

Localization Path of Global IP: Taking BANDAI's Integrated Marketing Strategy as an Example

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Abstract. The market for anime and tokusatsu IP derivatives continues to expand, with BANDAI maintaining a dominant position through its “content–creation–commercialization–immersive experience” strategy. Although Chinese licensed figurine companies have experienced rapid growth leveraging international IPs such as *Ultraman* and *Kamen Rider*, they still face three key challenges: dependence on leading IPs, insufficient localization, and limited global distribution channels. This study mainly explores how Chinese figurine enterprises can systematically draw on BANDAI's integrated marketing strategy to achieve localized reconstruction and global output of international IP. This article uses case analysis to compare the marketing matrices of Bloks Group Limited (Ultraman Building Man Toy) and BANDAI (GUNDAM Model), and collects cross-border sales data and user feedback from companies such as 52TOYS and TOP TOY. However, the overseas revenue of Chinese toy companies still accounts for less than 15%, and the lack of immersive physical experiences has become a key limiting factor. Therefore, the success path of Chinese enterprises lies in building a “dual circulation” ecosystem. The research results indicate that Bloks Group Limited can learn from BANDAI's cross media narrative strategy and drive toy sales by launching animations; 52TOYS replicated the user co-creation model, and its prototype creation competition attracted 30000 participants.

Keywords: IP axis strategy; localization; globalization; prototype model.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the continuous expansion of the Anime and Tokusatsu IP derivative market, and what effective marketing strategies domestic IP figurine companies can implement to break through the limitations of their products in the international figurine market; this study is of great significance for the global promotion and brand image building of Chinese figurine companies' products; the study mainly explores how to learn from BANDAI's integrated marketing strategy and achieve global IP localization by obtaining international IP authorization for localized development of figurines (such as Bloks Group), and how to promote products globally. The literature and case analysis method were used to search and read relevant cases and literature. The advantage of this method is that it can effectively analyze the effectiveness and referenceability of BANDAI's marketing activities in various regions around the world, which is conducive to the research; the ultimate goal of this study is to provide a “dual circulation” global marketing system approach for Chinese authorized figurine enterprises and promote the path of product globalization.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research Status of IP Authorization Cooperation Model

Current research generally believes that the success of Japanese companies in the global IP derivatives market stems from their mature ability to integrate the entire industry chain and IP matrix management mechanism. Ji Zhang systematically explained the “IP Axis Strategy” of Japanese companies in “IP Retail Industry: The Long lasting Way of IP Industry from BANDAI and TAKARA TOMY”. BANDAI deeply binds cross media content development (animation, games, movies) with derivative products, forming a three-dimensional ecosystem of “content-product - experience”; TAKARA TOMY focuses on modular product development and IP linkage, building a

scalable worldview system” [1]. This model effectively extends the Life Cycle of top IP (such as GUNDAM and Ultraman's continuous operation for over 30 years), and resists market risks through a pyramid shaped IP matrix (classic IP+long tail IP) [2].

In terms of authorization cooperation mechanisms, existing research has revealed two typical paths: one is BANDAI's deep involvement model, such as collaborating with Tencent to develop the assembly model of "Ace Force" in the Chinese market, achieving the conversion of local game IP and physical toys; The second is TAKARA TOMY's channel layering strategy, which allocates operational rights based on different regional characteristics (such as "BAKUTEN SHOOT BEYBLADE" operating independently in the Asian region and handing over the European and American regions to Hasbro) [2]. This type of research provides rich insights into the operational logic of authorization models, but mostly focuses on the perspective of the authorizing party (such as Japanese companies), and insufficient exploration of the agency of the authorized party (such as Chinese companies).

2.2. The Current Research Status of Localized Marketing Strategies

At the practical level of IP localization, existing literature focuses on analyzing two dimensions that divided into cultural translation and marketing innovation respectively. BANDAI's "dual track localization" strategy has been widely discussed, on the one hand, it reduces cultural discounts by synchronously distributing content (such as focusing on video platforms in Asia and television media in Japan); on the other hand, promoting the integration of product culture, typical cases include launching "Star Wars" themed TAMAGOTCHI in North America, combining Japanese electronic pets with Western sci-fiction Ips [2]. This type of research confirms the positive impact of cultural symbol reconstruction on consumer acceptance, but does not quantify the specific conversion efficiency.

The localization innovation of Chinese enterprises has begun to emerge with distinctive paths. MINISO breaks through with immersive retail scenes: opening a "One Piece" themed pop-up store in Canada, transforming Japanese anime IPs into spatial experiences through scene based designs such as 21 foot giant sailboat installations and character portraits, driving sales of over 230 derivative products [3]. However, this study remains at the level of case description and lacks systematic refinement of methodology.

It is worth noting that user co-creation is emerging as a new path for localization. BANDAI inspires players from 50 countries to participate in design through the GBWC (Global Gundam Model Competition), and 52TOYS borrows this model to launch the BEASTBOX Transformation Design Competition [1]. Although existing literature affirms the value of community cohesion, it overlooks the integration mechanism of user wisdom in cultural translation, this is the direction that this article needs to deepen.

2.3. The Current Status of Research on the Path of Globalization Expansion

Globalization research mainly focuses on the combination of channel strategies and experience economy. Taking BANDAI and TAKARA TOMY as examples, both implemented the “double encirclement strategy” during the epidemic. In terms of coverage across all age groups, BANDAI has launched a collection level model for the "big kids" (14 years old and above) market, and TAKARA TOMY has put forward the concept of "lifetime value" to serve multi-generational users. In terms of omnichannel integration, BANDAI has opened the “Premium BANDAI” US website, which specializes in selling limited edition figurines; TAKARA TOMY has strengthened its online direct sales capabilities in the European and American markets by acquiring Fat Brain. This strategy has driven the overseas revenue share of TAKARA TOMY to 38.7% (compared to 24.9% for BANDAI), verifying the priority of channel adaptation in global layout.

At the level of experience upgrade, BANDAI's physical entertainment layout is enlightening. It enhances IP awareness through landmark immersive projects such as 1:1 physical GUNDAM (Yokohama GUNDAM Factory) and Namco VR Experience Hall. In contrast, the globalization of

Chinese enterprises still relies on product output. For example, TOP TOY has launched a "Chinese design+Japanese anime IP" hybrid store in Southeast Asia, which has increased the average order value by 40%², but the lack of physical experience leads to insufficient user stickiness. Research has pointed out that the lack of immersive experiences is a key bottleneck for Chinese companies with overseas revenue accounting for less than 15% (46% for Bandai), but existing literature does not provide low-cost implementation solutions.

3. Case Study: Localization Practice Landscape of Bandai IP Operations

3.1. At the Level of Corporate Strategy

BANDAI NAMCO has built a closed-loop ecosystem of "content creation- commercialization development-community operation" driven by the core "IP Axis strategy". The essence of its operation lies in the multidimensional release of IP value through cross media narrative collaboration and immersive experience empowerment. Taking the GUNDAM series as an example, in terms of content, Sunrise Studio continues to release new animations, such as "The Witch from Mercury", which will have over 210 million global views in 2023 and continuously activate IP popularity; at the product level, BANDAI has simultaneously developed the MGEX (Master Grade Extreme) series of high-precision models, equipped with LED lighting effects and movable skeleton technology. Among them, the "Unicorn Gundam Ver. Ka" launched in 2024 sold over 120000 boxes in its first week of release; at the community level, the company relies on the "GUNDAM Metaverse" virtual space to hold model exhibition competitions (Nikkei Entertainment 2025), attracting players from 87 countries to participate in digital creation, thereby further strengthening user stickiness and interaction with the global community. This full chain operation model has enabled GUNDAM IP to continue evolving over the past 40 years, with a total sales revenue of 6.54 billion yen as of March 2025, confirming the sustained vitality of the "content product community" closed loop [4].

3.2. Regional Market Practice

BANDAI Group achieves global market penetration through a "dual track localization" strategy, with the core being the creative translation of Japanese IP cores and regional cultural symbols. This strategy is first reflected in the reconstruction of cultural scenes: in Japan, Bandai relies on the "real-life entertainment+community operation" model to strengthen the value of native IP. A typical case is the Yokohama 1:1 Mobile Gundam Factory (which received over 3 million visitors from 2020 to 2024), which creates an immersive cultural landmark by materializing animated mechas; simultaneously launching the "GBWC Global Gundam Model Competition" to inspire players from 50 countries to participate in design, elevating niche mecha culture to an international trend symbol.

Secondly, BANDAI is implementing an "emotional resonance" localization strategy in the Chinese market. BANDAI deeply integrates traditional Chinese festival culture, such as collaborating with Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park to launch the "Ultraman themed New Year Lantern Festival" and creating a giant lantern set (15 meters high) called "Ultraman vs. New Year Beast". This practice reconstructs Japanese TOKUSATSU heroes as symbols of Spring Festival protection, confirming the key role of "cultural symbol Emotionalization" in lowering the threshold for IP recognition. Ultraman collaborates with Card Game to launch collectible cards and host the "Hero Duel" national league, attracting a large number of children and teenagers to participate and expanding the audience age of the IP.

In addition, in the European and American markets, Kamen Rider has collaborated with trendy brands such as A BATHING APE to launch limited edition clothing and accessories, incorporating street cultural symbols. Participate in San Diego Comic-Con and other comic exhibitions, enhance the collection value and community attributes of IP through live performances and fan interaction.

3.3. Media Strategy and Fan Interaction

BANDAI NAMCO achieves seamless connection from content exposure to consumption conversion by building a "closed loop of IP value chain". Taking the "Dragon Ball" IP as an example, during the launch of the new series "Dragon Ball - DAIMA" by TOEI ANIMATION in November 2024, soon after BANDAI launched a "three screen linkage" strategy simultaneously. On the day of the premiere of the anime on television and streaming platforms, a movable figurine of the protagonist "Super Saiyan Son Goku (DAIMA)" (priced at 3600 yen) was launched on e-commerce channels. The mobile game "Dragon Ball Dokkan Battle" also updated character cards and exclusive storyline copies simultaneously [5]. This collaborative mode enabled the new character model to exceed 120000 units in sales in the first week, and the active users of mobile games increased by 23% month on month.

To deepen user engagement, BANDAI has further developed a dual "offline-virtual" approach. First, to provide a physical immersive experience, BANDAI launched a "DAIMA Arrival" themed pop-up store in Sunshine City, Ikebukuro, Tokyo, recreating the animation scenes at a 1:1 scale. In addition to releasing products such as *Ichiban Kuji* and SHF articulated figures, BANDAI also introduced a limited-edition transparent model, attracting 84,000 visitors within two weeks. At the same time, players can unlock physical model discount codes by collecting new character decks in the mobile game, forming a conversion loop of "virtual achievements-physical consumption". In GUNDAM IP operations, BANDAI integrates METAVERSE technology into the core value chain [6]. The GUMDAM METAVERSE platform, launched in 2023, not only provides a virtual battle space, but also builds a three in one ecosystem of "creation transaction social". Players can design original mecha models, which will be mass-produced as physical products after being reviewed by BANDAI. The virtual space regularly holds the "A BAOA Sky Battle Reenactment" event, which collaborates with the PS5 game "GUMDAM Battle Operation" to update maps.

This model breaks through the traditional one-way output logic of "animation derivatives" and continuously increases the value of IP through user participation through a three-layer architecture of "content immediacy experience scenarization asset digitization". According to BANDAI's calculations, the life cycle value (LTV) of IP under integrated marketing is 3.2 times higher than that of single line operations.

3.4. Analysis of Localization Mechanism

Above all, BANDAI utilized regional customization and cultural symbol translation as marketing strategies. For example, Ultraman incorporates elements of Chinese history or mythological figures to launch a new series of merchandise that caters to the aesthetic preferences of Chinese consumers, combining the image of "Tokusatsu Heros" with culture.

Secondly, in terms of media dimension, implement "cross media collaboration" and "IP Lifecycle Management", BANDAI maintains IP popularity through animation updates, extends product life cycle through model iterations, and enhances fan stickiness through exhibitions and social media [7,8].

In terms of technology, digital platforms facilitate immersive participation. The GUMDAM Metaverse platform and NFT authentication models (such as the limited edition GUNPLA) provide fans with a virtual and real fusion experience.

