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Chinese games bring culture to global market

Nation continues to hold position as world's largest video games exporter

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Chinese electronic games are continuously thriving in global markets, and are increasingly becoming carriers of culture to promote cross-cultural understanding and exchanges as a new universal language, said industry experts during the recent 22nd China Digital Entertainment Expo & Conference, better known as ChinaJoy, in Shanghai.

By the end of June, China had a record 679 million gamers. In the first half, actual sales revenue of the domestic game market totaled 168 billion yuan ($23.3 billion), up 14.08 percent year-on-year, according to a report released on July 31 by Zhang Yijun, first vice-chairman of the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association.

Overseas sales of Chinese games exceeded $9.5 billion in the first half, growing 11.07 percent year-on-year. The United States, Japan and South Korea continued to be the main overseas markets for Chinese games, accounting for 55.63 percent of total sales. European nations such as Germany, the United Kingdom and France are becoming emerging destinations for more Chinese games, said the report.

From a global perspective, China continued to hold the position as the world's largest game exporter in the first half, ranking first with a share of 32.6 percent of global total, according to a report released by mobile analytics firm AppsFlyer.

Over the past five years, Chinese games have entered the markets of more than 100 countries and regions around the world. In particular, games such as *Honor of Kings* and *Genshin Impact* have accumulated hundreds of millions of users globally, said Ao Ran, executive vice-chairman of the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association.

"China's gaming industry has shown a positive trend toward high-quality and sustainable development in recent years, since a larger number of Chinese enterprises are collaboratively creating world-class innovative video games within the global supply chain. Notably, the fine traditional Chinese culture is becoming the unique source of innovation and a differentiating advantage for Chinese games," said Richard Yu, vice-president and editor-in-chief at Tencent Interactive Entertainment Group.

The hit title *Black Myth: Wukong*, an action role-playing video game rooted in Chinese mythology, is a prime example of the worldwide appeal of Chinese video games with a strong cultural identity. Industry experts agree that games are rapidly developing beyond products for entertainment, and becoming a new cultural form integrating with advanced technologies and an important carrier of Chinese cultural aspects that keep expanding globally.

Yu pointed out that more Chinese game producers are ramping up efforts to make high-quality original games that draw both domestic and international players. Instead of simply putting cultural elements together, they explore deep into Chinese cultural connotations and strive to interpret them in innovative, globalized and modern ways.

"As a composite cultural carrier that integrates various art forms such as literature, music, film and fine arts, games naturally possess the potential to promote cross-cultural understanding and boast the advantage of crossing cultural boundaries. Their interactivity turns the players into 'interpreters' of different cultures," Yu added.

Not only Chinese producers, but also foreign companies are eyeing opportunities in the global collaboration and cultural integration with games as a bond. Representatives of over 200 companies from nations such as Japan, South Korea, the UK, France and Finland gathered for potential partnerships at the China International Game Developers Conference, which was held on July 31 as part of this year's ChinaJoy.

"There were barely no really successful Chinese console and PC games 10 years ago, but recently we have seen game studios and producers instilling Chinese culture to create something different. China has a wonderful historical culture and that's part of the creativity. In France, we are very much into culture in general, and Chinese culture is no exception — it is something that resonates a lot with us," said Yves Bléhaut, senior vice-president of strategic partnerships at Microids, a French video game publisher and developer.

Sony Interactive Entertainment (Shanghai) Ltd and its PlayStation gaming platform are also actively looking to contribute to China's console game ecosystems. Following the success of *Black Myth: Wukong* on its platform, the company is expecting to cultivate more local game developers in China and better connect the nation's gaming industry and culture with the world. In 2016, the company established the "China Hero Project" to support Chinese console game developers, connect with global counterparts, and help them grow globally with games featuring Chinese culture.

"China has the world's most game users and is one of the most critical and potential markets for PlayStation. We have noticed very early the potential and passion of Chinese game developers. Collaborating with over 400 Chinese game developers and publishers, we aim to introduce good Chinese games to the world," said Tatsuo Eguchi, chairman and president of Sony Interactive Entertainment, at the conference.

To better navigate Chinese game developers in overseas markets, the Research and Service Center for Game Globalization was inaugurated in Shanghai at the conference. It aims to provide one-stop services such as overseas market analysis, compliance guidance, financial services, legal protection and copyright protection.

Moreover, a first batch of guidelines targeting the Japanese, South Korean, British and French markets were also released at the event to support Chinese games' global expansion, comprehensively covering sectors including policies, regulations, market environment, culture, customs and user preferences. More guidelines on other countries in regions such as North America, Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East will also be released this and next year.

"The globalization of games ultimately involves a two-way cultural exchange. Games themselves are self-contained digital worlds where different cultures meet and spark inspiration. So while publishing Chinese games overseas, we also help introduce global cultures into China," said Yu of Tencent Interactive Entertainment.

