

Study on the Impact of “Tomb Raider” Cultural IP on Hangzhou's City Image and Urban Culture

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Abstract: *Tomb Raider* has created a new genre of fiction called ‘tomb raiding literature’, and its cultural IP has been increasingly developed and utilised. Scholars have found that ‘*Tomb Raider*’ is very relevant to Hangzhou's urban culture, but there is a lack of concrete research data to elucidate the underlying mechanisms and actual impact. Therefore, this study will focus on the ways and specific effects of *Tomb Raider*'s influence on Hangzhou's urban image and culture. The research methods include the interview method, questionnaire survey method, and literature research method in order to understand the public's awareness of the IP's influence on Hangzhou's urban culture. The study found that *Tomb Raider* has made Hangzhou's city image more youthful, trendy, and innovative through five important ways, including the original story background, festivals, cultural activities, related peripheral distribution, and linkage with local brands. The cultural IP has provided Hangzhou city culture with deep, broad, diversified cultural empowerment. This study helps to analyse the phenomenon of innovative development of the *Tomb Raider* cultural IP and Hangzhou's urban culture and provides models and experiences for other cities.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since its serialisation, *Tomb Raider* has been loved and sought after by readers, with both physical book sales and online popularity at the top of the list. Since 2015, *Tomb Raider* has made Hangzhou a ‘Pain City’. ‘Pain city’ refers to the phenomenon that in ACGN (animation, comics, games, novels) culture, anime characters or cultural elements widely penetrate into all corners of the city, in which the word “pain” emphasises the huge size and ostentatious decoration (Niga, 2024). In China, Hangzhou is known as the ‘Pain City’ of *Tomb Raider*, and fan enthusiasm for the original novel and its spin-offs has led to the establishment of several landmarks related to the work, attracting many fans to visit the city (König, 2024). Current research focuses on Hangzhou's ‘August 17th Rice Festival’ under the incubation of modern urban festivals and the impact of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ on the fan tourism economy (Bourdieu, n.d.),[4]. However, such a research horizon is limited and has not yet systematically explored the specific impact of the IP of *Tomb Raider* on the shaping of Hangzhou's urban culture. Therefore, it is difficult for

the existing results to provide reference experiences for the symbiotic development of other cities and their cultural IPs.

This study focuses on the phenomenon of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ creating Hangzhou's ‘City of Pain’ and analyses the sustained impact of the cultural IP's creation and promotion strategies on Hangzhou. The study concludes that *Tomb Raider* not only brings fresh blood to Hangzhou's local culture, but also facilitates the development of a mutually beneficial model between the two. This paper uses literature analysis method, questionnaire survey method and interview method to conduct research, the advantage of these three methods is that they can be good from multiple dimensions to analyse the ‘*Tomb Raider*’ to create its cultural IP ways and its impact on Hangzhou's urban culture and image,’ which is conducive to the research. The ultimate goal of this study is to analyse the multilayered benefits brought to Hangzhou by the successful creation of this IP. Through this study, it will help to explore the cultural dissemination and city image of Hangzhou's new IP culture, and at the same time provide sustainable

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development experience for other similar symbiotic models of 'cultural IPs and cities for mutual benefit'.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In summarising and analysing the relevant research literature at home and abroad, this study found that Zhao Rongli is currently studying the generation of urban festivals related to *Tomb Raider* in the article *Research on Modern Urban Festivals - Taking the August 17th Rice Festival as an Example*, contributing to this study in terms of the reciprocity between urban festivals and cultural IPs (Rongli, 2024). Grischa Bertram examines the criticality of culture-led - and sub-culture-led urban regeneration in Germany, discussing urban indigeneity in literature and culture (Bertram, 2024). Nardine El-Bardis in *Urban Culture as a Challenge of Enhancing Social Interaction in Public Spaces* examines the interrelationship between society and the city and the role of urban culture in it (El-Bardisy, 2024). The literature referenced above does not cover much in terms of research on the cultural impact and shaping of specific cultural IPs on the relevant cities, and this study will start from the actual embodiment of cultural IPs on the formation and development of urban culture, and conduct a study on the causes and effects of the impact of *Tomb Raider*'s cultural IPs on Hangzhou's urban image and culture.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Questionnaire Method

The questionnaire was initially set up with seventeen questions, divided into basic and detailed questions. The basic questions collected information on the gender, age, city and status of the person completing the questionnaire, with the advantage of being able to clearly collect data on commonalities and characteristics that exist in the general public, universally and as a group. Detailed questions collected the opinions, understanding, suggestions, etc. of the questionnaire fillers about *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou, the advantage of researching these questions is that it can understand people's understanding of the impact of *Tomb Raider* on Hangzhou's urban culture from multiple perspectives, which will make this study more persuasive.

