

# A Study on the Marketing Strategies of Mainstream Film and Television Companies: Taking Marvel as an Example

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### Abstract:

Marvel Entertainment, initially established in 1939 as Timely Publications, underwent a significant transformation in the 1960s under the creative guidance of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko. The introduction of relatable superheroes such as Spider-Man, the X-Men, and the Avengers propelled Marvel to global recognition. These characters' relatability, combined with their extraordinary abilities, allowed Marvel to transcend the comic book medium and expand into various entertainment domains. The pivotal moment in Marvel's evolution came in 2009 when it was acquired by Disney for \$4 billion, marking the beginning of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). This strategic move was financed by a daring \$525 million loan from Merrill Lynch, enabling Marvel to bring its film production in-house and maintain creative autonomy. This decision not only allowed for a more cohesive storytelling approach but also resulted in a significant share of profits, contributing to the creation of blockbuster films that shattered box office records and cultivated a devoted fan following. Central to Marvel's enduring success is its business model, which hinges on cross-media integration. This approach has allowed Marvel to weave a rich tapestry of stories and characters across different platforms, including movies, television series, video games, and an extensive range of merchandise. The interconnected nature of the MCU has fostered a sense of continuity and depth, encouraging fans to engage with the brand across multiple touchpoints.

**Keywords:** Marketing; Film and Television Company; Marvel.

## 1. Introduction

Marvel Entertainment is a huge company that is known worldwide for its superheroes, movies, comics, and shows that captivate fans of all ages. It was founded in 1939 as Timely Publications, but Marvel truly found its identity in the 1960s when it rebranded as Marvel Comics. During this time, legendary writer Stan Lee, with talented artists like Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, made some of the most iconic superheroes, including Spider-Man, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, and the Avengers. These characters became very popular because, despite their superpowers, they faced real-life problems that made them relatable to readers. Over the years, Marvel expanded beyond comics, and in 2009, it was bought by Disney for 4 billion dollars, allowing Marvel to grow even more. They began making their own movies, starting with "Iron Man" in 2008, which launched the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which is a series of interconnected films and shows that tell one big story. The MCU has become a big success, with movies like "The Avengers," "Black Panther," and "Guardians of the Galaxy" breaking box office records and gathering a huge fan base. Beyond movies and comics, Marvel also produces video games, toys, and TV series, setting its place as one of the biggest names in entertainment. Marvel has built a massive, shared universe that keeps expanding, and fans keep increasing [1].

To finance its ambitious plans for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Marvel Entertainment made a bold move by taking on a \$525 million loan from the investment firm Merrill Lynch. This allowed Marvel to bring its movie-making operations in-house, which was described by Cuneo as their "most transformative move." By having full control over its films, Marvel could make sure that its vision for a connected universe of superheroes was executed precisely as intended. This investment was risky but paid off massively as it laid the foundation for what would become the MCU, one of the most successful franchises in cinematic history. Marvel's decision to handle its productions internally not only gave them creative freedom but also allowed them to keep a larger share of the profits, fueling their rapid growth and enabling them to reinvest in even more ambitious projects.

## 2. Analysis of the Dominant Business Model of Marvel

Marvel Entertainment's dominant business model revolves around creating and expanding its large universe of superheroes and storytelling across multiple platforms. What began with comic books and has grown into a multi-faceted empire that includes movies, TV shows, video games,

