

SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

Black Panther (Dir, Ryan Coogler)

"At first, he was just going to do a few songs for the film," Coogler said. "Then he came in and watched quite a bit of the movie, and the next thing I know, they were booking a studio and they were going at it."

Ryan Coogler on working with Kendrick Lamar



Media Industry:

Power and media industries - Curran and Seaton

The idea that the media is controlled by a small number of companies primarily driven by the logic of profit and power.

The idea that media concentration generally limits or inhibits variety, creativity and quality.

The idea that more socially diverse patterns of ownership help to create the conditions for more varied and adventurous media productions.

Regulation - Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

The idea that there is an underlying struggle in recent UK regulation policy between the need to further the interests of citizens (by offering protection from harmful or offensive material), and the need to further the interests of consumers (by ensuring choice, value for money, and market competition).

The idea that the increasing power of global media corporations, together with the rise of convergent media technologies and transformations in the production, distribution and marketing of digital media, have placed traditional approaches to media regulation at risk.

Cultural industries - David Hesmondhalgh

The idea that cultural industry companies try to minimise risk and maximise audiences through vertical and horizontal integration, and by formatting their cultural products (e.g. through the use of stars, genres, and serials).

The idea that the largest companies or conglomerates now operate across a number of different cultural industries.

The idea that the radical potential of the internet has been contained to some extent by its partial incorporation into a large, profit-orientated set of cultural industries.

PRODUCT CONTEXT

The 17th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe or MCU (the highest-grossing film **franchise** in history) The film is set in the fictional African kingdom of **Wakanda** which through technical advancements and superiority through the use of a mineral called **Vibranium** has meant the kingdom has avoided European colonisation.

After the death of his father, **T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman)** returns to **Wakanda** to prepare himself to become king. All other tribes approve, yet the Mountain Tribe does not meaning T'Challa must fight their champion M.Baku (Winston Duke) until one yields or dies. Claiming the power of the Black Panther all is well until **Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan)** makes claim and takes the throne.

The film was produced by **Marvel Studios** the cinematic company built from the famous comic book **brand Marvel Comics**. Marvel Studios is also a **subsidiary** of the **Walt Disney Company**.

Black Panther broke records for the highest opening weekend in the USA drawing in **\$202,003,951** as well as performing well globally grossing well over **\$1 Billion** worldwide with **48%** in non-US countries. Full Breakdown [here](#)

It is also the only superhero film to be nominated for a **'Best Picture' Academy Award**. It won three Oscars for Costume, Production Design and Original Soundtrack.



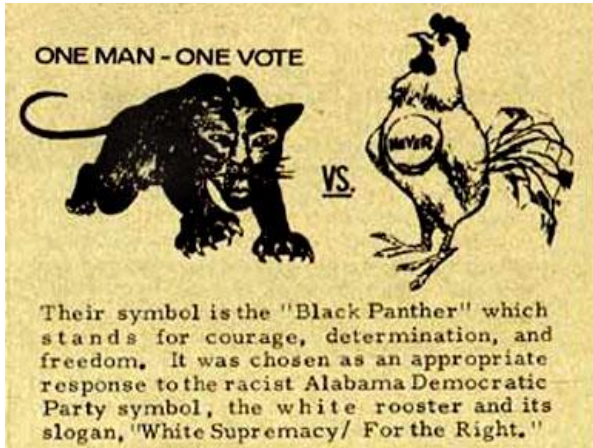
Q. With your initial impressions of the film why do you think that it was so successful?

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE BLACK PANTHERS



In the wake of the assassination of **Malcom X** in 1965, the **Black Panther Movement/Political Party (1966-1982)** was founded by **Huey Newton** and **Bobby Seale**. The party's original purpose was to patrol African American neighbourhoods to protect residents from acts of **police brutality**. The Panthers eventually developed into a **marxist revolutionary group** that called for the arming of all African Americans, the exemption of African Americans from the draft and from all sanctions of so-called white America, the release of all African Americans from jail, and the payment of compensation to African Americans for centuries of exploitation by white Americans. At its peak in the late 1960s, Panther membership exceeded **2,000**, and the organization operated chapters in several major American cities.



Marvel's Black Panther (a.k.a. King T'Challa) was a product of the '60s, created by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee during their legendary creative relationship at Marvel. He first appeared in "Fantastic Four" Vol. 1 #52, dated **July 1966**

One possibility is the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, a political party founded by civil rights activist **Stokely Carmichael** in 1965 to register African American voters in Lowndes, Alabama, that had a black panther as its logo. Carmichael was a huge influence on the founders of the Black Panther Party, who the

next year took the party's name from LCFO's logo.

