

A Review of the Development on AoFei Animation Film Derivatives

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Abstract

With the development of the new media and mass communication, the animation industry in China has undergone tremendous changes in tandem. These changes are reflected in the increasing number of original animation works, the quality of animation production and its cultural heritage, and the fact that the audience is no longer limited to children and teenagers. As a new force in the development of China's animation industry, the dissemination of animation film derivatives provides a platform for audiences to support their favourite animation films. Due to the maturity of the derivatives industry and the lack of awareness of the film industry in developing derivatives, the inability to plan derivatives in the planning and production of films and the single mode of communication, the overall communication of Chinese film derivatives to audiences is relatively lagging behind. This paper selects AoFei Entertainment, a leader in China's animation industry, and reviews the development of AoFei's animation film derivatives. On the one hand, it makes an analysis of the gap between the development of animation film derivatives in China and that of developed countries (USA and Japan). On the other hand, it aims to provide audiences who love animated films with a channel for the dissemination of derivatives using culture as a creative image.

Keywords: Animation Film Derivatives, Development, AoFei Entertainment, Review

Introduction

Based on the perspective of mass communication, the creation and dissemination of animation films allows audiences to not only watch the films in cinemas, but also to actively join in the promotion of the films and the use of derivatives after viewing, seeking information more actively. The Chinese animation film derivatives themselves are not only functional but

also incorporate characters designed with traditional Chinese culture, provides a medium for the spread of traditional Chinese culture. However, despite the growing audience interest in Chinese anime and film derivatives, there is still a large gap in their communication impact compared to that of developed countries (Iwabuchi, 2010). At the same time, most of the current research on AoFei Entertainment has focused on products as well as marketing strategies (Pan et al., 2019), and there is a lack of reliable research on users' attitudes towards animation film derivatives due to the non-existent sample size. In addition, the audience for Aoife's anime film spin-offs is spread across different cultures in various countries, which can have different impacts on users and how audiences react (Rosewarne, 2020). Therefore, understanding audience attitudes towards anime film spin-offs fills a gap in previous research. This overview takes a historical look at AoFei's anime derivatives. Specifically, this review will analyse the challenges faced and the achievements of AoFei anime derivatives through three stages: early, mid-term and current. On the one hand, it analyses the long-standing gap between AoFei Animation Derivatives, as the most representative Chinese company, and the developed world. On the other hand, it provides evidence for audiences to understand AoFei animation derivatives. This study provides valuable comments for those involved in the field of mass communication, as well as for the audience of AoFei Animation film derivatives. In summary, the objectives of this study are:

1.1 To analysis the gap between AoFei Animation derivatives as the watchdog of China's animation industry and developed countries such as the US and Japan.

1.2 To review the historical stages through Aoife Animation derivatives have developed.

The Concept of Animation Film Derivatives

Animated film is often used to denote an object that has been given life, meaning alive and vibrant. Georges Sadoul (1972) defines an animated film as one in which an image drawn on a flat surface or a three-dimensional object is the subject. With the development of animated films, the classification of animation has gradually become more and more. Technically speaking, animated films have undergone the process of black and white to colour, silent to sound, two-dimensional to three-dimensional; from the classification of dissemination channels, animation can be divided into television animation, advertising animation, underground animation, bus animation, film animation, etc.

Animation derivatives refer to products related to an animated work, animated image, animated brand or animated content that are developed and produced by the developer under an agreement specified by both or more parties, featuring that animated work, animated image, animated brand or animated content or containing a certain copyright-licensed animated element (Yoon, 2017). The derivatives of animated films can be divided into content products, image derivatives and general derivatives according to the type of content.

Type	List
Content category	Audio-visual, books, various magazines
Image derivatives	Toys Stationery Food, beverage Clothing, Apparel Daily necessities, household goods Accessories, collectibles Electronic networks (video games, advertising, etc.)
General Category	Anime conventions, theme parks, entertainment venues

Figure 1: Classification of Animation film derivatives

Introduction to Aoife Entertainment

Anime films are an integral part of the cultural media landscape. From traditional mediums such as movie and television to the realm of short live videos and gaming applications, anime has gradually been used by creators to edit life into stories and evoke emotional resonance in audiences (Lamarre, 2002). Founded in 1993, Aoife Entertainment is the watchdog of the Chinese animation industry. The company not only possesses advanced technology, but also demonstrates a strong competitive edge in the dimension of creativity. In the early days of its establishment, Aoife Entertainment has been committed to developing a national animation culture. And in the course of its development since then, it has expanded its business platforms, such as film and television, derivatives and other media (Xie, 2018). Today, Aoife Entertainment as well as becoming a comprehensive animation communication and cultural organisation. The influence of several anime films under its name has spread around the world.

