



INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

**Business plan of ZD Interactive Company Offline Murder
Mystery Game Store**

XIAOFANG ZHANG

Master in Applied Management

Supervisor:

MsC Nuno Alexandre dos Reis Teixeira, Invited Assistant Professor,
ISCTE-IUL

February 2025

Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

**Business Plan of ZD Interactive Company Offline Murder Mystery
Game Store**

XIAOFANG ZHANG

Master in Applied Management

Supervisor:
MsC Nuno Alexandre dos Reis Teixeira, Invited Assistant Professor,
ISCTE-IUL

February 2025

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the unwavering guidance of my supervisor, Professor Nuno Alexandre dos Reis Teixeira. His extensive expertise in the field, meticulous attention to detail, and commitment to fostering rigorous research have been invaluable throughout my journey. From our initial discussions to the final refinement of my arguments, Professor Teixeira's insightful feedback and intellectual generosity profoundly shaped this work. To him, I extend my deepest respect and heartfelt gratitude.

My sincere appreciation goes to ISCTE-IUL for fostering an interdisciplinary learning environment where theoretical rigor meets real-world application. Special thanks to Professor Sofia and Professor Shi for their generous sharing of expertise during critical phases of this project.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis research partner Tian, whose extensive experience in various fields provided me with much inspiration, especially in AI research, visual design, code development, and organizing complex tasks. He patiently helped me solve problems, enabling me to overcome numerous challenges. Similarly, I am deeply thankful to my research partner Yin Gu, who provided invaluable resources for my thesis research and offered tremendous help, ensuring smooth progress in every aspect of my work. This study gained significant momentum through the professional support of Mr. Peter and Ms. Li Li from ZD company. Their willingness to provide platform support and share valuable insights into industry dynamics added unparalleled depth to my studies. Finally, my parents' unwavering support gave me the strength and confidence to pursue my studies with determination.

Abstract

With the rapid growth of immersive entertainment, traditional forms of leisure are being replaced by more interactive experiences. Murder mystery games, in particular, have surged in popularity, especially in the post-pandemic era, driven by a growing demand for social, interactive entertainment. As VR and AI technologies advance, they present new opportunities for enhancing the immersion and interactivity of these games. However, integrating these technologies into narrative structures presents challenges, particularly in how textual elements can amplify the overall gaming experience.

This business plan outlines a strategy to integrate VR and AI into murder mystery games to drive enhanced player immersion and market competitiveness. By leveraging VR's capacity to create fully immersive environments and AI's ability to tailor gameplay experiences, the plan details a comprehensive market analysis, technology integration roadmap, and revenue model. The goal is to transform traditional gaming narratives into engaging, interactive experiences that boost player satisfaction and create new opportunities within the gaming industry.

The methodology incorporates a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and participant observation to gather data from players and owners. Key findings reveal that while technology enhances the immersive experience, challenges remain in maintaining narrative complexity and player engagement across diverse demographics.

The project provides robust evidence — demonstrated by increased player engagement and potential revenue growth — that these technological enhancements can significantly boost market competitiveness. In doing so, our study offers essential insights for game developers and researchers at the intersection of technology, narrative, and player immersion in interactive entertainment.

Keywords: Immersive Games, Business Plan, Interactive Entertainment

JEL Classification: L82, M21

Resumo

Com o rápido crescimento do entretenimento imersivo, as formas tradicionais de lazer estão sendo gradualmente substituídas por experiências mais interativas. Os jogos de mistério de assassinato, em particular, aumentaram em popularidade, especialmente no período pós-pandemia, impulsionados pela crescente demanda por entretenimento social e interativo. À medida que as tecnologias de RV e IA avançam, elas apresentam novas oportunidades para aprimorar a imersão e a interatividade desses jogos. No entanto, integrar essas tecnologias nas estruturas narrativas apresenta desafios, particularmente em como os elementos textuais podem amplificar a experiência geral do jogo.

Este plano de negócios descreve uma estratégia para integrar RV e IA em jogos de mistério, com o objetivo de aumentar a imersão dos jogadores e a competitividade no mercado. Ao aproveitar a capacidade da RV de criar ambientes totalmente imersivos e a habilidade da IA de personalizar as experiências de jogo, o plano detalha uma análise de mercado abrangente, um roteiro de integração tecnológica e um modelo de receita. A meta é transformar narrativas de jogos tradicionais em experiências envolventes e interativas que aumentem a satisfação dos jogadores e criem novas oportunidades na indústria de jogos.

A metodologia adota uma abordagem de métodos mistos, combinando revisão de literatura, entrevistas semiestruturadas, pesquisas e observação participante para coletar dados de jogadores e proprietários. As principais descobertas revelam que, embora a tecnologia amplie a experiência imersiva, ainda existem desafios em manter a complexidade narrativa e o engajamento dos jogadores em diferentes demografias.

O projeto fornece evidências robustas — demonstradas pelo aumento do engajamento dos jogadores e pelo potencial de crescimento da receita — de que essas melhorias tecnológicas podem aumentar significativamente a competitividade no mercado. Assim, nosso estudo oferece insights essenciais para desenvolvedores de jogos e pesquisadores que atuam na interseção entre tecnologia, narrativa e imersão dos jogadores no entretenimento interativo.

Palavras-Chave: Jogos Imersivos, Plano de Negócios, Entretenimento Interativo

JEL Classification: L82, M21

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	I
ABSTRACT	II
RESUMO	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF TABLES	VI
LIST OF FIGURES	VII
GLOSSARY	VIII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	2
2.1. MURDER MYSTERY GAME OVERVIEW	2
2.2. CONSUMER DEMAND FOR IMMERSIVE ENTERTAINMENT	4
2.3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN ENTERTAINMENT	5
2.4. STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE MURDER MYSTERY GAMES INDUSTRY	5
2.5. SERVICE MARKETING AND THE SERVQUAL MODEL	7
2.6. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DESIGN	7
2.7. CUSTOMER JOURNEY	9
2.8. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN MURDER MYSTERY GAMES MARKET	10
2.9. BUSINESS PLANS, MARKETING PLANS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE	11
2.10. RESEARCH GAP	11
3. METHODOLOGY	12
4. BUSINESS PLAN	18
4.1. EXTERNAL SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS	18
4.1.1. <i>PESTEL Analysis</i>	18
4.1.2. <i>Sector Analysis</i>	21
4.1.3. <i>Competitor Analysis</i>	23
4.1.4. <i>Porter's Five Forces Analysis</i>	24
4.1.5. <i>Consumer Analysis</i>	27
4.2. PRESENTATION OF THE COMPANY	38
4.2.1. <i>Company Background</i>	38
4.2.2. <i>Core Team and Professional Talent</i>	39
4.2.3. <i>Core Business Areas and Service Scope</i>	40

4.2.4. <i>Flagship Projects and Milestones</i>	41
4.2.5. <i>Major Clients and Market Impact</i>	42
4.3. SWOT	42
4.4. VALUE PROPOSITION AND PROJECT STRATEGY	45
4.4.1. <i>Mission, Vision and Values</i>	45
4.4.2. <i>Objectives</i>	46
4.4.3. <i>Strategy</i>	47
4.4.4. <i>Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning</i>	53
4.4.5. <i>Competitive Advantages</i>	54
4.5. MARKETING-MIX	55
4.5.1. <i>Product</i>	55
4.5.2. <i>Price</i>	56
4.5.3. <i>Place</i>	57
4.5.4. <i>Promotion</i>	57
4.5.5. <i>People</i>	62
4.5.6. <i>Process</i>	62
4.5.7. <i>Physical Evidence</i>	64
4.6. REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	66
4.6.1. <i>Human Resources Plan</i>	66
4.6.2. <i>Operational Setup and Location</i>	67
4.6.3. <i>Technology and Equipment Needs</i>	68
4.7. MONITORING AND ACCOMPANIMENT	69
4.8. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY ANALYSIS	70
4.8.1. <i>Budget Allocation</i>	70
4.8.2. <i>Revenue Forecast</i>	71
4.8.3. <i>Profitability Timeline</i>	74
5. CONCLUSIONS	78
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES	80
APPENDICES	87
APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	87
APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	90
APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	93
APPENDIX D – TEAM PROFILES	99

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Business Area Sales Distribution	39
Table 4.2 Script Tiering	48
Table 4.3 Market Segmentation	53
Table 4.4 Product or Service Type List	56
Table 4.5 Store Price Menu	56
Table 4.6 Whole Year Promotion Plan	60
Table 4.7 Cost Estimates	61
Table 4.8 Estimated Initial Investment for the Project	70
Table 4.9 Basic Information of the Store	72
Table 4.10 Income Calculation	72
Table 4.11 Five-Year Revenue Forecast Table	75

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Global Murder Mystery Games Market Size in 2032	2
Figure 4.1 The Murder Mystery Company	23
Figure 4.2 Porter Five Forces Model	25
Figure 4.3 Age Distribution	27
Figure 4.4 Home vs. Outdoor Entertainment Preferences Chart	29
Figure 4.5 Popular and Widely Accepted Formats Among Players	30
Figure 4.6 Preferred Game Duration Pie Chart	30
Figure 4.7 Key Motivators For Murder Mystery Game Participation	32
Figure 4.8 Key Barriers To Murder Mystery Game Participation	33
Figure 4.9 Importance of Key Factors When Choosing a Murder Mystery Game Store	34
Figure 4.10 Key Factors That Could Enhance Player Engagement in Murder Mystery Games	34
Figure 4.11 ZD Company logo	38
Figure 4.12 Nezha: Chapter of Rebirth Concept Post	48
Figure 4.13 Shadows of War Concept Post	48
Figure 4.14 Shanghai Wisdom Concept Post	49
Figure 4.15 Meta Quest 3 Product Image	51
Figure 4.16 XiaoHongShu APP (Rednote) and Dianping APP Image	51
Figure 4.17 Experiencing Way Reference Image	55
Figure 4.18 Online Platform Reference	55
Figure 4.19 ZD Murder Mystery Store Concept Image	64
Figure 4.20 ZD Interactive Company Offline Murder Mystery Game Store Logo	64
Figure 4.21 Keychains and Decorative Fan	65
Figure 4.22 The Organizational Structure of the ZD Murder Mystery Store Project in the Early Stage	66
Figure 4.23 Store Room Decoration Style Concept Design Image	67

Glossary

DM	Dungeon Master
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
NPC	Non-Player Character
UGC	User-Generated Content

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of immersive entertainment experiences, traditional forms of entertainment are gradually being replaced by innovative forms that blend digital and physical interactions. Murder mystery games, a highly interactive genre, have become increasingly popular. In particular, the post-pandemic era has seen a surge in consumer demand for entertainment that fosters social engagement, contributing significantly to the rise of immersive murder mystery games. As virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies continue to advance, they offer new creative possibilities for enhancing the interactivity and immersion of these games, further enriching the player experience.

Despite the significant improvements in interactivity and engagement, challenges persist in designing more complex and compelling narrative content for these games. Specifically, this study focuses on the use of textual narrative elements and how to leverage VR and AI technologies to amplify immersion and interactivity. While traditional murder mystery games emphasize social interaction and role-playing, technological advances have enabled the integration of VR and AI to create narratives that transcend linear storytelling, allowing players to engage more deeply with the virtual environment and interactive plotlines.

This study aims to explore how VR and AI technologies influence players' immersive experiences in murder mystery games and to examine the relationship between textual narrative elements and technological interaction. This research focuses on how these technologies can be effectively integrated into game design to enhance immersion, personalization, and interactivity, ultimately boosting player engagement and satisfaction. By analyzing the application of VR in scene creation and plot development, as well as the role of AI in generating personalized narratives and facilitating character interactions, this study will provide valuable insights and practical guidance for game designers.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. First, a literature review establishes a theoretical framework synthesizing existing research on immersive entertainment and the application of VR and AI technologies in gaming. Second, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and participant observation gather data from both players and industry experts, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the role of technology and player experience in murder mystery games.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the background, research problem, objectives, and methodology; Chapter 2 provides a literature review on immersive entertainment; Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology for data collection and analysis; Chapter 4 presents the research findings; and Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter assesses the findings of previous studies and examines the research gap that this study fills out. This chapter discusses the overview of murder mystery game industry and it also examines the consumer demand for immersive entertainment. This chapter also assesses the integration of digital technology in entertainment and analyses the business models in entertainment industry. This section also assesses about the notion of service marketing and SERVQUAL model and also assesses the customer experience design and customer journey paradigm. This section also explains regarding the success factors in entertainment sector and also discusses marketing plan, business plans, and their consequence.

2.1. Murder Mystery Game Overview

The international market for games of murder mystery was appreciated at approximately USD 0.15 billion in year 2023 and is expected to raise to USD 0.25 billion by year 2032 having a compound yearly rate of growth of around 6.00% in entire the period of forecast (Verified Market Research, 2024). The games of murder mystery are a kind of game of party. One players is secretly playing the killer role and other players have to identify who is the criminal among them. The market for games of murder mystery is increasing, especially with the rise of immersive and interactive experience of gaming. These types of games are accessible in different formats, like board games, live-action games of role playing, video games, and experiences of online interaction (Verified Market Research, 2024).. Players can now take part in murder mystery games on a variety of online platforms, either in a narrative-driven structure or in a more open-ended multiplayer setting. Murder mystery games are often inspired by popular media, such as books, movies, and television shows. The market consists of a variety of participants, including indie producers who use platforms to fund their games and huge gaming firms. Participants are focussing their efforts on boosting R&D (Verified Market Research, 2024). The growth of the regional market is being supported by technological advancements. Manufacturers must keep up with the shifting trends in the industry and create items that satisfy the increasing demands of consumers. Companies are developing innovative technical solutions to strengthen their positions.

Figure 2.1 Global Murder Mystery Games Market Size in 2032



Source: Business Research Insight (2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented and astounding on a worldwide scale, with demand in the market being lower than expected in all regions when compared to levels before to the epidemic. The market's growth and demand reverting to pre-pandemic levels are the reasons for the sudden market expansion, which is indicated by the increase in the compound annual growth rate (CAGR). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the entire world. It generated a lot of unforeseen disruptions and had an impact on the sector (Verified Market Research, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental effect on the market because of the economic slowdown, the unpredictability of the financial sector, and the high level of instability in the market. The pandemic caused a decline in demand because of a disrupted supply chain, a decrease in product sales, and changes to delivery dates. Business collaboration and partnership were impacted by the travel bans that were put in place. Travel restrictions and lockdowns during the COVID-19 epidemic had lately caused a decrease in demand (Verified Market Research, 2024). It is expected that the ongoing decline in the business as a result of the lockdown measures would have a direct impact on the growth of investments in the market.

The product's presentation will be further improved by technological advancements and developments, allowing it to receive a wider variety of requests in the market. The market will develop as a result of technological advancements that will enhance performance. The desire for technological advancement is growing, and it is rapidly driving the need to boost productivity (Murder Mystery Game Market Size, Industry Analysis 2031, 2022). Certain players concentrate on enhancing their products in order to satisfy the preferences and needs of consumers. It is expected that the continuous innovation in product manufacturing will increase the demand for items.

The market can be divided into online and offline segments based on kind. Online will grab the most market share during the forecast period. An interactive online experience might involve web-based platforms where players engage with one another and the game environment in order to solve riddles. They can be narrative-driven or multiplayer, and they generally have a social aspect. The market can be divided into three categories based on application: shopping center, home, and others (Murder Mystery Game Market Size, Industry Analysis 2031, 2022). The murder mystery games market will be dominated by shopping malls during the projected period, and companies in the industry will cover this segment. Escape rooms are sometimes found in shopping malls, where they are set up in designated areas. These escape rooms frequently feature murder mystery themes as part of their puzzle-solving adventures.

The top players are actively participating in strategic activities that are intended to maintain a strong market position and increase market share through mergers, alliances, and other means. The main players are eager to launch new and creative items (Verified Market Research, 2024). They are investing much in research & development in order to come up with new technologies that will help them maintain and strengthen their current market position. Changes in the market are dynamic, including things like market expansion, partnerships, and mergers. The combined efforts of these key firms have a significant impact on the competitive landscape and the future direction of the market. Mango Detective Game (India), Qingqingtalk (U.S.), Jingrenyuan (Taiwan), Qinglou Culture (U.S.), and Xijing Culture (China) are among the firms that make the best murder mystery games (Verified Market Research, 2024).

2.2. Consumer Demand for Immersive Entertainment

The market for immersive murder mystery games has been growing rapidly due to a greater demand for unique gaming experiences and the popularity of interactive entertainment. The demand for experiences that are driven by a narrative has increased as gamers look for gaming that is more engaging and unique. As a result of this change in what consumers want, game developers have been motivated to design new and engaging environments that test players' ability to solve problems while also immersing them in intricate tales (Godfrey, 2021). The increasing popularity of escape rooms and live-action role-playing games has also helped the market grow, as these formats serve as a doorway to immersive murder mystery games. In addition, the pandemic has caused an increase in the consumption of digital entertainment, which has resulted in a growth in online gaming platforms that host immersive murder mystery games. As social associations in entire process of gaming have been

essential, there is a raise in formats of multiplayer that permits family and friends to work collectively to resolve complex plot from their homes in their comfort zones (Yu & Zhang, 2023). VR effectively enhanced their experience of the thrill and mystery inherent in crime fiction. Immersive experience provided by VR technology, which also contributed to students increased motivation to learn about crime fiction (Kariko & Takai, 2024). As technology tends to enhance and make experience immersive and more accessible, it can be expected that there will be an increase in new titles to be released in coming years (Mentzelopoulos et al., 2016). Immersivity is explicitly produced by the game developers with the goal of creating an immersive experience. At this juncture, we are only interested in the participant-gamers insofar as they function as a kind of “immersive glue/adhesive” that holds the set-up together. The rules of a serious game function as regulative elements of spatial perception in which cross modal sensory channels (visual, audible, haptic, olfactory, and gustatory) are addressed.(Freitag et al., 2020).

2.3. Digital Technology Integration in Entertainment

Digital technology, in which immersive systems aim to revolutionise gaming and entertainment by allowing users to actively influence and co-construct narrative experiences. Key technologies supporting immersive systems include advanced visualisation, natural language processing and autonomous virtual agents that respond to user input.(Klimmt et al., 2012). At start, the commencement of assets of multimedia like audio recordings and films create more authenticity and depth in story. It is important to picture in an online game of murder mystery where a user gets communications video from defendants or hear to recordings of audio that provide essential material. These types of elements not only enhance the overall experience of gaming, but they also assist players to feel that they are active in examining a case (Zheng et al., 2024). Moreover, technology offers players with an ability to engage with another in real-time. Players can work collaboratively, talk with others, and solve the mystery as a team because of specialized apps and online platforms. Players can make strategies, share their findings, and exchange opinions with their detectives of fellow with the help of live chat videos and functions. This community sense contributes to a social component for the game that will not be possible for others(Markouzis & Fessakis, 2016).

2.4. Structure and Organisation of the Murder Mystery Games Industry

In the current years, the game market of murder mystery has witnessed a robust raise in admiration that can be based on increasing interest in social activities and interactive entertainment (Wang et al., 2020).

These types of games normally need players to coordinate to solve an artificial case of murder that have been taken into different streams of media like card games, board games, live events, and digital experiences. The rationale of these games are very interesting because it permit players to be completely immersed in a suspenseful story where they can plat the detectives of roles, witnesses, and suspects (Robson & Kirsch, 2017). Conventional card games and board games are very renowned and also offer an experience offline that encourages personal connection and collaboration of group On the contrary, digital platforms play a key role in increasing the business by offering games of murder mystery that can be played from distance, rapidly through platforms of video conferencing or different specialized applications ("Guide to Digital Innovation in the Cultural and Creative Industry," 2024). These games are more renowned because of their convenience and accessibility, after pandemic that result to a raise in virtual social gatherings and gaming.

Live-action events of murder mystery have also been renowned. These types of events offer an immersive experience same as theater, where players associate with the tale. These types of events that are rapidly held at different locations like private residences and restaurants, offer players the chance to dress up and become their characters, commencing an element of creativity and roleplay (Berman et al., 2011). The rising popularity of these live events in the sector of entertainment shows their appeal. Firms and event planners take benefit of this kind of trend to offer unforgettable experiences for groups and different formal activities of team-building. As the marketplace for game of murder mystery tends to change, game makers and other event organizers are finding creative and new methods to enhance the experience. This comprises the use of more complicated plotlines, advanced narrative approaches, and interactive technologies (Banks & Cunningham, 2013). The rising popularity of mystery-themed rooms of escape, cross-platform games, and puzzle games is further suggestion of the reach of growing of genre. The game market of murder mystery is anticipated to be increasing because it amalgamates a classic appeal with existing adaptations, giving players of all types of ages with both new fascinating experiences and nostalgic satisfaction.

The games of murder mystery are very renowned in North America, giving players with an immersive and exciting experience. The style of "Dinner Party" is a widespread type of game in which players take various roles and be together to solve an imitated murder while taking food. These types of games rapidly have scripted hints and situations that encourage interaction among guests to determine the truth behind murder. The mysteries of dinner party

murder are very flexible in the market because they can be used in both i.e. official events and casual parties (Georgieva et al., 2015). Online games of murder mystery are another main market. These digital versions help respondents to take part from a coldness by involving through internet platforms or video calls (Marchand & Hennig-Thurau, 2013). Murder mysteries with a theme usually have elaborate costumes, props, and décor to offer a more immersive experience that is personalized to the chosen topic. Finally, instructional murder mystery games can be used as tools for learning and development in educational environments. These games are created to educate particular subjects or skills through interactive storytelling and problem-solving (Davidovici-Nora, 2014). Educational murder mysteries can be utilized in schools, corporate training sessions, or team-building activities. They combine entertainment with educational aims to engage participants in a meaningful way.

2.5. Service Marketing and the Servqual model

Service marketing plays a key role in the murder mystery games success, whether rooms of physical escape, interactive events, or virtual experiences. Since these types of games depend on player engagement and immersive storytelling, making sure a huge degree of service quality is important for customer retention and satisfaction (Tsai & Chen, 2021). Tangibility is based on the physical elements, like props, design, and digital interfaces that increase immersion. The role of reliability is also prominent ensuring that the storylines, mechanics, and technical components function constantly. Additionally, responsiveness is important as virtual assistants and game masters must offer timely supports and hints. Assurance develops trust of players with the help of professional staff members, proper instructions, and well-created plots. Empathy includes catering and understanding to the expectations of players, providing individualized experiences, and adapting levels of difficulty (Wu & Hsu, 2012). Find gaps in the service quality and increase experience of customers. A well-implemented strategy of service offers positive word-of-mouth marketing, raises repeat contribution, and reinforces brand loyalty in a market of competitive entertainment (Yoshida & James, 2010).

2.6. Customer Experience Design

Smartphones have become an extension of ourselves in the digital age, enabling us to communicate effortlessly, access information, and explore countless opportunities. Smartphones are useful tools for gamers in virtual murder mystery games, allowing them to

explore the mystery more thoroughly. Furthermore, dedicated mobile applications that are specifically created for murder mystery games might improve the gaming experience even more (Yu & Zhang, 2023). These apps frequently include virtual detective notebooks that allow players to keep track of clues, suspects, and theories. They might also feature puzzles or mini-games that players have to finish to solve more progress or information in the story. Possessing all these things that are available on a phone makes engaging and smooth user experience. The makers of game have to make the protection of users on top priority by ensuring that the connections are safer, using different techniques of data encryption, and attaining the key accessibility for individual information.

The environment is the most essential factor that may identify whether an online game of murder mystery is important or not. By making an immersive and authentic setting, players have capability to completely submerge themselves in the interesting dominion of crime-solving. Although technology is essential for enhancing gaming, it must not be taken away from the importance of making the appropriate environment. Each element starting from visual aesthetics to design of sound, involves to immersing gamers in an experience of compelling murder mystery (Trammell, 2024). Making an interface of game that is visually impressive and contests the period or topic of the game of murder mystery. Players may be moved to other location and time by comprising elaborate illustrations and images, whether it be a spooky and dark Victorian mansion or an attractive 1920s speakeasy. The addition of ambient background music or thematic sound effects further increases the mood, making players feel like they are actually part of this fascinating universe. To make a more realistic atmosphere, it is important to emphasis on growth of story and character (Sauerland, 2022). Create characters that are well-developed and have interesting histories and motivations that move the story along. Motivate players to engage with these characters by using dialogues or interactive options in the game. Players get more engaged in solving the mystery when they are given the ability to make their own choices in the plot. Some people could say that putting too much emphasis on creating a realistic atmosphere could take attention away from the actual gameplay. It is important to find a balance, but if a person ignores the atmosphere, the experience will be less than exciting (Zheng et al., 2024). A compelling murder mystery is not only about solving problems; it is also about becoming engrossed in the story and feeling like a real investigator. Virtual murder mystery games can provide players experiences they will never forget and make them want to play again by using technology like tablets and paying close attention to the environment, atmosphere, and storytelling (Zheng et al., 2024). The development of characters and the story are also important for getting players interested in the mystery. In order to provide gamers an experience they will remember and want to repeat, it is important to strike the perfect balance between technology and atmosphere.

