Distinctions Between Chinese and Japanese Anime Industry Developments and Development Strategies for the Chinese Anime Industry

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Abstract

Anime, which is the fusion of animation and comics, originates from the strong relationship between animated visuals and narrative-driven comics. In Chinese, there is a word based on transliteration from the English word "cartoon" that refers to the combination of animation and comics. It is sometimes specifically used to refer to American cartoons. Compared to the current situation in the Japanese anime industry, the Chinese anime industry is falling behind in terms of development. Although somewhat left behind, the anime industry is growing steadily. This article will analyze current developments in the Chinese anime industry and compare them with the developments in the Japanese anime industry to identify areas where progress lags and to better anticipate future advancements.

Keywords

Chinese anime, Japanese anime, Anime industry, Strategic developments for anime

1. Introduction

In the 1920s, China had created the first independent animated movie. During then, countless animations based on Chinese culture were filmed with quality no worse than those of other countries and became one of the main forces of animation creation across the world. However, it did not last; In the 90s, these dedicated animations that were heavily time-consuming did not fit into the new business model, with the addition of foreign animation companies swarming into China causing the loss of local creators, this eventually led to the fall of Chinese animation during then. On the other hand, Japanese animation is credited as one of the leading forces in this industry. As early as 1917, some Japanese were inspired by American cartoons, which led some Japanese to create their own animations, which also led to the rise of many famous caricaturists in Japan. During this period, the comic industry in Japan experienced steady growth and had a burst of growth during 1963, when the business aspects of comics were abandoned in exchange for a focus on pure artistic drawings, and it leveled up the whole ideology for the industry. It was also during this period that Japanese animation with new styles was created, and this turned the tide for fashion in the animation industry, this allowed a large amount of production while expanding the range and number of audiences. Therefore, China needs to recognize its deficiencies in anime industry development, optimize development, and complete its industrial chain in order for the Chinese anime industry to reach new heights.

2. Current situation of Chinese anime industry development

2.1 Overall analysis of the current situation

The anime industry in China is listed as a new industry that has the most potential to grow and has gained funding from
the government. There is no doubt that it is great news for the industry, as more funds can attract more creators to develop and create together (Sheng Lei, 2017).

The growth in technology and methods of message transferring enables the growth of the industry not only in the speed of creating an anime but also at the depth of the industry. The industry is very attractive to younger people, and good publicity may attract more potential creators, meaning that developments in this area in the future would be stable. New companies that focus on anime have smaller studios that divide the work and specialize in different parts of anime creation, which would increase both the quantity and the quality of newly produced anime, improving the quality of anime. Compared to what it was before, the anime industry right now has a bright future with different supports (Meng C, 2022).

2.1 Problems exist under current situations

Although the anime industry is in good condition right now, it does not mean that there is nothing wrong with the industry. These are some reasons why the industry is still growing relatively slowly (Yanli G, 2020).

2.1.2 Incomplete industrial chain

The anime industry has an incomplete industrial chain. Compared to other industries that may have their raw materials, the anime industry does not have regular raw materials, and instead, they are developed directly by different groups of creators. Different ideas may lead to misunderstanding, and all these ideas understood in different ways are passed down to other teams responsible for parts like drawing and developing teams. These misunderstandings can often cause an anime project to go through a lot of different teams but end up with little or no development progress; it may even lead to the cancellation of the project due to no work done from previous teams, a clash in ideas, and an overload of work. Therefore, it is generally the reason why Chinese anime projects end up dead midway in production. Also, another problem is the low quantity of good creators, scarcity of technological developers, and almost no creators who excel in anime creation and market operation (Jie L, 2021).

2.1.3 Existence of shoddy pieces of work

Some anime is low quality. One classic example of shoddy work in China is the 3D animation called (or the three body problem), with huge amounts of propaganda before release, claiming to invest heavily in production, and setting the standards and expectations sky-high for audiences. However, after the actual work was released, the responses from audiences flooded with dislikes. The ridiculous storyline combined with low-quality models resulted in the total failure of the animation. Most animations feed their target audiences, which are usually teenagers and children, only production animations that grab the audience’s attention but are not really interesting. These animations would not result in the development of the anime industry, because they do not need advanced technology nor a carefully planned script, rather just an eye-grabbing storyline to attract lots of audiences for profit which also leads to another question: Where is the so-called money that was ‘heavily invested’ in this animation? It also shows the problem that the government’s subsidies may not actually land where they are needed, resulting in shoddy work, neither satisfying audiences nor contributing to the development of the anime industry.