Another possible inspiration is the 761st Tank Battalion, a segregated U.S. Army unit that earned one Medal of Honor, 11 Silver Stars, around 300 Purple Hearts, and a Presidential Unit Citation for its exploits in Europe during World War II.

The unit was especially notable for counting among its members future baseball and civil rights legend Jackie Robinson. The battalion was nicknamed the "Black Panthers" after their distinctive logo. Kirby and Lee were themselves WWII Army vets — in fact, Kirby served as an Army scout in Europe during the war, so it's highly possible he at least was familiar with the unit.

However, neither Lee nor Kirby (who died in 1994) ever explained why they picked the name "Black Panther." Kirby originally called the character "Coal Tiger" before they duo settled on the catchier name we now know and love.

Q. From what you read about the Black Panther Movement/Party what implications does it have that the names are both the same?

HARLEM RENAISSANCE



The Harlem Renaissance was the development of the Harlem neighbourhood in New York City as a black cultural mecca in the early 20th Century and the subsequent social and artistic explosion that resulted. Lasting roughly from the **1910s through the mid-1930s**, the period is considered a golden age in African American culture, manifesting in literature, music, stage performance and art and a new **cultural identity**.

The music that percolated in and then boomed out of Harlem in the 1920s was **jazz**, often played at speakeasies offering illegal liquor. **Jazz** became a great draw for not only Harlem residents, but outside white audiences also.

Some of the most celebrated names in American music regularly performed in Harlem—**Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith, Fats Waller** and **Cab Calloway**, often accompanied by elaborate floor shows. Tap dancers like John Bubbles and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson were also popular.

At the centre of this stage revolution was the versatile Paul Robeson, an actor, singer, writer, activist, and more. Robeson first moved to Harlem in 1919 while studying law at Columbia University and continually maintained a social presence in the area, where he was considered an inspirational but approachable figure.

Robeson believed that **arts and culture** were the best paths forward for Black Americans to **overcome racism** and make advances in a **white-dominated culture**.



TRADITIONAL BLACK CINEMA



[*Do the Right Thing*](#) (Lee, 1989)

MOONLIGHT

[*Moonlight*](#) (Jenkins, 2016)

The science fiction blockbuster and superhero genres have traditionally been dominated by **white, male characters**. In the 1990s, actors like

Will Smith and **Wesley Snipes** did break ground playing black characters, but recent action films and especially superhero films have rarely featured African-American actors in lead roles.

For the last **15 years**, Marvel films have topped the box office. Though these regularly featured non-white characters, they were often sidekicks (e.g. The Falcon in the Captain America films).

There have also been very few superhero films with a female lead (Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel being exceptions).

Black cinema has traditionally consisted of issues-based **social realism** (e.g. the films of Spike Lee) or have been '**arthouse**'/'**prestige**' pictures (e.g. Moonlight, 2016). **Blade** (1998) is one of the few superhero films to have a black main character.

Spike Lee is an American filmmaker who writes, produces, directs and stars in movies steeped in Black Culture. The majority of his films fall within the social realism genre showcasing life in various black communities drawing attention to black issues.

US/European news media tends to portray **Africa** as an under-privileged, developing country, focusing on **civil wars, famine and terrorism**. The Victorian branding of Africa as '**the Dark Continent**' has not evolved very far. Very few feature films from Africa reach the Western mainstream, and films like **Blood Diamond (2006)** and **Captain Phillips (2013)**, though featuring sympathetic African characters, still portray Africa as a dangerous and barbaric place.



Blood Diamond (Zwick, 2007)



Captain Phillips (Greengrass, 2013)



Shooting Dogs/Beyond the Gates (Caton-Jones, 2006)

#OSCARSSOWHITE

Thursday, January 14th

The Academy Award nominees are announced. For the second year in a row, zero actors of color receive acting nominations.

Almost immediately, #OscarsSoWhite starts trending on Twitter, a re-up of Reign's protest. Her hashtag has become internet shorthand for dismay at the lack of diversity among Academy Award nominees.

Monday, January 18th

Spike Lee, who directed 2015's *Chi-Raq*, which did not receive any Oscar nominations, announces on Instagram that he will be boycotting the Academy Awards. (Lee won an honorary Oscar last fall and has been nominated previously, for *Do the Right Thing* and *4 Little Girls*.) In his post, Lee writes that he and his wife "Cannot Support" the awards. "**How Is It Possible For The 2nd Consecutive Year All 20 Contenders Under The Actor Category Are White?**" He quotes Martin Luther King, Jr. — on the national holiday in King's honor — and the musical *Hamilton* ("I WANNA BE IN THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENS") to say "The Truth Is We Ain't In Those Rooms And Until Minorities Are, The Oscar Nominees Will Remain Lilly White."