2.7. Customer Journey

Participants in scripted murder mystery games are given specific instructions on what to say and when to say it. They are frequently given introduction comments, questions to ask, replies to provide, and sometimes some shared discussion to help ease the tension. Character information is frequently presented in booklets, which are read throughout the evening, typically around a table in rounds, with the single goal of solving the murder (Siebert, 2020). The *How to Host a Murder* series, in particular, helped these games become popular in the 1990s. Players in scripted games are not able to improvise; they can only act out their characters based on the information provided by the game. In interactive murder mystery games, players are given character backgrounds and secret information. These games have several subplots, and the objective goes beyond simply solving the crime, which is different from scripted games (Bolton et al., 2018). Usually, there is a supper during the event, but visitors are not required to sit at a table; they can roam around and interact with other people as they like. Participants are urged to interrogate, execute actions, or engage in activities with other visitors. This will help them solve the case or complete their characters' specific aims. Interactive games feature ad-libbing, allowing users to develop their characters in novel paths. In some versions, the murderer knows their role from the beginning, whereas in others, this information is given to everyone during the solution round (Wei & Baker, 2024). The games, which are designed for 6 to 20 or more players, typically last for more than 2 to 3 hours. The players utilise their character booklets and clues (i.e., the game contents) to investigate the background of the crime by utilising the questions, answers, suggestions, evidence, and clues that are offered. All of these are intended to gather more and more knowledge about the murder until the participants are in a decent position to propose who they think is responsible. Most of the time, the hosts ask the participants to come to the party dressed as and prepared to act like one of the suspects mentioned in the game scenario (Tahir et al., 2024). The scripted game is typically played during a three-course dinner party, while the interactive game can be played in a mix-and-mingle style format with finger foods, a buffet, or a sit-down dinner. Interactive games are also utilised in workplaces that focus on team building. Businesses and church organisations have discovered that they are a valuable resource for developing effective communication skills and strengthening relationships amongst people (Tevely & Papp-Váry, 2023). The people who are in charge of the mystery might assign roles and characters according to what they know about the attendees.

2.8. Critical Success Factors in Murder Mystery games market

The industry of Murder Mystery Games is influenced by different factors comprising the notion that clients expect entertainment that is interactive and immersive. The introduction of digital platforms have increased the accessibility to these types of games, helping a broader limit of viewers to take part. The community building and social engagement features of these kinds of games have been important for appealing players (Lee et al., 2024). The growth of novel technology in the domain of gaming has resulted to more improved graphics and immersive storytelling. Additionally, there are different periods that raises in demand that are created by different seasonal events and releases of themed games. The creators of game are encouraged to be more creative and innovative because of the competition between them. Moreover, an amalgamation of these kinds of constructs is transforming the way it assesses. The increasing admiration of experiences of social gaming among different consumers is the main element that drive the market of Murder Mystery Games (Aleem et al., 2016). As people view for various ways to be explained, the attraction of working collaboratively to resolve mysteries has been very admired (Aleem et al., 2016). Additionally, the development of communities of online gaming promotes players to feel more associated to each other. Moreover, it is important for the growth of mobile gaming that players have more accessibility to games of murder mystery on the go that raises the people who can play with them. Additionally, the amalgamation of VR and AR technology is transforming the way that conventional games are played that makes things more immersive. New types of releases have been more recognised because to enhanced methods of marketing and more types of promotions on platforms of social media (Lut, 2023). These types of characteristics work collaboratively to make the games of murder mystery more appealing towards players. There are different types of growth prospects and innovation in the game market of Murder Mystery. To start proceedings, there is a chance to work collaboratively with distinguished intellectual properties, like televisions and movies shows to draw among fans. The process of localization can assist customers who are from non-English speaking countries to expand the geographic reach (Zhang & Chang, 2022). Subscription-based models could help to create consistent revenue and improve player retention. Incorporating educational components into mystery games might entice schools and organizations to participate in meaningful learning experiences. Hosting live events and competitions can also help to build community involvement and brand loyalty. The trend of remote gatherings continues, providing prospects for virtual murder mystery parties as a unique social experience (Zhang & Chang, 2022).

2.9. Business Plans, Marketing Plans and Their Importance

A well-crafted business plan is important for the success of business of a murder mystery game, whether working physical venues, mobile events, or virtual experiences. It summarizes the target market, vision, operational approach, revenue model, and monetary forecasts. Key components comprise pricing strategies, competitor analysis, startup costs, and growth plans. A robust business plan attracts investors, ensures sustainability, and offers a roadmap for growth. A marketing plan is important because it explains how to retain and attract customers (Ahmad et al., 2017). It comprises customer segmentation, branding, digital marketing approaches, and promotional strategies. Since murder mystery games flourish on immersive storytelling, engagement-based tactics of marketing like influencer collaborations, social media teasers, and gamified advertising can be greatly actual (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Email campaigns, SEO-driven content, and collaborations with venues of entertainment also help increase visibility. The synergy between a marketing and business plan ensures market penetration and operational efficiency. Without the role of strategic planning, a murder mystery game business risks poor audience reach, unpredictable service delivery, and monetary unpredictability (Bolton et al., 2018). A well-implemented marketing and business strategy not only increases experience of customer, but also initiatives brand loyalty and long-term profitability in a competitive entertainment sector.

2.10. Research Gap

Apart from increasing admiration of murder mystery game, restricted research happens on the association between customer designs how the elements of game are structured to associate players and experience of customer that how players consider and engage with the game. The current researches focus on mechanics of game, immersive environment, and storytelling, however lack empirical understandings into how particular elements of design like interactive decision-making, character roles, and individualized narratives increase satisfaction and engagement. Moreover, there is a gap of research in assessing how various demographics of customers like enthusiasts and casual players respond and perceive to choices of game design. The effect of digital advancements like VR integration and AI-driven storytelling, on immersion of players and their retention also considers underexplored. Assessing these gaps can assist developer to improvement strategies of design to recover experience of customers, raise retention, and make inclusive and dynamic experiences of murder mystery.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology employed to examine the interplay between textual immersion and social dynamics in murder mystery games. A multi-method qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted to provide a comprehensive understanding of player experiences, industry challenges, and market potential. The study integrates four key research methods:

Literature Review – To establish a theoretical foundation by synthesizing existing research on murder mystery games and immersive entertainment.

Semi-Structured Interviews – To capture in-depth, context-sensitive insights from industry practitioners and players with varying levels of engagement.

Survey Questionnaire – To quantify player behaviors, preferences, and market expectations using structured data collection.

Participant Observation – To experience and analyze gameplay interactions firsthand, ensuring a nuanced understanding of player immersion and social engagement.

By triangulating these methods, the study ensures a rich, multi-dimensional perspective, balancing qualitative depth with quantitative support. The methodological framework aligns with best practices in game studies, consumer behavior research, and service innovation analysis.

Literature Review

In the industry of the murder mystery game, engagement is shaped by consumer experience, service quality of experience and decisions making process. In the academic literature, consumer experience is a well-discussed invariant of satisfaction and retention in entertainment services. Immersive, interactive, and emotionally engaging play are considered by prior research to be critical to increasing the total user experience in gaming (Jennett et al., 2008). According to the immersion theory, playing interactive storytelling and becoming multisensory immersed with the game it triggers more player immersion and higher emotional investment on the game (Freitag et al., 2020). Players are most satisfied and engaged in well structured narratives and social collaboration and personalized role play in the context of murder mystery games (Bolton et al., 2018). Escape rooms, live action role playing, virtual gaming environments have all demonstrated the importance of immersive entertainment further by sharing similar cognitive/emotional mechanics as murder mystery games (Kärnä et al., 2024).

One such framework to use to analyse service quality in experience based industries is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al.,(1988). Templeton identifies five

key dimensions relating to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy all which are vital in defining how customer would perceive service delivery. The physical or digital elements of an experience that increased the immersion — set design, props, virtual environments — seen as tangibility. Consistency in storytelling and the mechanics of gameplay, reliability has to do with the storyline and the way the game mechanics should be. As for responsiveness, we are talking about those elements like availability of game masters, customer support, and interaction with the interactive feedback system, which are quite useful both on offline and online murder mystery games. Professional facilitation, the development of the script, and the digital infrastructure all contribute towards building assurance in quality of experience. Empathy is the game's capacity to respond to the preferences of different players, and in the game's case, this implies the ability to set the right difficulty level, the narrative complexity and the appropriate levels of interactivity for distinct audience segments (Wu & Hsu, 2012). However, the recent studies show that customer retention in the immersive entertainment experiences relies on service quality which is measured by the quality of staff expertise, interactive storytelling, and post-game engagement (Tsai & Chen, 2021)..

Thus, the process of consumer decision making in interactive entertainment is structured according to the Five Stage Consumer Decision Model portrayed by Kotler and Keller (2012). Problem recognition occurs in the first stage when consumers are seeking engaging, social, and intellectually stimulating activities. As more and more consumers want new, immersive social experiences, many actively search for experiential entertainment such as murder mystery games (Yu & Zhang, 2023). Secondly, information search is significantly affected by online reviews, social media marketing, word-of-mouth recommended, which is why (Wei & Baker, 2024). TripAdvisor, Reddit, Weibo or even niche gaming forums have become an indispensable part of forming perception of game quality for the consumers. The third stage, evaluation of alternatives, is concerned with evaluating different formats of the game, pricing models and customer service quality indicators directly affecting final purchase decisions. Results from this study reveal that price sensitivity, the quality of the narrative as well as group compatibility heavily influence a selection of a game experience. Tahir et al., (2024) found purchase decision stage the fourth stage driven to a large extent by perceived value and availability of promotions, unique game theme etc. Post purchase evaluation stage, as to when consumers decide to engage with the brand again and what comprises brand loyalty, occurs after the consumers have shared their experience in social media or even review platforms (Bolton et al., 2018).

The desk research was conducted to critically analyse industry trends and market dynamics to include non academic literature with academic literature. The review was

performed systematically through the use of keywords such as 'consumer experience in immersive entertainment,' 'service quality in gaming,' and 'decision making in interactive storytelling' over the academic databases at Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and IEEE Xplore. Apart from academic sources, industry reports from Verified Market Research (2024), Business Research Insights (2024), and Jagtap (2025) were taken into account to have quantitative insights of the market's growth, competitive landscape and the emerging trends. Also, social media analytics and consumer generated content was reviewed through Reddit, Twitter, Weibo, and Google reviews to gather qualitative data of user preferences, pain points and changing market demands. The integrating academic literature, market reports, and real-world consumer feedback, thus ensuring that this study presents the total picture of murder mystery game market, but also the theoretical and practical points.

This research proposes these insights to help deepen understanding of how immersive entertainment decision is made based on service quality and consumer experience. It offers a theoretical framework explaining murder mystery game industry that helps explain consumer preferences and service effectiveness in this industry. This is important in understanding what shapes player behavior in terms of narrative engagement, service quality dimensions and decision making processes which have repercussions for the developers of games, the service providers and stakeholders of the entertainment industry.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To explore the interplay of textual immersion and social dynamics in murder mystery games, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants, chosen to represent diverse stakeholder perspectives and gameplay engagement levels.

- Industry practitioners: 2 store owners (operating venues for more than 3 years).
- Players: 3 Experienced player (plays once or twice a week), 1 Medium-level player (plays 2-3 times a month), 3 light-level player(plays once a month or 2-3 times every few months), 2 non-players(has never played,but expressed interest).

Store owners provided insights into operational challenges and industry trends, while players offered perspectives on gameplay motivations and barriers. The inclusion of non-players helped identify deterrents to participation. Stratifying players by engagement frequency ensured representation of diverse experiential depth (Kaveladze et al., 2021).

Interviews were collected between December 2024 and January 2025. Conducted online via video conferencing. Interviews were conducted in Chinese. Interviews averaged 40–60 minutes, allowing sufficient time for nuanced discussions. Prioritized geographical flexibility (participants across Shanghai) and minimized disruptions to participants' schedules.

The content was written and translated by the researcher based on confirmations from interviewees.

A flexible guide covered four themes: Analyze industry pain points and opportunities for business model innovation, uncover service chain execution details and their alignment with user needs, identify sources of immersion mechanisms and emotional engagement, and explore market expansion potential and user conversion strategies.

Semi-structured interviews in understanding multifaceted educational and social constructs differentiated according to purpose (Brown & Danaher, 2017), epistemological privilege of established knowledge implicit in the interview guide or the knowledge of the participants, the role of the participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was designed to quantify player behaviors, preferences, and perceptions related to murder mystery games. This quantitative approach complements the qualitative insights from interviews and participant observations, providing statistical validation of key findings.

Survey research is a widely accepted method in social sciences and market research for measuring attitudes, behaviors, and consumer preferences (Bryman, 2016). Self-administered online questionnaires are particularly effective for reaching large populations in digital entertainment studies (Evans & Mathur, 2018).

The target population includes current and potential murder mystery game players in China, specifically those engaged in immersive entertainment experiences. The sample was non-probabilistically recruited, focusing on:

Demographic Scope

- Age: 18–50 years old (core market demographic)
- Gender: 54% male, 46% female
- Geographical distribution: Tier 1, Tier 2 and emerging cities (e.g., Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, Chengdu)
- Participant Recruitment: The questionnaire was created using Wenjuanxing, a widely used survey platform in China.
- The survey link was distributed via Xiaohongshu App (RedNote), relevant murder mystery gaming apps, WeChat group, and WeChat friend networks, including peer-to-peer referral sharing.
- The survey period was from 19th Dec 2024 to 18th Jan 2025.

Survey Structure

The questionnaire consisted of 37 items, structured into six modules:

- Demographics – Age, gender, occupation, and education.
- Entertainment Habits – Time allocation, spending patterns, preferred activities.
- Game Perception – Genre preferences, immersion evaluation, and social motivations.
- Consumption Behavior – 35.54% favored RMB 200-300 per session, only 9.76% accepted >RMB 500. Reactions to pricing fluctuations.
- Market Feedback – 65.19% cited poor service quality. Expectations for improvement.
- Open-ended Feedback – Ideal script features, barriers to participation.

The survey incorporated 5-point Likert scales, matrix questions, multiple-choice, and open-ended formats, ensuring both quantitative rigor and qualitative depth.

Data Analysis Approach

The collected data (N = 293 valid responses) was analyzed using descriptive statistics and visual summaries to extract insights from participant responses.

Univariate Analysis

Demographics (age, gender, education level, occupation), Entertainment habits (spending, gaming frequency), Price sensitivity (willingness to pay), Preferred game duration.

Analysis Methods

Calculates the proportion of different categories (e.g., 18-25 years old accounts for 40.27%). Measures central tendencies for numeric variables such as spending levels and game duration preferences.

Tool: Excel

Data Visualization

Descriptive charts were used to visualize age, gender, occupation, game preferences, pricing acceptance, and game duration trends.

Tools: Excel / Tableau (for histograms, pie charts, scatter plots)

This comprehensive approach ensures that the study provides data-informed insights into consumer behavior, player preferences, and market trends in the murder mystery game sector.

Participant Observation

To holistically understand gameplay dynamics, I engaged as both a participant and observer in murder mystery game sessions from November 2024 to February 2025. As a researcher, I immersed myself in physical murder mystery game venues, participating in sessions without revealing my identity as a researcher. This covert participant observation allowed me to integrate into the gaming environment naturally while observing real-time social interactions and emotional responses (Deng, Z. F., 2024). This method aligns with participant

observation as a key approach for studying gaming behaviors, interactions (Walsh & Apperley, 2008) and immersion experiences (Snodgrass, 2016).

For this study, I participated in one session of each of three murder mystery games.

- The Unrest Hills: Chronicles of Six Beasts
- Mortal Mysteries: Gateway to the Abyss
- Lichuan: Tales of the Uncanny

Each session included experienced players (excluding myself), defined as individuals who play at least 1 – 2 times per week and are familiar with game mechanics. Every observation session covered the full gameplay experience – from introductory briefings to post-game debriefings—ensuring a comprehensive understanding of player behaviors.

This involved:

- Experiencing diverse game genres to analyze how narrative design and game mechanics shape player interactions.
- Observing real-time emotional responses, role-playing intensity, and group dynamics, emphasizing emotional engagement and behavioral analysis (Parke & Griffiths, 2008).
- Documenting the role of textual elements (e.g., clues, character backstories) in driving immersion and emotional energy release.
- Field notes and reflective journals were compiled to triangulate findings with interview and survey data, ensuring a multidimensional analysis of user experience.

4. Business Plan

4.1. External Situational Analysis

External analysis is the process of looking at the industry environment of a firm. This comprises of reviewing like the competitive position, dynamics, competitive structure, and company's history. The external examination on a macro scale includes global, political, and macroeconomic, social, technological, and environmental, and legal elements (Davies et al., 2014). The major aim of external analysis is to find the dangers and possibilities in a sector or segment that will result to enhanced growth, volatility, and profitability.

4.1.1. PESTEL Analysis

4.1.1.1. Political Context

The political atmosphere is essential in creating the success of murder mystery game provided by ZD Interactive.

The laws and policies associated to the public safety laws, entertainment, and business licensing impact the processes of those creations. In countries having strong policies on interactive entertainment and live-action role-playing, ZD Interactive has to ensure agreement with domestic needs (Xiong et al., 2023). The political doctrine is a major component as instability can demotivate customers from linking in different entertaining doings. The policies of taxation and support from government for the entertainment and gaming sector can impact the sustainability and profitability of the business. If the government offers rewards for creative and cultural businesses, it will advantage ZD Interactive by minimizing costs of operations or raising opportunities of investment (Saffarizadeh, 2022). Additionally, policies on gathering limitations like those enforced at the time of pandemics can meaningfully influence the revenue of store and customer meeting. The 14th five-year plan for cultural and tourism development (Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2021) explicitly calls for the promotion of immersive entertainment formats and encourages the integration of emerging experiences—such as murder mystery games and escape rooms—with cultural tourism. It also promotes the application of next-generation information technologies throughout the entire value chain of cultural creation, production, dissemination, and consumption to accelerate the development of the digital cultural industry. The 14th five-year plan for the development of the cultural industry (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021) encourages the development of immersive entertainment and experience products. It calls on the cultural equipment manufacturing industry to adapt to trends such as immersive experiences and intelligent

interaction by promoting technological research, development, and upgrades. Efforts will be accelerated to foster innovative advances in core technological equipment—including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), holographic imaging, ultra-high-definition displays, wearable devices, smart hardware, and immersive experience platforms. The 2022 Xuhui District cultural development special funding support project application guidelines (Xuhui District People's Government, Shanghai, 2022) are aimed at consolidating the gains from pandemic prevention and control. They seek to accelerate the recovery and revitalization of the cultural and creative industries while strengthening the “Shanghai Culture” brand. The interim provisions on the management of content for escape room and scripted murder mystery games in Shanghai (Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, 2022) stress that operators are the “primary responsible party.” They require businesses to establish robust internal content review systems, employ content review personnel, and implement appropriate technological supervision measures. The opinions on further unleashing consumption potential and promoting the sustained recovery of consumption (General Office of the State Council, 2022) underscores that consumption is a key link and a vital engine in the domestic economic cycle.

4.1.1.2. Economic Context

Economic situations effect the behaviour of customer spending, impacting the profits of offline mystery game store of ZD Interactive. In a robust economy with lower level of unemployment and huge disposable income, people have more chances to spend on immersive experience and entertainment (Nonomura & Mori, 2024). On the other hand, during economic downturn, unrestricted spending downfall, impacting the sales and revenues of ticket. The inflation rates and interest rates, and variations of foreign exchange also impact the costs of business and strategies of pricing. Moreover, economic situation assess property costs and rents that are important for physical store (Nonomura & Mori, 2024). If the prices of rental increase significantly, profitability can minimise unless the firm identifies different innovative manners to produce revenue like premium experiences and programs of membership. Additionally, the competition within the sector of entertainment, comprising VR gaming centers and escape rooms influence the strategies of pricing and positioning of market. A complete economic climate with reasonable costs of operations permits ZD Interactive to increase and finance in novel experiences of storytelling.

4.1.1.3. Socio-Cultural Context

Consumer preferences, demographics, and cultural trends play a key role in developing the success of offline mystery murder game of ZD Interactive. The increasing interest of people in immersive entertainment, live-action role-playing, and crime-solving games positively influence the need for experiences of murder mystery (Xiong et al., 2020). The increasing popularity of shows of crime and detective fiction also increases the interest of customer in those interactive experiences. Moreover, the transforming social behaviors, like a choice for public involvements over material belongings, advocate the need for group-oriented activities of entertainment like games of murder mystery. However, the cultural components associated to crimes themes have to be considered as particular audiences that may find content inappropriate and offensive.

The target market of demographics including age, social background, and level of income impacting marketing strategies. Young people and millennial who consider experiential entertaining have odds to be the key clients. Moreover, the social media trends and effect of influencers have an effect on the selection of entertainment that cannot be ignored. A well-devised strategy of marketing comprising engagement of community and influencers can raise trust and retention of customers.

4.1.1.4. Technological Context

Technology plays a key role in raising the murder mystery game store of ZD Interactive. The inclusion of AR, VR, and digital storytelling techniques can raise the immersive experience and differentiate the store from various competitors (Zhu et al., 2024). Enhancement in AI-formed interactive storytelling and real-time decision-making in games can create unique and personalized experiences for applicants (Barros et al., 2018). Additionally, the utilization of mobile apps for increase of game, ticket booking, and post-game association can increase the customer experience and the operations efficiency. The digital marketing tools and social media assist to promote enterprise, attract new customer, and retain existing customers through advertising and content marketing (Barros et al., 2018).

4.1.1.5. Environmental Context

Environmental consciousness and sustainability are essential in operations of business. ZD Interactive has to examine the effect of environment of its store of murder mystery game, including materials utilized in set of design, use of energy, and waste management. Implementing various practices of sustainability like utilization of materials for props which are very eco-friendly and reduce use of energy through HVAC mechanisms and smart

lighting which can raise the company's reputation who are very conscious towards environment (Canale & Farinetti, 2022). Additionally, linking in initiatives of corporate social responsibility (CSR) like cleanups and community collaborations ensuring sustainability increase brand image and loyalty. Climate conditions and natural disasters also posture credible threat to operations, particularly if the company's situation in areas are released to huge weather events (Jaschek et al., 2019). Moreover, the governmental regulations on sustainability of environment may require compliance with benchmarks of efficiency of energy and policies of disposal of waste. Firms that implement green initiatives might also advantage from incentives of government or reduction of tax, giving monetary benefits while adding to a sustainable model of business.

4.1.1.6. Legal Factors

Legal factors are important in ensuring the flat operation of murder mystery game store of ZD Interactive. Acquiescence with licensing of business, intellectual property rights, and labor laws is important to ignore lawful disagreements. Ensuring that narratives of game and themes do not disrupt laws of censorship or ethical strategies is also important, particularly in locations with stringent regulations of media content (Morgan, 2013). The safety of employees and conditions of working must comply with the laws of labour, especially if facilitators and actors are included in making the immersive experience. Moreover, the safety of measures and customer liability must be examined, as interactive experiences and physical activities can pose insignificant threats. Having elucidated terms of waivers, service, and disclaimer of liabilities can defend the firm from lawful issues (Morgan, 2013). The rights of intellectual property associated to concepts of original game, design of character, and narratives must also be defended to stop unauthorized replication or copying by competitors. Additionally, compliance to the laws of consumer protection related to refunds, transparent marketing, and fair pricing is important to sustain legal and credibility compliance (Morgan, 2013).

4.1.2. Sector Analysis

The market of murder mystery games has faced remarkable growth in current years, based on increasing appetite of consumers for interactive and immersive experiences. In 2023, the international market was valued at around USD 1.3 billion and is anticipated to attain USD 2.4 billion by 2032, showing a compound yearly growth rate of 7.9% at that time (Jagtap (2025)). This increasing route is based on different factors. The increasing admiration of

escape rooms and events of live-action role-playing have increased interest in games that are driven by narrative that promote problem-solving and social interaction. The assimilation of technology, like AR and VR has increased the appeal of these types of games by providing immersive experiences (Jagtap, 2025). The segment of market into offline and online formats, covering to different preferences of consumer. Offline murder mystery games have attained traction in the settings like homes and shopping malls. The shopping malls have embraced these types of games as experiential magnetisms, depicting foot traffic and giving unique options of entertainment. At home, the kits of murder mystery and hosted events have been renowned for social gatherings, providing an associating substitute to conventional entertainment (People's Daily Online, 2021).