2.2 Possible solutions to problems mentioned above

These problems come with potential solutions. For example, for the issue with an incomplete industrial chain, one possible solution is to further divide and specify work for different teams to better arrange when to transfer work to another group, and which group they are transferring it to. A clear and complete industrial chain prevents many projects from being canceled during production, and it accelerates the development of the whole project. At the same time, different ideas are accepted and combined within groups and with other groups, so that the actual idea is passed down correctly and precisely. Also, having stricter reviews and supervision, combined with new technology, creators, and subsidies, it is not hard to produce an excellent anime with a core idea. Monitoring the flow of funds from the government and making sure all the funds are actually used on anime production, largely prevents products with low quality. A stricter check on anime products also stops low-quality anime from being displayed, therefore encouraging creators to make higher-quality products. There are actually lots of independent drawers and character designers in China, and with the help of appropriate funds or high wages for these jobs, it is completely possible to design interesting and meaningful original characters that combine Chinese elements, and it would avoid the problem of having no development due to copying from others. If the artistic core of anime expands, the target audiences for anime like this would level up to an audience of a higher age, increasing the total audience. Implementing these proposals would naturally advance the
development of Chinese anime production and make it more complete (Zheng L, 2014).

3. Current situation of Japanese anime industry development and its core competitiveness

3.1 Overall analysis of the current situation

Compared to the anime industry in China, the Japanese anime industry is already pretty complete. There are countless new drawers, and different developed companies equipped with new technologies, and employees could create new original anime or produce an anime from a popular comic with ease. With the support of the government, little limitations on creators, and influences from past cultures allowed some Japanese to have a deep cultural heritage, and this made the creation of new anime easy. Creators who focus on anime development are allowed to keep creating new meaningful pieces of work, and there are many creators who could work on anime development. Good foundations of anime which originated during the Second World War provided countless valuable information for the current anime industry. A strict quality control over anime production and the ability to instantly correct and change contents when discovering problems prevents lots of meaningless anime from being displayed, and when problems occur after they are displayed, they fix the issue by correcting the anime, and therefore really achieves a strict control of quality in the anime industry (Morisawa T, 2015).

3.2 Core competitiveness

Japanese anime industry development out-levels the Chinese industry for several reasons. The first reason is the amount of time that Japan has used for developing anime has far exceeded the time that China used. When the Japanese anime industry started developing, there was nearly no development in the Chinese anime sector which resulted that while Chinese animation and comics were just starting to develop, Japanese anime already had a good foundation accompanied by lots of experience and technology. From past knowledge, Japan’s anime industry is booming. However, the Chinese anime industry, without these experiences and the technology needed, is making developments starting from point zero. The second reason is the difference in government management. Although the Chinese government is now imposing more policies, funding, and management on the anime industry, in the past they did not see this as a potentially profitable industry which meant that there were rarely any policies, subsidies, or regulations on the industry. Meanwhile, the Japanese government has been paying a lot of attention to the development of the anime industry, supporting it using funding and lots of policies helping creators. The loose regulations that China previously used caused many creators who wanted to generate actual good content not to receive the help that they needed, and it also resulted in people who simply wanted to profit from anime claiming that they were producing anime but rather making off-standard products not meeting the requirements to earn profit. Another key reason is how the Japanese have the mindset to surpass. Compared to Chinese and its stagnant thoughts of the industry, Japan has already realized that only surpassing Disney provides a chance for Japanese animation to live (Hyeong D K, 2015).

4. Analysis of the development in Chinese and Japanese anime from the industrial level

4.1 Similarities on the industrial level

There are plenty of similarities between the Chinese and Japanese anime industry development. One of these similarities is about the technological developments in this industry. As time passed by, newer technologies were used in this industry. New rendering techniques and modeling made creating animations much easier and lowered the entry threshold. This also led to many new creators joining the field of anime creation, stabilizing the production of anime. Therefore, in the amount and frequency produced, the two countries have a relatively similar rate of production. Also, audiences of both countries have similar needs, like how they appreciate specific drawing styles and voice acting, and also with different types of storylines which mean that audiences from both countries share a similar liking towards voice actors, drawers, and screenwriters. At the same time, audiences may show a liking towards a specific voice actor and drawing style. One example is the Japanese voice actress Ogura Yui, with representative works like the ending song for Unbreakable Machine-doll, known as, and voicing for characters like Hikawa Kyoka in the game Princess Connect Re: Dive, Manhattan Café in the game Umanasume: Pretty Derby, Hanasato Minori in the game Project Sekai Colorful Stage! Feat. Hatsune Miku and many others are all deeply appreciated by audiences and players. On top of this, the styles of drawing also evolve and change as time passes to fit the interests of new audiences. These examples also show similarities between the needs of voice actors and scriptwriters for both countries. The targeted audience for both
countries is also similar, with ages between 13-30 which means that the content and concepts being passed on should be very similar, again strengthening the need for script writers (Alvaro David Hernández Hernández, 2018).

