The Marketing of Comic Books:

The Power Behind Visual Narratives

Dania Kyle

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By: Dania Kyle

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair, Department of Marketing
Dr. Walsh, Darlene

_____ External Examiner
Dr. LeBel, Jordan

_____ Thesis Co-supervisor
Dr. Arsel, Zeynep

_____ Thesis Co-supervisor
Dr. Paulin, Michèle

Approved by _____
Dr. Bodur, Onur, Graduate Program Director Dean of Faculty

April 2023 _____
Dr. Croteau, Anne-Marie, Dean of Faculty

ABSTRACT

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This research investigates the psychology behind the marketing of comic books by discovering how individuals experience reading comics, and how comics engage their readers. This qualitative study sheds light on an underexplored area in marketing through a netnography, four case studies, 15 interviews (with comic book readers and professionals in the industry), and attendance at a comic book convention. Despite being part of an extremely lucrative industry across the globe, academic studies on comic books are practically uncharted in marketing. Yet comics possess a unique storytelling method that is a powerful tool for communicating: visual narratives. Artistically immersing into these narratives causes readers to become narratively transported, which allows them to experience positive emotions and transmedia comics. Comic books also offer identification through the limitlessness, diversity, and inclusivity of their visual narratives, which often leads to self-discovery. The outcome of reading comics can feel so positive that it often turns into therapeutic re-experiences. The implications of this research are just as much practical as they are theoretical. Aside from being captivating and entertaining, comics are educational, can delicately present sensitive matters, and are a great medium to use for advertising and displaying a company's mission. Besides the creation of new opportunities for marketing experts and academics, this study determines three reading stages and three life stages within the context of

comics, builds upon previous literature and theories from different fields, and expands the current knowledge available for scholars.

Keywords: comic books, emotions, narrative transportation, transmedia, visual narratives.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this to my mother, Catherine de Boucherville. She has always been my superhero. She nurtured me into the strong, wise, mature, resilient woman that I am today. The short but cherished time that we spent together on this Earth was beyond treasurable. She was murdered by my biological father when I was 16 years old, on July 5th, 2012. Her death saved my autistic brother's life and mine. Without her, I wouldn't be who I am. She lives on through us and continues to inspire me. Thank you, Mom, for encouraging me to be the best version of myself, follow my dreams, and pursue the career I always wanted. I'm grateful you taught me about the importance of being an independent woman at a young age. Here I am, 27, catapulted into the world of academia! And the sky is the limit!

I also want to dedicate this to my grandfather, Joseph de Boucherville. He was an incredible pilot, and a brilliant intellectual – it runs in the family. I remember seeing his walls covered in books as a child, and it left me awe. He passed away a few months after my mother did. Thank you, Papi, for always loving me the way that I am, boosting my confidence, making me laugh, teaching me how to assert myself, and be proud of who I am.

Lastly, I want to dedicate this to all victims of domestic violence and femicide. I stand with you. I stand by you. I am with you. My childhood and teenage years were filled with trauma and heartbreak. And so, I found an escape from my reality through my growing fascination in comic books. They fueled my imagination, allowed for my soul and mind to wonder. I hope I can inspire you to achieve your goals, never give up, and keep striving to become the best version of yourself. Together, we stand against injustice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Comic books, also referred to as comics, received their name due to comic strips being initially primarily humor-based; superheroes and other genres later became popular (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021). There are ongoing scholar debates as to what the exact definition of a comic book is: while some argue that it consists of a series of printed issues, others say that it simply is "sequential art" (Eisner, 1985; Laird, 2020; Sturm, & National Association of Comics Art Educators, n.d.). This was also recurring throughout my findings, but for the sole purpose of simplicity, this research refers to comic books as an umbrella term that englobes all genres and all types of comics.

The modern comic book has a longstanding ancestry. Its roots originate from prehistoric times (Vacca, 1959). Comics epitomize a critical dimension of culture: there is a wide variety of comic books and graphic novels of all genres (USA), "bandes dessinées" (Western Europe, predominantly in France and Belgium), and "mangas" (Japan) (Prough 2010; Rigaud et al. 2015). In use since 1951, the Mariam-Webster (n.d.) dictionary defines the term *manga* as: "Japanese comic books and graphic novels considered collectively as a genre." Comic books "are recognized as a legitimate and unique pop art form that chronicles the American culture" and comic characters "have become American icons" (Wright & Sherman, 2006, p. 165). They have been used to study brain functions "related to emotions, humor appreciation, image comprehension, and visual language," due to their meanings going far beyond the simple interpretation of image and text (Morelli, 2018, p. 1). Comics are objects of art combining artistic, cinematic, and literary elements and values, as explained by Moore (2004), the editor for DarkStorm, a comics company. Comics expand the possibilities of storytelling by captivating audiences' imagination, which also turns out to be an inexpensive form of entertainment,

according to Washington (2004), the creator of Omega Man. Avery (2004), a writer for Marvel, stated: “the art of allegory, counter-point and still-life realism can be explored in comics more than any other medium.”

Comics have dramatically skyrocketed in popularity. As mentioned in *The Washington Post*, comic sales have been on the rise, even if “comic books are more accessible than ever before, partially because of the Internet” (Andrews, 2016). In fact, over 4 billion pages of comics were sold in 2013 by the largest digital comics platform, *ComiXology*, purchased by *Amazon* for an undisclosed amount a year later (Andrews, 2016; MacDonald, 2014). However, comics are also becoming more popular due to the increase of comic book shops, their hyper-popular movies expanding the audience of readers, the boom in films and television series (Andrews, 2016), but also because they “have certainly conquered the gaming world” through video and mobile games (Thompson, 2021), and have theme park rides across the globe (Young, 2016).

Comics adapt to technological advances and the virtual worlds that the Internet has created: a new trend has recently emerged in the comic book industry. Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) “have disrupted the entire comic-book industry’s network of dealers, conventions, and fans who buy, collect, and trade hand-drawn originals,” which have “also created a stir between the creators and the big companies over IP rights and marketability, and this is only the beginning” (Craig, 2022). For example, Frank Miller’s most expensive piece of art became his Sin City NFTs, selling for almost $841K US, while his NFT for Batman’s The Dark Knight Return cover is valued between $1.3 and $1.6M US (Perry, 2021). Another example can be with fans from DC Comics paying nearly $2M US for NFTs of Wonder Woman (Pearce, 2021). An NFT is a unique digital asset, representing real-world objects, such as art, music, collectibles, virtual avatars, and videos; NFTs are bought and sold online, usually with cryptocurrency (Conti,

2022). In other words, owning a digital comic book issue through the purchase of an NFT preserves the collectible value, as opposed to buying online subscriptions that follow a rental model (Craig, 2022). The comic book industry is expected to maintain a steady growth due to these distinct circumstances. Therefore, it is crucial that the context defining this research's method involves both the online and in-person communities of comic book readers.

Comic books have generated online communities where readers and collectors share their thoughts and opinions through blogs, articles, videos, and podcasts – such as Bulbapedia, for example, which is known as an online community-driven Pokémon encyclopedia. Yet physical communities also exist, such as with the example of *comic-con*: a comic book convention (con, for short) that focuses on comic books and other connected forms of pop culture entertainment, involving movies, television shows, and video games (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021). Comic-cons are held in many locations, but it originated in 1970 from the San Diego comic-con (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021). The Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards honors professionals in the comic industry, and have been awarded combined with San Diego's comic-con since 1988 (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021). Generally, comic-cons feature a variety of events, notably panels with entertainment industry professionals, including artists, writers, actors, and directors (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021). Many fans who attend comic-cons participate in cosplay, which consist of dressing up as fictional characters (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021).