Geographically, North America has catered the market, owing to its robust culture of gaming and high level of disposable incomes. But, the region of Asia-Pacific is considered as the fastest increasing market, considered by quick advancement in technology and a mushrooming interest in the interactive entertainment, especially in nations like South Korea and Japan (People's Daily Online, 2021). Based on the dynamics of market, the rising popularity of themed events and social gaming has been important. The consumers are getting unique experiences to amalgamate puzzle-solving, storytelling, and social interaction. This trend is increased with the increase of social media, where sharing is very common and that fuel more interest. Though, there is positive outlook there are challenges that persist. The appeal of niche of games of murder mystery might restrict their audience and not all consumers are based on role-playing and narrative-driven experiences. Moreover, the complication of some mechanics of game can be a blockage for newcomers (People's Daily Online, 2021). To reduce these issues, the firms are focusing on simplifying the designs of game without assimilating innovative rudiments and compromising depth to widen their appeal. In next few years, the market is poised for ongoing growth, with anticipations showing a valuation of USD 4.31 billion by 2030, with a growth rate of 9.03% from 2024 to 2030 (Jagtap, 2025). This increase is anticipated to be based on continuous innovations in design of game, the commencement of progressive technologies, and the increasing renowned of experiences of immersive entertainment across different demographics (People's Daily Online, 2021).

According to the study of Gu (2021), in 2021 the state-run media mentioned that there are approximately 6,500 jubensha companies recruited in China, an increase of greater than 60% from 2020. At the time of pandemic of COVID-19, apps of "Murder Mystery Game" (MMG) permitted people to play jubensha digitally. Following the enabling of limitations of pandemic in China, greater than 45,000 shops of jubensha operated with around 10 million dynamic players. It was approximated that the market will attain 23.89 billion Chinese Yuan.

Gu (2021) assessed that market research on China mentioned that games of script murder had been the third most widespread procedure of entertainment for people of China, behind watching movies and playing sports.

4.1.3. Competitor Analysis

The murder mystery game market has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by consumers' increasing appetite for immersive and interactive entertainment experiences. As of 2024, the global market was valued at approximately USD 1.26 billion and is projected to reach USD 2.14 billion by 2031, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.9% during this period (Research, 2022). Within this expanding market, several key players have established themselves as prominent competitors, each offering unique products and experiences that cater to diverse consumer preferences. One key firm is The Murder Mystery Company identified as the renowned immersive providers of murder mystery game. With an approximated yearly revenue of \$56.6 million and staff members of 251 employees, the firm has showed adequate growth, raising its count of employees of 14% in the previous year (Research, 2022).

Figure 4.1 The Murder Mystery Company



Source: murdermysteryco Website Public Image (2020)

Another essential player in the marketplace is Hunt a Killer, considered for episodic games that challenge players to resolve the intricate cases with the help of comprehensive narratives and clues. The innovative method of the company has increased a dedicated base of customers, adding to the overall popularity of at-home experiences of mystery (Cognitive Market Research, 2022). Moreover, Escape Room in a Box is also one of the competitor

which has capitalized on the trend of escape room by providing games of box that read the immersive experience of physical rooms of escape. Their products amalgamate puzzle-solving with the elements that are narrative, adding to customers adding the interactive entertainment at home. The Mystery Agency has also created a presence in the market with its story-driven puzzle and handicraft game. Their focus on materials of high-quality and add the process of storytelling has appealed consumers making for premium experiences of mystery game. Additionally, the features of market consider different competitors, comprising The Mystery Game Company, The Dinner Party Company, and Night of Mystery, each providing unique formats and themes to associate players (Verified Market Research, 2024). Conventional manufacturers of board game like Hasbro and Ravensburger have also entered the genre of murder mystery, assessing their formulated channels of distribution and recognition of brand to assess market share. Physically, the market has witnessed robust activity in North America, with firms like Hunt a Killer and The Murder Mystery Company creating the charge. But, there is an increasing occurrence of global competitors like Jingrenyuan in Taiwan and Mango Detective Game in India, showing an international market expansion (Verified Market Research, 2024). The landscape that is competitive is based on the mixture of formulated firms and emerging startups, everyone determined to distinguish themselves with different unique themes, delivery methods, and game mechanics. The commencement of technology, like online integration and digital components has been a main differentiator, with firms like Digital Murder Mystery providing virtual experiences to cover to tech-savvy or remote audiences (Verified Market Research, 2024).

Despite the growth of market, the firms experience challenges like huge competition from other genres of game and restricted awareness in different emerging markets. To resolve these issues, the firms are emphasizing on innovative designs of game, increasing their channels of distribution, and strategic marketing to get to a wider audience (Verified Market Research, 2024). The market of murder mystery game is a competitive and dynamic landscape, with different players providing a broad range of products to cater the increasing customers' demands seeking interactive and immersive entertainment. As the market tends to increase, the firms can adapt and innovate the transforming preferences of customers who are well-positioned to get success.

4.1.4. Porter's Five Forces Analysis

In this part, Porter five forces model is used for external assessment. Porter's five forces are used to identify and analyze the competitive forces that exist within an industry. The five forces include competition, the threat of new entrants to the industry, the negotiating power of suppliers, the bargaining power of customers, and the ability of customers to identify

substitutes for the products in the sector. The approach assists firms in estimating the level of competition and possible profitability in their market, which helps them to better understand where power sits in their industry. For this market, the analysis is done below:

Figure 4.2 Porter Five Forces Model



Source: Hessing (2024)

Threat of New Entrants

The offline murder mystery game market has been growing rapidly, attracting new players looking to capitalize on the demand for immersive entertainment experiences. However, significant barriers exist for new entrants. Establishing a brick-and-mortar murder mystery game store requires substantial investment in venue setup, game design, décor, and marketing. Additionally, creating engaging storylines and ensuring a high-quality experience requires expertise in event planning and interactive storytelling (Tahir et al., 2024). ZD Interactive benefits from brand recognition and established operational processes, making it difficult for new entrants to compete effectively (Anderson, 2024). However, to maintain its competitive advantage, the company must continue innovating with unique themes, personalized experiences, and strategic partnerships to enhance customer engagement.

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

Suppliers for an offline murder mystery game store include venue providers, costume and prop manufacturers, scriptwriters, and technical service providers. The bargaining power of suppliers varies depending on their role in the value chain. If ZD Interactive leases venues for its events, landlords may exert pricing pressure, especially in prime locations. Additionally, suppliers of high-quality props and costumes may charge premium rates, affecting the overall cost structure (Anderson, 2024). However, ZD Interactive can mitigate supplier power by negotiating long-term contracts, sourcing materials from multiple vendors, or even

developing in-house content and assets. Vertical integration by creating its own game scenarios and purchasing costumes in bulk could also reduce dependency on external suppliers (Tahir et al.,2024).

Bargaining Power of Buyers

Consumers have a wide range of entertainment options, including escape rooms, live-action role-playing (LARP) events, virtual reality experiences, and traditional social activities like dining or watching movies (Tahir et al.,2024). The abundance of alternatives increases the bargaining power of buyers, as they can easily switch to competing entertainment offerings. Additionally, customers today rely heavily on reviews, social media, and word-of-mouth recommendations before choosing an experience, putting pressure on businesses to deliver exceptional service. To counter this, ZD Interactive has to refine its offerings, offer high-level service of customers, and make memorable experience that promote repeated visits (Tahir et al.,2024). Providing programs of loyalty, customizable game selections, and exclusive events can further promote retention of customers.

Threat of Substitutes

This threat in the market of murder mystery game is robust, as clients have different substitutes of environment. The games of digital murder mystery, streaming services, and online escape rooms providing experiences of interactive storytelling all consider as probable alternatives. Moreover, at-home kits of murder mystery and board games offer a declined cost substitute for clients who consider same experiences in a private environment (Georgieva et al. 2015). To distinguish itself, ZD Interactive has to focus on the unique value of personal social interaction, real-time problem-solving, and immersive storytelling that online substitutes cannot completely replicate. The nights of hosting themed, collaborations with influencers, and assimilating technology into the experiences can further differentiate the store from alternatives (Russell, 2023).

Competitive Rivalry

The competitive rivalry within the market of murder mystery game is very penetrating, having different business for a share of the segment of immersive entertainment. Formed companies, operators of escape room, and other providers of interactive experience make an extremely competitive landscape. The difference factor is based on the storytelling quality, customer engagement, and the capability to make a memorable experience (Russell, 2023). ZD Interactive has to emphasize on ongoing innovation, safeguarding that its themes are engaging and fresh. Effective marketing campaigns, competitive pricing, and partnerships with leveraging feedback of customers to enhance and refine the experiences will assist to sustain a robust competitive position.

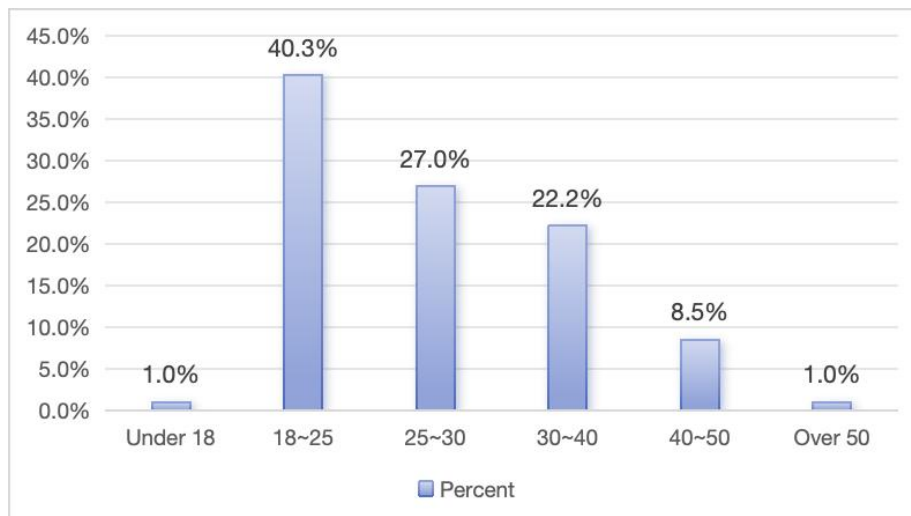
4.1.5. Consumer Analysis

The findings in this section are based on a quantitative survey conducted with 293 respondents. The data was collected online using a non-probabilistic sampling method, meaning that while the survey reflects a broad range of player perspectives, it may not fully represent the entire population. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the results.

4.1.5.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Age Distribution

Figure 4.3 Age Distribution



Source: own elaboration (2025)

The prominence of younger demographics in the murder mystery game market is further reinforced by both survey data and qualitative interview findings. The 18-25 age group constitutes the largest proportion of players (40.3%), followed by the 25-30 age group (27.0%). In total, 67.3% of respondents are under 30, indicating that the genre primarily appeals to younger audiences who favor innovative and socially engaging entertainment.

This trend is corroborated by Meituan's 2021 Offline Murder Mystery Game Consumer Insights Report, which similarly found that 75% of consumers were under 30, with the 20-25 age group alone accounting for 35% of total users. The consistency between the survey results (67.3% under 30) and broader industry data (75% under 30) highlights the dominant role of younger players in driving the genre's popularity.

Qualitative interview findings further support this pattern. Experienced players like player KK and player C (Experienced player, refer to the Appendix B-Interview) emphasized that

young players are particularly drawn to the narrative depth and social interaction in murder mystery games, making immersive and interactive experiences a key priority. Additionally, lighter players such as player W (light-level player, refer to the Appendix B-Interview) demonstrated a stronger preference for interactive settings and task-driven mechanics rather than traditional deduction-based gameplay, reinforcing the notion that younger players seek engagement beyond passive storytelling. For a more detailed breakdown of the survey data, refer to the Appendix A-Survey Questionnaires.

Gender Distribution

Male participants slightly outnumber females, making up 52.56% of respondents.

Educational Background

The majority of respondents hold at least an associate degree (89.42%), with bachelor's degree holders accounting for 41.64%. This suggests that highly educated individuals are more inclined to participate in murder mystery games, as they tend to prefer intellectually stimulating and narrative-driven activities.

Occupation Distribution

Students are the largest occupational group (30.38%), followed by private-sector employees (22.53%).

Students: Have more flexible schedules, making them more open to new and experimental entertainment. Seek novel experiences and immersive gameplay, making them a key audience for the industry.

Private-sector employees (primarily white-collar workers): Prefer weekend and holiday sessions as a way to relieve stress and socialize.

This indicates that the industry could benefit from developing short, high-quality game sessions tailored for working professionals.

Marital and Parental Status

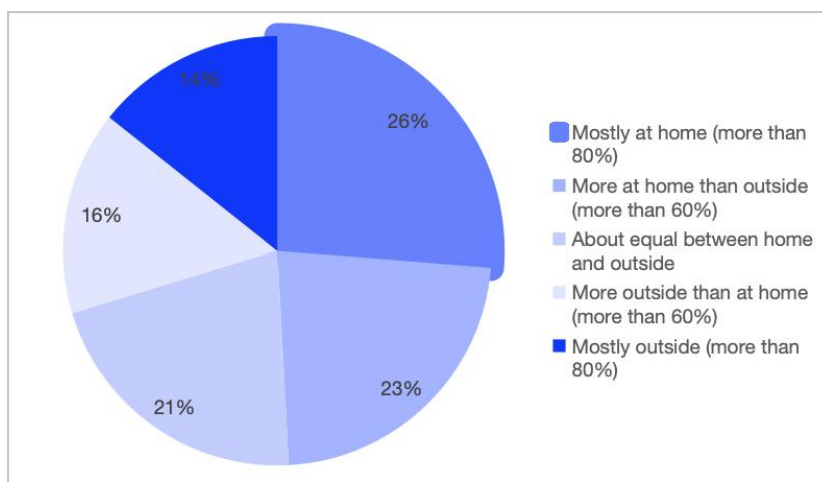
49.49% of respondents are single, and 55.29% do not have children. This suggests that the majority of murder mystery players have fewer family obligations, allowing them more free time and financial flexibility, making them an ideal target market. For additional statistical details, refer to the Appendix A-Survey Questionnaires.

4.1.5.2. Entertainment Habits

Survey data suggests a notable shift toward home entertainment, with 49.15% of respondents primarily engaging in leisure activities at home, while 26.28% almost exclusively do so. This trend is largely attributed to post-pandemic lifestyle adjustments, where home

entertainment offers cost-effectiveness and convenience. The increasing availability of streaming services, video games, and online books has further reinforced this behavior.

Figure 4.4 Home vs. Outdoor Entertainment Preferences Chart



Source: own elaboration (2025)

However, qualitative interviews reveal that core murder mystery players still favor offline experiences, highlighting a discrepancy between general entertainment preferences and the specific demands of murder mystery enthusiasts. Experienced players KK and C pointed out that online murder mystery games lack non-verbal communication, NPC interaction, and DM narratives, all of which are crucial for immersion. For details, refer to the Appendix B-Interview. Meanwhile, Xin (light-level player, refer to the Appendix B-Interview) acknowledged using online murder mystery apps for casual play but still preferred in-person games when organized by friends. Melgar, A. R. B. (2024) discussed the differences in consumer behavior between online and offline board game markets. The study found that while online murder mystery games have seen growth, core players still prefer offline experiences, a conclusion that aligns with our survey findings.

These findings align with the China Merchants Securities' industry report (2021), which states that although online murder mystery games have gained traction, offline experiences remain dominant, particularly in the immersive, high-end gameplay segment. Zhi et al. (2023) studied the impact of social interactions in murder mystery games on player engagement, further supporting our perspective.

The survey also identified the top three entertainment activities among respondents:

Reading & storytelling-related hobbies (66.55%); Watching movies/TV (62.8%); Board games & murder mystery games (49.83%). This indicates a strong consumer preference for narrative-driven, relaxing, and immersive entertainment.

In terms of spending behavior, most respondents allocate RMB 300-500 per month (29.69%) on entertainment, followed by RMB 500-800 (22.87%). Given these spending patterns, murder mystery pricing should remain within a mid-range affordability level to attract the broadest audience.

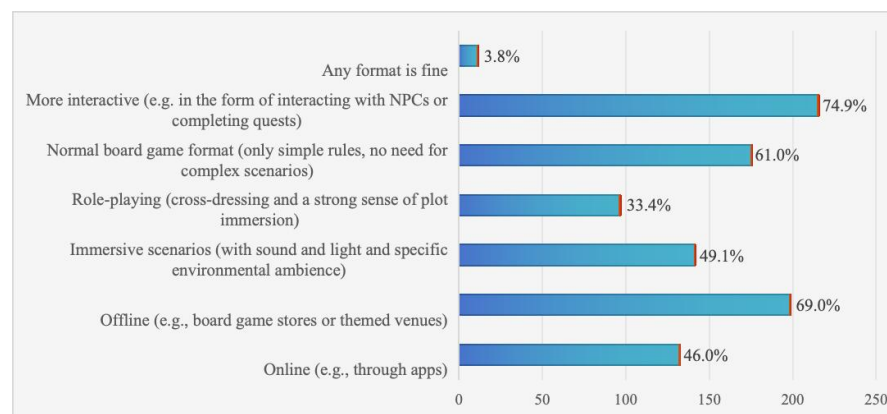
4.1.5.3. Awareness and Participation in Murder Mystery Games

Survey results indicate that murder mystery games are not yet a weekly activity for most participants, presenting an opportunity to enhance customer retention and repeat engagement. Specifically, 35.49% of respondents have played only a few times and understand the rules, while only 15.7% participate on a weekly basis. Over the past six months, 45.8% have played 1-3 times, and 19.47% have played 4-6 times, reflecting a relatively infrequent engagement pattern among most consumers.

Preferred Game Format: Offline immersive experiences (69.0%) and NPC interaction or task-based gameplay (74.9%) emerged as the most popular formats, underscoring consumers' strong preference for interactivity, realism, and immersion.

This trend suggests a gradual shift away from traditional tabletop murder mystery formats towards more experience-driven models that incorporate narrative depth, physical settings, and interactive elements.

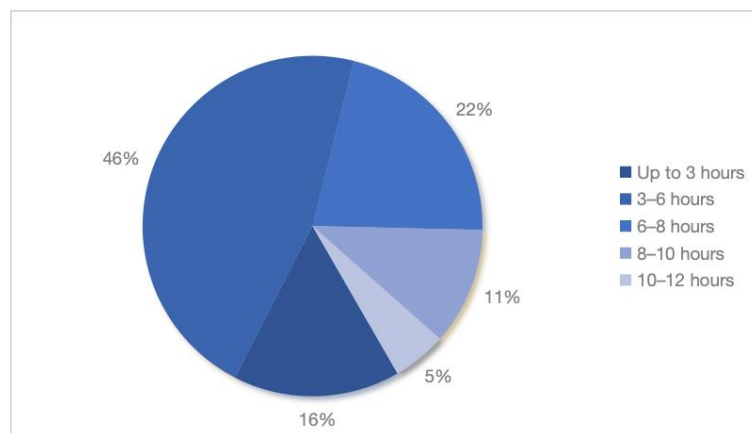
Figure 4.5 Popular and Widely Accepted Formats Among Players



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Ideal Game Duration: The majority of respondents prefer longer, more immersive sessions, with 46% favoring 3-6 hours games and 22% preferring 6-8 hours game. While shorter formats (up to 3 hours) appeal to beginners, the mainstream market gravitates towards extended gameplay experiences, reinforcing the demand for complex storytelling and deeper character immersion.

Figure 4.6 Preferred Game Duration Pie Chart



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Interview findings further validate these survey results, confirming that immersion and interactivity are critical factors in shaping consumer preferences. This aligns with survey results showing that 74.9% of respondents prefer NPC-interactive or task-based gameplay.

Lighter players such as W (refer to the Appendix B-Interview) emphasized that physical settings, search-for-clues mechanics, and NPC interactions significantly enhance engagement, making murder mystery games feel more dynamic and interactive. The game experience descriptions in the Participant Observation Annex file closely align with these findings. Lichuan: Tales of the Uncanny emphasizes horror elements and an immersive storyline, with its atmospheric setting and interactive features meeting players' expectations for an engaging and immersive experience. The Unrest Hills incorporates complex character backgrounds and intricate deductive logic, aligning with players' preferences for deep narratives and interactive gameplay. These insights demonstrate that the consumer survey data is validated by real player feedback and further highlight the prevailing trends in the murder mystery game market.

Medium player Ying (refer to the Appendix B-Interview) noted that store loyalty is often built around trusted DMs, as a skilled DM enhances immersion and storytelling quality, further reinforcing the importance of game hosts in creating engaging and memorable experiences.

These insights align with Meituan's 2021 industry report, which identified DM professionalism, script quality, and venue atmosphere as the three most influential factors in consumer decision-making.

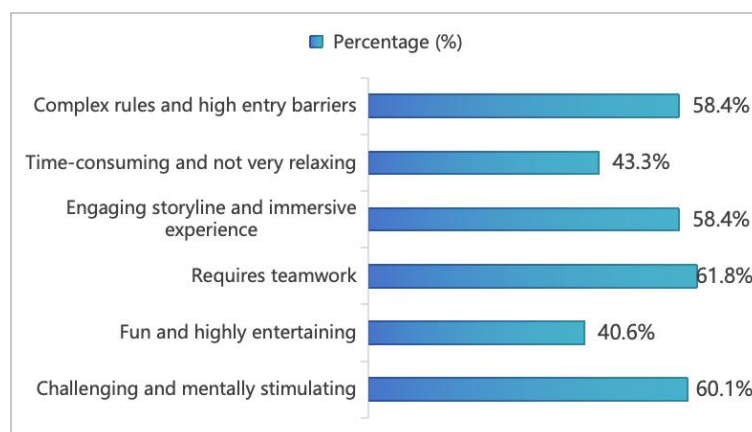
Despite strong consumer interest, time commitment (62.8%) and difficulty in gathering a group (57%) remain the two biggest deterrents to participation. This suggests that offering shorter, more accessible game formats and organizing open-group events could effectively lower participation barriers and attract a broader audience. Naghikhani, S. (2024) also

pointed out that lack of free time and not having enough interested friends/players are the two main obstacles to playing board games.

4.1.5.4. Key Motivators and Barriers

The survey results indicate that engaging storylines (58.4%) and immersive experiences (58.4%) are the two most important factors attracting players to murder mystery games. This highlights the significance of well-structured narratives, unexpected twists, and strong character development in enhancing player engagement.

Figure 4.7 Key Motivators For Murder Mystery Game Participation



Source: own elaboration (2025)

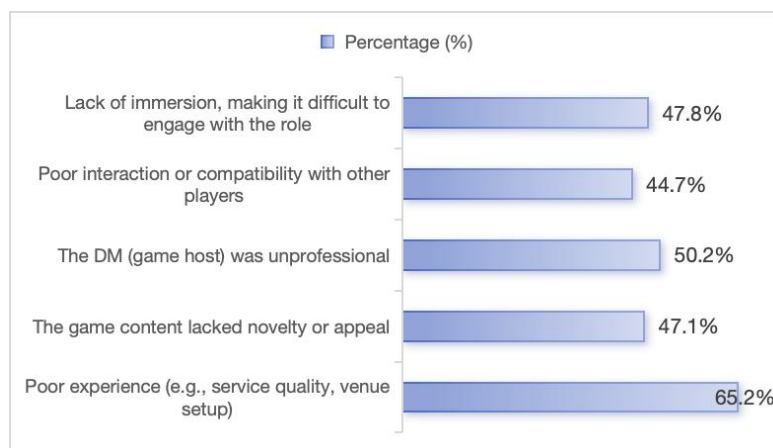
The player feedback in the Appendix C-Participant Observation file indicates that the narrative depth and deductive experience of The Unrest Hills and Mortal Mysteries were highly praised, which aligns with the consumer survey data.

Additionally, team collaboration (61.8%) emerges as a key motivator, reflecting the social nature of the game, where players work together to solve complex mysteries. In the Appendix C-Participant Observation file, multiple players mentioned in their feedback on Mortal Mysteries that the game's deduction chain is long, requiring deep engagement in discussion and reasoning. The exchange of information and collaboration between players are crucial aspects of the gaming experience. This feedback validates the accuracy of the consumer survey data, indicating that the appeal of murder mystery games lies not only in the storyline but also in player interaction and deductive challenges.

Furthermore, intellectual challenges (60.1%) appeal to players who enjoy logic-based problem-solving and critical thinking. The complex nature of murder mystery games, which often requires deduction, reasoning, and attention to detail, provides a mentally stimulating experience that keeps players engaged.

