

Exploring the Media Management Strategy in the Production and Dissemination of “Bocchi the Rock!”

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Abstract:

This article focuses on the animation “Bocchi the Rock!” co-produced by Fangwen Publishing House and CloverWorks (CLW) to analyze its core strategies in media management. By analyzing the content incubation model of Fangwen Society and the refined production system of CLW, and combining the peripheral industry development logic of music-driven IPs, this paper deeply explores the core strategies for niche cultural products to break through the barriers of different circles. The research findings show that the work takes high-quality original music as its competitive core and builds a composite operation model through live performances by voice actor bands, immersive visual expression, and scenario-based derivative development (such as live house collaborations). At the same time, the SWOT model is used to reveal its shortcomings, such as insufficient depth of derivation and a single business form. In the expansion opportunities of the global pan-secondary dimension market, it still needs to deal with the challenges of homogeneous competition and cultural barriers. It also offers suggestions for optimizing the dissemination paths and strategic layouts of anime works, providing innovative references for the management and operation of 2D cultural products.

Keywords: CloverWorks; Media operation; Animation industry.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

With the rapid development of Japan’s anime industry, “Bocchi the Rock!” has garnered a massive international fan base. Since 2017, it has been se-

rialized in Kadokawa Shobo and quickly won the hearts of its audience [1]. Specifically, “Bocchi the Rock!” revolves around the activities of a band club, incorporating a wealth of elements from campus life. Notably, the animation features Bocchi’s occasional whimsical ideas, which are both intriguing and relatable to everyday life. As a result, the entire series is

vivid and engaging, earning high praise from the public. “Bocchi the Rock!” has received high ratings of 9.9 and 9.3 on Bilibili and a certain Douban, respectively [2]. It has also been highly praised in ACG-related communities, even surpassing other classic works with long histories and large fan bases in the HuPu rating system. “Bocchi the Rock!” was ranked 78th in the 2022 Japanese Popular Language Awards and won the title of ‘Anime of the Year’ in Japan, along with awards for Best Animation Adaptation, Best Animation Score, Best Voice Actor Performance, Best Comedy Animation, and Best Daily Animation, further demonstrating its influence and popularity in Japan.

“Bocchi the Rock!” is an innovative musical series that follows Light Girl!! and focuses on a band. Despite the similar theme, with the aid of modern technology, “Bocchi the Rock!” has seen significant advancements in the cutting-edge nature of its rock music and the expressiveness of its artwork [3]. The series has sparked extensive discussions and attention on social media, with “Bocchi the Rock!” memes, derivative works, and other content rapidly spreading online, and the band’s image quickly gaining widespread popularity. The music and animation of “Bocchi the Rock!” possess high artistic value and are at the forefront of related industries, making it a new phenomenon in recent years’ music school series. The success of “Bocchi the Rock!” provides valuable references and guidance for the development of future Japanese music and school series, encouraging subsequent works to strive for high-quality creation.

This thesis focuses on “Bocchi the Rock!” as the primary research subject, analyzing its management and operational strategies. It also uses the SWOT model to analyze its competitive strengths and weaknesses, and finally, it offers targeted development suggestions for reference. The research period covers the management and operations of “Bocchi the Rock!” from its production start to June 2025. The study aims to uncover the feasibility of niche IPs breaking out of their niche markets. It proposes suggestions for optimizing the dissemination path and strategic layout of anime works, providing innovative references for the management and operation of 2D cultural products.

2. The Existing Media Management And Operation Mode Of Fangwen Society And CLW

2.1 Japanese Novel And Manga Adaptation Mode

Japanese novels and manga adaptations follow a stan-

dardized industrial chain process. After completing their works, creators sign contracts with publishers, who then validate the market through serial publications in magazines or standalone books. Once an outstanding work is authorized by the author, the publisher transfers the copyright to the production company. A production committee, including music companies, is formed to share risks and benefits. For example, in the case of “Bocchi the Rock!”, after being incubated by Bunko Shobo, the four-panel manga by Kiyoshi Hamaguchi was animated by CLW and released on platforms such as Bilibili, forming a complete industrial loop.

Fangwen Publishing, a leading figure in the Japanese four-panel comic industry, is known for its daily and cute themes [1]. Its publication lineup includes professional four-panel monthly magazines like “Manga Time Kirara”. Notable works such as “Soul of the Light” and “Swinging Camping” blend warm, everyday life with charming characters. The company focuses on style compatibility and continuously identifies creative talents that fit the “daily with cute” theme through its new talent support program. As an independent animation studio under Aniplex, CLW leverages its parent company’s technical expertise to excel in the precision of visuals and the portrayal of character expressions [4]. The realistic scenes and vivid characters in “Bocchi the Rock!” are typical examples of this approach. CLW favors themes of youth and campus life, aligning with Aniplex’s core values in the anime industry. Through successful works like “Closet Darling,” CLW has demonstrated its ability to accurately appeal to a broad youth audience.

2.2 Analysis Of Management Characteristics

“Bocchi the Rock!” leverages music as its core competitive advantage, breaking away from the conventional anime music configuration model. It features 4 end credits (ED) and 6 in-game themes (IN), all performed by character voice actors, enhancing both musical diversity and character development. By securing the copyright of the Bonded Band, it directly uses high-quality original compositions, significantly reducing the cost of composition while enhancing the artistic quality of the music. This approach ultimately earned it the awards for Best Music and Theme Song of the Year [5].

The core audience of “Bocchi the Rock!” is young people aged 6 to 35. The show meets the audience’s audio-visual quality needs through CLW’s high-quality production, and it resonates emotionally with its ‘cute’ label and the protagonist’s social anxiety persona from Bunka Shoseki. It also integrates music theory knowledge and band culture to attract rock enthusiasts. Its audience includes fans of ‘otaku culture,’ Japanese rock music lovers, and young

viewers looking for social conversation topics, forming a composite audience structure that combines subcultures and specific interests.

“Bocchi the Rock!” was initially incubated through the four-panel comic matrix of Fangwen Publishing House. It gained popularity in the Asian market through serial publication in the magazine “Manga Time Kirara MAX” and the digital version on Bilibili Comics. After being adapted into an animation, CLW took charge of its production, which was broadcast simultaneously in China and Japan via iQIYI and Bilibili. The series also continued to generate interest with a final movie. In addition to the comic and animation markets, “Bocchi the Rock!” has also secured a place in the audio-visual market thanks to its outstanding music and the activities of the band’s real-life prototypes. As of December 2024, 17 music albums of “Bocchi the Rock!” are available for purchase, making the music market one of its key markets.

3. Development Of Animation Peripheral Products

The peripheral products are divided into direct derivative products, indirect derivative products and image authorization products. The specific analysis of the peripheral products of “Bocchi the Rock!” is as follows.

3.1 Direct Spin-off Products

Direct derivative products are those derived from the content of anime works, where the value is more in their collectible value than in their practical or entertainment value. For example, music albums mentioned earlier are physical direct derivative products, and individual singles also fall under the category of published products. As the most popular female lead in 2022, Bocchi and other main characters’ figurines and merchandise are being mass-produced. Meanwhile, Japan’s secondary entertainment industry has matured, and “Bocchi the Rock!” as a standout in the music anime genre, naturally includes secondary concerts themed around its original music.

3.2 Indirect Derivative Products

Indirect derivative products primarily refer to extensions or re-creations of the content from the anime. Specifically, these are peripheral products derived from the original work’s visual and auditory elements, worldviews, and storylines. The indirect derivative products of “Bocchi the Rock!” mainly consist of original artwork, character designs, and comprehensive product lines. Since one of the main venues for the band in “Bocchi the Rock!” is the Livehouse Fanxing, which has a real-life counterpart, it often hosts themed music performances by the band’s

real-life counterpart, ASIAN KUNGFU GENERATION. These band activities also serve as part of its indirect derivative products [6].

Music is a key selling point of the anime, and many fans are not content with just taking photos and checking in at the store; most choose to stay and attend live performances to experience the atmosphere described in the anime. Additionally, the band’s real-life counterparts, ASIAN KUNGFU GENERATION, and the band that performs in the anime, Band of Bonds, are regular visitors to the Livehouse, attracting many fans loyal to the anime [3].

In “SHELTER,” posters from “Bocchi the Rock!” are prominently displayed, and the show often features performances of the anime’s theme songs. This not only attracts audiences who come to enjoy the music but also sparks interest in “Lonely Rock!” among the audience, thereby driving traffic to the anime. Through this mutual promotion, both industries are invigorated and thrive.

As a highly popular and influential work, “Bocchi the Rock!” frequently participates in both comprehensive and specialized comic conventions. These conventions primarily cater to fan communities rather than publishers. “Bocchi the Rock!” has a large fan base, which not only boosts the convention’s traffic and revenue but also enhances its entertainment value and recognition. Hosting cosplay events at the convention can enhance fans’ sense of participation and belonging, while the sale of merchandise can boost related industries’ revenue.

3.3 Image Derivative Products

Image licensing products refer to the practice where animation companies grant the usage rights of beloved anime characters to traditional manufacturing industries, such as adding value to merchandise and stimulating consumer interest. For instance, after the popular anime “Bocchi the Rock!” gained immense popularity, Ryo Yamada’s unique personality made him a favorite, leading to a surge in sales of his bass prototype. Consequently, companies began licensing Yamada’s image to numerous original bass tutorial books, leveraging the enthusiasm for learning music sparked by watching the anime to boost consumer interest. However, many unlicensed and low-quality products also flooded the domestic market, highlighting the need for stricter regulation of image licensing.

4. Analyze the Competitive Strengths and Weaknesses Based on The SWOT Model

4.1 Unique Core Competitive Advantage

The core competitive advantage of “Bocchi the Rock!”

lies in its distinctive artistic style and high-quality music. The visuals in “Bocchi the Rock!” exhibit a strong expressionist style [4]. The script boldly exaggerates and distorts the visuals, using this abstract approach to vividly depict Bocchi’s inner world or highlight the characters’ personalities. In the second episode, when depicting Bocchi’s changing perception of Liang, the series dramatically constructs a garden in Bocchi’s mind where Liang is present. As it becomes clear that Liang simply enjoys solitude and is not socially anxious, Bocchi’s inner world shatters, with the land between Bocchi and Liang splitting into a sea of lava. This exaggerated and expressive visual style not only highlights the characters’ psychological states but also enriches the audience’s visual experience while enjoying the anime.

The art style of “Bocchi the Rock!” incorporates a significant amount of postmodern art elements, such as Pochi imagining himself transforming into Godzilla when he becomes famous, and turning into Slime when he feels neglected. These elements greatly enhance the visual appeal and diversity of the artwork, adding new dimensions to the original school-themed anime, making it one of the work’s standout features.

As an anime centered on the activities of a band club, “Bocchi the Rock!” has made significant efforts in music. To create this anime, CLW specially invited the band to compose several high-quality rock songs, which have successfully laid the foundation for the anime’s widespread acclaim. From a musical perspective, the anime also boasts many noteworthy aspects.

Fangwen Publishing House stands out among publishers due to its distinct personality. By focusing on themes such as ‘cute’ elements and light novels, the publisher attracts a steady stream of creators who provide it with continuous material. This clear focus also sets it apart, maintaining a large and loyal readership [1]. To sustain this, the publisher must continuously innovate and evolve in these specific areas, ensuring a constant influx of new vitality and attracting new readers. Additionally, as one of the established publishing houses, Fangwen has built a strong brand reputation and influence, along with a rich pool of talent, which lays a solid foundation for its maintenance and development.

Thanks to the strong capital and excellent production technology support from its parent company, Aniplex, CLW has inherent advantages in production channels and technological innovation [7]. As a subsidiary of Aniplex, CLW’s development will inevitably face certain limitations, but this adds to the overall innovation and flexibility of Aniplex’s animation creation. Overall, leveraging Aniplex’s experience, technology, and the reputation of a veteran producer, CLW undoubtedly holds a significant

competitive edge in the market.

4.2 The Downside Of „Bocchi the Rock!“

As an original small IP, “Bocchi the Rock!” relies heavily on the original work for content creation, resulting in insufficient depth in derivative development. While its animated series and music albums are of high quality, the core appeal remains largely tied to the original plot and characters, lacking original content that stands independently from the IP. For example, most otaku fans find the music albums heavily reliant on existing tracks from the animation, leading to a decline in fan enthusiasm once the content ends. Additionally, its indirect derivative products primarily replicate the original work, lacking in-depth exploration of the world-building or character relationships, which fails to further enhance the IP’s value.

From a business perspective, niche IPs like “Bocchi the Rock!” face issues such as a single commercial model and a limited audience reach. Physical merchandise, including figurines and souvenirs, as well as concerts and comic conventions, primarily target the core otaku community. These products are often overpriced, and non-core fans are less likely to purchase them, making it difficult for these IPs to expand their reach beyond their core fan base.

4.3 Environmental Opportunity Analysis Of „Bocchi the Rock!“

“Bocchi the Rock” strategically exploits two macro-opportunities: the expansion of the global ACG ecosystem (450 million users in 2024, Statista 2025) and the underutilized niche market of music anime (6.2% produced in 2020-2024, Japan Animation Association 2025). Its competitive differentiation stems from the combination of authentic rock aesthetics and Kawaii character design, a fusion that meets the demands of 78% of Gen Z audiences for “musical authenticity” and “relevant narratives”. This hybrid approach is a model of cross-media narrative, achieving participatory engagement through the integration of live performance and music theory.

There are three cooperative vectors that jointly amplify the chance of capture. Firstly, the integration of culture and tourism. According to the Tokyo 2024 Cultural Report, the 320% surge in tourists at SHELTER Livehouse after adaptation is a testament to this. Then, from the perspective of digital asset development, NFT collectibles can account for 19% of fans’ spending. Finally, in terms of educational licensing, 63% of the audience expressed their intention to learn with the instrument, thus achieving cooperation with platforms such as UCaisi. These approaches position IP in the dominant position of vertical types and depend on the institutionalized opportunity channels within its management framework.

4.4 Environmental Threat Analysis Of „Bocchi the Rock!“

However, the intense market competition has significantly increased the pressure for content innovation. Similar music series are fiercely competing in quality creation. If “Bocchi the Rock!” fails to consistently produce innovative, high-quality, and differentiated content, it risks losing its fan base. Additionally, “Bocchi the Rock!” must address external challenges such as policy scrutiny, cultural barriers, and widespread piracy. From a commercial perspective, the commercial success of the “Bocchi the Rock!” IP heavily depends on the popularity of the original work. The derivative ecosystem has yet to break through the core fan base. Without leveraging technological advancements or cross-industry collaborations to expand mass consumption, it may struggle to achieve long-term value realization.

5. Suggestions

5.1 Marketing Strategy Optimization Path

In the digital age, the marketing strategy of “Bocchi the Rock!” should focus on data assets as the core driving force, building a multi-dimensional user behavior analysis system [8]. By collecting consumption records from e-commerce platforms and sentiment data from social media, combined with natural language processing technology, the system can analyze fans’ functional preferences and emotional needs for derivative products. This enables the creation of a dynamic pricing model, offering discount packages for low-priced Live tickets for frequent consumers, while maintaining scarcity through high pricing and strict monitoring of the second-hand market premium for high-priced collectible items. Notably, the tiered product matrix should be integrated with user lifecycle management, such as designing an “annual membership plan” for long-term fans, providing exclusive access to behind-the-scenes footage and priority purchase rights for physical merchandise, thereby enhancing user loyalty.

5.2 Multi-dimensional Expansion Of Content Creation From Innovation

The narrative application of AR technology should move beyond the simple addition of functions to a more immersive world-building experience [9]. For instance, the “Xiaobei Zhe Virtual Street” can feature dynamic scenes that change with time: during the day, it recreates the layout of real-life Livehouse venues, allowing users to capture hidden band graffiti on walls using their mobile cameras and unlock voice messages from band members; at night, special band performances are staged, and users

must participate in AR treasure hunts to collect scattered sheet music fragments, triggering holographic projections of limited tracks. Technically, the Unity engine can be used to develop lightweight interactive modules, reducing the technical barriers for users, while incorporating physical feedback mechanisms to enhance the on-site experience. The intelligent transformation of music and visuals requires the development of a cross-platform algorithm matrix: in addition to TME playlist matching, a “Rhythm DNA Test” mini-program can be developed to analyze users’ listening habits, such as click frequency and volume adjustments, to generate personalized animation recommendations (for example, high-energy preference users might receive a mix of battle scenes from “Bocchi the Rock!”) [10].

In the development of metaverse scenarios, a digital twin space called “Xia Beize Virtual Street” can be created. By integrating NFT technology to endow virtual items with asset attributes, this initiative aims to transform users from content consumers into active participants in the virtual economy [11]. Additionally, by incorporating multi-linear storylines and hidden plot Easter eggs, the project can enhance the story’s depth and replay value. By employing cross-media narrative strategies, the IP content ecosystem can be further enriched, continuously boosting user engagement and creativity.

6. Conclusion

The success of “Bocchi the Rock!” exemplifies a paradigm shift in niche IP media management, driven by Fangwen Publishing’s content incubation expertise and CloverWorks’ high-fidelity production. By leveraging music as a competitive nucleus and deploying cross-media strategies, such as voice actor band performances, immersive visual expression, and scenario-based derivatives, the IP transcended subcultural boundaries to achieve global resonance. However, this study reveals intrinsic limitations, including insufficient derivative depth, a monolithic business model, and vulnerability to homogeneous competition in the expanding pan-secondary market. Future research should address these gaps by quantitatively analyzing longitudinal revenue streams from diversified derivatives such as VR concerts, interactive gaming modules and examining cultural localization efficacy in non-Asian markets. Additionally, comparative studies between music-driven and conventional anime IPs could further refine media management frameworks for niche genres. While this work offers a replicable model for youth-oriented subcultural products, its single-case focus necessitates broader validation across diverse IP typologies to generalize strategic insights.

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