Aoife Entertainment's main business is divided into five parts, namely animation and film derivatives, internet entertainment, baby products and film and media (Wang, 2018). With a large number of products covering all age groups, it has a well-known group of IP for all age groups, such as "One Hundred Thousand Jokes", "End Brain", "Except the Wind", "Township Street" and "Beacon Bear". In addition, Aoife Entertainment's derivative products mainly include animation stationery, animation graphics, animation toys and non-anime toys. Anime graphics-based figures and models have become a staple of Aoife Entertainment's product offerings in recent years. The products are designed to fill the void created by the audience after watching the film. These derivatives have become more than just collectibles and have largely become a vehicle for audiences to experience the film and share information (Jenkins, 2003). Its production of original animation images and intellectual property has become the number one category in the Chinese animation industry (Sun, 2012). As one of the most powerful and promising animation and entertainment culture industry group companies in China, Aoife Entertainment has gone through the following stages in the development of the animation and film derivatives it produces:

The Early Stages of Development of Aoife Animation Film Derivatives

Between 1993 and 2005, Aoife Entertainment worked on a long hybrid production chain of animation and toys, which included cultural creativity and derivatives manufacturing. From the content (anime images) to the exhibition of anime films and the distribution and dissemination of derivatives. In its early years of existence, Aoife Entertainment quickly established itself as a first mover competitor in the animation industry, and over a decade, its

animation spin-off brands and dissemination channels have become an unparalleled presence within the industry. However, despite further leaps and bounds in China's animation derivatives industry, the proportion of animation derivatives as a communication medium is still lagging behind compared to that of developed countries such as the US and Japan. Fung and Ho (2018) said that the immaturity of China's film derivatives industry is demonstrated by the fact that, as far as theatrical animated films themselves are concerned, the biggest problem with the dissemination of animation derivatives is the relatively poor level of films and the lack of IP precipitation. The gap between the distribution of anime derivatives in China and Japan lies in the fact that the Japanese anime industry can be attributed to the influence of public cultural policies and that the local Japanese culture provides a fulcrum for the originality of anime images. In other words, audience demand forms a positive correlation with the distribution of Japanese anime films and the dissemination of derivatives (He, 2014). The gap in Chinese anime film derivatives therefore lies in the way in which they are disseminated and promoted. In response to this situation, AoFei Entertainment purchased the rights to produce and distribute derivative toys of the popular Japanese anime Pokemon in 1998, which became the beginning of China's exposure to international derivatives, and AoFei Entertainment used animation toys as a breakthrough to build its own anime derivative empire.

Animation spin-offs are based on the characters from the film productions thus forming. These products are designed to recreate and create memorable characters and sequences from the original anime. They allow audiences to interact and participate in the life of the film. A positive interaction pattern can be formed between anime derivatives and anime films. In addition, anime derivatives enhance the promotion of anime works to a certain extent, not only to increase the influence of anime works, but also to broaden the communication field of the medium (Liu & Sun, 2020). The viewership of anime works and the recognition of anime characters are also key factors in the dissemination of anime derivatives. In other words, the audience's popularity of anime works is an important indicator of the spread of anime film derivatives, and whether users can empathise with anime characters in the process of watching anime films largely determines their attitude towards derivatives (Okamoto, 2015). AoFei Entertainment has become one of the fastest growing anime companies in China, taking its cue from the Japanese strategy of distributing anime derivatives and placing emphasis on the exploitation of intellectual property and culture. Until 2005, Aoife Entertainment was exclusively awarded the "China Famous Mark" (Xie, 2018).