Together, these motivators suggest that narrative depth, immersive elements, teamwork, and intellectual challenge are the core driving forces behind murder mystery game participation. Developers and game designers should prioritize rich storytelling, multi-layered plot structures, and interactive environments to enhance player engagement.

Figure 4.8 Key Barriers To Murder Mystery Game Participation



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Despite their appeal, murder mystery games also face significant participation barriers. Poor service quality (65.2%) and unprofessional game hosts (50.2%) are the most frequently cited concerns. In the Appendix C-Participant Observation file, multiple players mentioned in their feedback on Lichuan: Tales of the Uncanny that the DM was too busy to provide timely guidance, which affected the overall experience. In the feedback on Mortal Mysteries, some players found certain case-solving logic to be overly forced, leading to negative emotions. These real player experiences help explain the "service quality" issues identified in the survey data and provide concrete examples that can be used to improve future game design and operations. Players expect a high level of facilitation, as the role of the DM is critical in maintaining immersion and guiding gameplay. Inadequate hosting skills, lack of enthusiasm, or poor game facilitation can severely disrupt the experience, leading to dissatisfaction and negative reviews.

Additionally, lack of fresh and engaging game content (47.1%) is a major factor discouraging repeat visits. Many players expressed frustration with predictable plotlines, overused tropes, and limited game variety. This suggests that regular updates, script diversity, and innovation in game mechanics are necessary to sustain player interest.

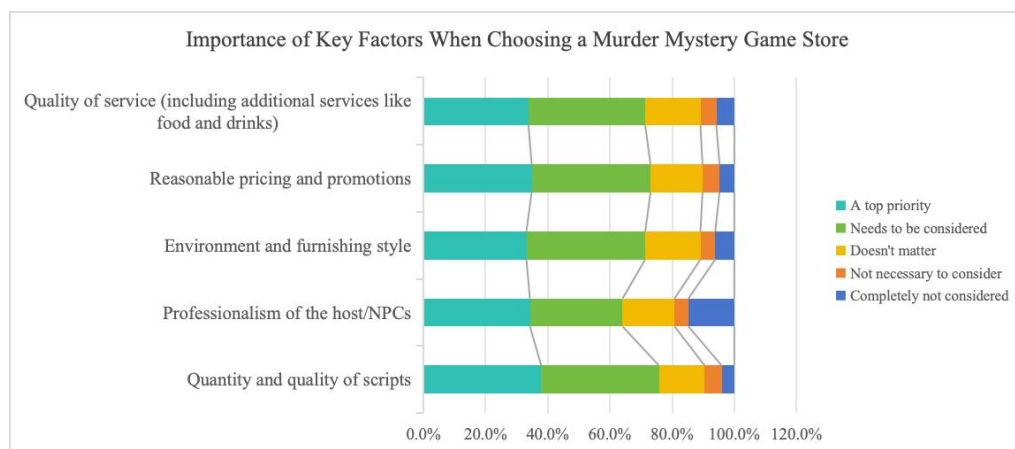
These findings emphasize the need for better staff training (Martyn, E., & Anderson, C. K., 2018), improved customer service (Chaichi, K., 2012), and continuous content development to maintain player retention. These findings align closely with industry and academic analyses: Meituan's 2021 Offline Murder Mystery Consumer Insights Report (Xing et al.,

2022) identified DM professionalism, script quality, and venue reputation as the top three factors influencing consumer choices, directly corroborating the barriers observed in this study (e.g., 50.2% dissatisfaction with unprofessional hosts). China Merchants Securities' In-Depth Industry Report (2021) emphasized that the quality of the DM is pivotal to offline game experiences, noting that skilled DMs must excel in narrative pacing, script interpretation, and player engagement — a requirement unmet in venues criticized for poor service quality. Collectively, these sources validate the centrality of service standards and content innovation in shaping player satisfaction, reinforcing the need for industry improvements in DM training and script development.

4.1.5.5. Evaluation of the Proposed New Mystery Game

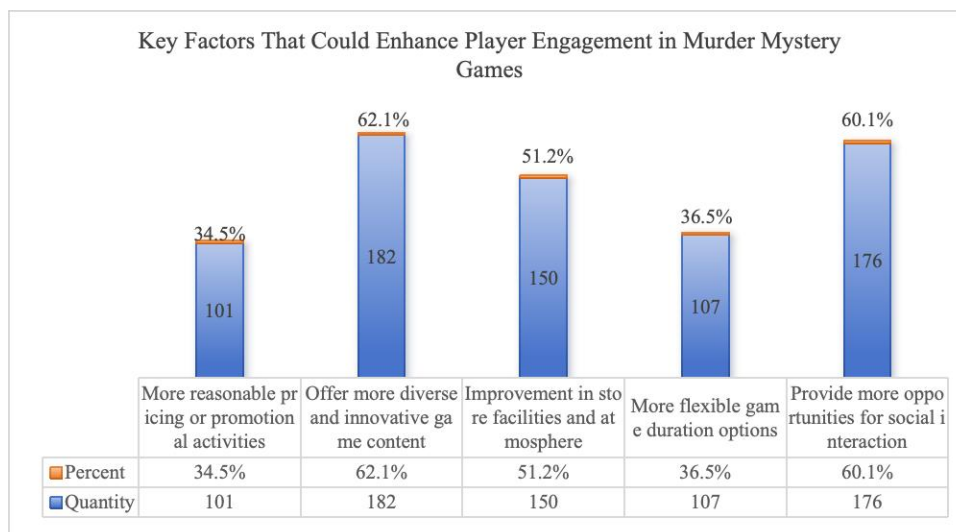
Survey responses highlighted key areas for improvement, which provide direction for developing a new murder mystery game format. The following evaluation assesses how these expectations align with potential innovations.

Figure 4.9 Importance of Key Factors When Choosing a Murder Mystery Game Store



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Figure 4.10 Key Factors That Could Enhance Player Engagement in Murder Mystery Games



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Players' Key Expectations for the New Murder Mystery Game:

- Quantity and quality of scripts was a top priority for respondents, indicating a strong demand for engaging narratives with interactive plot twists.
- Real NPC roles make the gameplay experience more realistic and engaging.
- Shorter gameplay options to accommodate players with tighter schedules.

Interest in New Game Features:

- According to the survey, 60.1% of respondents expressed interest in having more social and interactive gameplay, which could be enhanced through hybrid formats that blend digital technology with physical elements.
- Multi-session storylines, allowing players to engage in an ongoing narrative.
- Offering trial sessions and promotional incentives can help gauge market response and improve player experience.

The findings indicate that the future of the murder mystery game industry will likely be shaped by a balance between high-end, immersive experiences and more accessible, Yu and Zhang (2023) also explored how narrative elements in murder mystery games influence player immersion, which aligns with the analysis that consumers prefer NPC interactions and immersive experiences. socially-driven formats. To sustain growth, businesses should focus on refining DM quality, improvement script diversity, and leveraging innovative technologies while ensuring affordability and accessibility.

Beyond structured responses, some participants provided qualitative feedback on the perceived value of murder mystery games. The key perspectives are outlined below:

- Negative Perception – "Murder Mystery Games Are Meaningless".
- Cost Concerns – "Poor Cost-Effectiveness"

A small fraction of respondents believe that murder mystery games lack depth or purpose, viewing them as purely recreational with no real-world value. Research has shown that the perceived value of services, including recreational activities, is closely linked to tangible benefits, and a lack of such benefits can reduce engagement (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011). Similarly, tangible benefits in recreational services have been found to affect customer loyalty and engagement (Prentice, 2013). This suggests that the absence of a tangible takeaway (e.g., learning, skill development) may diminish player interest in murder mystery games.

A significant number of respondents raised concerns about the price-to-value ratio of murder mystery games. Prior research has demonstrated that cost-effectiveness directly impacts consumer engagement in recreational services (Cohen et al., 2012). Players expect better script quality, more immersive environments, and engaging experiences to justify the cost of participation. This feedback suggests that pricing strategies and experience enhancement could be key factors in improving player retention.

Implications for Game Design and Business Strategy: Incorporating educational elements, such as historical, psychological, or forensic themes, could broaden the game's appeal by offering more than just entertainment and helping attract skeptics. Improving game quality, offering tiered pricing models, or introducing membership discounts would address cost-effectiveness concerns, making the game more accessible and increasing its perceived value for players. This feedback underscores an opportunity to position murder mystery games not merely as entertainment but as an engaging and rewarding experience for different player groups.

4.1.5.6. Participant Observation

Based on the findings from the Participant Observation:

- In "Unrest Hills," players who prefer deep logical reasoning and can handle a substantial amount of reading require improved organization and distribution of the script content to avoid repetition and fragmentation, thereby enhancing reading efficiency and comprehension.
- In "Lichuan," the target audience demands a quick immersion into a mysterious atmosphere while still expecting a certain depth of reasoning. Therefore, a balance must be struck in terms of pacing and information presentation.
- "Mortal Mysteries" reveals that novice players rely more on detailed character background explanations to quickly engage with the storyline and lower the entry barrier.

These insights, analysis shows that players who enjoy complex reasoning and hardcore puzzles respond well to scripts that reinforce logical depth and incorporate traditional cultural elements. Players valuing an emotional experience and a beginner-friendly approach tend to be drawn to scripts that offer an immersive atmosphere with guided design. Meanwhile, those who prioritize rigorous logic and attention to detail are more sensitive to the clarity and coherence of how script information is presented. Consumer feedback further highlights the high value placed on the DM's live guidance. The ability of the DM to offer necessary hints while still allowing players the freedom to reason independently is seen as crucial for enhancing the overall experience. This segmented analysis of player preferences and service touchpoints not only deepens the understanding of the user experience for each script but also outlines a clear direction for future market promotion and product iteration.

4.1.5.7. Critical Success Factors

The essential success factors for the market is providing immersive and compelling storytelling. Customers seek engaging, well-crafted narratives that challenge their problem-solving skills while providing an entertaining experience. The ability to design unique murder mystery plots with intriguing characters, unexpected twists, and interactive elements is crucial in keeping players engaged (Anderson, 2024). By frequently updating themes and introducing fresh storylines, the company can encourage repeat visits and maintain excitement in its offerings.

Customer satisfaction is a major driver of success in the interactive entertainment industry. From the moment a customer enters the venue, they should be immersed in an engaging and enjoyable environment. This includes well-trained staff who enhance the experience by playing their roles convincingly, well-designed sets that create an authentic atmosphere, and a seamless booking process that minimizes customer effort (Berglund & Nilsson, 2023). Positive word-of-mouth, social media recommendations, and online reviews play a significant role in attracting new customers, making it essential for the market to provide exceptional service.

Marketing plays a critical role in the success of the market of murder mystery game store. The company must effectively reach its target audience through digital marketing, social media engagement, and influencer collaborations. Utilizing platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to showcase exciting snippets of the experience can generate interest and attract new customers. Hosting special events, themed nights, and corporate team-building sessions can further expand the customer base (Sandwell & Sutton Lutz, 2014). Additionally,

a strong brand identity that highlights the unique and immersive nature of the market's offerings can differentiate it from competitors.

Partnering with local businesses, event planners, and corporate clients can create additional revenue streams. Collaborations with restaurants, bars, and theaters can lead to bundled experiences, attracting a broader audience. Corporate team-building events and private parties are lucrative opportunities that can ensure a steady flow of bookings (Blas, 2016). Working with social media influencers or online communities specializing in gaming and entertainment can further amplify brand reach and awareness.

Maintaining a balance between high-quality production and cost efficiency is vital for long-term success. Investing in reusable props, digital storytelling elements, and scalable game formats can help reduce costs while maintaining an immersive experience. Managing venue costs, staffing, and marketing expenses effectively will allow the company to maximize profitability while keeping ticket prices competitive (Zhi et al., 2023).

The interactive entertainment industry is constantly evolving, with new trends emerging regularly. The market must stay ahead by incorporating technological advancements such as augmented reality (AR) or digital integrations into its murder mystery games. Gathering customer feedback and implementing improvements will help refine the experience and ensure long-term customer retention (Kärnä et al., 2024).

4.2. Presentation of the company

4.2.1. Company Background

Shanghai ZD Interactive Team was established in 2016, In 2016, it had only six employees, after years of continuous exploration and practice, now boasts a team of over 50 professionals. As a comprehensive service provider specializing in creative visual design, internet product consulting, automotive product design, and integrated online and offline marketing, ZD has always upheld its corporate philosophy of “innovation-driven, interaction-enabled.” Leveraging robust technical capabilities and deep-rooted design expertise, the team consistently delivers comprehensive digital transformation and brand upgrading solutions for leading domestic and international brands. To date, they have successfully completed over 50 large-scale projects and incubated several proprietary

Figure 4.11 ZD Company logo



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Insights & Strategic Implications:

- **Development Projects Dominate (45%)** – This area is now the largest revenue driver, suggesting a strong focus on tech and digital innovation.
- **Creative Visuals Maintain Strength (30%)** – A core pillar, particularly within film production, AD production and automotive branding.
- **Product Consulting (15%) & Integrated Marketing (10%)** – These areas could be expanded further, especially in high-demand industries.

Table 4.1 Business Area Sales Distribution

Business Area	Sales Percentage (%)	Key Clients
Development Projects	45%	Tech startups, Software firms, Digital platforms
Creative Visuals	30%	Film production companies, Automotive brands
Product Consulting	15%	Internet platforms, Hardware companies
Integrated Marketing	10%	Corporate events, Exhibition planners

Source: own elaboration (2025)

4.2.2. Core Team and Professional Talent

The success of any innovative business stems from the strength of its team, and at the heart of our company's development is a group of highly skilled professionals whose expertise spans a wide range of fields.

Peter (Founder, CEO & Chief Visionary): A Computer Science graduate from Harbin Institute of Technology, Peter leads the company's strategic planning and technological innovation, ensuring sustained growth.

LILI (Co-Founder & Chief Creative Officer): With a Design degree from a top Shanghai Fudan University INSTITUTE OF VISUAL ARTS, LILI oversees project management and design, ensuring a seamless blend of functionality and aesthetics.

BEI (Head of Front-End Development): A Unity development expert specializing in 3D modeling and VR content, BEI enhances interactive experiences, particularly in VR-based murder mystery games.

PU (Head of Back-End Development): An expert in cloud architecture and high-performance computing, PU ensures the stability and efficiency of back-end systems for immersive VR experiences.

RUO (Head of Art Design Team): A multi-award-winning designer, RUO leads brand visual identity, 3D modeling, and immersive venue layouts for murder mystery experiences.

XU (Head of Interactive Installation Team): With extensive experience in interactive installations and exhibition design, XU merges technology with artistic expression to create immersive experiences.

SHUI (Director & Visual Effects Leader): A renowned visual effects expert in film and animation, SHUI oversees creative storytelling, post-production, and visual effects strategies (Detailed professional backgrounds and achievements are provided in the Appendix D-Team Profiles).

4.2.3. Core Business Areas and Service Scope

The business of the Shanghai ZD Interactive team primarily spans the following three core areas, each backed by years of project experience and unique solution development.

Creative visual services offered 3D design, AR/VR, and interactive motion sensing, as well as H5 website development and brand marketing visual design. Provided art production, creative art direction, and visual effects production for several films, delivering visually impactful cinematic works. Produced high-quality visual materials for the Champion services of various new-generation electric vehicle brands, helping these brands stand out in a fiercely competitive market.

Product consulting services offered Internet product consulting and user experience design, Website and App Development, Hardware Design, and Engineering Consulting. Tailored online products — mini-programs and sales platforms — for well-known brands like Bate Medical, enhancing their digital transformation and user engagement.

Integrated marketing services offered offline event planning and exhibition display design. Media Placement and IP Acquisition. Delivered comprehensive design, production, and interactive installation solutions for the exhibition booths and internal displays of Guangzhou Automobile Group, creating immersive spaces that blend aesthetics with high-tech appeal. Successfully planned and executed various offline events over the years, helping clients enhance their brand image holistically.

4.2.4. Flagship Projects and Milestones

In the process of continuously expanding its business and enhancing its service capabilities, the Shanghai ZD Interactive team has accumulated extensive industry experience.

2014: Baxter Medical Brand Mini-Program Development

During the early stages of digital transformation, ZD developed a mini-program for the Baxter Medical brand that created an intuitive, convenient, and highly interactive online platform. This enhanced the brand's digital image and enabled consumers to understand its culture and product advantages better.

2016: Top-tier supplier for Luxury Brands and online Development Project

Leveraging outstanding technical expertise and project execution capabilities, the team successfully positioned itself as a top-tier supplier for luxury brands and undertook a significant online development project in the domestic market, further establishing its leading status in the high-end segment.

2018: Online Sales Platform for New-Generation Electric Vehicles

ZD tailored an online sales platform for a Chinese new-generation electric vehicle brand. Integrating product displays, online transactions, intelligent data analytics, and personalized recommendations, the platform significantly enhanced the interaction between the brand and consumers, boosting market competitiveness.

2019: A Year of Multiple Flagship Projects

- **Liulishuo Offline Interactive Exhibition Hall Project.** In collaboration with the tech-driven education app Liulishuo, ZD created a 400-square-meter offline interactive exhibition hall. Utilizing cutting-edge technologies such as VR and AR, the hall delivers an immersive interactive experience and serves as a key platform to showcase the brand's philosophy and technical prowess.
- **Guangqi Group Booth and Corporate Building Exhibit Design Project.** ZD provided comprehensive design, production, and interactive installation solutions for Guangqi Group's exhibition booth and corporate building displays. By cleverly integrating interactive installations, the project successfully created an immersive space that marries aesthetics with technological sophistication, significantly enhancing the brand image and on-site engagement.
- **Champion Services for New-Generation Electric Vehicle Brands.** ZD has supported several new-generation electric vehicle brands by producing high-quality visual materials, ensuring that these brands stand out in a fiercely competitive market through superior visual communication.

- The team has engaged in deep collaborations with multiple film production teams, offering art production, creative art direction, and visual effects services. Additionally, under the leadership of SHUI, the dedicated scriptwriting team injects unique creative elements into film projects, enhancing the artistic appeal and visual impact of the final works.

4.2.5. Major Clients and Market Impact

Over the years, the Shanghai ZD Interactive team has provided professional services to leading domestic and international brands such as Mercedes-Benz, Bentley, SAIC Motor, GAC Group (Guangzhou Auto Company), Chanel, L'Oréal, and so on. Through continuous innovation and high-quality execution, the team has successfully completed over 50 large-scale projects. These projects have not only achieved significant results within their respective fields but have also helped clients establish a distinctive brand image, driving the overall digital transformation and upgrading of the industry.

4.3. SWOT

Strengths

- **Skilled and experienced team and strong team collaboration:** With over 80 professionals, ZD's team, led by creative directors LI and RUO, excels in design, technology, and project management. The technical team, including BEI and PU, specializes in VR and interactive design, driving immersive and innovative game experiences. RUO mentions that creating VR script-killing games involves close collaboration across multiple areas of expertise, such as content creation, 3D modeling, VR set design, and more. The team's ability to collaborate and use AI-assisted tools to improve efficiency is a major strength of the company. The company's core competencies are the team's multifaceted collaboration and efficient workflow.
- **Comprehensive Expertise:** The company has extensive experience in creative visual design, product consulting, and marketing, allowing it to offer robust digital transformation and brand enhancement solutions.
- **International Brand Experience and Market Expansion Opportunities.** The company has already provided services for a number of international brands and has accumulated a wealth of experience in overseas projects. This ability to expand globally and its brand reputation is a major strength of the company, helping it to further expand its business.
- **Innovative VR and AI technologies:** The Company has adopted VR and AI technologies as its core strategy, with VR technology enhancing immersion and AI-driven storytelling

adding innovative elements to games. The company has provided technological leadership through these technologies to create more immersive and interactive gaming experiences for players.

- The company's products fit the market demand, especially the preferences of young consumer groups. The Company's VR murder mystery games emphasize emotional and intellectual involvement, which meets the needs of young consumers for interactive and immersive entertainment experiences and opens up the company's market.
- Hybrid Business Model: Integrating online and offline experiences enhances customer engagement and expands market reach, offering a unique gaming experience.
- B2B Market Expansion: Strategic partnerships in corporate team-building and education allow ZD Interactive to diversify revenue streams and promote long-term growth.

Weaknesses

- AR Technology Maturity and Comfort Issues: AR technology is currently immature, particularly with issues related to accuracy and comfort during extended use, which affect both the application of the technology and the player experience. Although the company plans to improve these issues, it remains a weakness. According to feedback from BEI and XU, technology maturity is a significant challenge.
- Early Resource Allocation Challenges: During the initial phase of implementing VR, the company faces resource allocation challenges, especially in terms of cost control. This could affect the company's ability to grow quickly in the early stages. This is also a concern highlighted by CEO Peter during interviews.
- DM Recruitment and Training Issues: Recruiting and training experienced game masters (DMs) remains a challenge. Despite internal training and outsourcing strategies, the company still faces difficulties in ensuring a high-quality game experience. Insights from the operations center point out that this is a significant challenge in recruitment and training.
- Initial VR Technology Complexity and Content Development Limitations: The simplified VR interactions in the initial phase may limit the complexity of visual effects and interactive experiences. To control costs, the company plans to start with basic text and virtual characters, gradually improve and upgrade the experience.
- Financial Pressure and Initial Investment Challenges: In the early stages of the project, particularly regarding venue construction, equipment investment, and marketing promotion, the company may face financial pressures, which could impact the project's launch and early development.

Opportunities

As the murder mystery market continues to grow, particularly with increasing demand from younger consumers, the company has the opportunity to establish a strong presence in this emerging market. We plan to seize this growth opportunity through precise market positioning and innovative gaming experiences.

As market demand rises, combining simple yet effective VR technology to enhance script presentation can meet low-cost requirements in the early stages and lay the foundation for more complex graphics and interactive features. By leveraging technological innovation to attract younger consumers, we aim to gain market validation quickly.

The company plans to extensively apply cutting-edge VR and AR technologies in the murder mystery store, providing customers with immersive interactive experiences. Through virtual environments and real-time interactive technologies, we will enhance player immersion and entertainment value, thus creating a differentiated competitive advantage in the market.

With the increasing popularity of VR technology and rising demand for immersive experiences, although the visuals will be relatively simple in the initial phase, we plan to continuously iterate and upgrade VR content, gradually enhancing user interaction and expanding our market influence. Eventually, we will transition toward a fully immersive virtual environment.

- **Increasing Demand for Immersive Entertainment among Young Consumers:** There is a growing demand for interactive and immersive entertainment among young, tech-savvy consumers. The company's VR murder mystery games align with this trend, offering a broader market opportunity. As market demand increases, young consumers have become a target market, providing the company with the opportunity to capture this growing segment.
- **Increased Interest in Murder Mystery Games:** With murder mystery games gaining popularity as a form of entertainment, especially among young people and groups, market demand continues to rise. The cultural rise of murder mystery games provides the company with a large potential market. The increasing popularity of this entertainment format presents a significant market expansion opportunity for the company.
- **Further Development of AI and VR Technologies:** The ongoing advancements in VR and AI technologies provide future development opportunities, particularly in dynamic storytelling and complex NPC interactions. As these technologies evolve, the company can enhance the interactivity and complexity of its games, strengthening its competitive position in the market. These technological advancements offer substantial growth potential, especially in the VR and AI sectors.

Threats

- **Immaturity of AR Technology and Market Competition:** The limitations of AR technology and competition from similar products could pose a threat. Currently, AR technology suffers from issues such as insufficient accuracy and discomfort during prolonged use, and there is an influx of "hype-driven" AR murder mystery games in the market, which fail to provide a truly immersive experience. This could lead to a lack of trust in AR technology in the market.
- **Balancing Technology Maturity with Market Demand:** Finding a balance between technological innovation and market demand remains a potential threat. While pushing for innovation, the company needs to continuously balance the maturity of the technology with market demand. If the technological complexity cannot be rapidly increased, it could affect market acceptance and the player experience.
- **Intense Competition in the Murder Mystery Market:** The murder mystery market is highly competitive, with established brands already leading the market. The barriers to entry are gradually lowering, leading to an influx of new entrants. To address this threat, the company will leverage its strengths in creative visuals and technology applications, differentiating its brand through unique game IPs and innovative user experiences to secure a strong position in the market.
- **Impact of Economic Uncertainty on Consumer Spending:** Current economic uncertainty may impact consumer spending decisions, particularly in the entertainment sector. To counter this challenge, the company plans to implement flexible pricing strategies, offer membership discounts, and provide low-barrier virtual game experiences through online platforms to attract customers across various income levels. Economic uncertainty could threaten consumer demand.
- **Post-Pandemic Health and Safety Regulations:** With the post-pandemic recovery, the offline entertainment industry must comply with strict health and safety regulations. The company plans to ensure compliance with these regulations through innovative reservation systems, timed entry, and other measures while enhancing the overall customer experience. Health and safety regulations may pose a threat to operations.

