

From Social Media to the Entire Industry Chain: The Growth Mechanism and Commercialization Path of Native IP-Taking Chiikawa as an Example

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Abstract. In the context of the evolving social media communication landscape, social media native IPs—characterized by lightweight content and strong emotional engagement—have emerged as a key driver of growth in the cultural industry. This study takes Chiikawa as a case to examine the growth mechanism and commercialization path of native IPs from content dissemination to industrial transformation. Grounded in theories of symbolic consumption, art therapy, fan economy, and the IP value chain, this research adopts a mixed-method approach combining literature review, case analysis, and questionnaire survey, with quantitative analysis based on 133 valid responses. The findings indicate that Chiikawa fosters emotional projection and builds stable user attachment through highly symbolic character design and narratives reflecting real-life pressures. Furthermore, the development of social media native IPs follows an evolutionary path of "symbol construction—emotional resonance—fan participation—industry extension," in which emotional value serves as the core driver of both content dissemination and commercial conversion. This study provides theoretical insights and practical implications for the sustainable development and industrialization of social media native IPs.

Keywords: Chiikawa, social media native IP, emotional value, fan engagement

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the development trend of native IP in the social media era. With the change of social platform communication mechanism, a type of IP characterized by lightweight content and high emotional links is rapidly emerging. Against this backdrop, it is very meaningful to research Chiikawa, a healing IP born in the social media environment. This study mainly focuses on the analysis of how the IP realizes the linkage between content dissemination and commercial development on the basis of obtaining audience emotional resonance. The ultimate goal of this study is to reveal the internal mechanism of social media native IP from content dissemination to commercialization, and to summarize its sustainable development path. In order to achieve this goal, this paper analyzes and summarizes the cases on the basis of literature combing, and systematically

discusses their emotional value and industrialization logic in combination with relevant theoretical frameworks.

2. Core theory

2.1. Literature review

The core of this study is based on four major theories: symbolic consumption theory provides core support for the analysis of Chiikawa to construct user emotional connections through symbolic systems such as images, expressions, and stories [1]. Art healing theory explains the emotional regulation function of IP healing content and helps to understand its emotional value [2]. The "participatory culture" in fan economic theory provides an analytical perspective for fans to participate in IP construction [3]. The IP industry chain theory supports the extension of the whole industry chain and the analysis of the commercialization path driven by the "millet economy" [4,5]. In addition, related theories such as identity and cross-cultural communication further enrich the research perspective [6,7].

The existing relevant research mainly focuses on symbol consumption, art healing, fan economy and foxtail millet economy, and discusses the role of symbolic consumption in IP emotional connection, the healing mechanism of healing content, the driving force of fan participation on IP commercialization, and the monetization characteristics of millet economy [8,9]. For example, Mei Qionglin studied the core connotation of symbolic consumption and its role in the construction of consumer culture in "Symbolic Consumption Constructing Consumer Culture: A Brief Discussion on Baudrillard's Critical Theory of Symbols", and contributed to this study in the application of symbolic consumption theory, but did not explore the relationship between symbolic consumption and art healing in combination with Chiikawa IP [10]. Wang Xingchen and Jiang Shen analyzed the monetization characteristics and industrial value of the millet economy in "From Symbolic Consumption to Industrial Engine: The Reshaping of the Animation Industry Ecology and Value Chain Driven by the 'Millet Economy'", which provided a reference for the study of the commercialization path of this paper, but did not focus on the millet operation model of Chiikawa's single IP [11,12]. These studies as a whole provide basic theoretical support and core analysis ideas for the analysis of Chiikawa IP, and make important contributions to the study of IP emotional value and commercialization path.

However, there are still obvious shortcomings in the existing research, and there is a lack of targeted research on the specific IP of Chiikawa, which fails to organically combine symbol consumption, art healing, fan participation and the commercialization path of millet economy, and does not deeply explore the unique emotional expression mode, cross-cultural communication adaptability and exclusive millet operation mode of Chiikawa, and the research lacks systematization and pertinence.

