

Research on the IP Operation Model Relying on the Player Community—Take SEGA as an Example

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Abstract. Now, digitalization and entertainment industries are highly integrated. The value of IP is becoming increasingly prominent. With the rapid expansion of the global digital entertainment market, IP has become the core competitiveness of the game industry. As an important carrier of the IP ecosystem, the player community's spontaneous dissemination and secondary creation behaviors have significantly extended the life cycle of IP. Player community plays an important component of the game IP operation. This study takes SEGA (Japan) as the research object, and through collecting behavioral data from the player communities of project SEKAI, P5X, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Yakuza, reveals the important role of player communities in IP operations. Based on these data, the study proposes a 3C model. That means an IP co-construction operation model driven by official content, amplified by the community, and co-created by users. The Content-Community-Co-creation (3C) model proposed in this study not only provides a practical framework for game companies to optimize IP operation, but also reveals how user participatory culture promotes the evolution of IP from a single product to a multi-dimensional ecosystem, offering significant implications for the business model innovation of the cultural industry in the digital age.

Keywords: IP operation, Player communities, User Generated Content, Value

1. Introduction

Now, digitalization and the entertainment industries are highly integrated. More and more people choose video games as a form of entertainment [1]. The value of game IP is growing rapidly [2]. Players with common interests form a player community. Through interaction, sharing, and creation, players have a profound impact on the value of game IP.

Sega is a Japanese video game company. In 2001, it stopped producing home game hardware and transformed into a game software manufacturer. Sega's IP includes Sonic the Hedgehog, Yakuza, Persona, and Hatsune Miku.

Taking Sega as an example, this study explores the importance of player communities in IP operations and proposes an IP operation model that relies on player communities. This study aims to reveal how the different behaviors of officials and players in player communities develop IP influence and propose viable operational models. This exploration of these questions can provide reference and assistance for game companies in building and operating their player communities.

2. The impact of player communities on IP

Player communities are mainly groups that are formed spontaneously or guided because of common interests and emotional connections. This study will focus on the current status of player communities for most game IPs: communities that are formed spontaneously by players and rely on major social media platforms.

In a spontaneously formed player community, the main actors are the officials and the players. Officials guide, activate, and maintain the community ecosystem through continuous content production and interactive management. Players actively participate in the community through discussions, sharing, secondary creation, mutual Q&A, and spontaneously organized events, enriching and maintaining the game ecosystem. The actions of both parties impact the game's retention rate, social media presence and reputation, and its cross-media operational capabilities.

2.1. Official operating behavior

On the two major platforms, Tik Tok and Bilibili, the main content released by SEGA's official account is official information about stand-alone game IPs. Such as the preview of Sonic's new works, Yakuza's DLC. Meanwhile, SEGA's two flagship mobile games in China called Project SEKAI and P5X, have independent official accounts on both platforms. It mainly releases the update notice of the game, characters' PV and other official content. These official contents released in the player community can effectively stimulate community activity and player discussion, and provide new Raw materials for players to discuss. Moreover, Sega goes deep into the player community through interaction in the comment area, questionnaires and other forms, and surveys each updated risk assessment through indicators such as retention intention, consumption intention and user portrait, so as to better serve the target users and improve the retention rate.

According to statistics, project SEKAI and P5X have reached more than 100000 fans and more than one million likes in tiktok through the release of game information. However, accounts of other Sega IP addresses are rarely set up and have few followers. The official account of the Bilibili platform Sega has received 180000 fans and millions of likes with more than 1000 videos through the release of its game information. Project SEKAI account has 900000 fans and P5X account has 1400000 fans [3].

By comparing the data of Sega official accounts on the two platforms, we can find that the data of Sega on Bilibili is significantly better than that of tiktok. The research by Sanghyun Park and Sungjoo Lee indicates that brand-related UGC media can have their own distinguishing features in the information they provide and thus need to be carefully adopted for market research [4]. Therefore, the reason is that the adaptability of the community and IP is different. The adaptability of the community based on Bilibili and Sega is higher than that of TikTok.