"We obviously see more foreign friends and international participation at ChinaJoy this year. With games building a globalized platform, we expect to enhance exchanges, reduce barriers and accelerate integration, which will carry us all farther," he added.

Running from Aug 1 to 4, this year's ChinaJoy attracted over 790 business exhibitors from 37 countries and regions including the US, Canada, UK, Germany, Japan and South Korea.



Top: Visitors attend the 22nd China Digital Entertainment Expo & Conference, or ChinaJoy, in Shanghai on Aug 2. XU PEIQIN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Above: Visitors play games developed by Blizzard at ChinaJoy in Shanghai on Aug 3.
LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanghai building intl e-sports hub

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Shanghai is advancing efforts to build itself into an international e-sports hub by introducing top-tier world-class tournaments and more supportive policies.

Global video game developer Riot Games will hold the 2026 global championships for its signature game *Valorant* in Shanghai, Whalen Rozelle, the company's head of international publishing and e-sports, announced on Aug 1.

The news was made public during the 2025 Global E-sports Summit, which was part of the China Digital Entertainment Expo & Conference, better known as ChinaJoy, held in Shanghai from Aug 1 to 4.

The character-based 5v5 tactical game *Valorant* was first released in October 2019. Its global monthly active users have now exceeded 25 million, with a daily concurrent number of users reaching 4.2 million during peak times.

In February 2023, Chinese tech giant Tencent, Riot Games' parent company, announced the introduction of *Valorant* and officially launched it five months later. Official data from a Tencent news conference in July showed that the number of concurrent users for *Valorant* on Chinese servers doubled from over 1 million in 2024 to 2 million in April this year. Preregistrations for the mobile version of *Valorant* exceeded 20 million before its official release in June. Over 50 million downloads were made in the first week.

Riot Games set up a subsidiary in Shanghai in 2015 and built a research center in the city in 2021, the first overseas facility of its kind beyond its headquarters in Los Angeles. Despite the global pandemic, Shanghai managed to hold the global championship for Riot Games' blockbuster game *League of Legends* in 2020.

All these are closely related to market energy, complete infrastructure and a mature e-sports community built up in Shanghai, said Rozelle.

According to the interim report for the Chinese e-sports industry released during the Aug 1 summit, Shanghai held the majority 22.9 percent of all e-sports games held across China during the first six months of the year. The city is home to 34 e-sports clubs, outnumbering all other Chinese cities.

Data from the municipal government show that Shanghai held nearly 2,300 e-sports games last year, generating nearly 1.12 billion yuan ($156 million) in income.

The "Lingjing Fusion" action was officially announced by the Jing'an district government during the summit on Aug 1, with the intention to build an e-sports industry ecosystem in the district.

Efforts will be made to attract e-sports and gaming companies from home and abroad to set up operations in Jing'an in the next three years. Newly established enterprises may be eligible for a maximum 10 million yuan start-up subsidy, or a maximum 5 million yuan housing subsidy, and 30 million yuan of operating incentives.

A one-time reward of up to 5 million yuan may be granted to well-known industry accomplishments. A maximum of 10 million yuan of one-time financial support will be provided to the construction of e-sports industrial parks based on the renovation of old venues. Projects advancing industrial upgrading by applying frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence or virtual reality to e-sports may be entitled to a one-time fiscal support input of up to 10 million yuan.

A number of supportive policies have been rolled out in Shanghai over the past few years. In 2019, the municipal government released a set of 20 measures to complete infrastructure and enhance the overall business environment for e-sports companies. The municipal government launched last July its three-year action plan for 2024-26, saying that the city's direct income from e-sports games should exceed 8 billion yuan by the end of 2026.

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> **Zhang Yijun,** first vice-chairman of China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association

International cooperation is crucial. Therefore, the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Jing'an District signed a strategic memorandum of understanding with the E-sports Committee of China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association and the Japan e-Sports Union on Aug 1 to deepen cooperation in industrial internationalization, standard promulgation, technology innovation and exchanges, as well as nurturing talent.

Zhang Yijun, first vice-chairman of China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association, said that local governments' financial and fiscal policies, combined with the optimization of industrial funds, have boosted the high-quality development of China's e-sports industry. Integrating technology, culture, entertainment and sales, the e-sports industry has helped to inject more vitality into the consumer market and generated a large number of job opportunities.

According to the recently released half-year report for China's e-sports industry, sector revenue approached 12.8 billion yuan in the first six months, up 6.1 percent from a year earlier. Livestreaming of games contributed the majority — 80.38 percent of revenue.

"China's e-sports industry has built a complete industrial chain, connecting livestreaming platforms for well-known games, clubs and cross-industry cooperation. The sector has become more regulated, mainstream and international," said Zhang.



A view of Tencent Games' booth at ChinaJoy expo in Shanghai on Aug 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY