

# Anime IP in China: A Comprehensive Review of Academic Endeavors

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the landscape of academic research on anime intellectual property(IP) in China, addressing the scarcity of review literature and providing insights into its current state. Through statistical analysis and content research methods applied to over 700 articles indexed in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure(CNKI) database from pre-2014 to 2023, key findings emerge. While anime IP has garnered significant attention, there is a predominant focus on applied research over review articles. The analysis highlights a scarcity of high-level research, concentrated disciplinary distribution, and limited thematic diversity. Additionally, there is a concentration of research in journals related to film, television, media, and publishing, albeit with a lack of strong continuity. Citation analysis shows increased attention to anime IP research in recent years. The study explores various research contents, including commercialization strategies, cultural expression, educational applications, cross-media storytelling, and internationalization, with a noted dearth of international comparative research.

**Keywords:** Anime intellectual property; IP; Animation IP; Statistical analysis; Review.

## 1 Introduction

With the per capita GDP in China surpassing \$10,000 in 2019 and the rise in disposable income, consumer spending on cultural and creative products has gradually increased. Consequently, academic research in the field of anime IP has also grown. Despite being affected by the pandemic, both the economy and research have experienced varying degrees of impact. Overall, as a significant representative of the cultural and creative domain, anime IP exhibits a stable and thriving development trend. However, the field predominantly focuses on applied research, with limited attention given to summarizing studies and review articles.

Recognizing the aforementioned shortcomings, this study adopts statistical analysis and content research methods, concentrating on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure(CNKI) literature from before 2014 to 2023. Through a comprehensive statistical analysis of over 700 pieces of literature in the anime IP field, the review of IP articles is delineated into two parts. The first part involves examining the quantitative characteristics, policy influences, funding distribution, page information, emerging perspectives, and methodologies in anime IP research. This analysis is consolidated within the paper titled 'Statistical Analysis of Anime IP Research Literature—Based on CNKI Literature from 2014 to 2023'. The second part, the focal point of this paper, delves into anime IP-related research

from various angles, including article distribution characteristics, publication types and continuity, citation analysis, authorship, institutional affiliations, collaboration patterns, and research content.

## **2 Research Preparation**

The study concentrated on accessing materials available in the CNKI full-text database. To account for the diverse terminology in the field, search terms like "Anime IP," "Animation IP," "Two-dimension IP," and "Comic IP" were selected. The search was confined to the "Subject" category without incorporating logical operators, word frequency, or extension functions. The investigation spanned from pre-2014 to 2023, with data collection conducted between January 13 and January 17, 2024. A range of academic sources, including journals, dissertations, conference papers, newspapers, featured periodicals, and journal series, were considered. Following these criteria, a total of 762 articles were retrieved.

## **3 Quantitative Characteristics Analysis**

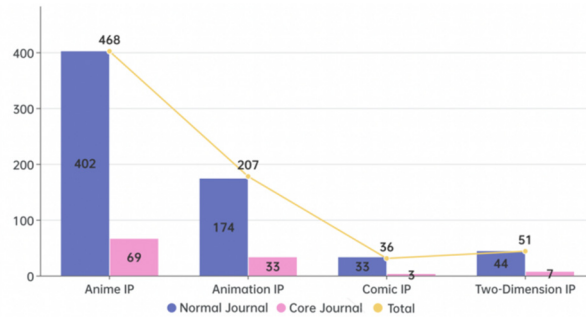
### **3.1 Limited High-Level Articles, Concentrated Themes, and Disciplinary Distribution**

A total of 112 graduate theses were retrieved in the search for anime IP-related literature, comprising 109 master's theses and 3 doctoral theses. This indicates a relative scarcity of high-level research in the field of Chinese anime IP. The low number can be attributed, in part, to the limited availability of doctoral programs and enrollment quotas in relevant Chinese anime-related disciplines. Improving this situation would require a focus on cultivating high-level talent in the anime sector and strengthening support for related research projects.

Examining the disciplinary distribution, the main subjects covered in anime IP-related research include drama, film and television arts, cultural economy, culture, journalism and communication, fine arts, tourism, computer software and applications, sports, trade economics, Chinese literature, industrial economics, light industry and handicrafts, enterprise economics, industrial general technology and equipment, information economics, and postal economics.

