

The Positive Impact of Fan Culture on Cross-media Communication of Cultural IPs: A Case Study of Harry Potter

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Abstract. In the context of today's media convergence, cross-media communication of cultural IPs has become the norm, with fan communities playing a significant role in this process. This paper takes the cross-media narrative communication and development of cultural IPs driven by fan culture as its research object, and selects the globally renowned cultural IP "Harry Potter" as an example. Through using the case analysis and literature review techniques, consulting the materials and literature in question, it examines and evaluates the journey of fan culture transformation and how it fills and expands narrative gaps in official work by the fans themselves. The study concludes that the creation of fans can enrich IP stories; fans contributing to the generation of a production also becomes the cross-media communicator of such a cultural product (games, musicals, and short videos, to name a few). This research shows that the culture of fans positively influences the IPs in 3 dimensions: first, it leads to the joint writing of the official and the public and indefinitely expands the narrative scope; second, it creates a positive cycle of the generation - attention - commercial value - new generation, supporting the unremitting appreciation of the commercial value; third, it contributes to the continuous integration of attention to new focuses, ensuring the sustainability and leading role of cultural impact.

Keywords: Fan culture, cross-media communication, prosumer, narrative expansion introduction

1. Introduction

The development of digital media has enabled the fan base to undergo a fundamental transformation from mere consumers to "prosumers" (people who both consume and produce). This concept was proposed by Alvin Toffler and others, and has since been widely used to describe groups that engage in both consumption and production activities [1]. Within cultural IP communication system, fans no longer find any satisfaction in receiving rather than utilizing their creativity and emotional investment to make consumption behaviors a production of similar quality creative labor that integrates an economic and cultural worth. These are the most active members of reproduction and communication of IP content using different forms: writing fan fiction, creating short videos on fan

subjects, and arranging community activities. This is not mere copying, but a considerable level of innovative interpretations, blank plot fillings, and official plot expansions.

The creative efforts of fans can generate significant cultural and economic value. On the one hand, it is exactly the most active component of the IP ecosystem which is constant generation of monumental content. It continuously adds content to story of the IP, and improves the forms of expressions, and increases the popularity and influence of the IP. For example, some works promote the sales of official derivatives (cultural products) or help link with platform providers, bringing benefits to the entire IP; Fan creations have also become an important driving force for the active content of the IP and the promotion of viral communication.

Therefore, in the current cross-media communication and development of cultural IPs, fans, through their own creative practices, have become indispensable co-builders in the IP ecosystem. They are not only just listeners to the stories; they are the one who tell stories and players of the culture. They proactively sew the discontinuities of the official narrative, and sustain the emotional appeal within the fan community; they experiment with the different narrative techniques and ideological coloring of the IP, stretch its cultural boundaries; and through cross media secondary production and communication, they inculcate the IP into the wider social and cultural groups, and achieve through this the expansion of the IP narrative universe, the circular extension of commercial value, and the eventual inception of the cultural effect [1,2].

2. Cross-media narrative gaps and invitations

2.1. Narrative gaps in official texts

Under the framework of cross-media narrative theory, the narrative gaps in official texts refer to the plot elements that were not elaborated in the original work due to space limitations or focus on specific plotlines. Taking the Harry Potter series as an example, "The Age of the Raiders" in the original work is only presented through fragmented character recollections, without a complete account of the specific social background, details of character interactions, and key events. Such gaps are not considered as creative flaws but rather leave more room for readers to imagine freely.

In the reception theory, these gaps hold a role "invitation" attribute. The writable text theory developed by Roland Barthes implicates the desire where incomplete narrative structures are suggested to awaken the desire to be engaged among the audience. From the perspective of the development of text theory and the actual situation of literary reception, this kind of reader as a producer has a higher degree of text acceptance and subject intervention than a consumer. Their existence points to the spiritual production during and after reading, as well as the possible material text production [3]. The story world constructed by the original work is like a cheese full of holes, with countless blanks and gaps calling for readers to fill them through re-creation. Fans of "Harry Potter", out of getting interested in the intrigue of the age of the raiders, rely on the disjointed passages in the books to have the best introduction at the very end of the hidden innuendoes an official book, examine the personality and image traits of the personalities of that era, and discuss the political and cultural features of that time. This group deciphering routine legitimizes the "call structure" feature of narrative gaps - it offers a legal allows the semantic uncertainty of fans that builds upon it to create something secondary creation fan fiction in order to transcend imitation to additional exegesis of the official story [2].