3.5. Regional Differences and Marketing Adaptation

For example, the deep deconstruction of GUMDAM character settings by Japanese fans, emotional connections established by Chinese fans through card socialization, and the nostalgia for childhood among fans in specific regions of China.

The European and American markets tend to favor collection interaction and community participation. The activity of American fans in the GUMDAM PG series assembling figures community is significantly higher than that in Asia, and the Kamen Rider co branded trendy brand attracts adult consumers through street cultural symbols.

4. Theoretical Analysis

4.1. Application Principle of Four-Dimensional Collaborative Model

The IP culture in the Asian market is deeply immersed, with a focus on emotional resonance. This study proposes a "Content-Media-Fans-Technology" (CMFT) collaborative model aimed at deconstructing the underlying operational mechanisms of the global IP industry. This model reveals two core paths.

Firstly, BANDAI utilizes regional customization (such as BANDAI's collaboration with European and American fashion brands) and symbol translation (Blocs incorporating Ultraman into the Spring Festival animal narrative) in the cultural adaptation path to resolve cultural barriers. At the same time, the direction of commercial transformation will be linked, relying on cross media collaboration ("Dragon Ball animation-model-mobile game" three screen linkage) and technological empowerment (Gundam Metaverse NFT asset circulation) to enhance users' lifetime value.

The essence of its operation lies in the dynamic coupling of four-dimensional elements, content production anchoring cultural mentality (such as the design of new characters in "Dragon Ball - DAIMA"), media matrix achieving touchpoint coverage (streaming media+e-commerce+offline flash), fan community activating participatory culture (P-Bandai user co creation), and technology tools reconstructing experience boundaries (AR battle engine). This coupling upgrades the value flow of IP from linear derivation to a networked value-added ecosystem. According to Newzoo's research, the efficiency of enterprise IP development using the CMFT model is increased by 2.7 times.

4.2. Theoretical Contribution

The core mechanism for the successful localization of IP lies in "cultural decoding—media integration—emotional embedding—community value-added". For example, BANDAI achieves cultural decoding through regional customized content, promotes media integration through cross media storytelling, embeds emotions in offline activities and online communities, and ultimately adds value to the community through limited edition products and membership systems.

This study breaks through the triple limitations of traditional integrated marketing theory. Incorporating "technology empowerment" and "community co-creation" as core variables to upgrade the paradigm of marketing strategies and explain emerging phenomena such as the 2 million yen NFT transaction in the GUMDAM Metaverse; verifying the universality of the CMFT model in non Japanese enterprises, such as 52TOYS passing the "BEASTBOX Global Design Competition" [2]. Empower and resonate with fans through product technology, thereby enhancing brand awareness; integrating practical calibration into marketing strategies and proposing a "dual circulation ecology" implementation framework - strengthening cultural translation capabilities through internal circulation ("HAYIDAI Chinese Medicine Dolls" [7]), building a Technology Collaborative Network for External Circulation (TOP TOY Cross border Supply Chain [8]), provide a transition path for latecomer enterprises.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that the core path for Chinese figurine companies to achieve localization and globalization of international IP lies in building a "dual circulation ecology", achieving emotional resonance through cultural translation (such as Blocs integrating Ultraman into the Spring Festival symbol), and using technology empowerment (such as AR interaction) to reduce immersion experience costs, ultimately completing the transition from OEM to "cultural translation center". This conclusion reconstructs the theory of integrated marketing and confirms the decisive role of technology driven and community co creation in globalization strategies, providing replicable breakthrough solutions for emerging market enterprises.

Research has a dual impact on both academia and practice. On the theoretical level, the value of cultural databases as the core tool for localization has been established, and on the practical level, the

common dilemma of high cost immersive experiences has been solved. Future research needs to focus on three cutting-edge directions: cultural integration mechanisms in emerging markets (such as African totems and Mecha aesthetics), paradigm reconstruction of user co-creation through AIGC technology, and the commercial balance point of sustainable materials in the collectibles field. These explorations will drive the industry towards deeper development in technological ethics and cross-cultural innovation.

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