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FROM CULTURAL RESOURCES TO GLOBAL CONSUMER VALUE: THE BRIDGE–IMC MODEL AND THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF BLACK MYTH: WUKONG UNDER THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Abstract. The global circulation of cultural products depends on more than the possession of distinctive heritage. Cultural resources must be integrated into a marketable experience, distributed through digital systems and converted into value that foreign consumers can understand and participate in creating. This article develops the BRIDGE–IMC model through a theory-elaborating case study of Black Myth: Wukong. Evidence from 2020 to July 2026 is triangulated across producer announcements, platform records, technology-partner materials, independent academic studies and institutional reports. BRIDGE represents six connected dimensions: the Belt and Road institutional context (B), relationship building (R), integration of cultural resources (I), digital marketing capability (D), global market expansion (G), and consumer engagement (E). International marketing capability (IMC) provides the orchestration logic linking these dimensions. The case shows that Chinese mythology, historic architecture, music, visual art and advanced game technology were assembled into a coherent global consumer experience. Digital visibility and platform access supported rapid scale, while participation through play, reviews, livestreams and user-generated content converted cultural meaning into experiential, symbolic and social value. However, the concentration of early demand in East Asia demonstrates that global availability is not equivalent to balanced international diversification. The model proposes that consumer engagement creates a recursive learning loop that renews relationships, resource integration and digital routines. The contribution is a process explanation of how cultural resources become consumer value, brand competitiveness and international market performance. The framework also provides a diagnostic tool for China–Kazakhstan cultural-industry projects under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: BRIDGE–IMC model; cultural industries; international marketing capability; Black Myth: Wukong; consumer engagement; Belt and Road Initiative

Introduction

Cultural resources do not enter international markets by themselves. A classical narrative, architectural tradition, musical form or visual symbol may possess substantial cultural value and still generate little foreign-market value if it cannot be organized into a product that audiences

can access, understand and use. The strategic problem for cultural industries is therefore one of conversion: how can culturally specific resources become consumer value without losing the difference that makes them distinctive?

Digital games make this problem unusually visible. They combine software, narrative, visual art, music, performance, design and intellectual property in one interactive product. They also circulate through global platforms on which attention, reviews, livestreams and user-generated content affect discovery and demand. Recent research describes video games as an important site of cultural production rather than a marginal entertainment form (Yodovich et al., 2025). Their production depends on ecosystems that cross technology, media, heritage and creative sectors (Klimas et al., 2026). International success consequently requires more than high production quality. It requires a capability to coordinate relationships, cultural meanings, digital channels, market expansion and consumer participation.

Black Myth: Wukong provides a revealing case. Developed by Game Science and released in August 2024, the action role-playing game draws on Journey to the West and a dense field of Chinese mythological, architectural, musical and philosophical references. Guinness World Records reports that it sold 20 million units in its first month and exceeded 2.2 million concurrent Steam players on its first day (Guinness World Records, n.d.). By 30 July 2026, its Steam page displayed more than 875,000 reviews across languages and an ‘Overwhelmingly Positive’ overall evaluation (Steam, n.d.). These outcomes make the case theoretically useful, but the evidence also calls for restraint. Launch demand was concentrated in East Asia, and independent research finds that international players often valued technical and gameplay accessibility while missing parts of the cultural narrative (Gao et al., 2025). Global availability and global market diversification are not the same result.

Existing international marketing capability research explains how firms sense markets, build relationships, implement marketing strategies and reconfigure resources (Morgan, 2012; Morgan et al., 2018; Pfajfar, Mitreġa, & Shoham, 2024a). Digital marketing research adds scalable communication, analytics and customer interaction (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Wielgos et al., 2021). Cultural-industry research explains symbolic value and the tension between authenticity and market accessibility (Morhart et al., 2015; Throsby, 2008). Yet these streams do not fully explain the process through which cultural resources move from organizational inputs to consumer value and international market performance.

This article develops the BRIDGE–IMC model to provide that process explanation. BRIDGE denotes the Belt and Road institutional context (B), relationship building (R), integration of cultural resources (I), digital marketing capability (D), global market expansion (G), and consumer engagement (E). IMC refers exclusively to international marketing capability. The model extends the prior hierarchical CIIMC framework by converting its macro, foundational, core and strategic layers into an observable case process. B is the macro context; D supplies foundational digital execution; R and I perform relational and cross-cultural conversion; G provides strategic expansion; and E turns market response into consumer value and renewal feedback.

Three research questions guide the study. First, how were Chinese cultural resources integrated and marketed in the internationalization of Black Myth: Wukong? Second, how do the BRIDGE dimensions interact to convert those resources into consumer value? Third, what can this case contribute to the design of international marketing capability for China–Kazakhstan cultural-industry cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)? The article contributes a mid-range process model and a set of testable propositions. It does not claim that

the game was an official BRI project; rather, it uses the case to identify firm- and ecosystem-level mechanisms that BRI cultural cooperation can enable.

Literature review

International marketing capability in digital cultural markets

Marketing capability is the repeatable organizational ability to deploy resources in order to understand and serve markets. Day's (1994) distinction among inside-out, outside-in and spanning processes remains useful: firms need operational routines, market-sensing processes and mechanisms that connect the two. In international settings, capability must additionally coordinate market knowledge, strategy formation and implementation across institutional and cultural boundaries (Morgan et al., 2018). Export performance depends not on possession of a strategy alone but on the ability to execute and adapt it.

Dynamic capability theory explains why the capability base must change. Sensing, seizing and reconfiguring allow organizations to respond to technological and market discontinuity (Teece, 2007). International dynamic marketing capabilities are particularly relevant when platforms, audience tastes and institutional conditions change simultaneously (Hoque et al., 2022; Pfajfar et al., 2024a, 2024b). The distinction between ordinary and dynamic capability matters in a cultural project: releasing content reliably is an operating capability; changing the narrative format, partner configuration or business model is a strategic renewal capability.

Digital marketing capability forms the operational infrastructure of this process. It combines content distribution, platform management, customer-data use, campaign experimentation and real-time response. Such capabilities have direct value relevance for firm performance and customer outcomes (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Wielgos et al., 2021), while the wider digital-marketing literature emphasizes the interaction of technology, content, consumer behavior and governance (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Their contribution is increasingly treated as part of a capability hierarchy rather than as a stand-alone tool set (Manis & Madhavaram, 2023). A recent review in emerging-economy settings similarly identifies marketing analytics, social media, customer engagement and organizational readiness as connected drivers of innovation and performance (Elkhoudary et al., 2026).

For cultural products, however, digital access is an incomplete outcome. A trailer can be seen globally while the narrative remains culturally opaque. The international marketing capability of a cultural enterprise must therefore link platform execution to cultural interpretation, relational legitimacy and innovation. This is the theoretical position from which BRIDGE-IMC begins. Firm-level cultural intelligence and social-media technology can facilitate this link, but only when they are institutionalized as repeatable marketing routines (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2022).

Cultural-resource integration, authenticity and consumer value

Cultural resources include stories, symbols, places, rituals, artistic practices, skills and intellectual property. Their value is not additive. A product does not become more meaningful simply by accumulating visible signs of heritage. Integration is required: resources must support a coherent narrative, experience and brand promise. In video games, the integration challenge is especially demanding because cultural meaning must work through mechanics, environment, sound, character design and player action.

Authenticity is central to the evaluation of this integration. Consumers may regard a cultural brand as authentic when it appears credible, internally consistent, culturally grounded and faithful to its claimed identity (Morhart et al., 2015). Cross-cultural evidence also shows

that perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between brand experience and stronger consumer-brand attachment, although effects vary across markets (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Authenticity should therefore not be treated as the absence of adaptation. It is an audience judgment about whether adaptation preserves a meaningful source identity.

The relevant output is consumer value. For an interactive cultural product, value can be functional (technical quality and playability), experiential (immersion and emotion), symbolic (identity, cultural meaning and status), and social (participation in communities and shared interpretation). Cultural value and commercial value can reinforce one another, but they can also diverge. A technically successful game may leave international players outside its deeper narrative, while a culturally respected work may fail to reach a scalable audience.

The latest reception research on *Black Myth: Wukong* demonstrates this tension. Gao et al. (2025) find that Chinese audiences emphasized cultural authenticity and identity, whereas many international players focused on gameplay, technology and accessibility. Earlier case analysis identified sensory, symbolic, translation, technical and playability factors as joint conditions of cross-cultural acceptance (Mao, 2024), while research on Chinese mobile games shows that ‘Chineseness’ is actively debated inside online communities (Li & Li, 2023). The findings suggest that integration must be evaluated twice: first within the product, and then in the meanings consumers actually construct.

Relationships, global expansion and consumer engagement

International cultural production is ecosystem-based. Developers require platforms, hardware and software partners, distributors, translators, creators, media, cultural institutions and audience communities. The relational view explains how complementary assets, knowledge sharing and governance can create value that no single organization controls (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Current video-game research likewise identifies cooperation, knowledge management and adaptive coordination as central to cross-industry projects (Klimas et al., 2026). Relationships are therefore not merely a promotional channel; they are productive infrastructure.

Global expansion adds market selection, localization, positioning, pricing, platform access and scale. Standardization and adaptation are not opposing solutions but contingent choices that must fit product and market conditions (Mandler et al., 2021). Digital platforms can make a cultural product immediately available across borders, but they also concentrate data and bargaining power. Platformization reorganizes cultural production around programmable infrastructures, visibility rules and continuous metrics (Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

Consumer engagement changes the direction of value creation. It includes cognitive attention, emotional investment and behavioral participation through use, reviews, recommendation, content creation and community activity. Social-media strategy turns audiences from recipients into participants (Li et al., 2021), while engagement research emphasizes the managerial importance of listening, interaction and user-generated content (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Cross-country evidence further shows that cultural conditions influence clicking, sharing and electronic word of mouth (Mattison Thompson & Brouthers, 2021). Engagement is consequently both an outcome of international marketing and a source of new market knowledge.

Digital content can build engagement, trust and value when it is useful, relevant and narratively coherent (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). It can also amplify misunderstanding or controversy. BRIDGE-IMC therefore treats engagement as a recursive mechanism: consumers receive and interpret cultural value, but their responses also reshape relationships, integration choices and digital routines.

The BRI and the China–Kazakhstan relevance

The BRI is an institutional setting for connectivity and exchange rather than a substitute for firm capability. Research on BRI markets shows that cultural friction can affect export performance even when infrastructure and policy access improve (Li et al., 2019). Kazakhstan's BRI engagement also combines national development logic with international institutional imagination (Lee et al., 2021). The implication is that policy opportunity must be translated into relationships, products and audience value.

This translation is relevant to Kazakhstan's growing creative economy. Recent studies emphasize the role of universities, cities and cross-sector networks in the development of Kazakhstani creative industries (Kim & Comunian, 2024), while a Central Asian perspective links the creative economy to diversification, identity and regional cooperation (Auken et al., 2025). Official information reported 45,500 registered creative-industry entities in Kazakhstan in 2025, with strong concentration in Almaty and Astana and a large share of individual entrepreneurs (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). Smaller cultural firms need shared capabilities and relationships precisely because they cannot independently finance every internationalization function.

The literature thus leaves a process gap. International marketing explains capability; cultural studies explain meaning; platform research explains digital circulation; BRI research explains institutions. BRIDGE–IMC links these levels around a single conversion question: how does a cultural resource become consumer value and market performance?

Methodology

Research design and case selection

The study uses a theory-elaborating single-case design. A single case is appropriate when the phenomenon is revelatory, theoretically significant and embedded in a complex real-world context (Yin, 2018). Extreme or highly visible cases can expose mechanisms that are difficult to observe in average cases, provided the study does not generalize frequencies from one observation (Eisenhardt, 1989). Black Myth: Wukong was selected because it combines a culturally dense source, advanced digital production, rapid market scale, extensive public traces and evidence of both successful engagement and cross-cultural limitation.