However, comics have not received enough attention in marketing, as most scholarly articles focus on cinema, literature, music, and technology (Rigaud et al. 2015; van Laer et al. 2019). Hence, my thesis investigates two research questions, namely: how do individuals experience reading comics? (RQ1); how do comic books engage their readers? (RQ2). The

method consists of qualitative data analysis through the presentation of four transmedia comics case studies, an online and in-person fieldwork, along with 15 interviews. More specifically, in this study, I analyze individuals who join comic book communities, share and collect comic books, attend Comic-Con, indulge in transmedia comics, and at time even cosplay. Aside from the three reading stages, individuals experience reading comics through visual narratives that lead them to become narratively transported. Experiencing a comic book also allows identification through its limitlessness, diversity, and inclusivity: this leads to self-discovery through comics, and ultimately, into an indulgence of positive emotions. Comics engage their readers throughout their different life stages. Inspired by Russell and Levy (2012), this study will look at four types of comic book re-experiences (which can have a backward or forward process): volitional, reconstructive, reflective, and ritualistic. Nostalgia was positively experienced by all comic book readers in this study. Comics are the epitome of narrative transportation: experiencing a comic offers the duality of art and knowledge, typically resulting in positive emotions.

Pertinent for practitioners in the field of marketing, and specifically for comic book professionals, this research is also valuable for individuals working in the educational field, as comics have been proved to be pedagogically oriented. Comics are not only entertaining, they can also be a way to begin a conversation of trust and respect with all stakeholders regardless of their age. Comics are also designed to present topics of sensitive matters, as the visuals make the narrative a lot more easier to absorb. Additionally, comics grasp individuals' attention, which can also be strategic for marketing communicators, businesses, or any organization to emphasize a critical message using different artistic methods and models.

Being one of the first studies to uncover the marketing behind comic books, this study holds several theoretical implications. Aside from expanding the currently available knowledge on comic books and transmedia comics, this research is the first to present the psychological experiences linked to reading comics, both from the readers' point of view, and from the authors' and artists' perspectives. It is also the first marketing study to determine that there are three reading stages when it comes to experiencing comics, and three life stages for comic book readers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Transmedia Comics

With transmedia, one universal story is coordinated in multiple media, each orchestrating a piece of the story (Sawhney, 2019). Transmedia is often defined as "a narrative or project that combines multiple media forms (Techopedia, 2017). It comes into play when a plot and characters differ from the original story, despite the universe and aesthetics remaining the same (Naghdi, 2023). A transmedia story lives across diverse mediums and forms of storytelling (Naghdi, 2023).

Transmedia storytelling is the creation of a coordinated story experience: each medium or channel has its specially designed role to do what it does best (Sawhney, 2019). A transmedia story is told through various mediums: to grasp its entirety, each of them needs to be experienced (Jenkins 2010; Sawhney, 2019). Continuity in the spreadable narrative is crucial for transmedia storytelling, since the expandable story offers an immersive experience (Sawhney, 2019).

Transmedia storytelling is "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (Jenkins, 2010, p. 944). In other words, transmedia storytelling is a storytelling method that is experienced amongst several platforms and different formats that employ current digital technologies (Derbaix et al., 2017; Naghdi, 2023). As Swahney (2019) puts it, transmedia storytelling "allows a story to unfold across multiple media platforms." It can allow brands to grow and retain the attention of an audience more than with other marketing communication strategies (Cronin, 2016). Researchers also affirm that companies adopting brand narratives through transmedia storytelling can be more successful in

creating connections between the brand and its audience (Feiereisen et al., 2020). In fact, transmedia storytelling grabs the attention of younger generations, due to how historical contents become more appealing (Dusi et al., 2017).

Transmedia comics have been financially fruitful, due its capacity to expand narrative continuity between numerous iterations, which used to be almost non-existent (Proctor, 2018). Typically, a transmedia comic arises when the properties of a comic book has been expanded and franchised (Practor, 2018). In this research, I refer to *transmedia comics* as transmedia brands that incorporate comic storytelling: it frequently crosses platforms, especially with movies, television series, and video games. Moreover, Proctor (2018) refers to transmedia comics as being the circumstance of a comic book medium entering "an intensive dialogic relationship with other new media of the day, including radio, newspapers, television and film, as well as the kinds of merchandising phenomena usually equated with media conglomeration and convergence in the contemporary moment" (p. 51). He also added that previous research determined that transmedia comics can be perceived as spin offs that were "crafted exclusively by the comic-book producers with only financial coordination with the intellectual property (IP) holders'" (Clarke, 2012; Proctor, 2018, p.51).

Transmedia comics surround us throughout our lives, and are displayed in different forms (e.g. books, video games, movies, television series, toys, clothes, amusement parks, etc.). This is namely due to the strong narrative transportation derived from the storytelling associated to comics. It generates narrative persuasion, no matter the medium, which can lead to transportation, reducing the resistance to persuasion and often generating story-consistent beliefs (Moore & Green, 2021). Later presented in the *Method* section, case studies of four transmedia comics' stories are great examples at demonstrating how one comic book can evolve into a

becoming a billion-dollar generating brand, but they are also examples of how comics eventually become part of the mediums transmedia brands employ.

The goal of transmedia storytelling is to create a pleasurable alternative to written-based contents (Dusi et al., 2017). Narratives in media count a story that "can be a highly effective delivery vehicle for persuasive communication, including public health interventions, social engineering, and commercial marketing campaigns" (Brechman & Purvis, 2015, p. 366), along with transmedia brands.

2.2 Narrative Transportation

Storytelling is critical in communication and marketing. *Storytelling* is a form of co-creation between parties, since it is an "interactionally achieved discourse and sense-making activity" (Ochs et al., 1992, p. 38). Every story holds a narrative. A good narrative incorporates various stories to illustrate, animate, and validate its message, lesson or moral (Margolis, 2018). While a story depicts a character and the events it undergoes, a narrative is about how its interpretation (Margolis, 2018; van Laer et al., 2014). When individuals interpret a story, it becomes a narrative: this is often done to seize cultural meanings, assert their individual and/or social identity, and communicate their experience (Bahl & Milne, 2010; Holt, 1995; McCracken, 1986; van Laer et al., 2014). Brechman & Purvis (2015) determined that narratives are composed of chronology and causality. In other words, narrative must incorporate "an organization of events in terms of a temporal dimension" (a story has a beginning, middle and an end), along with a story's elements structured into "an organized framework that established relationships between the elements and allows for causal inference" (Bruner, 1990; Brechman & Purvis, 2015, p. 367).

Narratives are remarkably liable to be persuasive when individuals become transported into the narrative world they are reading (Green & Brock, 2000; Moore & Green, 2021). Individuals can experience comics and their storytelling when they become narratively transported. The tendency that allows one to become immersed in a story is called *transportability* (Mazzocco et al., 2010; Moore & Green, 2021). Therefore, people who are highly transportable are more favorable to becoming easily and regularly transported into narratives (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Moore & Green, 2021).

Narrative transportation is referred to by psychologists as: "the experience of being engrossed by the world of a story, so much that the real world seems to temporarily disappear" (Ichino, 2019, p. 268). Narrative transportation can occur during the absorption of any medium, but narrative transportation deriving from comics holds a power unlike others. Furthermore, "the phenomenological experiences of transportation are possible because all the readers' mental resources get focused on the story rather than on their own real situations" (Ichino, 2019, p. 269).