Based on this, this paper will rely on the core theory, draw on the reasonable results of existing research, focus on the particularity of Chiikawa IP, supplement the existing research gaps, focus on the emotional healing mechanism of its symbolic system, the driving role of fan participation in the millet economy, and the cross-cultural communication and commercialization adaptation strategy to improve the systematic research of a single healing IP.

2.2. Overview of Chiikawa IP

Chiikawa, one of the most representative "social media native IPs" of the moment, was first released in the form of a short comic in 2017 on author Nagano's Twitter (now X). Through fragmented narratives and high-frequency updates, it gradually accumulates attention, and forms a stable fan community under the communication mechanism of user retweets, comments and secondary creations.

From the content level, Chiikawa has constructed a unique emotional expression mode through cute appearance character design and realistic story design: the character in the seemingly relaxed daily life: the character still needs to face real situations such as work, exams, competition, etc. in the seemingly relaxed daily life, if the character is in a high-stress environment for a long time, it may be alienated into the monster "Chimera" and hunted by his former companions. This uncertainty and pressure form a symbolic correspondence with the current young people's real-life troubles of unstable employment, study, and self-worth, so it has aroused strong emotional resonance among young audiences.

With the continuous increase in attention and topicality, the IP has gradually extended from social media content to industrialization, including comic publishing, animation adaptation, and large-scale derivatives development. Especially in the commercialization stage, the success of Chiikawa is mainly reflected in the expansion of derivatives and offline consumption scenarios, such as limited peripherals, themed pop-up stores and brand co-branding activities, etc., which are strong. It has transformed the sense of participation and emotional identity of fans, and further expanded the market influence of IP. From the perspective of the cultural industry, this case shows that the development of IP in the social media environment no longer depends entirely on the production system of the traditional film and television or comic industry, but gradually realizes the transformation of content influence into commercial value through emotional value accumulation and community communication.

3. Research methods

3.1. Questionnaire survey

This study focuses on the core question of "how the emotional value of native social media IPs is transformed into commercial potential," and systematically designed the questionnaire structure accordingly. The overall logic is based on the emotional transmission mechanism, combining symbolic consumption theory, emotional economy theory, and participatory culture theory to construct an analytical framework from emotional perception to commercial conversion. The questionnaire design focuses on the emotional resonance dimension, primarily measuring users' emotional experiences when encountering relevant content and their emotional projection of the characters' experiences. Based on this, the study examines whether users express personal values or personality traits through their liking of the IP, analyzing how emotional resonance further transforms into individual self-identity. Furthermore, combining participatory culture theory, this study sets up a fan participation behavior dimension, examining users' interactive behaviors on social media, such as liking, forwarding, secondary creation, and community participation, to measure the IP's dissemination activity in the social media environment. At the commercial level, the study analyzes users' willingness to pay for related content or peripheral products, and their acceptance of cross-media and cross-industry development of the IP, through two dimensions: willingness to commercialize and acceptance of industry chain expansion. Use title case for the

paper title. Function words like "at", "or", "with", etc. should not be capitalized unless they are the first word of the title.

3.2. Research results

The survey was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire, published through the questionnaire star and Tencent document platforms, and disseminated in a targeted manner with the help of social media such as WeChat and Xiaohongshu. A total of 133 questionnaires were collected, and 120 valid questionnaires were screened. In the sample structure, 53.38% were female and 45.86% were male, and the overall sample could better reflect the basic characteristics of young Internet users. (See Figure 1)

In the data analysis stage, this paper first sorts out and screens the collected questionnaires, classifies and counts the basic information of the samples, and uses descriptive statistical methods to summarize and analyze the proportion of the results of each item. At the same time, the answers to the open-ended questions are summarized by keywords and visualized in the form of word clouds to supplement the user's emotional experience and cognitive characteristics reflected in the quantitative data. (See Figure 2)