merchandise, and more. A key aspect of Marvel's strategy is the interconnected nature of its universe, especially through the Marvel Cinematic Universe. In the MCU, characters and stories overlap, creating a cohesive experience for fans that extends beyond individual movies. This encourages viewers to engage with multiple films, shows, and other media to follow the complete storyline, which in turn drives ticket sales, streaming subscriptions, and merchandise purchases. Marvel also licenses its characters for use in other products and media, generating additional revenue without having to produce everything themselves. By consistently delivering engaging content that resonates with audiences of all ages, Marvel has transformed its superheroes into a powerful, multi-billion-dollar brand that dominates the entertainment industry. One of Marvel's key strategies is cross-media integration, which involves connecting its stories and characters across different types of media, creating a vast, interconnected universe that fans can enjoy in many ways. This strategy began with comic books, but now Marvel's characters appear in movies, TV shows, video games, and even theme parks. The Marvel Cinematic Universe is a perfect example of this approach, where superheroes like Iron Man, Captain America, and Spider-Man can jump from a movie to a TV show or a video game, keeping their stories connected. This makes fans want to watch, play, and buy everything to stay up to date on the whole storyline. Marvel also collaborates with other companies, allowing its characters to appear on merchandise like toys, clothes, and various video games. This approach keeps Marvel's heroes omnipresent, making the brand impossible to miss and keeping fans engaged no matter where they look. Marvel's popularity stems from its ability to offer something for everyone and connect with people in unique ways. One of the main reasons Marvel is so beloved is because its characters are incredibly relatable; even though they have superpowers, they go through problems like everyone else. For instance, Spider-Man is just a teenager trying to balance school, friends, and his superhero duties, which makes him relatable to many fans. Marvel excels storytelling, creating huge, connected universes where all the characters' stories intertwine, making each movie or show feel like an important piece of a larger puzzle. The action and special effects are always impressive, and Marvel know show to add humor, making their movies entertaining and fun for all ages. Additionally, Marvel is known for its diverse range of characters, which means that everyone can find a hero that looks like them or faces similar challenges. This inclusive approach helps people feel represented and connected to the Marvel universe, keeping fans excited and engaged. Marvel's approach to storytelling is often referred to as the "Marvel Formula." This formula com-

bines relatable heroes, interconnected stories, a balance of action, humor, and emotion, diverse characters, engaging villains, and thrilling post-credit scenes to create a consistently entertaining and compelling cinematic universe. By sticking to this formula, Marvel has managed to keep its content fresh and appealing to a broad audience, ensuring that its stories remain relevant and popular [2].

### 3. Marvel's Development Limitations and Challenges

However, Marvel's journey hasn't always been smooth. In the 1950s, the Comics Code Authority (CCA) was established to regulate comic book content, which had a significant impact on Marvel and other comic publishers. The CCA imposed strict rules that limited what comics could show, including violence, horror, crime, and supernatural elements. As a result, Marvel had to tone down its stories considerably, making them less exciting and interesting to readers who craved more realistic and gripping tales [3]. Fans wanted to see characters facing real challenges, but the CCA's rules made it difficult for Marvel to deliver that kind of content. Consequently, Marvel's sales declined because the overly sanitized stories failed to resonate with the audience. This period was a challenging time for Marvel, as it struggled to maintain its appeal while adhering to the restrictive guidelines set by the CCA. Marvel Entertainment has grown from a small comic book publisher into one of the most dominant forces in global entertainment. Through its strategic financial investments, such as bringing movie production in-house, Marvel has built a business model that centers on creating a vast, interconnected universe that spans comics, movies, TV shows, videogames, and more. Marvel's cross-media integration ensures that its stories and characters remain ever-present, keeping fans engaged and eager for more. The company's success is driven by its ability to craft relatable characters, compelling stories, and diverse heroes that resonate with audiences worldwide. Despite challenges like the Comics Code Authority, Marvel has continually adapted and evolved, using its unique formula to create a powerful, multi-billion-dollar brand that continues to captivate and inspire fans around the globe [4, 5].

### 4. Conclusion

To sum up, Marvel Entertainment has adeptly maneuvered through the shifting dynamics of the entertainment sector, emerging as a worldwide leader. The company's strategic rebranding during the 1960s, its daring decision to finance

its own film production with a substantial loan, and its pioneering method of weaving narratives across different media have all been crucial in propelling Marvel to the forefront of the industry. The establishment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe stands out as a pivotal moment, crafting a unified and far-reaching story arc that has resonated with viewers across the globe.

The essence of Marvel's triumph lies in its business strategy that highlights the interconnectivity of its fictional universe and the appeal of its characters to audiences. This strategy has been a recipe for success, propelling the company to achieve not just financial triumphs at the box office but also cultivating a dedicated community of fans who actively engage with Marvel's offerings across a spectrum of platforms. Marvel's capacity to navigate obstacles, such as the constraints set by the Comics Code Authority, is a testament to its tenacity and dedication to producing captivating content.

As we look to the future, the sustained prosperity of Marvel will depend on its capacity to uphold narrative excellence, to pioneer new avenues for content distribution, and to stay in tune with the changing preferences of its audience. In the face of an ever-evolving entertainment landscape, which includes the growing influence of digital streaming services and the significance of international markets, Marvel must remain vigilant. By upholding its foundational principles of crafting characters that resonate and crafting immersive tales, while also being open to embracing new ideas and innovations, Marvel is set to continue its reign as a major player in the entertainment world for many years to come.

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