

The Multi-dimensional Relationship and Connection between Chinese Games and Consumers: Taking Online Games as an Example

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Abstract: Online games are an emerging industry and one of the manifestations of the Internet economy. At the same time, the contradictions between game consumers (players) and producers (game developers) have been various different situations and different interests since the development of games in China. The accumulation of these contradictions has gradually intensified the contradictions between players and game developers, leading to the stagnation of game development and the tendency of developers to neglect player welfare and service attitude. It has led to players' cautious consumption attitude and boycotts towards game developers. Coupled with the economic downturn since the start of the pandemic, consumers' income has dropped and they have no extra money to spend on gaming and entertainment, which has greatly affected the revenue of the gaming industry. Therefore, how to regulate and ease the relationship between players and game developers in order to promote the healthy development of online games.

Keywords: Consumer; Producer; Online Game Platform; Public Opinion Field

1. Introduction

In the digital age, online games have evolved beyond simple entertainment into a composite medium integrating culture, social interaction, and commerce. In 2023, China's game market reached ¥302.96 billion, generating over ¥70 billion in related sectors such as telecom and IT, and forming a complete industrial chain from development to consumption (Game Committee of the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association) [4]. As a core digital entertainment product, online games reshape leisure patterns and foster new consumption and social interaction models through immersive

experiences, virtual economies, and social mechanisms.

The Chinese gaming market is dominated by online, mobile, and single-player games. Online games-oldest and most interactive-foster deep engagement with both the game world and other players via role-playing, teamwork, and virtual transactions, making them ideal for studying consumer behavior: decision-making motives, loyalty formation, emotion-driven spending, and virtual goods purchases.

The 2024 phenomenon *Black Myth: Wukong* not only boosted tourism but also spurred broader recognition of gaming's cultural value and its evolving relationship with users.

Yet beneath this growth, developer-player tensions are rising. Some studios prioritize short-term profit through exploitative practices-induced spending, false advertising, and privacy violations-eroding trust and dampening consumer willingness, trapping the industry in a cycle of arrogance and resistance. Post-pandemic economic pressure and tighter household budgets intensify these challenges. Meanwhile, youth addiction, irrational spending, and disputes over virtual assets remain pressing social concerns.

Adopting a consumer perspective, this study explores the multidimensional interactions between online games and consumers. It extends virtual economy consumer behavior theory by developing a model incorporating social capital, immersive experience, and consumption intention. Building on Wang and Liu (2022), who showed that relationship strength positively affects player loyalty ($\beta = 0.57$) [1], the study examines how these relationships moderate manufacturer-player power dynamics, deepens immersion theory's account of consumer motivation, and identifies conditions for transforming passive payment into active willingness to pay. It also advances the concept of "structural contradictions" (Li Keqiang, 1991) [2] by analyzing interest conflicts between new and

old players arising from manufacturers' expansion strategies. Furthermore, drawing on Cai and Chen's (2025) "game Taylorism" framework [3], the study critiques how manufacturers achieve capital accumulation via data monitoring and labor exploitation.

From a practical perspective, this study offers actionable insights for multiple stakeholders:

- Guiding manufacturers to align with diverse consumer needs, avoid structural conflicts from blind expansion, and balance commercial value with social reputation;
- Encouraging the industry to reposition itself as a "service provider," safeguard player rights, and empower consumers as active co-creators-not passive recipients;
- Supporting policymakers with theoretical foundations to strengthen regulations on minor protection, virtual property rights, and anti-addiction systems.

This study aims to:

- Integrate existing research to clarify the theoretical link between online games and consumers;
- Identify key manufacturer-consumer contradictions and their root causes;
- Propose multi-dimensional consumer segmentation criteria to support differentiated operations;
- Build a framework for positive manufacturer-consumer interaction to advance industry sustainability.

Guided by these objectives, the study addresses four core questions:

- (1) How do consumers form relationships with online games?
- (2) What are the main current contradictions between manufacturers and consumers?
- (3) How do demand patterns and structural tensions differ across consumer groups?
- (4) How can manufacturers and consumers achieve mutual benefit?

