese OLG market, which has hindered the expansion of foreign competitors in China and has promoted local game development. At the same time, Chinese operators gain their advantage on the operation of a MMORPG requiring a 24 hours online service, which means the local game companies can provide customized service at any time. Today, the Chinese OLG industry has controlled the service sector by providing updated content that fits local demands and in further shaping the formation of the market, while the Western game companies emphasize the technology-oriented and innovation facets.

Besides that, Chinese-produced game products have been exported to other markets which are mainly in the Chinese-speaking sphere (Chen, 2009). It is therefore worth discussing whether Chinese topic games, especially *Wuxia* games, can become a popular genre which may be widely accepted by the players with the characteristics of cultural proximity, just as the popularity of ‘Korean Wave’ in the intra-Asian market (Shim, 2006). Or will the export of cultural products still have to follow the path of
globalization, while the media products that originated in market in a lower economic area must be modified to fit a higher economic market (Spark, 2007:185). Meanwhile, Chinese game companies, for instance, Tencent (the giant Chinese web holding company) and Shanda, aggressively expand their overseas investment through buyout and synergy with foreign game companies (Kafka, 2011), when they have held a large number of cashes at hand. It is therefore worth discussing whether these companies have abilities to afford the competitive products in the international market in the next step. Future studies may focus on the strength of Chinese game firms, their relationship to and position in the global climate.
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