



Exploring the Impact of Marvelous Dynamics on Fans' Perception, Behavior, and Pop Culture

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abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Marvel and its fanbase, with a particular emphasis on the X online community (@Marvfess). Employing a phenomenological qualitative approach, data was collected through interviews and observations involving individuals aged 18-25 who actively engage with @Marvfess on X. Furthermore, data triangulation was conducted by consulting a social media and branding specialist as well as a psychologist. The research aims to evaluate the impact of Marvel's interactions with its fans on brand perceptions, the influence of these interactions on fan behavior, and their contribution to broader trends in popular culture. Drawing on Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression, Social Presence Theory, and Jenkins' Participatory Culture, the findings indicate that Marvel's engagement with its online community fosters a strong connection, significantly shaping fans' perceptions and behaviors, and driving trends in popular culture through active fan participation.

abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki hubungan antara Marvel dan basis penggemarnya, dengan penekanan khusus pada komunitas daring X (@Marvfess). Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi yang melibatkan individu berusia 18-25 tahun yang secara aktif terlibat dengan @Marvfess di X. Selain itu, triangulasi data dilakukan dengan berkonsultasi dengan spesialis media sosial dan branding serta seorang psikolog. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi dampak interaksi Marvel dengan penggemarnya terhadap persepsi merek, pengaruh interaksi ini terhadap perilaku penggemar, dan kontribusinya terhadap tren yang lebih luas dalam budaya populer. Berdasarkan Teori Ekspresi Diri Goffman, Teori Kehadiran Sosial, dan Budaya Partisipatif Jenkins, temuan menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan Marvel dengan komunitas daringnya memupuk hubungan yang kuat, secara signifikan membentuk persepsi dan perilaku penggemar, serta mendorong tren dalam budaya populer melalui partisipasi aktif penggemar.

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1. Introduction

The emergence of digital technology has brought about a massive transformation for Marvel, a prominent global entertainment brand. Its role as a content supplier has expanded to include shaping popular culture and many people's identities, attitudes, and lifestyles—particularly young people. Marvel has expanded to become a global phenomenon since its founding through comic books, movies, and other media.

Marvel Studios' association with The Walt Disney Company, a global leader in entertainment, has increased the studio's significance. Leading American animation company Disney expanded its brand in 2009 when it paid \$4 billion to acquire Marvel Entertainment. This calculated action enabled the establishment of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), bringing in \$23 billion in ticket sales worldwide. The success of Disneyland parks and associated merchandise demonstrates their worldwide influence. Marvel's fan base has grown due to the MCU, which has drawn many viewers. Marvel is more than just an entertainment company because of its ability to build strong emotional bonds with characters and deliver compelling stories that engender enduring fan loyalty.

Online fan communities have transformed how fans interact digitally by creating a dynamic environment of shared excitement. Driven by the widespread use of the internet and social media, these communities offer welcoming environments for communication, encouraging friendships among participants with similar tastes in TV series, movies, video games, or pastimes. They significantly impact associated sectors, content makers, and fan culture. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (previously Twitter) act as focal points for fan interaction within the Marvel fan community. Fans may share happiness, fan art, and cosplay images using hashtags like #Marvel, #Avengers, and #MCU to spark conversations worldwide. Marvel

Studios use these channels to share announcements, teasers, and behind-the-scenes photos to build excitement and a sense of community. Social media is also the driving force behind fan projects, such as crowdfunding campaigns and petitions, which seek

to bring back favorite characters, provide a voice to fans, and strengthen bonds within the thriving Marvel community.

X stands out in particular for its quick and extensive information distribution, which permits real-time changes without restrictions on time or location. On X, auto-based accounts have grown in popularity since 2016. Through Direct Messages, users can send anonymous messages to these accounts, and a bot will post them. These communications, which are called "mentees" (mention confess), allow followers to submit information or pose inquiries [1] anonymously. Communities can convene around autobase accounts to discuss common interests, including daily living, food, beauty, travel, animals, music, literature, education, employment, celebrities, and entertainment. Marvel fans use the @Marvfess auto base account on X to communicate and look for information on the universe. This account is the primary source of information; it provides specific details on characters, plots, hypotheses, and the most recent Marvel news. Because @Marvfess offers content that suits their interests and informational needs, fans choose it [2].

Marvel has developed a devoted and passionate fan base, influencing the franchise's course and fan culture. This active engagement influences fans' opinions of the company and how they interact with its products and related content. Hills examines how fan groups interact with and interpret media texts in "Fan Cultures," highlighting the significance of comprehending fan behaviors and interpretations in influencing popular culture trends. The concepts put forth by Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) in "Spreadable Media" also suggest that fans' active involvement in content creation and dissemination improves the bond between brands and their following [3]. As a result of their increased sense of connection to the company, supporters are encouraged to develop a sense of community and loyalty. Because of their participation, fans feel more a part of the company, strengthening the bond between them, and companies may establish more profound and significant connections with their audience by recognizing and promoting fan activity. This allows companies to capitalize on the fervor of their fans and increase their exposure and reputation. Additionally, this dynamic enables brands to get

insightful input and feedback from their most ardent followers.