The unit of analysis is the international market development of the game as a cultural product, not Game Science as an entire firm. The observation period begins with the first widely circulated gameplay reveal in 2020 and continues to 30 July 2026. The period captures pre-release attention formation, partner and platform preparation, launch, market response, cultural spillovers and post-launch reception.

The case is used to elaborate a process theory, not to test the causal effect of the BRI. No reviewed source identifies the game as an official BRI project. Accordingly, the B dimension is specified as the institutional context in which the case mechanisms can be transferred to cross-border cultural cooperation. This boundary avoids a common inferential error: assigning a policy label to a commercial outcome without evidence of a direct program relationship.

Evidence collection and analysis

The evidentiary archive was constructed from five source groups. Producer-controlled records supplied release and positioning information. Platform and market records supplied dated indicators of availability, reviews, concurrent use, sales and awards. Technology partner records documented complementary production and marketing relationships. Peer-reviewed studies provided independent analysis of cultural representation and reception. Government and

institutional reports provided evidence of cultural-tourism spillovers and the policy context. Table 1 summarizes the source logic.

Table 1 – Case evidence and its analytical role

Evidence group	Examples and period	Analytical use	Reliability and limitation
Producer-controlled records	Game Science product descriptions, trailers and official sales announcement, 2020–2025	Positioning, release sequence, cultural narrative and first-party performance claims	Direct evidence of intent and milestones; promotional framing requires triangulation
Platform and market records	Steam store/review page; Guinness World Records; The Game Awards, 2024–2026	Global availability, engagement scale, sales milestones and external recognition	Observable and dated; platform metrics are dynamic and do not reveal all regional sales
Technology and ecosystem records	NVIDIA partnership announcements and technical documentation, 2024	Relationship building, digital production capability and global co-marketing	Partner-verified; focuses on technology users and omits confidential arrangements
Independent research	Peer-reviewed studies of cross-cultural communication and audience reception, 2024–2026	Cultural integration, authenticity, accessibility and asymmetric reception	Provides methodological independence; early scholarship remains case-specific
Institutional and spillover records	Chinese government cultural-tourism reports; Kazakhstan creative-industry policy information, 2024–2025	Cultural spillovers and transferability to BRI cultural-industry development	Useful for policy outcomes; not evidence that the game was an official BRI project

Note – all sources are publicly accessible; dynamic platform values are reported with an observation date.

Analysis proceeded in three rounds. In the first round, evidence was coded in descriptive terms, including partner resource, cultural symbol, narrative integration, technical capability, platform reach, localization, review activity, audience interpretation and spillover. In the second round, these codes were grouped under relationship, integration, digital, global and engagement mechanisms. In the third round, the mechanisms were mapped onto the earlier hierarchical CIIMC logic and connected to consumer value, brand competitiveness and performance. The BRI context was added only at the institutional level.

Triangulation emphasized convergence and contradiction. A producer statement was not used alone when an external record was available. Dynamic metrics are reported with dates. Contradictory evidence—especially the difference between global sales visibility and the regional concentration of demand—was retained because it clarifies the boundary between

global availability and global diversification. The resulting propositions are analytical generalizations for later testing, not statistical estimates.

Results and discussion

Case overview: exceptional scale with an uneven global footprint

Black Myth: Wukong entered the market as an action role-playing game rooted in Chinese mythology and Journey to the West (Steam, n.d.). Its distinctiveness came from the combination of a globally recognizable interactive format with source-specific characters, environments, architecture, music and philosophical references. Technology was not separate from cultural presentation. NVIDIA documented cooperation with Game Science to incorporate full ray tracing and DLSS technology, linking production quality with access to an established global hardware and PC-gaming ecosystem (NVIDIA, 2024).