Ichino (2019) presented Green and Brock's (2000) five factors determining the degree of transportation: the *emotional involvement* into the story, the *cognitive attention* focused on the story, the *imageries* of the story content, the *propositional imaginings* of the story content, and the *relevance* of the story content to the reader's real life. Comic books score high on the *emotional involvements*, as reading them brings positive emotions: visual narratives make comics automatically score high on the *cognitive attention*, *imageries*, and *propositional imaginings*. Studies on narrative transportation have confirmed that "fictions have a significant power to influence us in various ways, affecting both our emotions and our beliefs," which is due to our cognitive architecture, such as when imagination interacts with our emotions and beliefs (Ichino, 2019, p. 279). While Ichino (2019) researched narrative transportation and the powers of

fictions, the same concepts can be applied to comic books: they also detain the power to influence individuals in various ways, typically by affecting comic book readers' emotions and beliefs. Since comic book readers often develop attachments and positive feelings to their favorite characters, *relevance* also results on a high degree, as comics and their stories become part of comic book readers' identity. In fact, reading is related to one's identity (Gee, 1996; Botzakis, 2009),

Reading has been experienced for millennia in our Western culture: it is intimately connected to Foucault's concept of individuals' "arts of existence" – which promotes a regimen creating sound minds and sound bodies through the transmission of content and information, along with the development of mental acuity (Botzakis, 2009, p. 52; Foucault, 1985). If used mindfully, comic books can be powerful resources for sparking student interest and learning (Botzakis, 2009). Education research confirms that reading regularly and frequently positively affects learning and scholastic performance, and reading comics enriches literacy (Botzakis, 2009; Hull & Schultz, 2002),

Reading comics involves the absorption of a visual narrative, which is precisely a story depicted with a sequence of images and written text. A successful comic offers cohesion and readability: it is achieved when three forms of conventional arts are simplified, namely: narrative art, literature and drama (Rutgrink, 2013). The visual narrative is typically displayed through panels of different shapes and sizes, along with staple and crucial moments pictured on splash pages. In a comic, time and space are often divided into panels, which tell a story (Rutgrink, 2013), The blanks between comic panels offer readers space for their imagination – a golden mine for it to be financed and transformed into film adaptations (Rutgrink, 2013). In fact, the space between the panels is called the *gutter*: it is where comic book readers must interpret the

story by creating a closure that links instances together (Rutgrink, 2013). Moreover, text is usually written in bubbles of various shapes and sizes according to the emotion felt. For example, a character thinking of something would have his/her thought displayed in a bubble shaped like a cloud (also known as a thought balloon), while a character screaming something would have his/her words displayed in a bubble shaped with spikes (a speech balloon). There are eight types of text containers: speech balloons, captions, emanatas, labels, narratory blocks, signs, sound effects, and thought balloons (Gardner, 2006). Please refer to Appendix A. In addition, the critical importance of terminology is presented in the glossary of 14 re-occurring comic terms, which are summarized in Appendix B. They are mostly taken from to the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* (Overstreet, 2004).

According to literature, there are several comic components that affect narrative transportation. Aside from visual depictions, character dialogue is crucial in comic books: it is one of comics' features that is "as valuable as the images themselves," since they offer abundant support in the narrative within comics (Hernández, 2022). Bubbles are "the visual tool used to represent the speech, dialogue, or conversation of the characters in the comics" (Hernández, 2022). They are part of the visual language of comics, since they are little expressions in themselves, each possessing their own meaning (Hernández, 2022). Bubbles can communicate a situation or context to a comic book reader (Hernández, 2022). Thus, understanding the meaning of speech bubbles in comics allows marketers, authors, and artists to learn know how to express emotions and feelings in a dialogue, along with its nature, the source of the speech, and sounds (Hernández, 2022). They facilitate and intensify narrative transportation.

Strong narrative transportation can lead individuals to want to re-experience it; many comic book readers re-read their favorite comics. Russell & Levy (2012) referred to *temporal*

thickness derived from re-consumption, which was defined as "a suspension of time that is crucial to human psychological development (Leighton, 1960) and that is especially valuable given the limited opportunities for contemplative time in modern society (Carù and Cova, 2003)" (p. 354). The authors declared that re-consumption allows individuals to reach back into their history, to define their present, and to extend into their future (Russell & Levy, 2012). During the re-experience, time collapses in the object itself: the future and the past are in an eternal state due to how reconsumption bridges "experiences across time. […] Reconsuming can be an extraordinary experience, filled with the emotional luxury of delight, novel sensations, and intellectual insight." (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Rusell & Levy, 2012, p. 355).

Evans et al. (2020) proved that mental transportation mediates nostalgia's psychological benefits. Nostalgia consists of reliving memories (typically through mental imagery) and entails *mental transportation*: mentally time traveling to an event to re-experience it as if one were there (Evans et al., 2020). Mental transportation, along with other forms of imagery-based memory processes, has been associated with positive social outcomes (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Evans et al., 2020). In other words, mental transportation is "an imaginal process in which individuals mentally leave their current physical space and transfer themselves into a narrative" (Evans et al., 2020, p. 85; Green & Brock, 2000).

Similar to Appel & Richter (2010), Moore & Green (2021), and Slater & Rouner (2002), van Laer et al. (2014, p. 799) refer to individuals feeling empathy when they become narratively transported: it implies that "story receivers try to understand the experience of a story character, that is, to know and feel the world in the same way." In fact, due to the mental imagery, "story receivers generate vivid images of the story plot, such that they feel as though they are experiencing the events themselves" (van Laer et al., 2014, p. 799).

2.3 Emotions

Emotions touch on our internal state of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Kuruoğlu and Ger (2014) explored how the affective components of objects generate emotions, which can lead to an *emotional habitus* – a practice that is "shaped by experiences and narratives, in turn disposes its constituents toward certain ways of being, acting, and feeling" (p. 223). Moreover, they displayed how emotions create affective fields, and how they "move individuals and collectivities into shared ways of feeling, thinking, and acting" (2014, p. 210). Kuruoğlu & Ger (2014) explained that transient emotional states, such as "excitement, pleasure, anger, and others – are seen as evoked by consumption experiences" (p. 213), and implied that "emotional object–subject bonds often relate to self-identity, but may also serve interpersonal and communal ends" (p. 214). Furthermore, Harris & Sørensen (2010) along with Kuruoğlu and Ger (2014) explain that material objects produce and are ingrained to *affective fields*, which are tangles of emotionally expressive relationships between objects, things, and places. Practices and processes that shape relationships also attract individuals into the affective fields created by the object (Kuruoğlu & Ger, 2014).

Positive emotions have a prototype – happiness, and as Aristotle said: "everything we do is ultimately aimed at experiencing happiness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 18). The noun *experience* is defined as "the apprehension of an object or emotion through the senses or mind," while the verb *to experience* is defined as "to participate in personally; undergo" (Joy & Sherry, 2003). Experiences involve embodiment of the phenomenological and the cognitive unconscious (Joey & Shery, 2003). In other words, reading comics is an example of an aesthetic experience that can be embodied. Research has demonstrated that individuals feel transient emotions as they are reading. Mental transportation allows readers to immerse themselves into a narrative, in turn,

making them better at feeling what the characters feel, which intensifies the narrative's persuasive appeal (Appel & Richter, 2010; Evans et al., 2020; Mazzocco et al., 2010; Zheng, 2014). Narrative transportation mediates the advantages of feeling nostalgia on "social connectedness, meaning in life, optimism, inspiration, and self-continuity" (Evans et al., 2020, p. 91).

Experiences result in emotions. Flow is the optimal experience: it is achieved when an experience scores high on both challenges and skills, which leads to one's personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow experiences are a magnet for learning; in general, they occur when people do their favorite activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow experiences are in harmony with what individuals feel, wish, and think: they happen when one's consciousness is full of experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Depending on the person, reading any type of book can be an example of a flow experience, since it occurs when someone encounters an established set of goals that needs suitable responses (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow experiences deliver "flashes of intense living," in which the sensation of time becomes twisted: hours appear to fly by in minutes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 31). Similarly, Joy & Sherry (2003) referred to flow experiences as pleasurable somatic states that are "induced by focused attention on an intense activity" (p. 260). The authors (2003) explain that somatic experiences involve both the physical process of thinking, and the body's process of informing the logic of thinking about art. Flow experiences and somatic experiences, along with their effects, can be connected to the concepts relating to narrative transportation and feeling immersed when reading: these types of experiences are right in line with the context of experiencing comic books.

