

The Impact of Fan Engagement Strategies in ACG IP Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention

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Abstract. The ACG (animation, comics, games) industry has been developing rapidly, and IP has become an inseparable part of contemporary entertainment and consumption culture. This study mainly studies the impact of ACG intellectual property (IP) marketing strategies on consumers' purchase intentions. Through a literature review and a qualitative analysis of existing studies and ACG IP cases, this study explores the psychological appeal of ACG IP, fan engagement strategies, and the main factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, it further examines character design, narrative construction, world-building, fan communities, user-generated content (UGC), and interactive activities, with particular focus on brand awareness, perceived value, emotional attachment, fan identification, community belonging, and brand loyalty. The findings suggest that effective ACG IP marketing can enhance consumers' psychological connection with the IP by providing functional value, emotional value and social value, thereby increasing the purchase intention. In general, fan participation plays a significant role in establishing long-term consumption relationships and encouraging continuous support.

Keywords: ACG IP, Fan Engagement, Consumer Purchase Intention, Emotional Attachment, Brand Loyalty

1. Introduction

The ACG (animation, comics, games) industry has become an integral component of contemporary entertainment and consumer culture. With the development of digital media, ACG intellectual property (IP) has evolved from its original form to include games, animations, products, events, online communities, etc. Unlike traditional marketing, ACG IP marketing does not merely rely on the functional advantages of the product. ACG IP relies on unique characters, narratives, fictional worlds, emotional experiences, etc., and can build a strong psychological connection with consumers. Moreover, fans are no longer just passive consumers. ACGI products are developed and disseminated through platforms such as fan communities, user-generated content (UGC), interactive activities, and social media. The forms of participation can deepen consumers' emotional dependence, their sense of identification, the sense of belonging to the community, and brand loyalty, influencing consumers' purchasing behavior. This paper examines the impact of ACG IP marketing strategies on consumers' purchase intentions, studies the psychological appeal of ACG IP and fan participation strategies, and analyzes key factors like brand recognition, perceived value,

emotional attachment, fan identification, community belonging, and brand loyalty. In addition, it studies how fan participation affects purchase intentions and also discusses the challenges encountered in ACG IP marketing.

2. Overview of ACG IP and fan engagement marketing strategies

2.1. Features and psychological appeal of ACG IP

ACG IP refers to fictional characters, stories, and worldviews created through media like animation, comics, and games. These elements can establish emotional connections with consumers, increasing their interest in the IP. Unlike traditional brands that mainly emphasize product functionality, ACG IP offers consumers a long-term emotional experience via distinct character images, immersive story narration, and rich fictional worlds. Moreover, these characteristics can meet consumers' emotional needs in various aspects like entertainment, identity expression, and a sense of belonging, fostering emotional attachment and fan identification.

Based on the definition of the American Psychological Association (APA), psychological needs refer to non-biological demands that play an important role in an individual's mental health. These demands may stem from an individual's inner desires, or they may arise from interactions with the social environment [1]. Thomson et al. conducted research and found that emotional attachment is a strong emotional bond formed between a person and a certain individual or object, which includes emotions such as connection, love, affection, and enthusiasm [2]. Gwinner and Swanson argued that team identification is a special form of identification, mainly existing in the environment of sports fans [3]. Similarly, fan identification refers to the psychological connection that is formed between the fans and the objects they follow. Therefore, ACG IP has four key features: character design, story narration, world-building, and emotional value.

2.2. Fan engagement strategies in ACG IP marketing

Fan engagement can be understood as a form of customer engagement. From this perspective, Brodie al. believed that consumer participation is a psychological state that consumers experience when interacting with a certain object in a specific context [4]. In ACG IP marketing, fan participation refers to the process where consumers actively participate in IP-related activities after purchasing, which includes joining fan communities, creating and sharing UGC, attending events, and interacting with brands and fans. Santos believed that UGC refers to the digital content created and shared by users on digital platforms, and its main function is to express and disseminate information [5]. Compared with one-way communication, ACG IP marketing provides fans with the opportunity to participate in the production and dissemination of IP content, which is interaction and content co-creation. Thus, fan communities, UGC creation, and interactive activities are the main fan participation methods in ACG IP marketing.