In terms of themes, common topics explored in anime IP-related research encompass animated films, animation IP, domestic animation, Chinese animated film theaters, comic IP animation, IP operations, digital manga, manga adaptations, anime IP, anime industry, domestic anime, anime IP design, two-dimension, two-dimension culture, online literature, and two-dimension IP. Interdisciplinary theme exploration in research appears to be relatively limited.

### 3.2 Publication Types, Sources and Continuity



**Fig. 1.** Comparison of general journals and core journals distribution.

In terms of core journal types, research is primarily concentrated in publications related to film and television, media, publishing, and the cultural industry. Among the published articles, 731 are in Chinese journals, and 31 are in foreign journals. Out of these, 112 articles are in Chinese core journals(Figure 1), constituting 14.6% of the total, distributed across 42 core journals(Peking university and Nanjing university cores, CSSCI expanded edition, and CSSCI source collection).

Among all core journals, the journal with the highest number of anime IP-related articles is "View on Publishing" (12 articles), published consistently over a span of 4 years. Additionally, "Contemporary Cinema" and "Movie Literature" each featured 8 related articles. "Media" published 7 related articles, distributed in 2016 (1 article), 2018 (3 articles), 2019 (1 article), and 2020 (2 articles), spanning 4 years. "Movie Literature" published 2 articles in 2017 and 2 articles from 2019 to 2021, spanning 4 years. "Contemporary Cinema", from 2016 to 2023, published 1 article each year except for 2020, maintaining a stable focus over 7 years, making it the most consistently researched journal in the anime IP domain. Furthermore, "Contemporary Cinema", "Contemporary TV", "China Television", and "China Publishing Journal" each published 5 articles or works related to anime IP. Among these, "China Television" has the longest time span, publishing articles as early as 2017, spanning 5 years.

**Table 1.** General publications that publish the most IP related articles.

Keywords	Anime IP	Animation IP	Comic IP	Two-dimension IP
Journal (articles)	Toy Industry/19	Voice & Screen World/6	Zhejiang Gongshang University/2	Journal of News Research/3
	Toys World/18	Home Drama/5	Radio & TV Journal/2	Toys World/3

Regarding mainstream journals, "Toy Industry," "Toys World," "Journal of News Research," "Popular Literature and Art," "Animation Research," and "Voice & Screen World" are the most focused journals in the field of anime IP research. Among these, "Toy Industry" has continuously published 19 relevant articles, with the earliest publication dating back to 2016, spanning 7 years. "Toys World" has published 18 articles since 2015, spanning 8 years,

making it the journal with the longest research span in this field. "Journal of News Research" has published 9 articles, with the earliest dating back to 2017, spanning 6 years. "Popular Literature and Art" has published 7 articles, while both "Animation Research" and "Voice & Screen World" have published 6 articles each (Table 1).

In "anime IP" searches, "Toy Industry" published the most articles (19 articles), while "Voice & Screen World" led in "animation IP" searches with 6 articles. For "comic IP," Zhejiang Gongshang University and "Radio & TV Journal" each contributed 2 articles. Lastly, "Journal of News Research" and "Toys World" each published 3 articles on "two-dimension IP."

In general, anime IP research shows strong continuity in some core journals, with certain scholars making consecutive contributions in a short time. Research in the anime IP domain is primarily published in journals related to film and television, media, publishing, and the cultural industry, with Chinese journals being predominant. "View on Publishing" is the main journal for anime IP research with a stable publication cycle.

### **3.3 Author, Affiliation and Collaboration**

A total of 762 articles were included in the statistical analysis, among which 63 articles were deemed invalid due to missing author data, resulting in 699 valid articles, accounting for 91.7% of the total. Among the valid articles, 524 were authored solely, constituting 75.0%, while 175 were co-authored, making up 25.0%. The ratio of sole authorship to co-authorship was approximately 3:1. In terms of institutional collaboration among co-authored articles, we observed that cross-institutional cooperation was scarce, with co-authors predominantly affiliated with the same institution.

Universities were the primary affiliation of authors, with companies and newspapers serving as secondary affiliations. Among universities, the highest number of articles related to anime IP were published by China University of Communication (21 articles), Nanjing University of the Arts (7 articles), and Shaanxi University of Science and Technology (6 articles).

When searching with keywords such as "anime IP" and "animation IP," China University of Communication emerged as the institution with the highest number of publications, with 10 and 11 articles respectively. For articles with the keyword "comic IP," the institutions with the most publications were Netease, Central Academy of Drama, and Zhejiang Gongshang University, each publishing 2 articles. Finally, for articles with the keyword "two-dimension IP," Jilin Academy of Arts, Jilin University, and Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication were the leading institutions, each contributing 2 articles.

Among all scholars researching anime IP, the authors with the highest continuous publication volume are Liu Bin, Wu Weihua, and Zhang Fangyuan, each contributing 3 articles. Liu Bin's first related article was published in 2019, spanning 3 years, while Wu Weihua and Zhang Fangyuan's initial article was in 2020, with a span of only 1 year. A total of 24 scholars, including Jin Shao, Fang Xiang, Jiang Haijun, Yu Hong, Xiong Jiefen, and Fang Ting, have continuously published 2 articles. Among these, Xiong Jiefen and Zhang Shule's first related literature was published in 2020, spanning 1 year. The other scholars' 2 articles were mostly published in the same year. Notably, Jin Shao, despite only publishing 2 articles in the anime IP domain, has 5 articles in the IP field, with the first one published in 2018, spanning 2 years.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals a predominant trend of sole authorship in the research on anime IP, with a ratio of approximately 3:1 compared to co-authored articles. Cross-institutional collaboration is limited, with most co-authors affiliated with the same institution. Universities are the primary contributors to this research domain, notably China University of Communication leading in publications. Authors like Liu Bin, Wu Weihua, and Zhang Fangyuan stand out for their continuous contributions. However, further efforts are needed to foster collaboration across institutions and expand the scholarly landscape in anime IP research.

### 3.4 Citation Analysis

Out of the total, 446 articles have been cited, accounting for 58.5%. Among the articles retrieved using the four search keywords, the highest citation rate is for "Two-dimension IP", reaching 68.6%. The most cited article is "Behind the IP Craze and the Future of Movies under the Pan-Entertainment Mindset", with 179 citations, published in the 2015 issue of "Contemporary Cinema". However, as of January 2024, the authors have not continued their research in this field.

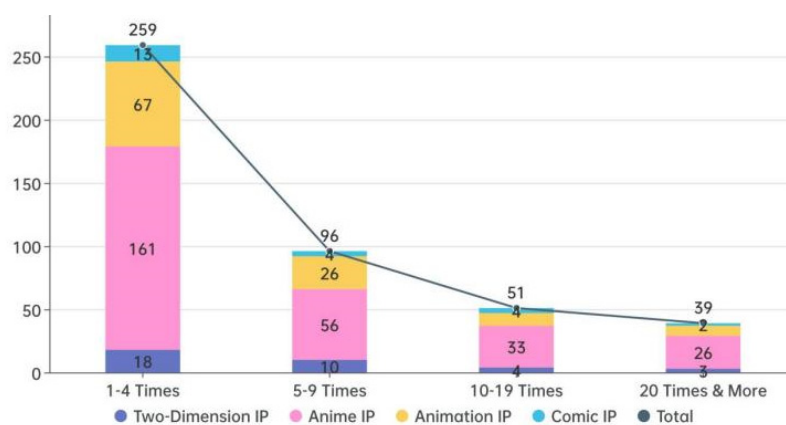
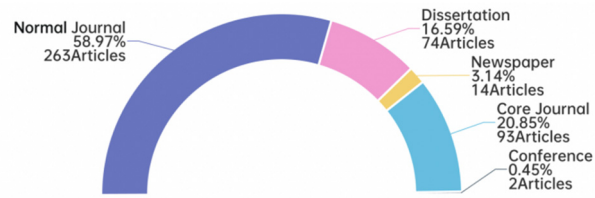


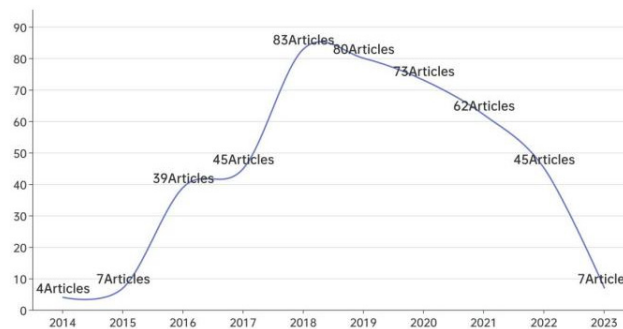
Fig. 2. Distribution of cited literature.