4.2 Differences on the industrial level
Since they have similarities, they also have differences. One difference is the core idea that scripts carry and that two countries present different concepts and ideas. Japanese anime focuses more on friendship and character bonds, while Chinese anime carries fewer ideas and spirits, and instead focuses more on getting upmarket for profits which results in Chinese anime’s quality and reputation being lower than Japanese anime. Even though the quantity of Chinese anime produced may exceed Japan, Japanese anime still has a higher quality.

5. Chinese anime industry development strategies

5.1 Chinese policies aiding the anime industry
To support the anime industry, China has also introduced many new policies supporting anime development. One of the new policies is economic support, using means like special funds to encourage innovation and development for companies. With the same logic, it is no surprise that there are policies like tax reduction to help companies reduce their costs. In order to raise new creators in the anime sector, the Chinese government has also set up educational facilities about anime and provided scholarships in order to attract more young people into this industry. In order to encourage spending, governments have also added new creative schemes and set them as bases for new development, developing other sectors on the anime industry. Meanwhile, technologies in anime production should be developed as well; reaching a critical breakthrough is the answer to producing higher-quality anime faster. On top of this, the industry should not focus on anime itself, but also on platforms that transmit them, to make sure that there is a stable product. Meanwhile, technologies in anime production should be developed as well; reaching a critical breakthrough is the answer to producing higher-quality anime faster. On top of this, the industry should not focus on anime itself, but also on platforms that transmit them. By developing these platforms and making them more delicate and attractive, there will be simultaneous success in the anime industry.

5.2 Directions for industrial development
As for China, there is no doubt that the future of anime is brightened. In order to keep this development as it is, there should be a clear direction of development, and this should be accompanied by its corresponding corrections. One measure of Chinese anime development is to use derivatives of past products and set them as bases for new development, like targeting specific profitable merchandise and publicizing them, to make sure that there is an audience willing to consume new products. Also, the Chinese anime industry should start with a creative idea and expand on it to get a stable product. Meanwhile, technologies in anime production should be developed as well; reaching a critical breakthrough is the answer to producing higher-quality anime faster. On top of this, the industry should not focus on anime itself, but also on platforms that transmit them. By developing these platforms and making them more delicate and attractive, there will be simultaneous success in the anime industry.

5.3 Directions for firm development
In order to strengthen the entire anime market and prepare for future developments, Chinese anime companies should also have a specific direction of development. One plausible direction is diversification, developing other sectors on the base of anime. These may include novels and games to become more profitable and influential. Companies should also seek international developments, study, and collaborate with other foreign countries to increase cultural exports and international communication. On the level of creativity, companies can consider not to be innovative on only just the themes and topics, but also on forms of presentation. Examples of these innovations are the use of virtual and augmented reality to make audiences feel an immersive experience. More goods, activities, and services surrounding the anime could also add to interactions between audiences, gain more profits, and use these profits to create better pieces of work (Shuo Z et al., 2021).
6. Conclusion

China has a long history of producing animations, which could serve as valuable resources for Chinese anime to compete with foreign anime. However, attempting to reinvigorate the Chinese anime market with predominantly Chinese anime still requires cooperation from various stakeholders, including the government, companies, and the audience. The article compares the development of the Chinese anime industry with other countries that excel in anime production. It also identifies the main advantages of the Chinese anime industry and analyzes its current state. Problems to discuss include possible solutions for development. The development of the Chinese anime industry is lagging behind Japan’s for several main reasons, such as an incomplete industrial chain, copyright issues, low-quality and unoriginal works, a predominantly young audience, and other factors. Meanwhile, the market scale of anime in China is smaller than in Japan, suggesting that the Chinese market is still waiting to expand. As for future expansions, the Chinese market should internationalize and increase its cultural output. Regulations and funding should be stricter to ensure the creation of higher-quality products, thereby securing a brighter future for the anime industry. What Chinese anime needs is a cultural core. When an anime can convey cultural impressions, it is considered valuable.

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