



2.2 Ownership + Control

• Disney is a media **conglomerate** who own a substantial amount of other companies across a range of cultural industries. As well as owning Marvel they are also the film's **distributor** which makes this a good example of **vertical integration**.

What are some of the benefits of this type of ownership?

- When Disney bought Marvel, they agreed to minimal creative influence over Marvel products.
- Despite Marvel historically having sold some of their comic book titles such as *Spiderman* to TV and then to Paramount, *Black Panther* has remained fully owned by them which in 2009 allowed them to develop the character to be the protagonist in his own film and the surrounding characters.
- Disney's recent merger with 20th Century Fox means that Disney/Marvel have re-acquired the rights to produce and distribute their own original properties of X-Men, Fantastic Four and Deadpool, which will see them integrated into the larger Marvel Cinematic Universe.
- In 2013, Marvel signed a deal with Netflix to develop TV series for six more characters (Daredevil & Punisher were already films). This may have caused conflict with Disney, who later developed their own streaming channel - Disney +, and in 2019 Netflix cancelled their Marvel shows (although these may continue at a later date - on Disney's own streaming channel).

Regulation

The Warrior Battle scene was a consideration for a higher rating due to a number of factors:

- The intensity of the scene (sound design influenced this)
- Less emphasis on comic violence - T'Challa removes his powers at the beginning of the scene, so they are two normal men fighting. This is more problematic because the violence isn't contextualised in relation to fantasy violence/use of powers
- Use of real life weapons, rather than magical hammers or indestructible shields like Captain America's.
- In the end, because there is a lack of detail in relation to injury - i.e. it doesn't linger, they decided to pass it at 12A without cuts

The Black Panther Party (1966-82) were a controversial and aggressive political activist group who monitored violent and unlawful police behaviour towards black people. A more contemporary and peaceful equivalent might be the **#blacklivesmatter** campaign that used social media to raise awareness of the same issues.

What does this suggest about this issue within society?

Marvel films have never before featured African-American actors in lead roles; they appear as sidekicks (e.g. The Falcon in Captain America). This links to the **#oscarssowhite** meme from 2016 that drew attention to the lack of diversity in films/actors being nominated in Hollywood, suggesting under-representation.

The film has an **Afro-futuristic** feel and seeks to show the successful and powerful future of black culture to modern audiences.

2.3 Marketing + Promotion

Distribution and Marketing

- 360-degree experience using differentiated marketing for different audiences.
- Marketed as a cultural event across a range of platforms, raising the profile to politically resonate. Strong black female characters helped to draw in new audiences.
- Crowd funding projects help support under-privileged children in black communities.
- Brand association played a huge part in targeting varied audiences and appeal to people other than 'fanboys of comic books'
 - **Hasbro Toys** - all adverts feature children of colour (both genders and a range of ages) targeting these demographics groups.
 - **Lexus Cars** - featured in the movie and collaborated on superbowl advert '*Long live the King*'. Also featured in a graphic novel
 - **Kendrick Lamar soundtrack** - Album released at the same time as the film and each helped promote the other through **synergy**.
- "Welcome to Wakanda" catwalk show at New York fashion week made it into several fashion magazines, working across media platform to promote. The opening weekend showed that 44% of ticket buyers were female, showing a wider audience reach.

Digital Convergence

- The teaser trailer was released in June 2017 by Disney's sister channel ABC, during NBA Finals. Within 24 hours it had been viewed 89 million times on Youtube.
- Just before release, B.P. was the most-tweeted about film of 2018 with more than 5m tweets globally. In March 2018, it was the most-tweeted about film ever with 35m



2.4 Theoretical Perspectives

Hesmondhalgh - Cultural Industries

- Profit is integral to a film franchise's success, and they can often fall into the trap of producing formulaic work that lack risk. *Black Panther* helps to diversify the superheroes in the MCU even further than was already the case. No Marvel film is 'just another superhero movie' - they straddle a variety of genres.
- The range of cultural industries is demonstrated through **synergy** in the marketing campaign.
- There is low risk for the producers as Wakanda and T'Challa had already been introduced in Civil War and the original comic is over 50 yrs old. However, the Afro-centric film could have been seen as a commercial risk due to the niche nature of the target audience.

