# Marvel’s Thunderbolts rebranding to The New Avengers sparks divided fan reaction



Marvel Studios has recently executed a striking rebranding of its antihero film *Thunderbolts*, announcing it as *The New Avengers* just days after the movie's release. This mid-campaign reveal, marked by a novel approach to marketing, was first hinted at through a mysterious asterisk in the film's title and publicly confirmed during a Hollywood premiere when cast members Florence Pugh, David Harbour, and Sebastian Stan presented a revised poster.

The rebranding tactic, which saw Stan replace *Thunderbolts* advertisements with the new title in a guerrilla marketing effort, has split audiences—some laud the innovative strategy while others accuse Marvel of employing misleading tactics to stir interest. This move not only reflects a bold marketing gamble but also underlines a significant trend: major franchises must continually adapt to remain relevant in a shifting entertainment landscape.

According to Alex Chan, head of brand communications and marketing at Geneco, this strategic pivot is a response to evolving audience behaviours and the pervasive superhero fatigue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused a notable decline in box office revenues, which, coupled with the saturation of superhero content on streaming platforms, has compelled Marvel to rethink its marketing strategies. Chan states, “Given that this iconic franchise has been around for 17 years, it is essential for the marketing team to introduce a new strategy, fresh approach and unconventional tactics.”

Padmanabhan Manickam, a former GroupM marketing expert, supports this viewpoint, describing the rebranding as not just a creative plot aligned with the film but also an astute marketing play. He considers the asterisk a "brilliant teaser marketing" method, engaging fans and non-fans alike with curiosity.

Significantly, both experts stress that this was not a last-minute decision but an intentional strategy put into action from the beginning. Chan refers to the execution as “the most un-Marvel marketing strategy they have ever undertaken,” highlighting the departure from Marvel’s traditional approach focused on heroism. Instead, this fresh direction seeks to invigorate audience engagement and enhance box office performance through a calculated deviation from established norms.

Despite the buzz generated around the rebranding, it's essential to note that *Thunderbolts* remains the title officially listed in theatres. This nuance speaks to the nature of the reveal, suggesting that the intent was more about stimulating conversation than legal rebranding. Chan argues that this approach capitalises on the current landscape where social media often leaks plot details even before their intended reveals, allowing Marvel to maintain narrative control.

The ability to lead such a reveal highlights a pivotal shift in marketing dynamics within the film industry. As audience speculation escalates online, the choice to embrace these discussions rather than shy away from them reflects a strategic adaptability that offers competitive advantages. Manickam adds that while this creative exercise may resonate well within the Marvel fandom, it may not universally translate to success across other film franchises.

Currently, *The New Avengers* rebranding has successfully sparked interest, drawing attention from those who have yet to see the film. Disney CEO Bob Iger has praised *Thunderbolts* as a paradigm shift toward prioritising quality over quantity in Marvel’s output. Nevertheless, while early reactions suggest an intrigue, only time will tell if this bold marketing endeavour leads to sustained box office success. Chan believes that risk, when executed with clear intention, represents an essential lesson for entertainment marketers navigating today’s crowded media ecosystem.

However, this approach hinges on the underlying content's relevance; if there is insufficient depth to explore, marketing adaptive strategies may fall flat. Chan warns of the potential perception of being overly self-indulgent, which could lead to minimal impact on audience engagement—something entertainment brands must avoid.

In conclusion, whether the *New Avengers* rebrand heralds a new chapter for Marvel or constitutes a fleeting public relations stunt, it signals that franchise storytelling now extends beyond screen narratives and into innovative brand strategy.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 3, 6, 8
2. Paragraph 2, 4
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 9
6. Paragraph 10
7. Paragraph 11

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## 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' strategic rebranding of 'Thunderbolts' to 'The New Avengers' following its cinematic release. The move, highlighted by cast members Florence Pugh, David Harbour, and Sebastian Stan unveiling a new poster at the Hollywood premiere, reflects Marvel's adaptation to evolving audience behaviors and superhero fatigue. Experts like Alex Chan and Padmanabhan Manickam analyze the decision, emphasizing the need for fresh marketing strategies to maintain audience interest and prevent brand fatigue. The article also touches upon the role of social media in narrative control and the importance of calculated risks in marketing.
3. <https://www.adweek.com/convergent-tv/thunderbolts-new-avengers-title-marvel-disney-marketing/> - Adweek's article delves into Marvel Studios' unexpected rebranding of 'Thunderbolts' to 'The New Avengers.' The transition began with a $76 million opening weekend box office gross, followed by the cast's involvement in updating promotional materials. The article highlights the global initiative, with international markets adopting unique motifs, and discusses the creative collaboration between Marvel Studios and Disney to execute this rebranding strategy effectively.
4. <https://time.com/7278167/thunderbolts-asterisk-meaning/> - Time magazine explores the significance of the asterisk in Marvel Studios' 'Thunderbolts*' title. The film introduces a group of underpowered, morally ambiguous characters, diverging from traditional superhero narratives. The asterisk, teased during marketing, signifies the absence of the Avengers, as indicated by a poster stating, '*The Avengers are not available.' The article discusses how this creative choice plays with the ambiguity of the Thunderbolts name and reflects Marvel's innovative approach to storytelling.
5. <https://time.com/7281871/thunderbolts-asterisk-name-explained/> - Time magazine provides an in-depth explanation of the 'Thunderbolts\*' title and the meaning behind the asterisk. The article details the film's focus on a group of B-list superheroes dealing with mental health challenges and identity crises. It discusses the humorous origin of the 'Thunderbolts' name and how the asterisk signifies the team's temporary and informal status. The piece also touches upon the film's narrative developments and the rebranding to 'New Avengers' by CIA Director Valentina Allegra de Fontaine.
6. <https://bmoutdoor.com/info/Marvel-Thunderbolts-Rebrand-Campaign> - BM Outdoor's article examines Marvel Studios' rebranding of 'Thunderbolts' to 'The New Avengers,' highlighting the strategic move to leverage the established Avengers brand. It details actor Sebastian Stan's guerrilla marketing efforts in Los Angeles, where he personally updated promotional materials to reflect the new title. The piece emphasizes the innovative approach to out-of-home advertising and the impact of involving talent in real-world activations to create viral buzz.
7. <https://www.gamesradar.com/entertainment/marvel-movies/it-took-five-years-but-thunderbolts-post-credits-surprise-finally-fixed-my-big-problem-with-the-mcu-before-avengers-doomsday/> - GamesRadar discusses how the 'Thunderbolts' post-credits scene addresses a long-standing issue in the Marvel Cinematic Universe by introducing the 'New Avengers' and hinting at a convergence of storylines. The article highlights the significance of the 174-second scene, which introduces the Fantastic Four's ship and suggests potential involvement of characters like Doctor Doom. It emphasizes how this development brings narrative cohesion and builds excitement for upcoming Avengers films.