2. A comparison Between the Status of Online Games and the Current Situation of Players

2.1 The Content, Characteristics and Industrial Chain Structure of Online Games

Online games are Internet-based digital entertainment products that create composite virtual social spaces integrating technical infrastructure, economic systems, and social networks. Players engage in role-playing, collaboration, and virtual transactions, blending

entertainment with meaningful social interaction. From an industry perspective, China's digital game value chain operates within global labor division through three models: "overseas R&D-domestic operation," "domestic R&D-overseas distribution," and "domestic self-R&D and self-distribution." This structure shapes power dynamics between developers and players. When core R&D is overseas, domestic operators tend to prioritize short-term profits to recover agency costs, often intensifying player conflicts. According to the Game Committee of the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association, China's game market generated ¥302.96 billion in sales revenue in 2023 and is projected to reach ¥325.78 billion in 2024, contributing over ¥70 billion to related sectors such as telecom and IT, while supporting a full industrial chain from development to consumption [4].

2.2 Player Profiling, Consumption Behavior-driven Mechanisms and Industry Development Status

Game consumers are online gamers who make in-game purchases. Current trends among Chinese online game users include: a shrinking share of young players, growth among middle-aged and elderly users; rising proportions of lower-educated and lower-income players; and increasing spending contributions from freelancers, rural laborers, and migrant workers. Though underage players remain numerous, they are not primary spenders-conversely, shares of highly educated and high-income users have declined. Xu Lan (2024) used K-means clustering and heatmap analysis to identify segments such as "high-spending students/young adults" and "middle-income stable middle-aged/young adults," confirming a significant negative correlation between age, education level, and willingness to pay [5].

Consumer behavior is driven mainly by immersive experiences and social relationships. Immersion-intense focus and detachment from reality-creates a positive feedback loop that extends gameplay and increases willingness to pay. Strong social ties (e.g., guilds or fixed teammates) boost loyalty, while weaker ties broaden information diversity and enhance engagement; peer effects strongly shape purchasing decisions. Wei Hua et al. (2011) identified key online gaming motivations-fun, immersion, social interaction, escapism, and competition-and found they influence

consumption primarily through immersion [6]. Based on 448 student surveys, Zhang Hongxia et al. reported that males have longer gaming experience, whereas females show greater market potential, with “entertainment and social aspects” being the strongest driver [7].

The Chinese online gaming industry features a two-tier “backbone + support” structure, with the backbone consisting of developers, operators, and distributors, and the support encompassing hardware, media, and e-sports. Its network follows a “pyramid” hierarchy and a “strong triangle + weak rhombus” spatial pattern, shaped by administrative hierarchy, new economic forces, and institutional proximity.

Nevertheless, the industry confronts three major challenges: technological weaknesses, scarcity of original IPs, and legal deficiencies in virtual property protection. Virtual property disputes rose 40% in 2022, yet unified legislation remains absent. Moreover, about 20% of teenagers play games over four hours daily, highlighting widespread addiction and excessive consumption [8].

2.3 Limitations of Existing Research

Although existing research has approached from perspectives such as consumer behavior and industrial economics, there are obvious deficiencies:

First, there is a significant bias in perspective - more focus on game-buying decisions, while less attention is paid to the interaction process between players and the game and the in-game experience.

Second, the analysis of the binary interaction

between manufacturers and consumers is inadequate. Wang Manxin and Liu Wumei (2023) confirmed that relationship strength has a significant positive impact on loyalty ($\beta=0.57$), but did not delve into how vendor strategies affect consumer rights.

Third, there is a lack of discussion on “structural contradictions”.