The launch outcomes were exceptional. Game Science announced sales of 10 million units across platforms by 23 August 2024 (Game Science, 2024), and Guinness World Records later certified 20 million units in the first month (Guinness World Records, n.d.). The game also won Best Action Game at The Game Awards 2024 (The Game Awards, 2024). These indicators show rapid conversion of attention into purchase and recognition.

Nevertheless, the case did not immediately produce a geographically balanced consumer base. Guinness reports that 93% of Steam reviews at launch were in simplified Chinese and 82% of launch-day traffic originated in East Asia (Guinness World Records, n.d.). Independent analysis later found asymmetric reception across Chinese and international audiences (Gao et al., 2025). The case is therefore more informative than a simple success story: it shows both the power and the unfinished work of international marketing capability.

B – Belt and Road context: enabling condition, not direct cause

The B component situates cultural internationalization within the connectivity, exchange and legitimacy created by the BRI. It may improve access to partners, events, digital infrastructure, policy attention and cross-border cultural programs. In China–Kazakhstan cooperation, these conditions can reduce the cost of initiating a project and help small firms find institutions and audiences.

The Black Myth case also establishes the limit of this reasoning. Its observed market performance is explained most directly by product integration, technology, platform reach, engagement and consumer response. The evidence does not support a direct BRI-performance claim. B therefore operates through organizational and ecosystem mechanisms; it changes the opportunity structure but does not create consumer value by administrative designation.

Proposition 1. The Belt and Road institutional context supports international cultural-market development indirectly through relationship formation, resource access and capability development; it has no sufficient direct effect on consumer value or market performance.

R – Relationship: mobilizing complementary assets

The case reveals several types of relationship. Technology cooperation linked Game Science with global hardware and software ecosystems. Digital storefronts and console channels connected the product to purchasing, delivery and review infrastructures. Streamers, reviewers and player communities acted as cultural intermediaries. After launch, tourism agencies and heritage sites connected the digital experience to physical places.

These relationships performed different tasks. Technical partners strengthened performance and global signaling; platforms provided reach and data; creators reduced search costs; players supplied interpretation and electronic word of mouth; cultural institutions

extended the value chain beyond the game. The relationship dimension is therefore a portfolio of complementary assets rather than a generic measure of networking.

Relationship quality also shapes cultural governance. A partner may broaden reach while simplifying cultural meaning, or provide technology while increasing dependence. Effective IMC requires clear roles, data rights, intellectual-property safeguards, attribution and mechanisms for joint learning.

Proposition 2. Relationship capability increases the quality of cultural-resource integration by providing complementary technology, market knowledge, legitimacy and distribution assets, subject to balanced governance and knowledge sharing.

I – Integration: converting heritage into an interactive value proposition

Integration is the core cultural conversion mechanism. Black Myth did not present Journey to the West as a digital museum. It reorganized narrative fragments, mythological figures, architecture, sculpture, landscape, music and combat traditions around player action. Real cultural locations were converted into explorable spaces, while a familiar action-RPG grammar reduced the initial learning cost for international players.

The integration was both material and semantic. Advanced graphics increased the visibility of architectural and environmental detail, but technical fidelity alone could not explain cultural value. Meaning emerged from the relationship among image, sound, challenge, character and narrative context. Gao et al. (2025) describe this as a hybridization of tradition and global game conventions. The case supports a complementary rather than substitutive view: global conventions become a carrier for source culture when they do not displace the source identity.

The physical spillover illustrates successful integration. Official reports identified 36 real-world locations represented in the game, including 27 in Shanxi, and linked the title to increased tourism interest (State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2024). A digital product thus reactivated value in architecture, destinations and heritage services. This is evidence of cultural-resource multiplication, not only game sales.

Proposition 3. Cultural-resource integration increases perceived authenticity, differentiation and experiential value when global product conventions complement rather than replace the source culture's narrative and symbolic coherence.

D – Digital: building reach, access and market intelligence

The digital dimension includes both production and marketing execution. High-fidelity development made cultural settings experientially credible, while trailers and platform pages allowed the product to be discovered, wish-listed, purchased and discussed across borders. Platform reviews then created a continuous market record. Digital capability connected content, distribution, analytics and response.

