

Social Media Content Marketing and Brand Value of Celebrity IP Derivatives: A Comparative Case Study of TF Entertainment and HYBE's Weverse Ecosystem

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Abstract. In recent years, digital entertainment and fan-driven consumption have gained rapid popularity worldwide. With the rapid development and widespread use of diverse social media platforms, celebrity IP derivatives have become a vital and fast-expanding segment of the fan-economy market; mainstream platforms such as TikTok and Xiaohongshu play a decisive role in shaping and sustaining the long-term brand value of celebrity-related products. This essay combines literature analysis with practical case review, exploring how social-media-based content marketing constructs fan engagement and deepens emotional connection between audiences and idols, so as to generate and enhance the brand value of celebrity IP derivatives. This paper adopts a comparative case analysis approach, selecting two representative idol-operation enterprises, TF Entertainment and HYBE with its Weverse ecosystem, to systematically compare their content output strategies, community-building modes, and commercial transformation paths. It further discusses prominent potential industry risks, including excessive commercialization, fan emotional burnout caused by repetitive content and high-intensity fan labor, as well as product quality mismatches. The conclusion offers targeted suggestions for sustainable celebrity IP management and practical references for marketing contemporary cultural and fan-oriented products.

Keywords: Celebrity IP, Social media, Content marketing, IP derivatives

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

Social media platforms have seriously changed the way entertainment companies operate star-related businesses. In the past, most stars relied on film and television works, songs, and offline activities to connect with the audience. Now, many stars can interact with fans around the world on Xiaohongshu, TikTok, Weibo, and other platforms. This high-frequency online interaction has created a close fan base, and celebrity peripheral derivatives have gradually become an important source of income for brokerage companies.

Brokerage companies will often publish daily trends of stars, behind-the-scenes tidbits, and content specially produced for fans online, so as to deepen the emotional bond between fans and idols and provide emotional value for fans. Under such an industry background, what we need to think about is how brokerages should transform the emotional loyalty of fans into the long-term brand value of star-related products, not just a surge in short-term product profits.

1.2. Research significance

This article refers to past research on celebrity endorsement, online content marketing, and fan behavior direction, and tries to explain how social media content will affect the brand value of celebrity IP derivative products.

Theoretically, this research can enrich the brand-related research results in the background of the fan economy and extend the marketing theory to the subdivision of celebrity peripheral goods.

At the practical level, the conclusions of the research can provide entertainment brokerage companies with real cases for reference. Formulate a stable social media content operation plan so that the value of IP derivatives can grow for a long time.

1.3. Research content and research method

On the basis of sorting out relevant theories and research results, this article builds an analytical framework for the influence of star IP content marketing on brand value and conducts comparative analysis through cases.

Research method:

- (1) Literature research: summarize the existing theories and research conclusions.
- (2) Case analysis: Choose Weverse and other fan interaction platforms as examples to analyze the impact of different content operation strategies on the brand value of IP derivatives.

2. Literature review and theoretical basis

2.1. Star IP and IP derivatives

Star IP is a set of industries created around the external image, business strengths, personality traits, and personal life of the star himself as the main body.

Unlike fictional IPs such as novels and animations, star IP has its own strong personality attributes. Its commercial value largely depends on the exposure of stars in front of the public, public favorability, and the real emotional bond between fans and stars.

And star IP derivatives are all kinds of goods developed by celebrities as a series. They include physical albums, support props, and such peripherals. At the same time, experiential consumption such as offline meetings and concerts also belongs to the category of derivatives. Entering the era of social media, derivatives have long been not only a subsidiary of stars. It has slowly become an important carrier for fans and idols to communicate emotions, and it is also an important way for the industry to achieve commercial realization.

2.2. Social media content marketing

Content marketing refers to the marketing method for creators to output content with practical value to attract the target audience and finally complete the audience conversion [1]. In the current environment, content marketing attaches more importance to two-way interaction and instant

information updates. Enterprises are no longer just one-way indoctrination advertisements, but produce interesting and emotional content to stimulate potential users to participate and forward relevant product content.