Fourth, research on the segmentation of special groups lags behind. Although Hu Penglin (2025) pointed out the growth of elderly and female users, consumer behavior responded inadequately. Fifth, the exploration of consumer empowerment mechanisms is limited. The “Game Taylorism” perspective proposed by Tsai Chih-fan and Chen Long (2025) reveals that manufacturers manage players’ “free labor” through algorithms and rules, but does not further explore how players shift from passive objects to active co-builders.

Fifth, the exploration of consumer empowerment and vendor management mechanisms is limited. The “Game Taylorism” perspective proposed by Tsai Chih-fan and Chen Long (2025) reveals that manufacturers transform players into “free workers in the game factory” by collecting players’ experiential knowledge, optimizing action efficiency, and creating the ideology of “consent”. Although this critique fills the gap in the study of player management under platform capitalism, it does not further explore how to shift players from “managed objects” to active empowerment co-builders.

2.4 Theoretical Foundation Framework (See Table 1)

Table 1. Theoretical Framework

Theory Name	Core Points	Applications in this study
Flow Theory	The mental state of an individual when fully engaged in an activity	Explain the transformation path from “passive immersion” to “active payment”, and analyze how immersive experiences drive consumption behavior
Self-determination Theory	Three major needs: autonomy, competence, and a sense of belonging	Analyze the underlying logic that consumers are “willing” rather than “forced” to pay and explore healthy consumption patterns
Strong and Weak Relationship Theory and social capital theory	Strong relationships enhance loyalty, while weak relationships enhance stickiness	Analysis of differences in consumer behavior and social capital conflicts in “structural contradictions” under different relationship intensities
Theory of Network Externalities	Product value increases as the user size grows	Explain the motives behind the vendor’s “expansion” strategy and the conflicts of interest between new and old players
Consumer empowerment theory	Consumers gain a voice through communities	Explore feasible paths for transforming player feedback mechanisms into content modifications and community autonomy to reduce operating costs
Game Taylorism (Cai & Chen, 2025)	Vendors control players’ free labor through	Criticizing the capital logic of the “land-graber” role of vendors and the damage to players’ rights under platform

	efficiency management	capitalism
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3. The Construction of the Relationship between Online Games and Consumers

3.1 Evolution of Consumer Roles in Games

With the development of the Internet, the way players communicate with manufacturers has become more efficient and convenient. Games have evolved from the "ninth art" to a commercial industry, where players are not only passive players but also need to actively protect their consumer rights. At the same time, some core players began to participate in indirect content co-creation, such as the Honor of Kings skin co-creation program, the CrossFire map self-production, and the promotion of secondary creation merchandise for 2D games. This shift from a mere player to an indirect creator has significantly deepened the emotional connection between players and the game. According to the iiMedia report, nearly half of the players showed a strong willingness to communicate and compete in the community. From the perspective of immersion theory, games are not just entertainment tools, but an important pillar that provides emotional value and spiritual comfort in a fast-paced life.

3.2 Types of Relationships Between Consumers and Games

The current online game consumers are mainly divided into four types: immersive (focused on the game itself), competitive (focused on competition and skill improvement), consumption-driven (paid), and social (centered on community interaction). Among them, immersive and competitive players constitute the main consumers, who pay more attention to the game content itself and are relatively passive about community and official dynamics; Consumer and social players, on the other hand, have a certain driving force in the public opinion field, but are vulnerable to being suppressed by manufacturers' trolls. This type of difference provides the basis for subsequent relationship model analysis.

3.3 Consumer-Vendor Relationship Model and Gender Ecosystem Reconstruction

From a traditional economic viewpoint, the manufacturer-consumer relationship is often reduced to a simple "producer-consumer" model. In an ideal complex industrial ecosystem, this

should evolve into a "service provider-recipient" dynamic, where firms are demand-driven and players pay for experiential satisfaction. In reality, however, some firms deviate from the service-provider role, adopting a "rent-seeking" approach. Leveraging information asymmetry and addiction mechanisms, they induce excessive consumption and engage in infringing practices such as loot boxes.