Personal memories affect aesthetic experiences (Joy & Sherry, 2003). The following four types of re-experiences are motivated by different emotions, and inspired part of my findings.

Individuals crave re-experiences for their emotional payoff: they anticipate and desire to feel the emotional peaks and the climax they previously experienced (Russell & Levy, 2012). When the emotional climax is re-experienced, individuals "lose track of time and space" due to the intensity of their mental and physical immersions being at an equilibrium (Russell & Levy, 2012, p. 353). *Volitional reconsumption* represents experiences that are "actively and consciously seeked" to refresh one's memory of a past experience through the recollection and discoveries of new details (Russell & Levy, 2012, p. 341). Both the meaning of the object and the identity of the individual are shaped by volitional re-experiences (Russell & Levy, 2012). This type of re-experiece cause intense emotional and cognitive responses, since its outcomes is novel and different (Russell & Levy, 2012). *Reconstructive reconsumption* is about rediscovering a memory; it happens when individuals desire to either refresh or rebuild their memory of an experienced object (Russell & Levy, 2012). The satisfaction that is felt out of this type of experience "lies in the pleasure of rediscovering and restoring in memory the object that was partially forgotten" (Russell & Levy, 2012, p. 348). *Reflective reconsumption* are experiences "characterized by a focus inward, on the reconsuming self. They are marked by an openness to review previous interpretations and to revisit and reconsider them." (Rusell & Levy, 2012, p. 350). *Ritualistic reconsumption* is an experience that is composed by a sequence of repeated behaviors at episodic and predictable intervals, developed and learned over time, with its outxome being expressive and symbolic (Russell & Levy, 2012). Ritualistic reconsumption may be compulsive (Russell & Levy, 2012). According to researchers Boyer and Liénard (2006), and Rusell & Levy (2012), rituals share characteristics not only with habits (such as with their regularity), but there are also similarities with addictions (such as their repetition, and lack of social approval, for example). Lastly, Rusell & Levy (2012) determined that feeling nostalgia

can cause a yearn for a lost paradise and "may reflect feelings of depression" (p. 347). Wanting to re-experience the past translates into nostalgic reconsumption and is often associated to objects that are "temporally distant but emotionally charged memories" (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003; Russell & Levy, 2012, p. 347).

In sum, comic books influence individuals in various ways, typically by affecting comic book readers' emotions and beliefs. This is due to how our imagination interacts with our emotional system (Ichino, 2019), particularly when we read.

Chapter 3: Method

In this study, I triangulated three qualitative approaches: fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and case studies. I coded the data acquired from fieldnotes and interviews, whether it is archival, visual, or audio, involves naming meaningful segments that each represent a concept (Belk et al., 2012), which will be presented in the following section (e.g., *Findings*).

The coding for all three approaches resulted in a total of 380 codes. Coding refers to decreasing data into eloquent segments, and allocating names for these segments (Belk et al., 2012; Creswell, 2007). The process of abstracting those codes derives from the grounded theory, which represents a combination of coding approaches, namely: open, axial, and selective (Belk et al., 2012; Ho & Limpaecher, 2022). Used at first, *open coding* entails dividing the collected data to label them with codes; this allows to contrast and compare similar observations (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022). The second step involves connecting the data together: *axial coding* consists of observing the data for concepts that would be associated to the central phenomenon being investigated (Belk et al., 2012; Ho & Limpaecher, 2022). I organized the codes into subcategories, which then evolved into categories, which were narrowed down to key categories; the last step is *selective coding* (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022). This third phase involves regrouping all the categories around one core category, which eventually embodies the main ideas of my research (Ho & Limpaecher, 2022).

The research protocol approved by the *Research Ethics Unit* of *Concordia University* prior to data collection is in Appendix C. The following chapter is divided in four sections: the four transmedia comics case studies, the fieldwork, the interviews, and lastly data analysis.

3.1 Context: Four Transmedia Comics

> "Experience, though it seems quite like scientific knowledge and art, is really what produces them." – Aristotle in *Metaphysics* (1960, p. 3)

Today, comic books are at the forefront of pop culture (Sava, 2012). Since their appearance, comics' popularity has boomed; there are some for every generation – comics are for everyone (Scheidt, 2017). They have mutated to transmedia comics, which offer different forms of narrative transportation, depending on the medium.

Transmedia brands surround us throughout our entire lives; it has become inevitable. These brands have become a massive international success due to their vast platforms and mediums, catered to appeal to different audiences. Presenting the history of four transmedia comics, their stories, and their evolution through time gives a great example of how individuals are exposed to mediums inspired by comic books in various ways. While the majority of readers started reading comics after being introduced to them in their youth, some of them were first exposed to television series, movies, and video games from their transmedia brands, which later translated into a passion for their comic books.

My data shows that comic book readers typically refer to transmedia comics when they want to expand the storytelling of the comic, to learn more about their favorite comic book characters, to discover more about the comic's universe, and to compare adaptations and interpretations of other mediums with original comic stories. My findings also determined that they also purchase comics (physical and virtual copies, along with monthly subscriptions to read them online), and other objects relating to comic books, such as figurines, plushies, clothing, and toys. Many comic book readers also collect comics.

Four transmedia brands were selected as case studies: Batman (from DC Comics), Spider-Man (from Marvel), Star Wars, and Pokémon. These four were chosen as they are part of

the brands generating the most revenues internationally: DC, Marvel, Star Wars, and Pokémon. Diversity in the conception of those brands was taken into account: two of them started off as a comic book, while the other was at first a movie, and Pokémon's debut was as a pair of video games. Each of the four brands' evolution and history were studied in terms of their origins, expansions, financial success, and popularity amongst online observations and participants from the interviews.

As stated in a *Forbes* article entitled "Box Office: 'Joker' Becomes The Most Profitable Comic Book Movie Ever.," Batman is one of the most profitable comic book movies, along with the Joker, his archnemesis, which each generated $411M (in U.S. dollars, on a budget of $35M), and $956M (on a budget of $62.5M) respectively (Mendelson, 2019). Created in 2002, *Batman: the 10-Cent Adventure* sold 702,126 copies, making it the fourth best-selling comic book of all time (Lawrence, 2019; Polo 2019). Batman and the Joker also appeared in *Detective Comics #1000* in 2019, making it the ninth best-selling comic book of all time, with over 526K copies sold (Lawrence, 2019; Polo 2019). Batman comics sold more than 10M copies of comic books in 2012 (Mapp, 2014). Batman licensed merchandise sold for over $11B globally (in U.S. dollars) in 2013 alone (Mapp, 2014). According to Cacciatore (2022), Batman comics have sold over 484M copies worldwide, and was recently outsold by the best-selling manga in history, One Piece, with over half a billion copies sold worldwide. According to Xenos (2022), Batman is the fourth highest-grossing movie franchise of all time, with a worldwide box office (non-inflation-adjusted), earning over $6.79B (in U.S. dollars) non-inflation-adjusted (DC Extended Universe scored as 11th, with a worldwide box office of over $5.8B non-inflation-adjusted). *The Dark Knight Trilogy* generated almost $2.5B (in U.S. dollars) (Leonte, 2020; The Numbers, 2005). Today, the Batman franchise is worth over $27.7B (in U.S. dollars) (Guttmann, 2021).