For instance, the spread of Hatsune Miku is closely linked to fan creations. Kobayashi and Taguchi pointed out that fans use the Vocaloid system to create original songs, videos and derivative works, and share them via online platforms [6]. Fans are both recipients of IP content and participants in content dissemination. Meanwhile, online platforms have lowered the threshold for fans to participate in content production and dissemination, allowing individual creations to enter a broader fan network. Therefore, fan participation in ACG IP marketing is mainly achieved through community interaction, UGC creation, and online and offline activities, forming a participation process from content creation to content dissemination.

3. Major factors influencing consumer purchase intention in ACG IP marketing

3.1. Brand awareness and perceived value of ACG products

Brand recognition is a key factor influencing consumers' purchase intentions. It relates to consumers' identification and consideration of the brand. Keller believed that brand recognition consists of brand awareness and brand image. When consumers have a high level of familiarity with a brand and have positive associations with it, a strong customer-based brand asset will be formed [7]. The familiarity of consumers with IP can reduce the uncertainty in the purchase decision, hence making it easier for consumers to identify the IP and the various characters, stories, and cultural symbols associated with it. The Pokémon brand, which is continuously spread worldwide through media such as video games, animations, and products, has achieved a high level of brand recognition [8]. Therefore, continuous cross-media dissemination can increase the opportunities for consumers to come into contact with the IP and also enhance their familiarity with the IP.

After consumers form a brand perception, they need to determine whether the related products have sufficient value. Zetmer argued that perceived value is the evaluation made by consumers of the overall benefit of a product after comparing the benefits they obtain from the product with the costs they incur [9]. Meanwhile, Sweeney and Soutar divided perceived value into emotional value, quality and performance, social value, and price and monetary value dimensions via the PERVAL scale [10]. For ACG products, consumers' value judgments involve product quality and functionality, as well as emotional and social values. Pokémon trading cards and limited-edition products provide functional value while also meeting consumers' emotional needs and strengthening their connection with the IP. Thus, brand recognition mainly helps consumers identify and familiarize themselves with ACG IPs, and perceived value further influences consumers' judgment of the product's value. When consumers become familiar with an IP and believe that the product can provide sufficient functionality, emotion, or social value, their purchase intention will increase.

3.2. Emotional attachment and psychological connection

Emotional attachment is a key factor affecting consumers' purchasing intentions. More specifically, it reflects the psychological connection between consumers and an IP. Thomson, MacInnis, and Park pointed out that consumers may develop emotional attachment to consumption objects like brands. They argued that stronger emotional attachment increases consumers' commitment to the brand and encourages them to invest more resources in maintaining the relationship, thus influencing consumer behavior [2]. In the ACG industry, emotional connections can form emotional connections with products, fictional characters, stories, and virtual worlds. At the same time, continuous narration and immersive experiences will deepen this connection. Bopp et al. found that players develop emotional attachments such as admiration, emotional investment, and concern for the characters' experiences towards the game characters. This indicates that fictional characters can bring psychological value to the audience and encourage them to participate in related IP [11].

For example, in Genshin Impact, the character design, character stories, voice interactions, and game experience all contribute to enabling players to gradually understand and become familiar with different characters. As the interaction deepens, the relationship between the player and a particular character becomes increasingly close, and the player will develop a stronger emotional connection and symbolic meaning towards the related products. Therefore, purchasing character souvenirs or limited edition items can become a way for consumers to express their personal interests and maintain their connection with the IP. Thus, it can be seen that emotional attachment can influence

consumers' purchase intentions via identification, emotional investment, and perceived value. In other words, when consumers form a strong psychological connection with an ACG IP, related products gain greater personal meaning, increasing purchase and IP engagement.

3.3. Fan identification and community belonging

Fan identification and community belonging are important factors influencing consumers' purchase intention, as consumers often develop a sense of identity through participation in fan communities. From the perspective of social identity, Tajfel and Turner argued that an individual's social identity is partly derived from the social group they belong to. Thus, group membership affects an individual's self-perception, causing a difference between them and other group members [12]. Muniz and Guinn defined brand communities as specific communities formed among brand enthusiasts via structured social relationships, regardless of geographic boundaries [13]. In the ACG industry, consumers can share opinions, interact with like-minded fans, and join fan communities.

