

# The Evolution and Challenge of Marvel's Communication Strategy in The New Media Environment

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**Abstract.** The emergence of the new media period, against the backdrop of digitalisation and globalisation, has significantly altered traditional media communication modes and user consuming habits. As a world-renowned entertainment and media conglomerate, Marvel must constantly update its market strategy to meet the difficulties and opportunities presented by the current media landscape. This study examines the growth of Marvel's publicity strategy in the modern media landscape, as well as the challenges it encounters. With the rise of new media and the influence of COVID-19, among other considerations, Marvel must constantly change its marketing promotion plan to satisfy the demands of online streaming media platforms. This article summarises Marvel's present promotional methods and the main challenges that may be encountered in the new media environment, as well as the remedies, in order to serve as a reference for the cinema and television industries' marketing plans. These include expanding its content distribution on social media and streaming platforms, leveraging these platforms to improve viewer interaction and engagement, and developing film and TV series that combine with new media features to increase content appeal and viewer brand loyalty. Furthermore, Marvel should focus on cross-cultural product innovation, such as collaborating with local creators to co-create works with local cultural traits and tailoring its global content library to the needs of distinct cultural markets.

**Keywords:** Marvel Studios; new media; digital marketing.

## 1. Introduction

The traditional entertainment, film, and television industries have been significantly impacted by the growth of new media as well as the global epidemic of COVID-19. The shutdown of theaters has prompted moviegoers to shift their viewing habits from physical theaters to internet streaming. These occurrences have significantly influenced Marvel and other film and television businesses' marketing communication methods [1].

Based on the aforementioned occurrences, this study focuses on the evolution of Marvel's marketing communication strategy as a result of the epidemic potential and the rapid development of new media, as well as how Marvel should make future decisions in the new media environment. This study uses the literature analysis approach to summarize the growth of Marvel's communication strategy thus far and the obstacles it will encounter in the new media environment, with the goal of providing references for future marketing communication strategies in film and television.

## 2. New Media Communication Characteristics

### 2.1. Feature

To begin with, new media is more than just one-way communication; it also provides a platform for users to communicate with one another via blogs and postings, allowing them to not only view content but also actively participate in the debate of important topics.

Second, new media allows users to use social media tools for real-time editing, strengthening their ability to collaborate with content creators and other groups on a global scale.

Third, new media can assist companies in creating online communities where users can express their opinions about the brand and share information with others, thereby enhancing user brand

loyalty and community awareness. Additionally, the company can receive feedback from consumers promptly.

Fourth, new media encourages users to create a variety of content on the platform. Fans of Marvel, for example, can improve their sense of participation by sharing similar theme videos created by others via social media.

Finally, new media enables Marvel and other corporations to market relevant content via a variety of channels, including movies and TV dramas on streaming platforms. These various marketing tactics might present users with more options [2].

## **2.2. Compared to Traditional Media**

First and foremost, new media is timely and interactive. New media enables consumers to participate in real-time feedback and discussion, whereas traditional media has restricted interaction. Second, most new media content is available in real time over the Internet, whereas traditional media, such as newspapers, may require a subscription to access content. Third, content providers can distribute content in a timely manner on new media, with less filtering and censorship, whereas traditional media receive severe editing. Fourth, users of new media are not only readers but also publishers, whereas traditional media user are only receivers. Finally, modern media evolves swiftly, whereas traditional media does the opposite [3].

In general, there are significant contrasts between new and old media. Users can participate in community conversations and other forms of new media communication in real time. At the same time, new media offers a number of channel marketing tactics to increase user brand loyalty. In contrast, traditional media's subscription and content review mechanisms demonstrate that the benefits of new media communication make it more suitable for the current communication environments.

## **3. Evolution of Marvel's Communication Strategies**

### **3.1. General Strategies**

In addition to new media, Marvel introduces characters through a variety of media, including movies, television shows, and video games. Although many different films and television shows share the same worldview, the audience can enjoy the ones they are interested in without viewing them all.

Second, Marvel will add Easter eggs corresponding to other movies with the same world view under the released movies, which can enhance users' expectations for the unreleased movies, and the spread of Easter eggs can also promote discussion among the audience and increase the heat, for example, near the end of Marvel's Avengers: Infinity War, when Nick Fury is obliterated by Thanos' snapping fingers, he uses a pager to call Captain Marvel, and the pager falls to the ground to display the Captain Marvel logo, indicating that Captain Marvel is about to appear.

Finally, Marvel will collaborate with businesses in many industries to produce peripheral items that will appeal to a variety of user groups while also increasing Marvel's brand awareness and influence. For example, the Marvel Spider-Man game series, which was co-launched by Marvel and SONY on the PlayStation, not only expanded Marvel's product categories, but also drew fans from both companies [4].

### **3.2. Compared to Traditional Media**

With the emergence of new media, Marvel first uses a variety of social media platforms to disseminate the original content under its own brand. Furthermore, as part of Marvel's exclusive content community, the official will interact with the public, potentially increasing user loyalty and sense of belonging. Second, Marvel allows users to publish their own Marvel-related content in the community, including photos and videos, among other types of content production, which can further boost users' sense of community belonging. Third, as the epidemic spread in recent years, Marvel began to develop its own film and television series, including: Marvel uses these film and television

platforms to combine movies, TV dramas, comics, and video games with other series such as "Wonder and Vision," "Hulk," and "Falcon and Winter Soldier." The partnership of these various channels provides fans with more happiness than one plus one [5]. Marvel's usage of these new media communication tactics substantially improved brand-consumer connection, increased content distribution, and increased users' sense of belonging and brand loyalty. However, as competition in the new media environment heats up, Marvel has a variety of difficulties, including how to continue producing fresh and diverse content.

In general, Marvel's employment of new media communication methods has yielded impressive results in terms of growing audience groups and increasing brand influence; yet, Marvel still confronts numerous obstacles in dealing with the continuously changing new media market environment and audience needs.

## **4. Challenges in the New Media Landscape**

First and foremost, Marvel's communication challenges in the new media environment are divided into five categories: Marvel's distributive challenges and audience growth, market competition, the promotion of its own film and television products, the quality of Marvel's film and television works, and the communication barriers faced by different cultures.

### **4.1. Distributive and Audience**

Marvel's promotional and distribution channels are relatively limited. Marvel's core fan base has always been focused on movies, and its distribution on other social media and streaming media is rather weak, which is detrimental to Marvel's development across several platforms [6]. Furthermore, Marvel fans are mostly between the ages of 11 and 20, indicating that the company still has a lot of space to grow in terms of audience reach [6]. Furthermore, Lu, Tseng, and Xu's research found that when compared to DC's IP character awareness, most Marvel characters had low IP recognition, which is damaging to Marvel's market dominance [6]. This is because the characters' low IP recognition means that fans pay less attention to and are less interested in them, resulting in fans' unwillingness to pay for peripheral products such as films based on these characters, resulting in a decrease in Marvel's total market share.

### **4.2. The Market and Cultural Product Cycle**

Marvel must compete, particularly in the Chinese market, with both DC and Japan's animation sector, both of which have significant influence in China's cinema and television circles. Furthermore, Marvel must address the issue of the short life cycle of its own cultural products, as the market saturates and audience tastes change. Marvel's new film and television products launched in recent years have been unable to break through the previous success, and the audience's interest is gradually declining [6,7]. The problem could be that Marvel is no longer able to consistently attract new fans; Marvel's overall brand image may also fade in the minds of viewers; and, at the same time, revenue from Marvel's film and television works will decline, further limiting Marvel's ability to innovate and create.

### **4.3. The Market and Cultural Product Cycle**

In the face of the Chinese market, Marvel's social media promotion remains inadequate. Marvel has not established official accounts on various well-known Chinese social media platforms, such as Bilibili, Douyin, Weibo, and others, which limits Marvel's content marketing [8]. For example, Nike has actively engaged with a large number of Chinese consumers via social media platforms such as Weibo and Tiktok. Not only that, but Nike has a wide range of collaborations with Chinese athletes, celebrities, and so on to help market its brand. These tactics assist Nike in attracting a big number of Chinese consumers.

#### 4.4. Quality and Inventiveness of Work

With the outbreak, Marvel began to boost the number and proportion of films and television programs produced. However, in order to continue continuous market expansion and work release, Marvel needs to pay attention to the quality of its product releases [8]. Furthermore, as the superhero market has become saturated in recent years, the public may become bored with superhero-themed movies, and Marvel must discover new ways to broaden its fan base and maintain its attraction [7].

#### 4.5. Cross-culture

Marvel's films and TV series are based on Marvel Comics, which were created in an American atmosphere, hence Marvel's films lack enough Chinese aspects to appeal to a wider range of age groups. Cultural differences pose another hurdle to Marvel's global expansion [7].

### 5. Suggestions

Not only Marvel, but the rise of streaming media has altered the content generation process of the whole traditional cinema and television industry, as well as consumer viewing patterns. As Lotz et al. stated, taking Netflix as an example, in order to deal with the impact of the streaming media environment, Netflix adjusts its content library, which not only includes content from various countries, but also makes targeted adjustments in response to local cultural differences [9]. This has allowed Netflix to grab a significant part of the global market. Instead than presenting the same content universally, Netflix's video library in 17 different nations mixes mainstream cultural components from each country. The ability to alter the content library enables Netflix to maintain a strong market share and competitive rate in a variety of markets and nations throughout the world [9]. As previously stated, despite the fact that Marvel's film and television products have a significant global fan base, they continue to meet development resistance in culturally diverse countries such as China.