3.2 Interview Method

This study collected data through the interview method and set up seven in-depth questions aimed at exploring the correlation between *Tomb Raider* fans and Hangzhou's urban culture and its potential for cultural integration. Based on the interviews, the specific impact of the interaction between *Tomb Raider*'s cultural IP and Hangzhou on the interviewees was derived and the data coded. Specific questions aimed to explore respondents' purchasing power of related cultural peripherals and their participation in activities, their understanding of the linkage between *Tomb Raider* IP and Hangzhou, their reasons for liking the two, the impact of *Tomb Raider* on the respondents, their impression of Hangzhou now, and the ways in which *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou can develop in-depth cultural fusion and city image shaping in the future.

Three fans of *Tomb Raider* were selected as interviewees for this interview, which was biased towards subjectivity and aimed at capturing fans' personal feelings and opinions. The interviews had the advantage of providing insight into the cultural identity and emotional connection of the interviewees to *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou, and at the same time, the content of the interviews closely matched the theme of this study, providing valuable qualitative data for the study. Based on the subjective responses of the interviewees during the interviews, the results of the analyses in the three areas of personal experience, meaningful value and city impression were derived respectively.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Questionnaire Results

A total of 104 people participated in this questionnaire survey, and a total of 104 valid questionnaires were collected. The questionnaire survey data shows that 84 respondents believe that the storyline of Hangzhou in the original *Tomb Raider* is one of the reasons why they know and love Hangzhou; 90 respondents believe that the special festivals organised by the cultural IP are an important way for them to go to, learn about, and integrate into Hangzhou, and the most important and typical one is the August 17th Rice Festival in Hangzhou every year; 76 respondents believe that the various cultural activities organised by the IP in conjunction with Hangzhou attract them to learn about the city's culture. 76 respondents believe that the various

cultural activities organised by the IP in conjunction with Hangzhou attract them to learn about Hangzhou's urban culture.

11 percent of the respondents went to Hangzhou every year to attend the festival, 30 per cent went to Hangzhou to attend the festival, and 51 percent wanted to attend but did not go to Hangzhou to attend for personal time reasons. Seventy-six respondents believed that the related cultural activities held by *Tomb Raider* combined with Hangzhou's local culture to make it more three-dimensional and vivid, such as the stage play of Notes on the Rainy Village, the author's book signing, and the character's birthday party. 28 respondents buy peripheral products of *Tomb Raider* every month, 30 respondents buy them 1-2 times per quarter, 20 respondents buy them 1-2 times a year, and individual respondents said they would buy peripheral products as long as they came out with their favourite ones. Of the 104 questionnaires, 100 respondents had knowledge of the linkage between *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou culture, attractions and brands. More than 70 respondents knew about the linkage between the *Tomb Raider* IP and the national key cultural relics protection unit Xiling Yinsha, Wushanju, Louwailou,

Xiaofeng Bookstore, the West Lake, and the Hubin Yintai, and more than 40 respondents knew about the linkage between the *Tomb Raider* IP and the centuries-old Hangzhou old shop Fang Hui Chun Tang, Hangzhou city road Lushan Road, and Hangzhou Joy City's linkage.

4.2 Interviews Results

This paper uses interviews to obtain research information, the interview subjects are three rice in different cities, the interview questions include ‘the participation degree of the activities and the purchasing power of the neighbourhood’, ‘the significance and value of travelling to Hangzhou for the *Tomb Raider*’, ‘the impact of the *Tomb Raider* on your impression and feelings towards the city’, ‘what other city image and culture can be integrated with the cultural ip of *Tomb Raider*’ and so on. The impact of *Tomb Raider*'s on your impression and feelings towards the city’, What other city images and cultures can Hangzhou integrate with *Tomb Raider*'s? The data were coded at the end of the interviews when the results were collected, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Interview data coding.