The launch illustrates the value of accumulated attention. Publicly circulated trailers created a long pre-release period in which audiences, creators and technology partners interpreted the product before purchase. After launch, more than 875,000 Steam reviews by July 2026 supplied social proof and a large body of market feedback (Steam, n.d.). Digital visibility thereby reduced uncertainty for new consumers and generated data for renewal.

Yet visibility is not cultural understanding. Digital systems can scale a misunderstanding as easily as a valued meaning. The D dimension becomes an international marketing capability only when analytics and content decisions are connected to integration and cross-cultural interpretation.

Proposition 4. Digital marketing capability increases scalable international access and market intelligence, but its effect on consumer value is mediated by cultural-resource integration and market-specific interpretation.

G – Global: separating access from diversification

Global capability comprises market selection, localization, positioning, platform coordination and the ability to scale without destroying product coherence. Black Myth achieved worldwide digital availability and rapid commercial scale. Its globally familiar genre and technical standard reduced category uncertainty, while its Chinese cultural specificity generated differentiation.

However, the regional concentration of launch traffic shows that a global channel does not guarantee global market depth. Three stages should be distinguished: global availability, when consumers can buy the product; global adoption, when meaningful demand emerges in several markets; and global diversification, when performance is not dominated by one home or regional base. The case clearly reached the first stage and demonstrated elements of the second, while the evidence is insufficient to claim fully balanced diversification.

This distinction is useful for BRI projects. A cultural producer should not evaluate internationalization solely by the number of countries covered by a platform. Market portfolios should be examined through non-home revenue, retention, review-language distribution, local creator participation and repeated demand.

Proposition 5. Digital platform reach positively influences global market expansion, but international market performance becomes more resilient only when global availability is converted into geographically diversified adoption through localization, positioning and relationship capability.

E – Engagement: co-creating meaning and renewal feedback

Engagement begins with play but extends to reviewing, livestreaming, recommending, explaining symbols, creating guides and visiting associated cultural sites. These activities create experiential, symbolic and social value. They also turn consumers into cultural intermediaries who translate the product for other consumers.

The case shows that engagement is not uniformly positive. International audiences may praise combat and visual quality while overlooking narrative depth; controversy or technical problems can also circulate rapidly. This variance is analytically useful. Reviews and community discussion reveal where cultural meaning has been received, adapted or lost. Engagement therefore mediates value conversion and supplies data for capability renewal.

The feedback path is essential. Consumer responses can change localization, explanatory content, platform priorities, partner selection and future product design. A one-off viral launch becomes a durable international capability only when engagement knowledge is retained and transferred across projects.

Proposition 6. Consumer engagement mediates the relationship between global market expansion and consumer value, while engagement feedback positively influences the renewal of relationship, integration and digital marketing capabilities.

Table 2 – BRIDGE–IMC dimensions, case manifestations and value-conversion roles

Dimension	Theoretical function	Manifestation in Black Myth: Wukong	Converted value	Characteristic risk
B – Belt and Road context	Macro-level connectivity and legitimacy	Not a project input documented by Game Science; used as the institutional extension context for cross-border cultural industries	Opportunity, access and policy coordination	Attributing firm success directly to policy
R – Relationship	Relational infrastructure and complementary assets	Developer-platform-hardware cooperation; distributor, creator, player and tourism-ecosystem links	Technical quality, reach, legitimacy and knowledge	Platform dependence or unbalanced appropriation
I – Integration	Recombination of cultural, creative and technological resources	Journey to the West, real architecture, music and myth integrated with an AAA action-RPG format	Authenticity, novelty and coherent experience	Decorative symbolism or cultural dilution
D – Digital	Scalable communication, analytics and platform execution	Viral trailers, digital storefronts, global content circulation, high-fidelity production and review data	Awareness, accessibility, data and conversion	Visibility without comprehension
G – Global	Market selection, localization, positioning and scaling	Worldwide PC/console launch and multilingual access, but geographically concentrated early demand	International reach and revenue diversification	Confusing global availability with global diversification
E – Engagement	Participation, meaning co-creation and market feedback	Play, livestreams, reviews, fan discussion, user-generated content and tourism interest	Experiential, symbolic and social value; learning	Misinterpretation, controversy or one-off attention

Note – IMC denotes international marketing capability, not integrated marketing communications.