Spider-Man had three comic books remain in the top ten best-selling comic books of all time; *Amazing Spider-Man #583* from 2009 scores in eighth place, selling over 530K copies, and *Amazing Spider-Man #1* from 2014 selling almost 560K copies scoring in sixth place (Lawrence, 2019; Polo 2019). The character also appeared in *Secret Wars #1* in 2015, the seventh best-selling comic book of all time, with over 550K copies sold (Lawrence, 2019; Polo 2019). The fifth best-selling comic book of all time is *Ultimate Spider-Man #1*, which sold more than 631,990 copies (Lawrence, 2019; Polo 2019). According to CBR, one of the comic book blogs studied, the rarest Spider-Man comic books today vary from $26K to $1.45M (in U.S. dollars) (Keller, 2021). The latest Spider-Man video game sold over 3.3M copies in 3 days, and over 20M (in U.S. dollars) as of today (Saed, 2021). Since 2002, the films have generated $6.35B (in U.S. dollars) (Geisinger, 2019). Xenos (2022) divulged Spider-Man as being the fifth highest-grossing movie franchise of all time, with a worldwide box office (non-inflation-adjusted) earning over $8.25B (MCU ranks as #1, earning a worldwide box office of almost $25.67B in U.S. dollars, non-inflation-adjusted). The movie *Venom*, which is also in Spider-Man's universe, generated a $854M on a budget of $90M (in U.S. dollars) (Mendelson, 2019). According to Guttmann (2021), the Spider-Man franchise is worth over $27.9B (in U.S. dollars) today.

Published in 2015, the comic book *Star Wars #1* sold 1,073,000 copies, making it the second best-selling comic book of all time (Polo, 2019), with over 100 different cover variants (Lawrence, 2019). In 2019, Star Wars books sold for over $1.82B (in U.S. dollars), and almost $5B in video games in 2019 (Talaviya, 2019). Back in 2015, after its release, Walt Disney Studios announced that the movie *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens* smashed box office records by being the fastest movie to gross $100M and $200M (in U.S. dollars), among its other recording breaking facts (D'Alessandro, A., & Busch, 2015; Hayes, 2015). Today, it still ranks

as being the third fastest to movie to earn $100M (in U.S. dollars) at the domestic box office: it amassed almost $120M in 24 hours in the North American movie territory, consisting of the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Guam (The Numbers, n.d). According to the same film industry data website, the movie *Star Wars VIII: The Last Jedi* holds fifth place in being the fastest movie to gross $100M (in U.S. dollars) at the domestic box office (The Numbers, n.d.). Back in 1976, the comic book was pre-released prior to the movie, but was truly adapted from the movie's screenplay; the novelization of the first film was published six months before the movie was released (Britt, 2015; Wookieepedia: The Star Wars Wiki. (n.d.-a)). Star Wars is the second highest-grossing movie franchise of all time, with a worldwide box office (non-inflation-adjusted) of $10.31B (in U.S. dollars) (Xenos, 2022). The Star Wars franchise is worth almost $69B (in U.S. dollars) today (Guttmann, 2021).

The manga series *Pokémon Adventures* sold over 150M printed copies worldwide and is the sixth best-selling manga of all time (Fear; 2019; Grunenwald, 2018,). Since 1996, Pokémon licensed merchandise sold for just over $82B (in U.S. dollars), with its video games generating more than $24B, and $1.85B in the movie box office (Adey, 2021). In July 2016, the mobile game *Pokémon Go* was launched and became a global cultural phenomenon: it generated more than $5B (in U.S. dollars) in five years (Adey, 2021; Tiwari, 2021), adding over $7B (in U.S. dollars) to Nintendo's market capitalization (Schaefer, 2016), with over 632M downloads (Chapple, 2021; Tiwari, 2021). Within 24 hours of its release, it became the biggest mobile game of the year with just under 21M daily active users in the United States (Allan, 2016). In 2019, it was ranked as being the most popular in Japan, with 14.81M hours played on a weekly basis (Statista, 2021)! More than 380M copies of Pokémon games were sold worldwide, and over 34.1B trading cards were produced (The Pokémon Company, n.d.), making Pokémon the

highest-grossing video game franchise ever (Hallman, 2021; Lu, 2020; Puckett, 2021). As of August 2021, the Pokémon franchise is worth over $105B (in U.S. dollars) today, making it the world's highest-grossing entertainment media franchise of all time (Guttmann, 2021).

Appendices D1 and E1 present the evolutions of Batman and Spider-Man, respectively, from starting off as being comic books into becoming transmedia brands. Appendices D2 and E2 present the evolutions of Batman and Spider-Man, respectively, from being transmedia brands into becoming franchises. Appendix F1 presents the evolution of Star Wars from being a series of movies into becoming a transmedia brand (it includes Table 7, presenting the releases of Star Wars movies), while Appendix F2 presents Star Wars going from a transmedia brand into a franchise. Lastly, Appendix G1 presents Pokémon's evolution from being a pair of video games into becoming a transmedia brand, while Appendix G2 presents its evolution from a transmedia brand into a franchise.

3.2 Fieldwork

Comic book readers will often consult online comic communities, such as blogs, forums, and websites, to discover new comic book trends, news, storylines, upcoming movies, video games, interviews, along with reading others' opinion on certain comic book issues, series, video games, and movies. Yet they also visit physical locations, such as comic book stores, and attend events like Comic-Con. Therefore, aside from the observations deriving from my fieldwork at Montreal's Comic-Con in July 2022, I conducted an online fieldwork was conducted to analyze comic book forums and comic book consumers' narratives through YouTube videos. An ethnographic fieldwork was conducted through participant and nonparticipant observations, photography, and content analysis of videos. The fieldwork for this study consists of passive

online ethnography, also known as netnography, which is "a direct adaptation of ethnography to the dynamic technological realities of the internet" (Belk et al., 2012, p. 83). Knowing how culture quickly adapts to technologies, a netnography focuses on online communities and online culture, where interactions and culture are fluid, transforming, and transformative (Kozinets, 2010). One of the advantages deriving from an online ethnography is that observed participants acted as they naturally would in their normal real-life setting: their behavior was not impacted nor by a researcher's presence, nor by any recording devices (Belk et al., 2012). Furthermore, netnography provides data rich in content, as it includes a hefty number of diverse consumers and their opinions, and "benefits from highly interactive unelicited data in which consumers converse with one another about topics that matter to them" (Belk et al., 2012, pp. 83-84).

Within the online community, social media platforms and forums both provide colossal quantities of "qualitative, public, conversational, consumption-related WOM (word-of-mouth), and C2C (consumer-to-consumer) interactive data" in social pre-existing settings, where new data is continuously being generated daily and online (Belk et al., 2012, p. 83). In fact, Kozinets (2010) has redefined netnography as:

> a specific set of related data collection and creation, analysis, interpretive, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the Internet, including the myriad of mobile applications. (p. 19)

Social network analysis was incorporated into the netnography to analyze and understand these types of social interactions. It requires the researcher to "focus on the structures and patterns of relationships between and among social actors in a network" (Kozinets, 2010, p. 36). This analytical method employs two units: the social actors, also known as nodes, and the relation between them, also known as ties (Kozinets, 2010). In this context, comic book readers

are social actors, with the ties being comic books; the networks chosen for data collection are ones that represent relational ties connecting these actors. Kozinets (2010) also explains that a social network is composed of a group of individuals who are connected by specific social relationships, a shared hobby, a common interest, or exchanging any type of information. Hence, the design and setting of the fieldwork consist of the following: participant observations, in terms of their interactions, discussions and reviews on different comic blogs and forums, along with YouTube videos of celebrities' comic book shopping experiences.

3.2.1 Site Selection

Gaining a better understanding of comic readers' experiences, personal preferences, and opinions involved analyzing testimonies from interviews and linking their responses to online observations, along with the process of the before, during, and after stages of reading comics through various life stages, while also relating it to theories from the *Literature Review*.

