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Master thesis

THE EFFECTS OF TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING IN BRAND RESONANCE FOR MEDIA FRANCHISES

Written by:

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Even if it takes me a million years!
I will create a civilization cultivated to the exact same point
as the era in which Star Wars was created,
so I can watch the next movie in the franchise!

- *Fire Punch*, Tatsuki Fujimoto

Abstract

Transmedia storytelling is emerging as a concept for media franchises, where multiple media from the same franchise combine to create a coherent, non-redundant experience. The aim of this research is to explore whether the application of a transmedia strategy in a media franchise is linked to an increase in brand resonance, conceptualized in the Brand equity model developed by Keller. The dimensions of brand resonance examined are emotional attachment, sense of community, active engagement and behavioral loyalty. To conduct this research, the example of the Marvel Universe was used to explore its transmedia model and interactions with resonance among its audience. Results were collected through two surveys: a descriptive quantitative questionnaire in which participants detailed their consumption habits and feelings towards the Marvel Universe, and a qualitative experiment in which participants were able to comment on two different transmedia franchises, one in which they had been exposed to transmedia content and one in which they had not. These experiments allowed us to delve deeper into participants' reactions, to understand how their response differs when exposed to transmedia content, and how this can reinforce their resonance with the brand. The results showed that transmedia content did indeed increase brand resonance for the Marvel franchise, but that its interaction with each dimension could be different and more complex than a simple positive correlation between the two.

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Introduction

A) The rise of Transmedia Storytelling

Over the past two decades, franchises have expanded their reach beyond movies to bounce around in video games, books, comic books, live experiences, board games, music, or even TV series on streaming platforms. This is exemplified by the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* (MCU), a commercially and critically successful franchise that has been spun off across multiple platforms giving a cohesive and participatory experience that rewards the fan for following the continuity of each film and spin-off product. As of 2019, the MCU has grossed $17 billion (Harrison et al, 2019) and continues to expand with the announcement of new TV shows for Disney+, further expanding its universe and the backstory of its characters.

These franchises, such as the MCU or *Star Wars*, use the concept of transmedia storytelling and build their success and high grossing revenue on it. Transmedia storytelling consists in extending a narrative through several media. These contributions to the narrative are not redundant and therefore contribute in a unique way to the overall story. Each contribution benefits fully from the potential of its own media to remain relevant. Each element of the narrative can then be consumed independently as a point of entry or as an extension to satisfy the needs of each consumer, or it can be assimilated completely to grasp all the elements of a plot or a world (Jenkins, 2003). What differentiates a multimedia strategy from a transmedia strategy is that the enjoyment from all the media is greater than the sum of its parts. Loyal and engaged consumers are rewarded for their loyalty, feeling the euphoria of putting the puzzle together (Pratten, 2015, p. 3).

B) The phenomenon of Convergence culture

Transmedia storytelling becoming relevant in the 21st century is the consequence of a technological evolution bringing a shift in behaviors and consumptions. Henry Jenkins called this phenomenon "convergence culture", and described it as a convergence of uses, technologies and contents through a converging technological environment. He defined it as "a shift in the logic by which culture

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operates, emphasizing the flow of content across media channels." (Jenkins, 2006, p. 283).

Thus, a smartphone can fulfill the functions of a phone, a TV, a newspaper, a radio, a computer and so on. Social networks have allowed a convergence of social interests, relationships, and information. The various platforms have adapted to this convergence of uses by facilitating the passage from one platform to another and one content to another. This is the case, for example, with Google, which brings together many features in a single account, or Amazon, which brings together delivery and streaming services. It allows consumers to participate more and be engaged more in a brand or in a product. Nevertheless, it also means that brands must offer valuable content on a regular basis to maintain this relationship and the level of interaction needed to engage. Indeed, customers are not only attracted by the purchase of a product or a service, but they want to enjoy a good customer experience. Experience is now a huge driver for company's performance (Klaus, 2014).

Transmedia storytelling is an answer to this new context, to the shift of culture convergence and participatory culture that became the basis for customers' needs and journeys. As a marketing tool, it allows to stand out in the multiplication of platforms and medias by creating a communication spanning over several medias in a complementary experience that brings emotions and interests to consumers (Jenkins, 2006).

C) Research question

A franchise is "something that creates value across multiple businesses and across multiple territories over a long period of time" according to Bob Iger, the chief executive of Disney (Keiles, 2022). This research will focus on media franchise only, defined as the grouping of various creations and products derived from an original fictional universe.

For media franchises, transmedia strategies are becoming increasingly common, whether in the cinema (Marvel, Star Wars, Star Trek...), gaming (League of

Legends, Assassin's Creed...), books (Harry Potter, The Witcher...) or even music (Gorillaz, Daft Punk...). This strategy opens new entry points for audiences wishing to introduce themselves into a universe, and new opportunities to engage with the franchise to become even more immersed in the universe.

But do these new opportunities of engagement for the audience really deepen the connection between the audience and the franchise? While the first people to think of the transmedia storytelling concept believed so, recent discussions surrounding franchises such as Marvel of Star Wars preferred to talk about fatigue than critical success. Marvel used to be acclaimed for the teasing generated, but it seems to be starting to fall apart with recent releases disappointing people and decreasing expectations for its future. At the same time, the competitor DC Comics tried to do its own transmedia strategy with the DCEU (DC Comics Extended Universe), directly competing with the MCU, that never really succeeded. Indeed, the DCEU failed to create an extended storyline, to maintain teasing over time and to create a cohesive experience with several failed, cancelled, and postponed projects. That came to the point that James Gunn was nominated in December 2022 CEO of DC Studios to reboot the DC cinematic universe with a 10-projects plan to launch in 2025. James Gunn stated that there was indeed a superhero fatigue, but not caused by the huge amount of content saturating the cultural environment, but because "People [Creatives working on superhero movie] have gotten a little lazy" and that movies lack emotions currently.
But is that true? Does rebooting every franchise and planning huge cohesive plan with several projects is still the way to go to connect with the audience?

The objective of this research paper is to observe the correlation between the characteristics of transmedia storytelling and brand equity with a focus on brand resonance by following Keller's definition of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 2013). By doing so, we plan to figure out if a transmedia storytelling strategy really improves the resonance the audience may feel with the franchise, and also if this sort of strategy can reach a point of saturation.

It could feel natural to get the impression that watching more content on several different media of a said franchise will lead to a natural increase in resonance, just

because the viewer engages more in the franchise, but is it true and does the transmedia aspect of a franchise that is connecting everything together really create resonance? Or dissonance? By adding new media, new stories and new characters, the cultural convergence might start to diverge. The viewers may feel saturated with content, to a point of no-return where they feel lost.

This research tries to differentiate two types of behavior: engaging in watching several media of a franchise and engaging in the transmedia of a franchise. For the first behavior, the viewer enjoys having a multimedia experience, in which he can engage but without feeling the overall cohesion within the universe, and only engage in independent storylines. For the second behavior, the viewer enjoys learning more and engaging in connecting media to one another, expanding its cohesive understanding of the franchise. These behaviors will be at the core of quantitative research.

The objective of differentiating these behaviors is therefore to test the validity of the following hypotheses by using variables unique to transmedia storytelling:

H1: The characteristics of transmedia storytelling are correlated with brand resonance.

H2: There is a point, considered "optimal", of the extent of transmedia strategy that a brand can have. Beyond this point, the consumer may lose the resonance he had with the brand.

Literature review

A) Transmedia storytelling

1) History and definition of transmedia storytelling

The concept of transmedia storytelling first rose in the mind of Henry Jenkins in 2003, after discussing the emergence of collaboratively developed content across media with Hollywood creatives. Jenkins differentiated this new way of creating stories from crossmedia by the fact that it involves "co-creation rather than adaptation of content that crosses media". (Jenkins, 2003). He noted the following criteria of a transmedia storytelling strategy:

> Each medium does what it does best — so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice versa.

In 2006, Jenkins explored the concept of convergence culture and gave a first definition of transmedia storytelling as all the "stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the world, a more integrated approach to franchise development than models based on urtexts and ancillary products.". (Jenkins, 2006, p. 293).

At this period, the concept of transmedia storytelling is becoming more and more relevant for creatives and studios, especially thanks to the work of the writer and CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment Jeff Gomez. Gomez participated in the transmedia development of many franchises, giving advice to studios and brands to develop their marketing through storytelling and the inclusion of new media. Gomez effectively pushed the Producer's Guild of America (PGA) to recognize in 2010 the role of "Transmedia Producer". (Finke, 2010). The PGA then defined the following:

A Transmedia Narrative project or franchise must consist of three (or more) narrative storylines existing within the same fictional universe on any of the following platforms: Film, Television, Short Film, Broadband, Publishing, Comics, Animation, Mobile, Special Venues, DVD/Blu-ray/CD-ROM, Narrative Commercial and Marketing rollouts, and other technologies that may or may not currently exist. These narrative extensions are NOT the same as repurposing material from one platform to be cut or repurposed to different platforms.

2) Actors of transmedia storytelling

A lot of history of the concept was cemented in cinema with Hollywood being the pinnacle of transmedia storytelling, and the definition given by PGA also goes in that sense. Nevertheless, it does not mean that at this period transmedia storytelling was all about cinema. The Coca-Cola Company notably launched the successful campaign "Happiness Factory" designed around several short films, characters, a fake documentary, and a story evolving into a fictional world. (The Coca-Cola Company, 2007).

Brian Clark identified the three main actors of innovation in transmedia storytelling as "entertainment properties created as extended experiences around a core media product; advertising properties created to advance the marketing of a brand; and issues advancing properties created to promote a topic or perspective." (Clark, 2011) and offered ten different business models that could apply for these actors to build a transmedia project.

3) Forms and characteristics of transmedia storytelling

In 2012, Philips specifies transmedia storytelling strategies by differentiating it into two different sorts: the East and West Coast transmedia storytelling.

Either you take a single story and you splinter it across multiple media, or you start with one story and you keep adding pieces on to it *ad infinitum*. (Philips, 2012, p. 15).

West Coast transmedia is generally Hollywood transmedia. The goal is to start with a strong central work and bounce off that original work with new creations. The whole then forms a complete system, with each of its parts being able to be consumed independently of the others, while connecting to each other. Star Wars is an example of this. The goal here is to extend and revive interest in a brand on a regular basis by adding a new element. This element being part of a non-redundant perspective, this strategy also allows to diversify the brand's portfolio. All this works to offer a customer's journey that is most adapted to the needs and desires of each consumer.

The East Coast transmedia is much more focused on social logic by positioning the digital and the interactions at the heart of the system. The difference is that there is no central work that serves as a foundation for transmedia. The entire transmedia strategy is built as a single block and cannot be consumed independently. All the elements (videos, social medias, articles, live experiences...) are intertwined to serve a common story, in a specific period of time. The objectives are rather to concentrate a scattered audience around a project and to facilitate engagement (Phillips, 2012, p. 13-14).

In 2016, Jenkins identified the following seven principles to characterize and analyze transmedia storytelling practices (Jenkins, 2016).