The relationship between brands and fans has become more intricate. Marvel, a significant figure in popular culture, provides a unique example to examine brand-fan relationships. Comprehending Marvel fans' opinions is essential to appreciating the company's influence on digital popular culture. Brummett observes in "Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture" that social behaviors extensively embraced by the general public are included in popular culture [4]. This culture, sometimes called mass culture, consists of commonplace behaviors, viewpoints, works of art, and items that broadly appeal to all segments of society. Media like music, movies, television shows, and books are also included, as are routine activities.

According to a related study by Lou, Jiao, and Koh (2021) on social media-based brand communities, meeting fan needs for entertainment, information, and social interaction improves the brand-fan relationship and increases fan engagement behaviors like online word-of-mouth and willingness to buy [5]. This emphasizes how crucial vibrant brand communities are to fostering brand loyalty and influencing consumer behavior.

Marvel uses social media to interact with followers, share fresh content, and create a vibrant community—all of which increase brand loyalty and influence [6]. In the same vein, Lee and Watkins (2016) discovered that fans express their identities through interaction and have a close connection with Marvel [7]. These results emphasize how crucial it is to comprehend fan viewpoints to create successful brand strategies in digital popular culture.

Interactions between brands and their fans significantly shape brand loyalty, identity, image, and reputation. About Marvel, these exchanges help to build a robust community that satisfies fans' informational, recreational, and social requirements while strengthening brand loyalty and forming a sense of shared identity. These encounters lead to positive engagement behaviors like increased purchasing and word-of-mouth advertising. The substantial influence of dynamic brand-fan interactions on perception and engagement is

demonstrated by this active involvement, which strengthens brand reputation among fans and encourages behavior changes.

Given the growing intricacy of brand-fan relationships, this study uses a qualitative phenomenological lens to explore Marvel's relationship with fans, particularly in the online community X @Marvfess. The three main questions it addresses are: (1) How do these dynamics affect fans' perception of Marvel? (2) How do fan interactions affect Marvel-related behavior? and (3) How do these interactions affect pop culture trends?

This study demonstrates the influence of interactions between Marvel and its followers on platforms like X (@Marvfess) in shaping the broader views of the brand and examining fan loyalty, interactions, and collective perception underscores the influence on buying merchandise, attending gatherings, and engaging in internet-based endeavors. The research highlights the importance of fan debates, recommendations, and content production in promoting involvement. It also shows how fan collaborations and creations, such as memes, fan theories, and collective storytelling, impact broader pop culture trends. The active culture of the Marvel fandom ultimately has a tremendous influence on developing and spreading trends outside the fan group, significantly impacting the broader pop culture scene.

2. Research Methods

This study used a qualitative research methodology, which focuses on an in-depth investigation of phenomena, comprehension of participants' subjective experiences, and interpretation of the meaning of social context. This method involves looking deeply, in-depth, and intricately into the studied topic. It aims to comprehend participants' subjective experiences, considering their viewpoints, interpretations, and meanings about their social environment [8].

A phenomenological method is applied to reveal the viewpoints and real-life experiences of Marvel enthusiasts in the online community X @Marvfess. As a philosophical and methodological framework,

phenomenology seeks to comprehend the essence of phenomena as experienced by its subjects, emphasizing the significance of happenings or occurrences. Using thorough investigation and analysis, phenomenological research aims to reveal the fundamental structures and patterns of human experience [8]. Using this method, the study seeks to uncover the many levels of interpretation and impression Marvel fans have about the brand.

Through the evidence from numerous sources of information, data-gathering procedures such as observations, interviews, and triangulation improve the validity and dependability of the findings. To obtain other perspectives, opinions were sought from Muhammad Syibbli Z., M. Psi., a psychologist who has been providing counseling since 2020, and branding and social media specialist Lanre Ajayi, who has over three years of expertise in these areas. By integrating various views and areas of knowledge, this method guarantees a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon.

When choosing the sample's demographics, the authors concentrate on those who actively follow @Marvfess on platform X and are between 18 and 25. Respondents Aisyah (19), Dian (19), Pieor (21), Reyna (19), and Arvy (23) are among them. This population was chosen based on earlier studies showing that age and engagement levels significantly impact how people connect with pop culture and create identities connected to brands. This research aims to provide a thorough understanding of how fan perceptions impact their roles as engaged consumers, the dynamics of Marvel's relationship with pop culture, and fans' contributions to brand identity through social media and online communities. To achieve this, qualitative methods, the phenomenological approach and pertinent demographic characteristics will all be integrated.

The theoretical frameworks of Self-Expression, Participatory Culture, and Social Presence drive this study's data analysis and interpretation. Every framework offers a distinct viewpoint: Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression looks into the impact of fan interactions on their perceptions of Marvel. Social Presence Theory examines how these interactions influence fan behavior and engagement with the brand. Jenkins' Theory of Participatory

Culture explores the role of these interactions in shaping broader cultural trends. By integrating these ideas, the study thoroughly analyzes the impact of fan dynamics on brand perceptions, fan behavior, and the effect of Marvel on popular culture.

Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression

Erving Goffman's theory of Self-Expression, outlined in his book "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1959), offers a conceptual structure for comprehending how individuals portray themselves in different social situations [9]. The idea provides the basis for examining the way Marvel fans engage with Marvel content and the fan community on X (@Marvfess). Individuals shape their view of the brand by projecting their personalities, ideals, and social identities through their interactions with Marvel and other fans. These exchanges provide fans with the opportunity to witness their own identities being mirrored and affirmed in the narratives and personalities they hold dear, strengthening their bond with Marvel. Goffman's theory emphasizes the significance of fan-to-fan and fan-to-Marvel interactions in cultivating a committed and involved fan community, ultimately influencing their opinion of the brand in a positive way.

Social Presence Theory

Social Presence Theory, first developed by Short, Williams, and Christie in their work "The Social Psychology of Telecommunications" (1976), provides insights into how individuals perceive their social interactions in online communications [10]. When applied to interactions among Marvel fans, especially on platforms like @Marvfess, this theory explains how the feeling of community and belonging that arises from interacting with other fans and Marvel itself affects fan behavior towards the brand. Through the establishment of a more prominent social presence, these connections stimulate greater engagement, loyalty, and active participation with Marvel material, consequently influencing the behaviors of both individuals and the fan community.

Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture

Henry Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture, as described in his book "Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide" (2006), highlights the significant involvement of fans in the creation and spreading contents, ultimately influencing wider

cultural trends [11]. This hypothesis is especially pertinent in comprehending how fan interactions contribute to the development of pop cultural phenomena. Marvel's online fan involvement strategy exemplifies the implementation of participatory culture. Marvel utilizes the creative potential of its audience, motivating them to produce content, exchange fan art, and participate in theoretical conversations, so increasing its cultural impact. This interactive engagement not only improves Marvel's brand image and reputation but also encourages the development of a community and natural, fan-generated promotion. Furthermore, it enhances fan allegiance by enabling fans to actively participate in and influence the wider storyline associated with Marvel.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The Impact of Dynamics on Brand Perceptions

The perception of brands is significantly affected by the interactions that occur between fans and brands, as well as within the fan community. Studies have demonstrated that these encounters have a significant influence on how individuals perceive and interact with a brand. For example, those who actively engage in brand communities frequently demonstrate greater brand loyalty and a more pronounced feeling of community. Participating in brand communities on social media platforms can strengthen the emotional bond individuals have with a brand, hence increasing their support and loyalty [12].

Lanre Ajayi, a specialist in branding and social media, observes that Marvel has successfully built a vast universe by seamlessly incorporating its characters from comic books into real-world situations, resulting in captivating experiences. The all-encompassing cosmos enables enthusiasts to engage profoundly with the brand and its narratives. Ajayi emphasizes that the Marvel internet fan community often establishes connections between these characters and proposes ways in which cherished childhood figures could be included into the Marvel universe. Ajayi highlights "The Marvel online fan base consistently links these characters in the Marvel

universe together, including those from the comics," (Lanre Ajayi, personal interview, May 14, 2024).

Fan and brand interactions are varied and multifaceted, shaping the collective perception of a brand like Marvel. On platforms such as X (@Marvfess), these interactions play a significant role. On one side, they develop a big and dedicated fan base that can increase brand success. However, they also risk establishing a homogenous group that might overlook the brand's weaknesses. Aisyah's opinion of Marvel shows this distinction. She explains, "In my perspective, Marvel is a huge brand, and I see it as an influential and globally appealing brand. How I perceive Marvel affects my tastes for its products and content, such as the newest Marvel mega-hits" (Aisyah, personal interview, January 31, 2024). Her positive perception demonstrates how favorable brand perception can result in brand loyalty.

Reyna, another Marvel fans, compliments Aisyah's views by underlining her engagement: "My faith in this brand encourages me to be an active fans, keeping up with every new release, taking part in community discussions, and consistently making investments in Marvel-related items. My tastes are directly influenced by this brand's identity, which I feel connected to" (Reyna, personal interview, February 4, 2024). Reyna's statements illustrates how intimate and community encounters with a brand promote consumer engagement and loyalty.

Dian emphasizes that engaging with fellow enthusiasts on @Marvfess expands her understanding of Marvel by exposing her to novel information and perceptions, resulting in more profound and significant interactions compared to those in person. Pieor agrees with these perspectives, highlighting that forums such as @Marvfess enable profound discussions about Marvel that augment fans' admiration for the brand. She acknowledges that the Marvel brand's perception is significantly shaped by the sense of community that emerges from shared interests and the intricacy of the Marvel universe.