According to *Similarweb*'s 2022 data set, YouTube scores in second position after Google in terms of traffic ranking, with 32.1B monthly visits from desktops and mobiles. Hence, content analysis of videos was conducted with seven YouTube videos because, as Belk et al. (2012) explained, it is the second-most popular search engine in the world offering a natural archive of consumer behavior – we live in an era where videos and Internet are omnipresent. These YouTube videos were taken from the YouTube channel named *Collider Extras*, found in the top suggestions after searching "comic book shopping." I thought it would be interesting to compare how celebrities go comic book shopping, since it uncommon to perceive in social settings and I am not in a position to interview a celebrity for my research. I also thought it would be pertinent to discover how actors who played the roles of comic book characters in movies would choose what comic books to read and how they experienced their professional

experience. Five of the selected videos involved four actors who played roles in movies deriving from comic books (namely, Hellboy, Spider-Man, Shazam, and Watchmen), and a famous professional in the comic book industry, Frank Miller – writer, penciller, drawer, inker, colorist, designer of artist covers, and director of comic books, such as for Batman (DC, 2018). The selection also included celebrities outside of the comic book realm, with two groups of musicians: Linkin Park, a rock band, and The Black Eyed Peas, a musical group with styles varying between hip-hop and pop. Each video was transcribed before being qualitatively analyzed (please refer to Appendix L). The seven videos totaled 1 hour 25 minutes and 34 seconds, which was transcribed through 90 pages.

In contrast to one of the oligopolies within the world of social media platforms, medium to smaller forums were selected to diversify the netnography, each offering unobtrusive data through natural C2C conversations (Belk et al., 2012). Selecting these data sources permitted catching cultural moments and interactive events in consumer culture's subtle historical, social, and spatial dimensions (Belk et al., 2012).

The online fieldwork of comic websites included comic book forums, blogs, comic interviews from transcribed articles, podcasts, and videos. The twelve comic book blogs were selected to retain a diversified amount of monthly visits (Similarweb, 2021), namely: Comicbeat.com (321.4K visits), Dccomics.com (3M visits), Comicbook.com (23.3M visits), Comicsbulletin.com (under 50K visits), Marvel.com (4.5M visits), Animesuperhero.com (314.1K visits), Bleedingcool.com (6.2M visits), Comicsalliance.com (206.8K visits), Comicsverse.com (122.1K visits), Aiptcomics.com (340.7K visits), Cbr.com (56.1M visits), and Spidermancrawlspace.com (under 50K visits). The data was collected for almost a year, specifically between August 2nd, 2021 and May 8th, 2022. The blogs that did not contain clear

forum sections at the time were Comicbook.com, Comicsalliance.com, Dccomics.com, and Marvel.com.

3.2.2 Fieldwork Procedures

In order to collect data that would be relevant for this research, all of my data resources were acquired through a non-random sampling method. Determining and selecting the population under study was the first step in my methodological design, as each sampling technique's goal is to achieve a representative sample (Webb & Wang, 2013). The population in this fieldwork consists of individuals who read comic books. Since I was not able to discover an accurate sampling frame, which is a registered list of all incidences in the population under study allowing random selection, I opted for convenience sampling, a widespread practice in the first studies on online text (Bar-Ilan, 2005; Scheaffer et al., 2012; Webb & Wang, 2013). I decided to create my own sampling frame by combining 12 comic book forums, that were selected to retain a diversified number of monthly visits, determined by Similarweb (2021). When it comes to choosing which blog to read on every comic book forum, I opted for a cluster sample, which is a probability sample containing sampling units, where each is a collection, or cluster of elements (Scheaffer et al., 2012; Webb & Wang, 2013). More specifically, I sampled "the longest strings of conversation on fan blogs—a sting composed of an original post and all sub-sequent commentary" (Webb, Chang et al., 2012; Webb & Wang, 2013, p. 102). According to Webb and Wang (2013), cluster sampling is favored when the phenomenon under study meets two conditions: it cannot be easily sampled any other way, and it can only be observed in clusters, such as with blog interactions encompassing clusters of posts, with blog topics and messages appearing as attached to one another.

Similarly, I also employed purposeful sampling to balance out my sample as being representative as much as purposeful. As Webb & Wang (2013) explained, choosing to conduct an in-depth analysis of incidences that instill the sample with diversity, existing in the studied population, improves the concerns of representativeness raised with a non-probability sample. Accordingly, I gathered my secondary data from different sources, believing that various sites attract different types of comic book readers. The purposeful sampling varied from selecting: *i)* samples accounting for the rate of messages created and/or the number of views, *ii)* samples in response to user initiatives, for example when examining blog posts and conversational threads relating to topics presenting comic book readers' opinions and thoughts on certain comics, movies, and video games (while ignoring conversational threads that failed to discuss that), and *iii)* exemplar sampling, permitting me to pick information-rich Internet text to aid as case studies, such as with Spidermancrawlspace.com, which I analyzed and examined in depth to explain how comic book readers created and belonged in a sense to an online comic book community through the expression of their experiences on the blog, since its posts and comments provided clear examples of the notions in my research (Webb & Wang, 2013).

I qualitatively analyzed a total of twelve comic book blogs, which included five podcasts, five transcribed interviews with comic book professionals, and 13 forums with posts totaling well over 36 pages. I also overlooked the social media pages of the blogs and went read numerous articles posted on these twelve blogs. Consequently, to find blogs, comic interviews that were either recorded as videos, podcasts, or that were transcribed articles, I used search features on the comic book forums, allowing both random sampling and purposeful sampling through key words sample (Webb & Wang, 2013). During my observations, I noticed that all twelve comic book forums typically had anonymous users, since individuals could create their

own usernames and divulge their location, factual or imaginative, such as with one individual from Spidermancrawlspace, who wrote that their location is “Paradise”.

To conclude, sampling across time was an additional method I used for collecting my secondary and primary data; a three-stage sampling was designed between the periods of summer 2021, fall 2021 and winter 2022. Secondary data, acquired from the fieldwork, was helpful to relate the primary data derived from interviews and enrich the data analysis.

3.3 Interviews

3.3.1 Recruitment and Sampling

Potential participants were identified through public calls for participation and snowball sampling. Those who wished to be interviewed contacted me directly through either email, telephone, or a social media post, such as on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or Snapchat. To be more precise, the calls for participation were publicly posted on my social media platforms and were also sent to my contacts, who forwarded them to their friends and/or acquaintances. Potential participants contacted me after receiving the recruitment material by either acquiring the calls for participation through their personal friends and/or acquaintances or by viewing public social media posts. The content published in a social media post was practically identical to the open call for participation that was posted at a comic book store located in Montreal, Canada (please refer to Appendix H). None of the recruited participants came from viewing a printed call for participation in a comic bookstore located in Montreal.

Potential participants self-identified either as comic book readers, comic book fans, and comic book collectors. The inclusion criteria consisted of comic book consumers who agree to participate in an interview, while the sole exclusion criteria entailed minors. None of them were

in any kind of conflict-of-interest relationship with the researcher. The individuals who reached out all identified as individuals who enjoy reading comic books, as expressed in the open calls to participation.

Before being interviewed, the chosen participants electronically signed a written consent form ensuring that their identity will remain confidential (please refer to Appendix I).

3.3.2 Designing and Conducting Interviews

The interviews were designed to answer the two research **questions** RQ1: How do individuals experience reading comics? RQ2: How do comic books engage their readers? Overall, the interviews were critical to better understanding the interviewees' passion for comics and their impact on them. They explored comic book readers' personal preferences, emotions, routines, their passion for comics and its evolution through time, their favorite characters and comics, their reading and purchase habits, and their perceptions of transmedia brands. In the following paragraphs, the interview guide and participants' background are described.

3.3.3 Creating Bilingual Interview Guides

In-depth interviews were semi-structured. The interview questions were mostly open-ended questions on the participants' previous and current personal experiences, opinions, and preferences regarding comic books.

