

# Research on Interactive Development Between User Participation and UGC Output Within Fan Community Atmosphere

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**Abstract:** Fan communities have gone from being the recipients of information to cultural spaces for the joint creation and sharing of content and emotions. At the same time, daily use by users and the creation of user-generated content form a feedback loop. This paper will explore the atmosphere of the fan community, investigate how the process of user participation has developed into continuous content creation, and examine the reverse shaping effect of content production on the will to participate. The three levels of behaviour in the fan community participation behavior are: information reception, social interaction and content creation. Each level of behaviour accumulates in the emotional atmosphere, identity structure and norm system of the community, completing the transition from the consumption end to the production end through the paths of emotional mobilisation, identity reinforcement and creation transformation; large-scale UGC output reduces the participation threshold by increasing the visibility and cohesion of the community, thus forming a circular reinforcing effect. The Platform's technical architecture is both a support and a bottleneck at this time. This study offers a process analysis of the collective content creation by fan communities in the digital age and provides a reference for the cultivation of community operation ecology.

**Keywords:** Fan communities; User participation behaviors; UGC content production; Interactive development; Participatory culture.

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## 1. Introduction

Digital Technology is changing how media content is disseminated and experienced. Fan groups have exhibited a special behaviour in this process. They are no longer willing to be passively exposed to culture; instead, they actively create their own cultural connotations through commentary, dissemination, alteration and adaptation of existing works. Jenkins refers to this cultural form as "participatory culture" and believes that fans have developed a system of artistic practice through "textual piracy". Fan communities are also the producers of the content they enjoy.

Chinese Social Media also shows this. According to the "2025 Weibo Pan-secondary Anime Content Ecology Research Report", by 2024, there were approximately 503 million pan-secondary anime users across China, which accounted for almost half of all Internet users, and the related market had reached about 597.7 billion yuan. There are over 320 million ACG users on Weibo, and 2.6 million ACG-related posts are produced daily. Super topics, fan groups and other phenomena have led to a shift in the production of fan content from individual behaviour to group activities. Therefore, the following problem has been raised: How do fan communities achieve large-scale content production? What is the connection among users' browsing, commenting and sharing, and the large-scale production of UGC?

Many studies have been conducted in the field of fan culture and user behaviour in virtual communities so far. Most research has treated "user participation" and "content creation" separately. The former is a type of communication behaviour, and the latter falls under the category of content creation. This way does not consider the cooperation among the two in the community. Likes and comments in the daily operation of fan communities provide the foundation for content creation, and the release of UGC has also altered the

mode of participation by community members. Participation and production are mutually permeating [1]. This paper takes the atmosphere of a fan community as the subject of study and examines user participation and UGC creation simultaneously to offer a more all-encompassing view of fan community research.

## 2. Three Basic Forms of User Participation Behavior in Fan Communities

The behaviour of participation by members of fan communities cannot be explained by a single index, such as "activity level". The three categories of these differences are information reception, relationship interaction and content contribution. Of course, the three divisions are based on daily life and are not fixed; users in actual communities often belong to multiple types.

The type of information reception for participation has the largest scope. Many community members only browse the posts and videos and read the information; they do not speak or post. The "quietness" of these members does not necessarily mean they are uninterested in the community; browsing provides content creators with a basic level of exposure, and low-cost behaviours such as signing in and checking in also provide some support for the community's activities [2]. Weibo Super Topics are, in fact, interest-based communication platforms that facilitate information sharing. As per Weibo's official rules, users' daily log-ins, interactions and other behaviours on the platform will affect the overall index of this super topic. The number of correct sign-ins indicates the extent to which people in the community have been able to participate.

The type of relationship interaction for participation is at a middle level, and it includes comments, forwards and bullet

comments, etc., which are two-way communications. Users at this level are no longer mere consumers of content; they are also participants in the discussion of the meaning and emotional sharing of the community through responses [3]. Every reply and every round of viewpoint collision are continuously adding to the network of community relations. The basic forms of the people's emotions among the members are micro-interactions.

The content contribution type of participation has the strongest output attribute and includes original text and images, re-creation videos, fan works, etc. The proportion of this kind of member accounts for the lowest in the community, but they are the foundation for the inheritance of community culture. Not only are the content creators some of the top users, but there are others. Xiaohongshu data can be used to show this: 50% of the platform's traffic exposure goes to ordinary users with fewer than 1,000 followers. This way, it will be more likely that the content of ordinary users will be seen and the hurdle for transitioning from receivers to contributors will be lower. These three types of participation do not have a strict order; they can be chosen freely according to the circumstances. Flexibility is thus necessary to maintain the life of the community.

### **3. From Participation to Production: The Transformation Path of UGC Content Creation in the Community**

After classifying the types of participation behaviour, the next problem to be addressed is: How are daily life transformed into UGC creation? What are the conditions for a jump from "observing and discussing" to "doing"? It will not change by itself; a community environment is required to make that change.