The mid-term Stages of Development of AoFei Animation Film Derivatives

The period 2005-2016 was a significant phase in the development of AoFei Entertainment's spin-offs. AoFei Entertainment aims to create a platform based on IP-based entertainment and has always maintained content as its core strength. In other words, the distribution of derivatives wrapped in a cultural core is not only about content, but also includes a communication environment that reflects traditional Chinese culture (Burri, 2007). The medium encompasses digital media, social media as well as film and television. In addition, the quality and service of the product is another important factor in ensuring the sustainability of AoFei Entertainment. The feedback and expectations of the audience for the derivative products have always been an important criterion for AoFei Entertainment's derivative product distribution.

Chen & Zhigang (2015) mentioned that the imperfect development of China's animation industry is mainly reflected in the incompleteness of the industrial chain. In other words, the

communication influence of the derivatives of China's animation industry still lags behind that of developed countries such as the United States and Japan. In contrast to other traditional industries, AoFei Entertainment's derivative distribution model is not limited to a content-led model, but rather an interactive form of content to meet the needs of its audience. The United States has set a precedent for the production and distribution of derivatives based on Disney cartoon images, which have reaped critical acclaim in several countries (Pan et al., 2019). The gap with the United States in terms of content creation for animation film derivatives has led AoFei Entertainment to focus on the investment of resources and the development of innovative content. As a result, Aoife Entertainment has established a variety of distribution channels, such as the extent of media outreach, as a means of promoting anime film spin-offs. In 2009, AoFei Entertainment was listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange of China, marking the company's entry into the international arena by virtue of its advanced content production and distribution, and in 2013, AoFei Entertainment officially acquired the rights to the famous Chinese animation "Pleasant Sheep and Wolf". In 2016, AoFei Film, a subsidiary of AoFei Entertainment, obtained the official Film Distribution License (Xie, 2018).

The Current Stages of Development of AoFei Animation Film Derivatives

In recent years, the proportion of distribution of derivative products from Chinese animation films has increased year by year, with more and more audiences following the distribution of derivative products through cinemas, television and online media. However, the lack of media channel resources is one of the gaps that have to be taken seriously between Chinese film derivatives and developed countries such as the US and Japan at present (Fan & Feng, 2021). In other words, the animation + toy distribution model needs more channel resources to support it. AoFei Entertainment has realised the problems at this stage and has established a development layout with culture as the content and media as the carrier. The dissemination of anime film derivatives is no longer limited to traditional media, but is a comprehensive communication model that integrates film promotion, anime social media, online media and cultural entertainment (Zhou, 2018).

The increasing development of ICT technology has enabled AoFei Entertainment to establish a communication model with a mixed online and offline platform. The online platform, based on reliance on the internet and data, has changed the traditional mode of communication and offers audiences the possibility to seek information conveniently. In 2018, through its Jiajia Cartoon TV, AoFei Entertainment distributed several programmes on animation and film derivatives, reaching 216 million users. The offline platform relies on physical shops to provide face-to-face services. In 2019 alone, AoFei Entertainment as well established 10 live-action shops (Zhou et al., 2021). The hybrid communication model of the two platforms is gradually becoming an important option for audiences to learn about information and embrace Chinese culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this overview critically analyses the gap between Chinese animation film derivatives and those of developed countries at different stages through a historical review of AoFei animation film derivatives. In addition, this review critically analyses the factors that influence AoFei animation film derivatives on audience attitudes. The findings suggest that cultural innovation and technological enhancement are key strategies for users to increase their trust in derivatives at any stage. In the age of new media, anything can become an

overnight success, and established companies can be unwittingly replaced by various mistakes. How to attract a wider audience and meet the needs of different audience groups is the biggest challenge facing the communication of China's animation industry (Fung, 2016). This paper reviews the development of AoFei Entertainment's animated film derivatives and analyses the challenges encountered at different stages through comparisons with developed countries such as the United States and Japan, with the aim of providing a channel of communication for audience acceptance of traditional Chinese culture and "IP" based animated film derivatives. It also extends the application and impact on audience attitudes in the field of Aoife animation film derivatives, providing evidence for future researchers. In addition, this review selects Ao Fei Entertainment, a representative of the Chinese animation industry, to provide guidance on the spread of the Chinese animation industry through a review of its development and the growing audience base.

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