Four interview guides were created: the two initial English versions, one for comic book readers (please refer to Appendix J1), and another for professionals working in the comic book industry (please refer to Appendix K1), were both translated into French (please refer to Appendices J2; K2) by myself, as I am perfectly bilingual and can relate back and forth the subtle differences in language and terminology used. Each interview guide was divided into three parts: *i)* the interviewer introducing themselves and asking about the interviewee's background,

ii) conceptual questions, and *iii)* topical questions before concluding the interview. Ten interviews were conducted in English (with two of the ten participants being professionals working in the comic book industry), and five were conducted in French (with one of the five participants being a professional working in the comic book industry). All five French interviews were translated into English by myself.

One question required participants to project themselves into an imaginative scenario (choosing a comic that would be expanded through another medium), while a few others required them to employ storytelling techniques (for example, when discussing how they were first introduced to comics), and others required them to critically think (such as when explaining their taste or behavior). This method was chosen since storytelling distinguishes feelings, emotions, and sensations from a raw service experience; it requires a storyteller and a story receiver, and at least one of them to experiment narrative transportation through communication (Van Laer et al., 2014).

3.3.4 The Participants' Background

The participants' background, in terms of their age, location, occupation(s), and hobbies at the time of the interviews, are presented in Appendix M (please see Table 11). The participants' age varied between 18 and 49 years old. Their favorite comic books and favorite comic book character are also presented in Table 11. Participants joined Zoom from across the globe. Toward the end of the interviews, all participants were also asked the genre of comics that they enjoy among an offered list (please refer to Appendices J and K). All 15 interviews totaled 22 hours 8 minutes, with the shortest one being 30 minutes, and the longest one being 3 hours and 10 minutes. This range resulted in the average interview being approximately 1 hour and 29

minutes. The median for interviews was 1 hour and 25 minutes. The 15 transcribed interviews totaled an amount of 710 pages, which were qualitatively analyzed.

A third of the participants had professional experience with comic books, through different forms (please refer to Table 11 in Appendix M). Five the 15 individuals work as professionals in the comic book industry. In fact, P3 won a prestigious comic book award. P7 studied comic books, and her school project won a scholarship. P9 also won several awards for her comic book. P13 created a chemistry class that incorporated comic book concepts at a college. Similarly, P14 did the same for a humanities class at the same college.

3.3.5 Interview Procedures

All 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted online through a video-call on the Zoom platform with video recording, on a one-on-one basis. An audio recording was also employed as a backup plan, in case of a power outage (which did happen during a snowstorm) or other technical difficulties. Each interview was then transcribed to text by the software HappyScribe. I reviewed the transcriptions, as they did contain a few mistakes. The participants were not financially compensated but were offered to receive an emailed version of this thesis' aggregate findings. All of them accepted. The selected participants identified themselves as comic readers, comic lovers, comic enthusiasts, comic collectors, and/or professionals working in the comic industry.

3.4 Data Analysis of Comic-Con

A second part of my primary data aside from the interviews is my presence at Montreal's Comic-Con. Initially launched in 2009, Montreal hosts two Comic-Con events: a free smaller version is offered over a weekend (this year it was in January), and the larger event takes places

in July for three days (Comiccon de Montréal, 2022). With this Canadian city being French-speaking and proudly bilingual (Jedwab, 2021), the event is also known as *Le Comiccon de Montréal* (Comiccon de Montréal, 2022). It identifies as "a pop-culture fan convention that showcases artists and products entertainment genres […] in all its forms, and of course, […] comic books" (Comiccon de Montréal, 2022).

I attended the last day of the event's first-time re-opening since the beginning of the pandemic. The building the event occurred at, called *Le Palais des Congrès*, was submerged with people: from the outside where cosplayers were roaming around, to the inside, where many were enthusiastically waiting for their admissions in extensive line-ups. Over 62,000 individuals showed up: Montreal's Comic-Con broke its attendance record (Carpenter, 2022). As suggestion on their website, Montreal's Comic-Con encourages its fans "to come dressed as their favorite pop culture characters, be they from movies, TV, video games or comics," especially since there is a big costuming competition with international judges and about 2,500 cheering fans (Comiccon de Montréal, 2022). Many individuals would side next to cosplayers for pictures, and at times, little crowds would form around them. People of all ages attended the event.

The main floor of the event is home to an incredible number of kiosks, most selling comics, manga, objects to cosplay, and figurines. A gaming zone is dedicated for lovers of video games, and screenings of short and featured films are also provided. Montreal's Comic-Con offers a unique shopping experience to comic book readers. There were also separate rooms where conferences, panel discussions, and workshops revolving around comics were hosted. Lastly, fans get to meet several creators and celebrities, including artists and authors of comic books, and actors, as part of Comic-Con's guests. Many of them offered autographs, sketches, photos, and sessions to answer fans' questions. It was a geek's true paradise!

Chapter 4: Findings

You may ask yourself why do individuals even read comics in the first place? The answer is simple: it provides a hedonic benefit. Positive emotions are generated. Ultimately, individuals read comic books to feel better! Reading comic books can make you happy before you even start, narratively transported during your escape from reality, and passionate after absorbing the narrative.

The first section of my findings introduces the stages of reading a comic book, as illustrated by Figure 1. The second section answers RQ1 by presenting 1) how the unique storytelling method in comics transports comic book readers; 2) how comics allow identification through limitlessness, diversity, and inclusivity; 3) how self-discovery is experienced through comics; and 4) how comic book readers indulge in positive emotions. The third section answers RQ2 question by demonstrating how comic book are experienced in different life stages, as represented by Figure 2, and how comic books can be therapeutically re-experienced.

4.1 The Stages of Reading a Comic

My findings (from the netnography and the interviews) show that reading a comic book can be divided into three stages: before reading it, during the reading, and after reading it. Figure 1 explains the three stages of reading a comic book, which is repeated for every read comic. Enjoyment can be felt at all stages, and it fuels interest in comics and their mediums.

Figure 1

The Stages of Reading Comic Books

Note. Enjoyment fuels interest. In the after stage, readers usually are experiencing a form of affect.

Before individuals take the time to read a comic book, they have to choose it depending on the mood they want to be in, and the emotions they want to feel. The comic is read online (either bought or rented) or in a physical copy (either given, lent, or purchased). Reading comics is a ritual that usually becomes part of comic book readers' routine. They anticipate that they will have fun doing it, that they will enjoy themselves, and that it will make them feel happy, since they are taking a moment for themselves to relax and be entertained. P11 said: "I cannot wait to read." The first stages imply feeling happy before even starting to read comics. Several interviewees mentioned how they incorporated reading comics as part of their nighttime routine, which was also seen in the netnography, such as when David purchases a comic book that he is looking forward to reading because it will be for his bedtime reading (see Appendix L).

During the ritual, individuals escape their reality as they become narratively transported. Reading a comic book feels easy to them, as much as it is fun and thrilling. They feel love, whether it is for the characters, their universes, the storylines, the authors, or the artists. When explaining why he was reading less comics during his teenagerhood and then went fully back

into it after graduating from his PhD, P13 declared: “But I was always in love with them.” Comic book readers always appreciate how comics help them to surpass their own imagination. This stage involves being narratively transported during their escape from reality. An example is when P2 explains why he prefers comic books over regular novels: “I really like being brought into that world as intended.” Experiencing the specific visuals that the author and artist envisioned for the comic’s storyline allows him to become part of the world “as you read it.” In other words, comic book readers escape their surroundings during the experience. P1 also referred to the importance of the imagery “it’s a really cool way to escape.”

After they finished reading a comic, feelings of love and nostalgia can come forward, as they breathe out of a universe full of characters, stories, and new discoveries to submerge back into their physical environment – also known as reality. As seen in the netnography, a member of the musical group, The Black Eyed Peas (see Appendix L), recollected feeling nostalgia when he came across a toy of a comic book character “it takes you back to an era: childhood.” It even inspired him to create music. Individuals who read comics conclude that they love this medium. The ones who own a collection typically feel honored and proud; they think it is cool to have and be able to share with others. For example, P2 expressed how owning a comic book collection makes him feel: “Definitely good. It makes me happy to have a collection of something that I can take pride in. I’m like “Oh yeah! This is what I like to read! These are my comic books!” P2 reiterated that building a comic book collection that makes you happy is a great feeling. In the after stage, readers usually are experiencing a form of affect, as they feel passionate about comic books after they absorbed its visual narrative.