The BRIDGE–IMC process model

Figure 1 integrates the findings. Cultural resources enter the model as potential value. The BRI context can facilitate exchange but remains outside the firm-level conversion chain. Relationships mobilize complementary assets; integration turns those assets into a coherent cultural proposition; digital capability provides access, distribution and data; global capability configures markets; engagement converts reception into value and learning. IMC orchestrates the sequence across foundational, core and strategic layers.

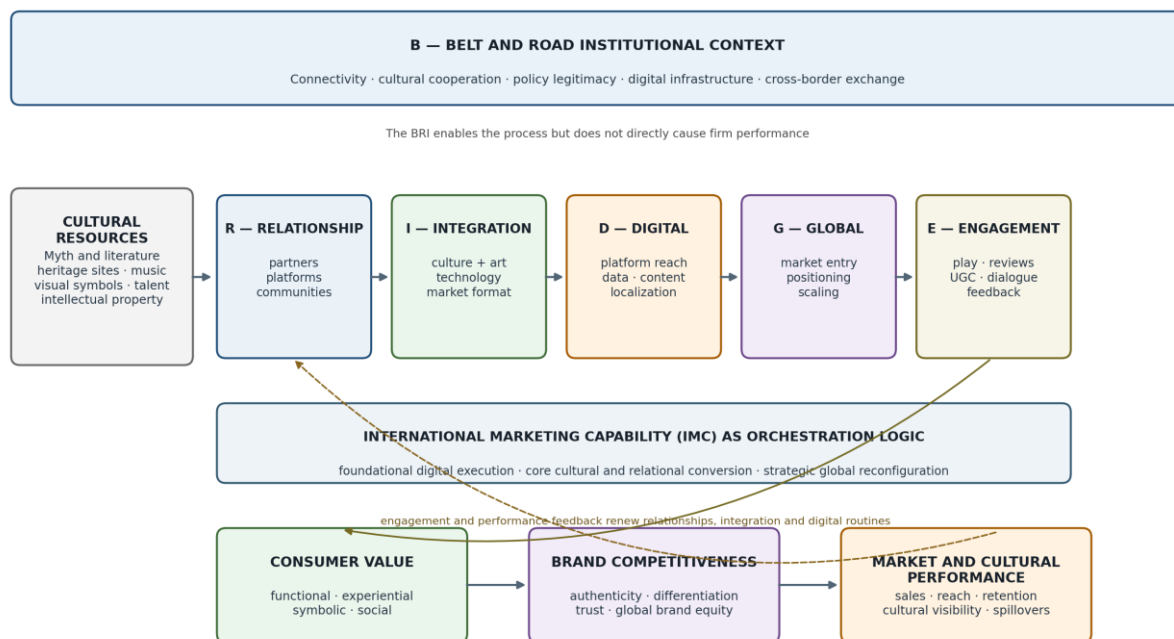


Figure 1 – The BRIDGE–IMC cultural-resource conversion model

Note – developed by the author from the case analysis and international marketing capability literature.

The process is configurational. Strong technology cannot permanently compensate for weak cultural integration; authentic content cannot create international performance without access; global availability cannot sustain a brand without engagement. A bottleneck in one dimension limits the value of the others. The model also distinguishes consumer value from brand competitiveness. Functional, experiential, symbolic and social value strengthen authenticity, differentiation, trust and global brand equity; these brand assets then support sales, retention, portfolio expansion and cultural visibility.

Proposition 7. The BRIDGE dimensions have a complementary, bottleneck-sensitive effect on international marketing capability: weakness in any one of relationship, integration, digital, global or engagement capability constrains the conversion of cultural resources into consumer value.

Proposition 8. Consumer value positively affects international market performance through brand competitiveness, expressed as perceived authenticity, differentiation, trust and global brand equity.