However, it is important to acknowledge the variance in fan interaction. Arvy gives a nuanced viewpoint: "I also understand that there are some people who may not be as enthusiastic about this brand as I am due to different preferences or personal experiences" (Arvy,

personal interview, February 5, 2024). This acknowledgment underscores the heterogeneity of customer experiences and the fact that attitudes regarding companies are not homogeneous. While Aisyah and Reyna may hold highly favorable opinions, other fans may have diverse experiences that affect their participation in different ways. Respondents from a personal interview stated that engagements within online fan communities, such as @Marvfess, play a significant role in influencing brand perceptions.

Arvy highlights the importance of online interactions in influencing brand perception. She specifically mentions that she gains a deeper understanding of Marvel by engaging in discussions with fellow fans on the @Marvfess platform. She contends that online connections provide a heightened and pertinent experience, enabling enthusiasts to express their fervor without the limitations of physical presence. Although the collective experience enhances the recognition of a brand, Arvy's acknowledgment that individuals may have different experiences suggests that although platforms like @Marvfess offer a shared space for fans to engage and express their enthusiasm, personal encounters and experiences can influence individual perceptions and connections to the brand. The variation in perceptions might arise from personal preferences, previous encounters with brands, and the range of fan backgrounds.

Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression, stating that individuals adopt distinct roles in different social settings to show themselves in a favorable light to their observers, might be applied to comprehend how fan interactions influence their perceptions on Marvel. Within Marvel fan communities, those involved adopt specific roles and communicate in a manner that aligns with the group's collective identity. These interactions confirm and support their interests, enhance their relationship with the Marvel brand, and promote a shared sense of belonging and identity among fans.

The various ways which fans engage with the Marvel brand, including online group participation, attendance at physical events, and the collection of Marvel merchandise, are in accordance with Goffman's theory that self-expression is shaped by

the circumstances surrounding it. Some passionate individuals may experience a more profound sense of connection by participating in events or collecting products, as these activities provide unique opportunities for self-expression.

Sybbli's interpretation of Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression highlights the impact of individuals' self-expression and social connections on the perception of brands within a community. Goffman believes that self-image is not static but rather undergoes constant development through social interactions. Sybbli emphasizes the significant influence that environments, such as fan groups, influence on individuals' manifestation of their personalities and interests. Sybbli further underscores the significance of the media and the relevancy of the platform in facilitating self-expression. online communities provide an ideal environment for fans to express their passions genuinely and acceptably. This secure atmosphere satisfies various psychological demands, including validation, acceptance, and the necessity to feel assured in self-expression. According to Sybbli, "One thing provided by a community, especially a Marvel community, for example, is a sense of appropriateness where we're allowed to express our interests and passions" (Muhammad Sybbli Z., M. Psi., personal interview, 7th May 2024).

Fan dynamics significantly influence brand perception, as demonstrated by Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression. Platforms like @Marvfess allow fans to interact with each other and Marvel, influencing the overall perception of the brand. These interactions demonstrate dedication, knowledge, creativity, and loyalty, which in turn affects others' perceptions. Fan culture promotes validation and acceptance among peers, affecting how a brand is perceived. The platform offers a secure space for fans to express their interests, satisfying their psychological demands for recognition and approval. Positive interactions with Marvel's official accounts can strengthen a positive view of the brand, while negative interactions can damage it. Active involvement of fans with Marvel's content significantly influences the overall perception of the brand.

The complex perception of Marvel among the fan community is a result of these social performances and interactions. Recognizing and valuing this variety

improves the fan community and presents challenges for the brand to satisfy a wide range of expectations and encounters. The interaction between fans and Marvel on platforms like @Marvfess plays a crucial role in shaping the brand's overall perception. Marvel can promote strong emotional ties and inspire active involvement by implementing inclusive strategies that acknowledge various forms of fan expression and interaction. The dynamic and diversified fan engagement highlights the constantly evolving brand perception and the significance of establishing spaces that allow fans to authentically and securely express their interests.

Influence of Fan Interactions on Behavior Towards Marvel

The relationship between fans and companies on social media has emerged as an essential factor in shaping fan behavior, especially within the entertainment industry. A study highlights the significance of fan engagement in fostering a sense of community and allegiance, which companies can exploit to impact buying choices, event participation, and online involvement (Deller, 2014). Modern brands must carefully employ fan involvement to benefit themselves. Engaging with followers on social media platforms allows brands to obtain instant feedback and important insights, helping them to quickly adapt to changing client preferences. This interactive connection cultivates a mutually advantageous environment where fans consider themselves as valued and heard, while brands gain a deeper understanding of their target audience. However, it is essential for companies to demonstrate openness and responsiveness, as even a single error can lead to significant adverse outcomes in the age of digital technology.

Lanre Ajayi, a specialist in social media and branding, emphasizes the importance of fan involvement in shaping a brand's marketing strategies. Ajayi notes that every Marvel movie is accompanied by linked historical and upcoming events, either in the Marvel comics or additional stories inside the Marvel universe. During a personal interview, Lanre Ajayi mentioned, "For every Marvel movie, there's a corresponding past event and a future event, either in their comics or other stories in the Marvel universe. Most times, the community talks about these corresponding events, which gives Marvel

insight into their marketing strategies" (Lanre Ajayi, personal interview, 14th May 2024).