Therefore, social media content marketing plays a particularly crucial role in the actual operation of celebrity IP. With the help of Weibo, TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Weverse, and other platforms, stars and brokerage teams share daily clips and behind-the-scenes tidbits, carry out live interaction, and release exclusive graphic videos. The essence of these behaviors is content marketing with people as the core. The continuously output content not only maintains the public exposure of the stars, but also provides fans with emotional support and topics for chat and discussion, realizing the interaction between fans and artists, thus accumulating the trust of fans and laying the foundation for the subsequent sale of peripheral products.

2.3. Fan economy and consumer participation

In the past, in the traditional fan economy, fan consumption was mostly concentrated on core products such as albums and concert tickets. However, after the popularization of social media, the boundaries of the fan economy have been continuously broadened, and the purchase of derivatives, paid digital content, and members who open exclusive applications have become very common forms of consumption. Nowadays, the construction of virtual brand communities generally improves the participation enthusiasm of fan groups through the process of information interaction of topics, fan identity expression, and community cultural norms [2].

Consumer participation is a key concept to understand the fan economy. In the research on social media brand communities, consumer participation is the process of cognitive input, emotional input, and practical action input in the process of interaction between users and other members of the brand and community [3]. There is a wide range of star-chasing scenes, for example, browsing, liking, and commenting on pictures and texts or videos related to peripherals; editing or creating direct shooting of concerts; spending money on limited peripherals. Fan participation not only represents the loyalty of fans, but also an important driving force for the brand to achieve value co-creation.

2.4. Brand value

Brand value can be used to measure the status and actual influence of the brand in the hearts of consumers. This is based on the brand asset theory (CBBE) from the consumer's perspective that brand value comes from multiple dimensions such as consumers' perception of the brand, association, judgment of quality, and brand loyalty [4, 5].

For star IP derivatives, its brand value generation logic is relatively special. The practical function of the derivative itself is not the main source of value. It relies more on the meaning of star IP and the subjective emotional identity of the fan group. Whether a star's peripheral can be recognized depends to a large extent on how much fans like this star and whether they agree with the emotional meaning of the product. Therefore, the process of establishing the brand value of star IP derivatives is actually to gradually transform the feelings of fans for idols into the cognition and trust of derivatives. Therefore, the attractiveness, professionalism, and credibility of star IP itself will not directly form brand assets, but indirectly affect brand credibility as an intermediary variable [6].

3. The impact mechanism of social media content marketing on the brand value of star IP

3.1. Content production and IP image shaping

Whether the star IP can have a high brand value depends on whether it can attract the audience first. On social platforms, the stars themselves and the brokerage team continue to output all kinds of content, consciously polishing and strengthening the personality and characteristics of the stars. Common content is roughly divided into four categories:

Daily content: share life, bring the psychological distance between stars and fans closer, and make fans feel friendly and familiar.

Professional content: show business ability, consolidate the public's impression of his professional strength, and create such people through marketing.

Planning content: combine node planning related content with special meaning to create the popularity of online topics.

Interactive content: promote the distance between artists and fans through close interaction with fans.

After long-term content output, the personal characteristics of stars will form a fixed image in the minds of fans. Relevant theories suggest that if consumers repeatedly bind and accept a certain character to a specific product, a strong memory connection will be formed between the two [7]. That is to say, social media content marketing with excellent quality can transfer the image advantages accumulated by star IP to the brand of derivatives.

3.2. Social media communication and audience reach

However, after the content is made, it still needs to rely on publicity to give full play to its practical value. Social media provides celebrity IP with a wide range of channels that can accurately reach different groups of people, which is mainly reflected in these points:

First of all, social media breaks down the communication barriers of traditional media. Celebrities no longer need to rely on traditional channels such as TV stations and paper magazines. They can directly push content to a large number of fans by relying on personal accounts and removing intermediaries for direct dissemination.

Secondly, the platform algorithm amplifies the content dissemination effect. Fans' likes, comments, and retweets bring interactive data, and high-quality content will be pushed to more non-fan users by algorithms, which will have the opportunity to break the circle outside the circle, so that more people will be impressed by the stars themselves and their related products.

Finally, multi-platform differentiated operation covers audiences with different preferences. Targeted promotion through users with different preferences and natures. Star IP releases different content according to the characteristics of the platform, which can reach more potential consumers.

3.3. Fan interaction and emotional connection

Content marketing is not only to complete information output, but more importantly, it is to mobilize users to participate in interaction and slowly build emotional connections. Social media platforms mainly deepen the emotional bond between fans and star IP through multiple channels, and enhance the stickiness of fans.

