# Marvel’s Thunderbolts rebranded as The New Avengers in bold marketing twist



In a striking development just days following its cinematic release, Marvel Studios has opted to rebrand its latest film, Thunderbolts, as The New Avengers, a move that has sparked both excitement and controversy among audiences. This unexpected transformation was first hinted at through a cryptic asterisk in the film’s title, which was intricately tied to the film’s narrative. It was confirmed at a Hollywood premiere where cast members, including Florence Pugh, David Harbour, and Sebastian Stan, unveiled a new promotional poster. On social media, Stan even took to replacing Thunderbolts bus stop ads with their The New Avengers counterparts, embodying a guerrilla-style marketing strategy that resonated with the film's plot twist.

As reactions poured in, opinions were sharply divided. Some lauded the meta-marketing strategy, while others decried it as an instance of brand baiting. This divisiveness underscores a broader truth: even monumental franchises like Marvel must continually adapt to remain pertinent in an evolving entertainment landscape.

Alex Chan, head of brand, communications, and marketing at Geneco, commented on this shift, observing that the film industry has undergone significant changes since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a notable downturn in box office revenues. The rise of streaming platforms alongside an oversaturation of superhero narratives have compounded these challenges. “Given that this iconic franchise has been around for 17 years, it is essential for the marketing team to introduce a new strategy,” he stated. According to Chan, the team’s innovative approach is crucial for staving off audience fatigue and maintaining engagement through to the next phase of Marvel's content rollout, slated for 2027.

This sentiment is echoed by former GroupM marketing expert Padmanabhan Manickam, who characterised the reveal as a brilliant marketing ploy that aligns seamlessly with the film’s storyline. He noted that the use of the asterisk was a clever way to generate buzz before the reveal, labelling it as "brilliant teaser marketing." Chan corroborated this perspective, asserting that the asterisk was likely an intentional strategic decision by Marvel's marketing team from the outset, a bold deviation from the company's traditional focus on heroism.

“Marvel typically focuses on traditional heroism. This bold step represents a departure from their tried-and-true formula, taking risks with a fresh approach to boost box office performance,” Chan explained. Manickam described the initiative as a thunderingly bold brand exercise, emphasising the necessity for brands to understand and remain flexible to the needs of their audience.

Interestingly, while the film’s title remains Thunderbolts in theatres, this nuanced distinction is essential according to Chan. It suggests that the rebranding is more a conversational catalyst than an outright renaming. “The focus of the reveal is more on sparking conversations rather than rebranding the movie’s name,” he added. This tactic could be a response to the rapid spread of unofficial spoilers on social media, positioning Marvel as a leader in narrative control rather than a follower.

As Marvel takes the reins of its narrative, the campaign also highlights the evolving role of social media in shaping audience expectations. By proactively leading discussions around the film’s twists rather than allowing leaks to dominate, Marvel exemplifies an adaptive marketing mindset that is vital in today's fast-paced digital landscape.

While the initial buzz is undeniable, experts agree that assessing the long-term impacts of this rebranding will take time. Chan remarked that thus far, the strategy seems to be paying dividends, with Disney CEO Bob Iger referring to Thunderbolts as an exemplary case of prioritising quality over quantity.

The marketing initiative raises an important lesson for the industry: in an age of excessive content, the most successful brands need to innovate continually. Chan emphasised that understanding the intricacies of one’s content and daring to step outside conventional methodologies are paramount in the current environment. However, this carries inherent risks. If marketing efforts lack substance, they may come across as self-indulgent, potentially alienating viewers rather than attracting them.

In conclusion, whether this rebranding signifies a pivotal shift for Marvel or merely a temporary gimmick, it underscores a crucial truth in franchise storytelling: branding now extends far beyond traditional cinema. The case of Thunderbolts, with its unexpected metamorphosis into The New Avengers, showcases the creative potential and risks that lie in adaptive marketing strategies.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline), [[2]](https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline)
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5. Paragraph 5: [[4]](https://time.com/7281871/thunderbolts-asterisk-name-explained/)
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9. Paragraph 9: [[1]](https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.marketing-interactive.com/marvels-thunderbolts-twist-bold-brand-play-or-franchise-lifeline> - This article discusses Marvel Studios' unexpected rebranding of its latest film, 'Thunderbolts,' to 'The New Avengers' shortly after its release. The move was revealed through a post-credits scene and a social media campaign featuring cast members updating promotional materials. The rebranding aims to rejuvenate the franchise and address audience fatigue by introducing a fresh approach to the superhero genre.
3. <https://www.adweek.com/convergent-tv/thunderbolts-new-avengers-title-marvel-disney-marketing/> - Adweek's article delves into Marvel Studios' strategic decision to rebrand 'Thunderbolts' as 'The New Avengers.' It highlights the marketing campaign's innovative tactics, including the use of an asterisk in the title and guerrilla marketing efforts by cast members. The piece also discusses the collaboration with Wheaties to create limited edition cereal boxes, tying into the film's narrative and character development.
4. <https://time.com/7281871/thunderbolts-asterisk-name-explained/> - Time magazine explores the significance of the asterisk in the title 'Thunderbolts\*,' revealing it as a foreshadowing of the team's rebranding to 'The New Avengers.' The article provides insights into the film's plot, character arcs, and the creative decisions behind the title change, offering a deeper understanding of Marvel's marketing strategy and narrative direction.
5. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2025/05/09/thunderbolts-striking-75-million-worldwide-second-weekend-box-office/> - Forbes reports on the box office performance of 'Thunderbolts\*,' noting a strong $75 million worldwide in its second weekend. The article analyzes the impact of the film's rebranding to 'The New Avengers' on its box office performance and discusses the potential for sustained success through strategic marketing and audience engagement.
6. <https://www.sportskeeda.com/us/movies/news/this-marketing-is-brilliant-internet-reacts-as-video-of-sebastian-stan-replacing-thunderbolts-poster-with-new-avengers-title-goes-viral> - Sportskeeda covers the viral reaction to Sebastian Stan's guerrilla marketing stunt, where he replaced 'Thunderbolts\*' posters with 'The New Avengers' titles. The article includes fan reactions and comments on the effectiveness of this marketing strategy in generating buzz and engaging the audience.
7. <https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2025/05/06/nolte-disney-retitles-box-office-disappointment-thunderbolts-as-the-new-avengers/> - Breitbart discusses Disney's decision to rebrand 'Thunderbolts\*' as 'The New Avengers' following its box office performance. The article critiques the move as a response to the film's underwhelming reception and examines the implications of leveraging the established 'Avengers' brand to boost the film's appeal.