

Research on the Development Status, Existing Problems, and Countermeasures of Derivative Products of the Animation Industry in the Digital Economy Era

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Abstract. Digital economy and animation industry are emerging industries under the normalization of epidemic prevention and control. The derivative products of the animation industry have a good development environment in the era of the digital economy. Firstly, this paper analyzes the development status of derivative products in the animation industry under the digital economy era, and then expounds on the existing problems of derivative products, including the development orientation and creativity of derivative products of animation industry need to be improved, the brand building of derivative products of the animation industry is insufficient, and the intellectual property protection of derivative products of animation industry needs to be strengthened. On this basis, this paper puts forward some countermeasures and suggestions, such as effectively improving the development orientation and creativity of derivative products in the animation industry, making efforts to create the brand effect of derivative products in the animation industry, and strengthening the intellectual property protection of derivative products in the animation industry.

Keywords: Digital economy; Animation industry; Derivative products.

1. Introduction

Under the background of the normalization of COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control, China's digital economy has gradually developed. The scope of the digital economy is very wide, and it can be applied to various Internet-related technologies, such as big data, blockchain, cloud computing, etc. At present, the digital economy not only exists in the professional field but also has a profound impact on the behavior and living habits of young people.

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in 2019, the demand of Chinese young people for the digital economy such as the Internet has greatly increased, especially in the animation industry. The reason is that under the background of epidemic prevention and control, young people are more likely to become anxious, and they need entertainment to release their pressure in the intensely competitive environment. Some young people like the derivative products of the animation industry very much, and these derivatives also help them to release their pressure. At the same time, the derivative products of the animation industry are also on the cusp of the digital economy, which leads to the rapid development of the derivative products of the animation industry.

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, manufacturers selling derivative products of the animation industry in mainland China were usually Japan, the United States, and other countries with relatively complete animation industry development. However, after the outbreak of COVID-19, many Chinese enterprises entered the animation industry, and with the rapid development of the digital economy, they began to use the Internet to make derivative products for the animation industry and began to publicize and sell them. According to the statistics on the website of the National Bureau of Statistics, in the era of the digital economy, domestic animation industry derivatives occupy about 30% market share in China.

2. The development status of derivative products of the animation industry in the digital economy era

2.1 The rapid development of China's digital economy

Since the 18th Party Congress in 2012, China has listed the digital economy as one of the important development targets. The management regards emerging technology industries such as the Internet as key support industries and has issued a series of industrial support policies, which have achieved remarkable results in the past decade. According to the data released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, during the decade from 2011 to 2020, the scale of China's digital economy has increased substantially. The scale of the digital economy in 2020 is 4.12 times that of 2011, and the compound annual growth rate of the digital economy has reached 17.06%. At the same time, during this decade, with the development of China's digital economy, China has been in a leading position in the international market in the high-tech field represented by 5G. During this decade, the development of the digital economy has also benefited some people, thus attracting more and more network users. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the number of Internet users in China was 564 million in 2012, while the number of Internet users in China reached 1.023 billion in 2021. It can be seen that China's digital economy is developing at an extremely fast speed, and it has widely affected domestic people's life behavior.

2.2 Concept and development course of derivative products in the animation industry

The derivative products of the animation industry, that is, the way animation companies promote their animation roles, are also a major profit-making means for animation companies, and their derivatives include physical derivatives and virtual derivatives. These products are IP created by using the influence of animation itself. By attracting animation lovers and selling them, they can make profits. Before 2012, China's animation industry mainly used physical derivative products as its sales source. These physical derivative products include, but are not limited to, models, hand-made products, food, and clothing. Such physical derivatives are usually placed in various animation exhibitions and retail stores for sale. After 2012, with the development of China's digital economy, all kinds of animation industry derivatives are gradually sold to animation lovers in the form of virtual products, such as games adapted from animation products, digital audio-visual products of animation, and fan works of animation. The physical derivative products of the animation industry are also gradually moving towards the network, attracting more animation lovers to buy physical derivative products through online shopping malls.

2.3 At present, the development characteristics of derivative products in China's animation industry

In recent years, the number of cartoon lovers in the post-90s and post-90s groups in China has gradually increased, especially in the background of normal epidemic prevention and control. Many young people look at the derivative products of the cartoon industry to relieve their psychological pressure. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the number of animation lovers in China has increased rapidly between 2019 and 2021. According to the data from Research Report Network, the number of Chinese animation lovers has increased from 332 million in 2019 to 403 million in 2021. Thus, people's demand for the animation industry is gradually rising. To make the supply of derivative products in the animation industry match people's demand, various local animation industries in China are also gradually rising and beginning to produce high-quality derivative products of the animation industry. After every high-quality animation IP, a variety of derivative products will be derived, such as characters and costumes. These derivative products attract many animation lovers to pay for them.