Level 1: Open coding	Level 2: Axis coding	
	Genus	Causality
Actively participate in <i>Tomb Raider</i> -related festivals and cultural activities, and purchase peripheral cultural products and artefacts	Personal experience	Event Participation Neighbourhood Buying
Impressed and influenced by ‘ <i>Tomb Raider</i> ’ and travelled to Hangzhou, I went to all the places where the characters went, saw the same scenery as the characters in the book, felt the same culture and characteristics of the city, and integrated into the city.	Significance value	Emotional resonance Sense of belonging, satisfaction, happiness Role Connection
Feeling the real local customs of Hangzhou, the city's culture and urban characteristics show diversification and youthfulness, Hangzhou has become the <i>Tomb Raider</i> 's ‘City of Pain’	City Impressions	Real Experience Cultural Empowerment
<i>Tomb Raider</i> promotes its cultural IP through various forms and combines with Hangzhou's non-legacy culture, linking up and interacting with citizens in Hangzhou's public venues or streets and alleys, becoming a feature of Hangzhou's regional culture.	Cultural integration	In-depth publicity Non-legacy Linkage Deeply penetrate into people's lives Formation of cultural symbols

All three interviewees have participated in activities related to *Tomb Raider*, but at the same time, one of the interviewees believes that there are still limitations to the organisation of activities: 'The locations of activities such as *Tomb Raider* 817 are too limited, and I hope that more locations can be developed'. Three interviewees have also purchased related peripherals and have a large purchasing power, the interviewee said: 'The peripherals of *Tomb Raider* Notes are updated very frequently, so I buy them very quickly. The three interviewees made similar comments to the question 'What is the significance and value of travelling to Hangzhou for *Tomb Raider*?', saying that they were influenced by *Tomb Raider* and had strong emotional resonance with Hangzhou.

Two of the three interviewees went to Hangzhou for the first time because of travelling, and one of them because of '*Tomb Raider*', which empowered her with cultural IP, as she said that she first saw Hangzhou's customs and traditions because of '*Tomb Raider*'. Another interviewee said, 'The first time I went to Hangzhou was for travelling, and later I went to Hangzhou for *Tomb Raider*, and Hangzhou is very accommodating to *Tomb Raider*'. All three interviewees are aware of the offline linkages between *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou, such as the linkages between *Tomb Raider* and Xiling Yinsha, Hangzhou Binjiang Longhu Sky Street, Fang Huichun Tang, Xiaofeng Bookstore and other large shopping districts. Three interviewees respectively believed that *Tomb Raider* could spread the cultural history of the attraction in the form of different activities, do more screen casts combining *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou culture in public places, or conduct some commercial performances about *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou's non-heritage culture, etc.; one of the interviewees pointed out that the culture of *Tomb Raider* could be more deeply integrated into the daily life of local residents and become a part of it. They suggested that this could be done by creating city symbols with regional characteristics or organising public welfare activities in the name of the characters in the book, thereby attracting the participation of more diverse groups. This strategy not only helps to increase the connection between *Tomb Raider* and the local community, but also helps to transform its cultural value into a unique urban cultural symbol of Hangzhou, which in turn promotes widespread cultural recognition and dissemination.

5 DISCUSSION

Through the results of the questionnaire survey and interviews, this study finds that the development of *Tomb Raider* in Hangzhou and the extension of its cultural IP has a positive impact on Hangzhou in various aspects, which is reflected in the following - *Tomb Raider's* cultural IP has a positive impact on Hangzhou's city image and culture in five ways, namely through the fascinating background of the original story, the organisation of related festivals, the organisation of a wide range of cultural activities, the release of related peripherals, and the association of cultural attractions and brands (mainly local brands). The *Tomb Raider* cultural IP has a positive impact on Hangzhou's city image and culture in five ways: through its fascinating original story background, organising related festivals and celebrations, organising various cultural activities, distributing related peripherals, and linking cultural attractions and brands (mainly Hangzhou's local brands). The combination of *Tomb Raider's* cultural IP and Hangzhou's culture can play a promotional role for both parties, allowing more people to understand the work as well as Hangzhou, expanding the influence of *Tomb Raider's* IP, developing Hangzhou's tourism industry, and boosting Hangzhou's economic development.