- Two opposing vectors of engagement:
    o Spreadability: How much the audience can engage by sharing content and make it circulate through socials.
    o Drillability: How deep and complex the content can go for the audience to dig in. The goal is to deeply engage a smaller community of fans.
- Two opposing vectors of storylines:
    o Continuity: How linear is the storyline between each media. The continuity is rewarding to true fans.
    o Multiplicity: How diverse the stories can become with each media being familiar while not being the continuation of anything, like an alternate version. Easier to engage in.
- Two opposing directions of relationship:

- Immersion: How the consumer enters the world of the story. For example, a video game permitting to immerse into the fictional world.
  - Extractability: How the consumer takes away aspects of the story to put them into the real world. For example, an amusement park derived from a franchise.
- Worldbuilding:
  - The rules of the world built and elements of recognition.
- Seriality
  - How dispersed in time is the content and the publishing's organization.
- Subjectivity
  - How transmedia experience allow to learn more about more intimate aspects of the story.
- Performance
  - How strong is the interaction between the media and the audience.

B) Brand resonance

1) Customer-based brand equity

Keller built the customer-based brand equity model (CBBE) as a pyramid with brand resonance on top. The pyramid is divided into four steps: Identity, Meaning, Response and Resonance, with these four steps divided into six brand building blocks. The building blocks are the necessary steps to create a strong brand. These blocks are Brand salience, Brand performance, Brand imagery, Consumer Judgements, Consumer Feelings and Consumer Brand resonance (Keller, 2013).

Keller defines brand resonance as the most valuable brand-building block. "Brand resonance, occurs when all the other brand-building blocks are completely synchronized with customers' needs, wants, and desires." (Keller, 2001). Brand resonance relates to the relationship a customer has with the brand and how he feels that he is in sync with the brand. Keller breaks down Resonance into the four following categories: Behavioral loyalty, Active engagement, Attitudinal attachment, and Sense of Community (Keller, 2013).

2) Behavioral Loyalty

Behavioral loyalty is the propensity for the customer to do regular purchase or consumption of the brand and the share of volume attributed to the brand (Keller, 2013, p. 121).

With the introduction of transmedia storytelling in brands, customers become loyal not only to products but also to experiences (Silva, 2020). Experiences generate emotional responses that can lead to behavioral loyalty. Customers who are high on positive affective traits, are indeed more likely to be loyal to a brand (Pulligada et al, 2016). Pulligada differentiates customers who more likely to be high on Positive Affective (PA) traits and those who are more likely to be low and outlines that it is possible to target high-PA customers using specific media content and that there is "distinct differences between low- versus high-PA customers on what type of content they consume." (Pulligada et al, 2016). As the specific media are to be researched yet, transmedia storytelling offers a wide range of media and emotion to target high-PA customers, which are more likely to be loyal.

Storytelling creates a relationship to the customer that is based on relevance and engagement, and leads to loyalty (Silva, 2020). In a context in which audience are more and more aware and wary of advertisings, transmedia storytelling considers the consumer as a part of a brand story, and not only a message receiver, these new campaigns lead to longer term relationship (Tosun & Donmez, 2019, p. 368).

3) Active engagement

According to Keller, customers are engaged when they invest time, money, energy or any resources into a brand (Keller, 2013).

By definition, transmedia storytelling must offer interaction for the audience to engage in. Transmedia storytelling is built either around the idea of spreading the audience by their engagement (through expanding the content to consume and sharing) or to concentrate the audience by their engagement around specific event (Jenkins, 2016).

A transmedia branding strategy should not only focus on the "canon," that is, the official expansion of the storytelling through different media and platforms, but also, like in transmedia fictional storytelling, on promoting user engagement, including spaces for user participation. (Scolari, 2018).

Transmedia storytelling is at the center of fan communities and the ability to invest time in discovering the brand's new medias, money in participating in such new activities and energy of being a part of the community, discussing about it on the internet (Jenkins, 2006).

4) Attitudinal attachment

Keller defines attitudinal attachment as viewing the brand as something special, that might go to the point of brand love (Keller, 2013).

The engagement generated by transmedia storytelling and the ability to participate in the making of a brand story strengthen brand attachment.

The trend toward collaborative branding (especially through social media), which enables marketing managers to give consumers the opportunity to contribute to a brand's personality, may be a good way to create a brand personality congruent with consumers' selves. (Malär et al, 2011).

Storytelling and brand narrative is also recognized as a driver of brand love "particularly by triggering identification with the brand values and emotional attachment to the brand." (Dias & Cavalheiro, 2022).

5) Sense of community

Keller defines the Sense of community as the identification with a brand community.

Identification with a brand community may reflect an important social phenomenon in which customers feel a kinship or affiliation with other

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people associated with the brand, whether fellow brand users or customers, or employees or representatives of the company. (Keller, 2013).

Transmedia storytelling allows customers to feel connected to other parts of the community, even in a passive way.

> Even that silent majority of passive audience members can be electrified by the spectacle of other, more active participants reaching out and seeing the story reach back. It makes a world and a story come alive like nothing else. (Phillips, 2012, p. 120)

> It's possible to structure an interactive transmedia experience to allow a completely passive mode (reading blog posts, watching videos, reading tweets) and have an audience that does only that, without ever sending emails, leaving comments, or otherwise reaching out and touching the story world. What's more, this passive method of consuming a transmedia experience is the one that by far the most audience members engage in. (Phillips, 2012, p. 120)

Costa-Sánchez also outlines that transmedia storytelling is a tool for corporate communication and to share value of the company and employees through a narrative campaign, based on the analysis of the Heinen campaign "#Dropped" (Costa-Sánchez, 2014). Roxo develops Costa-Sánchez arguments by putting transmedia storytelling as a tool for recruiting in a context of participatory culture in which brands can learn candidates through their engagement in the set of values generated by the narrative, and candidates can learn from the brand's previous communication and narratives (Roxo, 2019).

Research methodology

A) The Marvel Universe as an example

The aim of this study is to explore the links between the development of a transmedia strategy for a media franchise and its audience's resonance to it. In addition, we seek to determine whether it is possible to observe negative consequences on franchise loyalty due to an overabundance of media and a narrative scope that has become too broad. The identification of such effects could thus guide future research towards the creation of transmedia strategies in a more precise manner to assist transmedia managers.

To carry out this study, I will use the example of the Marvel Universe to explore individuals' perceptions and appreciations of it.
I specifically chose this example for the following reasons:

    1. The concept of transmedia storytelling can seem abstract to most respondents. Requiring visualization and projection to discuss it effectively, I therefore decided to base the questions on an example that people could relate to, to facilitate discussions about their consumption habits.

    2. To guarantee relevant answers and to delve deeper into the subject, I opted for a renowned transmedia franchise. While there are many other interesting examples worth exploring, the Marvel Universe is known to a wide audience (with both positive and negative feelings) through a variety of media, not just films.

    3. There are as many transmedia storytelling strategies as there are transmedia franchises. Given that the subject is vast and relatively recent, it is not yet possible to generalize the findings of this research to all franchises and strategies. My aim is therefore to explore the relationship between a transmedia franchise and its audience, focusing on brand resonance, and to initiate a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. The example of the Marvel Universe is particularly interesting in this respect. From a transmedia point of view, it is often cited as an example of a successful franchise that has deployed a far-reaching strategy and invested heavily in unifying its universe. However, we are increasingly seeing the mention of "superhero fatigue" in the media, with the impression that the universe

is running out of steam, going round in circles, or expanding too much, to the point of losing all cohesion and coherence.

For a descriptive analysis of the relevance of the Marvel Universe's transmedia storytelling strategy and how it applies to the seven principles developed by Jenkins, see Appendix 1.

B) A quantitative questionnaire (N=137)

This research is based on the use of a quantitative questionnaire designed to explore participants' relationship with the Marvel Universe. This study is a correlational study of people appreciation of Marvel with respect to different transmedia dimensions. The aim of the questionnaire is to identify different groups of people with different consumption habits regarding the Marvel Universe, as well as a differentiated liking of transmedia storytelling and to observe whether there are any significant differences in perception between those groups.

The questionnaire was designed along the following lines:

1. The participant's degree of affinity with the Marvel Universe. This is the first section of the questionnaire, in order to avoid any subsequent bias due to the following questions.

2. An assessment of the participant's media consumption of the Marvel Universe, to establish his or her profile to the franchise.

If the respondent answers that they are not interested at all by the Marvel Universe, the questionnaire ends after this section for them. The following sections are limited for people who have at least a slight interest.

3. A four-block study of the four aspects of brand resonance: active engagement, behavioral loyalty, sense of community and attitudinal attachment. How the respondent assesses its resonance to Marvel.

4. An assessment of the participant's appreciation of transmedia storytelling of Marvel. To answer if it is something they appreciate and feel positively or negatively about?

This questionnaire was created using Qualtrics and publicly distributed in French and English via an anonymous link on social networks. It was also shared with customers of a recreation and games center via a QR Code.

See Appendix 2 for the full survey.

A total of 137 responses were received. Among the respondents, the average age was 27.39 and there was good gender parity, with 50.5% men, 46.9% women and 2.6% classified as "other".

Responses to the questionnaire were then subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using SPSS.

C) A qualitative experiment (N=16)

A qualitative experiment was conducted to assess the responses of participants when exposed to transmedia content.

The objective was to identify and gain insights into the participants' emotions and reactions towards transmedia content, both positive and negative. Additionally, the experiment aimed to observe if there were any differences in behavior between individuals who were exposed to the content and those who were not.

The experiment was to have a trailer of a primary product of a franchise: the trailer for a product that is at the center of every other derivative content. Then to have two groups of people comment on that trailer: one group would be exposed to other transmedia content of that franchise before watching the trailer, and the other group would not be exposed to any other content prior to watching the trailer. We would afterward see if we noticed any differences in the participant reaction and appreciation of the trailer with or without prior exposition of transmedia content.

To raise more results as I only have a small set of participants, I did the experiment with two franchises simultaneously. Each group commented on both trailers of primary product for both franchises but were only exposed to the transmedia content of one of the two franchises.

During the process, each participant would also be able to comment on each transmedia content for me to observe their reaction. The transmedia content includes for each franchise a song, a video clip, a board game, and the trailer of primary product. I would also explain quickly the four dimensions of brand resonance to each participant and ask them to estimate on a 5-points scale how they would rate themselves on that dimension for each franchise, with explanations.
See appendix 3 to see the full process, questions, and exposed content of that interview. Transcripts available upon request.

This means that with a sample size of N=16, I have collected for each franchise 8 comments from people who only watched the trailer, and 8 comments from people who watched several pieces of content before watching the trailer. The experiment aimed to observe if there is any noticeable difference in the appreciation of the trailer with or without exposition to transmedia and to react on stimuli of respondent while watching videos, listening to songs, or playing games of that franchise.

I collected these data in a recreation center in France from people that came for game nights and were willing to participate. 16 responses were received. Among the respondents, the average age was 25.19 and the parity was poor, with 3 women for 13 men.

I chose the franchises Marvel and League of Legends for the following reasons:
Marvel was the continuation of the quantitative questionnaire and at the center of this research, so the arguments are the same as the ones used in section A).
As I needed another franchise to increase the number of results with two groups, I chose the League of Legends one because it is one that is considered performant, with high quality products in a high range of media. This franchise may also be known greatly by some people who could experience a full range of emotion while being exposed to content, while some other people may not know about it at all.

D) Interview with Senior brand manager

To further develop managerial implications of this research, I conducted an interview with a Senior transmedia manager working in a famous international video game publisher who prefers to stay anonymous.