This approach allows Marvel to create a continuous narrative that engages and captivates people, ultimately cultivating lasting interest and loyalty to the brand. Marvel employs a systematic approach by incorporating subtle clues and concealed messages in its films, which encourages ongoing involvement and speculation among its followers. This intentional strategy creates enthusiasm and keen expectation for upcoming releases.

Marvel frequently engages with fans on social media platforms, actively responding to comments and participating in conversations. The significant level of interaction encourages the creation of a strong and dedicated community that feels a profound personal connection to the brand. Marvel's skill in actively seeking and adapting fan input into its storytelling and promotional strategies demonstrates a comprehensive and flexible approach to brand management. The cumulative impact of these contacts on fan behavior is substantial, underscoring the importance of maintaining an involved and supportive audience.

The online communities linked to Marvel, such as @Marvfess, effectively embody this ever-changing nature. For instance, Aisyah realizes that seeking tips and opinions from fellow enthusiasts influences her buying decisions and reinforces her sense of identity as a Marvel fan. In a personal interview, Aisyah stated, "Thanks to @Marvfess, I often receive advice and opinions from fellow fans, which can influence my decisions when purchasing merchandise or watching the latest films" (Aisyah, personal interview, 31st January 2024). This shared enthusiasm fosters a stronger connection with the brand, transcending geographical limitations and amplifying a feeling of common identity. Similarly, Dian emphasizes that the discussions inside @Marvfess provide excellent information and a variety of viewpoints, which influence her choices of Marvel items. She notes, "Interacting within online communities, especially with @Marvfess, influences my preferences towards Marvel products by providing additional insights and diverse perspectives" (Dian, personal interview, 3rd February 2024). These interactions enhance her sense of belonging and shared experiences with other fans,

solidifying her collective identity as a part of the Marvel fan community.

While most participants acknowledge the positive influence of community interactions on their brand preferences and feeling of identity, it is important to note that there are nuanced differences to take into account. Arvy, for instance, notes that her preferences for Marvel merchandise are not swayed by communal suggestions, unlike others. Instead, she relies mainly on her own subjective assessment. She states, "Engaging with online communities, such as @Marvfess, does not significantly impact my preferences for Marvel products or content. When it comes to evaluating a product, I rely on my own judgment of its quality and relevancy rather than depending on recommendations or opinions from the community" (Arvy, personal interview, 5th February 2024). Nevertheless, Arvy acknowledges that participating in @Marvfess enhances her relationship with the collective identity of Marvel fans, underscoring the role of the community in fostering a shared sense of belonging, albeit without directly influencing her purchasing behavior.

Interactions between fans and the Marvel brand foster a feeling of bonding and collective belonging. These interactions have a significant impact on fans, shaping their preferences and deepening their emotional attachment to Marvel. Social Presence Theory proposes that the extent to which individuals perceive their own as socially present in online communications influences their emotional and behavioral responses (Short et al., 2021). When applied to Marvel fan interactions on sites like @Marvfess, the theory suggests that the creation of a feeling of community and belonging through these interactions leads to a higher level of social presence among fans. The increased level of social engagement, characterized by a feeling of connection with like-minded fans and with the Marvel brand, inspires fans to form a stronger emotional bond with the company and its content. As a result, fans demonstrate a strong inclination to actively engage with Marvel by participating in discussions, producing fan art, distributing content, participating in events, and making purchases. The concept suggests that a stronger feeling of social presence among fans leads to more engagement with Marvel,

which subsequently influences their actions towards the brand.

Platforms such as @Marvfess function as virtual forums where fans like Aisyah and Dian convene to exchange their thoughts, perspectives, and enthusiasm regarding Marvel. These contacts have a significant impact on their purchasing decisions and their self-identification as fans. The establishment of a strong social presence fosters a sense of connection, which in turn cultivates a more profound emotional attachment between fans and the Marvel brand. Put simply, when fans perceive themselves as members of a community and their interactions hold significance, their emotional attachment to Marvel intensifies.

Vitak and Ellison (2013) conducted fresh research that delves deeper into the impact of media on social interactions and perceptions. They emphasize the potential of online interactions to strengthen social capital through the development of bonds and trust among users. This is particularly applicable to how Marvel fans interact with each other and the brand. They skillfully employ real-time input to actively engage with their audience. Vitak and Ellison's research demonstrates that online communities have a substantial impact on user behavior and perceptions. These communities foster a sense of connection and worth among fans, leading to increased engagement with Marvel's content and goods.

Psychologist Syibbli asserts that the reasons why people choose to support certain brands or join specific communities are strongly influenced by group dynamics and personal objectives. This is consistent with Social Presence Theory, which proposes that the perception of closeness and real-time interaction in communication increases involvement. Within the Marvel universe, the interactions between fans on platforms such as @Marvfess serve to cultivate a feeling of belonging and also shape behavior by reinforcing the accepted standards and shared fundamentals of the community. Syibbli explains, "Everyone surely has their own reasons, values, goals, and backgrounds... tied to group dynamics, which later on norm, you know." (Muhammad Syibbli Z., M. Psi., personal interview, 7th May 2024).