Male players have long dominated game consumption. Evidence shows men exhibit significantly higher willingness to pay than women (28.2% vs. 15% in a Japanese survey) [9]. In China, men demonstrate stronger engagement and long-term paying behavior across PC, mobile, and console games. However, their consumption contribution has not translated into proportional discourse power.

As female players grow rapidly (reaching 48.6% of mobile gamers in China in 2022), Peng Yun (2021) notes that the power structure in the game market is shifting, with women's influence markedly increasing in social media public opinion [10].

Typical cases further confirm this trend. First, in the "Infinite Lost" (April 2024) incident, female players used insulting remarks such as "strangling" and "slaying" against male players in the super topic, and the official inaction or even covert support led to a large number of male players stopping spending money to post negative reviews, ultimately resulting in low game revenue [11]. Secondly, "Yanyun Shiliusheng" was marketed with the slogan "Female-friendly", which attracted a large number of female players but failed to please both sides by retaining the "masculine" element at the same time: female players accused of "backstabbing", while male players felt their preferences were ignored, resulting in a significant loss of users [12].

More representative is the controversy surrounding the "Genshin Impact" series. In 2021, when the character Shenhe was reported by female players for his costume design being "otaku" and "objectifying women", miHoyo quietly changed the image without an official announcement, and there was little resistance from male players during that period [13]. A similar situation was more intense in the game "Guilongchao", which led to massive dissatisfaction among male players after the game's official handling of character illustrations on Weibo was accused of overly catering to

female aesthetics, resulting in user attrition and commercial predicament (from its launch in 2022 to its announcement of shutdown in September 2024) [14].

In addition, in the single-player game sector, "Revenge on Gold Diggers" was seen as a "backstinger" by a large number of male supporters after its official thank-you letter specifically mentioned "sisters who like the game" and marked "regardless of gender". It quickly triggered a surge of negative reviews and refunds on the Steam platform. Sudan's Game, on the other hand, saw some male players, such as Qiqi, a high school sophomore, feel that their private domain has been taken over and give them negative reviews. [16] Mingchao and Arknights have also sparked similar gender confrontations due to character designs and plot inclinations. Although male players are the main payers, they are generally in a state of collective silence.

An empirical study by Liao Z. et al. (2025) shows that among Chinese teenagers and young adults, the rate of problem games among men (21.5%) is significantly higher than that among women (14.1%), indicating that men are more deeply involved in games but are clearly at a disadvantage in the struggle for the right to speak [17]. Peng (2021) further pointed out that this aphasia is not accidental but a natural result of women's accumulation of social media cultural capital [18]. Manufacturers often divide player groups through gender issues and shift the responsibility for the structural contradictions brought about by "expansion" (conflicts between new and old players and different gender demands) to internal confrontations within players, thereby maintaining their own control and capital accumulation. This alienation from "service providers" to "conflict transferers" not only harms the rights and interests of the male consumer base but also hinders the long-term healthy development of the gaming industry.

4. Analysis of the Contradiction between Manufacturers and Consumers

4.1 Sources of Contradictions

4.1.1 Profit-driven vs user experience

There is an inherent tension between game developers' profit-driven instincts and players' pursuit of a quality experience. When developers prioritize short-term market share and profits, they often sacrifice the user experience and even view players as manageable resources.

A typical case from a well-known 2D game developer: Kulo Games' "Mingchao" was launched in a rush to seize market share in the same field as Genshin Impact, resulting in a serious lack of optimization (iOS resource compilation takes too long, devices overheat, frequent crashes), and players reported "problems everywhere". Despite the battle mechanics and character modeling being hailed as top-notch, the perfunctory main storyline and numerical expansion (from 1.0 Kakaro to 1.1 Jinxi doubling in strength) forced players to spend money to draw new characters in order to maintain competitiveness, distorting the essence of the experience of "no equal return after investment" [19].

The same is true of MiHoyo's Genshin Impact series: in version updates, the strength of old characters drops rapidly, the values of new limited characters expand significantly, and players are forced to keep drawing cards to maintain the competitive/immersive experience. This strategy of "maximizing profits over balancing design" gives the developers high revenue but gives core players a sense of control as if they were being managed by a farmer [20].