As a diversified video platform based on ACG culture, Bilibili has a relatively high proportion of Generation Z users in its community, which matches Sega's corporate tone of traditional Japanese mainframe production and focuses on ACG culture. In addition, the content of game information often has a large amount of information, which needs to be supported by enough video duration. Bilibili, as a diversified video platform, meets the needs of long video. Therefore, people in the community are more willing to accept and pay attention to the game content [5].

As a short video platform, the content transmission of TikTok is more dependent on short video forms with strong rhythm, strong emotional drive and high entertainment. This mechanism is not friendly to Sega's game information content which focuses on the amount of information and fans. Not only that, community members tend to focus on "fast consumption" when brushing buffering.

Their acceptance of in-depth game content is low. That makes it difficult for the information content to obtain sufficient recommendation weight and dissemination effect on buffering.

Not only that, the user group of TikTok is more popular than Bilibili. Although Generation Z is one of the core users of TikTok, its interest and understanding of ACG culture and traditional Japanese host games are not as concentrated as that of Bilibili. This makes it difficult for Sega to accurately reach users in the player community on the tiktok. Sega needs to rely on users to generate content and cooperate with TikTok creators in the field of games to realize being known outside of fixed circle communication if Sega wants to better play the dissemination potential of TikTok.

2.2. User-generated content

There are many forms of user-generated content. In the player community, it mainly includes game mod, fan-fiction, Fan-art, Cosplay, music cover and dance videos. This study will introduce them through project SEKAI and Sonic series.

According to statistics, the popularity of pjsk (project SEKAI) tags in TikTok reached 2.17 billion. Bilibili did not directly disclose the total playback volume, it was estimated that the total playback volume was also about 2.1 billion. The large volume of user generated content in the player community far exceeded the heat brought by official information, and had a strong voice of social media.

Moreover, according to the existing user-generated content, user-generated content on different platforms is more adaptable to this platform. In TikTok, UGC content mostly includes character dance imitation, animation editing works, and cosplay. These are all with strong short video characteristics, forming a fragmented but wide coverage content chain. Bilibili players tend to produce long content with more information, such as in-depth commentary, character research, plot prediction, game guide, etc., with higher content professionalism, which has become an important guide path for new players to enter the pit.

The Sonic series has a long history and a large number of fans. Since the end of the 20th century, many fans have independently developed many Sonic games and animations using Flash, Mugen and other tools. Among the numerous user-generated content, it is worth mentioning that "Sonic Mania" is a work developed by Whitehead, a well-known mod producer, and officially released by Sega, reflecting the value of fan creativity and official IP cooperation.

Dina El Shihy and Sarah Awaad's research integrates insights from social media influence and consumer behavior, specifically within the Gen Z demographic. Finds that UGC positively influences purchase intentions [6]. The user-generated content not only greatly improves the exposure and discussion of IP, but also deepens users' understanding of the game's worldview, character setting and playing mechanism, and enhances users' stickiness and sense of belonging [7]. Especially on the content platform driven by community culture, the fan-made ecology generated by UGC is crucial to the vitality of IP. And then, the effect of UGC on players is consistent with Syahrulanuar Ngah and others' research of the positive relationship between the overall perceived value of online game players' virtual goods and user satisfaction on the repurchase intention of virtual goods, which will improve the consumption intention of players [8].

What is more noteworthy is that the continuous output of UGC has promoted the formation of high-frequency social interaction among players based on comments, barrage and forwarding, and built a bottom-up content promotion mechanism for IP, which can often capture the resonance points of players more accurately than the official, and achieve fission communication through the word of mouth of players affect players. This user-driven content ecology not only reduces the cost of publicity but also expands the boundary of IP influence. It allows its limited IP to penetrate into different cultural

contexts through multiple forms, breaking the barriers of circles and entering a wider audience's vision, and makes IP gradually turn into a spiritual symbol, with stronger recognition and continuous communication power..