Theoretical contributions

The first contribution is a process extension of international marketing capability theory. Prior research identifies market knowledge, implementation, digital and dynamic capabilities, but it often treats them as a list of firm attributes. BRIDGE–IMC specifies an ordered conversion process and connects macro context, ecosystem relationships, cultural integration, digital execution, strategic expansion and engagement feedback. It thereby shows how ordinary and dynamic capabilities interact in a cultural product.

The second contribution is to place consumer value between cultural resources and performance. Cultural resources are not assumed to possess automatic market value. They become valuable when consumers experience, interpret and socially circulate them. Engagement is both a mediator and a feedback mechanism. This explains why the same product

can achieve technical admiration, cultural pride, symbolic attachment or narrative confusion in different audience groups.

Further conceptual clarification concerns globality. The case separates global availability, global adoption and global diversification. This distinction prevents platform coverage from becoming an inflated measure of international performance and creates more precise indicators for later empirical research.

Managerial and policy implications

Cultural enterprises can use BRIDGE–IMC as a stage-gate diagnostic. Before international launch, managers should identify the cultural resources that form the non-negotiable source identity; map technology, platform, creative and institutional partners; and test whether the integrated product communicates a coherent value proposition. Digital launch plans should connect awareness metrics with evidence of understanding, not only impressions or downloads.

Market dashboards should distinguish access, adoption and diversification. Useful indicators include non-home market revenue, review-language distribution, regional retention, creator participation, cultural comprehension, perceived authenticity and the reuse of jointly created intellectual property. Engagement data should be coded for cultural interpretation and fed back into localization, product design and partner management.

For China–Kazakhstan projects, the model favors co-creation over one-way cultural export. Kazakhstani cultural resources—epics, music, landscapes, nomadic heritage, design and contemporary urban creativity—can be combined with Chinese production, platform and commercialization capabilities, but local creators and institutions should participate in meaning, rights and revenue decisions. Bilateral teams need multilingual boundary spanners and shared rules for IP, data, attribution and audience research.

Policy programs should support the full conversion chain. Events and connectivity correspond mainly to B and R. Sustainable market outcomes also require integration laboratories, localization support, rights services, platform analytics, co-production finance and mechanisms that retain learning after a project ends. Universities and city-based creative hubs in Almaty, Astana and Chinese partner cities can serve as neutral intermediaries.

The Black Myth case also warns against mechanical replication. Its scale, genre and domestic consumer base cannot be copied by most cultural firms. What can be transferred is the capability logic: grounded cultural specificity, complementary relationships, high-quality integration, digital execution, disciplined global expansion and continuous engagement learning.

Conclusion

This article examined how cultural resources can be transformed into global consumer value through international marketing capability. The theory-elaborating case of Black Myth: Wukong produced the BRIDGE–IMC model: Belt and Road context, Relationship, Integration, Digital, Global and Engagement, coordinated by international marketing capability. The case demonstrates that commercial scale followed not from heritage alone, but from the integration of Chinese mythology and material culture with technology, global game conventions, platform access and participatory consumption.

The model's central mechanism is conversion. Relationships make complementary resources available; integration creates an authentic and accessible proposition; digital capability scales access and intelligence; global capability develops market depth; engagement

produces consumer value and renewal feedback. Brand competitiveness then connects consumer value to market and cultural performance.

The study has limitations. It relies on public archival evidence and cannot observe confidential budgets, regional sales, contracts or internal decisions. Platform metrics change over time, and a single high-performing case cannot represent all cultural industries. The application of the BRI is contextual rather than causal. Future research should conduct interviews with developers, platforms, cultural institutions and players; compare Chinese and Kazakhstani projects; and test the eight propositions through a multi-level design. Consumer surveys can measure functional, experiential, symbolic and social value, while firm-level research can examine capability configurations and non-home market performance.

The case provides a practical conclusion: cultural heritage becomes international market value only when organizations can integrate it, communicate it, invite participation and learn from the meanings consumers return.

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