4.1.2 Short-term profits vs. long-term development

Some developers, in pursuit of short-term financial performance, adopt an operation strategy of draining the pond to catch fish, sacrificing the game's life cycle and brand reputation, which ultimately leads to a massive loss of users.

Eagle Network's "Arknights: End of the World" (launched globally in January 2026) is a typical example: a PayPal payment vulnerability broke out right after the launch, resulting in "misplacement of charges" (players' accounts were randomly used for other people's consumption, with amounts ranging from tens of dollars to tens of thousands of dollars). Despite the official emergency closure of the channel and the promise of a full refund, the incident exposed a serious lack of technical stability. At the same time, the gacha system was widely criticized as "extremely unbalanced" - 5,000 tokens were needed for ten draws, the output of treasure chests was very low, the cost of a single draw was much higher than that of similar games, with a guaranteed minimum of nearly 60,000 crystals, making it difficult for a large number of F2P and micro-payer players to obtain limited characters, causing a sharp increase in negative reviews in

the community and casting a shadow over the long-term operational prospects [21].

The case of Hollow Knight: Song of Silk shows another kind of mismatch between the short term and the long term. The game, which took six years to develop, has 1.5 times the content of its predecessor and costs only 79 yuan ("more without more price"). However, the high difficulty of the game has led to a large number of new players "breaking down" - the complex actions of the small monsters are comparable to the bosses in the previous game, with multiple mandatory encounters in each area, and long "jumping fun" with repeated trial and error. The development team fell into a divergence between the artistic pursuit and the player experience. Despite the sincerity of long-term refinement, they ignored the difference in needs between core players and ordinary players [22]. (At the same time, the large number of incomprehensible sentences and words translated into Chinese also seriously detracts from the player experience.)

4.1.3 Expansion of vendor power vs. loss of consumer rights

Under the dual effects of information asymmetry and platform power, manufacturers hold the power to set game rules, control user data, and resolve disputes, while players are in a relatively disadvantaged position and have difficulty defending their rights when their rights are compromised.

A typical case is the abnormal account ban of MiHoYo's "Zero" (2026 incident). The official anti-cheat system monitored and judged "abnormal behavior" (including multiple device logins or normal operations being wrongly judged) based on algorithmic data, resulting in a large number of compliant players being permanently banned and all virtual assets (characters, weapons, spending records) being lost. The player complaint channel is limited to official internal review, with processing periods lasting months or even going nowhere, and no third-party data verification or transparent explanation is available, fully demonstrating the absolute monopoly of the manufacturer over user data and rule interpretation rights [23].

4.2 Manifestations of Contradictions

4.2.1 Consumer fraud and false advertising

It is mainly characterized by goods not matching the description, concealment of key information and probability misguidance.

FGO (Fate/Grand Order) has long been criticized

for promoting "fair card drawing", with an actual SSR probability of only about 1%. There was no guarantee mechanism in the early days, and official events often used "high rarity rate" to induce recharges, but in reality, a huge amount of money was needed to stably obtain limited characters, which has repeatedly led to collective complaints from Chinese server players [24].

Mihoyo's Genshin Impact also has a typical problem of false advertising. A 2025 investigation by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) revealed that MiHoYo had concealed the true cost of gacha and the probability of winning in its promotion and used a confusing virtual currency system to mislead players (especially minors), eventually reaching a settlement and paying a \$20 million fine. This incident fully demonstrates the prevalence of manufacturers using information asymmetry to induce consumption [25].

4.2.2 Game balance issues, pay-to-win mechanisms

The main manifestations are Pay-to-Win, mandatory pay-to-win thresholds, probabilistic pay-to-win, and numerical changes.