The aim of that interview was to help frame a research question and to outline the problematics faced by managers working in that field.

E) Limits of the research

This research has several weaknesses that should be taken into consideration when reading the findings and discussions later.

First, the quantitative questionnaire is a descriptive case about the Marvel Universe only. This means that while these results could be interpreted in the context of the analysis of the transmedia storytelling strategy of the Marvel Universe, they cannot then simply be applied to all franchises and transmedia strategies. The aim of this study is simply to reveal the relationships that may exist between a transmedia franchise and its audience, in order to further the debate on future applications.

Secondly, as a descriptive questionnaire, it is inherently flawed. The results lack nuance, which can hardly be expressed on an arbitrary scale. The answers are also limited to the answers I proposed on the questionnaire, and some valid points were forgotten in the making of the questionnaire. As an example: in the question "What do you dislike in the Marvel Universe?", several people replied "other" and answered "the tone and humor" and "Disney's financial greed". These are criticisms of the Marvel Universe that could have been cited in the questionnaire and could have been interesting to quantify more precisely. Furthermore, as the questionnaire is anonymized, it's impossible to explore in greater detail any response that might enrich the study. Furthermore, although the participants' responses highlight correlations and associations between several phenomena and behaviors, it is more difficult to prove a clear causal link between the two.

Finally, the sample size remains relatively small (N=137). Although some results appear significant, there is still a lack of data to support the conclusions reached. The sample is also not sufficiently representative of the population, the average age remains relatively young (≈27.39 years), partly from a community of people enjoying playful universes, and we therefore observe an average interest in the Marvel Universe that remains relatively high, perhaps higher than the population.

The qualitative interviews try to balance out these flaws by having the opportunity to let respondents give more nuance to their answer, explore more subjects together, and have a testing between exposition to transmedia versus no exposition. Nevertheless, the sample flaws remain the same, with a small number of interviews and a sample relatively young (≈25.19 years), with an already existing interest in games and a poor parity (18.75% women).

Findings

## A) Quantitative questionnaire

1) Descriptive statistics

The results include answers from 137 respondents.

We run a descriptive analysis of the first three questions of the questionnaire to better understand who the respondents are. This gives the following means:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of respondents' feelings toward the Marvel universe on a 5-points scale.

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
I enjoy the Marvel universe	3.83	1.135
I feel I have a lot of knowledge about the Marvel Universe	3.21	1.257
I will stay updated with future news and releases from the Marvel Universe	3.18	1.139

With the following repartition for each variable:
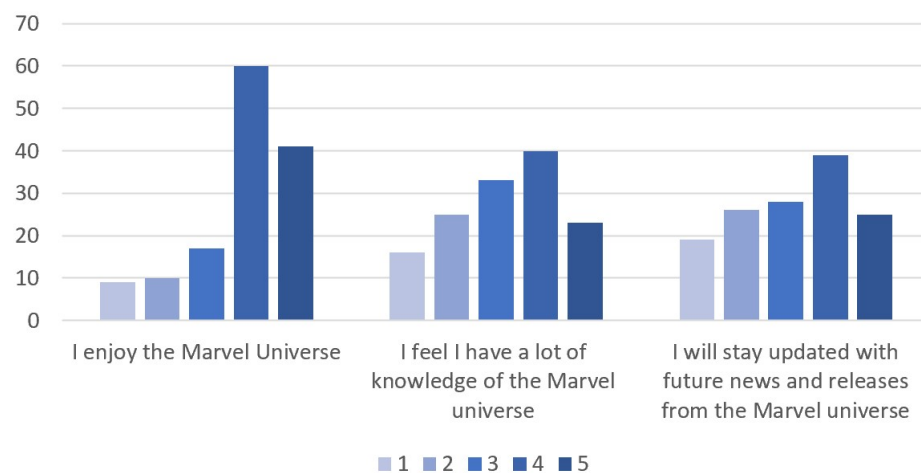
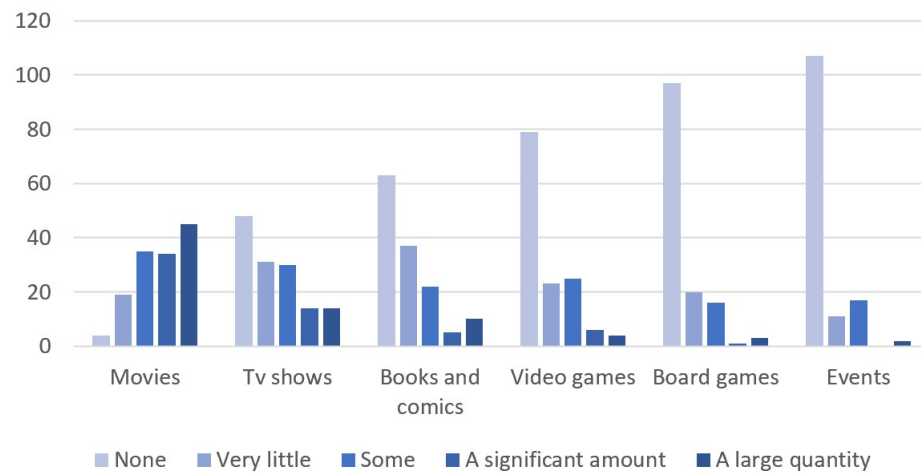*Graph 1. Repartition of respondent's ratings*

We can see from this data that most participants are Marvel enjoyers, with 73% rating their enjoyment of the Marvel Universe 4 or 5 out of 5.

Scores are more evenly distributed on the other two variables, but with a tendency towards people who are rather knowledgeable about the Marvel universe and intend to stay updated in the future.

When looking at the consumption habits, we get the following descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of respondents' consumption habits of different Marvel Universe's media on a 5-points scale.

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
Movies	3.71	1.151
Tv shows	2.38	1.329
Books and comics	1.99	1.197
Video games	1.78	1.076
Board games	1.49	.892
Events	1.39	.816

Graph 2. Repartition of respondent's ratings for consumption of each Marvel media

From this table we can observe that the respondents mainly watch movies. Indeed 57% of total respondents say they watched at least a significant number of Marvel movies. There is almost no respondent who has watched no Marvel movies.

For the next media, the quantity of respondents who have never interacted with them increases. More than 50% of the respondents have never interacted with video games, board games and Marvel-related events.

Movies remain the main media for many respondents, and other media are more anecdotical. Nevertheless, some respondents expressed interest in those media and in the combination of them. The following statistical tests will try to give insights on the impact of such media on the Marvel Universe enjoyment.

2) Linear regression of media consumption for Marvel enjoyment.

We will now look at linear regression analyses performed on three separate dependent variables, using the same independent variables. All the variables involved in our study are metrics. The dependent variables are the first three questions about feeling towards the Marvel Universe about enjoyment, knowledge, and future news. The independent variables are the consumption of different media that the respondent have declared.

Linear regression is a statistical method that allows us to model the relationships between a continuous dependent variable and independent variables. We seek here to establish a mathematical relationship between the consumption habits of transmedia products and the observed behaviors and feelings, quantifying their impact on the observed values.

The first linear regression will focus on the dependent variable "enjoyment of the Marvel Universe" based on the answer on the questionnaire.

The model fit can be commented on with the adjusted R^2. The model has an adjusted R^2 value of 0.53, meaning that 53% of the feeling of enjoyment (the dependent variable) can be explained by the independent variable in that model.

The model gives the following coefficients:

Table 3. Linear regression coefficients for the dependent variable "enjoyment of the Marvel Universe"

Variable	Unstandardized β	Sig.
Constant	1.192	<.001
Movies	.618	<.001
TV shows	.097	.157
Books and comics	.140	.072
Video games	-.024	.797
Board games	.083	.384
Events	-.179	.121

There is not enough data for other variables to be significant at a 5% confidence level, but the variable "movies" is significant with a sigma value <0.05 and has a positive relationship with enjoyment, meaning that watching more Marvel movies lead to a higher enjoyment. This positive relationship appears from the positive β coefficient, meaning that an increase in that variable leads to an increase in the dependant variable. Nevertheless, with a model fit of 53%, it means that there are many other variables not included in that model that drives enjoyment.

The second linear regression with the dependent variable of "knowledge of the Marvel Universe" gives the following model with an adjusted R^2 of 0.673:

Table 4. Linear regression coefficients for the dependent variable "knowledge of the Marvel Universe"

Variable	Unstandardized β	Sig.
Constant	-0.58	.791
Movies	.609	<.001
TV shows	.196	.002
Books and comics	.216	.003
Video games	-.019	.825
Board games	.071	.420
Events	-.031	.771

In that model, we observe several significant independent variables at a 5% confidence level. Movies, TV shows and books and comics all have a significant positive relationship with the feeling of knowledge, with movies having the greater impact on the dependent variable's variation. With a model fit of 67.3%, these media explain a good part of the feeling of knowledge that a respondent can have.

Finally, the third linear regression with the dependent variable "stay updated about future Marvel-related news and releases" gives the following model with an adjuster R^2 value of 0.522.

Table 5. Linear regression coefficients for the dependent variable "stay updated about future Marvel-related news and releases."

Variable	Unstandardized β	Sig.
Constant	.234	.791
Movies	.473	<.001
TV shows	.242	.003
Books and comics	.191	.037
Video games	-.077	.485
Board games	.265	.019
Events	-.015	.914

This model shows a significant positive relationship between the dependent variable and its independent variables "Movies", "TV shows", "Books" and "Board games" at 5% confidence level.

The next questions in the questionnaire are only displayed for people who, at the question "How would you describe your level of interest in the Marvel Universe?", answered anything else than "not interested at all". Out of 137 respondents, 33 answered that they have no interest in the Marvel Universe and consequently won't be counted on the analysis of the following sections.

3) Clusters segmentation and consequent enjoyment of the Marvel
Universe

The objective here is to create clusters of cases. Assign each respondent to a
different cluster, with each cluster representing a different group of cases, with
different consumption habits based on the variables of the different medias
("Movies", "TV shows", "Books", "Video games", "Board games", "Events").
With these clusters, it would be easier to categorize different customers with
different approaches to transmedia storytelling and the multitude of Marvel media.

