A Marvelous Change: The Positive Impact of the Marvel Cinematic Universe on Cinema & Society

D’Andre Arceneaux, Mallory Rosetta, Dani Kattan, and Marcus Gutierrez

Texas Tech University
Introduction

On May 2, 2002, Marvel Studios released their debut film, *Iron Man*, starring Robert Downey Jr. This one film changed the course of cinematic history and became the stepping stone for the largest interconnected cinematic universes of all time. The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) was created by Kevin Feige, the current president of Marvel Studios. The way audiences perceive superhero movies and cinema as a whole has changed over the last 10 years and will forever be changed by Marvel Studios. **The Marvel Cinematic Universe has greatly impacted the way audiences view superhero movies, especially through the way women are portrayed in films, the embracing of a foreign nation’s religion that is not our own, and the switch in media convergence of Marvel into their own studio.**

Summary 1

In the article, *Entertainment Assembled: The Marvel Cinematic Universe, a Case Study in Transmedia*, Drew Menard discusses how Marvel is not only “a leader in the box office”, but also “innovative in its use of world-building” (Menard, 2015). Menard discusses how Marvel incorporates secondary elements such as short films and comic books by telling a story across multiple media channels, or transmedia (Menard, 2015). Menard states, “Each individual narrative has the ability to stand-alone and yet, makes a worthy contribution to the grand narrative. On its own, any transmedia installment may be enjoyed by a casual consumer, however, the consumption of all installments, across media channels, provides a more enriching experience” (Menard, 2015, p.4).

This article is credible because Menard effectively evaluated the extent to which Marvel has applied the principles of transmedia to its Cinematic Universe by investigating how strongly
Marvel tied its various media installments into one grand narrative. Menard states, “This study found that the Marvel Cinematic Universe is indeed saturated with connections between its individual stories, across all media platforms” (Menard, 2015, p.5). Supporting the statement from the beginning of the article, Menard said, “This study finds that not only is Marvel a leader in terms of box office success, it is a narrative innovator, a frontrunner in the emerging realm of transmedia storytelling” (Menard, 2015, p.5). Menard expresses that transmedia storytelling is growing more and more with each film to come out so when this franchise is able to bring in such success, this method of storytelling is on the up and up.

Summary 2

The journal *Cinematic Destiny: Marvel Studios and the Trade Stories of Industrial Convergence* by Derek Johnson examines how the Marvel Cinematic Universe was impacted through the industrial convergence of the company. Johnson begins by giving background information on the various Marvel movies. He goes on to describe how the Marvel industry went from licensed convergence through licensor companies to self-produced convergence through their own studio. Marvel Studios strived to get away from the power of major licensed studios to use its creative comic book properties for its own studio (Johnson, 2012). Through this change, Marvel instated comic book managers to be an integral role in reimagining film production culture.

This journal is effective because it evaluates how the divergence away from licensed companies affected the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This journal is relevant for this course of research because it not only gives history to Marvel Studios, but also gives fan the knowledge and understanding as to why a Marvel movies’ content is so high in quality and accuracy.
Altogether, this is an extremely credible article in helping readers understand the impact of the Marvel Cinematic Universe on the view of superheroes.

Summary 3

The article *Avenging Women*, by Mary DeMarchi, analyzes the effects of sexism and post-feminism on disempowering women. It also discusses the current role women have in films while connecting how sexism and post-feminism are portrayed by the lack of women actresses in Marvel’s Avenger series (DeMarchi, 2014). DeMarchi emphasizes how the series “centers on larger than life male figures and leaves little space for fully developed female characters,” but counters her points by indicating how women in the series have their own power moments (DeMarchi, 2014, p.1). Black Widow, for instance, is an example of a female character coming behind a man’s shadow to represent the false nature of post-feminism as seen in the 2010 film *Iron Man 2*. The author concludes by analyzing how the general view of sexism and post-feminism connects to Marvel ultimately through expressing how women characters can show their power.

Coming from DePaul University and being found on Google Scholar, the article proves to be credible and reliable. The source is useful for this project because it aligns with the overall topic while also shaping how the audience views not only how women are portrayed in films but also how they are portrayed in Marvel’s Avenger series. Overall, reading this article helps one better understand how audiences view female characters in the film industry.

Summary 4

In the article *Africana Religion, Black Panther, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU)*, Torin Dru Alexander discusses the introduction of Black Panther into the Marvel
Cinematic Universe and the inclusion of an all African-American cast. Alexander gives an extremely detailed account of how Marvel paid very close attention to the adaptation of the Wakandan religion from several Egyptian gods and how the religions and belief systems were loosely based on Egyptian beliefs (Alexander, 2018). He also covers how the film presented an updated version of “[re-imagining] in light of influences from Afro-futurism” (Alexander, 2018, p. 64). Alexander concludes by saying that “although Wakanda is a creation of the imagination and not ‘real,’ Black Panther’s potential to shape perceptions of Africa and African peoples is genuine” (Alexander, 2018, p. 65).

Throughout the article, Alexander comments on how Marvel conducted a lot of research on the religions the focus in the comics and film. Because of this, research and dedication to authenticity, audiences are able to look into the different types of religion and cultures. This dedication to authenticity is what makes the Marvel Cinematic Universe important; it is able to convey a creative story while keeping the realism through research. The creation of Black Panther also allows for children to look up to characters that are of the same nationality. With the addition of Black Panther, children of African discordance are able to see that there is a hero like them.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has shaped the way the audience views superhero movies by the way women are portrayed in films, the embracing of a foreign nation’s religion, and the switch in media convergence of Marvel into their own studio. The perception of movies allowing audiences to look at the cinematic industry in a new way. This prominent change has led society to realize how one superhero movie can have a crucial impact on people.
References:


