

Success Factors Influencing Commercial Movies in the Hollywood Model and Limitations: Based on Superhero Movie Series

Yueting You*

NOIC Academy, Markham, ONL3S2H4, Canada

Abstract. Commercial films have always been the mainstream choice for filmmakers and film and television companies to invest in and produce in the film industry, especially films adapted from comics and novels. Even if there is a strong fan base of the original book, whether it is the original fans or the fans of the movie, there are both positive and negative reviews for these commercial films. It can be said that there are limitations on the bases of good development. This study focuses on Spider-Man, an outstanding Hollywood film series, and examines the marketing methods of this series to explore the factors that contributed to its success, as well as the shortcomings that existed in the back, and finally made recommendations for these shortcomings. According to this study, the success of commercial films under the Hollywood operating model is mainly due to Hollywood's excellent marketing methods, and the recommendations of this study for the future of commercial films are conducive to reducing audience losses and maintaining their profitability in the film market, which will contribute to the progress of future films. The point is to balance the commercialization and artistry.

1 Introduction

With the continuous growth of Hollywood films, as the world's commercial film giant, its companies and films have been widely recognized by the public. Hollywood, as a signature of the film industry, has a unique and complete mode of film production and marketing, and today's film industry is generally categorized into commercial films and art films. In the literature of Hollywood movie industry operation mode, it is written that "commercial movie is a type of movie whose main or only purpose is to make money"[1]. The difference between and art movie is only in the different proportion of commercial and artistic content. With the booming of Hollywood movie industry, especially the commercial movies make the industry thriving, the commercial movies are successful but also face challenges. This paper will be based on the literature of Hollywood movie industry operation mode on the study of Hollywood movie industry operation mode and Marvel Enterprises, Inc. for the Spider-Man series of movie research points reflecting the advantages of the current commercial movie and the challenges and problems faced by the study. This study will analyze the following cases and give relevant recommendations after the study and analysis. According to this study, the success of commercial films under the Hollywood operating model is mainly due to Hollywood's excellent marketing methods, and the recommendations of this study for the future of commercial films are conducive to reducing

audience losses and maintaining their profitability in the film market, which will contribute to the progress of future films. The point is to balance the commercialization and artistry [1,2].

2 The movie Spider-Man series

The movie Spider-Man series stands out as a commercial movie success story among the many superhero franchises. The reason behind this is attributed to the marketing techniques also, the fan base, and the excellent movie making of good Hollywood [3,4].

The superhero movie series is one of the typical commercial movie genres, and its commercial purpose is greater than its artistic purpose. Spider-Man series of films by Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures Columbia Pictures co-distribution, the first series of Spider-Man by Columbia Pictures distribution and production, the Amazing Spider-Man series and the new Spider-Man series Marvel Studios is involved in the distribution of the new Spider-Man series by the Marvel Sony together.

Spider-Man this IP was originally under the banner of Marvel, there are a total of three series, in 1985 Marvel sold its filming movie rights to other film and television companies for film production, and finally in 2002 by Sony's Columbia Pictures release to produce the first Spider-Man movie series and release, in the consecutive completion of the trilogy after the release of the Sony release to produce the Amazing Spider-Man series. 2017 Spider-Man Heroes Returns was released in

*Corresponding author: Rileyyou0712@ldy.edu.rs

theatres announcing both the addition of Spider-Man to the Marvel Universe and the return of Spider-Man to Marvel.

Spider-Man has also linked up with other characters in other movies since joining the Marvel Universe. Peter Parker, played by Tom Hyland, first appeared in the Marvel Universe in *Captain America 3 Heroes of the Civil War*, and then joined the Avengers, and was also involved in a very important part of the character in *Avengers 4* and *5*. Continued *Heroes Return* followed by the release of sequels *2019 Spider-Man Heroes Expedition*, *2021 Heroes Without Returns* [5].

3 Distributing company

The Spider-man series made such success could literally thank to the movie production companies Marvel Studios and Columbia Pictures (whose parent company is Sony picture). The distributing companies are mainly from Hollywood, playing a vital rule in being the strong background of those commercial movies. The firms have systematic and professional film producing procedures.

3.1 Marvel studios

Marvel started out as a company that produced comics, so it has nearly 4,700 characters under its belt, and has produced several movies from the time the first comic book came out in 1939 to the present day. Its lineup covers original characters *Captain Marvel*, *Thor*, *Spider-Man*, and other popular IPs, and these character series of movies are distributed by most of them by the Walt Disney Company. Marvel Studios is involved in the production of three series of films *x-Men*, *Spider-Man* and *Marvel Universe*. It joined Walt Disney Studios as a subsidiary in 2015.

Marvel Studios' products include spin-off TV series in addition to movies. Characters from the Marvel Universe who do not have solo movies have developed TV series that focus on them personally, such as the TV series *Loki*, *Scarlet Witch*, which was released on the streaming medium "Disney+".

3.2 Columbia pictures

Columbia TriStar Pictures Group, one of the eight major Hollywood studios, is the film sales company of Sony Pictures Entertainment, responsible for selling, distributing and promoting film products in the United States and 67 countries and territories worldwide.

Columbia was founded in 1924 to produce 30 films a year and over the decades has grown to become one of the core Hollywood studios with 12 of its films winning the Academy Award for Best Picture [6]. Columbia Pictures took over the production and distribution of *Spider-Man*, and after its release the *Spider-Man* series won the highest box office of any superhero franchise.

3.3 Synopsis

The *Spider-Man* trilogy, directed by Sammy Rehm, tells the story of Peter Parker, who was inadvertently bitten by a mutant spider and gained special powers, falling in love with Mary Jane at one point, and fighting the villain. During the period lost self also lost their important relatives uncle Ben, also in the struggle to grow back to find their own story.

The *Amazing Spider-Man* tells the story of *Spider-Man* and *Gwen Stacy*, and unlike Peter Parker and Mary Jane ultimately *Spider-Man* ends up losing *Gwen Stacy*.

The new *Spider-Man* joins the *Marvel Universe* as a member of the *Avengers* and also meets *Mary Jane*. The plots of the first two movies were much the same as the other *Spider-Man* movies but due to the joining of the *Marvel Universe*, linkages with other major characters also appeared. In *Heroes Without Returns*, *Doctor Strange* joins the fray so the concept of parallel universes is involved and there is also a storyline where all three generations of *Spider-Man* appear on screen at the same time.

3.4 License

In addition to the comics, *Spider-Man* also released the games *Marvel Spider-Man 1* and *Marvel Spider-Man 2*. In addition to this they license IPs to businesses to produce peripheral products such as toys, t-shirts and sweatshirts.

4 Analysis of the marketing strategy

Why exactly are commercial movie superhero movies, one of the falling movie genres in Hollywood, so profitable? The commercial movie model in Hollywood, marketing techniques, script adaptations, and a certain Hollywood fan base for the series are key to the success of these superhero movies.

In the beginning Marvel sold the rights to *Spider-Man* to Sony as a solution to Marvel's debt crisis, and the first series of *Spider-Man* movies were distributed and produced by Columbia Pictures. In the usual sense, Hollywood commercial movies are characterized by the following four aspects: i.e., internationalization of capital, scripted assembly line work, highly commercialized products and prioritization of entertainment [7].

Hollywood spin-offs are sold all over the world as the movie spreads and the movie becomes an advertising spot for these goods, while games, toys, books, and records adapted from the movie are all sources of high profits [7]. Licensing and Hollywood spin-offs all bring in a lot of profit to the movies, ensuring that they have additional ways to make a profit besides the box office. For example, the *Marvel* superhero print clothes in *Uniqlo* and the *Lego* toys for the members of the *Avengers*. Superhero movies, as comic book adaptations, have a strong fan base of their own; in addition to the original book fans of the comics, their popularity grows dramatically for a particular character's popularity after the movie is released, and a lot of fans of the movie will go on to learn more about the source material as a result.

One could also argue that all superhero movies are promos for comic book characters. As well, every great movie requires a soundtrack and casting under a producer-neutral system, where the producer-promoter hires popular singers and actors who fit the image and are also well known to increase the quality and popularity of the movie. For example, the new Spider-Man series cast Zendaya as Mary Jane.

Usually, it is known that the Marvel Studios on the works are adapted from the comic book released by Marvel, so since it is a comic book adapted into a movie, there will be commercial adaptation. There are hundreds of issues of a comic book, and the script is continuously updated according to the author, whether from the perspective of drawing art or script writing angle, the whole process is less commercially oriented compared to a movie release. Compared to movies, the production cost of comics is much lower. According to Dai Luyao, production management in Hollywood under the producer-centered system goes through three stages: In the first stage, the studio's studio managers give the scripts they receive to script reviewers, who then decide whether or not to give them to the story writers, and the scripts they get can only be shown to the story writers if they have passed the review process [7]. The second stage is when the movie project is polished and the script has to be polished. The third stage is that the script is acquired by the studio and then the studio will ask the producer to transfer the rights about the script. In Hollywood's producer-centered system, the producer pays more attention to commercial returns, and in the development of the project, the producer will pay more attention to the certainty of the genre, the combination of the actors and the market response, and the commerciality of the film elements from the audience's

point of view. To prevent the phenomenon of self-indulgence in the movie [7]. Commercial movies pay more attention to commercial returns. From the viewpoint of superhero movies in recent years, most of them have already fixed the plot pattern of this genre: a protagonist with supernormal capabilities or strong abilities who saves the world, and a villain with the same abilities as the protagonist, and the ending is to save the world. At the same time, the protagonist will also face sacrificial situations and experience brief failures, but in the end, it will be the protagonist who succeeds in saving the world.

5 Suggestions

From the perspective of the movie, with the development of the times, the electronic information industry is so advanced in the twenty-first century in general the number of movie viewers is greater than the audience of the comic book, so that the movie script adaptation to be popular enough, and to be reasonable enough. The measure of quality for Hollywood movies is the box office, based on its own commercial positioning. The first Spider-Man script went through twists and turns eventually directed by Sami Rehm and was a huge success. The crew had to have a deep understanding of the character as well as great artistry and a strong enough business acumen to go back to a producer-centered system to polish the script. One thing that all these superhero movies have in common is that they all have sequels. Hollywood gives these comic book adaptations a sequel, which is also a good means to make the IP popular and commercialized. For example, the James Bond series, the Mission Impossible series, and the Matrix series.

Table 1. The box of the movie series Spider-Man [8].

Cinematic	Distribution company	Box office performance (worldwide)
Spider-Man 1	Columbia Pictures	\$821,708,551
Spider-Man 2	Columbia Pictures	\$783,766,341
Spider-Man 3	Columbia Pictures	\$890,871,626
The Amazing Spider-Man 1	Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios	\$757,930,663
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios	\$708,294,944
Spider-Man: Heroes Return	Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios	\$175,000,000
Spider-Man: Heroic Expedition	Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios	\$160,000,000
Spider-Man: No Return of Heroes	Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios	1,921,847,111

All of the Spider-Man movies have been successful in terms of the box office performance mentioned in Table 1, and all three trilogies are among the top 5 highest grossing Marvel Comics adaptations in the U.S., with Spider-Man listed at number two, Spider-Man 2 at number four, and Spider-Man 3 at number five. The trilogy is also one of the ten highest grossing movies of all superhero movies in U.S. history, with Spider-Man fourth, Spider-Man 2 sixth, and Spider-Man 3 seventh. In addition, the Spider-Man trilogy is also the three highest-grossing Sony Columbia Pictures movies. After the release of the new Spider-Man, Spider-Man: Heroes Return ranked second among all Spider-Man movies. SPIDER-MAN: HEROES RETURN NO MORE the three spiders together became the highest grossing Spider-Man movie of all time. It ranked 7 at the world box office and 3 in North American movie history. Especially Spider-Man Heroes Without Return has been released to achieve the seventh in the world and the third in North American movie history. Series of film adaptation is also a technical job; most sales series of films is through the last film left in suspense as well as to capture the audience's love for the characters and reluctance to give up.