Curran and Seaton - Power & Media Industries

- The diversity in the film challenges the idea that there is a lack of creativity and variety through conglomerate ownership.
- Disney's lack of interference in decisions with Marvel suggest a complex pattern of ownership than C+S suggest
- Dominance of Marvel in the superhero genre does limit the opportunities for independent films in these areas. Even DC (i.e. Batman, Superman, Suicide Squad, etc.) struggle in comparison.

2.5 Key Terminology

Colonisation
the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

Afro-futurism
the re-imagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology seen through a black lens.

Franchise
a movie franchise is a collection of related films in succession that share the same fictional universe, or are marketed as a series.

Conglomerate
a large organisation that owns different types of companies across a range of different areas, e.g. Disney owns films, TV channels, theme parks, etc. Maximising their opportunities to reach audiences and make profit!

Production Company
plans, films and edits the film or media product

Distribution Company
organises the marketing, sale and transport of the film or media product to reach the largest possible audience

Exhibition Company
shows the final or media product, i.e. TV channel (Netflix/Prime) or Cinema (Odeon, Showcase)

Parent Company
a company that has a controlling interest in another.

Subsidiary Company
a company owned and controlled by another company

Horizontal Integration
a company owns multiple companies at the same stage of the film industry, i.e. different film production companies.

Vertical Integration
the parent company owns multiple companies across different stages of the film industry, i.e. production, distributors and exhibitors.

Revenue
the income from ticket sales after a film release

Box Office
number of tickets sold or amount of money raised

Production Budget
how much money will be spent on the entire film project - not including marketing.

Synergy
when a number of different institutions work together for beneficial reasons

Regulation
the process of protecting vulnerable groups from watching content that may harm them

Production values
the lighting, sound, scenery and props used to improve a film - the better the quality, the higher the value.

Convergence
the merging of communications - print, TV, radio, internet, social media, etc. along with portable and interactive technologies through digital platforms, i.e. smart-phones!

2.1 Black Panther: Context

Industry Context

Black Panther (Coogler, 2018) is the 17th film in the 'Marvel Cinematic Universe', the highest-grossing film **franchise** in history. It is produced by Marvel Studios, a famous comic book brand that is also a **subsidiary** of the Walt Disney Company.

Black Panther was extremely successful, broke records for the highest opening weekend in the USA, and also performed well globally, **grossing** well over \$1 billion worldwide, with 48% in non-US countries.

It was one of the only superhero films to be nominated for a 'Best Picture' Academy Award. It won three Oscars for Costume, Production Design, and Original Soundtrack.

Economic and Political Context

Obama, America's first African-American president raised the profile of minority groups through creating many initiatives that aided marginalised people; from universal healthcare, to college and entrepreneurship access funds for the under-privileged.



The Trump administration has vowed to reverse many of these and use the funds elsewhere, leading to support from mostly white, right-wing Americans who consider the initiatives unfair. Trump has insulted other countries and has refused to condemn violent, racist attacks in American cities. This has led to many people accusing him of being overtly racist himself.

Historical + Cultural Context

For over 500 years European powers **colonised** African countries and exploited the continent for resources and slave labour, leading to Africans being branded as 'savages' and their culture dismissed as 'primitive'. Victorians called Africa the 'Dark Continent' giving it connotations of evil and terror - the effects of which are still being felt today, with films such as *Blood diamond* (2006) and *Captain Philips* (2013) portraying Africa as a dangerous and barbaric country despite constructing a sympathetic representation of African people. This makes *Black Panther* all the more significant with its positive and powerful portrayal of black characters and narratives