2.3. 3C model (content-community-co-creation)

The study above demonstrates the important impact of the player community on IP operations by explaining the official operation behavior and the UGC of players. To make good use of the player community, we need to build a high-quality IP operation mode. Konstantinos Ouranos Tobias Hellbach Hansen put forward the value co-creation egg model in 2018 [9], through the joint efforts of consumers, enterprises and the market, and through the user-generated content as a link, to achieve the purpose of co-creating value. Based on it, this study focuses on the behavior patterns of the official and players in the player community, and proposes 3C model, an IP co-construction operation model driven by content, amplified by the community and created by users.

Content refers to content driven, which is the official operation behavior in the player community, including information release, topic guidance and content theme setting. The forms of content include, but are not limited to character PV, CG animation, plot preview, version update, set, official material package, etc. The official update in the player community ensures that the player community has original materials for discussion, imitation and adaptation, which is the start for promoting co-creation.

Community refers to the community amplification effect, which is the discussion behavior of players in the player community. The player community is the key area for content dissemination and player relationship maintenance, as well as the key area for influence amplification. In the community, the original content officially released is reinterpreted, reorganized and extended through player discussion, bullet screen interaction, forwarding and gossiping, thus stimulating multiple discussion cycles, so as to amplify the volume of communication, get through the emotional resonance of users and improve the retention rate.

Co-creation refers to the co-creation drive. It is the highest level of the model. It is the behavior of players' active secondary creation, expression and production on the basis of content and community, and has co-creation contact with the official [10]. The collaborative creation between the government and players can confirm the importance of the government for the player community, which is conducive to improving the IP goodwill and community activity. Moreover, when new IP works have not been released, co-creation will inject vitality into IP, which is the key to the continuation and regeneration of content ecology.

Content, community and co-creation are not nonlinear chains, but a dynamic circulation system:

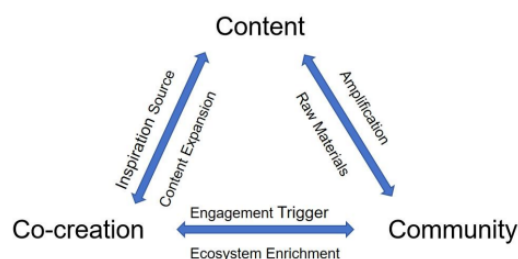


Figure 1. 3C model

As shown in Figure 1, content, community and co-creation inspire and feed each other. The original content information in the player community provides basic materials for creation and

interaction. After these contents enter the community, they are rapidly spread and enlarged by players' forwarding, comments, editing, imitation and other ways. With the improvement of community activity, users have gradually transformed from passive receivers to active creators, and a large number of co-creation behaviors have been generated through continuous participation. These co-creation achievements not only further enrich the expression level and cultural atmosphere of the community but also provide new content inspiration and participation opportunities for other players, forming a soil for re-dissemination and re-creation, so as to promote the active and cohesive development of the community to a higher level. At the same time, some high-quality co-creation content may also be officially adopted to feed back the original content system and expand the IP boundary.

This mechanism of community interaction triggered by content, co-creation inspired by community, and co-creation nurturing content and community is a system that is always in dynamic flow and circulation. Emphasizing co-construction better than one way output, and has the ability to stimulate and integrate the deep value of the player community.

3. Conclusion

This study takes Sega company as an example to explore the key role of player community in game IP operation. By analyzing the player community data of project SEKAI, P5X, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Yakuza, this study demonstrates the important role of official operation behavior and user generated content in promoting IP communication, enhancing user stickiness and building a community atmosphere. After that, this study further proposes a 3C model, describes the dynamic cycle interaction mechanism among content, community and co creation, and provides a reference model for IP operation practice.

In the background of highly social digital entertainment environment, the vitality of IP no longer depends only on the continuous output of the official, but also on the endogenous power of content re creation and community autonomy in the player community.

Future research can systematically track the impact of UGC content on the actual conversion effect of IP such as retention rate, payment conversion rate, brand recognition through quantitative methods, or expand the research object to different types of IP, such as non game IP POPMART and its target community, so as to enrich the theoretical system and practical path.

To sum up, the player community is an important asset of IP. Paying attention to the operation and incentive of the player community will become an indispensable strategic element for the long-term operation of game IP in the future.

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