To do so, the first step is to process hierarchical clustering. The hierarchical
clustering is cumulative and starts with each case as one cluster, and groups them
step by step until having only one cluster. This method is a good starting point to
estimate the number of clusters relevant in that case. The linkage method used is
Ward's method, efficient to create clusters of similar size.
The output is the following dendrogram:
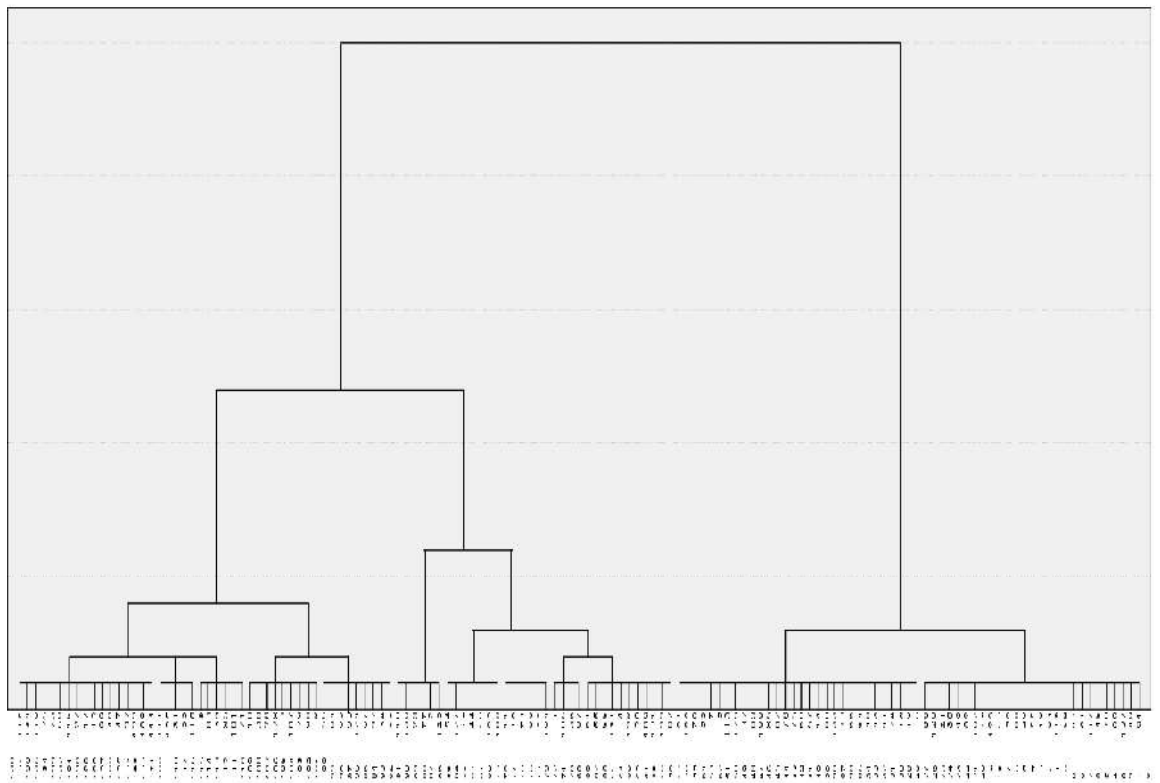
Graph 3. Dendrogram after hierarchical clustering on Marvel media consumption.

We estimate the number of clusters that is best suited with the cases by "cutting" clusters with the highest jump between them, with jump representing distance between clusters. From this dendrogram, two clusters is a good solution but three could be conceivable.

The second step is to conduct a k-means clustering with a fix number of clusters and to decide on which clusters to continue with. Trying with two and three clusters, two seems like the most viable option to have clusters of same size. The clusters centers below indicate the central mean of each variable for each cluster.

Table 6: Final clusters centers with consumption variables after k-means clustering with 2 numbers of clusters in 15 iterations.

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Movies	3	5
TV shows	2	4
Books and comics	1	3
Video games	1	3
Board games	1	2
Events	1	2

Cluster 1 is composed of 87 cases and cluster 2 of 50 clusters.

Looking at the cluster centers, we can conclude that the first cluster is a population of people who enjoy watching the cinematographic productions of Marvel occasionally (movies and TV shows) and has no interest whatsoever in the other transmedia content that could exist. Cluster 2 is composed of people with higher interest in movies and TV shows, but also has a slight interest in other transmedia content. Let's call cluster 1 "Occasional Marvel viewers" and cluster 2 "Marvel Enthusiastic viewers".

Running descriptive analysis on each cluster for the variables "I enjoy the Marvel Universe", "I feel I have a lot of knowledge about the MU" and "I will stay updated about future news of the MU", we observe that the means are higher for Enthusiastic

viewers. This means that there is a correlation between the amount and diversity of watched content of that franchise, and the enjoyment, interest, knowledge of it.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of respondents' feelings toward the Marvel universe on a 5-point scale for each cluster.

Cluster	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	I enjoy the Marvel universe	3.46	1.159
	I feel I have a lot of knowledge about the Marvel Universe	2.64	1.089
	I will stay updated with future news and releases from the Marvel Universe	2.61	1.185
2 Enthusiastic viewers	I enjoy the Marvel universe	4.48	.735
	I feel I have a lot of knowledge about the Marvel Universe	4.2	.857
	I will stay updated with future news and releases from the Marvel Universe	4.18	.873

Using the same method, we get two other clusters of the same population using new different independent variables to classify the sample with transmedia interests. Using the variables "I enjoy the connection between the different Marvel content", "I enjoy how the movies are connected to tell one big story" and "The multitude of different content enriches the overall Marvel experience", we get the following clusters centers.

Table 8: Final clusters centers with transmedia variables after k-means clustering with 2 numbers of clusters in 15 iterations.

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2
Connection between media	2	4
Connection as one big story	3	5
Enriches the overall experience	3	4

Cluster 1 is composed of 43 cases and can be called "Non-transmedia oriented" group as a cluster of cases who are less fond of connection between media and storylines. Cluster 2 is composed of 61 cases and could be called "Transmedia engagers" as people who enjoy such connections and the transmedia dimension of the Marvel franchise.

Same procedure as above, by running descriptive analysis on every combination of clusters, we observe that transmedia engagers are more active in the Marvel universe and have an overall better enjoyment of it.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of respondents' feelings toward the Marvel universe on a 5-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I enjoy the Marvel universe	3.86	.639
		I have a lot of knowledge	2.69	1.004
		Stay updated	2.83	1.104
	2 Transmedia engagers	I enjoy the Marvel universe	4.10	.803
		I have a lot of knowledge	3.2	.887
		Stay updated	3.23	.898
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I enjoy the Marvel universe	4.07	.997
		I have a lot of knowledge	3.86	1.167
		Stay updated	3.79	.699
	2 Transmedia engagers	I enjoy the Marvel universe	4.65	.486
		I have a lot of knowledge	4.32	.653
		Stay updated	4.32	.909

The cluster combining [Enthusiastic viewers/Transmedia engagers] is the one with the highest enjoyment of the Marvel Universe. The cluster [Enthusiastic

viewer/Non transmedia oriented] group seems to be the less likely cluster, as there are half as many cases within than cluster than in other group.

Table 10. Cases repartition in each cluster

		Transmedia cluster	
		1 Non transmedia oriented group	2 transmedia engagers
Consumption cluster	1 Occasional viewers	29	30
	2 Enthusiastic viewers	14	31

This section divides the sample in four groups that will be used in the following sections:

- [Occasional viewer/non-transmedia oriented]
- [Occasional viewer/transmedia engager]
- [Enthusiastic viewer/non-transmedia oriented]
- [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engager]

In following sections, these clusters will appear in brackets. Brackets with only one cluster will include all variants of that cluster. For example: [Enthusiastic viewers] means both [Enthusiastic viewer/non-transmedia oriented] and [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engager].

4) Brand resonance dimensions descriptive analysis

The procedure above used to get the enjoyment of the MU for each combination of clusters is applied to get all the results in that section for each brand resonance dimension. The aim here is to observe the difference in behaviors within each cluster for each brand resonance dimension and to see whether transmedia engagement improves the resonance between the consumer and the franchise or not. Each dimension was questioned in the questionnaire using several questions on a

4-point scale, answers are labelled: [1 = "Definitely not"] ; [2 = "No, not really"] ; [3 = "Yes, to a certain extent"] ; [4="Definitely yes"].

See appendices 4 to 7 to get the results for each dimension of the above procedure.

From the data, we observe that the mean of each variable in each dimension increases the highest between the cluster [Occasional viewers] and [Enthusiastic viewers]. That means that the resonance increases the most for engaged viewers, who engaged in several media at once, whether they enjoy transmedia and engage in it or not.

The second biggest increase in means for all dimensions is for enthusiastic viewers, between [Enthusiastic viewer/non-transmedia oriented] and [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engager]. That means that people who already watch a lot of Marvel content, but also actively engage in transmedia, and like this aspect of the Marvel franchise, generally feel more in resonance with the Marvel brand than people who watch a lot of Marvel content but are not interested in transmedia and connection between media.

On the other hand, transmedia don't always have an impact on [Occasional viewers].

Below is the detail for each resonance dimension.

The variables used to get a sense of the attitudinal attachment of respondent are the questions:

- "Are you looking forward to the release of new Marvel-related media?"
- "Would you say that you love the Marvel Universe?"
- "Do you consider the Marvel Universe as part of your life and interests?".

These questions try to determine whether respondent feels like Marvel is part of who they are, what they want, is it something they have in mind and they are attached to.

According to the result in Appendix 4, attitudinal attachment is positively correlated with both more engagement in viewing several media and transmedia engagement for all clusters.

The variables used to get a sense of the sense of community of respondent are the questions:

- "Do you feel you are part of a Marvel community?"
- "Do you interact with members of a Marvel fan community?"

The results in appendix 5 show that for [Occasional viewers], transmedia has no effect, but transmedia elements increase the sense of community for [Enthusiastic viewers]. Then, transmedia in the Marvel franchise increases the sense of community for people who are already invested in watching the Marvel content.

For respondents who interact with members of a Marvel fan community, 50% of them interact rarely, 45% interact frequently and 5% only interact daily. These interaction happen for 35% of respondents both online and physically, 55% online only and 10% physically only.

The variables used to get a sense of active engagement are

- "Are you involved in finding additional information about the Marvel Universe outside of the movies, such as books, encyclopedias or interviews?"
- "Have you ever created content inspired by Marvel?"
- "How would you rate your time investment in the Marvel Universe?" with this last question being a 5-point scale.

The results in appendix 6 show that there is for most people no content creation, and while this increases slightly in cluster [Enthusiastic viewers] compared to [Occasional viewers], the effect is almost negligible.

On the other hand, transmedia engagement has a positive effect on the involvement in finding new information and learning more about the Marvel Universe. Transmedia engagement also has a strong effect on time investment. For example, for [Enthusiastic viewers], time investment's mean increases from 2.5 to 3.5 between the cluster [Enthusiastic viewer/non transmedia oriented] and the [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engager] group. While this increase in time investment could be considered positive for the transmedia manager, this may be a negative in terms of experience for the viewers. Indeed, regarding the statement "I have already felt forced to watch a Marvel content to follow the story/and or the development of characters", on a 5-points scale, the mean for [Enthusiastic

viewers/non transmedia engager] is at 3.36 while it is at 4.03 for [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engagers]. This time investment could be forced to viewers because of transmedia, who feel obliged to watch content, and who don't do it for pleasure only anymore.

For behavioral loyalty, the variable used are:

On a 5-points scale:

- "Money investment in the Marvel Universe"
- "I still enjoy the Marvel Universe as much as I used to"

On a 4-points scale:

- "Have you ever bought any Marvel merchandise?"
- "Are you willing to give a new Marvel media a second chance, even if you didn't like the previous ones?"

The aim of these variables is to measure how ready people are to invest financially in the franchise, but also how loyal they are to this specific franchise and not another, currently and in the future.

According to results in appendix 7, while money investment is on average lower than time investment for all population, there is still a positive relationship between money investment and transmedia according to the results.

On the other hand, there seems to be no consequence of transmedia engagement on the resulting quantity of Marvel merchandise bought. Indeed, there is a positive relationship between quantity of merchandise bought and viewership, with [Enthusiastic viewers] buying more than [Occasional viewers], but [Transmedia engagers] buy as much as [Non-transmedia oriented group]. This reinforces the idea that [Transmedia engagers] are engaged in storytelling, and in learning more about characters and stories, and not on product with no added value for the storytelling. Transmedia doesn't trigger purchase in derivative products.