There are 39 articles with citation counts of 20 or more, accounting for 5.1% of the total literature. Articles with citation counts between 10-19 number 51, constituting 6.7%, those with 5-9 citations are 96, making up 12.6%, and those with 1-4 citations total 260, representing 34.1%. This indicates that in the field of anime IP research, many articles receive a certain degree of citation, but the distribution of citation counts is quite diverse, suggesting a rich array of viewpoints and research topics in anime IP-related studies (Figure 2). Among the cited articles, 41 are core literature, accounting for 20.9% of the total cited articles, higher than the proportion of core literature in the total literature (14.3%). This suggests that researchers tend to cite core literature. In addition, there are 74 cited master's and doctoral dissertations, accounting for 16.6% of the total cited articles, slightly higher than the proportion of dissertations in the total literature (Figure 3).



**Fig. 3.**Types of Cited Articles.

The cited literature exhibits a strong phased distribution. The peak citation counts were in 2018 and 2019, with 83 and 80 citations respectively. Even after 2020, newly published relevant literature, despite having a short release time, also has a high citation count, indicating significant attention to this field recently. Articles published before 2015 were hardly cited, indicating that although early scholars recognized the research value of the anime IP field, they provided limited academic value due to the underdeveloped anime IP market and a shallow and one-sided understanding of anime IP(Figure 4).



**Fig. 4.** Distribution of cited literature over time.

In summary, the study reveals a substantial number of cited articles, with the highest citation rate for articles retrieved using "two-dimension IP" as keywords. Researchers tend to favor citing core literature, and the citation distribution is diverse, indicating a rich content in the field of anime IP. Citation counts show a phased growth, receiving increased attention in recent years, while early articles received fewer citations, reflecting the gradual deepening of anime IP research.

## 4 Research Content

This section delves into six main research contents, exploring commercialization strategies, cultural expression and inheritance, educational applications, cross-media storytelling, literary relationships, and internationalization in the anime IP-related field.

### 4.1 Commercialization Strategies of Anime IP

Researchers have delved into commercialization strategies, market promotion, and profit models, from "Boonie Bears: The Wild Life" to "Ne Zha." He Ying have discussed how IP

animations can better deal with the phenomenon of catering to a younger audience and enhance the sustainability of commercialization. Li Chang conducted a systematic study of the operation of digital comic IP, while He Yingfei discussed strategies for the industrial transformation and development of anime IP[1]-[6].

#### **4.2 Cultural Expression and Inheritance of Anime IP**

As a cultural product, research has focused on how Chinese traditional culture is incorporated into anime IP. Scholars explore how anime IP, through cultural expression and inheritance, breaks geographical restrictions and moves towards internationalization. Specific research objects include Beihai Hepu Han Tomb, Han portrait stone sculptures, Longquan Temple, intangible cultural heritage, traditional Chinese stories, red culture, and traditional paper cutting, among others[7]-[12].

#### **4.3 Educational Applications of Anime IP**

With the rise of the "second-dimensional" culture, the application of anime IP in education has garnered attention. Han Xu focuses on the aesthetic features of children's animation IP in the era of big data and its potential impact on children's education. These studies highlight the positive role of anime IP in shaping children's aesthetic concepts and promoting emotional language development[13]-[15].

#### **4.4 Creation, Cross-Media Storytelling, and Literary Relationships of Anime IP**

Anime IP extends beyond the animation domain and develops in various media such as literature, film, and games. Research in this area focuses on the creative process of anime IP, including the production of original anime and mutual adaptation between manga and animation. For instance, Chen Ling explores how anime IP undergoes transformation in cross-media storytelling and the interrelationship between different media. These studies emphasize the flexibility and influence of anime IP in cross-media storytelling, expanding the creative modes of anime IP[16]-[20].