To address this issue, Marvel, like Netflix, can begin by including more exotic non-American cultural components into its film and television works, and creators can collaborate with local creators to include more characters and storylines with Chinese cultural features, such as "Shang-Chi". Furthermore, these culturally significant films can be made in China in order to improve cultural resonance and acceptability among Chinese viewers. In addition to generating character series for the Chinese market, Marvel may consider developing other items for the Chinese market, such as comics or hand action. These more adaptable formats may make Chinese fans be more open to other cultural themes and unique content found in Marvel.

In addition to cross-cultural problems, as the present media business progresses and the trend of digitization and multi-platform becomes more obvious, Marvel must also address the difficulty of how to better communicate with its worldwide and diverse fan base. Perez-Seijo and Silva-Rodriguez found that traditional and digital native media addressed similar difficulties in very different ways [10]. Traditional media, such as radio, hard-copy newspapers, and television channels, for example, find it more difficult to adapt to the diversity of platforms and more rapid and intuitive ways of interacting, whereas digital native media, which originated and operates on the Internet, can adapt more flexibly. Marvel may use digital native media methods to improve its platform diversity and audience engagement. First and foremost, Marvel can aim to build more mobile software items, like as games, interactive reading materials, and VR augmented experiences. The advent of these goods marks Marvel's growth of digital platforms, and they have the potential to provide users with a more immersive experience. For example, in a role-playing game themed around Marvel heroes, gamers can play as their favorite characters and even control them to fight and explore, this idea of gamers playing their favourite heroes has the potential to significantly increase Marvel fan participation, allowing fans to not only watch the tale but also participate in it. This sense of participation can also increase fan brand loyalty, which can lead to an interest in and consumption of Marvel-related products, and the Marvel brand and fan base will continue to grow in popularity. Second, Marvel can

use emerging streaming platforms to promote its film and television products all over the world, including previously untapped markets, and by collaborating with platforms like Netflix, Marvel can provide customized content to consumers in various countries and regions. Third, Marvel can try to boost its social media presence. For example, Marvel can try to create official accounts on platforms such as videos popular in more countries, and place a premium on fan interaction, including live broadcasting and creating challenges and topics based on Marvel IP characters, in order to increase interaction with young audiences and improve the topic degree on social media. It can also collect fan feedback in order to dynamically change the content of Marvel's films and TV shows to match their needs. In addition, Marvel may employ digital marketing and social media platforms to conduct more focused promotion efforts for their own film and television programs. For example, by cooperating with local pop culture events or concerts, or engaging with local fans on social media, they can enhance exposure and fan engagement for their product. Furthermore, Marvel may explore collaborating with local movie theaters to create special premiere activities and personalized presents for the release of new works, as well as movie advertising, in order to raise audience expectations and engagement.

Marvel can still learn from Netflix and regularly update and alter its content library to cater to the requirements and cultural features of different markets in order to overcome the difficulties of "market and cultural product cycle" and "quality and innovation". Marvel, for example, might release more regional short series or limited series aimed at certain regions, such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America, extending the life cycle of its cultural goods. In addition to this, Marvel can aim to capture the audience's attention by bringing new technology and deeper storytelling techniques. For example, in terms of content creation, Marvel's previous film *Black Panther* combined African cultural heritage to draw global attention to African culture. On a technical level, Marvel can try to incorporate VR technology, such as allowing players to experience the superhero's perspective in the first person, which can greatly enhance fan immersion.

## 6. Conclusion

This article focuses on the evolution and problems of Marvel's communication strategy in the modern media landscape. With the rapid development of new media and the spread of the epidemic, Marvel film and television companies must adjust from old communication techniques to online streaming media platforms. In the new media environment, Marvel faces challenges such as maintaining brand influence across multiple new media platforms, dealing with market competition and the short life cycle of cultural products, promoting its film and television works in various countries and cultures, maintaining the high quality and innovation of film and television works, and overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers. Marvel can continue to grow its footprint in digital media. Also, strive to include more regional and cultural variety, as well as new material, to attract people from all over the world, and increase social media involvement to keep the brand's topic relevant.

This study not only explains the necessary changes in the communication strategies of film and television companies such as Marvel in the new media environment, but it also provides strategic references for film and television content producers to deal with the rapidly changing media environment, particularly in light of the recently concluded global epidemic.

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