There are two ways that the narrative gaps could have an influence. One the one hand, it takes the center stage in the process of sustaining the lifecycle of the IP. Conversely, too much dependence on the narrative gaps can serve to undermine the coherence of the story world. Indicatively, when there

are several versions of the interpretation of the truth behind Sirius Black's escape from prison that have conflicting versions, it may confuse some of the new audiences. This effect validates the difficulty of truth maintenance to cross-media narrative. Algirdas Julien Greimas and others explored the achievement of truthfulness in discourse in their article "The Veridiction Contract". They hold that as a semantic effect, the production of a true narrative is a behavioral practice of "causing-to-appear-to-be-true" for the symbol receiver. In this process, only when the narrative of the discourse conforms to the expectations of the receiver can a seemingly true narrative be realized [4]. This paper is of the view that an effective cultural IP must strike the right balance between allowing anyone to tell stories and preserve the major scenes.

2.2. The narrative blank in official texts and the creative motivation

These gaps in the official texts are not just missing components but can be seen as an energy of invitation to the fans. The transmedia narrative goes on to incorporate the narrative to other platforms and forms inviting fans to engage in the story propagating it to other countries. The initially existing story is enlarged and the new worldview is created [5]. As an example, in the first "Harry Potter" series, certain details on the adventures in the life of Harry, the inner world of some minor characters and the mechanisms of shaping the social rules of the magic world was not the incompetence of the author but rather purposeful interfaces that gave a signal of exploration to the creative fans that provoked their imagination and also even bonded the unity of the fan community.

Such a mechanism of invitation is directly converted into the profound motive to get involved in secondary creation on the part of the fans. They take the hints given by the text, the reason behind the reasons of the characters and their own interpretation of the magical world to fill these gaps with their own fantasy. Fans develop fan fiction, musicals (like "A Very Potter Musical"), and art, representing the friendships, pranks, and experiences of growing up of young James Potter and Sirius, etc. Such acts of creativity are the very essence of the profound insights of the fans in the official text and investment of emotions into it, and the fulfilment of the desire of the community as a whole to the wholeness of the story and the depth of the exploration of the characters, which further diversifies the IP content and leads fans not to passive state of consumption but to the active, creative production, which is creative behavior.

3. Fans' enhancement and expansion of IP narrative content

3.1. Filling narrative gaps: continuing the life of the IP and establishing emotional connections

The cross-media narrative theory finds that official texts normally leave untapped narrative spaces because of the nature of the medium or narrative strategies. The gaps represent an implicit invitation to fans. In cases where official texts cannot satisfy the demands of the audience to incorporate particular characters or historical periods, they will come up with their model versions of the shared story by using shared imagination. The hostile brotherhood of the raiders presented in the musical "A Very Potter Musical" is comically, and the disjointed and scattered group has a humorous effect on the life of the school not described in detail in the original work. This emotive appeal transcends the consumption level and becomes active participants in the group memory of the IP. It draws new viewers through the use of new terms, as well as brings fresh cultural energy into the IP. Fans fill in narrative gaps, which are ways to create emotional attachment to the IP, thus the emotional lifespan of the IP, and extending the market popularity index by their creative work.

3.2. Exploring type variations: expanding the narrative boundaries and thought depth of the IP

Besides sealing the narrative gaps of the official creative products, fans, through their own creations, extend the limits of the narrative of the IP, resume the content and the plot of the story. Fan fiction is the most typical form of narrative reconstruction. Modern fan fiction is mainly influenced by Japanese doujinshi and has certain connections with the tradition of re-creation based on history or legends in traditional Chinese literature and the tradition of fan fiction in the West. It mainly refers to the secondary creation derived from the original plot, characters, etc. by the fan groups who gather because of their love for specific cultural works, covering literature, painting, music, film and television, etc. [2]. Using the example of the fan work "Harry Potter and the Rational Way", Harry can be regarded as a genius who lived and was educated in families of professors, acquired the entire education in the scientific world view. Hence his approach to the magical world is it is something that can be conducted and analyzed using science. As well as discontinuing the setting of magic is a talent in the original text, this story takes the Hogwarts school to the science philosophy laboratories.