#### **4.5 Relationship Between Anime IP and New Media**

With the advent of the new media era, the relationship between anime IP and new media has become a research hot-spot. Scholars like Qu Ying have focused on the cross-media narrative of anime IP in the era of converged media and its deep interaction with new media[21]-[25].

#### **4.6 Internationalization of Anime IP**

With the rise of the Chinese anime industry, internationalization has become a new research direction. Scholars focus on the performance of Chinese anime IP in the international market, the development of anime IP in the international market, and the impact of the international market on Chinese anime IP. Some scholars tend to compare the development strategies and characteristics of anime IP in different areas[26]-[30].

In summary, research related to anime IP has entered a stable development stage, presenting a diverse range of research contents covering commercialization, cultural inheritance, educational applications, cross-media storytelling, relationships with new media, and internationalization. Among these, commercialization strategies of anime IP have the highest

research quantity, and these studies are also proportionally higher in core journals. This includes research on development strategies from the perspective of Internet+, new media, studies under the background of national cultural confidence, as well as operations, industrial chains, publishing, monetization, copyrights, theme parks, blind boxes, and overall copyright operations. Some scholars have explored the cultural expression and inheritance of anime IP, the creation of anime IP, relationships with cross-media storytelling and literature, the relationship between anime IP and new media, and the internationalization of anime IP, while few scholars have discussed the application of anime IP in education.

However, there are several shortcomings in the current research. Firstly, there is a lag in research, mainly focusing on explaining market success models and inferential interpretations, lacking foresight. Overemphasis on successful market works neglects research on unsuccessful works and non-mainstream IP, resulting in a relatively narrow research perspective. Secondly, the theoretical system is incomplete, lacking a solid theoretical foundation. Establishing a complete theoretical system is needed for a deep understanding of anime IP phenomena. Additionally, there is a relative lack of research on social issues and critical studies. Research has not sufficiently addressed the problems, cultural identity, and gender stereotypes caused by anime IP in society. International comparative research is also limited, primarily focusing on the United States and Japan, with insufficient attention to other countries, leading to a limited understanding of the global anime IP industry. In specific research directions, there is still insufficient research on emerging markets and audience groups, anime IP creators and creative teams, consumer behavior, sustainable development and social responsibility, and the application of anime IP in the education sector. Moreover, research lacks sufficient consideration of ethical issues, especially in studies involving sensitive topics or specific groups. Finally, there is a relative lack of long-term observation of the cultural inheritance of anime IP.

## **5 Conclusion**

This study investigates the landscape of academic research of anime IP in China, examining its development trends, research quantity characteristics, publication types, citation analysis, authorship, institutional affiliations, collaboration patterns, and research content. The research aimed to address the scarcity of review literature in this domain. To bridge this gap, statistical analysis and content research methods were adopted, focusing on literature indexed in the CNKI database from pre-2014 to 2023. The investigation involved the retrieval and analysis of over 700 articles related to anime IP.

**Research Findings:** The analysis revealed several noteworthy findings. Firstly, while anime IP has experienced substantial growth and academic attention, there remains a predominant focus on applied research, with limited emphasis on review articles. Secondly, examination of the quantity characteristics of anime IP literature highlighted a scarcity of high-level research, concentrated disciplinary distribution, and limited thematic diversity. Thirdly, the study identified primary publication types, sources, and continuity patterns, indicating a concentration of research in journals related to film, television, media, and publishing. However, there is a noted lack of strong continuity in research across most journals. Moreover,



authorship analysis revealed a predominant trend of sole authorship and limited cross-institutional collaboration.

Citation analysis revealed a diverse distribution of cited literature over time, with a notable increase in attention to anime IP research in recent years. Additionally, the study explored various research contents related to anime IP, including commercialization strategies, cultural expression and inheritance, educational applications, cross-media storytelling, literary relationships, and internationalization, and there is a notable dearth of international comparative research, with a predominant focus on the United States and Japan.

Despite the progress made, several limitations persist in current anime IP research. These include a lack of theoretical depth, insufficient attention to social issues, and limited international comparative studies. Scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of anime IP's cultural significance, economic impact, and global relevance. As the field evolves, interdisciplinary collaboration and theoretical development will be essential in driving innovation and advancing knowledge in this dynamic domain.

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