The content on @Marvfess demonstrates the manner in which these fan exchanges take place. Fans express

their opinions regarding Marvel movies and series, participate in conversations about theories, and raise enthusiasm for new releases. The platform also serves as a hub for fans to engage with like-minded individuals, cultivating relationships and a feeling of inclusion. These exchanges illustrate the dynamic and involved character of the Marvel fan community on @Marvfess, emphasizing how these interactions influence attitudes and actions towards the brand by increasing its social visibility.

Nevertheless, Syibbli's viewpoint also underscores the variation in how online interactions impact preferences. While Aisyah and Dian are influenced by community interactions in shaping the way they behave, Arvy maintains his preferences based on personal judgments. Syibbli points out that "Online communities don't really influence preferences since we already have preferences beforehand," indicating that pre-existing preferences can moderate the impact of community interactions. This implies that although online contacts might strengthen feelings of belonging and identification, their impact on behavior may depend on the intensity of pre-existing preferences and the type of interactions.

On the social media platform @Marvfess, certain fans may have an increased level of excitement for new movies due to engaging in community discussions. The experiences of Pieor and Reyna serve as additional examples that demonstrate how the extent and excellence of interactions within fan communities can influence individuals' attitudes and actions towards Marvel. Pieor acknowledges that community recommendations can influence her tastes, whereas Reyna believes that discussions and recommendations from fellow fans are crucial in shaping her purchasing selections.

Syibbli's claim that individuals with prominent roles tend to participate in online communities and engage more deeply due to the wider range of opportunities and interactions available, thus allowing their preferences to be more influenced, provides an explanation for why highly engaged and interactive fans are more susceptible to the influence of their community. On the social media platform @Marvfess, this is apparent through the many fan deliberations over preferred characters, exceptional storylines, and anticipations for upcoming releases,

all of which jointly influence the perspectives and behaviors of the community. These findings are consistent with Social Presence Theory, which suggests that the immediacy and personal nature of online interactions can increase emotional and behavioral reactions, leading to increased fan engagement and influencing behaviors such as buying Marvel products, attending events, or participating in online activities.

To summarize, interactions among fans and between fans and the brand have a significant impact on fans behavior inside the Marvel fandom. Through the cultivation of a communal atmosphere and the amplification of social presence, these interactions result in heightened emotional connection and involvement with the Marvel brand. This increased level of involvement is evident through a range of actions, including buying Marvel merchandise, attending gatherings, and engaging in online activities. Hence, comprehending and capitalizing on these interactions is vital for Marvel to efficiently connect with its fan base and influence fan behavior.

Contribution of Interactions to Shaping Pop Culture Trends

Fan interactions have significantly shaped pop culture trends over the past decade, underscoring the dynamic relationship between audiences and content creators. This transformation is best understood through the lens of Henry Jenkins' participatory culture theory. Participatory culture, as articulated by Jenkins, describes a culture in which fans and other consumers are not merely passive recipients of media but active participants in the creation and circulation of new content (Jenkins, 2006). This theory highlights how digital media platforms empower fans to contribute to media in ways that were previously impossible. Jenkins identifies key characteristics of participatory culture:

- 1) Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement: Digital tools and platforms make it easier for fans to create and share content.
- 2) Strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others: Online communities provide encouragement and resources for fan creations.
- 3) Informal mentorship: Experienced members of the community help novices improve their skills.

- 4) Members believe their contributions matter: Fans feel that their input can influence the media they love.
- 5) Social connection: Fans form strong social networks around shared interests.

The impact of participatory culture has grown exponentially with the rise of social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These platforms have lowered the barriers for fan engagement and content creation even further, enabling fans to influence trends, create viral content, and directly interact with creators and brands. Jenkins' theory underscores a significant shift in the power dynamics of cultural production, where fans now play a crucial role in shaping the narratives and success of media and brands. This active participation can lead to more authentic and relatable cultural products that resonate deeply with audiences.

Expert in social media and branding Lanre Ajayi supports this point of view by highlighting the critical role that online communities play in shaping pop culture trends. According to Ajayi, "Brands like Heineken, Pepsi, Papa John's, and Coca-Cola have successfully leveraged their fan communities by integrating them into their marketing strategies, often through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok." (Lanre Ajayi, personal interview, May 14, 2024). By connecting their brand values with the interests of their consumers, these companies employ fan interactions to create a feeling of community and belonging. Heineken and Pepsi, for instance, have used football to convey their brand values and have tapped into a worldwide fan base to increase their reach and significance. Similarly, Papa John's and Coca-Cola have encouraged their online communities to show their appreciation for the products in unique ways, which has improved brand awareness and loyalty.