4.4. Value Proposition and Project Strategy

4.4.1. Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The mission of this project is to offer high-value immersive social experiences, combined with VR technology, to provide urban populations with an innovative entertainment option. It aims to achieve the dual goals of "fragmented stress relief" and "deep emotional connection." Through this approach, we seek to build a sustainable "Murder Mystery Game" brand that meets the needs of modern consumers who crave both entertainment and emotional resonance amid their busy lives.

Vision

In the short term, offline store will offer a stable traditional "Murder Mystery Game" experience, attracting core player groups and gradually establishing brand recognition. and will provide 60-90 minute short VR game experiences, catering to educational and corporate customization markets to quickly engage new users. With ongoing technological advancements, the future will see the adoption of VR and AI-powered scripts, enhancing interactivity and immersion, thereby increasing the technological competitiveness of the brand and promoting its expansion in the global market.

Values

This project upholds three core values: First, flexibility and adaptability. Two store will offer tailored experiences — traditional mystery/romantic scripts and short VR experiences — to meet different market demands. Second, immersive technology, which enhances the interactive experience and player immersion through the integration of VR technology and smart NPCs. Finally, innovative storytelling, which combines high-quality original scripts with AI-driven dynamic plot branching to maintain game novelty and innovation, ensuring that every experience remains engaging and surprising.

4.4.2. Objectives

The main objectives are to enhance brand visibility, expand market reach, and strengthen the company's position in the entertainment and educational sectors through innovative technologies and immersive experiences.

Utilize social platforms like Xiaohongshu (Rednote) and Douyin (TikTok) to promote the brand via KOL short videos. Implement a player loyalty system with a points-based reward mechanism to drive viral marketing, foster interactive engagement, and broaden brand awareness.

Develop seasonal and culturally immersive themed game rooms and city-exclusive scripts that tap into local culture and folklore, establishing a must-play series that appeals to tourists and local players. Collaborate with local cultural and tourism bureaus to create

"Murder Mystery Game & Cultural Tourism" experiences. Organize an annual city-based Murder Mystery Festival that highlights local culture and engages national audiences.

Innovating VR Scripts and Collaborating with Established IPs: Design and release interactive VR scripts across genres such as Romance, Education, History, and Mythology and partner with famous IPs.

Advanced innovative script generation technology to upgrade the VR and AI-driven Murder Mystery Game experience. This will enable dynamic plot development, reduce content creation costs, and boost replayability. NPC interactions will be further enhanced to simulate real game masters, providing players with a more immersive and realistic experience.

4.4.3. Strategy

This project adopts a city-exclusive strategy, focusing on deepening the local market and creating a Murder Mystery Game brand that combines cultural exchange, VR immersive experience, and traditional script formats. By leveraging six major strategies — product innovation, VR technology upgrades, brand marketing, B2B partnerships, community operations (points-based reward system), and data-driven approaches — the project aims to achieve profitability growth and maximize cultural influence in the Murder Mystery Game industry.

4.4.3.1. Product Innovation Strategy

To cater to a diverse range of audiences and preferences, our company offers various types of scripts designed to provide immersive and engaging experiences. These tiered offerings ensure that we can effectively meet the needs of casual players and dedicated enthusiasts and appeal to educational and family audiences. By segmenting our scripts this way, we aim to maximize engagement and satisfaction across a broad spectrum of participants, ensuring everyone can find an experience suited to their interests.

Furthermore, we integrate AI technology into our scriptwriting process. This allows us to develop dynamic, evolving storylines that adjust in real time based on player decisions, enhancing the immersion and replayability of each game. AI-driven narratives provide complexity and interactivity that traditional scripts cannot match. AI is also being leveraged to create visually engaging posters for each game, ensuring that our marketing materials are attractive and resonate with each experience's unique themes. By combining AI with creative content development, we set a new standard in gameplay and promotional materials.

Table 4.2 Script Tiering

Script Type	Duration	Duration
Traditional Story Script	6-7 hours	Hardcore "Murder Mystery" players, cultural enthusiasts
VR Short Experience Script	1 hour	Young players, couples
VR Educational & Popular Science Script	1 hour	Families, students, international users

Source: own elaboration (2025)

Nezha: Chapter of Rebirth — A Multi-Mythological Symphony Across Time and Space

Figure 4.12 Nezha: Chapter of Rebirth Concept Post

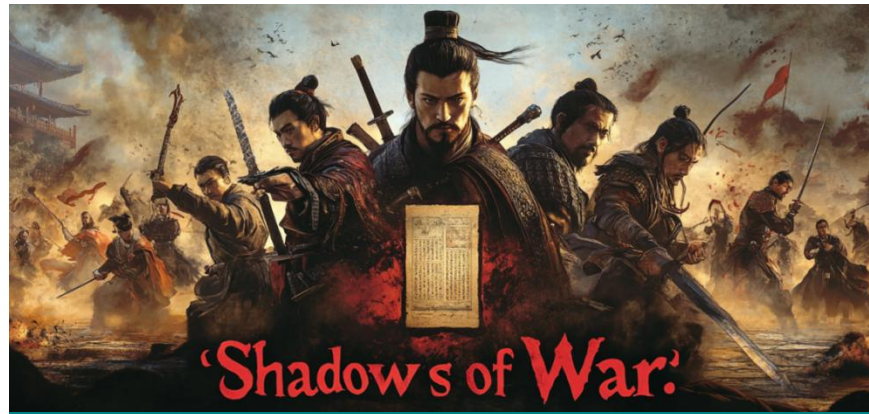


Source: own elaboration (2025)

Using Nezha's rebirth as the central narrative thread, the film employs themes of reincarnation and the multiverse to interweave different historical periods of China with a diverse tapestry of ethnic mythologies. Nezha evolves from being a symbol of a single culture into a cross-temporal "cultural bridge" who awakens divine powers within various ethnic historical contexts, uniting with heroes from different traditions to combat heavenly catastrophes. The movie breaks free from traditional regional constraints by fusing the deities and legends of Tibetan, Miao, Mongolian, and other cultures, ultimately forming an inclusive "Chinese Mythological Alliance."

Shadows of War: The Way of the Wise

Figure 4.13 Shadows of War Concept Post



Source: own elaboration (2025)

In the turbulent era of the Three Kingdoms, a prominent general from the Wei state is mysteriously murdered, sparking a whirlwind of intrigue, betrayal, and political maneuvering. Players step into the shoes of various military figures as they hunt for clues—a blood-stained token, fragmented documents, and a jade pendant inscribed with ancient proverbs. Alongside uncovering the truth behind the murder, participants must decipher a long-lost scroll imbued with the wisdom of Confucianism, Taoism, and classical military strategy, highlighting the values of loyalty, responsibility, and teamwork. Ultimately, as the mystery unravels, players face a pivotal decision: whether to harness their insights and sense of justice to drive reforms that could secure lasting peace for the nation. Designed to both educate and entertain, this script invites participants to immerse themselves in the drama of historical power struggles while reflecting on the enduring lessons of traditional culture and modern ethical responsibility.

Mystery in the Business Sea: Shanghai Wisdom

Figure 4.14 Shanghai Wisdom Concept Post



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Set in early 20th-century Shanghai — a time when Eastern and Western cultures intertwined amid booming commerce—a highly respected business magnate is suddenly and mysteriously murdered, sending shockwaves through the city's elite circles. Players assume the roles of key figures from Shanghai's commercial world, such as bankers, investors, international trade leaders, and corporate consultants. Each character not only harbors personal ambitions but also upholds a legacy of family tradition and cultural mission. Throughout the investigation, participants will explore diverse locales—from luxurious clubs and antique shops to financial centers and the iconic bars along the Bund—to uncover clues hidden in business ledgers, confidential contracts, family letters, and art pieces steeped in Shanghai's unique charm. The puzzles ingeniously blend Shanghai's traditional business spirit with the historical fusion of Eastern and Western influences, evoking elements such as the quaint alleys of old Shanghai, the distinctive "Haipai" style, and the enduring legacy of time-honored local brands. The term Hai Pai originates from Shanghai, China and is used to describe the unique style, characteristics and culture of the Shanghai area. Haipai culture is a unique cultural phenomenon in Shanghai area, including language, customs, architecture, food and dress. With its unique charm and style, the Haiist culture has become a unique cultural phenomenon in China and even in the world. This immersive experience encourages players to reflect on the values of honesty in business, teamwork, and social responsibility. "Mystery in the Business Sea: Shanghai Wisdom" not only delivers an engaging, suspense-filled narrative but also revives the unique commercial ecosystem and cultural heritage of Shanghai. It conveys core principles of "integrity and innovation" while prompting participants to explore how to maintain ethical standards and achieve mutual success in a fiercely competitive environment. Through this journey that bridges history and modernity, players will enjoy the thrill of solving a mystery while drawing valuable lessons from traditional wisdom and contemporary business ethics.

We will develop bilingual Chinese-English scripts tailored for the foreign market. Scripts will incorporate cultural elements, including Chinese tea culture, calligraphy, feng shui, and martial arts. Through these scripts, foreign players will not only enjoy the interactive fun of the Murder Mystery Game but also gain a deeper understanding of China's traditional culture through entertainment.

4.4.3.2. VR Technology Upgrade Strategy

Regarding VR technology upgrades, the project plans to enhance the immersive experience of the story by using smart NPCs to guide the plot, with AI-generated dialogues. Additionally,

the introduction of voice and motion recognition interaction technologies will improve player interaction with the game, enhancing emotional connections and immersion.

For hardware improvement, the plan includes adopting high-end VR equipment such as Meta Quest 3 and HTC Vive to ensure a smoother and more realistic gaming experience. To further enhance immersion, physical feedback systems such as vibration vests and haptic feedback devices will be introduced, allowing players to experience more intuitive physical sensations within the virtual world.

Figure 4.15 Meta Quest 3 Product Image



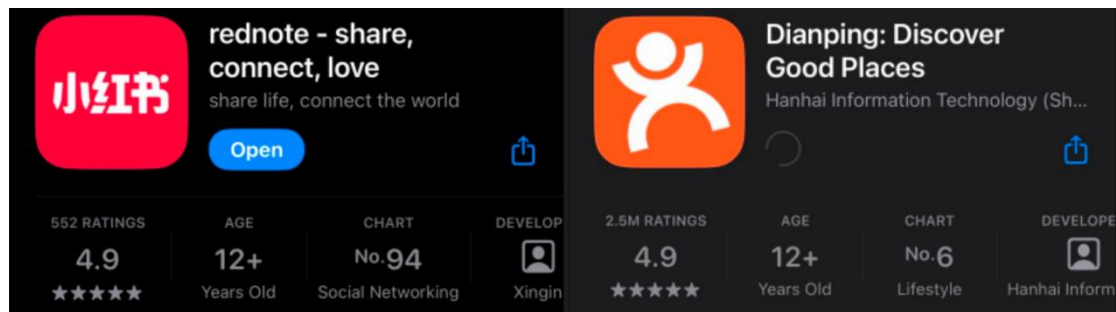
Source: Meta Store Website (2025)

In the future, the project also plans to introduce AI-driven dynamic script generation. This will enable automatic plot branching based on players' decisions, dynamically adjusting the storyline, thereby increasing replay value and ensuring that each experience offers a unique storyline, boosting the game's long-term appeal.

4.4.3.3. Brand Marketing Strategy

In terms of brand marketing, online marketing will focus on platforms like Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu, where KOL reviews of scripts will be published to increase brand exposure and popularity. We will also implement social viral marketing activities, such as "Check-in 3 VR Scripts for a Free Experience Voucher," to attract more users and expand our customer base. Encouraging users to post positive reviews on platforms like Dianping APP and XiaoHongShu APP (Rednote) will help generate word-of-mouth, further enhancing brand awareness and reputation.

Figure 4.16 XiaoHongShu APP (Rednote) and Dianping APP Image



Source: APPLE APP Store Image (2025)

Offline promotion will involve organizing pop-up experience events, setting up VR experience stations in shopping malls and universities. We will also collaborate with local businesses such as cafes, cinemas, and bookstores to offer immersive Murder Mystery Game packages, attracting customers from different sectors. To increase player activity, we will host exclusive events like "City Murder Mystery Game Challenge" to provide more attractive interactive experiences.

4.4.3.4. B2B Collaboration Strategy

For the education market, we plan to partner with universities to offer VR courses related to subjects such as history, psychology, and law, promoting the integration of VR into education. We will also cooperate with schools and training institutions to promote VR educational scripts and attract more teenage users. Moreover, we will collaborate with government agencies and museums to introduce cultural experience scripts, thereby enhancing the project's influence and cultural recognition in society.

4.4.3.5. Operations and Data Analysis

Regarding improving operational efficiency, the project plans to implement a reservation system to reduce downtime and improve turnaround rates. We will develop a mini-program in WeChat; mini-programs are quick to do, have short iteration cycles, have low trial and error costs, the requirements for quality are not very high, and problems are easy to correct. The corresponding barriers to entry are relatively low. We plan to share DM resources across games to lower labor costs and improve operational efficiency. Regarding script improvement, we will collect player feedback to adjust the script structure continuously, ensuring high repurchase rates and user satisfaction.

We will develop a CRM system to analyze user behavior. It includes multiple profiling insights, such as basic profiles and label analysis, to help us understand the characteristics

of our user base. We will gain deeper insights into user preferences and improvement script recommendations, improve user experience, and increase repurchase rates.

4.4.4. Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

This project adopts a city-exclusive strategy, combining Murder Mystery hardcore players, young trendy players (Gen Z), couples and social groups, corporate team-building (fun scripts), teenage education, and international users into segmented markets to precisely target the brand value, creating a comprehensive Murder Mystery Game experience based on local cultural IP & VR immersive experiences + international cultural exchange.

Market Segmentation

The market will be segmented based on different consumer needs, preferences, and market characteristics, ensuring that the product is accurately tailored to the target audience.

Table 4.3 Market Segmentation

Market Share	Core Needs	Recommended Scripts	Applicable Store
Experienced Players	40%	High-quality scripts, immersive experience, and intellectual challenges	6-hour scripts
Young Trendy Players (Gen Z)	20%	Self-pleasure, value recognition, social experience	Emotional Healing Center, Self-Awakening, Friends Only
Couples & Social Players	10%	Interactive immersion, couple/friend experience	Lovers multi-ending emotional interactive script
Teenagers & Educational Market	5%	Cultural popularization, historical experiences, VR interactivity	VR educational and science-themed scripts
Corporate Team-Building	10%	Relaxed atmosphere, team ice-breaking, social interaction	Office Chaos, Insane Asylum Corporation
International Users	5%	Understanding Chinese culture, social entertainment	English-language scripts

Source: own elaboration (2025)

Target Market

The ideal target market for the promotion plan includes experienced murder mystery players, young trendy players, and corporate clients. ZD murder mystery store aims to focus on this audience.

Market Positioning

Our brand differentiates itself from traditional murder mystery games by integrating AI-driven scripts, immersive VR environments, and adaptive storytelling mechanics. Unlike conventional games that rely heavily on static scripts and manual facilitation, our approach enhances replayability and realism through smart NPC interactions and AI-generated narrative branches. This results in a more dynamic and unpredictable gaming experience, reducing player fatigue and increasing engagement over time.

4.4.5. Competitive Advantages

This project's competitive advantages stem from a profound analysis of market demand, user experience, and cultural depth. By implementing multidimensional differentiation strategies, the project aims to build an irreplaceable market barrier. Below, we elaborate on the intrinsic logic of each advantage — cultural IP customization, technological innovation, and target audience alignment—and their connection to the research framework.

Cultural IP Customization with Local Integration: Traditional murder mystery games often lack cultural depth, relying on standardized scripts or regionally limited copyrights. This project addresses this gap by launching annual city-specific IP scripts incorporating local history, legends, architecture, and intangible cultural heritage. By collaborating with local governments, cultural bureaus, and tourism departments, the project promotes regional culture and aligns with cultural confidence and revitalization trends.

Technological Innovation for Enhanced Experiences: Integrating VR and AI technologies, the project replaces traditional DMs and static props with intelligent NPCs and dynamic AI-driven narratives, offering multiple endings based on player choices. These innovations enhance interactivity, replayability, and freedom, meeting the growing demand for immersive experiences and establishing a unique market position that combines cutting-edge tech with engaging content.

Precision Alignment with Gen Z Consumer Needs: The project targets Generation Z and focuses on scripts like Emotional Healing Center, Self-Awakening, and Friendship Journeys, which prioritize emotional engagement and social interaction over logic puzzles. This approach aligns with Gen Z's desire for emotional resonance and personal growth, fostering brand loyalty and supporting long-term market expansion.

4.5. Marketing-Mix

4.5.1. Product

The product is the VR Immersive Murder Mystery Experience Center (Store), which provides an immersive Murder Mystery game based on Virtual Reality (VR) technology. Players experience rich storylines within specially designed VR devices, interact with NPC characters in the virtual environment, solve puzzles, advance the plot, and engage in highly interactive social deduction gameplay.

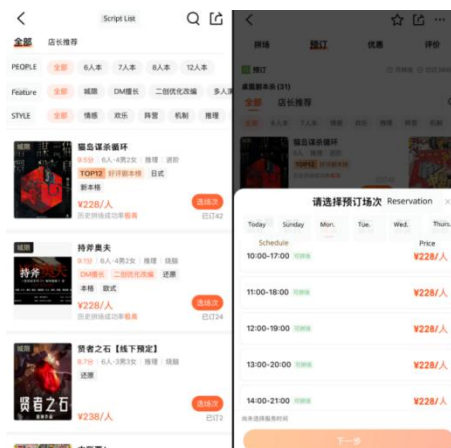
Figure 4.17 Experiencing Way Reference Image



Source: own elaboration (2025)

In addition to offline experiences, the store will provide an online platform where players can participate in games from home or interact with other players. Within the physical store, customers can collaborate or compete with other in-store players through the virtual platform, enhancing the social interaction and enjoyment.

Figure 4.18 Online Platform Reference



Source: Dianping APP Image (2025)

Table 4.4 Product or Service Type List

Categories	Items
Immersive or Traditional Entertainment	Murder Mystery Game, VR Experience
Special Entertainment and Social Services	Murder Mystery Game,, VR Experience
Retail Products	Stress Relief Toys, IP Figurines , Drink, Snack

Source: own elaboration (2025)

4.5.2. Price

Regarding the pricing model, we will have developed a quote for the murder mystery game based on the characteristics of the type of script.

Our pricing strategy is informed by a market analysis of similar immersive entertainment offerings in Shanghai. Based on competitor research, traditional immersive theater sessions typically average around RMB 40 per hour, while VR-based experiences generally range from RMB 180 to 250 per hour.

Traditional Story Script (6-7 hours, RMB 200/person): Although the session lasts 6–7 hours, the traditional story script relies primarily on live performance and narrative techniques that involve lower technological costs. This allows us to price the session at roughly RMB 30–33 per hour, which is competitive with similar traditional immersive experiences. The longer duration is designed to provide a comprehensive narrative journey, but the production and operational costs remain relatively low compared to VR experiences.

VR Short Experience Script (1 hour, RMB 220/person) & VR Educational & Popular Science Script (1 hour, RMB 220/person): VR sessions, despite their shorter duration, involve significant investment in advanced technology, such as high-quality VR equipment, regular maintenance, and technical support. The immersive nature of the VR experience, combined with its novel appeal, justifies a higher per-hour price point. These sessions fall within the market range for VR experiences, ensuring that our offering is perceived as a premium, cutting-edge product.

Table 4.5 Store Price Menu

Script Type	Duration	Price (RMB/person)
Traditional Story Script	6-7 hours	200
VR Short Experience Script	1 hour	220
VR Educational & Popular Science Script	1 hour	220

Source: own elaboration (2025)

4.5.3. Place

Our channel strategy combines both online and offline approaches to provide comprehensive services for different markets. We have also established offices and design studios in Shanghai. To attract offline traffic, we will collaborate with murder mystery venues and themed entertainment facilities to deploy VR experience equipment, attracting end users (C-end) and promoting B-end cooperation. Additionally, we will open immersive murder mystery experience centers in areas with a high concentration of young consumers in Putuo and Jing'an Districts of Shanghai to enhance brand visibility.

For online channels, we have developed a platform for booking store sessions and plan to create a dedicated VR murder mystery platform that supports remote multiplayer gaming experiences. We will also release lightweight VR game demos on platforms like Steam to increase brand exposure. Furthermore, we will launch a cloud-based murder mystery game platform to support global users and ensure scalability. Additionally, we will introduce DIY murder mystery toolkits on e-commerce platforms like Amazon and SHEIN to diversify our revenue sources.

4.5.4. Promotion

Our promotional strategy combines content marketing, digital Promotion, industry endorsements, and customer referral mechanisms to enhance brand awareness and increase user engagement. We aim to continuously expand our brand influence and market coverage by targeting multiple channels for precise advertising.

1.Target Audience

Young Adults (18-30 years old)

Interests: Enjoy trying new entertainment experiences, particularly immersive virtual reality games. They tend to favor interactive experiences and social sharing.

Income: Middle to low-income, primarily students and young professionals.

Location: Primarily in urban areas, especially in high-consumption and culturally active districts such as Jing'an and Putuo in Shanghai.

Targeted Marketing:

- **Social Media Promotion:** Utilize platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu (Rednote), partnering with KOLs to promote VR murder mystery experiences, attracting young adults to participate.
- **Location-based Advertising:** Implement targeted ads in local communities and near universities in Jing'an and Putuo districts to attract nearby young crowds.

- Social Sharing Incentives: Create campaigns that encourage social media sharing of game experiences, increasing brand exposure.

Families (30-50 years old)

Interests: Interested in family gatherings, team activities, and interactive entertainment suitable for all ages.

Income: Middle to high-income families, typically with stable financial standing willing to invest in family entertainment.

Location: Families living in urban areas, particularly those in Jing'an and Putuo districts.

Targeted Marketing:

- Family Activities and Packages: Offer tailored murder mystery game experiences that families can enjoy together, promoting family packages and group discounts.
- Local Community Engagement: Share content related to family entertainment via WeChat official accounts and Xiaohongshu, engaging families with interactive experiences.

Corporate Clients (B2B)

Interests: Companies are looking for team-building activities and innovative entertainment forms to boost employee collaboration and communication.

Income: High-income clients, typically funded by company HR or corporate culture departments.

Location: Corporate clients from large enterprises in Shanghai, especially in the tech sector and multinational companies based in Jing'an and Putuo districts.

Targeted Marketing:

- Customized B2B Experiences: Offer tailored team-building murder mystery game packages for corporate clients, emphasizing collaboration and problem-solving through interactive experiences.
- Industry Showcases: Participate in industry forums and online platforms (e.g., LinkedIn) to present customized services, attracting corporate clients to engage in team-building activities.

2.Target Audience

Increase Brand Awareness

Use social media, online ads, and offline events to enhance visibility and brand recognition for both stores in Shanghai. Implement location-based advertising in key business districts (Jing'an and Putuo) to increase local brand presence.

Increase User Engagement and Participation

Offer personalized VR murder mystery experiences to boost engagement and immersion. Encourage social sharing through UGC campaigns and creative contests to amplify user participation.

Drive Sales Conversion

Offer promotions via online platforms and social media (discounts, group deals) to encourage first-time visitors and convert them into repeat customers. Implement referral mechanisms and social sharing strategies to expand the user base and drive sales.

Build Loyal Customers

Introduce membership programs, reward systems, and exclusive scripts to foster loyalty and customer retention. Continuously release new scripts and VR scenarios to maintain user interest and encourage return visits.

Attract B2B Partnerships

Provide customized corporate packages, demonstrating the benefits of VR murder mystery games for team-building activities. Host B2B networking events and partner with industry leaders to increase brand authority and visibility in the corporate market.

3. Action Plan

Online Campaign

Social Media Promotion: Use platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu to share engaging content, user experience videos, and influencer promotion videos to raise brand awareness.

Location-Based Advertising: Use targeted ads on social platforms and Baidu for precise advertising in Jing'an and Putuo districts, attracting nearby customers.

UGC Incentives: Set up “Share & Win” campaigns that reward users with discounts or free experiences for sharing their game experiences on social media.

Offline Campaign

Grand Opening Event: Organize grand opening events for both stores in Jing'an and Putuo, inviting local media, KOLs, and potential customers to experience the immersive VR murder mystery game firsthand.

VR Murder Mystery Experience Zone: Set up experience zones at local trade shows, gaming events, and cultural festivals to attract event-goers and potential customers.

Family Activities and Promotions: Offer family-themed packages and group discounts during peak holiday seasons and school breaks to engage family audiences.