Tomb Raider has culturally empowered Hangzhou, resulting in more diversified cultural development and increased popularity among young people. The results of this survey directly respond to the core question of this study - the ways in which the IP of '*Tomb Raider*' influences Hangzhou's city image and culture, and the specific effects. According to Field Theory, the position of *Tomb Raider* IP in the field of cultural industry is that it has a high status in domestic literature and is the pioneer of the new novel genre of '*Tomb Raider* Literature'; this cultural IP has solid capital accumulation - in November 2016, it was ranked in the 'Top 10 Chinese IP Value List - Online Literature' in the 2016 China Pan-Entertainment Index Ceremony. In November 2016, '*Tomb Raider*' was ranked in the 2016 China Pan-Entertainment Index Ceremony as 'China IP Value List-Network Literature Top 10', and on July 12, 2017, the 2017 Cat Film Hurun Original Literature IP Value List was released, and '*Tomb Raider*' ranked second, which belongs to the first echelon of the domestic tomb-robbing novels and has a deep and wide influence, and has a high cultural capital. deep and wide, with high cultural capital (Niga, 2024). After 2015, *Tomb Raider* was adapted into a web series by Huanrui Century Film & Media Co, Ltd, which is not only

limited to novel publication, but also successfully expanded into various fields such as movies, TV dramas, games, etc., which enlarged the IP's commercial value and realisation ability, and provided more interaction and consumption options for the paddy rice (Niga, 2024). As a first-tier city with a developed domestic economy, Hangzhou has a high degree of tolerance and absorption of diversified cultures, and the storyline unfolding in Hangzhou in the original novel is fascinating, so the interactive and cooperative behaviours of *Tomb Raider's* cultural IP in Hangzhou, which develops and influences its city image and culture, are pioneering in the cultural industry development mode of ‘Novel IP+City’ in the whole country. This interactive and co-operative behaviour of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ cultural IP in Hangzhou develops and influences its city image and culture, which is a pioneering and leading position in the national ‘novel IP+city’ cultural industry development model (Niga, 2024). In the commercial field, Nanpai Pan Entertainment, the cultural company to which the IP of *Tomb Raider* belongs, deeply explores its commercial value and creates the IP industry ecosystem of *Tomb Raider* in a sub-type cooperation mode, so as to achieve the maximisation of its value. On the basis of the original IP, Nanpai Pan Entertainment also derives and develops related IPs, such as Old Nine Gates, Hidden Sea Flowers and Sea of Shahs, etc., and develops and exploits them from multiple angles and multiple dimensions, such as books, TVs, movies, comics, cartoons, games, etc., Drama and other multi-faceted and multi-dimensional depth of its development and excavation (Niga, 2024).

According to the questionnaire survey, the age of the ‘rice people’ ranges from below 15 to 50 years old, with teenagers between 15 and 25 years old being the main group. The IP of *Tomb Raider* boasts a large consumer clientele, and the ‘rice people’ contribute a great deal of influence to it in participating in festivals and purchasing peripherals, making it one of the better-known groups of fans of the novel in China. With regard to the organisation of festivals, the Hangzhou 817 Rice Festival, for example, generates the concept and notion of a ‘sense of place’ specifically in Hangzhou (Bourdieu, n.d.). The success of the official organisation of such festivals has provided the *Tomb Raider* fan community (hereinafter referred to as ‘rice’) with a place where they can be accepted, accommodated, and promote a sense of belonging to a common identity. The organisation of a series of cultural activities has created a more positive interaction between the rice, *Tomb Raider* and Hangzhou, which has led to a

greater interest in the combination of *Tomb Raider's* IP and Hangzhou's image and culture amongst other people, and has effectively raised their attention; the organisation of festivals and activities has led to a trend of tourism amongst fans of Hangzhou, triggering a mutual resonance of emotions and reinforcing the value of the identity of the fans, leading to an increase in the goodwill and acceptance of this combination of cultures among other people. The goodwill and acceptance of other people for this cultural combination behaviour is effectively increased (Rongli, 2024),(Zhange, 2023). According to Field Theory, the interaction between the *Tomb Raider* cultural IP and Hangzhou's local culture in the urban cultural field is a multi-dimensional and multi-level process, involving the integration of literary creation with the urban context, the combination of the fan economy and urban tourism, the organisation of cultural activities and the development of peripheral products; The creation of the *Tomb Raider* series of novels was inspired by the author Nanpai Sanshu's experience of living in an old mansion along Kirin Street in Hangzhou, where the character Wu Qi opened an antique shop next to the Xiling Yinshe, a setting that cleverly connects reality with the world of the novels and also generates readers' interest in and emotional connection with the city of Hangzhou; Hangzhou's major shopping malls also launched exhibitions, flash shops and other activities related to *Tomb Raider* to attract a large number of tourists to visit and experience them. and other activities, attracting a large number of tourists to visit and experience, such as various offline activities held by Hangzhou Joy City and Hangzhou Hubin Yintai in the August 17th Rice Festival. During the August 17th Rice Festival, Nanpai Pan-Entertainment will join hands with various parties to host and set up a wealth of thematic activities and cultural experience projects, such as the cultural experience of the cliff carvings in the three caves of the West Lake Yixia, the cultural experience of the Song Rhythm of the Wushan Store of the Xiling Yinsha, and so on, so that the rice farmers will be able to experience the cultural charisma of Hangzhou. cultural charm, and also promote the exchange and integration of different cultures; In terms of peripheral distribution, *Tomb Raider* already has a ready-made IP generation and development, so it puts the focus on IP consumption (Daocheng and Ziye, 2021). The creation, development and sale of different peripheral products attracts different hobbies of rice consumer groups to make purchases, and subconsciously integrates Hangzhou cultural elements into it, and consumers potentially deepen or change their impression of