Mihoyo's "Bhava: Star Rail" has serious numerical inflation and HP inflation issues. The Chinese community and international players have reported that late-game bosses' health and difficulty keep rising, causing old characters to depreciate rapidly and new limited characters to be much stronger than permanent ones, forcing players to keep spending money to maintain full star competitiveness in the Abyss/simulated universe. Many players have complained that "it's almost impossible to clear the high difficulty content without spending money", creating a vicious cycle of "the more you spend, the less you get" [26].

Eagle's Horn Network: Arknights: Endland Limited Characters + Weapon Pool Strength expansion: High Difficulty Cycle gameplay (late dungeons/challenge mode) relies on the current limited 6-star characters + specialized weapons to provide obvious numerical/mechanism advantages (output, survival, system space). Paid whale players can easily get full marks/high rankings after drawing the limited + special weapon; Free or micro-payer players get stuck rewards for lacking meta strength even if they operate at the top level. Infrastructure produces resources slowly, further amplifying the advantage of paying. High threshold for infrastructure + cultivation: The core gameplay

(infrastructure system + story/level advancement) is time-consuming and labor-intensive, and the resource output is far behind the consumption of gacha/cultivation. Zero-payer players "play more exhausting than work", high-difficulty content and full-reward challenges cannot "normally experience" due to numerical/efficiency gaps (require extremely long grinding time); A paid monthly card + first recharge + pass can ease the pace and provide a full-content comfort experience [27].

4.2.3 Player privacy leaks and box opening behavior

It is mainly manifested as box opening human flesh search, persistent harassment and information dissemination.

A typical case is the Xianjiajun Box Opening Incident (2021-2024). The group originated from the "Xian Di" box opening scandal in 2021 and later evolved into an extremist group targeting anti-Mihoha players, UP hosts and ordinary players, with core tactics including human flesh search, family box opening, online abuse reporting and comment control. From 2022 to 2023, the "Salt Lake Base" box opening group and the "Ten Kings' Office" reporting group were established, and a pay-per-report system was implemented. After the internal strife was exposed in 2024, the core members (including chief Lu Dongpeng, etc.) were cracked by the Chengdu public security authorities, 11 key members were arrested, the box opening interface was banned, and the group chat was disbanded [28].

5. Exploration of the Path to Achieve a Win-Win Situation for Manufacturers and Consumers

5.1 Optimization Suggestions from the Consumer Perspective

Consumers should shift from passive recipients to active participants to enhance their voice and rights protection through the following mechanisms:

- Transparency of game content: Require manufacturers to prominently display the probabilities of drawing cards, guaranteed mechanisms, item attributes, and subsequent maintenance commitments; Introduce third-party audits or blockchain evidence storage to allow

players to verify the results themselves.

- Double confirmation before consumption: For large purchases (single transaction exceeding 500 yuan), set up pop-up prompts along with detailed explanations to reduce impulsive spending.
- Consumer empowerment mechanism: Establish an in-game "Player Suggestions" section, and the official will regularly disclose the adoption of responses; Mature communities pilot player representatives to participate in balance tests and skin voting; Regularly publish content roadmaps for the next 3-6 months to help players understand the decision-making logic.

5.2 Strategy Adjustments from the Vendor's Perspective

Vendors need to shift from being "lockers" to being "service providers" and build long-term trust relationships:

- Segment the user group and identify the core audience: Build dynamic tags through in-game behavior data based on motivation (immersive, competitive, social, consuming) rather than just demographic variables. Design differentiated content for different groups (such as regular new heroes for the competitive type and enhanced guild systems for the social type) to avoid structural conflicts caused by blind expansion.
- Build long-term trust mechanisms: Appoint a dedicated community manager for regular communication; Immediately admit and compensate for operational mistakes (like Kingsoft CEO's reflection model on "Unrestricted Machine"); Publish annual content plans and fulfill promises such as "no numerical sales" and "permanently retain accounts".
- Avoid structural contradictions from expanding: Adopt a gradual expansion approach (test the acceptance of new groups for a limited time first); Set up separate servers or modes when there is a conflict of demands between new and old players; When conflicts erupt, the vendor takes the initiative to coordinate rather than hide, looking for the greatest common divisor (such as difficulty grading options).