3.3. Creating parallel worlds: from fan works to mainstream business cross-transition

"Manacled" as a typical fan work of "Harry Potter", this work constructs a dark world different from the original tone. The setting of Voldemort winning and Harry Potter's death, due to its great contrast with the original work, brings about a devastating and intense emotional impact for the audience. This extreme exploration of the hidden subplots in the original work essentially responds to the narrative gaps left by the official text and reflects the initiative of fans as "producers and consumers" in the production of IP meaning.

Fan creation is no longer limited to supplementary text consumption. This positive cycle of "fan creation - community popularity accumulation - commercial value realization" reflects the driving effect of folk creative power on cultural industry innovation [6]. Future research can further focus on the encouragement and support of laws or the official for fan creation.

4. The amplification effect of fans on IP communication traffic

4.1. Cross-media form transformation: building a diversified IP perception network

During cross-media communication, the self-reformative behavior of fans constitutes the core driving force for the diversification of IP perception. This transformation is not a simple replication, but rather forms a matrix covering various perception elements such as vision, hearing, and interaction through the characteristics of different media.

Take the IP of "Harry Potter" as an example. The fan-developed fan fiction series "The Mystery of Hogwarts" on the Itch.io platform, with its rich role-playing mode, enables users to deeply experience scenes such as the Sorting Ceremony and magic courses from the original story. The interactivity fills the limitations of the linear narrative of the novel. The unofficial musical drama "A Very Potter Musical" spreads through viral means. The story content is presented in hip-hop and dance form, and its humor attracts a large number of non-original fans. The YouTube click-through rate exceeds 10 million times. These cases confirm that fan creation, through cross-media transformation, achieves triple penetration: games enhance participation, visual art deepens spatial

imagination, and performance art generates a strong emotional resonance, jointly expanding the perception boundaries of the IP.

4.2. Social media-driven and viral communication: maintaining IP popularity in the era of algorithms

In the era of social media, communication is mainly based on the digital algorithms behind the platforms. The fan group has transformed from a passive cultural consumer to an active narrative co-creator and communication node. Taking the #HarryPotter topic on the TikTok platform as an example, this paper explores how fan creations can achieve viral communication through platform algorithms and inject continuous vitality into the classic IP. This topic gathers a large amount of second-generation creation content based on users' own understanding, covering various forms such as character makeup imitation, magic effect editing, plot interpretation, and original derivative plots.

The core mechanism for the wide communication of such creations lies in the precise distribution of platform algorithms and the collaborative effect formed by community interaction. TikTok's platform algorithms identify interest clusters through user behavior big data and precisely push fragmented creative content to matching audiences. When a video (such as the interactive video "Sorting Hat Test") triggers user imitation, the algorithm quickly captures the communication trend and promotes the formation of a viral diffusion of topic tags [7]. Data shows that the cumulative view count of this topic exceeds one million times.

This viral communication has dual value in maintaining the popularity of the IP. At the content level, second-generation creation continuously triggers new interpretations of the text from many years ago. At the communication level, the play-imitation behavior (such as the homophonic joke "Avada chews a big melon") significantly lowers the participation threshold and attracts non-core audiences to contact the IP communication. More importantly, user-created content itself becomes the fuel for the platform algorithms - when a new film is released or a certain anniversary comes, historical content will be reactivated due to the corresponding tags, forming a continuous cycle of "creation - communication - re-creation" [8].

This paper believes that the vitality maintenance of IP in the era of social media has deeply relied on the symbiotic relationship between fans and algorithms. The platform needs to build a more open creative ecosystem, such as providing an official material library to support second-generation creation; the copyright holder can establish a creative incentive mechanism and include high-quality fan content in the official communication matrix [9].

4.3. Community collaboration and meaning circulation: strengthening the cultural cohesion of IP

Through the collaborative mechanism, the fan communities accelerated the global circulation and iteration of IP content, strengthening the cultural cohesion. The simultaneous or successive efforts and creations of fans led to the continuous enrichment of fan fiction content, cross-media products (such as musicals, games), etc. Meanwhile, many popular contents under the #HarryPotter# TikTok topic originated from the collaborative derivative materials, proving that community collaboration has become the core engine for maintaining the popularity of the IP. This collaboration has continuously strengthened the IP cultural symbols in the global circulation process.

This paper believes that the fan communities achieved the strengthening of three types of cultural cohesion through collaboration: breaking the communication barriers in the time and space dimension, constructing a dynamic knowledge network in the content dimension, and forming a

labor value loop in the emotional dimension [10]. In the future, attention should be paid to the intervention of algorithm recommendations on the collaborative model, as well as the creative ethical controversies that commercial acquisition may trigger.

5. Comprehensive interpretation of positive effects: three-dimensional expansion of narrative, business and culture

5.1. Infinite expansion of the narrative universe

Fan-created content fundamentally changed the narrative structure of cultural IPs, enabling them to break through the inherent boundaries of single-author creation. Fans no longer contented themselves with consuming official texts but would directly participate in the storytelling of the IP world, using the narrative gaps left by official stories for re-creation. This continuous, bottom-up creative activity has made "Harry Potter" no longer confined to J.K. Rowling's seven novels and official derivative works, but has formed an IP centered around the official core narrative and spreading out to countless folk narratives, ultimately weaving and echoing together. On the one hand, this narrative space significantly strengthens the story material of the IP, providing the fans with an additional reference point to understand the relations between characters and details of the world on a higher level, satisfying the requirements of deep immersion, on the other hand, it gives the IP an unparalleled cultural vibration, allowing the IP to perpetually attract all those interested in it, always incorporating new social issues and aesthetic trends, and preventing the potential disappearance of traditional texts under the influence of historical elements.

5.2. Circular value enhancement of business potential

The commercial worth of IP has attained a circular growth due to the influence of fans culture. This paper unravels the fact that in the periods when the official productions remain outdated, the fans continue to keep the IP on the radar of other people through their personal figurative productions of voluminous secondary creation material like fan fiction, artwork, video clips, etc. Although the initial collection of the "Harry Potter" series has been finished long ago, fan creations continue to be popular within such websites as Archive of Our Own. Associated discussions and tags in the social media are also very popular and ensures that the IP does not expire quickly hence saving budgets on promotions. This unwavering popularity among followers makes up the first tier of foundation towards the increase in commercial value by the fans themselves. Simultaneously, there are also we-media users of high quality that acquire some economic gains in the process of creation, which encourages more fans to participate in high-quality creation, establishing a positive feedback loop.

As such, this paper will develop a closed-loop theory of fan creation - rise in attention - rise in the commercial value - spur to create more. The cycle begins with fan creation, which creates continuously, free content and keeps up to and improves the IP being visible. This obsession itself is directly transferred into the development of commercial value in the form of IP licenses, derivative sales products, and film and television adaptations, which contributes significantly to the fan community, encouraging more talents and interest to participate in the creation, creating better and more promising products and cycles further. The radical in this circular mechanism is that it alters the facing model of conventional IP development. The fans are no longer just consumers but they have become the engine behind the ever-growing commercial value of the IP and creativity has become an inorganic part of the commercial ecosystem of the IP.

5.3. Continuous renewal of cultural influence

Fan culture is an effective way of postponing the aging of IP, as it incorporates old IPs with the use of modern issues and aesthetic tendencies. This makes the IP culturally alive. To take a specific example, despite the series being published several years ago, the fans still immerse in the series and generate associated conversations on issues concerning the differences in classes and the impact of the media in the original works. Through these discussions and derivative works, the plot of the magical world is related to the real-life social issues and increases the correspondence of the IP to the reality.

With regards to the aesthetic expression, the creations of fans can be characterized as usually following trends and being quite close to the existing aesthetic style, adding new aesthetic euphoria into the IP. Simultaneously, the fact that fans interpret character relationships differently due to their own interpretation is also indicative of the tolerance to different storytelling and identity recognition as expected by the contemporary culture, which further increases the cultural universalism of the IP.

The communication of the fan creations is also supported by technological development. The video about “Harry Potter” on short-video sites, e.g., magic effect simulation and house-division tests, are more likely to win the favor of the broad audience due to the interactive type of communication. This low-entry, sharing of participation approach due to its simpleness, assists in retaining current fans and find the new audiences.

6. Conclusion

Therefore, this article holds that fan culture is the key mechanism for the long-term communication and innovation of classic IPs. It achieves this by integrating the IP with social issues for resonance, synchronizing with popular aesthetics for iterative development, and deeply coupling with technological platforms, thereby constructing a dynamic and open system for the reproduction of meaning. It is hoped that the IP holders can establish a more open creative ecosystem and interaction mechanism, actively incorporate the wisdom of fans, and jointly promote the vitality of the IP.

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