The first is the Parasocial Interaction mechanism. Fans browsing all kinds of dynamics released by celebrities on social accounts for a long time will produce a psychological feeling as if they are

communicating with idols face to face, thus generating a one-way but very strong emotional attachment [8]. When this kind of virtual interactive experience accumulates to a certain extent, fans will project their good impression and trust in the idol himself onto all kinds of derivatives bound with the star.

The second is the formation of a sense of belonging to the community. A large number of fans rely on the online platform to gather around the same star and slowly form an exclusive circle. Unique communication skills will slowly form within the circle, as well as collective behaviors in which everyone participates, such as supporting the list and showing off the surrounding area [9]. Frequent fan circle exchanges will constantly strengthen the identity of individual fans for IP, and this sense of belonging from the collective will further motivate fans to spend money on derivative products.

Finally, it is the cycle brought about by the satisfaction of demand. Relevant research mentioned that if the online brand community can meet the demands of users to obtain information, leisure entertainment, social interaction, and certain material incentives, then the quality of the relationship between users and brands will be significantly improved, which will drive the desire to buy, the willingness of the community to retain, and the active sharing of word of mouth. Behavior [10]. In the same way, the content of all kinds of star IP derivatives produced by social media is precisely the main way to meet the multiple needs of fans.

3.4. From fan participation to consumer and business value transformation

After fans generate emotional support and engage in community interaction, these psychological feelings must eventually be implemented into real consumption behaviors in order to realize the corresponding commercial value. There are four different channels in this transformation process.

The first one is to buy directly. In the process of fans browsing the content of the social platform, the page comes with a product jump link and a mall entrance. When you see the derivatives you are interested in, you can directly complete the order, and the content browsing and consumption behavior are seamlessly connected.

The second is the spread of word of mouth. Fans who have purchased the product will share the unboxing, usage experience, or return pictures within the circle or externally. Relying on this online word-of-mouth communication, it can subtly influence the consumption choices of other potential enthusiasts.

The third is the sense of identity. Many fans buy and display peripheral products, which is also a kind of self-expression in essence. By using derivatives to show their fan identity and personal preferences, this mentality of wanting to show identity will promote repurchase and collection behavior.

The fourth type is to participate in the creation together. Some companies will test the preferences of fans by developing various styles of peripherals, and then decide how to plan later peripherals according to everyone's preferences. At this time, they are no longer just ordinary buyers, but also participate in value creation, and their loyalty and willingness to consume IP derivative products will be further improved.

Based on the above analysis, social media content marketing affects the brand value of star IP derivatives, which can be summarized into a complete set of logical steps: first, polish and shape the image of IP characters through the output platform content, then build fan interaction and emotional bonds with the help of extensive dissemination of social channels, and finally complete the consumption transformation. Now the brand value has been improved. Content marketing is not only the beginning of the whole process, but also a core element that runs through all links.

4. Case analysis of the company

4.1. The star IP marketing model of the peak of the times

Times Peak is currently one of the most representative idol development entertainment companies in mainland China. With the "trainee system" as the core of its operation, the company has successfully launched well-known idol groups such as TFBOYS. Its star IP marketing model is characterized by the local fan market, and each operational dimension revolves around the main line of "cultivation".

The core strategy of the times is "accompanying growth". The company continues to produce trainees' daily training, rehearsal clips, and life content, so that fans can witness the whole process of idols from the trainee stage to debut to gradual maturity. This content logic positions fans as "witnesses" and "supporters" of idol growth, rather than mere consumers, thus establishing a deep emotional bond between fans and stars that goes beyond the general worship relationship. These contents focus on bringing the psychological distance between idols and fans closer, and are highly suitable for the aesthetic preferences and language habits of young Chinese audiences.

Times Peak highly relies on Weibo as the core communication platform. The company sets up an official account for each artist group, regularly publishes pictures, texts, and videos, and facilitates the gathering of fan communities with the help of the Weibo super talk function. At the same time, the company also actively expands TikTok, Bilibili, Xiaohongshu, and other platforms to achieve differentiated content distribution and audience reach.