Also, [Transmedia engagers] seem to be more forgiving with disappointing content and more willing to give a new chance, whereas [Enthusiastic viewers/non transmedia oriented] are as forgiving as the [Occasional viewers/non transmedia oriented].

[Transmedia engagers] seem to still like the franchise as much as they used to in the past, more than [Non-transmedia oriented]. They may feel less fatigue than other clusters.

Regarding exclusivity, 16% of respondents said they were only interested in Marvel on the super-hero genre, with the biggest competition being the competitor DC Comics, followed by the TV show *The boys*, the franchise *Invincible* and the manga *My Hero Academia*. The repartition in each cluster of people who said they were only interested in Marvel is the following:

Table 11. Cases repartition of "Marvel exclusive" in each cluster

		Transmedia cluster	
		1 Non transmedia oriented group	2 Transmedia engagers
Consumption cluster	1 Occasional viewers	7	6
	2 Enthusiastic viewers	1	2

This shows that [Enthusiastic viewers] tend to not be Marvel exclusive and enjoy similar franchises and competition. [Occasional viewers] may be less interested in the superhero genre and only follow Marvel. There seems to be no consequence of transmedia for exclusivity, but the sample may be too small to get a conclusion.

5) Transmedia behavior exploration

To explore more deeply the consequences of transmedia storytelling for the franchise, we apply the same procedure to the variables related to transmedia storytelling characteristics to understand how respondent in each cluster feel about that aspect of the franchise.

The variables here are:

- "I have already felt rewarded for being a fan by understanding in a Marvel content a reference to another Marvel content"
- "I have already felt frustrated because I could not understand something in a Marvel content referencing another Marvel content"
- "I already wanted to know more about the Marvel Universe through other media after seeing a Marvel movie"
- "There is too much content in the Marvel Universe for me to be able to understand everything"
- "There is too much content for me in the Marvel Universe for me to be able to buy everything".

The aim here is to observe specific behaviors that may appear after engaging in a transmedia franchise, positive and negative.

Results in appendix 8.

The results show that [Occasional viewers/non-transmedia oriented] face huge negatives when entering the Marvel franchise. They feel there is too much to buy and too much to understand, and they feel frustrated. The [Occasional viewer/non transmedia oriented] cluster is the only cluster out of the four combination that has a bigger feeling of frustration than reward while watching content.

For other clusters, while frustration exists because of Marvel content referencing one another, the rewarding feeling outshines the frustration. The feeling of reward increases by watching more content and for groups who enjoy transmedia content, while the feeling of frustration decreases by watching more content and also for groups who enjoy transmedia aspect.

The cluster [Enthusiastic viewer/transmedia engager] has the biggest curiosity. The crave to learn more through other content is very high for this cluster (mean=4.39) while watching more content without being interested in transmedia has no impact on this crave to learn more (mean=3.45 for [Occasional viewers/non transmedia oriented] and 3.43 for [Enthusiastic viewers/non transmedia oriented). This is

unclear if transmedia content triggers more curiosity toward other media content, or if more curious people are more likely to be transmedia engagers.

[Transmedia engagers] feel less that there is too much content to be able to understand everything and the mean even is quite low (mean=2.87) for [Enthusiastic viewers/transmedia engagers]. For this audience, they may not have enough content.

On the other hand, it appears that there is too much content to be able to buy everything for every cluster. While being an [Enthusiastic viewer] and/or a [Transmedia engager] decrease slightly this feeling, it remains high for everyone (mean=4.24 for [Occasional viewers/transmedia engagers] and mean=3.84 for [Enthusiastic viewers/transmedia engagers]).

6) Saturation feeling

To get a sense of the feeling of saturation that some viewers may feel, I use the question "Do you feel a certain saturation with the Marvel Universe?" and "If so, why?"

On a 3-points scale, answers are labelled: [1 = "No, I still love it as much as I used to"] ; [2 = "Yes, somewhat"] ; [3 = "Yes, definitely"].

For the whole sample, the mean is a 1.73 with a 0.73 standard deviation. The mean for each cluster is given below:

Table 12. Descriptive statistics of respondents' saturation toward the Marvel Universe on a 3-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented	2.03	.566
	2 Transmedia engagers	1.57	.774
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented	2	.877
	2 Transmedia engagers	1.68	.748

This feeling of saturation seems to be the same for [Occasional viewers] and [Enthusiastic viewers].

[Transmedia engagers] seems less impacted by that feeling of saturation, as the saturation of content may be concealed by the advantages of transmedia for the story quality. Nevertheless, [Enthusiastic viewers/Transmedia engagers] feel a little more saturated than [Occasional viewers/Transmedia engagers].

People who feel a certain amount of saturation had to explain why in the following question.

The 3 mains reasons raised (in order) are:

1. The lassitude due to repetitiveness of the story.
2. The recent direction and decisions of the Marvel brand.
3. The Marvel Universe becomes too complex to follow.

This can be resumed thanks to the opinion of some respondent who precised in the text box (in French, translated here):

> "The impression of watching a series of easter eggs to satisfy the egos of small fans, amid a custom-ordered blockbuster with no personality. Each film is a long episode of an MCU series that needs to be bingewatched, it is not a work (or even a real film) in its own right. Once every two years might be nice, but routine and weariness are starting to set in. Even by fans."

> "The interconnectedness of the stories is less significant and logical than in previous phases, which makes the extended universe less coherent."

> "Films made and scenarized with, it seems, templates..."

The qualitative interviews will bring more qualitative comments from other respondents to get a more nuanced views on the above conclusions.

1) Descriptive statistics

As the study was carried out on a small number of responses, the sample is too small to draw meaningful conclusions from data alone, and the results need to be coupled with the respondents' qualitative answers to piece together any similarities there may be.

The participants' responses will be analyzed in the following sections according to the four brand resonance dimensions: attitudinal attachment, sense of community, active engagement, and behavioral loyalty. However, to lay the foundations on which the analyses will be based, it is first necessary to present the quantitative results obtained.

See Appendix 9 for the full results of each interview.

Respondents were asked to rate a League of Legends trailer and a Marvel movie on a scale of 1 to 5. The average results were as follows:

Table 13. Means and standard deviations of trailer's enjoyment among respondents with and without prior exposure to transmedia content of the same franchise.

Franchise	Prior exposition to transmedia?	Mean	Standard deviation
Marvel	With	3.875	1.364
	Without	3.5	1.323
	Overall	3.688	1.356
League of Legends	With	2.625	.857
	Without	1.875	.927
	Overall	2.25	.968

From this table, we can observe that overall, the trailer from League of Legends was less enjoyable for respondents than the trailer from the Marvel movie.

We also observe that the mean of trailer's enjoyment is higher for both franchise with prior exposition to transmedia content. Nevertheless, the sample is too small to be significant and any conclusion should wait for the qualitative analysis in the next sections.

Table 14. Means and standard deviations of feelings of brand resonance among respondents toward each franchise, with and without transmedia exposition.

Dimension	Franchise	Prior exposition to transmedia?	Mean	Standard deviation
Attitudinal attachment	Marvel	With	4.125	1.364
		Without	3.375	1.218
	League of Legends	With	3.125	1.364
		Without	2.875	1.536
Behavioral Loyalty	Marvel	With	2.625	1.317
		Without	2.750	1.199
	League of Legends	With	2.250	1.199
		Without	2.375	1.654
Sense of community	Marvel	With	2.250	1.199
		Without	2.125	0.927
	League of Legends	With	2.375	1.218
		Without	2.375	1.654
Active engagement	Marvel	With	3.250	1.392
		Without	3.250	1.199
	League of Legends	With	2.813	1.225
		Without	2.625	1.654

From this table, there is no big difference in average feelings for each category between the transmedia-exposed group and the non-transmedia-exposed group. The sample size is too small to draw accurate conclusions from this data. However, we can observe that even if the differences remain minimal, the results obtained are as great or greater for the groups exposed to transmedia than for those not exposed, with the effect on attitudinal attachment having the greatest impact. It should also be noted that this is not true for behavioral loyalty, which is higher for both franchises in the group not exposed to transmedia.

2) Positive reactions emerging from transmedia content

The respondents were asked to watch, interact, and comment on specific transmedia content for one franchise. The reaction to each media is given below:

a) Song (audio only)

The first part of the interview was to listen to a song with audio only, and to react to it, say if he recognizes it. Recognizing and associating the song to the franchise requires to have some knowledge about that franchise to know how the song is significant for its worldbuilding.

For the Marvel song:

Out of the 8 respondents, 4 were able to recognize the song and to associate it with the corresponding media. 1 out of 16 knew the song but didn't know it was featured in a Marvel movie, 1 out of 16 said they already have heard the song before but do not know its name and had trouble recalling it. Finally, 2 out of 8 respondents did not know the song at all.

For the League of Legends song:

Out of the 8 respondents, 3 were able to recognize the song and to associate it with the franchise. The other 5 respondents did not know the song.

Those who did recognize the song and the associated franchise had little discussion of the song as such and tended instead to drift the discussion towards the franchise. For example, interviewee n°3 recognized the soundtrack to the *Guardians of the Galaxy* film and used this as a pretext to talk about the complete trilogy and his opinion of the third film, recently released. Respondent 5 praised the film's quality, contrasting it with the "declining quality of the latest Marvel productions", saying he was nostalgic for the days when he found Marvel films more memorable. These respondents are generally people who already have a strong intimacy with the franchise and know the subject well. This also enables these respondents to recognize the song and the franchise very quickly, usually in the space of just a few seconds. Discussion generally takes place during the song, with listening quickly taking a back seat to opinions.

For people who don't know the song or have difficulty remembering it, there's less discussion, and more silence to listen to the song. The comments therefore concerned only the song and its qualities.

There is no notable difference in the way respondents described the song, depending on whether they knew it or not. The adjectives used were the same: nostalgic, old, chill, or weird. Also, in both cases, the respondents mentioned they were willing to perform action, such as (re)watching the movie or listening to the whole soundtrack.

b) Song (with video)

The second part consists of watching a video from the same franchise. This video mixes a music video with a song, and features a product derivated from the franchise. Recognition can be by sound or image.

For the Marvel video:
6 out of 8 respondents recognized the song and/or the movie. Only 2 respondents did not identify any specific elements to recognize the film.

For the League of Legends video:
6 respondents recognized the song and/or TV show. Out of these 6 respondents, one knew the song very well and listened to it regularly without knowing where it originally came from (opening credits from the TV show *Arcane*). 2 respondents did not recognize the video clip and/or song at all.

The video allowed us to extend the debate to new subjects compared to the audio only. People who recognized the videos were able to discuss the animation style, for example. The two examples used here use original and innovative animation methods that have made them so successful. The film *Spiderman: Into the spiderverse* won an Oscar, and the TV series *Arcane* is a critical success. Respondents often commented on the animation quality of the clips.

Video clips also allow for more discussion of the story and characters. Unlike in the previous section, where the discussion quickly moved on to the franchise, here it focused very much on the media viewed, the emotions felt while watching it, the characters, the story, and the subject generally didn't drift.

The background audio is generally mentioned for its quality and for the artists who worked on it (Post Malone and Imagine Dragons), but the subject quickly returned to the video.