B2B Promotions

Customized Corporate Events: Develop bespoke team-building packages for corporate clients, providing a unique experience for enhancing teamwork and collaboration.

Industry Conferences and Showcases: Participate in relevant industry conferences and online showcases to demonstrate our B2B offerings, aiming to attract corporate clients.

4. Cost estimation

Table 4.6 Whole Year Promotion Plan

Timeline	Theme	Activity
JULY	Trial Pre-sale (Starting at the end of June)	Launch Early Bird Ticket 50% off experience vouchers for the first week (limited to non-peak hours). Carpool benefit: Free admission for 1 person when a group of 6 is formed.
	Opening Ceremony + Media Exposure	Invite local lifestyle KOLs and board game influencers to visit the store for live streaming, post Douyin/Xiaohongshu check-in videos. Partner with Dazhong Dianping/Meituan: New store traffic support + 'Limited-time Free Meal' lottery.
AUG	Summer Murder Mystery Carnival	10% discount for students with valid ID, and free cold drinks/ice cream (co-branded with nearby beverage stores).
SEP	Back-to-School + Mid-Autumn Festival	Mid-Autumn themed script: Custom short story 'Moon Palace Mystery', players can DIY mooncakes as clue props. Brush deal: Attend two different scripts on consecutive days, second session at a 20 RMB discount during National Day Golden Week.
OCT	National Day Golden Week + Halloween Pre-sale	Halloween Pre-sale: From October 20, pre-sale 'Halloween Haunted Night' limited tickets, including exclusive prop packs."
NOV	Off-season Activation + Double 11 Promotion	Co-branded 'Murder Mystery' cups with a milk tea brand, with clues printed on the cup for discounts when scanned. New Year's Eve Overnight Event: December 31, hosting 'New Year's Eve Murder Mystery Party' with buffet and lottery.
DEC	Snow Night Mystery + New Year Countdown	- Heartwarming Charity: 5 RMB donation per session to stray animal organizations, boosting brand goodwill." - Spring Festival themed scripts: Launch reunion-themed family scripts.
JAN	Winter Break + Spring Festival Pre-sale	Corporate Team Building Collaboration: Launch 'Team Icebreaker Script Package' for year-end company gatherings.
FEB	Valentine's Day	CP-exclusive script: Design a micro-emotional script Heart Signal, with a Polaroid photo gift after the game.

	Exhibition	Participate in the Murder Mystery Game exhibition.
MAR	International Women's Day (March 8)	Free admission for female players on March 8, with a fresh flower gift.
APR	Murder Mystery Revamp Season	Release Annual Big City Limited Script' beta testing recruitment, activate the old player community.
MAY	One-Year Countdown	Targeted push of Anniversary Exclusive Gift Packages'(e.g., free scripts + gifts) based on consumption data.
JUNE	Anniversary Celebration	- Release 'Annual Player Report' (e.g., number of scripts completed, correct reasoning rate), encouraging social media sharing. - Limited-time access to all scripts with every session receiving an anniversary-exclusive badge.

Source: own elaboration (2025)

5. Cost Estimates

Table 4.7 Cost Estimates

Activity	Estimated Budget (RMB)
Opening Event	10000
Online Ads (Social Media Promotion)	40000
VR Experience Zone (Exhibition Costs)	30000
KOL/KOC Sharing Activities	30000
Costumer Gift	10000

Source: own elaboration (2025)

If the social media campaigns do not generate the expected results, adjust the ad creatives, refine the target audience, or experiment with different time slots for optimal engagement. If user participation in UGC activities is lower than expected, increase incentives or partner with more influencers to boost campaign visibility. If offline events do not attract sufficient attendance, increase pre-event promotion through online channels, reaching a larger audience within the local community. If B2B response is underwhelming, consider offering more personalized solutions or industry-specific experiences to attract corporate interest.

4.5.5. People

Our team's core strength lies in interdisciplinary collaboration and the complementary expertise of its members.

CEO Peter, with expertise in computer science, creative design, and digital marketing, has created a unique advantage in cross-disciplinary collaboration to address complex market demands and technical challenges. We are also highly targeted in shaping and presenting team members. For example, LILI and RUO, as the design leaders, have shaped the "creative pioneers" image with their industry awards and representative works; while BEI/PU, as technical experts, further reinforce the "hardcore tech team" label, highlighting the team's technical capabilities in VR/AR. In terms of team development, SHUI has played a key role in the project, particularly in designing the murder mystery scenes and creating the atmosphere, with their creative input significantly enhancing the overall user experience. Meanwhile, XU has also played an important role in building the murder mystery venue, participating in hardware construction, and ensuring the seamless integration of physical space and immersive experience through strategic spatial design.

To further enhance customer engagement and a sense of belonging, we have established a "creative advisor" role, inviting clients to co-create murder mystery IPs and foster deep collaborative relationships.

We offer VR murder mystery operation training for our B2B clients to help them get up to speed quickly and achieve profitability. Additionally, we provide a "beginner's guide to murder mystery" course for C-end users to lower the barriers to entry for their experiences.

To increase the team's competitiveness, we will establish a competitive analysis officer to monitor market trends in real-time and respond quickly to market changes, ensuring the company can adjust its strategy and maintain a competitive edge.

We have a dedicated legal team that focuses on addressing IP infringement and technology patent disputes, safeguarding the company's intellectual property and technological advantages.

In customer risk management, we train our customer service team to identify economically sensitive clients, enhancing their purchasing power and customer satisfaction. Additionally, we have established a "policy interpretation group" to help B2B clients quickly adapt to regulatory changes and ensure compliance with operations.

4.5.6. Process

We will keep abreast of current script trends and focus on consumer preferences while setting the right values.

We plan to introduce collaboration design platforms like Figma to enable effective collaboration among team members, enhance process transparency and efficiency, share project progress promptly, and reduce communication costs.

Our agile development process includes four key steps:

- IP Incubation Phase: Led by the LILI and RUO's team, world-building and character design, quickly producing script prototypes.
- Technical Verification Phase: Led by the BEI and PU's team, testing interaction logic through lightweight VR demos.
- User Co-Creation Phase: Inviting seed players to participate in internal testing and iteratively improve experience details based on player feedback.
- Full-Channel Delivery Phase: Simultaneously deploying offline devices, online platforms, and operational support systems to ensure smooth integration of all components.

We use tools like Feishu (Lark) to enhance transparent management further, provide clients with real-time project updates, ensure smooth communication, and reduce project risks. In the market validation phase, we quickly test market demand with low-cost VR murder mystery games. In the user feedback phase, we collect player experience data to improve storyline design and interaction logic. As the project progresses, we gradually introduce technological upgrades, including AR technology and fully immersive virtual environments, to elevate the experience. At the same time, we adjust script content and technical solutions based on feedback from different markets, ensuring international adaptation and enabling us to launch versions that meet local needs globally. We have also established an agile risk control process. In the script development phase, we first conduct compliance pre-screening to ensure that the new script meets industry regulations and avoids legal risks. Regarding technical updates, we have implemented a "90-day minor version+180-day major version" update mechanism to ensure timely delivery of technological iterations and innovations.

In cost control, we use modular script development tools to reduce content production costs and substitute VR equipment leasing for heavy asset procurement, easing financial pressure and maintaining operational flexibility and sustainability.

We categorize client demands into "standardized/customized" types to improve resources and prioritize high-margin customized projects. At the same time, we use A/B testing to quickly validate market responses to different scripts, minimizing resource waste.

We have introduced crowdsourced development, opening up non-core script content for user co-creation and reducing development costs. In risk management, we conduct a "funding-resource matching audit" before the project begins to ensure the operation is not

overloaded. We also maintain a "script reserve database" containing 3-5 low-cost backup scripts to face unforeseen demands, ensuring the project remains flexible to market changes.

Furthermore, we will use dedicated servers to ensure data security and platform stability. We will establish precise design management requirements to ensure that each script development process is standardized and to avoid quality issues caused by poor standards.

4.5.7. Physical Evidence

In brand building and customer trust development, we use various physical evidence to showcase our technological strength, brand influence, and customer success stories, improving the credibility of our brand and market recognition.

The murder mystery storefront design features a modern, high-tech aesthetic, incorporating futuristic elements that align with the immersive VR experience. The store's entrance is framed with sleek, dark-toned walls and illuminated by vibrant neon lights in shades of blue and red. The neon lighting creates a striking contrast with geometric shapes and patterns visible on the walls, adding a sense of mystery and intrigue.

Figure 4.19 ZD Murder Mystery Store Concept Image



Source: own elaboration (2025)

The logo for ZD Murder Mystery features a sleek and modern design with an emphasis on futuristic elements. It showcases a young woman's profile wearing a VR headset,. The VR headset is rendered in glowing neon colors, predominantly in shades of blue, purple, and light accents, giving the logo a dynamic and energetic feel. The logo conveys a sense of mystery and cutting-edge technology, which aligns perfectly with the concept of a VR-based murder mystery adventure. The clean, futuristic design emphasizes the brand's commitment to a high-tech, interactive experience for its audience.

Figure 4.20 ZD Interactive Company Offline Murder Mystery Game Store Logo



Source: own elaboration (2025)

IP Peripheral Merchandise to Enhance the Brand Experience in the Murder Mystery Game:

- Keychains: Each keychain is designed to represent a unique character from the Murder Mystery game, reflecting a specific aspect of the game's storyline. These keychains serve not only as functional accessories but also as meaningful keepsakes that create a deeper connection between customers and the game's narrative. They act as both souvenirs and reminders of the immersive experience.
- Decorative Fan: The fan is a symbol of traditional Chinese art, elevating the immersive experience and acting as a collectible item that reflects the aesthetic and cultural elements of the game's world. It enhances the connection between the players and the rich cultural backdrop of the game.

Figure 4.21 Keychains and Decorative Fan



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Brand and Experience Enhancement: These IP items serve as tangible links to the brand's identity and the immersive experience of the game. Offering such memorabilia significantly boosts customer satisfaction by strengthening their emotional connection to the game world. These items are both practical (e.g., a keychain for everyday use) and collectible treasures, allowing players to carry a piece of the experience with them. Furthermore, these items can be packaged as part of an exclusive gift set or limited-edition collection, providing players with an enhanced, memorable brand experience. We will also adjust the gifts based on the popularity of the game scripts and introduce special hidden levels or gifts for players during their birthdays, adding an element of surprise and personal connection.

In digital proof, we present the company's professional level and technological advantages in the design field through an online portfolio, customer success case videos, and third-party platform ratings and awards. For example, we display international design awards and customer reviews on our official Behance and WeChat Accounts(The website is under construction), further proving our oversight in the industry.

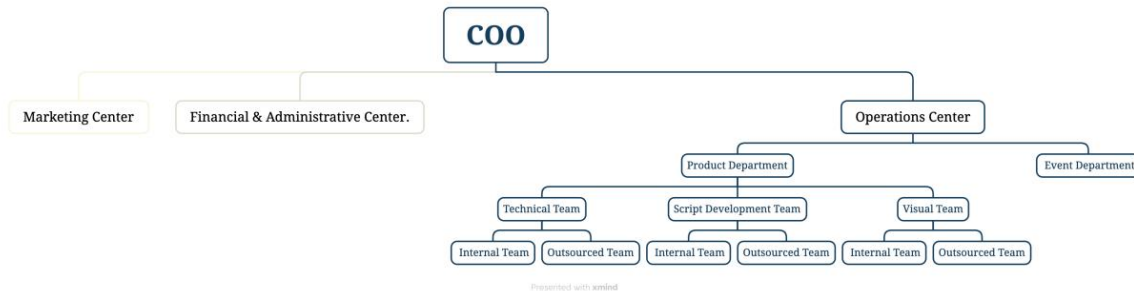
We use content visualization to showcase the entire script creation process. By producing a Script Creation Process video, we demonstrate the entire process from text to VR implementation, strengthening our professional image. Additionally, we have developed a "Murder Mystery Experience Simulator" H5 page, allowing customers to preview the essential experience online, reducing decision-making concerns and enhancing their willingness to purchase.

4.6. Requirements for Implementation

4.6.1. Human Resources Plan

To ensure the successful operation of the ZD Murder Mystery store project, we have developed an efficient human resources plan with strategic outsourcing to improvement resources and control costs. The project follows a Chief Operating Officer (COO) structure, divided into three main centers: Operations, Marketing, and Finance & Administration.

Figure 4.22 The Organizational Structure of the ZD Murder Mystery Store Project in the Early Stage.



Source: own elaboration (2025)

Marketing Center (3 employees): Focused on channel development, online platform operations, offline customer expansion, and customer service. Key roles include a Marketing Director, Community Operations Specialist, and Self-Media Specialist.

Operations Center (6 employees): The core department handling daily operations, event planning, and execution. It consists of:

- Product Department (3 employees): Script Developer, VR Developer, Visual Designer
- Event Department (3 employees): Event Manager, Brand Collaboration Manager, DM Training Manager

Finance & Administrative Center (2 employees): Responsible for financial planning and administration, consisting of a Finance Manager and Administrative Specialist.

Outsourced Team: Provides specialized support to reduce costs, including IT Technical Support, Legal Advisor, Public Relations Company, and Part-time DMs.

The total internal team includes 11 full-time employees, with flexible outsourcing for additional support. Feishu (Lark) enterprise tools will facilitate remote collaboration, enhancing team efficiency and reducing communication costs. These 11 individuals are existing members of ZD Interactive's core team, and their personnel costs are borne by ZD Interactive. It is important to note that they are not exclusively dedicated to the ZD Murder Mystery store but provide support based on project needs.

4.6.2. Operational Setup and Location

To ensure the smooth operation of the ZD Murder Mystery store, we plan to lease two locations, each covering an area of 150-200 square meters. Each venue will have four separate rooms, each designed with a unique theme. This distinctive decoration style will not only enhance the immersive experience for customers but also increase the interactivity and excitement of the games through different storylines and scene setups, attracting diverse customer groups.

Figure 4.23 Store Room Decoration Style Concept Design Image



Source: own elaboration (2025)

The two stores will be located in Shanghai's Jing'an District and Putuo District. Jing'an, centrally located, boasts excellent transportation networks, rich historical heritage, and a high consumer density, making it an ideal location for attracting white-collar workers and young people. Putuo, with a population of over one million, is a densely populated commercial area with significant cultural history, educational resources, and industrial transformation. It offers relatively lower property prices compared to central districts, appealing to a broad demographic.

Both districts offer convenient transportation and well-developed infrastructure, ensuring easy access for customers. Additionally, the stores will be located in an older section of the area, which means the rental prices are relatively affordable despite the prime location, while still benefiting from the area's convenience. The affordable rent in Jing'an and Putuo helps strike a balance between cost and revenue. By carefully selecting store locations, designing unique layouts, and incorporating distinctive décor, we can offer customers a high-quality entertainment experience while ensuring the project's sustainable growth and profitability.

4.6.3. Technology and Equipment Needs

To ensure the smooth operation of the ZD Murder Mystery store and provide a high-quality customer experience, we will invest in advanced technology to support the VR-based murder mystery games. For the flagship stores, we plan to purchase 20 PICO Neo 3 Pro devices, which will allow up to 8 players per session, with the ability to run two sessions simultaneously using 16 devices. Two backup devices will be kept on hand to handle any equipment failures. The remaining devices will be used for research and testing.

Other essential technological equipment includes:

- High-performance computers to support VR devices and ensure smooth gameplay.
- Wireless network system to maintain stable connectivity during multiple simultaneous sessions.
- Audio equipment to enhance immersion with high-quality sound.
- Surveillance system for security monitoring and ensuring customer safety.

For AI-driven scripts and visual AI, we will need:

- AI script development platform with high-performance servers to manage AI algorithms and data analysis.
- Visual AI system equipped with powerful graphics cards to handle real-time interactions and graphic rendering.

We will also configure cloud servers for centralized data storage and management, supporting multiple locations and ensuring data security. These technologies will enhance the immersive experience, ensure smooth operations, and support the long-term success of the project.

4.7. Monitoring and Accompaniment

Effective monitoring and support mechanisms are essential for the success of the ZD Murder Mystery store project. Without transparent processes such as demand management, change control, and risk management, projects risk deviating from goals. Continuous project monitoring requires a structured approach to identify and address risks promptly while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changing requirements. We aim to continually improve monitoring processes, streamline steps, and enhance project management efficiency.

The most significant risk is market demand fluctuations. Despite the positive outlook for murder mystery games, we must continuously monitor market trends and adapt marketing strategies accordingly.

We will utilize collaboration tools (e.g., Feishu, Trello, and Notion) to track tasks and milestones in real-time, ensuring accuracy and reducing manual errors. Regular project meetings and periodic evaluations will allow for timely issue resolution while preventing excessive monitoring costs. To measure effectiveness and service quality, we will establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as project completion rates, user satisfaction, and technical response times. A precise communication mechanism will ensure smooth information flow between departments, avoiding delays in decision-making.

We will implement an early warning system to monitor external factors like market changes, technical issues, and policy shifts. When risks arise, emergency plans will be activated to address them swiftly. Regular risk assessments and feedback will improve project management processes and technical support systems.

To build trust, we will provide consistent support services, including regular project progress reports and operational data, organize user training and forums, and offer 24/7 technical support to ensure prompt issue resolution. Based on feedback, we will continually iterate and improve products and services for long-term success.

We will refine the capital usage plan, improve financial structures, and establish partnerships with banks to address funding needs and ensure efficient financial management throughout the project.

4.8. Economic and Financial Viability Analysis

4.8.1. Budget Allocation

The budget allocation for the ZD Murder Mystery store project consists of six key components: Tangible Assets, Research & Development Investment, Operating Expenses, Marketing & Promotion Expenses, Working Capital, and Contingency Fund.

Tangible Assets Investment includes: Employee Office Equipment (such as desks, chairs, office supplies, etc., which may be classified as operating expenses if solely used for the management office). Murder Mystery Store Site Decoration Costs (including decoration costs for two locations). Game-Related Equipment and Technology (such as game tables, chairs, projection equipment, lighting equipment, etc.). Other Long-Term Hardware Equipment (such as servers, computers, VR glasses, etc.).

Research & Development Investment involves: Platform Development (system development and technical construction to ensure the implementation of VR/game scripts). Software and Technical Tools (purchase of relevant software and technical tools for development and operations).

Operating Expenses include: Site Rental Fees (rental costs for two locations). Employee Salaries (salaries for full-time employees and outsourced personnel, such as DM roles). Utility Costs (for both locations). Office Supplies (such as stationery, office supplies, etc.).

Marketing & Promotion Expenses include: Advertising (online advertising, social media marketing, etc.). Event Planning (promotional events, special events, etc.). Brand Partnerships (costs associated with collaborations with other brands).

Working Capital Investment covers: Marketing Expenses (market promotion, advertising fees, etc.). Travel Expenses (employee business trips, external partner meetings, etc.). Meeting Expenses (business meetings, industry events, etc.). Other Operating Expenses (such as occasional outsourcing or consulting fees).

Contingency Fund is reserved for unforeseen expenditures.

Table 4.8 Estimated Initial Investment for the Project

No	Project	Details	Amount/RMB	Percent	Remarks
1	Tangible Asset Input	Employee office equipment	-	-	No additional procurement required

2	Tangible Asset Input	Murder mystery store site decoration (immersive scene setup)	400,000	22%	Decoration for two stores, including soundproofing and themed decorations
3	Tangible Asset Input	Game-related equipment and technology	80,000	4%	Game tables, projection equipment, lighting, etc.
4	Tangible Asset Input	Other long-term use hardware	300,000	17%	Servers, computers, VR glasses, etc.
5	Tangible Asset Input	Content licensing	100,000	6%	Purchase of high-quality VR scripts or large-scale experience content
6	R&D Fund Input	Platform development	80,000	4%	System development and technology construction
7	R&D Fund Input	Software and technical tools	80,000	4%	Purchase of software and technical tools
8	Operating Costs	Site rental fees	500,000	28%	Annual rent for two sites
9	Operating Costs	Utilities, cleaning, miscellaneous expenses	40,000	2%	Monthly expenses for two sites
10	Marketing Expenses	Advertising and promotion	120,000	7%	Online ads, social media marketing, etc.
11	Emergency Fund	-	100,000	6%	
Total			1,800,000	100%	

Source: own elaboration (2025)

According to the above estimates, the initial investment for the project is 1.8 million RMB, funded by ZD Interactive Company's own capital. As the project develops and a certain number of players are acquired, in order to better serve them, various funding expenses will increase. Additional investment will be considered based on the project's profits

4.8.2. Revenue Forecast

The revenue for this project mainly comes from two sources: the income generated by the theme rooms (Traditional Story Script) in each store, calculated based on turnover rate and per capita spending, and the income generated by the VR rooms in each store, which includes two types of VR scripts: VR Short Experience Script and VR Educational & Popular Science Script.

Basic Information of the Stores

Table 4.9 Basic Information of the Store

Category	Details
Number of Stores	2
Number of Rooms per Store	4
Theme Rooms	3 rooms, each with a Traditional Murder Mystery Game script (6 hours)
VR Room	1 room, offering 2 types of VR scripts: VR Short Experience (60-90 mins), VR Educational & Popular Science (2 hours)
Turnover Rate (Theme Rooms) - Weekends	1.5 times per day
Turnover Rate (Theme Rooms) - Weekdays	1 time per day
Turnover Rate (VR Rooms) - Weekends	3 times per day
Turnover Rate (VR Rooms) - Weekdays	Same as Theme Rooms
Per Capita Spending (RMB)	RMB220 per person (includes base script fee and additional purchases)
Full Room Capacity	6 people per room
Operating Days per Month	30 days per month
Weekends (Days)	8 days
Weekdays (Days)	22 days

Source: own elaboration (2025)

Store Income

Table 4.10 Income Calculation

Items	Duration	Detail	Price
Income from 3 Theme Rooms	Weekends	• Turnover rate: 1.5 times per day	RMB43,200
		• Daily sessions per room: 1.5 times	
		• Daily income per room: 1.5 times × 6 people × RMB200 = RMB1,800	
		• Total daily income for 3 rooms: RMB5,400	
		• Monthly Total income for 8 weekends	
	Weekdays	• Turnover rate: 1 time per day	RMB79,200

	• Daily sessions per room: 1 time • Daily income per room: 1 time × 6 people × RMB200 = RMB1,200 • Total daily income for 3 rooms: RMB3,600 • Total income for 22 weekdays	
Income from 1 Weekends VR Rooms	• Turnover rate: 3 times per day • Daily sessions: 3 times • Duration per session: 1 hour • Assuming per capita spending remains at RMB220 • Income per session: 6 people × RMB220 = RMB1,320 • Total daily income: RMB3,960 • Total income for 8 weekends	RMB31,680
Weekdays	• VR room used for Traditional Story Script, with turnover rate the same as theme rooms • Turnover rate: 1 time per day • Daily income: 1 time × 6 people × RMB220 = RMB1,320 • Total income for 22 weekdays:	RMB29,040
The total monthly income for 2 stores	RMB183,120×2= RMB366,240	RMB366,240

Source: own elaboration (2025)

Based on the detailed analysis of room configuration, turnover rate, per capita spending, and operating days, the total monthly revenue forecast for the two murder mystery stores is RMB366,240. This forecast provides a useful reference for subsequent business decisions. In actual operations, the income may be influenced by market fluctuations, promotional activities, and other factors, so continuous monitoring and adjustment of business strategies are recommended.

Through a detailed analysis of each store's room configuration, turnover rate, per capita spending, and operating days, we forecast that the total annual revenue for the two murder mystery stores will be RMB4,394,880. This forecast provides a reference for subsequent business decisions. In actual operations, the income may be affected by market fluctuations, promotional activities, and other factors; therefore, continuous monitoring and adjustment of business strategies are recommended. Based on the calculations, this means that under

normal operating conditions, the two murder mystery stores will break even in approximately 6 months.

4.8.3. Profitability Timeline

Total Revenue: The total annual revenue forecast assumes a 5% annual growth rate. This means that each year's revenue will increase by 5% based on the previous year's total.

Annual Operating Costs: These include site rental, cleaning, marketing, and other operational costs, totaling RMB660,000 per year.

Research and Development Investment: RMB80,000 per year. Starting from the second year, this investment will increase to RMB100,000 annually.

Annual Salary Costs: The monthly company salary costs are RMB85,440 (covering employee wages and other company expenses), which includes salaries for 6 full-time DM staff and 2 part-time staff. This cost will increase annually by 10%, accounting for the year-over-year increase in the number of full-time and part-time DMs.

Game Equipment Costs: RMB20,000

per year, used for equipment depreciation and wear.

Annual Net Income: This is the net income after subtracting all costs from total revenue.