Times Peak has built an organizational structure with the official support association as the core. The company maintains normal communication with the fan group through the support association, and regularly releases welfare content to maintain the activity and loyalty of fans. At the same time, fans win more exposure resources for idols by buying self-made peripherals from the support club. This kind of fan labor has formed a highly organized and clearly divided operational system. It is worth noting that the fan group at the peak of the times is mainly "sister fans" and "mother fans", and such fans have a high degree of emotional investment. They regard the growth of artists as their own responsibility, so they show high continuity and mobilization ability in terms of data support and consumption expenditure. The company is also good at using this psychological feature to stimulate fans' competitive awareness and enthusiasm for participation by publishing list rankings and sales data.

The product system of Times Peak is mainly based on traditional peripherals, including music albums, photo albums, official support materials, and anniversary gift boxes. The sales channel is mainly based on official independent application software. At the same time, limited peripherals and paid live broadcasts are set up in offline activities such as concerts and fan meetings. In terms of strategy, the company focuses on the "commemorability" and "collectability" of products, and derivatives are often bound to specific time nodes (such as debut anniversaries and members' birthdays) to create a sense of scarcity and consumption urgency. However, compared with HYBE's diversified layout in terms of derivatives and forms, the product types of the times are relatively traditional, and there is still a lot of room for expansion in the development of digital products, experiential consumption, and cross-border co-branding.

The participation behavior of fans on social media can be roughly divided into multiple levels, such as daily interaction, data labor, secondary creation, support organization, and purchase and consumption. Among them, "data labor" is particularly prominent - fan groups will carry out organized behaviors such as "brushing topics" and "control comments" to improve the commercial value and industry status of idols by creating hot social media data. Although this participation model effectively supports the market performance of IP in the short term, it also implies problems

such as excessive labor and excessive consumption pressure on fans, which may have a negative impact on the willingness of fans to continue to participate in the long run.

4.2. HYBE's Weverse platform IP marketing ecology

HYBE Corporation, formerly known as Big Hit Entertainment, is one of the most influential entertainment companies in South Korea and even the world. Represented by the global success of BTS, the company has established a comprehensive entertainment ecology integrating music production, artist agency, platform technology, and derivative product development. Unlike Times Peak, which partially relies on third-party social platforms, HYBE launched its own fan interaction platform, Weverse, in 2019. This platform strategy makes HYBE's IP marketing model show distinctive ecological and global characteristics.

HYBE has a diversified combination of artists to attract fans with different preferences by forming different styles of boy groups and girl groups. The common characteristics of HYBE's artist IP are high-quality musical works, distinctive group worldview, and strong members' personal identity. Each group has an independent narrative system and style. This differentiated IP strategy enables different groups to attract fans with different preferences, spread risks, and effectively reduce internal competition between groups under the same company.

Weverse provides fans with content forms, including graphics and video content released by artists at any time, exclusive behind-the-scenes content open only to members, real-time live interactive functions, and member-exclusive content such as birthday specials and handwritten letters. The common characteristics of this content are "exclusiveness" and "immediacy" - the content obtained by fans on the platform cannot be obtained on other platforms. This scarcity effectively improves the willingness of fans to pay and the stickiness of the platform. Weverse represents a fan-exclusive platform to give rise to the platform fan model. HYBE uses platform technology to manage the fan community and transform the emotional connection of fans into commercial income [11].

Weverse reshapes the quasi-social interaction model on traditional social media, making the interaction more bidirectional. Artists post updates on the platform as personal accounts, regularly read and reply to fans' messages, and have real-time conversations with fans through live broadcasts. This interaction mode greatly enhances the emotional connection between fans and artists, and transforms the relationship between fans and idols from one-way worship to two-way emotional communication, thus significantly deepening the loyalty of fans. In other words, what Weverse creates is not only a scene of content consumption, but also a continuous and close-up emotional relationship maintenance mechanism.

Overall, there is a significant difference between the star IP marketing model of Times Peak and HYBE. Times Peak cultivates the local market and maintains fan relations with an emotional "cultivating narrative". Its advantages lie in the high emotional loyalty of fans and strong community mobilization ability, but it is limited by the dependence on third-party platforms and the traditional product form; HYBE takes its own platform, Weverse, as the core and builds a global The advantage of the IP operation ecology of digitalization and closed-loop is cross-market large-scale operation and data-driven accurate management. The two models have their own characteristics, but they both point to a core proposition: social media content marketing is the key driving force for the brand value construction of star IP derivatives, and the efficient integration of content, community, and business determines the growth potential and sustainability of brand value.

