



# The OSMU Model in the Korean Animation Industry and Its Application to the Integrated Development of the Yangtze River Delta Animation Industry

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**Abstract.** The integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta has created new opportunities for the animation industry and has also placed higher demands on collaborative innovation within regional cultural industries. However, in the process of regional integration, how to effectively integrate resources, achieve coordinated production, and build influential animation brands remains a key issue that urgently needs to be addressed. This paper takes the OSMU model, which has been widely applied in the Korean animation industry, as a case of reference. By examining its practical applications in content development, industrial extension, and market operation, the study analyzes the main types and operational characteristics of the OSMU model within the animation industry. Based on this analysis, and in consideration of the current development status and regional collaborative advantages of the Yangtze River Delta animation industry, the paper proposes a development path for constructing an OSMU model with regional characteristics. The study aims to provide theoretical references and practical insights for resource integration, coordinated development, and brand building in the animation industry of the Yangtze River Delta region.

**Keywords:** OSMU Model, Animation Industry, Copyright Protection.

## 1 Introduction

The integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) has created significant opportunities for the animation industry. In 2016, the State Council approved the *Development Plan for the Yangtze River Delta Urban Agglomeration*[1]. In 2019, the integrated development of the YRD was elevated to a national strategy, and the *Outline of the Yangtze River Delta Regional Integration Development Plan* was released. The region has since become the largest integrated urban cluster in China. Covering multiple sectors such as culture, economy, and education, the strategy has provided new momentum for the animation industry, which is a core component of the cultural sector. The YRD region has long maintained a leading position in China's animation industry.

Shanghai is widely recognized as the birthplace of Chinese animation. In 1922, the Wan brothers produced China's first animated short film, *Shu Zhendong Chinese*

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*Typewriter*. In 1941, they created Asia's first feature-length animated film, *Princess Iron Fan*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Shanghai Animation Film Studio produced a series of classic works, including *Havoc in Heaven*, *Three Monks*, and *Calabash Brothers*. In 2004, China's first national Animation and Game Industry Revitalization Base was established in Shanghai[2].

The animation industry in Zhejiang began in the 1990s with outsourcing production for overseas markets. After 2000, it gradually shifted toward original content creation, with Hangzhou as the core center. In recent years, Hangzhou has hosted more than 260 animation-related enterprises and over 20,000 practitioners. Since 2005, the city has hosted the China International Cartoon and Animation Festival and is striving to build itself into the "Animation Capital of China. [3]"

In Jiangsu, the animation industry initially developed through outsourcing companies concentrated in cities such as Suzhou. In 2006, the provincial government issued policies to support the development of the animation industry[4]. At present, Jiangsu hosts several national animation industry bases in Nanjing, Suzhou, Wuxi, and Changzhou. With a large number of related enterprises, the province ranks among the leading regions in China in terms of original animation production.

Compared with other YRD regions, Anhui's animation industry started relatively late. Since 2007, national animation industry bases have been established in Hefei and Wuhu[5]. In recent years, a number of original animation works have emerged, including *The Legend of Huangshan*, *Justice Bao with the Black Face*, and *Twelve Zodiac City Heroes*, demonstrating considerable development potential.

Despite its early start, abundant resources, and strong talent base, the animation industry in the YRD still tends to rely on local resources within individual provinces and cities. Industrial chains often remain confined within provincial boundaries, lacking complementary collaboration and regional integration. As a result, the formation of influential animation brands and the overall upgrading of the industry have been constrained.

Drawing on the successful experience of the OSMU (One Source Multi Use) model in the Korean animation industry, this paper proposes an integrated development strategy tailored to the characteristics of the YRD. First, cross-media thinking should be embedded in the early stage of joint planning, enabling the coordinated integration of resources and avoiding fragmented development. Second, regional collaborative production should be strengthened by leveraging the respective advantages of different areas: Shanghai's platform and financial resources, Jiangsu's technological and manufacturing capacity, Zhejiang's dynamic private-sector vitality, and Anhui's cost and talent advantages, thereby forming an efficient cooperative network. Finally, a regional copyright protection platform should be established to regulate authorization and rights protection, ensuring sustainable development. Through these measures, a localized OSMU ecosystem can be constructed, promoting the transformation of the animation industry from a "manufacturing-oriented" model to one driven by "creative production and brand building," and contributing to the emergence of a world-class animation industry cluster in the YRD.