5.3 Technical and Institutional Support

Synergy at the technical and institutional levels is a key guarantee for achieving a win-win situation. The following framework summarizes multiple paths:

Table 2. Win-Win Governance Framework

Dimensions	Core Measures	Expected effects	Responsible party
Technology	AI personalized recommendations, metaverse	Enhance immersion and asset	Manufacturer +

empowerment	social depth, blockchain virtual property rights confirmation	security, reduce loss and disputes	technical provider
Consumer empowerment	Feedback-response mechanisms, community autonomy pilots, content co-creation voting	Players shift from passive to co-building, enhancing loyalty	Manufacturers + Players
Vendor Strategy	Motivation segmentation + long-term trust + gradual expansion	Avoid structural contradictions and achieve a win-win situation for business and reputation	Manufacturers
Institutional safeguards	Age classification system, virtual property protection law, public complaint resolution rate	Provide a legal foundation and regulate the industry ecosystem	Government + Vendor

5.3.1 New Possibilities at the technical level

AI can analyze player behavior to provide customized content recommendations, reducing the loss of "not knowing what to play"; Metaverse technology enhances social stickiness, but privacy risks must be strictly guarded against; Blockchain provides immutable rights to virtual property and resolves long-standing disputes.

5.3.2 Policy Recommendations

Establish a game age classification system with Chinese characteristics, draw on the experience of ESRB and PEGI, and clearly define the content and consumption restrictions for each age group.

- Accelerate the introduction of the Virtual Property Protection Law, which clarifies the legal attributes, trading rules and dispute resolution mechanisms of virtual items.
- Strengthen consumer rights protection by requiring manufacturers to set up dedicated customer service channels and publicize complaint resolution rates, and increase penalties for false advertising and fraud.

6. Conclusion

This study systematically examined the multi-dimensional relationship between manufacturers and consumers in China's online game market, revealing the complexity and dynamics of this relationship. The study found that beneath the apparent prosperity of the current gaming industry lie profound structural contradictions: the tension between profit-driven and user experience, the misalignment between short-term profits and long-term development, and the imbalance between the expansion of power by manufacturers and the damage to consumer rights. These contradictions have erupted through consumer fraud, balance disputes, privacy leaks and group conflicts triggered by "circle expansion", especially gender conflicts in the public opinion field.

The root of the problem lies in the fact that some manufacturers view players as "value that can be exploited infinitely" rather than "relationships that need to be maintained for a long time", simplify "expanding" to "making money from

more people", and shift the responsibility of conflict through algorithmic control and gender issue differentiation. This "vendor centrism" and "game Taylorism" logic not only harms consumer rights (men are the main consumers but remain silent in public opinion), but also erodes the long-term development foundation of the gaming industry.

To achieve a win-win situation for both manufacturers and consumers requires the coordinated advancement of technology, institutions and culture. Technically, AI and the metaverse can serve to optimize experiences rather than induce consumption; Institutionally, legislation on age classification, virtual property protection, and consumer rights protection is in urgent need of improvement; Culturally, manufacturers should return from "land-grabbers" to "service providers", and the player community should move from "identity opposition" to "player consensus".

The limitations of this study lie in the fact that it is mainly based on literature review and case analysis, lacking large-scale first-hand empirical data support, and there are certain representativeness limitations in the selection of cases. Future research could delve into questionnaires or in-depth interviews of consumer segments to explore behavioral differences among players with different motivations and generations; It can also go inside the firm to examine decision-making mechanisms and user relationship management logic; It can also track game community autonomy practices and explore feasible paths for consumer engagement in content co-creation. Only by truly placing consumers at the center of the industrial ecosystem can online games, as a form of digital entertainment, achieve healthy and sustainable development, allowing every player - regardless of gender or preference - to find a sense of belonging and dignity in the virtual world.

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