Similarly, Jenkins argued that fans play an increasingly important role in contemporary media culture. Fans can actively collect, adapt, and redistribute media content, contributing to participatory culture [14]. The resulting interactions can strengthen the connections between ACG fans and IP, as well as with other community members. More importantly, a sense of belonging also has an impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. When consumers establish a sense of belonging within the ACG fan community, they can express their self-identity via IP-related consumption, strengthening their connection with the IP. Besides, the observation of other fans' participation and recommendations can create social influence, thereby affecting consumers' purchase decisions. Thus, fan identification and community belonging transform ACG consumption from an individual behavior into an experience with social and identity significance. As a result, strong fan communities and active participation can increase consumer engagement and purchase intentions.

3.4. Brand loyalty and repeat purchase intention

Brand loyalty is a crucial factor influencing consumers' willingness to make repeat purchases, as it reflects consumers' long-term inclination to choose and support a specific IP. Oliver defined loyalty as a strong commitment that consumers maintain even when affected by external factors, continuing to purchase or support their preferred products or services. This indicates that brand loyalty represents the long-term relationship between consumers and the brand, rather than just repeat purchasing behavior [15]. In the ACG industry, when consumers continuously interact with a certain IP and have positive experiences with its products, games, stories or characters, brand loyalty may gradually form. Long-term fan relationships can encourage consumers to continue to follow the IP and reduce the likelihood of switching to other options. Repeat purchases can also enhance consumers' familiarity with the IP, making subsequent purchase decisions easier. Constant exposure to characters, stories, games and related products offers consumers the opportunity to maintain their connection with the IP.

According to the research conducted by Rusli and Berlianto, for players of Genshin Impact, loyalty has a significant positive impact on their purchase intentions. In particular, higher player loyalty increases the likelihood of purchasing in-game products [16]. This finding indicates that brand loyalty can affect consumers' purchase intentions through existing consumption habits and the willingness to continue supporting. Thus, brand loyalty differs from emotional attachment. Emotional attachment emphasizes the psychological and emotional connection between consumers and ACG IP, while brand loyalty focuses on its expression through continuous consumption and

repeat purchases. As a result, a stronger brand loyalty can increase consumers' willingness to purchase related ACG products again and to support the IP in the long term.

4. The impact of fan engagement strategies on consumer purchase intention

4.1. The influence of fan community engagement on consumer purchase intention

ACG enterprises can leverage interactive experiences to stimulate fans' participation in IP content, thus enhancing consumers' purchase intentions. They can increase fans' engagement through offline activities, limited edition products, and themed experiences. For example, Sanrio uses pop-up stores and themed events to create offline spaces where consumers can interact with Hello Kitty characters. The official information of Sanrio indicates that Sanrio holds occasional limited-time pop-up store events to sell limited products and limited-edition character activities, to attract fans to purchase related goods [17]. Sanrio combines physical and digital experiences, using retail experiences, games, and digital content to add interactive pathways for consumers and the characters, strengthening the connection with fans [18].

These interactive experiences may increase purchase intention by creating emotional and social value beyond the functional value of the products themselves. When consumers interact with Hello Kitty via themed events and physical experiences, they may form a stronger emotional connection and attribute greater personal significance to the related products. At the same time, pop-up stores and themed events provide opportunities for fans to communicate and share experiences, helping to enhance social connections and a sense of community belonging. Moreover, time-limited and event-exclusive products have a certain degree of scarcity and uniqueness, which can boost the collectibility value of the products and further increase consumers' willingness to purchase ACG products. Thus, fan community participation can encourage consumers to move from passive consumption to active participation, while the emotional, social, and collectible value generated through these interactions can further enhance their willingness to purchase ACG products.