Traditional professional content creation is linear, but UGC in fan communities is constantly being added to. Motivations, forms and spreads of content are all influenced by the community environment. Fan communities have introduced many types of content, such as pictures and videos, to display paintings, stories and characters. The production of this type of content has a low threshold; a mobile phone or a computer can be used for release. Many ordinary fans have begun to create and spread content themselves. The LOFTER platform can be used to set the following or additional content as "hidden treasures", and readers can unlock the reading rights by purchasing paid gifts such as grain tickets and monthly tickets. This way links the income from content consumption and creation, reducing the cost of switching from browsing to production [4].

Mix clips, cover songs and imitation works, etc., all of which are now available on Douyin and Bilibili at a high production level. Such creations generally originate from an emotional connection to some material—a moving performance by a fan, a line with strong dissemination power, and so on—and can inspire derivative works. Shan Yichun sang the adapted version of "Li Bai" during the broadcast of "Singer 2025", and then said, "How about it?". What about it? Spread rapidly through the community and sparked a wave of imitation and imitation creation. According to the Changsha Evening News, Quan Hongchan posted this lyric on social media, and then a large number of netizens spontaneously created various derivative works through editing and covers. The spread of visual UGC often goes through the stages of emotional resonance, community

imitation and viral diffusion. The first creators are generally ordinary members of the community who have participated in it.

In terms of participation behaviour, UGC production is not a sudden change but an extension in depth of participation. A user who has been browsing the super thread for a long time will gradually build a desire and ability to express by continuously encountering others' creations; a positive feedback comment may also motivate them to post their own work. Therefore, UGC is not an independent form of participation behaviour but rather an advanced type of participation behaviour that occurs in a community atmosphere [5].

In terms of participation behavior, UGC production is not a mutation but an expansion of the depth of participation. A user who has been browsing the super-thread section for a long time will gradually accumulate the willingness and skills to express themselves as they continuously receive others' creations; a positive feedback comment may also trigger their attempt to publish original content. Therefore, UGC is not an independent activity separate from participation but an advanced form of participation behavior under the influence of the community atmosphere.

### **4. The Linkage Cycle Between Participation Behavior and UGC Output and Its Internal Mechanism**

There is a mutually reinforcing cycle of fan community participation behaviour and UGC creation, which consists of four stages: participation accumulation, emotional mobilisation, output feedback and re-participation. Thus, this mechanism can explain how the content ecosystem of the community sustains and expands continuously.

Participation accumulation refers to the knowledge reserves, social networks and operating abilities that users have gained through extended participation in the community. A regular fan who has followed the super thread for several months, even if they have never posted, already knows what kind of content the community prefers, how to express themselves, and what are the main topics of discussion. The above accumulations have lowered the psychological threshold for switching from consumption to production. When triggered by an event, such as the release of a new work or an anniversary of the community, users with a deeper accumulation are more likely to become content creators first. They begin creating not out of a desire for special talents, but because they have gathered sufficient experience in "what this community requires".

Emotional mobilisation answers the question of "why UGC surges at certain times". The birthday of a favourite singer, an anniversary celebration, or a group support rally can all be highly moving for people. At this time, the creative will of the people is no longer only self-expression but also the collective consciousness of "doing something for the community". At this time, as individuals' emotions converge into a sense of collective will, User-Generated Content can be spread widely and spontaneously [6]. Without this collective mobilisation of emotion, the initial wave of UGC would not have been sparked.

Output feedback keeps the loop running continuously. Comments, forwards and likes on a user's post can motivate that user to create more often. Social exchange theory can be used to explain this mechanism: The time and effort that creators invest are exchanged for social rewards, such as

reputation and attention in the community, which, although not monetary, can also motivate behaviour effectively. When a large number of creators simultaneously receive such positive feedback, the UGC output of the whole community will enter an acceleration phase [7].

Re-participation refers to the generated content serving as the foundation for the next round of participation. A well-known analysis post or a video that has been widely shared will attract more users to enter the browsing and interaction stage, thus expanding the participation base and reserving potential creators for the next round of production. The four stages are linked to each other and work together in a continuous cycle.

## 5. The Mediating Role of Emotional Energy and Group Identification

Two reasons for the continuous operation of the linkage cycle are provided below: emotional energy and group identification. These two variables have different time scales; emotional energy relates to the present psychological state, and group identification involves the long-term construction of membership. Together, they address the same question: How do individual-level participation behaviours aggregate to form collective-level content production?

Collins' Theory of interactive ritual chains is the origin of emotional energy. Therefore, it is believed that a well-organised interactive ceremony will give people the enthusiasm and confidence to participate willingly. The collection of emotional energy often begins with some interaction, such as a comment that garners many responses, a deep conversation among people with similar interests, or the experience of watching a live stream together. The short-lived enthusiasm that broke out at that time may be sustained by the public and thus become an enduring motivation for participation. Users who frequently receive positive feedback on their posts in the community are more likely to create other works. Emotional energy can be seen as a power-conversion device for "participation" into "production".