According to the previously mentioned claims, Marvel fans also have a big influence on larger pop culture trends. Reyna thinks that "Marvel's policies and production to stay relevant to contemporary pop culture are significantly impacted by the behavior of fans in online communities like @Marvfess. Marvel can benefit greatly from the community's feedback on particular products or regulations as it moves

forward." (Personal interview with Reyna, February 4, 2024). This realization emphasizes how fan communities are active participants rather than only followers, and how their input may have a direct impact on strategic and creative choices.

Marvel can determine the possible reception of future projects, for example, when fans work together on memes, fan theories, or group storytelling regarding Marvel's plots, character developments, or casting decisions. Marvel receives real-time feedback on fan sentiment from online groups, which helps the corporation better match audience tastes with content. Marvel is able to produce goods that connect with its fans on a deeper level thanks to this participatory culture, which strengthens fan loyalty and engagement.

Success in mainstream media is fueled by the power of participatory culture, as demonstrated by fan movements on social media, fan art, and fan fiction. One good example is the "Release the Snyder Cut" movement, in which admirers of Zack Snyder's original cut of the 2017 movie "Justice League" succeeded in getting the film released. The "Snyder Cut" was released in 2021 as a consequence of this fan-led initiative, which also demonstrated how formalized fan networks may affect media production choices. Similarly, Marvel fans have the power to organize praise or criticism for certain choices, forcing the business to change. A good example of how devoted fan communities may significantly influence production decisions is the "Release the Snyder Cut" campaign, which saw the release of a new version of "Justice League" as a result of fans' concerted efforts and persistent demands.

Still, not every viewpoint is in complete agreement. "I'm not sure to what extent fan behavior in online communities can influence Marvel's policies or production to remain relevant to contemporary pop culture," says Aisyah, expressing some pessimism. Instead of reacting to comments from online groups, I think that their judgments are primarily based on market research and commercial strategy." (Aisyah, personal interview, January 31, 2024). This viewpoint implies that although customer feedback is important, Marvel takes a variety of criteria into consideration. Common market analysis and strategic planning

continue to be important tools for the organization's decision-making.

Marvel's place in pop culture trends is a prime example of Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture, which holds that fans actively contribute to the creation and distribution of content, hence influencing broader cultural trends. Since its founding, Marvel has earned an extensive and dedicated fan base, and this number has only increased as the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has grown. According to psychology researcher Syibbli, Marvel's success can be attributed to its marketing methods, which are highly effective in appealing to the desires of fans. "Marvel's marketing strategy has consistently focused on appealing to consumers' desires for strong, likable characters and engaging narratives," says Syibbli (Muhammad Syibbli Z., M. Psi., personal interview, May 7, 2024). This strategy has allowed Marvel to create a brand that is beloved and generally recognized in society, drawing in new fans while maintaining the allegiance of devoted followers.

Marvel has been able to sustain its dominance in mainstream culture thanks in large part to its skillful utilization of fan engagements, which range from comic book events to social media involvement. The company's approach of embracing fan feedback and developing interactive experiences has boosted the success of its films and ensured that its brand remains relevant. This approach aligns with Jenkins' idea that fan interaction creates a mutually beneficial relationship for the audience and the company.

The account @Marvfess on X serves as an excellent example of how internet fan communities are vital in influencing pop culture trends. Fans actively participate in the continuous evolution of the franchise and its cultural significance through their enthusiastic engagement. @Marvfess is a good way to measure the mood and tastes of the audience. Marvel Studios receives insightful input from fans in response to new releases, casting announcements, or plot developments. This helps the studio improve its creative choices and remain aware of the changing preferences of its viewership. The symbiotic relationship between Marvel and its fan base is strengthened by this real-time feedback loop, which shapes the brand's direction and influence on pop

culture. Align with Ajayi's perspective, he highlights the importance of online fan networks in maintaining Marvel's relevance. This demonstrates how the involvement of fans fosters conjecture and conversation, sustaining Marvel's cultural relevance.

As Dian highlights in the interview, @Marvfess provides a forum for conversations on pop culture, memes, and current trends. Pieor also notes that conversations around Marvel content, memes, and trends on @Marvfess show how pop culture is changing in the modern era. "I often see discussions about memes from Marvel film clips, the latest content trends, and pop culture at @Marvfess itself," Pieor observes, suggesting that pop culture in the modern era is still evolving (Interview with Pieor, in person, February 3, 2024). These observations demonstrate how the dynamic relationship between Marvel and modern pop culture is both shaped and reflected by internet interactions.

Reyna and Arvy emphasize that reactions from fans to Marvel's storyline shifts are indicative of larger societal ideals. Reyna observes that through reflecting larger pop culture trends, internet groups such as @Marvfess help to create Marvel's narratives. "Marvel fans' interactions in online communities examine how pop culture as a whole impacts and molds our brand's stories and identity," she said. This demonstrates how fan interactions influence larger societal narratives and emphasizes the connection between Marvel and modern pop culture.