Hangzhou (Niga, 2024). The linkage between ‘*Tomb Raider*’ and Hangzhou culture reflects the association with the level of the city's development status, cultural characteristics and humanistic features (Chen and Yu, 2023). Analysing the production network of IP products of *Tomb Raider* from the perspective of collective production, according to the theory of Art World Theory, *Tomb Raider* takes into full consideration the collective production and interactive cooperation between its IP and various cultural brand companies when choosing the linkage objects for cultural product production (Backer, n.d.). Nanpai Pan Entertainment, as the original company of this IP, takes the cultural IP of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ as the leading body, and the selected linked brands strictly follow its regulations as well as those of the industry in this industrial chain, such as Hangzhou's centuries-old Fang Huichuntang, which has been linked with ‘*Tomb Raider*’ with its peripheral teabag gift box and seal hand lanyard, stationery brand Kinbor and its peripheral handbook gift box and paper and pencil book, as well as Xiling Seal Society and Xiaofeng Bookstore and ‘*Tomb Raider*’ offline attractions linkage, etc., to jointly carry out the production of cultural products; in the production process, it will involve the selection of product illustrators, and among the illustrators ‘*Tomb Raider*’ had cooperated with, ‘Flower and Wine Qingming’ and ‘A Tang Tang’, ‘Hundred Miles of Self-Rolling’ and other painters have drawn product pictures that are loved by the rice (Yuanyuan, 2017). According to Field Theory theory, ‘*Tomb Raider*’ cultural IP is top-down co-operation with other brands in product production, in this top-down at this time the major brands are in a benign competitive relationship, so in the selection of linkage brands at the same time, ‘*Tomb Raider*’ IP's original company, Nanpai Fanshuang Entertainment, will select the excellent artists in the field of homoerotic painting to carry out the creation of the product picture (Niga, 2024). *Tomb Raider*’ cultural IP on Hangzhou city to promote the role of Hangzhou city image of youth, trendy, for Hangzhou city's local culture to provide better product attachment and cultural empowerment, more diversified, development and innovation at the same time highlights the city's local nature, to the rice ‘home’ feeling.

6 CONCLUSION

This study finds that *Tomb Raider* has shaped its cultural IP image through five ways: through the background of its original story, by organising

festivals and celebrations, by holding cultural events, by releasing related peripherals, and by linking up cultural attractions and brands (mainly Hangzhou's local brands), which further leads to the conclusion of its study that the IP positively influences Hangzhou's urban image and culture through the image it has successfully shaped. This study provides a lot of valuable references for the future research in the direction of ‘cultural IP+city’, mainly affecting the development mode and innovative ways of ‘literary novel IP+city’, and digging out the dissemination ways of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ in Hangzhou, as well as providing thoughts on whether it can be developed and disseminated in other cities. The research mainly affects the development mode and innovative ways of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ in Hangzhou, and explores the dissemination way of ‘*Tomb Raider*’ cultural IP in Hangzhou, and also provides thoughts on whether it can develop and disseminate in other cities. In the course of the study, a clearer conclusion was drawn on the impact of Hangzhou's city image and culture on the *Tomb Raider* cultural IP, and at the same time, we also thought about other similar symbiotic modes of ‘mutual benefit and reciprocity between cultural IPs and cities’, which is conducive to further in-depth research on the specific means and strategies of the *Tomb Raider* cultural IP in the marketing and communication levels from the top to the bottom. It is also conducive to further in-depth research on the specific means and strategies of the *Tomb Raider* IP at all levels of marketing and communication. Future research should be more based on the degree of integration between *Tomb Raider*'s cultural IP and Hangzhou's city image and culture as well as the current situation, with an eye on the future communication means and development trend of ‘cultural novel IP+city’ for in-depth investigation.

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