3. The digital economy era animation industry derivatives development problems

3.1 The development orientation and creativity of derivative products in the animation industry need to be improved.

With the increasing demand of young people in China for derivative products in the animation industry, animation companies have also made countermeasures to the above situation. They began to actively look for inspiration that could attract the attention of young people and operated the derivative products of the animation industry through the mode of the digital economy. However, in recent years, with the purchase needs of young people being gradually met, the growth rate of sales of derivative products in China's animation industry has gradually declined. According to the data from the National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2021, the total output value of China's animation industry has reached 20 billion yuan, while the local animation derivatives only account for 10% of the total output value, and most of them come from Japan or the United States. The reason is that, first of all, the main target groups of the derivative products of China's animation industry are the post-90s and post-00s, but they have not spread to more people of all ages. Secondly, even though many derivative products of the animation industry are actively promoted, there are still no refreshing ideas. Most products are still sold between toys and restaurants, and these derivative products have high homogeneity and lack unique features. The above reasons eventually led to the lack of novelty among Chinese young people in the derivative products of the animation industry, and gradually reduced their competitiveness in the whole industry.

3.2 The brand building of derivative products in the animation industry is insufficient.

The lack of brand building is also a weak point in the development of derivative products in China's animation industry. At present, the orientation of most derivatives of the Chinese animation industry is short-term. Since the broadcast time of an animation is about two months, the best time for the derivative products of the animation industry to enter the consumer's field of vision is about two months after the animation. After these two months, the animation faded out of public view with its derivative products. This also hurts the development of some animation industry derivatives, because animation companies lack long-term operation of animation, and they have not made it become an IP goal that can enter consumers' vision for a long time. Therefore, Chinese animation industry derivatives generally lack popularity, and it is difficult to have long-term customers. Comparatively speaking, Japan's animation industry derivatives, such as mobile warrior Gundam, New Century Gospel Warrior, and other IP, even though the animation has been broadcast for many years, due to the company's long-term operation and publicity, even decades later, there is still a steady stream of consumers paying for it.

3.3 Intellectual property protection of derivative products in the animation industry needs to be strengthened.

At present, there are obvious problems in the intellectual property protection of Chinese animation derivatives. For example, all kinds of unofficial sales methods such as plagiarism and imitation continue. The main reason for the above phenomenon is that on the one hand, some animation companies lack the protection of intellectual property rights and trademark registration; on the other hand, the laws and regulations on intellectual property protection of derivative products in the animation industry are not perfect, thus giving pirated businesses an opportunity.

This kind of piracy even appeared in many animation exhibitions, and some merchants openly sold pirated products, while unsuspecting consumers were easily fooled. Due to the rampant piracy of manufacturers, the income of many animation companies has dropped rapidly, but it is difficult for them to make corresponding countermeasures. The above-mentioned phenomenon has led to some animation companies' problems such as insufficient funds, and they may even collapse and withdraw from the whole animation industry.

4. Countermeasures and suggestions for the development of derivative products in the animation industry in the digital economy era

4.1 Effectively improve the development orientation and creativity of derivative products in the animation industry.

In practice, it is very important to effectively promote the development orientation and creativity of derivative products in the Chinese animation industry. First of all, to avoid the repetition of derivative products, the animation industry should focus on improving the development orientation of its derivative products, and investigate the group preferences of consumers through the advantages brought by the digital economy era, namely, the Internet and big data, and actively select audience groups through the above technologies. Secondly, animation production companies should communicate effectively with foreign manufacturers or domestic counterparts more frequently, and learn from each other's experiences, to reinforce their products. Thirdly, creative development is also an essential link. Through creative development, the homogenization of some products can be more effectively avoided by animation production companies, and it is conducive to the formation of a high-quality and efficient animation derivative product development environment.

4.2 Focus on creating the brand effect of derivative products in the animation industry.

China's animation industry derivatives need to focus on building their brand effects. First of all, after an anime character is launched, the company should immediately let this anime brand enter the public's field of vision, and vigorously publicize it in streaming media, magazines, and other platforms. This can not only make the animation brand quickly enter the public's field of vision, but also enhance the public's good impression of the product. Secondly, companies in the animation industry should focus on the originality of animation characters. Originality is an important factor for consumers to deepen their impression of brands and avoid homogenization of products. As long as we grasp the characteristics of the characters and improve the original level of the products, it will be easier to form the brand effect. Thirdly, the long-term operation of derivative products in the animation industry is also an indispensable link. The long-term operation can make consumers pay attention to the derivative products of the animation industry for a longer time, and can make animation brands develop continuously, which will help the company to produce more derivative products and increase its operating profit.

4.3 Strengthen the intellectual property protection of derivative products in the animation industry.

Intellectual property protection is also an important part of the development of China's animation industry. In the era of the digital economy, pirates who steal other brand images for profit can steal intellectual property rights more easily and sell them online. To avoid this situation, animation production companies should register trademarks promptly, and register flagship stores or official stores online, to prevent pirates from making consumers buy pirated goods by imitating store names. In addition, although the development of the digital economy era will bring the disadvantages of rampant piracy, it will also better safeguard the rights and interests of genuine intellectual property rights.

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