Not every respondents able to discuss in detail the watched video have in-depth knowledge of the franchise, and they may talk about it just because they've heard about it or seen extracts of the film on the internet or streaming platforms.

Individuals who didn't recognize the clips or the franchise generally commented positively on the clips. Appreciating the quality of the animation or song.

c) Gaming session

The third part of the interview involved playing a board game with me. The game can be enjoyed without any knowledge of the franchise from which it originates, but it features characters and stories from the franchise.

Respondents were not familiar with the game. Of the 16 respondents, only one was already familiar with the game from the Marvel universe and had already played it, while the other 15 all had to learn the rules and discover the game with me.

The theme was more inspiring for those who had to play the Marvel game. They liked being able to choose a character they liked or recognized. The super-heroic theme also fitted in well with the gameplay and reinforced immersion, according to participants' responses.

Players who had played the game inspired by the League of Legends universe were more insistent on the quality of the components, the figurines, insisting that the game is beautiful. But there were very few comments on the game's narrative. The respondent who did not know the video game League of Legends very well but knew the TV show *Arcane* all chose to play the character Heimerdinger as out of all the characters in the board game, he is the only one also featured in the show. They enjoyed recognizing the character.

People generally enjoyed the gameplay, but there was little discussion of the franchise, the universe, the characters. Recalling the franchise was minimal, though players did talk about immersion more, saying they feel immersed in the universe. It is not something that was said when exposed to the previous media.

There was no noticeable difference in feelings about the game between those who already knew the franchise and those who did not. Players familiar with the franchise enjoyed recognizing the characters and embodying them, but this had no greater effect on the way they felt about the gameplay.

3) Final reaction to trailers and enjoyment.

Respondents were each asked to analyze two trailers, one with prior exposure to transmedia content, and one without any prior transmedia content. In the current section, we will detail the results by franchise, comparing responses between the two groups for each franchise: one with transmedia exposure and one without.

The aim here is to see if there is a noticeable difference in reactions and comments when watching the trailer. Does prior involvement in transmedia content influence the appreciation of a new transmedia element?

Regarding the Marvel franchise, the trailer was appreciated by both groups. Both groups commented on their appreciation of the trailer using similar arguments: the positive points generally being that the film was the long-awaited conclusion to the story, that the trailer kept the mystery alive by not revealing too much, that the trailer played on people's nostalgia by reminding them of the old films. The negative points that stand out are that the trailer is slow or boring. There was no noticeable difference in reactions between the two groups.

Regarding the League of Legends franchise, the trailer was generally unappreciated. Both groups felt that the trailer didn't do the game justice, that it was difficult to understand, and that the gameplay was anticlimactic. However, the responses were less negative for the group that had been exposed to transmedia content, and referred to positive arguments that did not appear in the group that had not been exposed to transmedia content. Thus, in the group exposed to transmedia, there are more positive mentions of the characters and their design. Opinions are less focused solely on the gameplay in the trailer, but also on the quality of Riot Games' (the game's developer) work on all its products, for those who are familiar with it. One interviewee, unfamiliar with either the *Arcane* series or the *League of*

Legends video game, was even able to make the connection between the character featured in the video clip viewed earlier, and the character in the video game, piquing his interest.

4) Brand resonance dimensions

Participants were asked to position how they view their feelings toward the franchise, in regard to the four brand resonance dimensions: Attitudinal attachment, behavioral loyalty, sense of community and active engagement. I explained to them each dimension concisely.

In the following sections, their comments are summarized but I also added any elements in their behavior and answers to previous questions that could be of interest for this research.

a) Attitudinal attachment

Attachment is the dimension where the greatest impact of transmedia storytelling appears, according to the results in part 1). People who say they "love" the franchise use a wider range of arguments when explaining why when they are part of the group that has been exposed to transmedia content. For example, they mentioned more the franchise's characters and the means employed behind the franchise to produce quality content. Interviewee n°12 explained:

> "I feel attached to the League of Legends universe because I think they put a lot of effort into offering great stuff. *Arcane* is beautiful, the KDA songs are catchy (note: KDA is a K-pop group in which performers are virtual characters of the video game *League of Legends*), even the game we played just before is beautiful, the attention to detail is impeccable."

Interviewee n°14 is another interesting case of someone who doesn't play the game but appreciates the universe that has been developed in several videos and in the *Arcane* series and finds the characters very good.

The arguments didn't change between the two groups, however, for individuals who don't feel attached to the franchise. They said they were not interested in the universe or hadn't had the time to get interested.

b) Behavioral loyalty

Individuals feeling more loyal talked about the fact that they consume the franchise's new releases as soon as possible. For Marvel new releases, they generally go to the cinema for each new film release, so as not to miss out on the rest of the story. Two interviewees also mentioned subscribing to Disney+ in order to watch the upcoming Marvel series.

Individuals who don't feel loyal either expressed no interest in the franchise in question, or consumed it very occasionally, or for free without taking advantage of the paid benefits (League of Legends is a free game for example and can be enjoyed completely without paying).

There were no notable differences in the participants' feelings about loyalty between the two groups.

3 participants said that they were feeling less loyal toward Marvel now than before and explained that they didn't enjoy the recent Marvel productions and agreed that it was becoming harder to follow due to the quantity of products.

Respondents didn't mention the notion of exclusivity on their own, and when asked, they said they're open to anything, including other competing products.

We can note, however, that when respondents discussed the various transmedia content exposed previously, 4 participants mentioned, while watching transmedia content, franchises from the competition, while no participant mentioned a franchise competing with the franchise on which there was no transmedia content exposed. Transmedia content may cause recall of competing franchises.

Behavioral loyalty is a special case. In fact, this is the only dimension where feelings are lower in the group exposed to transmedia content than in the group not exposed (see section 1). This may be explained by the small sample size, but it's still surprising to see all the other dimensions higher and this one going against it. The qualitative responses provide no further explanation for this observation and it

seems in contradiction with the results in the quantitative section. In the absence of further answers, three hypotheses may emerge:

- Individuals are victims of blocking: when recalling the brand through transmedia content, the participant conjures up associations from competing franchises, unconsciously lowering the sense of loyalty. This argument can be supported by the fact that this recalling is observed during discussion.

- Individuals exposed to several different transmedia contents bias their responses by underestimating their loyalty: they realize that they are not as loyal as they thought. This argument may be supported by the fact that most participants were unaware of the existence of the board games presented, for example.

- Individuals lower their feeling of loyalty because they are not as loyal anymore as they used to be. Watching transmedia content could reinforce the nostalgic feeling.

c) Sense of community

The feeling of belonging to a community seems to be stronger for the League of Legends franchise than for Marvel. League of Legends players who spoke about their sense of belonging to the community emphasized the fact that they follow several famous competitive players, and are active on social networks to debate, discuss and learn about the game in order to become better at it. The relationship with the developers was also a point raised by some participants, who said they felt listened to by the production team and were able to exchange ideas with them. These players feel part of the community.

About Marvel, the point that stands out most for fans is the theorizing about future films, particularly at the release of each film, with several participants watching videos explaining theories, hidden references in the film, and explanations of post-credit scenes. Participants have more of a sense of interacting with the community on an occasional basis, rather than being part of the community.

There was no noticeable difference in the way the two groups expressed themselves, with or without viewing transmedia content.

d) Active engagement

Participants mainly expressed their commitment in terms of time. A recurring pattern in participants' answers is that these are licenses that require commitment and investment.

Those who feel committed express that they sometimes feel the need to invest so much, especially for Marvel where it's almost necessary to follow several media simultaneously to grasp the full storyline. There is less criticism of League of Legends, where participants praise the ease of entry to the franchise's various media, requiring little or no knowledge. *Arcane* is a frequently cited example of a series that has successfully introduced many people to the franchise.

Those who don't feel engaged at all cite the complexity of the franchise as a deterrent to further involvement.

Discussion

The results obtained in the Findings section seem to corroborate the hypothesis that for the Marvel Universe, the characteristics of transmedia storytelling are correlated with brand resonance.

Indeed, while higher engagement in the franchise increases brand resonance, a higher engagement in the franchise with an interest in transmedia leads to an even higher increase in brand resonance. It would not be correlated with it in the case that higher brand resonance was only explained by higher engagement in the franchise, no matter the transmedia storytelling appreciation.

Attitudinal attachment is stronger through transmedia, with increasing emotions for the viewer. Sense of community is triggered through the need of exchanging with other fans, debating and theorizing. Active engagement increases with more content to watch, more characters to write about and more references to understand and a resulting rewarding feeling. Finally behavioral loyalty is maintained through a sense of immersion, viewers are more reluctant to leave a universe they immerse themselves in.

But this conclusion is to be nuanced, as transmedia storytelling interacts differently with each dimension, because transmedia storytelling is not a static thing. Transmedia storytelling is living, evolving, shifting, and is composed of any combination of media, and each media may interact differently with the dimensions of brand resonance.

While quantitative research showed that transmedia was positively correlated with many variables in the audience's resonance, the qualitative research highlighted how different media may work differently. Some media may improve immersion (games), others will spark emotion (video clip), or interest (themed website) or recall (music), and some of them might be more encyclopedic (books, magazines). And with each media interacting differently, what to conclude about the overwhelming quantity of combination of media? What about a franchise composed of movies, books and magazines, against a franchise composed of games, TV shows and websites? The qualitative research highlighted some reactions that could appear

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with each media, but future research could try to dive deeper into the combination of these media and how they interact with each other toward brand resonance. Transmedia storytelling can also be negatively correlated with brand resonance, as it can lead to a higher pressure to watch everything. Higher expectations also lead to bigger disappointment, and it is a frequent comment of respondents from that study that they are disappointed in recent Marvel content and direction.

Other comments pointed out that the overwhelming amount of entry points may be scary to new fans, but this may be explored further in other research about the effects of transmedia storytelling on awareness.

The research on saturation showed that people could indeed feel the fatigue mentioned at the beginning of this research. The results confirmed James Gunn's belief that people were bored of repetitive stories with no surprise and emotion, but other reasons for said saturation is not to be ignored. Indeed, the complexity of transmedia franchise is often cited in this research. If James Gunn and DC Comics really want to compete with Marvel, they should learn from their example and the observations from this study.

Another objective of this research was to show that there is an "optimal" point of transmedia storytelling, in which it is effective enough to impact positively brand resonance, but also not too present enough to negatively impact awareness and brand resonance. While this research showed that there was indeed an amount of positive relationship within brand resonance and transmedia storytelling, and a point in which people feel saturated, it struggled to find a precise pinpoint in which the positive starts to become negative.

Further research should now take a step back from the example developed here of the Marvel Universe and take a bigger look at how a franchise in general can interact with brand resonance. I believe that a step in that direction is to understand how different combinations of media work together for brand resonance as explained above.

Even further research could then expand on all types of brand for transmedia storytelling, and not only focus on media franchise. Some brands try to create a form of transmedia storytelling strategy while not having a narrative at its core, and

create the transmedia dimension out of brand values, brand logo, brand image and become a narrative world, "since they constitute complex discourse universes with a strong narrative imprint" (Scolari, 2009). The brands are now able to spread their messages through compelling content thanks to the development of new technologies and the rise of social media. What used to be an ad on someone else's content, became a blogpost, a newsletter, or a corporate magazine. That means that brands start to act like media companies (Pulizzi, 2012). According to Pulizzi, the barriers of entry that prevented brands from starting a content marketing strategy, such as the lack of talent working for brand content, the technology, and the opportunity of media to be consumed, no longer exist. Non-media companies are now competing with media companies for time and attention and the interest in content marketing should not decrease anytime soon. Indeed, according to a 2014 study, "70% of consumers want to learn about products through content as opposed to traditional ad methods" (MDG Advertising, 2014).

