

THE MAGIC OF MARKETING: HOW MARVEL CREATES UNFORGETTABLE STORIES IN THE WORLD OF MOVIES AND COMICS

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of cinema and entertainment, Marvel stands as an undisputed titan. Marvel undeniably reigns supreme as the most triumphant and prosperous media franchise in the annals of history, boasting staggering global box office proceeds that ascend to a remarkable \$11 billion. Nevertheless, Marvel's exceptional triumph does not solely emanate from its iconic superheroes. Astonishingly, even the relatively obscure hero, Ant-Man, a character previously unfamiliar to most, yielded Marvel an astonishing \$150 million more in revenue than the inaugural Captain America film.

Marvel's dominion extends far beyond the silver screen, encompassing a mesmerizing array of comics and graphic novels that have indelibly etched themselves into the affections of countless enthusiasts across the globe. Yet, the accolades lavished upon Marvel are not solely attributed to the extraordinary quality and unparalleled creativity that permeate their products but also to their consummate expertise in the arena of marketing.

In this discourse, we shall embark upon an exploration of the intricate tapestry woven by Marvel in its deployment of marketing prowess, unraveling the very essence of how this entertainment juggernaut conjures indelible and unparalleled moments within the intricate realms of cinema and comics.

Phase 0: The Birth of a New Era for the Company

The state of affairs at Marvel was far from prosperous. In 1999, facing financial difficulties and considering superhero movies as an exhausted genre, the company saw it as a reasonable decision to sell the rights to its most recognizable character. Spider-Man ended up under the wing of Sony Pictures for a sum of 7 million dollars shortly after the rights to the X-Men were transferred to 20th Century Fox. Film series based on the X-Men and Spider-Man significantly revived interest in superheroes on the big screen, ranking 7th and 8th in box office earnings in the history of cinema.

Marvel made a strategic mistake by relinquishing superhero films. The films based on the X-Men and Spider-Man generated immense excitement, prompting Marvel to return to the big screen, but without its most famous characters. Among these characters, Wolverine, Professor X, Cyclops, Magneto, and Spider-Man could be highlighted. However, after deals with Sony and Fox, Marvel lost the rights to them. Furthermore, Marvel faced competition from DC, which had the most iconic superheroes in history. How could Marvel compete with such famous characters as Batman and Superman? Adding Wonder Woman and the Flash to the mix made it clear that Marvel was in for a tough battle.

Phase 1: "The Avengers Assemble"

To compete with giants like Superman and Batman, Marvel decided to use cunning tactics. Given the popularity of the latter, direct competition was unlikely to be successful for Marvel's characters in terms of box office earnings. Therefore, the company avoided direct confrontation and instead created a comprehensive brand. By protecting relatively lesser-known heroes with a powerful brand, Marvel increased its chances of becoming noticeable and appealing to the audience, ultimately resulting in profitability.

This long-term strategic planning was not without its difficulties. It was a classic case of choosing between quick money in the present and potentially larger profits in the future. Marvel could have easily assembled all of its remaining heroes in an "Avengers" film and made a quick profit. Perhaps their characters didn't have the same level of stardom as Batman and Superman, but audiences would have been interested in seeing them come together.

However, Marvel chose the path of gradually developing individual heroes, creating anticipation among the audience for future plots and stories. Marvel planned to release films up to 2028, and it was this strategic foresight that became the foundation of the company's success. The first phase of Marvel's strategy included creating films for each individual character: Iron Man, Hulk, Thor, and Captain America (four of the Avengers). By generating interest around each hero individually, Marvel gained a huge audience that became the prelude to the "Avengers" film.

Films about individual characters allowed the audience to get to know them better and develop a fondness for them. So, by the time "The Avengers" hit the screens, fans were already in love with each hero.

At the tactical level, Marvel reminds us of the importance of using multiple channels simultaneously. The first five films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) intrigued the audience before the release of "The Avengers." Marketers can use a similar approach to create and promote content.

At the strategic level, Marvel initially did not pursue immediate commercial gain. When it started creating prequel films to "The Avengers," its primary goal was not only to make a profit but also to strengthen the impression left by "The Avengers." This approach to brand promotion demonstrates several positive effects. Firstly, the immense popularity of "The Avengers" undoubtedly increased the recognition of the Marvel brand, which, in turn, had an impact on the box office earnings of later-released films and merchandise sales featuring characters. In other words, creating a significant deal required audience preparation.