Based on the above key metrics, the following are the projected results for annual revenue and costs over the next five years:

Table 4.11 Five-Year Revenue Forecast Table

Year	Total Revenue (in RMB)	Annual Operating Costs (in RMB)	Annual Content Authorization Costs (in RMB)	Research and development funds	Game Equipment and Technology Depreciation	Annual Costs (in RMB)	Salary	Annual Net Income (in RMB)	Corporate Income Tax (CIT)	Net Income (in RMB)
Y1	4,394,880	1800000				787,200.00		1,807,680.00	451,920.00	1,355,760.00
Y2	4,614,624	660,000	110000	100000	20000	865,920.00		2,858,704.00	714,676.00	2,144,028.00
Y3	4,845,355	660,000	121000	100000	20000	952,512.00		2,991,843.20	747,960.75	2,243,882.45
Y4	5,087,623	660,000	133100	100000	20000	1,047,763.20		3,126,759.76	781,690.00	2,345,069.76
Y5	5,342,004	660,000	146410	100000	20000	1,152,539.52		3,263,054.59	815,763.75	2,447,290.84

Source: own elaboration (2025)

$$NPV = \sum_{t=1}^n \frac{C_t}{(1+r)^t} - I_0$$

NPV Calculation, Where:

C_t is the annual cash flow (net income), t is the year (from Year 1 to Year 5), I_0 is the initial investment (here, RMB1,800,000).

Cash Flows (C_t):

- Year 1: RMB1,355,760
- Year 2: RMB2,144,028
- Year 3: RMB2,243,882.45
- Year 4: RMB2,345,069.76
- Year 5: RMB2,447,290.84

In investment project risk evaluation, the beta coefficient (β) is an indicator of the system risk of the project. It represents the magnitude of the return fluctuation of a particular investment project relative to the fluctuation of the market return. Specifically, the absolute value of beta reflects the relationship between the extent of return change and the extent of market change, while the sign (positive or negative) reflects the correlation between the project's return trend and the market's return trend. For this project, the operating beta (β_p) is used to measure the operating system risk. The company's operating beta is typically the weighted average of the debt beta and equity beta. However, in practice, the debt beta is almost zero and can be ignored. Considering the interest tax shield effect, the relationship between the operating beta and equity beta can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\beta_p = \frac{E}{E + (1 - T_c) D} \times \beta_e$$

Where:

E is the equity value of the company;

D is the debt value of the company;

T_c is the corporate income tax rate;

β_e is the equity beta of the company.

According to Wind database, the industry equity beta β_e for this project is 0.75. Since the investor of this project is a startup with a simple capital structure and no debt, the project's operating beta (β_p) equals the equity beta β_e , which is 0.75.

The following data is based on the query:

Market return rate (R_m) is 5.7% (calculated from the 2022 China Capital Return Rate Estimate).

The latest data from the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China shows that the yield to maturity of the 5-year coupon government bonds is 1.5%, which can be used as the risk-free rate of return for this project.

Calculating the Discount Rate (Cost of Equity, R_e):

Using the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) to calculate the cost of equity (R_e):

$$R_e = R_f + \beta_p(R_m - R_f)$$

Substitute the known data: $R_f = 1.5\%$ (risk-free rate), $\beta_p = 0.75$ (operating beta, i.e., equity beta), $R_m = 5.7\%$ (market return rate)

Calculation process as follows:

$R_e = 1.5\% + 0.75 \times (5.7\% - 1.5\%) = 4.65\%$, Using the CAPM formula, the discount rate (cost of equity, R_e) is 4.65%.

Discounted Cash Flows: Each year's cash flow is discounted using the formula to convert it to its present value.

Total Discounted Cash Flow:

$$\frac{1,355,760}{(1+4.65\%)^1} + \frac{2,144,028}{(1+4.65\%)^2} + \frac{2,243,882.45}{(1+4.65\%)^3} + \frac{2,345,069.76}{(1+4.65\%)^4} + \frac{2,447,290.84}{(1+4.65\%)^5} = 1295518.39$$
$$+1957726.36 + 1957863.47 + 1955234.43 + 11949797.10 = \text{RMB}9116139.75$$

$$\text{Net Present Value (NPV)} = \text{RMB}9116139.75 - \text{RMB}1,800,000 = \text{RMB}7316139.75$$

This indicates that the project, considering a 4.65% discount rate, has a positive and substantial value. A positive NPV suggests that the project is profitable and worth investing in. This indicates that the project, considering a 4.65% discount rate, has a positive and substantial value. A positive NPV suggests that the project is profitable and worth investing in.

The initial investment of 1.8 million RMB for this project will be fully funded by the internal resources of ZD Company. As the business grows and develops, ZD Company may consider seeking venture capital by attracting external investors, which would help secure additional funds and resources while also diversifying the investment risk.

5. Conclusions

Conclusions

This business plan demonstrates the economic and operational viability of launching a "Murder Mystery Game" venture in Shanghai. The proposed project, which will operate two stores with distinct room configurations, is designed to capitalize on the rising demand for immersive, interactive entertainment experiences. The business model is tailored to meet diverse customer preferences and enhance overall engagement by integrating traditional story-driven narratives with innovative VR and AI-driven formats. Key findings from market research, semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires, and participant observation confirm that the project is expected to be highly profitable. With an initial total investment of RMB 1,800,000 and an anticipated annual revenue growth of 5% year-on-year, the detailed financial analysis indicates that the venture is forecast to achieve profitability within approximately six months. This robust business plan supports the project's feasibility and outlines a scalable model for long-term success in the emerging market of immersive interactive entertainment.

The company merges state-of-the-art technological enhancements with captivating, narrative-rich experiences. Its innovative use of VR and AI elevates the traditional murder mystery format and creates unique, personalized gameplay that resonates with tech-savvy audiences. To maximize market penetration, the business will employ a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes digital campaigns, influencer collaborations, and targeted promotions on popular social media platforms. These efforts are designed to build strong brand recognition, drive customer engagement, and differentiate the venture from competing entertainment offerings in the vibrant Shanghai market.

Limitations

While the business model shows promising financial returns, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The forecasted revenue growth and profitability rely on market conditions that could change due to external factors such as shifts in consumer preferences, increased competition, and broader economic fluctuations. Additionally, the study's financial projections assume stable operational efficiency and do not account for potential setbacks—such as equipment failures, staff turnover, or other disruptions—that could negatively impact the customer experience and revenue.

The reliance on cutting-edge VR and AI-driven gameplay is a limitation. This dependence introduces inherent risks related to technical issues, system malfunctions, or delays in adopting and evolving these technologies. As VR and AI advance, the business

must remain agile and adaptable to consistently deliver an immersive and engaging gaming experience. It is important to note that the sample selection for the market research was non-probabilistic. So, the findings may not fully represent the broader target market, and caution should be considered when generalizing these results to all potential customers in Shanghai.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are made for successfully implementing and growing the Murder Mystery Game project.

We need ongoing training for the DMs to enhance engagement and immersion. Regular evaluations should be conducted to ensure high-quality facilitation, as the DM's performance is crucial to the overall customer experience.

Continuously refresh the game scripts and explore new formats to meet players' evolving tastes. Expanding the VR and AI-driven capabilities of the games will also ensure the brand remains competitive in the market.

Increase brand visibility through strategic social media campaigns and partnerships with influencers. Engaging the community through loyalty programs and referral incentives will also increase customer retention.

Implement robust monitoring systems to track key performance metrics, such as customer satisfaction, revenue, and operational efficiency. Regularly assess market trends and adjust strategies accordingly to mitigate external risks.

Bibliographical References

- Ahmad, N. B., Barakji, S. a. R., Shahada, T. M. A., & Anabtawi, Z. A. (2017). How to launch a successful video game: A framework. *Entertainment Computing*, 23, 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2017.08.001>
- Aleem, S., Capretz, L. F., & Ahmed, F. (2016). Critical Success Factors to Improve the Game Development Process from a Developer's Perspective. *Journal of Computer Science and Technology*, 31(5), 925–950. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11390-016-1673-z>
- Anderson, M., & Anderson, C. (2024, October). Murder Mystery to Explore Careers and Technology. In *E-Learn: World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education* (pp. 187-190). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/224998/>
- Banks, J., & Cunningham, S. (2013). Games and entertainment software. In *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781004876.00050>
- Barros, G. a. B., Green, M. C., Liapis, A., & Togelius, J. (2018). Who killed Albert Einstein? From open data to murder mystery games. *IEEE Transactions on Games*, 11(1), 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.1109/tg.2018.2806190>
- Berglund, J., & Nilsson, E. (2023). *The player's agency in mystery storytelling*. DIVA. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:bth-25372>
- Berman, S. J., Battino, B., & Feldman, K. (2011). New business models for emerging media and entertainment revenue opportunities. *Strategy and Leadership*, 39(3), 44–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10878571111128810>
- Blas, E. A. (2016). Using a murder mystery to teach evaluation skills: A case study. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 21(3–4), 93–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10875301.2016.1169468>
- Bolton, R. N., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Cheung, L., Gallan, A., Orsingher, C., Witell, L., & Zaki, M. (2018). Customer experience challenges: bringing together digital, physical and social realms. *Journal of Service Management*, 29(5), 776–808. <https://doi.org/10.1108/josm-04-2018-0113>
- Brown, A., & Danaher, P. A. (2017). CHE Principles: facilitating authentic and dialogical semi-structured interviews in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(1), 76–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2017.1379987>

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (Fifth edition). Oxford University Press.
<https://ktpu.kpi.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/social-research-methods-alan-bryman.pdf>
- Boksberger, P. E., & Melsen, L. (2011). Perceived value: a critical examination of definitions, concepts and measures for the service industry. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 25(3), 229–240. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876041111129209>
- Business Research Insight (2024). *Murder Mystery Games Market Size & Global Report / 2032*. (2025). <https://www.businessresearchinsights.com/market-reports/murder-mystery-games-market-109466>
- Canale, L., & Farinetti, L. (2022). SQL Murder Mystery: a serious game to learn querying databases. *2022 IEEE 46th Annual Computers, Software, and Applications Conference (COMPSAC)*, 129–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1109/compsac54236.2022.00027>
- Cohen, D. A., Marsh, T., Williamson, S., Golinelli, D., & McKenzie, T. L. (2012). Impact and cost-effectiveness of family Fitness Zones: A natural experiment in urban public parks. *Health & Place*, 18(1), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2011.09.008>
- Chaichi, K. (2012). Impact of Staff Training on Customer Satisfaction in Travel Agencies in Klang Valley, Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences*.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267409735_Impact_of_Staff_Training_On_Customer_Satisfaction_in_Travel_Agencies_in_Klang_Valley_Malaysia
- China Merchants Securities. (2021). In-Depth Report on the Murder Mystery Industry: "Second Life" Experience Ignites Social Interaction. China Merchants Securities.
<https://www.sgpjbg.com/baogao/37248.html>
- Davies, A., John, E., & Thomas, A. (2014). Corporate strategy development via numerical situation analysis. *Benchmarking an International Journal*, 21(4), 619–633.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/bij-05-2012-0033>
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2018). The value of online surveys: a look back and a look ahead. *Internet Research*, 28(4), 854–887. <https://doi.org/10.1108/intr-03-2018-0089>
- Freitag, F., Molter, C., Mücke, L. K., Rapp, H., Schlarb, D. B., Sommerlad, E., Spahr, C., & Zerhoch, D. (2020). *Immersivity: an interdisciplinary approach to spaces of immersion. Ambiances*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ambiances.3233>
- Georgieva, G., Arnab, S., Romero, M., & De Freitas, S. (2015). Transposing freemium business model from casual games to serious games. *Entertainment Computing*, 9–10, 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2015.07.003>

- Godfrey, R. (2021). The politics of consuming war: video games, the military-entertainment complex and the spectacle of violence. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 38(7–8), 661–682. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2021.1995025>
- Gu, B. (2021, November 7). China trying to snuff murder mystery Role-Playing games. *Voice of America*. <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-trying-to-snuff-murder-mystery-role-playing-games/6301966.html>
- Guide to Digital Innovation in the cultural and Creative industry. (2024). In *SAGE Publications, Inc. eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071910023>
- Hessing, T. (2024, January 14). *Porter's Five Forces*. Six Sigma Study Guide. <https://sixsigmastudyguide.com/porters-five-forces/>
- Jagtap, S. B. (2025). Murder Mystery Games market size to surpass USD 2.14 bn by 2031. *Coherent Market Insights*. <https://www.coherentmarketinsights.com/industry-reports/murder-mystery-games-market>
- Jaschek, C., Beckmann, T., Garcia, J. A., & Raffe, W. L. (2019). Mysterious Murder - MCTS-driven murder mystery generation. *2021 IEEE Conference on Games (CoG)*, 89, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1109/cig.2019.8848000>
- Jennett, C., Cox, A. L., Cairns, P., Dhoparee, S., Epps, A., Tijs, T., & Walton, A. (2008). Measuring and defining the experience of immersion in games. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 66(9), 641–661. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2008.04.004>
- Kariko, A. a. T., & Takai, M. (2024). Innovative learning paths: Virtual reality in teaching the thrill of crime fiction. *Procedia Computer Science*, 245, 299–308. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2024.10.255>
- Kärnä, E. L. K., Väkevä, J., Rautalahti, H., & Lindqvist, J. (2024). Questions without Answers: Enjoyment of Irresolution in Mystery Player Experience. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 8(CHI PLAY), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3677100>
- Kaveladze, B. T., Wasil, A. R., Bunyi, J. B., Ramirez, V., & Schueller, S. M. (2021). User experience, engagement, and popularity in mental health apps: Secondary analysis of app analytics and expert app reviews. *JMIR Human Factors*, 9(1), e30766. <https://doi.org/10.2196/30766>
- Klimmt, C., Roth, C., Vermeulen, I., Vorderer, P., & Roth, F. S. (2012). Forecasting the experience of future entertainment technology. *Games and Culture*, 7(3), 187–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412012451123>
- Lee, J., Lee, J., & Yoo, S. (2024). An empirical study of success factors in Korea's game industry. *Computer Science and Information Systems*, 21(2), 525–545. <https://doi.org/10.2298/csis221117009>

- Lut, L. T. Y. (2023). *The future of the Finnish video game industry : critical success factors*. LUTPub. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe20231204151128>
- Marchand, A., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2013). Value creation in the video game industry: industry economics, consumer benefits, and research opportunities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(3), 141–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.05.001>
- Markouzis, D., & Fessakis, G. (2016). Rapid Prototyping of Interactive Storytelling and Mobile Augmented Reality Applications for Learning and Entertainment – The case of “k-Knights.” *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (iJEP)*, 6(2), 30. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v6i2.5560>
- McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in Semi-Structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674>
- Mentzelopoulos, M., Parrish, J., Kathrani, P., & Economou, D. (2016). REVRLaW: An immersive way for teaching criminal law using virtual reality. In *Communications in computer and information science* (pp. 73–84). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41769-1_6
- Morgan, S. P., Morgan, S. P., & Grasso, M. (2013). BOOK DNA: VALIDATING HOW SUCCESSFUL MYSTERY LITERATURE IS CONSTRUCTED [Thesis, The University of Georgia]. In Ashford University, L. Rhodes, V. Boyd, & R. Menke, *The University of Georgia*. https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/morgan_stephen_p_201305_ma.pdf
- Martyn, E., & Anderson, C. K. (2018). *Customer Satisfaction through Service Excellence: The Importance of Focused Training*. <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/22a76aa4-a337-45f0-bf44-90ad6dbfddf6/content>
- Murder Mystery game market size, industry analysis 2031*. (2022). Valuates Reports. <https://reports.valuates.com/market-reports/QYRE-Auto-9K9565/global-murder-mystery-game>
- Murder Mystery Game Market Size, Share & scope*. (2024). Verified Market Research. <https://www.verifiedmarketresearch.com/product/murder-mystery-game-market/>
- Melgar, A. R. B. (2024). Home Scape Home: A SME Playing in the Global Board Game Market. <https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/47689/1/203731379.pdf>
- Nonomura, R., & Mori, H. (2024). Who speaks next? Multi-party AI discussion leveraging the systematics of turn-taking in murder mystery games. *arXiv (Cornell University)*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.2412.04937>

- Naghikhani, S. (2024). Beyond The Box: A Comprehensive Market Research of The Board Game Industry. OCAD University.
https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/4419/1/Naghikhani_Sourena_2024_MDES_SFI_MRP.pdf
- Prentice, C. (2013). Service quality perceptions and customer loyalty in casinos. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(1), 49–64.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09596111311290219>
- Pastplay Teaching and Learning History with Technology. (2014). In *University of Michigan Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book.29517>
- People's Daily Online (2021). *How are murder mystery games gaining rising popularity among young people?* <http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/0402/c90000-9835592.html>
- Research, S. M. C. M. (2022). *Immersive Murder Mystery Games Market Report 2025, Market Size, share, growth, CAGR, Forecast, revenue*. Cognitive Market Research.
https://www.cognitivemarketresearch.com/immersive-murder-mystery-games-market-report?srsId=AfmBOoo9LKDosMzM6EyP5js2mM7F74MQ2o_7WPZAb1Duaj8J62huKml
- Russell, K. M. (2023). Crime has a PR component: Public relations in U.S. mystery novels. *Public Relations Review*, 50(1), 102396.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102396>
- Siebert, A. (2020). *Managing sticky experiences across the customer journey*.
<http://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10443/5305>
- Snodgrass, J. G. (2016). Online virtual worlds as anthropological field sites: Ethnographic methods training via collaborative research of Internet gaming cultures. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 40(2), 134–147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12097>
- Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism (Ed.). (2021). *Interim provisions on the management of content for escape room and scripted murder mystery games, Accepted for filing from 1 March_City of Shanghai*. Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism.
<https://whlyj.sh.gov.cn/wlyw/20220114/912c50a6464a48eba41a46c562b15d83.html>
- Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism. (2022). Interim provisions on the management of content for escape room and scripted murder mystery games in Shanghai.
<https://whlyj.sh.gov.cn/jqxxgk/20220113/bc6633f27d8e4b3bac3394cc2a6d8c4d.html>
- Tevely, T. V., & Papp-Váry, Á. F. (2023). Serial Killer Tourism. In *Advances in hospitality, tourism and the services industry (AHTSI) book series* (pp. 239–268).
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7242-2.ch010>

- Trammell, H. J. (n.d.). *Attention, curiosity, and pleasurable solitude within adventure games: a reading of RealMyst: Masterpiece Edition and Paradise Killer*. TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/11359
- Tsai, P., & Chen, C. (2021). Entertainment in retailing: Challenges and opportunities in the TV game console industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102503>
- The Murder Mystery Co. (2023). The Murder Mystery Co. <https://www.murdermysteryco.com/>
- Wei, W., & Baker, M. A. (2024). Virtual tourism experiences: exploring the concept and key elements. In *Edward Elgar Publishing eBooks* (pp. 55–70). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803926902.00011>
- Wu, H., & Hsu, F. (2012). A Multi-Dimensional and hierarchical model of service quality in the gaming industry. *International Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 12(3), 90–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15980634.2012.11434665>
- Wang, Q., Ding, F., Chen, D., Zhang, X., Shen, K., Fan, Y., & Li, L. (2020). Intervention effect of psychodrama on depression and anxiety: A meta-analysis based on Chinese samples. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 69, 101661. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2020.101661>
- Xiong, S., Wen, R., & Zheng, H. (2023). Player Category Research on murder mystery games. *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 13, 40–56. <https://doi.org/10.33063/ijrp.vi13.308>
- Xiong, S., Zuo, L., & Iida, H. (2020). Murder mystery game setting research using game refinement measurement. In *Lecture notes in computer science* (pp. 117–125). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65736-9_10
- Xing, W., Rongjun, M., Huiwen, W., Meituan, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Maples and Calder (Hong Kong) LLP, Guotai Junan Capital Limited, Computershare Hong Kong Investor Services Limited, Maples Fund Services (Cayman) Limited, China Merchants Bank, Davis Polk & Wardwell, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, & Han Kun Law Offices. (2022). *Meituan 2021 Annual Report*. https://media-meituan.todayir.com/20220419164002405410215762_en.pdf
- Yoshida, M., & James, J. D. (2010). Customer satisfaction with game and service experiences: antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(3), 338–361. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.24.3.338>
- Yu, Y., & Zhang, H. (2023). The Impact of Text Narrative Elements in Mobile Murder Mystery Games on Immersive Experience. *2023 International Conference on Culture-Oriented Science and Technology*, 72–77. <https://doi.org/10.1109/cost60524.2023.00024>

- Zhang, R., & Chang, Y. (2022). Analysis of the critical success factors of mobile animation games based on a consistent fuzzy preference relationship. *Library Hi Tech*, 41(5), 1275–1297. <https://doi.org/10.1108/lht-11-2021-0399>
- Zheng, W., Cheung, S., Zhu, B., Xiong, L., & Tzeng, G. (2024). A hybrid multi-attribute decision-making model for the systematic evaluation of exoticism-themed retail spaces from the perspective of consumer experience. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 79, 103848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103848>
- Zhi, L., Fan, F., & Jiang, W. (2023, October 14). *Enjoyment of murder mystery game reality shows: the influence of affective disposition, suspense and parasocial interactions*. Zhi | International Journal of Communication. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/20937>
- Zhu, Q., Zhao, R., Du, J., Gui, L., & He, Y. (2024). PLAYER*: Enhancing LLM-based Multi-Agent communication and interaction in murder mystery games. *arXiv (Cornell University)*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.2404.17662>

Appendices

Appendix A – Survey Questionnaire

The Survey Questionnaires are based on a quantitative survey conducted with 293 respondents. The data was collected online using a non-probabilistic sampling method, meaning that while the survey reflects a broad range of player perspectives, it may not fully represent the entire population.