The brand became narrative-based to convey meaning and build a relationship to consumers since "Storytelling is a useful tool for differentiating a company's particular position in the symbolic market and retaining customers by offering a set of shared values." (Scolari, 2018). Entertaining and Publishing is the future of Marketing. (Pulizzi, 2012; Philips, 2012). The transmedia storytelling strategy of a brand should not be different as the one of a popular media franchise in Hollywood, Scolari "considers brands to be transmedia narrative worlds that can be analyzed, designed and managed like any other transmedia storytelling construct in the field of fiction." (Scolari, 2018). A recent example is the celebration of Louis Vuitton's bicentennial: Louis Vuitton can communicate its timelessness through its strong cultural dimension and the aura of luxury brands. The whole branding forms a story, a narrative that includes the atmosphere of a brand, what it exudes, its rich history, all through "Louis 200", an exhibition of 200 artists deploying their creativity on the brand (Krim, 2022).

To conclude this research and the discussion, here are some recommandations for managers inspired by the results and the interview conducted with a transmedia manager working in an international video game company.

Transmedia storytelling strategy should be though by creatives and production team. Transmedia should not be viewed as a «financial-only» strategy to be

successful. To assure cohesion between media, each media should be thought by people creating universes instead of people creating business plan. This seems to be the strategy of DC Studios by nominating James Gunn as CEO, that was already hired before to direct *Suicide Squad*, and who directed the critical success trilogy *Guardians of the Galaxy* for Marvel.

A transmedia storytelling strategy should be for the fans, but not by the fans. Opinions of fans and clusters of people really invested in a franchise are not representative of the whole audience. Invested fans are, as seen in this study, more foregiving and demanding than others, and their expectations should not always be sollicitated as they may be «too high» for the rest of the audience.

In general, avoid any «Too much». Transmedia storytelling should be cohesive with independant content, and should not be dependant of an intensive understanding of the whole franchise and storyline as it could cause a loss in loyalty as it requires too much time or money to invest in.

Each media must be understood differently as they have different impact on brand resonance. Also, it is not about what the fan of the franchise want, but what the fan of the media want. For example, by creating a comic book, it is not about satisfying the need of the franchise fan, but satisfying the need of comic book fan. The content should be enjoyed independently and create new fans to expand the brand. Being as mainstream as possible is not the way to go, and is a cited argument for how Marvel is disappointing now.

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Appendices

The Marvel Universe is extending across many different media, and you will find below a non-exhaustive list of it. The Marvel Universe is making every content relevant by making everything part of a multiverse. While it is impossible to have all content connected to a single storyline, they remain connected to the "multiverse". Every new iteration of Spider-man is then not a different product, but a new variant that exists in parallel to the other. That's how we can have 3 different actors playing Spider-man, another variant in the acclaimed video game "*Marvel's Spider-man*", another one in the comic-books and so on. These variants can then possibly meet during cross-over: The Spider-man from the videogame met the comic-book Spiderman during a comic book event for example.

- o Movies: The Marvel Universe is expanding through dozens of movies, made primarily by three different studios: Disney, 20TH Century Fox, Sony. The shared cinematic experience created by Disney is called the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) in which all movies are linked with each other through a continuous storyline, and post-credits scenes referencing the movies. Each new movie is part of a "phase" representing a new story arc in the overarching storyline.
- o TV shows: The MCU and the storyline expands since 2020 into a new field: the TV shows using the Disney+ platform. These shows introduce new characters and stories that can be enjoyed independently (*She-hulk, Moon Knight, Miss Marvel*) while others reveal the fate of existing movie characters (*Loki, WandaVision, Falcon & Winter soldier*). All these stories are expected to become relevant in the main storyline of the MCU.
- o Comic-books: Comics are the genesis of the Marvel Universe, everything started there. While this media is not the most famous and profitable one nowadays, it remains a solid source of stories and characters that fans wait to see on screens. Marvel sells comics by making their editorial strategy match with their film release. For example, the arrival of a character in the

cinematic universe usually comes with the release of new comics featuring it to learn more about his new adventures or their origin.

- o Video games: Dozens of video games featuring in the Marvel Universe exist. They usually have their own storyline and don't adapt an already existing storyline. This is the opportunity for the customer to play his favorite characters. This includes recent examples such as "*Marvel's Spider-man*" 1 & 2, "*Marvel's Avengers*", "*Marvel's Midnight Suns*"…

- o Board games: Marvel is giving the rights to many publishers to release board games. This includes original boardgames taking place in the Marvel Universe (*Marvel Unity* by CMON for example), but also retheme of famous preexisting board games using the Marvel franchise (*Marvel Splendor, Marvel Love Letter, Marvel Zombicide, Villainous Marvel).* These retheme let players enjoy an existing board game with characters and stories they know and enjoy.

We will now try to apply this strategy to the seven principals developed by Jenkins.

- o Two opposing vectors of engagement:
  - o Spreadability: Marvel is making their universe spreadable by using huge social media communication, releasing trailers that are widely shared.
  - o Drillability: The content is deep because the audience can learn more by engaging with TV shows and even reading comics and books. There is always more to learn about characters and stories thanks to more than 60 years of content.
- o Two opposing vectors of storylines:
  - o Continuity: The storyline is continuous thanks to post-credit scenes teasing new content and movies. Every independent piece of media in the MCU can become part of a bigger story divided in several story arcs. The MCU got its first climax with *Avengers Endgame*, putting an end to the "Infinity Saga" after more than 20 movies and 10 years of content. The story now takes place in the "Multiverse saga."
  - o Multiplicity: This continuity still leaves place for diversity and multiplicity thanks to the multiverse. There are many parallel

universes with variants of beloved characters and storylines, that let people enjoy stand-alone content that doesn't need any other piece of knowledge by still remaining part of the Marvel Universe.

o Two opposing directions of relationship:

  o Immersion: The consumer can immerse themselves into the Marvel Universe thanks to video games or VR experiences. The universe becomes more real and a place in which it is possible to engage in.

  o Extractability: Marvel also extracts its content to put it into the real world, retheming famous boardgames by just adding the Marvel name on it, creating theme parks in Disneyland, and creating derivative products of all kinds.

o Worldbuilding:

  o The world of Marvel is detailed, given across the main pieces of media but also additional source of information for the fans that engage the most deeply. This worldbuilding specifies the geography of that universe, the pantheon, the timeline, characters origins and potential futures.

o Seriality

  o The content has been dispersed since the sixties, and it is even possible to consider since the forties thanks to comic books. The MCU as a transmedia franchise has started in 2008 with the release of *Iron Man* and still has plans for incoming movies until at least 2027 with *Avengers: Secret Wars*.

o Subjectivity

  o The transmedia allows to leave more place to more intimate moment that couldn't make it into the main content. The TV show especially develops characters after the climax in the storyline and tries to give a different approach than the one seen in movies.

o Performance

  O The Marvel Universe is frequently cited as a successful example of transmedia storytelling, while strategies employed by competitors like DC Comics are often considered less effective. However, in this research, the performance aspect of Marvel's transmedia strategy

needs to be analyzed, as critics of their recent content have started to highlight flaws and weaknesses in the overall strategy.

Appendix 2: Online survey for quantitative questionnaire

I) Section 1: Felt enjoyment of the Marvel Universe.

For the following questions, please indicate to which degree you agree with each statement:

1) I enjoy the Marvel Universe.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

2) I feel I have a lot of knowledge of the Marvel Universe.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

3) I will stay updated with future news and releases from the Marvel Universe.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

II) Section 2: Knowledge and interest

4) Have you ever watched Marvel movies?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

5) Have you ever watched Marvel TV Shows?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

6) Have you ever read Marvel books or comics?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

7) Have you ever played Marvel video games?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

8) Have you ever played Marvel board games?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

9) Have you ever attended any Marvel-related events (conventions, screenings, meet-and-greets, etc)?

None	Very little	Some	A significant amount	A large quantity

10) How would you describe your level of interest in the Marvel Universe?

Not interested at all	Slightly interested	Moderately interested	Very interested	Extremely interested

If How would you describe your level of interest in the Marvel Universe? = Not interested at all

➔ 11) Why don't you feel interested in the Marvel Universe? (multiple answers possible)

I watched one or several marvel movies and didn't like it	I never got the opportunity to get interested in	I don't like this kind of franchises and universes	It seems too complex to follow	Other

Else

➔ 12) Since when have you been following the Marvel Universe?

Before 2000	Between 2000 and 2010	Between 2010 and 2020	After 2020

III) Section 3: Brand attachment

13) Are you looking forward to the release of new Marvel-related media (movies, series, books, etc.)?

Definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to a certain extent	Definitely yes

14) Would you say that you «love» the Marvel Universe?

Definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to a certain extent	Definitely yes

15) Do you consider the Marvel Universe as a part of your life and interests?

Definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to a certain extent	Definitely yes

IV) Section 4: Sense of community

16) Do you feel you are part of a Marvel fan community?

Definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to a certain extent	Definitely yes

17) Do you interact with members of a Marvel fan community?

Definitely not	No, not really	Yes, to a certain extent	Definitely yes

If Do you interact with members of a Marvel fan community = Yes to some extent/Definitely yes

➔ 18) How often do you interact with members of such communities?

Daily	Frequently	Rarely

➜ 19) On which platform do these exchanges take place? (multiple answers possible)

Online (forums, social networks…)	Physical (conventions, meetings…)

V) Section 5 : Active engagement

20) Are you involved in finding additional information about the Marvel Universe outside of the movies, such as books, encyclopedias or interviews with the creators?

No, I am not interested at all	No, very rarely	Yes, occasionally	Yes, definitely involved

21) Have you ever created content (blog posts, fan art, fan fiction, videos, etc.) inspired by Marvel?

No, I am not interested at in content creation	No, but I enjoy looking at content created by other fans	Yes, occasionally	Yes, regularly

22) How would you rate your investment in the Marvel Universe in terms of:

	1	2	3	4	5
Time	○	○	○	○	○
Money	○	○	○	○	○

<u>VI) Section 6: Behavioral loyalty</u>

23) Have you ever bought any Marvel merchandise? (Clothing, posters, plush toys…)

No	Yes, occasionally	Yes, frequently

24) Are you willing to give a new Marvel movie, book or video game a second chance, even if you didn't like the previous ones?

No, it I didn't like the previous ones, I won't give a second chance	Probably not	Probably yes	Yes, I am open to new experiences

25) Are you interested in other Superhero universes?

Only Marvel (exclusive option)	DC Comics	The Boys	Invincible	Other

26) Do you feel a certain saturation with the Marvel Universe?