However, under such a model, certain limitations emerge. Firstly, although the box office figures are impressive, the audience's comments on the movie are not always impressive. A part of the audience also appeared aesthetic fatigue. From the public' comments on the plot appeared on the satisfaction is not high. The same assembly line script mode the audience seems to have no great expectations for the plot of the movie. There are also cases where the audience who went to see the movie because of sentimentality found that the movie was no longer heart-warming, and slowly became disappointed. Secondly, movies that are too commercialized will lose some of their audience. If a movie is forced to have a sequel, then the audience will be over-consumed. In addition, the audience will easily lose their enthusiasm for the movie because they can guess the plot just by looking at the promotional trailer, so they will not choose to watch the movie [9].

The advice given to the above situation is that Hollywood commercial movies can polish the plot, a good story lays the foundation of a good work, and a classic Hollywood movie that sells well needs a gripping story. Avengers 4 and 5 are unusual in terms of plot, not only echoing other series but also breaking the superhero movie formula. The publicity has been appropriately toned down to create suspense for the audience. There is also the cultivation of actors and actresses, the new Spider-Man actor Tom Hyland has been spat out by the audience that the phenomenon of acting is not good. The last is to enhance the level of film production, the movie is a visual art, despite the strong commercial, but also a visual commodity, commercial movies are essentially no different from art movies [10].

To summarize, commercial movies under the Hollywood model rely on sequels and marketing techniques and scripts and fan bases to achieve success. But at the same time, there are some limitations, such as

excessive packaging and marketing, and the single plot makes the audience produce aesthetic fatigue and other problems. A good work needs a good director, a good actor, a good crew and a good production, so don't let commercialization ignore the artistic attributes of the work itself.

6 Conclusion

In summary, according to Hollywood's producer-centric system and the commercial nature of commercial films, the producers and crews of commercial films should pay attention to this research, good movies must be indispensable to good scripts, and make certain innovations to the scripts, scripts need such diversity, no one wants to watch the plot under the same formula for more than ten years. Commercial films are also films, and they should not be left behind. In other words, the film itself, as a work of art, is not a product of assembly line mass production, and there is no difference in the essence between commercial films and art films. Producers need to keep an eye on it, because the producer is the key to whether a film can be invested and profitable, and under the operation of a producer who has both artistic skills and business acumen, the film can avoid losing money to the greatest extent. There are certain limitations in the development of Hollywood films today, the most obvious is that the plot is too cliché, and the blunt story will gradually make the audience lose enthusiasm, resulting in a film with a high production cost but a loss. In the long run, if no changes are made, the future of commercial films will be bleak, and the artistic connotation of film as a work of art itself will be lost, deviating from the fact that film itself exists as a work of art. There are some limitations to this study, as the case study is a comic book adaptation of a Hollywood film, but there are many different forms of commercial film. In the future, the research direction will be to dig deeper into the specific balance between the commercial and artistic aspects of film.

References

1. M. C. Oxoby. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 1, 233-234 (2011).
2. S. F. Dong. *Cinematic Literature*, 22, 3 (2016).
3. G. F. Li. *Tradition and Breakthrough - A Study of Typologized Narrative in Hollywood Superhero Movies*. Phd Thesis, Shanghai, (2023)
4. J. Liu. *Journal of Hubei Radio and Television Universit*, 33(12), 2 (2013).
5. L. N. He. *Film Review*, 16, 3 (2015).
6. L. P. Shi. *Cinematic Literature*, 24, 3 (2015).
7. L. Y. Dai. *Hollywood movie industry operation model*. Phd Thesis, Chengdu, (2021).
8. T. H. Zhang. *Cinematic Literatur*, 13, 3 (2017).
9. X. L. Zhou. *Journal of Yuxi University (Social Sciences Edition)*, (2002).

10. Z. Y. Xiao. Literary and Art Life: Midday Magazine, (2015).