1. Sample Characterization

1. What is your age? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Under 18	3	1.02%
18–25	118	40.27%
25–30	79	26.96%
30–40	65	22.18%
40–50	25	8.53%
Over 50	3	1.02%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

2. What is your gender? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Male	154	52.56%
Female	133	45.39%
Non-binary	1	0.34%
Prefer not to say	5	1.71%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

3. What is your education level (including current enrollment)? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Junior high school or below	9	3.07%
High school / Technical school	22	7.51%
College diploma	92	31.4%
Bachelor's degree	122	41.64%
Master's degree or above	48	16.38%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

4. What is your occupation? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Government or public sector employee	18	6.14%
State-owned enterprise employee	15	5.12%
Foreign-funded or joint venture enterprise employee	31	10.58%
Private enterprise employee	66	22.53%
Business manager (including junior and senior management)	14	4.78%
Self-employed	15	5.12%
Freelancer	19	6.48%
Student	89	30.38%
Agriculture worker	8	2.73%
Retired	2	0.68%
Others	16	5.46%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

5. What is your marital status? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Single	145	49.49%
Married, no children	26	8.87%
Married, with children	105	35.84%
Refer not to say	17	5.8%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

6. Do you have children? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
No children	162	55.29%
One child	91	31.05%
Multiple children	23	7.85%

Prefer not to answer	17	5.8%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

2. Entertainment Habits

7. What is the proportion of your weekly entertainment time spent at home versus outside? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Mostly at home (more than 80%)	77	26.28%
More at home than outside (more than 60%)	67	22.87%
About equal between home and outside	62	21.16%
More outside than at home (more than 60%)	45	15.36%
Mostly outside (more than 80%)	42	14.33%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

8. Which types of entertainment do you prefer?[Multiple Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Watching movies or TV shows	184	62.8%
Playing games (Mobile games, board games, Switch, PS)	139	47.44%
Reading (books, comics, audiobooks), static hobbies, sensitivity to words or stories	195	66.55%
Walking in the park or hiking(experiencing immersion in a new environment)	158	53.92%
Sports activities (Gym, running, cycling, ball games)	109	37.2%
Traveling or short trips (to experience immersion in a new environment)	157	53.58%
Meetings with friends or restaurant dinners (strong social attributes)	112	38.23%
Theatre performance attendance, museum visits, or cultural activities (e.g., interest classes) focusing on cultural exploration	157	53.58%
Meditation or yoga (relaxing, focusing on	75	25.6%

3

personal mood management)		
Bath or rest and relaxation (stress relief)	87	29.69%
Gardening or pet interaction (stress relief)	98	33.45%
Going out to play board games, script killers, reasoning games (interactivity and teamwork)	146	49.83%
Other, please fill in: see a concert	3	1.02%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

9. How much time do you spend on entertainment activities on average each week? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Less than 5 hours	32	10.92%
5-10 hours	93	31.74%
10-20 hours	101	34.47%
More than 20 hours	67	22.87%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

10. What is your average monthly spending on entertainment? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
RMB100-300	48	16.38%
RMB300-500	87	29.69%
RMB500-800	67	22.87%
RMB800-1200	48	16.38%
More than RMB1200	43	14.68%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

11. How do you usually find information about Murder Mystery Game activities? [Multiple Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Social media (e.g. WeChat, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, DianPing)	231	80.49%

4

Official Website, APP	152	52.96%
Game shop activity promotion	128	44.6%
Friends' recommendations	173	60.63%
Other, please fill in	0	0%
Number of valid entries in this question	287	

12. Aside from murder mystery games, which of the following activities do you tend to choose as entertainment? [Multiple choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Board game stores	149	50.85%
Escape rooms	178	60.75%
Movie theaters	138	47.1%
KTV	125	42.66%
Handmade Workshop	130	44.37%
Arcades	112	38.23%
Other, please fill in.	5	1.71%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

13. How do you expect your entertainment time to change in the next year? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Increase	90	30.72%
Decrease	112	38.23%
Stay the same	91	31.06%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

14. What is the main reason for this change based on your answer to the previous question?

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Economic Factors: Increased income, more budget for entertainment	123	41.98%

5

Economic Factors: Decreased income, need to cut down on entertainment expenses	126	43%
Time Factors: Reduced work or study pressure, more free time available	104	35.49%
Time Factors: Increased work or study pressure, less free time available	148	50.51%
Interest Changes: Increased interest in Murder Mystery Games	126	43%
Interest Changes: Decreased interest in Murder Mystery Games	150	51.19%
Interest Changes: Preference for other types of entertainment activities	74	25.26%
Social Factors: Participation from friends or family, increased motivation to engage	119	40.61%
Social Factors: Lack of a suitable social circle, reduced willingness to participate	66	22.53%
Product/Market Changes: New scripts or innovative formats that capture my interest	146	49.83%
Product/Market Changes: Improved venue or service quality, better experience	156	53.24%
Product/Market Changes: Lower game prices, more affordable	101	34.47%
Product/Market Changes: More convenient venue locations, easier access	143	48.81%
Other: Affected by personal health or life circumstances	138	47.1%
Other, please fill in	1	0.34%
Same as before, no change.	26	8.87%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

3. Attitudes and Knowledge of Mystery Games

15. What is your first impression of Murder Mystery games?[Multiple Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Challenging and mentally stimulating	176	60.07%
Fun and highly entertaining	119	40.61%

6

food and drinks)						
Amount	75(5.12 %)	74(5.05 %)	245(16.7 2%)	547(37.3 4%)	524(35.7 7%)	3.94

34. What improvements could a store make to encourage your participation in such activities?(Multiple Choice)

Items	Quantity	Percentage
More reasonable pricing or promotional activities	101	34.47%
Offer more diverse and innovative game content	182	62.12%
Improvement in store facilities and atmosphere	150	51.19%
More flexible game duration options	107	36.52%
Provide more opportunities for social interaction	176	60.07%
Other, please fill in: No promotion would attract me	2	0.68%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

35. What are the reasons you don't want to play Murder Mystery Games? [Multiple Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Not interested in Murder Mystery Games	148	50.51%
It takes too much time	184	62.8%
The price is too high	101	34.47%
Contains uncomfortable content	164	55.97%
Too lazy to go out	167	57%
The learning curve is too steep	173	59.04%
Other, please fill in	9	3.07%
1. Couldn't find someone I want to go with		
2. There are people I don't like in the game		
3. It's hard to gather people now, and the best games require booking		

15

Completely uninterested, not planning to try	86	29.35%
Feels like a hassle, but might consider if conditions improve	97	33.11%
Somewhat appealing, but not aligned with personal needs at this stage	92	31.4%
Other, please fill in	0	0%
I enjoy playing	18	6.14%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

17

far in advance with a leader		
4. Lack of friends to join		
5. Don't have that kind of friend circle		
6. No suitable group of people		
7. Can't gather enough friends		
8. It takes too long to form a team, and the time slots are very limited		
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

6. Other Feedback

36. What could be the main reasons you would stop participating in certain entertainment activities [Multiple choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Loss of interest in these activities	120	40.96%
Price increase, feeling the cost is too high	108	36.86%
Game duration is too long, getting bored	125	42.66%
Lack of friends or social circle to participate with	155	52.9%
Inconvenient location, too far away	72	24.57%
Complex or hard-to-understand game rules	100	34.13%
Content includes elements that make me uncomfortable (e.g., horror, violence), or the game content and quality deteriorate	101	34.47%
Other, please fill in:		
1. Social anxiety		
2. No opportunity to participate	5	1.71%
3. Feels meaningless		
4. Too long in duration		
5. Poor cost-effectiveness		
I will always enjoy the games I like and never get bored of them	7	2.39%
Number of valid entries in this question	293	

37. What is your general attitude toward rejecting such activities? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
-------	----------	------------

16

32. If you had the opportunity, what would be your budget for Murder Mystery Games per quarter? [Single Choice]

Items	Quantity	Percentage
Less than RMB200	43	14.98%
RMB200~600	81	28.22%
RMB600~1000	69	24.04%
RMB1000~1500	24	8.36%
RMB1500~2000	29	10.1%
RMB2000~2500	13	4.53%
RMB2500~3000	14	4.88%
Over RMB3000	9	3.14%
Not interested in trying	5	1.74%
Number of valid entries in this question	287	

33. What is your most important consideration in choosing a Murder Mystery store? [matrix scale question].

Items	Completely not considered	Not necessarily to consider	Doesn't matter	Needs to be considered	A top priority	Average grade
Quantity and quality of scripts	12(4.1%)	16(5.46 %)	43(14.68 %)	111(37.8 8%)	111(37.8 8%)	4
Professionalism of the host/NPCs	14(4.78 %)	13(4.44 %)	49(16.72 %)	102(34.8 1%)	115(39.2 5%)	3.99
Environment and furnishing style	18(6.14 %)	14(4.78 %)	52(17.75 %)	112(38.2 3%)	97(33.11 %)	3.87
Reasonable pricing and promotions	14(4.78 %)	16(5.46 %)	49(16.72 %)	112(38.2 3%)	102(34.8 1%)	3.93
Quality of service (including additional services like	17(5.8%)	15(5.12 %)	52(17.75 %)	110(37.5 4%)	99(33.79 %)	3.88

14

Appendix B – Interview Questions

Interview List

Player Name	Description
KK	Experienced player (plays once or twice a week)
C	
SHEN	
XIA	Medium-level player (plays 2-3 times a month)
YING	
XIN	light-level player(plays once a month or 2-3 times every few months)
W	
TIAN	Non-player (has never played)
YQ	
DN (Manager)	Store Owner (interview with owner)
G (Manager)	
H (Manager)	

Interview Questions List

1. How often do you play murder mystery games?
2. When do you usually play murder mystery games? Is it mostly on weekends?
3. Do you usually play with friends, or do you gather through social media platforms or other channels?
4. If there aren't enough players, does the store manager help organize additional participants?
5. If the DM joins the game, does everyone get a discount?
6. Do you prefer shorter games (e.g., 4-5 hours) or longer games (e.g., over 7 hours)?
7. Does the DM assign roles and guide the players with the rules at the beginning of the game?
8. What is the process of emotional scripts like? (e.g., character development, plot progression)
9. Are emotional scripts now mostly ending with a sad conclusion rather than the traditional happy ending?

10. How did you first encounter murder mystery games? Was it through friends, or did you decide to try it out of curiosity?
11. After playing so many games, what do you think about the quality of the scripts in the market or in stores?
12. Do sequels of scripts usually lack innovation and fail to live up to the original?
13. What do you think is wrong with some of these scripts?
14. Did earlier scripts focus more on players' psychological experiences?
15. Would you say that at least half of the scripts you've played are good ones?
16. Does a store's unique décor style make you more likely to visit or enhance your game experience?
17. Are there any specific details in the décor that leave a strong impression on you?
18. Are facilities like cheap parking important to you?
19. What other services would you like a store to offer to attract you? For example, snacks or water?
20. If a new store offered personalized scripts based on your preferences, would you be interested?
21. What does your ideal murder mystery game store environment look like?
22. What are your expectations for the game environment and theme? Do you prefer more thematic settings?
23. What type of murder mystery scripts do you prefer? Detective-type or emotional-type?
24. If a store could fully meet your expectations, what unique services would you want it to offer besides high-quality scripts?
25. Do you think the amount of time you spend playing murder mystery games will increase or decrease in the next year?
26. What problems do you think the current murder mystery market or stores are facing?
27. How important is the décor and setting when you choose a store?
28. Would you be interested in themes related to your profession or area of expertise?
29. How did you first get into murder mystery games?
30. Do you think your work environment influences your interest in murder mystery games?
31. What murder mystery games have you found particularly memorable? What made these scripts stand out?
32. How long do the scripts you enjoy usually last? How long do you typically prefer for a murder mystery game?
33. Some immersive murder mystery games now require a full day or even a weekend—one day and one night or three days and two nights. What do you think of this format? Would you be interested in trying it?

34. What is the ideal number of players for you? Usually, murder mystery games have 6-8 players; would you be comfortable with more players?
35. Are you accustomed to taking a personality test to match a character before playing a murder mystery, or do you not mind choosing a character randomly?
36. Have you played any online murder mystery games? How was your experience?
37. What do you think about the overall trend of the murder mystery market? Are there any aspects you think could be improved?
38. How do you think the demand in the murder mystery consumer market has changed? For example, in terms of script complexity, character types, and game duration.
39. What do you think the future development trends of murder mystery games will be? Will they incorporate more technology or immersive experiences?
40. How important do you think the role of the DM is in a murder mystery game?
41. What key elements should a good script have?
42. What do you think about the overall trend of murder mystery games?
43. What factors would attract you to participate in a large-scale murder mystery game event?

Appendix C – Participant Observation

Effective monitoring and support mechanisms are essential for the success of the ZD Murder Mystery store project. Without transparent processes such as demand management, change control, and risk management, projects risk deviating from goals. Continuous project monitoring requires a structured approach to identify and address risks promptly while remaining flexible enough to adapt to changing requirements. We aim to continually improve monitoring processes, streamline steps, and enhance project management efficiency.

The most significant risk is market demand fluctuations. Despite the positive outlook for murder mystery games, we must continuously monitor market trends and adapt marketing strategies accordingly.

The Unrest Hills: Chronicles of Six Beasts

Genre: Historical & Detective Murder Mystery & City limited

Players: 6 participants (3 male, 3 female)

Game Duration: Approximately 6.5 hours

This game opens with the phrase, "Six thunders strike, all wishes granted," immediately setting the stage for a mysterious and suspenseful adventure. The story takes place in Unrest Hills, a legendary location filled with enigmatic events. Players assume different character roles, uncovering complex relationships and hidden secrets as the narrative unfolds.

The game requires players to engage in meticulous deduction and observation to identify key clues and unravel the mystery. It offers not only an intellectual challenge but also an emotional journey, as each character carries deep-seated motivations and dramatic backstories. The interplay between logic-driven reasoning and emotional depth creates an engaging and thought-provoking gameplay experience.

Below is the translated and organized summary of the 6 players' feedback on The Unrest Hills: Chronicles of Six Beasts:

- Player 1: The opening, being a story-sharing session, felt tiring, with scattered information that was hard to retain (even though key points were bolded). The entire script is riddled with short logical chains and rigorous deductions; each character's script contains at least a dozen deductive clues. Particularly impressive is the logical chain for the character Shiqingfeng (using marriage alliances as a clue), as every character plays the central role in some part of the story's logic. Although the design of having one complete script and a separate clue booklet is user-friendly, players still need to constantly search for details and narrative cues; it was especially frustrating that one character (the "Pig") had their script distributed in multiple copies.

- Player 2: The story begins by introducing sacrificial customs, even applying the same treatment to the deceased, which creates a unique atmosphere. It then uses on-site clues and investigative techniques to deduce the murderer, with plot twists gradually unfolding later on. I found the second twist quite innovative — even though it was eventually subverted, its inexplicable plausibility left a strong impression.
- Player 3: The backstories of each character are shrouded in mystery, yet in retrospect, they all make sense. Upon receiving the character scripts, the illustrations immediately signaled that something was off, perfectly foreshadowing later events. Throughout the game, numerous clues were planted through personal story-sharing (e.g., why the adoptive father took in so many children, why long-reunions felt strange, and each character's peculiar quirks). As the murder cases on Unrest Hills were gradually solved, the earlier foreshadowing was systematically paid off; although the ending was acceptable, it lacked a truly jaw-dropping twist.
- Player 4: The story attempts to convey the noble idea of sacrificing a few to save the many, although its emotional impact could have been deepened further. Its strengths lie in its compact size and the absence of additional clue cards; however, despite featuring a “back-and-forth” deduction format, the story's imperfections render the overall deduction somewhat rigid. Although the four twists demonstrate merits, nearly seven hours of gameplay felt exhausting, and there was a noticeable lack of novelty. The DM was patient in addressing various player concerns, especially with clear explanations of the logical deductions; however, there were moments of overly forceful guidance and rigid twists. Every character has a distinct personality and unique background, allowing players to deeply experience their emotions during role-playing, and the intricate relationships among characters greatly enhanced interaction and strategic interplay.
- Player 5: The overall atmosphere is rich and joyful, blending an authentic Chinese traditional background with a moderately challenging murder case to create a light yet eerie narrative ambiance. The first act lays out abundant character settings and details, with key clues presented early on, ensuring that even a single script for the entire game is sufficiently informative. The script is filled with quirky details—such as Ximen Wucuo's infatuation with girls' foot-binding cloths and a palm technique that exudes a foul odor—that are simply astonishing.
- Player 6 (me): Aside from the information disparity in the first act, the remainder is presented from a public perspective, ensuring fairness in the deduction process. The murder case isn't overly difficult but is cleverly designed, requiring many hypotheses to be supported by evidence. As subsequent twists unfold, the case's difficulty gradually

increases and new solving methods emerge. It may not be suitable for novice players, like me.

Lichuan: Tales of the Uncanny

Genre: Japanese Horror & Mystery

Players: 7 participants (3 male, 4 female)

Game Duration: Approximately 5.5 hours

This game immerses players in a haunting, suspense-filled Japanese folklore setting. The narrative takes place in Chángshì, a seemingly peaceful town concealing supernatural legends and eerie occurrences. The setting blends beautiful landscapes with unsettling horror elements, as rumors of a mysterious lake spirit and supernatural entities intensify the game's tension.

As the game progresses, players gradually unveil the dark secrets hidden within Chángshì, with each clue revealing deeper layers of horror. The immersive atmosphere is carefully crafted through character backgrounds, unsettling music, and cryptic messages, reinforcing narrative immersion and emotional engagement. The game effectively utilizes role-based interaction — each of the seven characters has distinct backgrounds and hidden motives, requiring players to engage in deductive reasoning and psychological role-playing to uncover the truth.

Below is an organized summary of the feedback from 7 players on Lichuan: Tales of the Uncanny:

- Player 1: This was my first play of a highly rated title from Ashes Press, and as someone who hasn't played many mystery games before, I found it very enjoyable. The entire story has a distinctly Japanese feel with strong visual imagery, and the narrative itself is intriguingly "uncanny." It's definitely worth a try for new players! The twists and the methods employed are both quite interesting (and surprisingly, the methods aren't even the weirdest among mystery games). That said, while locking down the culprit is relatively straightforward, the deduction methods are somewhat challenging.
- Player 2: I felt that in every aspect — whether it was the deduction, the reenactment, or the emotional engagement — the game didn't excel particularly well.
- Player 3: The biggest highlight is the author's excellent writing style, which makes for a very pleasant reading experience. Although the content isn't extensive, it is written at great length.
- Player 4: If it were written as a novel, it might be more compelling; however, as a game, it perhaps doesn't quite live up to the high expectations I had. The DM was quite busy at the start, handling several games at once. There were moments when I wanted to ask

questions but couldn't reach him, though later he was present throughout and responded promptly. The storytelling is acceptable, but if you're not particularly interested in this genre, the overall experience might feel rather average.

- Player 5: One of the standout features is the design of the locked room, which exudes a rich, fantastical atmosphere. Once you embrace that setting, the difficulty isn't high, and the deduction process flows smoothly.
- Player 6 (me): Although I had heard that the perspective of the little girl is somewhat peripheral, I didn't really feel that it was. I'd recommend it to both experienced new players and advanced players. The mystery isn't overly difficult, and the emotional aspects are decent—even if a bit dated. That said, the red-clad woman's perspective is somewhat lacking (she remains in a state of amnesia throughout), so for a better experience, opting for the blue-clad woman's perspective might be preferable.
- Player 7: The two booklets for the first act are very lengthy — by the time you finish reading, you've essentially covered everything. I found the story a bit redundant, as the author goes into extensive backstory and includes various patchwork subheadings and paragraphs to explain background events. This makes the narrative feel somewhat messy and makes it hard to follow the timeline. Additionally, the process of deducing the culprit relies heavily on imaginative leaps and self-constructed methods. Combined with the game's inherent magical setting, this approach may simply be a matter of personal taste—I'm not a big fan of the Japanese-style variant.

Mortal Mysteries: Gateway to the Abyss

Genre: Chinese Folklore & Hardcore Detective Mystery & City limited

Players: 6 participants (5 male, 1 female)

Game Duration: Approximately 7 hours

This game combines Chinese supernatural folklore, detective mystery, and logical deduction, offering a complex and highly structured investigative experience. The story revolves around six members of Xuanshui Pavilion, a secret society specializing in unraveling supernatural mysteries. They are invited by a mysterious elder to investigate bizarre events occurring in Hanxiu Village.

What distinguishes this game is its pure detective structure — each case features highly intricate puzzles and long-form logical reasoning. Players are required to engage in deep investigative discussions, often spending over an hour on a single case. This highly immersive experience caters to both newcomers and seasoned players who enjoy rigorous detective work.

The game integrates traditional Chinese occult elements such as spiritual communication rituals, weaving themes of life, death, and fate into the mystery-solving process. Additionally, it incorporates bloodline-related subplots and dramatic interpersonal conflicts, enhancing the emotional intensity of the narrative.

Below is an organized summary of the feedback from 6 players on *Mortal Mysteries: Gateway to the Abyss*:

- Player 1: This was my first time experiencing a hardcore mystery game, and overall the difficulty was noticeably higher compared to the lighter mystery or heavy reconstruction games I've played before. The first case was very interesting, featuring a design that combined dynamic, route-based murders with a locked-room scenario; however, in the second and third cases some of the explanations felt a bit forced, and the fourth case required players to really think outside the box, which indeed tested our deductive skills. The final reconstruction phase was quite brief, and the lack of character backstories made it hard to remember everyone.
- Player 2: The DM performed excellently, offering timely guiding questions when players were stuck, which helped us find our breakthrough. As a reconstruction novice, I found the reconstruction segment a bit convoluted — while it maintained the classic style of sifting through a jumble of family trees and other details, the ultimate narrative that emerged was still pretty good.
- Player 3: I would recommend this game to hardcore mystery enthusiasts, dedicated puzzle solvers, and anyone who can appreciate complex reconstructions and the intricate relationships of a wealthy family; I believe this work is among the highest-quality hardcore mystery games played this year. The game room at the venue is very spacious, with comfortable seating; even after 10 hours of play, you won't feel exhausted. The environment is clean, without any strange odors or clutter like in some other places.
- Player 4: The DM had a deep understanding of the script and set the tone right from the start, perfectly matching the work's atmosphere. With the author's witty writing style, the DM's timely jokes kept the game from feeling too tiring. The DM provided detailed notes on the board and patiently clarified any confusing points, guiding us through each locked room without simply handing us the answers, always keeping the pace and flow well under control.
- Player 5: The overall case design is fairly standard, but the first case is truly excellent — using an unconventional design to build a deductive line centered on “motive.” In particular, the information gap between the murderer and the “villagers” creates differences in perspective and leads to a series of mutual betrayals; during the deduction

process, different perspectives lead to different outcomes, and several clues are cleverly distilled into engaging mini-performances.

- Player 6 (me): I found both the game and the cases extremely brain-teasing, and I personally especially loved the first case.

Appendix D – Team Profiles

Founding Team

Peter (Founder and CEO & Chief Visionary)

Peter graduated from Harbin Institute of Technology with a major in Computer Science. He possesses a solid technical foundation along with a keen insight into cutting-edge technologies. Since the company's inception, Peter has served as CEO and Chief Visionary, spearheading overall strategic planning and technological innovation, thereby fueling the company's sustained growth.

LI (Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer)

LI graduated from one of Shanghai's premier design universities with a major in Design. With exceptional creativity and acute market sensitivity, LI is fully responsible for project management and comprehensive design oversight. He ensures that every project achieves an optimal balance between functionality and aesthetics, delivering a unique and compelling visual expression for the brand.

Professional Team

BEI (Head of Front-End Development)

BEI is not only dedicated to optimizing user interface design and interactive experiences, but he is also an expert in Unity development. He is proficient in various technologies on the Unity platform, including 3D modeling, interactive design, and VR content creation. With a solid technical foundation and extensive development experience, BEI has played a key role in numerous projects. In particular, in VR interactive projects such as murder mystery games, he has leveraged advanced Unity tools to create immersive and engaging VR experiences, effectively enhancing the visual impact and user engagement of these projects.

PU (Head of Back-End Development)

PU is responsible for the company's back-end development and system architecture design, committed to building a high-performance, stable, and reliable data service platform. He has extensive experience in data processing, server performance optimization, API design, and cloud architecture development. To support the continuously expanding VR projects, PU consistently refines back-end technologies by designing efficient distributed systems and real-time data processing solutions, ensuring outstanding performance in high-concurrency and low-latency scenarios. Particularly in immersive VR interactive projects like murder mystery games, PU's back-end systems serve as a critical backbone for data transmission and real-time interaction, providing robust and dependable technical support for the entire VR experience.

RUO (Head of Art Design Team)

RUO possesses a profound background in fine arts and extensive hands-on creative experience. He has earned numerous awards at prestigious domestic and international design competitions and has led visual design projects for several top-tier international brands. With his keen artistic sensibility and innovative thinking, RUO continuously drives the team to achieve cross-disciplinary breakthroughs in brand visual identity, thereby establishing an outstanding reputation for the company in the realm of art and creativity.

Beyond traditional graphic design, RUO is also highly skilled in 3D production, model creation, and mood board design, and he excels in exhibition hall design and construction. His vast experience in exhibition displays, interactive experiences, and spatial art planning enables him to tailor unique visual solutions for each project. Looking ahead, RUO will also serve as the overall lead for the design of murder mystery venue layouts, overseeing the complete design direction and providing comprehensive creative support—from concept to implementation—for various immersive experience projects.

XU (Head of Interactive Installation Team)

In the domain of interactive installations and cross-disciplinary integration, XU brings extensive practical experience to the table. He has been actively involved in planning and executing numerous international exhibitions and large-scale events featuring interactive installations. XU excels at seamlessly merging cutting-edge technology with artistic design, using his innovative ideas to create immersive experience spaces. His work has earned accolades in international interactive design competitions, and he has provided robust technical and creative support for the company's integrated marketing projects.

Furthermore, XU boasts rich experience in exhibit design, exhibition hall construction, and project implementation, along with an extensive network of resources and partnerships within the construction industry. Not only is he adept at crafting interactive experience spaces, but he has also accumulated significant practical expertise in bringing industrial product concepts to fruition. This enables him to deliver integrated solutions for large-scale projects that harmoniously balance aesthetics, technology, and industrial application requirements. Leveraging his comprehensive capabilities and cross-disciplinary resources, XU continually propels the team's innovation in interactive installations and immersive experiences, ensuring that every project—from concept to execution—achieves an exceptional standard that blends artistic beauty with high-tech excellence.

SHUI (Director and Visual Effects Leader)

SHUI brings a wealth of experience in film post-production, visual effects, creative editing, and directing, earning him widespread recognition as a visual effects expert in the industry. He has contributed to several highly popular animated films and has served as a visual

effects consultant on numerous trending projects, offering cutting-edge visual strategies and creative advice to enhance film productions.

In addition to leading the visual effects production team and the screenwriting team, SHUI oversees a dedicated scriptwriting group that delivers end-to-end services—from initial creative conception and script development to the final visual presentation. He is also responsible for assembling and managing an efficient production team that spans the entire process, including visual design, animation production, and post-editing, ensuring that each project precisely captures the director's creative vision.

Leveraging his exceptional artistic perspective and deep technical expertise, SHUI continually explores and integrates the latest in animation and visual effects technologies. He actively participates in the production of popular animated films and is committed to driving innovation and breakthroughs in cinematic visual effects. With an outstanding reputation both domestically and internationally, SHUI has repeatedly provided visual effects guidance and creative consultation for renowned animated films, thereby establishing a robust and unique competitive edge for the company's visual brand in the film industry.

This annex provides in-depth details on the expertise and roles of the core team members, highlighting their contributions to the company's strategic and creative development.