## 2 Characteristics of the OSMU Model in the Korean Animation Industry

“OSMU” is the abbreviation of One Source Multi Use, which can be literally translated into Chinese as “one source, multiple uses.” It refers to the diversified utilization of a single IP resource across different media forms and industrial fields[6]. The concept was first proposed by the Japanese electronics industry in the 1980s to enable the cross-media output of digital products, thereby reducing costs and improving efficiency and convenience. In 1995, the concept was introduced into the cultural and creative industries of South Korea. Since the early 2000s, the successful application of the OSMU model has played an important role in promoting the spread of the “Korean Wave” across Asia.

In the Korean animation industry, the OSMU model can be broadly divided into two main types. The first type is based on animations that have already achieved market success, which are then redeveloped across multiple media and industries. This model is characterized by a shorter development cycle, relatively low cost, and high market acceptance. A typical example is Pucca, created by the company VOOZ. In 2000, Pucca gained popularity through online Flash animations. Subsequently, a wide range of derivative products were developed around the character. Initially, small commodities such as mobile phone cases and key chains were introduced, followed by toys and stationery. In 2002, the brand cooperated with Lotte fast food and TV CF broadcasting stations for promotional campaigns and television animation adaptations. In 2003, it collaborated with Daesang Group on food packaging, and in 2004 it partnered with Nexon to launch an online game. Internationally, Pucca has cooperated with companies such as Burger King and Esoteric Fashion in the fields of food and clothing. To date, the brand has collaborated with more than 500 global enterprises—including Disney and Warner—and has launched nearly 3,000 products in more than 120 countries[7]. This model first attracts audiences through low-threshold online content and then gradually expands across industries, relying on audience recognition to achieve a high level of market acceptance.

The second type embeds the OSMU concept at the initial stage of project planning, allowing animation production and derivative development to proceed simultaneously. This approach features clear strategic positioning, strong integration capabilities, and efficient cross-sector collaboration. A representative example is Pororo the Little Penguin (2003), an animation series targeting preschool children. The project was jointly developed by four partners—ICONIX, OCON, EBS, and SK Telecom. SK Telecom provided financial support, Iconix was responsible for planning, OCON handled intermediate production, and EBS undertook post-production promotion and broadcasting[8]. The project was implemented in two phases. During the first phase (2003–2004), the focus was on animation production, broadcasting, and the initial development of derivatives such as books and toys. Through awards at international festivals, including the Annecy International Animation Festival, the series expanded into overseas markets. In the second phase (2004–2006), the brand strategy was further strengthened. The characters were incorporated into health-oriented products such as sugar-free chewing gum and yogurt, positioning the characters as “health ambassadors.” As a result, the number of derivative products expanded to more than 340 items and was exported to

over 110 countries. In 2011, commemorative stamps featuring the characters were issued. Through precise market positioning, multi-party collaboration, and the integration of social values, this model successfully established long-term brand influence.

In summary, by adopting the OSMU model, the Korean animation industry has effectively established brand identities, expanded markets, and driven industrial development. In the context of the integrated development of the YRD animation industry, it is valuable to draw on the Korean experience. By integrating regional resources and cultural characteristics, a localized OSMU model can be constructed, promoting the transformation of animation from a single-content production model toward a multi-form IP value chain and enhancing the overall industrial structure and global competitiveness.

### **3 OSMU Development Strategies for the Animation Industry in the Yangtze River Delta**

#### **3.1 Integration in the Early Planning Stage**

Under the OSMU model, early-stage planning not only determines the narrative content of an animation project but also influences the development and dissemination of subsequent derivative products. Therefore, animation planning should focus on three dimensions: capital integration, cross-media promotion, and user engagement. First, animation enterprises in the YRD should integrate investment resources and formulate unified investment strategies around a common animation theme. A coordinated investment structure led by large enterprises and supported by small and medium-sized enterprises can help avoid redundant resource allocation and unhealthy competition. Second, animation possesses inherent advantages in cross-media dissemination, as animated characters can be extended into multiple media forms, including film, television, games, and cultural and creative products. Relying on its well-developed cultural industry system, the YRD region can promote integrated marketing through multi-platform content production and derivative product development, thereby enhancing brand value. Finally, the cultivation of user engagement should be emphasized at the initial stage of brand creation. Story development and character design should be based on audience preferences, enabling viewers to develop emotional identification with the characters and narratives. This emotional connection can be further strengthened through the consumption of derivative products, thus fostering brand loyalty and forming a sustainable OSMU-based business model.