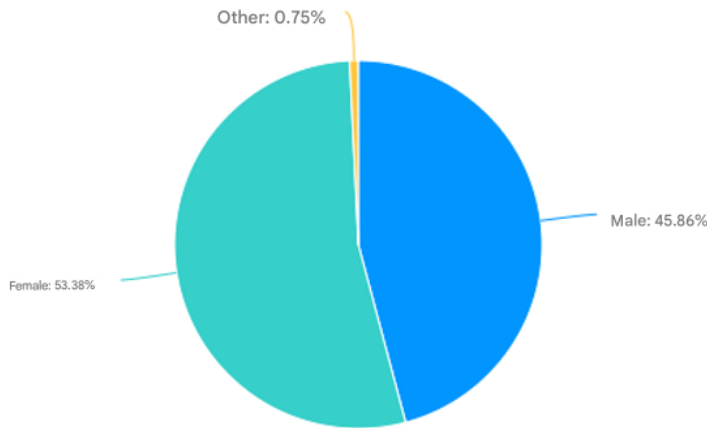


Figure 1. Gender distribution map



Figure 2. Distribution map of word clouds

4. Analysis of the growth and commercialization path of Jiikawa IP

4.1. IP is highly symbolized as an emotion carrier

"Chiikawa" resonates emotionally with the audience through character design and unique worldview. The characters in this work have rounded shapes, which bring a sense of healing visually. In addition, the characters need to work part-time, research, face the risk of failure and being alienated into monsters, which is more realistic, providing the audience with timely comfort and increasing emotional stickiness. According to the questionnaire data (see Figure 3), about 78% of respondents said they would project their own dilemmas onto the character's experience, and about 78% of respondents said that they would actively search for relevant content due to their emotions.

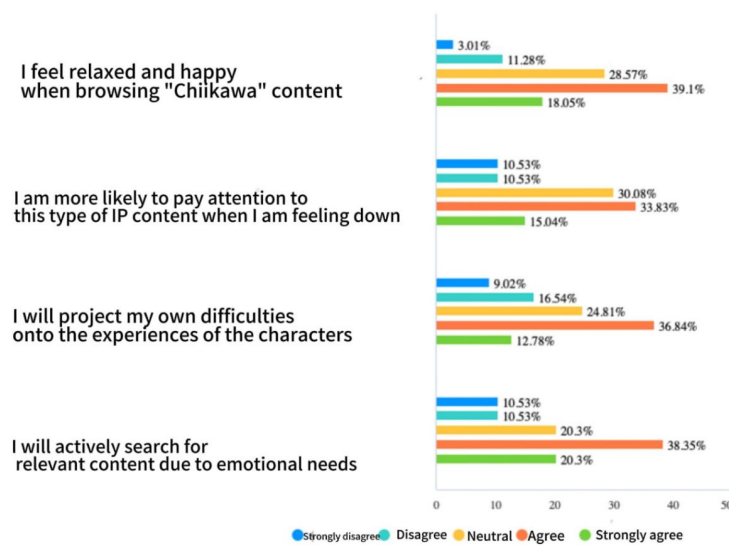


Figure 3. Emotional connection attitude scale graph

4.2. Emotional connection is effectively translated into commercial recognition and consumption intention

After establishing an emotional connection, Chiikawa first materialized emotional symbols into goods such as dolls, badges, and pendants, transforming resonance into consumer intentions. Relying on the logic of IP value chain construction, Jiikawa has formed a diversified business transformation path [4]. The questionnaire showed (see Figure 4) that a total of 53.38% of the respondents expressed their willingness to buy peripheral products. Next, we will develop IP across domains. According to the chart of the market-oriented attitude scale, a total of 68.42% of users agree that it is adapted into animation, games, and other content, which is in line with the symbolic narrative consumption logic of the digital media era [8]. (See Figure 5) Third, diversified use, expand and enrich offline experience, learn from the "FFC model", lay out O2O scenarios such as pop-up stores and theme cafes, and 56.39% of users recognize that IP has entered the commercial field, indicating that emotional value and identity have formed a stable foundation for business transformation [3].