4.3. Comparative analysis

From the two perspectives of content marketing and fan participation, Times Peak focuses on the operational idea of "accompanying growth". Content distribution and fan information gathering mainly rely on external third-party platforms such as Weibo. The company released daily training clips of trainees and various stage materials to slowly cultivate fans' emotional support for artists. Most of the activities of the fan group are led by organizations such as the support association, which will produce high-intensity data support behavior. In this mode, fans have a strong ability to execute, but long-term task-based support can also easily cause psychological and emotional consumption for fans. On the other hand, HYBE builds its own complete content environment. The platform released exclusive behind-the-scenes clips, real-time live broadcasts of artists, and other customized content, which changed the state of fans who used to simply do data labor, so that fans and artists could form two-way emotional communication, effectively improve user retention, and enhance fan stickiness.

Let's look at the platform ecology and IP derivatives. Although Times Peak has also launched its own official APP for commodity sales, there is a problem with the overall ecology: fans' social communication is still in third-party social software, and its own APP only undertakes the function of selling goods online. Most of the derivatives are traditional physical peripherals and physical albums. Merchants stimulate everyone's desire to collect with the help of limited sales and special versions of anniversaries, but the development of digital derivative products is still relatively limited.

Weverse is different. The platform has opened up a whole closed-loop system. Social communication, consumption, and purchase are all concentrated in the same software, and various derivative products such as physical peripherals, digital cards, and member-exclusive benefits are integrated. It not only develops a variety of digital derivative products, but also completes product distribution for users in different regions of the world.

5. Existing problems and optimization suggestions

First of all, the content is seriously homogenized, and the operation relies too much on the core fan group. In order to maintain short-term popularity on the Internet, brokerage companies and platforms constantly consume the emotional energy of core fans. In the long run, loyal fans need to bear heavy money and time costs and repeatedly receive routine material content, which is easy to cause aesthetic fatigue and physical and mental fatigue.

Secondly, there is a phenomenon of rushing to make quick profits in commercial development, and the quality of derivative products cannot keep up with the pace of development. Many official peripherals are priced at a high price, but the design is perfunctory and lacks new ideas, which slowly wears out the fans' willingness to collect and buy. In addition, domestic entertainment enterprises will also face obstacles to cross-cultural communication when entering overseas markets. At the same time, the active interaction of the fan community cannot always be smoothly transformed into actual business income. There is a gap between the popularity of interaction and consumption conversion, which makes it difficult to support the long-term stable development of the brand.

In response to the above-mentioned industry pain points, the marketing team should polish the quality of content, break out of the uniform material routine, and produce more diverse original content. At the same time, establish healthier community interaction rules, reduce meaningless data

tasks, and relieve unnecessary consumption and mental pressure on fans. The operator should focus on the long-term emotional connection between the idol and the audience.

At the level of derivative development, it cannot be limited to the physical periphery, but can also expand digital collections and online experience products to enrich the product matrix. Enterprises also need to improve their cross-cultural communication capabilities, break geographical restrictions with the help of digital platforms, explore overseas audience markets, and help IP achieve international development.

6. Conclusion

The peak of the times follows the narrative route of "idols accompany growth", builds fan emotional ties based on the local environment, and the revenue mainly depends on physical products. However, the whole operational system is dispersed, and social communication and commodity transactions are scattered across different third-party software, which does not form a closed loop. HYBE's Weverse has created a complete digital ecology that integrates content, fan community, and e-commerce. Relying on virtual derivative products and a global layout, it has obtained considerable returns. However, the underlying logic of the two models has something in common, and both of them take the emotional recognition of fans as the foundation of development. Whether it is domestic companion star chasing or diverse online interaction on overseas platforms, the essence is to build a quasi-social relationship, and then transform the attention of fans into actual purchasing power. That is to say, content marketing based on social media can deepen fans' sense of identity and emotional attachment, and then improve the brand value of star IP derivatives.

Overall, in the context of digital transformation, the entertainment industry cannot continue to follow the old marketing ideas. Only by breaking through the barriers between different platforms and building a global ecology that balances the efficiency of emotional maintenance and digital operation can the brand value of star IP derivatives be maintained and amplified for a long time.

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