4.2. The role of emotional connection and fan loyalty in consumer buying behavior

The emotional connection between consumers and ACG IP helps to establish long-term relationships and promote continuous purchasing behavior. Fournier believes that brand loyalty should not merely be understood as repeat purchases, but involves the formation of a long-term relationship between the brand and the consumers [19]. This indicates that the loyalty relationship between consumers and the IP needs to gradually form through continuous interaction, rather than being determined by a single purchase. Similarly, Carroll and Ahuvia pointed out that the emotional connection between consumers and the brand can enhance brand loyalty. Their research found that brand love is related to higher loyalty and positive consumption behavior, indicating that a stronger emotional connection can prompt consumers to continuously support the brand [20]. In the ACG industry, Genshin Impact provides players with a long-term interactive experience via characters, narratives, and a continuously expanding world. Regularly introducing new characters, updating the plot, and holding time-limited activities enable players to continuously come into contact with familiar characters and participate in new content. As this interaction continues, players may gradually form emotional identification with the characters and the story, and enhance their loyalty to the IP.

This emotional connection further influences consumers' continued purchasing behavior. When players form a strong connection with the game characters and story, they are more likely to purchase in-game items, character-related products, and participate in IP-related activities. Thus,

continuous fan interaction can strengthen the emotional relationship between consumers and the IP, and increase their long-term support intentions. For ACG IPs, meaningful continuous interaction can transform short-term participation into more stable fan loyalty, promoting repeat purchases and continuous consumption.

4.3. The challenges and future development of fan engagement marketing

Although fan participation in marketing brings development opportunities for ACG IP, it still faces certain challenges. Excessive commercialization may weaken the emotional connection between fans and the IP, as too many marketing activities may give consumers the impression of profit orientation. Moreover, group conflicts among fans due to different opinions and preferences may also affect the overall participation experience. Therefore, ACG enterprises need to maintain a balance between their commercial goals and their relationship with fans, avoiding excessive marketing that may affect fans' identification and participation in the IP.

In the future, fan participation in marketing may place greater emphasis on personalization and interactive experiences. In this regard, Prahalad and Ramaswamy pointed out that value creation is shifting from product-oriented to being centered around personalized consumption experiences. They further argued that consumers also participate in value creation by interacting with the enterprise, highlighting the importance of dialogue and participation in modern marketing [21]. For ACG IP, enterprises can increase opportunities for fan participation and content contribution via personalized content, interactive experiences, and virtual character growth. Thus, deeper fan participation can help ACG enterprises adapt to changes in consumer demands and maintain long-term fan engagement.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines the influence of ACG IP marketing strategies on consumer purchase intention. Based on the literature review and analysis of ACG IP cases, the findings suggest that the influence of ACG IP marketing on purchase intention is not simply a result of product promotion, but a process of developing psychological connections between consumers and the IP. Fan engagement plays a central role in this process by creating repeated and meaningful interactions between consumers and ACG IPs. Through these interactions, consumers can develop emotional attachment, identification, community belonging, and perceptions of value, which can strengthen their willingness to purchase and continue supporting the IP. This suggests that the effectiveness of ACG IP marketing depends not only on how well an IP attracts consumers' attention, but also on how effectively it develops and maintains consumer relationships. Brand awareness can help consumers recognize an IP and evaluate its products, while psychological and social connections can make the IP more personally meaningful.

Therefore, the key mechanism identified in this study is that fan participation helps to transform consumers' attention into a deeper psychological connection, influencing their purchase intentions and promoting sustained consumption. From this perspective, ACG IP marketing not only involves product promotion, but also emphasizes the establishment and maintenance of long-term relationships between consumers and the IP through continuous interaction. This process also reflects the consumer demands, product values, and corporate practices that are of concern in responsible consumption and production. By understanding consumers' needs for the functional, emotional, and social values of ACG products, enterprises can more appropriately carry out product

development and fan interaction, meeting consumers' needs while reducing excessive marketing and ineffective consumption.

However, this study mainly relied on secondary data and did not include direct collected first-hand data from consumers. Besides, the cases mainly focused on well-known ACG IPs, which limited the representativeness for smaller or less developed IPs. Moreover, no further analysis was conducted on the differences among consumers in terms of age, cultural background and level of fan engagement. In response to these limitations, future research can collect first-hand data through questionnaires, interviews, or experiments, and compare different ACG IPs, markets, and consumer groups to further test the relevant conclusions.

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