Group identification has a longer duration. The construction of identity in fan communities has two features: first, users gain a sense of belonging by participating in daily activities as fans; second, the production and spread of user-generated content (UGC) serve as materials for strengthening this sense of identity [8]. Some scholars have studied the fan community of virtual idol A-SOUL and found that the participatory production of fans serves two purposes: building identity and creating values; it helps fans establish their own sense of identity and a sense of belonging to a group, and also promotes the creation of community cultural values. Therefore, group identification serves as the precondition for joining; at the same time, it will also be carried forward throughout one's participation and work.

To differentiate between emotional energy and group identification, one can distinguish between the various links in the linkage cycle. Emotional energy responds to the question "Why did UGC suddenly increase at that time?" It is directly related to the collective emotion of resonance [9]. Group identification explains "why this burst is continuing" and helps the community learn how to create content daily on their own without external prompts. The two factors frequently occur simultaneously in actual operation. The above division only serves the purpose of analysis.

## 6. The Promotion and Constraints of Platform Technology Architecture

If emotional energy and group identification are the internal driving forces of the loop, then the technology architecture of the platform provides the external environment for this loop. Algorithm recommendations, interactive functions and governance rules directly determine the speed of loop start-up, working efficiency and future development direction. To understand how the above conditions work is to learn about the whole system in a loop.

The algorithm recommendation mechanism modifies the distribution pattern of visibility first. Douyin is an algorithm-driven platform that will show users content based on their interests. This "content finding users" logic allows ordinary users without a fan base to also have the chance of being seen by many people when they first post. Lowering the threshold for creators to receive feedback will shorten the cycle of the first attempt and incentive collection, thus accelerating the start-up speed of the linkage cycle. The other is a timeline-type community called Super Topic. The displayed content will be based on what fans have subscribed to and searched for, so creators need to use the social network in their community to spread such materials. The start-up process is slower, but the connections that have been built are relatively strong. The Design of interactive functions also directs the behaviour of participation in several directions. Colab and other imitation/challenge tools on Douyin have divided the process of content creation into standard steps that are simple to learn [10]. Xiaohongshu is a two-column information-flow model that grants users the right to choose content and retains a community atmosphere of "sincere sharing and friendly interaction". This combination will be more likely to build a light-weight daily sharing UGC ecosystem. The means of Weibo Super Topic are relatively direct: sign-in, points and heat value quantify participation behaviour; sign-in is correlated with the heat value of the Super Topic, and continuous investment is incentivised, but it may also lead to some behaviour changes towards data orientation rather than content orientation. Platform function design guides user behaviour to promote some forms of participation and inhibit others.

The Governance Rules Layer is more complicated. Set review standards, copyright policies and community norms to filter out low-quality content and maintain the overall quality of UGC. However, they may also restrict the production of some kinds of works due to overly stringent standards. But the fans are never passive followers. When the platform's rules conflict with community norms, some people have collectively migrated to change how they produce content or switched to code-switching [11]. The tug-of-war between the platform and the community constitutes the external environment of the loop, and various developments of the community loops are introduced here.

## 7. Conclusion

Given the internal environment of the fan community, this paper will explore how participation behaviour is linked to UGC creation. Based on the above studies, the following results have been obtained.

Participation is not an either/or choice. In fact, it is currently in a state of data collection, coordination with others, and work creation. Users move back and forth among different forms and are not fixed in any single place. The

group does not need to be in a particular category; life and vitality are what truly give this community its spirit. UGC production is not an independent behaviour, but arises from participation under the influence of the community atmosphere. Participation and creation require the collection of emotional energy and the formation of a group identity. If either of the above is not implemented, the continuous output of content will be hindered.

Participation behaviour can lead to UGC creation through a path: Participation fosters emotion-driven mobilisation and motivates the generation of feedback; thus, more people are encouraged to participate. At this time, the community's content ecosystem will be self-reinforcing; more people participate in creation, and as more diverse content appears, the easier it will be for new members to join. Some of the technical variables will also be included.

One of the aims of this paper at a higher level of abstraction is to consider participation and production as an integrated system rather than dealing with them separately. In other words, community managers should also produce content to promote the construction of the community. If either of these is lacking, the cycle will not operate normally.

If there are any deficiencies, the analysis of user motivation and psychological state in this paper has relied on literature deduction to some extent and has not been supported by one's own interviews and questionnaires. If the following studies can fill in these deficiencies, then the model will be more convincing. In addition, it can be investigated whether the links in the fan communities of different types, such as fan communities for idols, fan communities for works, and fan communities for brands, are also different.

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