#### **3.2 Regional Collaborative Production**

The success of the OSMU model is grounded in high-quality animation works; therefore, improving the level of animation production is of critical importance. The YRD region can establish a differentiated collaborative production chain based on the industrial strengths of each area. As the regional leader, Shanghai possesses strong financial resources and creative talent and should primarily undertake early-stage script development and project planning. Jiangsu, relying on national animation industry bases in cities such as Nanjing, Suzhou, and Wuxi as well as abundant university resources, can

focus on mid-stage concept design and artistic development. In recent years, Anhui has undertaken a significant transfer of animation-related industries. Cities such as Hefei and Wuhu have gathered numerous animation production companies and benefit from relatively lower labor costs, making them well suited to mid-production processes such as in-between animation and 3D production. Zhejiang, supported by its capital and geographical advantages, can strengthen post-production work such as visual effects while also introducing international resources for co-production and talent training. Through regional division of labor and collaborative cooperation, the YRD can form a complementary animation production chain, providing a solid foundation for high-quality animation production within the OSMU framework.

### **3.3 Strengthening Copyright Protection**

Within the OSMU model, animation-derived products serve as a key vehicle for extending a single animation element across multiple fields. However, in the process of applying animation elements to derivative products, it is essential to strengthen brand authorization mechanisms to ensure that investors and developers obtain reasonable returns. This, in turn, further incentivizes continuous investment of capital and talent into original animation and promotes a virtuous cycle of industry development. Specifically, the Yangtze River Delta region should first enhance regional coordination by jointly establishing specialized copyright protection institutions and continuously improving relevant policies and regulatory frameworks, thereby providing clear legal and institutional safeguards for animation intellectual property rights. Second, investors and creators should strengthen their awareness of copyright protection by registering trademarks and securing copyrights for core animation characters and related elements at the early stage of project planning, so as to reduce infringement risks at the source. Finally, efforts should be made at the societal level to promote copyright awareness and guide consumers to develop a preference for officially licensed products, encouraging them to consciously choose and purchase authorized animation derivatives. In conclusion, by advancing institutional development, industry self-regulation, and consumer guidance in a coordinated manner, the copyright protection system can be strengthened and a healthy market supply-demand relationship can be fostered.

## **4 Conclusion**

Since the late 1990s, South Korea has systematically introduced the OSMU model to promote the development of its cultural and creative industries, achieving remarkable success particularly in animation and related content sectors. This model enables the cross-media and multi-format expansion of a single intellectual property (IP), thereby realizing multiple rounds of value extraction and cumulative value enhancement. As a result, an integrated industrial chain centered on film and television, animation, games, music, and derivative products has been established. Through this development path, the “Korean Wave” has gradually emerged and exerted widespread influence across Asia and even globally. Its successful experience provides valuable reference for the

Yangtze River Delta's animation industry, which is currently undergoing transformation and upgrading. Against the backdrop of regional integration in the Yangtze River Delta, the animation industry urgently needs to establish an OSMU development model that aligns with regional resource endowments and industrial structural characteristics. First, in the early stage of animation project planning, it is essential to strengthen investment in capital integration, cross-media promotion, and user engagement. Second, during the production stage, emphasis should be placed on regional collaboration. Based on the current development status of the animation industry in the Yangtze River Delta, production resources should be integrated to form distinctive animation industry clusters. Finally, copyright protection serves as a crucial guarantee for the profitability of animation derivatives in the market. From the government and investors to production entities and consumers, all stakeholders should enhance their awareness of intellectual property rights, thereby fostering positive interactions among the market, creators, and consumers.

Overall, the application of the OSMU model in the animation industry contributes to the optimization of resource allocation and the in-depth exploration of value. It not only facilitates the systematic development of animation brands but also expands industrial chains and increases added value. With the continuous advancement of digital media technologies and the diversification of communication channels, profound changes are taking place in both the production and consumption patterns of the animation industry. In this context, the Yangtze River Delta animation industry must continue to explore diversified development paths in implementing the OSMU model, integrating technological innovation with market dynamics, so as to better meet the increasingly diverse demands of consumers and promote high-quality and sustainable development of the regional animation industry.

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