No, I still love it as much as I used to	Yes, somewhat	Yes, definitely

If Do you feel a certain saturation with the Marvel Universe = Yes somewhat/Yes definitely

➔ 27) For what reason(s) do you feel a saturation? (multiple answers possible)

Lassitude due to the repetitiveness of the stories	It becomes too complex to follow	I am tired of the media saturation regarding the Marvel Universe	I don't have the time/budget to keep up as much as I would like to	I don't like the recent direction and decisions of Marvel	Other

VII) Section 7: Transmedia storytelling appreciation

28) What do you particularly enjoy regarding the Marvel Universe? (Multiples answers possible)

Nothing (exclusive option)	The stories	The characters	The background/the lore	The special effects and action	The connection between the movie	Other

29) What do you particularly dislike regarding the Marvel Universe? (Multiples answers possible)

Nothing (exclusive option)	The stories	The characters	The background/the lore	The special effects and action	The connection between the movie	Other

For the following questions, please indicate to which degree you agree with the following statements:

"Marvel content" refers to any content from the Marvel Universe, whether it is a movie, a TV show, a comic book, a game, a live event or anything you could imagine with the name "Marvel" on it.

30) I have already felt rewarded for being a fan by understanding in a Marvel content a reference to an other Marvel content.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

31) I have already felt frustrated because I could not understand something in a Marvel content referencing an other Marvel content.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

32) I still enjoy the Marvel Universe as much as I used to.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

33) There is too much content (Movies, TV shows, books...) in the Marvel Universe for me to be able to understand everything.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

34) There is too much content (Movies, TV shows, books...) in the Marvel Universe for me to be able to buy everything.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

35) I have already wanted to know more about the Marvel Universe through other media after seeing a Marvel movie.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

36) I have already felt forced to watch a Marvel content to follow the story and/or the development of the characters.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

37) The multitude of different Marvel content enriches the overall Marvel experience by deepening characters and stories.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

38) I enjoy how the movies are connected and tell one big story.

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

39) I enjoy the connexion between the different Marvel content (For example: The connexion between TV shows and movies).

Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree

40) How old are you?

41) What is your gender?

Male	Female	Non-binary/other	Prefer not to say

Appendix 3: Qualitative interview process and exposed media

- Step 1: Random affiliation between Marvel and League of Legends (information not shared to the respondent).

In this study, respondents will be asked to express their feelings towards trailers from two different franchises but will be exposed prior to several transmedia content for only one of the two franchises. One should be selected randomly and will decide what content will be exposed in the following steps.

- Step 2: Live reaction to a trailer with no bias.

The respondent must watch a trailer and express its reaction while watching it and afterwards. The trailer shown is either from Marvel or League of Legends (LoL), this is the trailer that will be commented with no prior exposition to other content, and thus is the franchise not selected in step 1.

  - Marvel Trailer:

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcMBFSGVi1c

    - This trailer is for the climax of their storyline. It is a recap of the previous content while teasing the end of everything. The emotions might be stronger for people already familiar with Marvel.

  - LoL trailer:

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNjWjwae-us

    - This trailer is for the main product of the franchise, the League of Legends video game. It features gameplay and iconic characters.

I ask then the respondent to answer to the following:

On a scale 1 to 5: How did you enjoy this trailer?

Then, I explain to the participants the four dimensions of brand resonance and ask him the following questions:

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Attitudinal attachment for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Behavioral loyalty for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Sense of community for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Active engagement for this franchise?

<u>Starting from now, the respondant will only see content from the franchise selected at random in step 1.</u>

- <u>Step 3: Reaction to songs, no visual.</u>

The respondent is asked to listen to a song and tell as soon as he recognized it if he does, then to tell what the source of that song is if he knows, and to express feelings toward it. If he doesn't recognize it, he must tell what that makes him think of and what he thinks of it.

   o Marvel song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrI-UBIB8Jk
      - This song comes from the soundtrack of the movie *Guardians of the Galaxy*. That movie puts a huge emphasis on songs and the soundtrack is a commercial and critical success.
   o LoL song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmI_Ndrxy14
      - This song is the one celebrating the 2014 world cup of League of Legends.

- <u>Step 4: Reaction to songs and visual</u>

This time, the respondent is asked to watch the clip with a song and tell what he can recognize as soon as possible. Then to express feelings toward it.

   o Marvel video:
      https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApXoWvfEYVU

- This song comes from the soundtrack of the movie *Spider-man: Into the spider-verse.* The artist is Post Malone, and this song became known outside of the range of the movie. The clip features extracts from the film.
  - LoL song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9G1VOjN_84
    - This song is featured in the opening credits of the Netflix TV show *Arcane* that takes place in the LoL universe and presents the origins of several iconic characters. Composed by Imagine Dragons, this song is a commercial success and the clip features extracts from the TV show.

- Step 5: Short gaming session

The respondent and I go through a short gaming session of a boardgame from that franchise. He must tell what he thinks of it, components, characters, production quality, gameplay...

  - Marvel game: *Marvel Champions* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TTkDVcHHKU (illustrative video, not shown to respondent)
    - This game is a cooperative card game in which players incarnate one superhero each, and they fight together against a scenario from the game in which a Marvel villain appears.
  - LoL game: *Mechs vs Minions* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr2vgmO1_og (illustrative video, not shown to respondent)
    - This game is a cooperative figure game in which players play characters from the LoL video game and must complete scenarios together.

- Step 6: Final trailer reaction with bias

The respondent watches the trailer that he did not saw in step 2, and must comment on it.

I will then ask the respondent to answer to the following:

On a scale 1 to 5: How did you enjoy this trailer?

Then, I explain to the participants the four dimensions of brand resonance and ask him the following questions:

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Attitudinal attachment for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Behavioral loyalty for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Sense of community for this franchise?

On a scale 1 to 5: How would you rate your Active engagement for this franchise?

Appendix 4: Table of descriptive statistics of respondents' attitudinal attachment on a 4-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I'm looking forward releases	2.28	.649
		I "love" the MU	2.34	.670
		MU is part of my life and interests	1.62	.728
	2 Transmedia engagers	I'm looking forward releases	2.67	.661
		I "love" the MU	2.63	.718
		MU is part of my life and interests	1.80	.664
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I'm looking forward releases	2.86	.949
		I "love" the MU	3	.877
		MU is part of my life and interests	2.29	.825
	2 Transmedia engagers	I'm looking forward releases	3.42	.765
		I "love" the MU	3.42	.765
		MU is part of my life and interests	2.94	.772

Appendix 5: Table of descriptive statistics of sense of community on a 4-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I am part of a Marvel fan community	1.38	.622
		I interact with members of a fan community	1.34	.614
	2 Transmedia engagers	I am part of a Marvel fan community	1.53	.730
		I interact with members of a fan community	1.37	.669
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I am part of a Marvel fan community	2	.679
		I interact with members of a fan community	1.93	.917
	2 Transmedia engagers	I am part of a Marvel fan community	2.61	.882
		I interact with members of a fan community	2.42	.886

Appendix 6: Table of descriptive statistics of respondents' active engagement on a 4-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I am involved in finding information about the MU	1.69	.761
		I have already created fan content about MU	1.34	.614
		Time investment in MU	1.69	.604
	2 Transmedia engagers	I am involved in finding information about the MU	1.80	.847
		I have already created fan content about MU	1.40	.675
		Time investment in MU	1.83	.950
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I am involved in finding information about the MU	2.07	.730
		I have already created fan content about MU	1.79	.975
		Time investment in MU	2.5	1.092
	2 Transmedia engagers	I am involved in finding information about the MU	2.58	.958
		I have already created fan content about MU	1.87	.885
		Time investment in MU	3.48	1.122

Appendix 7: Table of descriptive statistics of respondents' behavioral loyalty on a 4-point scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	Money investment in MU	1.21	.412
		I buy Marvel merchandise	1.34	.484
		Give a new chance	3.03	.626
		I still enjoy as much as I used to	3	1.102
	2 Transmedia engagers	Money investment in MU	1.60	.894
		I buy Marvel merchandise	1.33	.547
		Give a new chance	3.2	.714
		I still enjoy as much as I used to	3.6	1.102
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	Money investment in MU	2.07	1.207
		I buy Marvel merchandise	1.79	.579
		Give a new chance	3	.784
		I still enjoy as much as I used to	2.93	.917
	2 Transmedia engagers	Money investment in MU	2.45	1.234
		I buy Marvel merchandise	1.77	.617
		Time investment in MU	3.29	.643
		I still enjoy as much as I used to	3.97	1.048

Appendix 8: Table of descriptive statistics of respondents' transmedia feeling on a 5-points scale for each combination of clusters.

Cluster: consumption	Cluster: transmedia	Variable	Mean	Std. deviation
1 Occasional viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I have felt rewarded	2.83	1.167
		I have felt frustrated	3.86	.990
		I already wanted to learn more through transmedia	3.45	1.088
		Too much content to understand everything	4.1	.817
		Too much content to buy everything	4.24	.739
	2 Transmedia engagers	I have felt rewarded	3.63	1.033
		I have felt frustrated	3.43	1.331
		I already wanted to learn more through transmedia	3.8	.925
		Too much content to understand everything	3.23	1.278
		Too much content to buy everything	4.03	1.217
2 Enthusiastic viewers	1 Non transmedia oriented group	I have felt rewarded	3.5	1.225
		I have felt frustrated	2.79	1.188
		I already wanted to learn more through transmedia	3.43	1.342
		Too much content to understand everything	3.79	1.051
		Too much content to buy everything	4	1.177
	2 Transmedia engagers	I have felt rewarded	4.06	1.124
		I have felt frustrated	3.16	1.068
		I already wanted to learn more through transmedia	4.39	.919
		Too much content to understand everything	2.87	1.231
		Too much content to buy everything	3.84	1.214

Appendix 9: Table of quantitative results from the qualitative interviews for step 1 and 6.

		MARVEL					LEAGUE OF LEGENDS				
	Prior transmedia content exposition?	YES					NO				
	Interview	Enjoy	Attachement	Community	Loyal	Engagement	Enjoy	Attachement	Community	Loyal	Engagement
Marvel group	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	4	3	3	4
	2	4	5	3	5	5	1	1	1	1	1
	3	5	5	4	4	4	2	1	1	1	1
	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	5	5	5
	5	5	5	2	3	4	2	3	2	2	2
	6	3	4	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
	7	5	5	4	3	5	4	5	5	5	5
	8	5	5	2	2	3	1	2	1	1	1
	Mean	3.875	4.125	2.250	2.625	3.250	1.875	2.875	2.375	2.375	2.625
	STD	1.364	1.364	1.199	1.317	1.392	0.927	1.536	1.654	1.654	1.654

		MARVEL					LEAGUE OF LEGENDS				
	Prior transmedia content exposition?	NO					YES				
League of Legends group	9	2	2	1	1	2	3	4	3	2	4
	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2
	11	3	4	1	3	3	3	5	2	2	3
	12	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	5
	13	5	4	3	5	4	2	3	3	3	4
	14	4	5	3	3	5	3	3	2	1	3
	15	4	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
	16	5	4	3	3	4	3	1	1	1	1
	Mean	3.500	3.375	2.125	2.750	3.250	2.625	3.125	2.375	2.250	3.000
	STD	1.323	1.218	0.927	1.199	1.199	0.857	1.364	1.218	1.199	1.225
	Overall mean	3.688	3.750	2.188	2.688	3.250	2.250	3.000	2.375	2.313	2.813
	Overall STD	1.356	1.346	1.073	1.261	1.299	0.968	1.458	1.452	1.446	1.467