However Aisyah argues that conversations in groups such as @Marvfess might not accurately reflect the broader dynamics of pop culture. "In my view, interactions between Marvel fans in online forums don't always mirror the prevailing societal norms and trends in pop culture today. Discussions and shared information can occasionally veer more into niche subjects that are only interesting to ardent followers," she states. This suggests a more limited influence on pop culture trends, as conversations tend to cater more to ardent fans than to a wider audience.

Syibbli observes that from a psychological standpoint, online communities are shaped by shared objectives or characteristics, resulting in a diversity of viewpoints. These communities form, storm, norm, and perform in ways similar to group dynamics, where

disagreements and arguments influence the community's course. "Do not see that storming or differences or a debate or a difference is bad," adds Syibbli. "It turns out that this will make a decent conclusion, thus that dynamic contributes to the community's shaping, so it's not all negative."

This dynamic interplay is evident in conversations about Marvel content and its impact on pop culture trends within the framework of @Marvfess. Fans may argue passionately over how certain characters are portrayed or the future course of a film. Even if they represent a range of opinions, these discussions ultimately define the community's identity and influence on popular culture.

Fans actively shape and co-create cultural content according to Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture, which is exemplified by the dynamic interactions within online fan groups. Beyond only consuming content, fans participate actively by creating memes, fan theories, and participating in conversations and speculations. In addition to enhancing the fan community, these exchanges have an impact on larger pop culture trends, mainstream media, and cultural narratives. The insights of psychologists show how positive conflicts within these groups influence values and dynamics, which in turn greatly influences the direction of popular cultural trends. All things considered, fan-generated content and interactions within virtual communities are crucial in creating and distributing trends that go beyond the fan base, demonstrating their indispensable role in the dynamic relationship that brands have with their audiences in the creation of modern cultural landscapes. These relationships, which are informed by Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture, function as a dynamic feedback loop where fans offer a variety of perceptions and comments that impact the course of creative decisions made for media properties such as Marvel. By ensuring that cultural products thoroughly resonate with audience tastes, this participative method not only improves fan pleasure but also solidifies the products' place in mainstream media and pop culture. The relationship between creators and their audience is essentially symbiotic when it comes to fan-generated material and interactions, as fan engagement actively molds and

accelerates pop culture trends beyond the boundaries of traditional media distribution.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a multifaceted relationship between Marvel and its fanbase, particularly within the X online community (@Marvfess). The data suggest that the interactions between Marvel and its fans shape brand perceptions and significantly influence fan behavior. These interactions foster a strong sense of community and belonging, which drives fan loyalty and engagement with the brand. Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression is particularly relevant in understanding how fans project their identities through their interactions with Marvel. The theory posits that individuals perform different roles in various social contexts to present themselves in a favorable light. In the context of the @Marvfess community, fans engage in specific behaviors that reinforce their identification with the Marvel brand. This alignment of personal identity with the brand enhances fan loyalty and strengthens the emotional connection between the fans and Marvel.

Social Presence Theory further elucidates the impact of these interactions on fan behavior. The theory suggests that the sense of community and belonging created through online interactions increases social presence, heightening emotional engagement with the brand. The data indicate that fans who perceive a higher social presence are more likely to actively engage with Marvel content, participate in fan communities, and make purchasing decisions aligned with their identification with the brand. Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture highlights fans' active role in shaping popular culture trends. The study finds that Marvel fans are not passive consumers but active participants who contribute to creating and disseminating content. Through fan-generated content, discussions, and collaborative storytelling, fans influence the direction of Marvel's narrative and its broader cultural impact. This participatory culture enhances Marvel's credibility with culture and strengthens the bond between the brand and its fanbase. The interactions between Marvel and its fanbase within the @Marvfess community are crucial in shaping brand perceptions, influencing fan behavior, and driving trends in popular culture. These interactions demonstrate the power of fan

engagement in creating a dynamic and evolving relationship between a brand and its audience, ultimately contributing to its long-term success.

4. Conclusions

According to this research, which is based on interactions inside the Indonesian Marvel online community @Marvfess on X, the relationship between Marvel and its fans has a major influence on pop culture trends, brand perceptions, and consumer behavior. Fan interactions can create emotional attachments and active engagement. Fan behavior is significantly impacted by these contacts, which can strengthen group identity and influence purchasing decisions. The close connection between followers and the brand is highlighted by the apparent intimacy in online interactions, which increases engagement and loyalty. Furthermore, thorough discussions and theories among the populace support the development of cultural narratives; varied viewpoints encourage ongoing interaction and communication, which actively shapes cultural discourse. These interactions strengthen emotional ties and a sense of community, which improves overall brand views, as shown by Goffman's Theory of Self-Expression. These kinds of encounters, according to Social Presence Theory, influence behavior and promote more engagement and loyalty. Jenkins' Theory of Participatory Culture illustrates how fan interactions, which involve active participation and co-creation of content, impact more general cultural trends. Fan interactions play a crucial part in maintaining and enhancing Marvel's cultural effect. This harmonious dynamic demonstrates how these interactions impact brand perceptions, fan behavior, which in turn shapes pop culture trends.

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