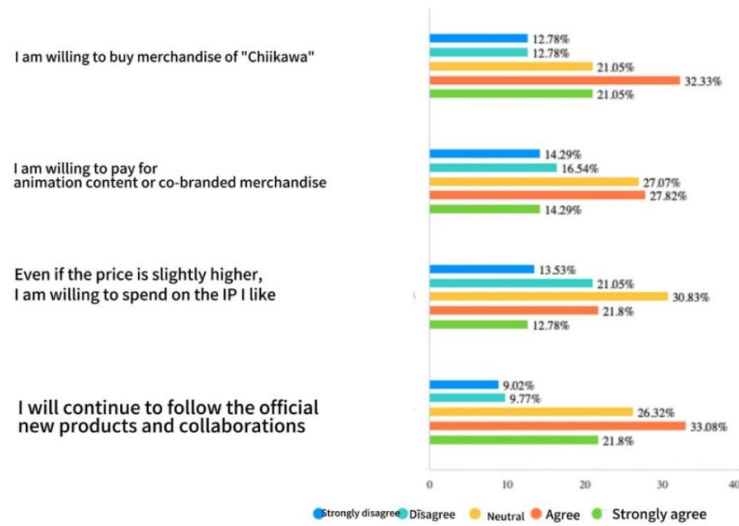


Figure 4. Consumption intention scale graph

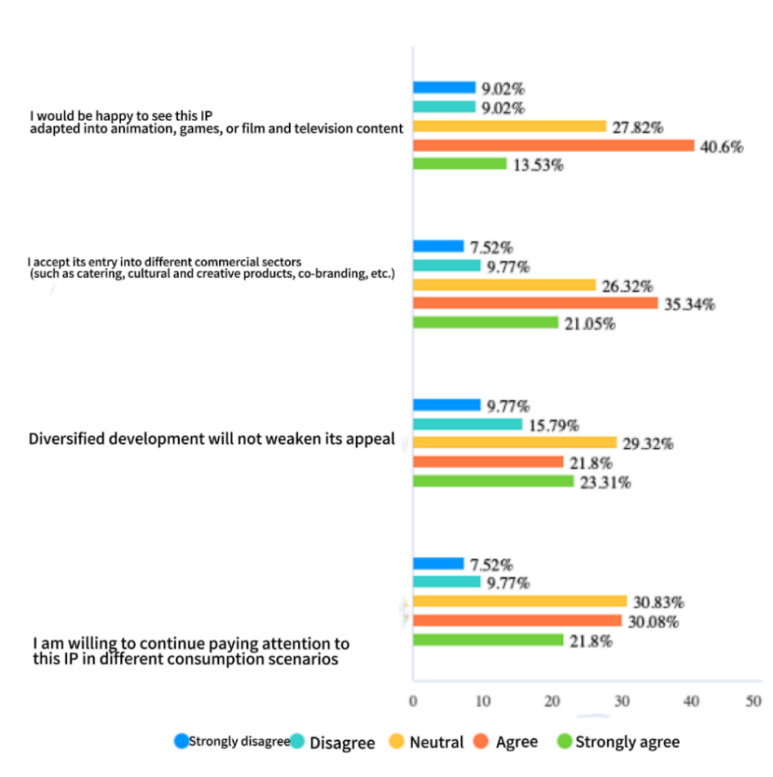


Figure 5. Market-oriented attitude scale chart

5. Conclusion

This study takes chiikawa as a case study to discuss the growth mechanism and commercialization path of social media native IP from content dissemination to industrial development. The results show that the IP has formed a strong emotional resonance among young audiences through highly symbolic character images and narrative methods with realistic stress metaphors. Audiences not only

get emotional regulation and psychological comfort when watching content, but also participate in the content diffusion of IP through interaction and communication behavior on social media platforms. The further conclusion is that emotional value is the core driving force for IP communication and development, and users' participatory behavior in social media further strengthens the community foundation of IP and provides a stable user base for commercial development. On this basis, derivative product development, cross-media adaptation, and offline consumption scenario expansion have become important ways to achieve commercial value transformation.

This study provides valuable empirical enlightenment for the study of social media native IP, which is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, it emphasizes the central role of emotional expression in IP content design; second, it shows that participatory communication in social media platforms can effectively enhance user identity and community cohesion; The third is to reveal that emotional value can be gradually transformed into industrial value through derivative products and diversified consumption scenarios.

In the future, relevant research can be further explored in multiple directions, such as expanding the sample scope, conducting comparative research on different types of IP, or analyzing the communication mechanism and industrial development path of social media native IP in different cultural environments from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, so as to further enrich the research results in this field.

Author contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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