Phase 2: Creating a Universe

When the Marvel brand gained immense popularity, the company realized that the future after "The Avengers" promised incredible success. It was time to leverage the results of their work by continuing to develop existing characters and introducing lesser-known ones through media channels. New films about each of the Avengers were released, further exploring their stories and making them even more popular.

At the same time, a lesser-known character, Ant-Man, made it to the big screen and managed to earn a solid sum of \$519 million worldwide. Although Ant-Man didn't top the superhero rankings, the recognition of the Marvel brand made his film successful at the box office, earning almost as much as the first Iron Man movie and more than the first Captain America film.

Marvel didn't limit itself to cinema alone. The company decided to expand its presence to television. After releasing series like "Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.," "Agent Carter," "Inhumans," and

"Damage Control," Marvel enriched the Avengers' backstory, paying attention to secondary characters.

Marvel also collaborated with Netflix, where another successful character, Daredevil, emerged. The phenomenal success of the "Daredevil" series prompted the creation of "The Defenders" series on Netflix, where secondary characters from the MCU took the spotlight. "Daredevil," "Jessica Jones," and "Luke Cage" received positive reviews. Separate series about the Punisher and Iron Fist are also planned. As with "The Avengers," the heroes from the Netflix series came together in "The Defenders."

The success of all these series added to the trust in the Marvel brand. Once again, even if fans had no previous knowledge of lesser-known heroes, they knew that Marvel's stories were always interesting, and that was enough.

In all Marvel films and series, it is clear that the heroes exist in a shared universe. Captain America appears in "Ant-Man," Nick Fury makes appearances in several films, and Captain's shield plays an episodic role in "Iron Man 2" long before "The Avengers" was released. In the Netflix series, there are references to the "incident" from the movies and events from other shows in the same universe. Despite having their own plots, these shows are interconnected, creating a backdrop for "The Defenders."

Such cross-references in Marvel films and series are a pleasant bonus for loyal fans, but each film and show can also be enjoyed as a standalone work.

As the marketing department of the company says: "The concept of the MCU is not just to tell the story of individual characters. Undoubtedly, each hero has their own film, but they all contribute to the main storyline of the Avengers saga." This strategy, along with Marvel's brand promotion, yields excellent results. For heroes like Ant-Man, Jessica Jones, and Luke Cage, their own series or movies would not have existed without the concept of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The success of these shows, in turn, fuels the Marvel universe as a whole. Each of their triumphs makes it stronger.

How Marvel uses marketing to retain the attention of its fans and expand its business

1. Creating a Unique Brand:

One of Marvel's key successes is the creation of a strong brand. Marvel Studios developed a strategy that allowed each film and character to become part of a larger cinematic universe, creating a sense of continuity and connecting the films into one overarching story. This method helps retain viewers and keeps them eagerly awaiting each new release.

2. Teasers and Trailers as Art:

Marvel knows how to create anticipation and generate interest in upcoming projects. Their trailers have become events in themselves, sparking discussions and building enormous expectations. For example, the trailer for "Avengers: Endgame" garnered over 289 million views within the first 24 hours.

3. Fan Engagement and Social Media:

Marvel actively engages with fans through social media and events like Comic-Con. They foster live discussions about their projects, share news with fans, post artwork, and interact with them on forums. This creates a sense of community where every fan feels like a part of something bigger.

4. Merchandising and Collectibles:

Marvel understands fans' passion for collectibles and merchandise. They release a wide range of products, from action figures and t-shirts to tableware and posters. This helps fans express their attachment to the franchise and attracts new buyers.

5. Long-Term Vision:

Marvel places special emphasis on long-term planning. They interconnect storylines and characters over many years, creating grand sagas. This makes every new film or comic an integral part of the larger narrative, encouraging fans to follow everything that unfolds.

CONCLUSION:

Marvel serves as an illustrious exemplar illustrating the transformative power of marketing in elevating a franchise into a veritable cultural juggernaut. Their exceptional capacity to meticulously craft a distinctive brand identity, ardently captivate enthusiasts, fabricate riveting promotional trailers, and orchestrate enduring strategic blueprints has propelled them to a venerated echelon within the pantheon of entertainment enterprises. The indomitable Marvel machine persistently dazzles and gratifies its legion of fervent adherents, leaving an indelible mark upon the collective consciousness. It is an incontrovertible certainty that their marketing stratagem will persist in imbuing us with inspiration and awe as we traverse the uncharted terrain of the future.

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