Wednesday, January 20th

The New York Times reports that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will announce "**measures aimed at making its Oscar choices more diverse.**" Possible actions include nominating 10 films for Best Picture and increasing the number of acting nominees, from five per category to eight or 10.

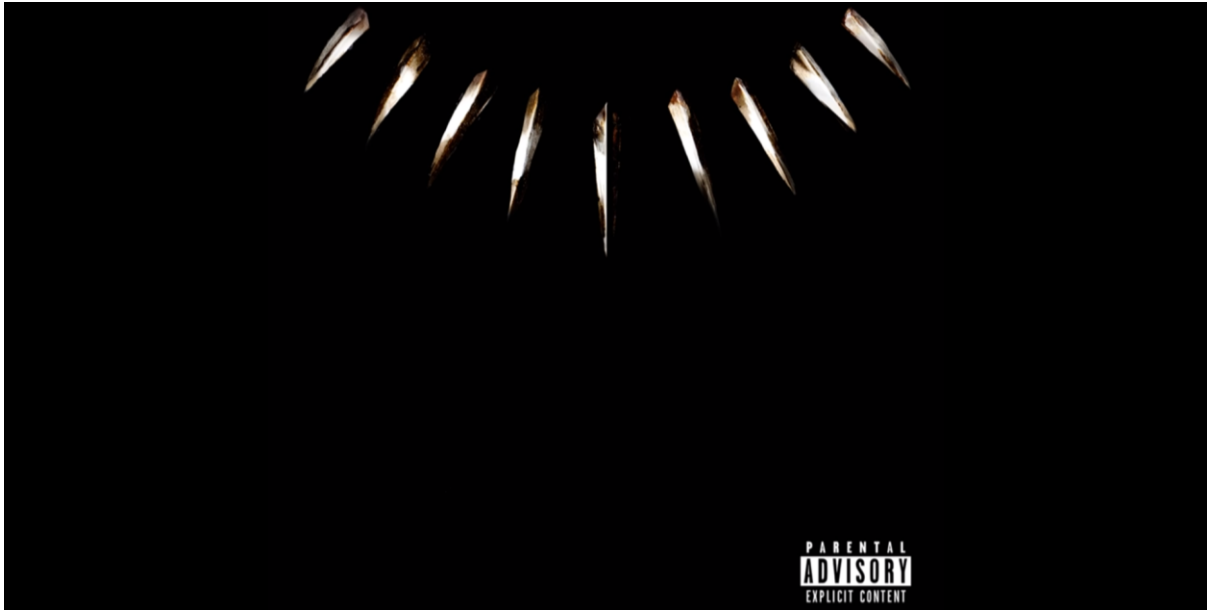
Wednesday, January 27th

Isaacs, along with AMPAS CEO Dawn Hudson, give an hour-long interview to The Hollywood Reporter for the magazine's cover story. They **explain the reasoning behind the changes** to the Academy rules and talk about the role they believe the Academy plays in the film industry. As for allegations that the AMPAS caved to "**political correctness**," Hudson says, "The Academy is **tradition-bound, it is rule-bound**, it is not trying to be politically correct, never has been. We are an elite institution... We are the best of the best in the film industry. We don't feel that we have looked far and wide enough for the best of the best. It's not about political correctness, it's about building the best team, **the best institution, the best artists**. Because unless you have the best artists as members, unless you have the best artists voting on the Academy Awards, you don't have a real reflection of the best of our film culture."

Q. How important is it that Black Panther got nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Award with regard to the Film Industry?

KENDRICK LAMAR AND LUDWIG GÖRANSSON

'Black Panther'



When Lamar visited South Africa in 2014, the motherland presented him with a challenge not unlike that faced by many black Americans upon setting foot in their ancestral homeland for the first time. Africa presented a **profound paradox** to Lamar, whose good kid, m.A.A.d city major label debut brought worldwide success but left him grappling with the desire to remain true to his Compton roots while reaching new heights.

With **Black Panther: The Album**, the artist became an architect. Much like the film's cast, which features actors **from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tobago, South Africa, the U.K. and U.S.**, the soundtrack is **Pan-African** in scope. In the same way that the film's hero, King T'Challa, attempts to reconcile a fragmented Wakanda, Lamar took on a similar project, helming a collaborative effort that criss-crosses continents, **hops genres** and cross-pollinates perspectives.

Look no further than the **rare amalgamation of diasporic tongues** here — the Zulu of South African artists **Babes Wodumo, Sjava and Yugen Blakrok**; the northern California slang of Sacramento standout **Mozzy** and Bay Area crew **SOBxRBE**; the trap-inflected Southern dialects of **Future, 2 Chainz, Travis Scott and Swae Lee** of Rae Sremmurd; the British soul of **Jorja Smith**; the pop vocals of Toronto's **The Weeknd**. (Even U.K. star **James Blake** shows up, like the white CIA-spy-turned-Wakanda-ally Everett K. Ross in the film, to lend his support on two tracks.)

When **Coogler** found out he was picked to **direct Black Panther**, the Oakland-born filmmaker made it a point to travel to the continent he would be depicting onscreen, to get a sense of what it really means to be African in the **21st century**. Apart from TV ads and vacation guides, Coogler wanted to experience Kenya and South Africa firsthand to translate their essence on-screen.

If **1915's Birth Of A Nation**, with its **racist depiction** of African-Americans, predicated a century-long struggle against violent white supremacy in this nation, the movie **Black Panther**, 100 years later, projects a **new narrative** with the attempted reclamation of a scattered black diaspora. Lamar's soundtrack is a necessary note in that (continuing) **redemption** song.

Q. Why do you think Kendrick Lamar's collaboration with Ryan Coogler was so successful in helping strengthen the marketing for Black Panther?

Q. How does this relate to the Harlem Renaissance?



THE FILM PROCESS

Production: The process of making a film including: **Pre-production** - planning, scripting, storyboarding **Production** - the actual shooting/filming **Post-production** – editing

Distribution: This stage is a very important part of the film industry as it is the **link** between the **producer** and the **audience**; it refers to all the **strategies** used in the release, **marketing** and **promotion** of the product.

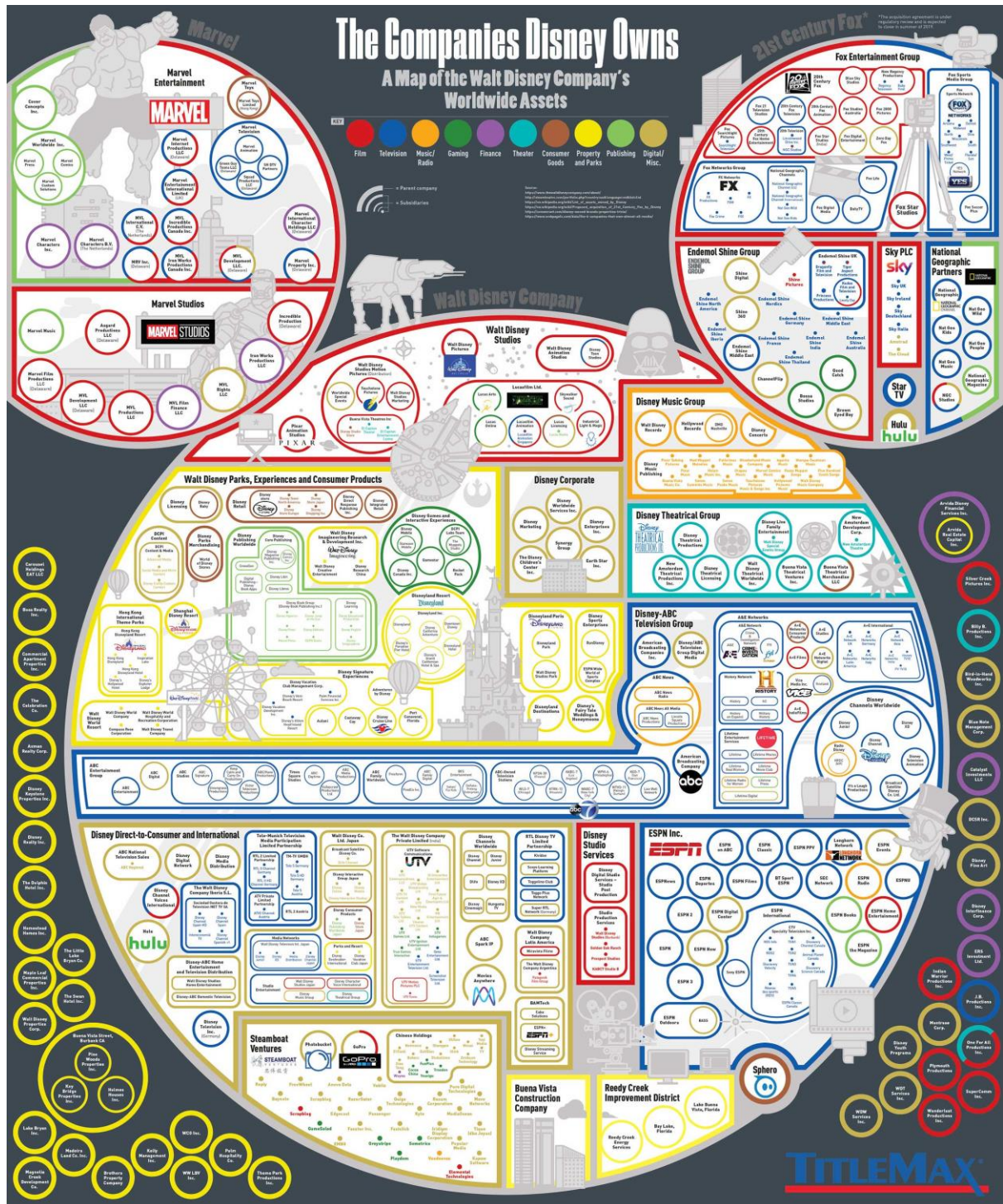
Exhibition: All the opportunities available to an audience to **view** a film, including **multiplex** and **independent** art house cinemas, at **film festivals** and **online**.



DISNEY CONGLOMERATE

Conglomerate: A company that owns large numbers of companies in **various mass media** such as television, radio, publishing, films, and the Internet.

Media Conglomerate: Media conglomerates strive for policies that facilitate their **control** of the **markets** across the globe.



Vertical Integration: When one company owns corporations operating different stages of the same process (e.g. production – distribution – exhibition)

Horizontal Integration: When one company owns various corporations which are involved in the same activities (e.g. production)

Q. Why is it so beneficial that Disney is able to make use of vertical and horizontal integration?



[Black Panther Hasbro Toys](#)

When watching the advert pay attention to the ethnicity of the children and what this means for identification (Gauntlett) and reaching an audience.

Q. Do you think the same ethnicity would be used to advertise toys for Thor/Spiderman? If not why?

[Lexus Black Panther Superbowl Spot](#)

Adverts for Black Panther were also shown between NBA matches.

Q. What audiences would you reach through the choice of advertising spots and content?

bbfc View what's right for you

The **British Board of Film Classification (BBFC)** is an **independent regulator** and guide with over 100 years' experience. We're here to help everyone in the UK choose **age-appropriate films, videos and websites**, wherever and however they watch or use them.

We use focus groups and surveys to consult people across the UK every four to five years and use this process to listen to what they say, think and feel about what's appropriate for children of all ages.

We believe that adults should be free to watch what they want to, so long as it's within the law. But we also have a responsibility, when absolutely necessary, to **restrict content** that could otherwise cause harm to adults and society as a whole.

Working closely with the film and digital industries, with educators and organisations dedicated to children's welfare, we are continually evolving the guidance we offer, and are increasingly able to make a bigger difference in helping everyone – children, families and adults - choose well.

Q. According to Livingstone and Lunt traditional means of regulation of media products is currently at risk with the rise of technology and convergent media. Do you think this is the case with Film regulation?



MARKETING CONSUMPTION



Within **24 hours** of the teaser trailer being released it had reached **89 million views** on YouTube, where it currently sits on **42 million views** today.

Just before release, Black Panther was the **most-tweeted** about film of 2018 with more than **5 million** tweets globally. In mid-March 2018, it became the **most-tweeted about film** ever with **35 million tweets**. With the **advancement in technology** and the ability to be active on the internet on the go film marketing can be spread and consumed much more effectively.

Q. Can you think of any other platforms where film marketing most likely to be consumed by audiences?

Released during **Black History month** the film became a **cultural event** for African Americans and subsequently for black society across the world, building on a majority black cast, headed by Marvel's first Black Director, Ryan Coogler.

When the film premiered, **churches, community centers, activists groups** and schools bought out theaters to ensure that all children would have a chance to see a screening. Shortly after the hashtag **#WhatBlackPantherMeansToMe** started allowing audiences to share their personal connection regarding what the film did for them.



APPLYING THEORY

Curran and Seaton (Power and Media Industries) notes that **media concentration** generally limits or inhibits variety, creativity and quality. Think about film franchises and mainstream cinema, how often do you see something that takes a risk or breaks the mould.

Q. Is this the case with Marvel and Disney? Or does Black Panther break the mould?

Hesmondhalgh notes that companies or conglomerates now operate across a number of different cultural industries. Look back at how Black Panther was marketed alongside releases such as toys, cars, fashion and music.

Q. How does this help create synergy with the marketing release of the film? How does this attract and target different audience demographics?

Have a fantastic Christmas. Wakanda Forever!