When the narrative transportation was strong in the *During* stage, individuals tend to consult transmedia comics after reading a comic to learn about specific characters through

different mediums. They usually do so out of curiosity but will also instruct themselves about them through other comics, such as when P11 said: "I really to inquire myself about comics." Some comic book readers will even do research on the background of certain characters, because learning about their origins and storylines matters. For example, P11 described how some comic book characters reach out to their readers; "it's very easy to attach ourselves to them." Many will partake into online communities to learn about others' thoughts, interpretations, and opinions, such as seen in the netnography. For example, in one of the comic book forums, Anime Superhero, an individual with significance contribution to the website (18,556 posted messages), by the username "Stu," created a post to discuss with others his passion for a villain in the Batman universe. After describing himself as "Marvel Animation Age Webmaster" (Stu, 2021), he warns other users to not post any spoilers to readers about the second part of a comic book called *Batman: The Long Halloween*. He expresses his love for a Batman television series and for DC. He started off a forum post by saying:

> To celebrate the release of *Batman: The Long Halloween, Part Two* I thought it might be fun to take a look back over Two-Face's prior animated (and some none animated) appearances. Please be considerate of posting spoilers for The Long Halloween, Part Two for those of us who still prefer our home media to be physical, spoiler tags should be used. As always, the images in this post appear courtesy of The World's Finest – The #1 DC Animation Resource […] One of Batman's oldest, coolest and most fascinating villains, Two-Face made his debut way back in 1942. […] Longtime readers of this forum will no doubt be aware of my fondness for *Batman: The Animated Series*. (Stu, 2021)

The bond between comic book readers and comic book characters can easily grow into a passionate relationship, where individuals enthusiastically discuss how they discovered them, along with why they love them. Stu (2021) later posted on the comic book forum that his favorite female villain is from a comic book character: "as someone who had no knowledge of Poison Ivy

before the episode [of *Batman: The Animated Series*] aired, she soon became perhaps my favourite female villain."

To summarize, before individuals read a comic book, they feel and anticipate positive emotions. According to the interviews, comic book readers feel that this experience will be fun and that they will enjoy it. They also feel happy and relaxed because they are taking a moment for themselves. It is a form of entertainment for them. While reading a comic book, individuals escape their reality, as this experience is thrilling to them. Comic book readers are having fun, especially since it is an easy read. After reading a comic, they often refer to the concept of "love" when talking about characters, storylines, and comic book universes. When discussing comic book genres, P6 mentioned: "I love biographies in comic books, like when I read one about Molière." Another example rose when P14 explained how different it feels to re-experience, now as an adult, the first Marvel comic book he read as a child: "When I go back to this one, it's one of my first imprints, if you will, on my love of comic books." *Love* is a key code in this study, since all interviewees employed the term, which was also recurrent in the netnography.

4.2 How do Individuals Experience Reading Comics?

Individuals are exposed to multiple touchpoints when reading a comic book and through their different related medias, exposing them to books, video games, movies, along with other derivative products (such as clothing, toys, etc.). This leads them to build relationships with comic book characters, enrolling them in experiencing emotions through different means and mediums, that can be labelled as transmedia brands deriving from comic books' storytelling. In this section, I will summarize three key findings explaining how individuals experience emotions when reading comic books through 1) being narratively transported, 2) identifying with

characters, the limitlessness, and the diversity portrayed in the stories, 3) discovering themselves through comic book characters, comic narratives, and nostalgia[1].

Individuals embrace visual narratives when reading comic books, which allow them to become narratively transported and feel like they have escaped their surroundings, diving into the world and story they are reading about. Ultimately, this also leads to gains of positive emotions. The visual narratives lead comic book readers to become narratively transported and to feel the sensation of escapism. Narrative transportation stimulates readers' imagination, which allows them to feel a temporal thickness: their escapism makes them experience the visual narrative like a fluid motion. Strong narrative transportation can leave a powerful impact on individuals, often leading to re-experiences.

Comics also affect individuals through the diversity, inclusivity, and limitlessness associated to their visual storylines. In other words, comic books can become canon, and their readers can relate to not only the narratives, but also the characters. When a bond is established between the object and the subject due to diversity or inclusivity, comic books can become part of the readers' identity. This can result in various ways, such as comic book readers expanding a comic book collection, deciding to cosplay, attending Comic-Con, associating with comic book communities, entering the world of re-selling comics, and even strengthening relationships with other individuals who show interest in comics, such as with sharing with friends and family. Relating to one's identity is also connected to the memories individuals hold towards the comics they read. The memories linked to comics are highlighted by emotions (typically positive), the eras in which the comics were released or read in, the feeling of nostalgia (a positive emotion),

[1] Nostalgia is fully explored in the section answering the second research question: *How do Comics Engage Their Readers?* (see page 47).

and connecting with other individuals. The memories held towards comics can also lead to individuals deciding to re-experience reading comic, which can also be caused by the strong positive emotions attached to it.

Lastly, individuals experience positive emotions when reading comic books, especially when comics help them discover themselves through their wide variety of characters and narratives. The absorbed visual narratives from comics transform into memories; individuals who were introduced to comics during childhood and teenagerhood often feel nostalgic about them, but in a positive way. Many comic book readers become passionate enough to build collections of not only comics themselves, but their associated objects (e.g. movies, figurines, video games, clothes, etc). Some will even purchase comics for the sole purpose of reselling them, as many issues kept in great condition gain value over time (see Appendix L).

4.2.1 How Comics' Unique Storytelling Method Transport Readers

Comic books have a unique way of presenting a storyline: it combines a written narrative with visual art forms. This unique storytelling method differentiates comics from other mediums. All participants affirmed that reading a comic is easier and more entertaining than reading a book, regardless of the storyline's length, due to the artwork accompanying the text.

4.2.2 Reading a Visual Narrative. Comic books differentiate from other mediums due to their visual narratives, often exceeding our reality. The bond that is formed between the reader and the comic book itself also evolves as the individuals age. Comics can provide a platform for authors and artists to express delicate subject matters through stories, such as historical and social movements, along with politics for example. The variety of stories can be drawn in

countless possibilities to be expressed to the readers. When asked what she loves about comics, P1 said:

> I think comic books are really interesting, because they really are – the word that comes into my head is *apolitical*; […] it's a really, really interesting medium to tell stories, because it's a very, very visual thing. And it's kind of beholden to anything you can put on paper! Versus movies; it's very political in the sense that you're trying to market the movie to appeal to as many people as possible. You're obviously limited into what is physically able to on this Earth. And even with CGI, you can only do so much! But you also have kind of the politics of like, well, this character played by this actor was really, really popular in this movie. So, then we're going to carry them through to other movies, even though they kind of don't make sense. Like the one that really comes to mind, also as an accident then, is obviously Wolverine in the X-Men movies. He's not in a lot of these kind of storylines in the comics, but Hugh Jackman is such a big draw: they have to kind of shove them into all of the nine movies that he's doing right now. So that's what I really like about about comic books. And again, it just looks like a revolving door of different people. And you can have them do or be whatever you want, and that's why I think the comics get really, really kind of out there, especially under Jack Kirby and stuff like you can go to space and you can have these alien creatures, and you can have like Galactus eating entire planets, because it's whatever you can come up with in your mind. Yeah. And for so long, comics were so underground and so niche that it didn't matter if it was like weird or silly, because it's like you weren't trying to appeal to the masses for all of these different storylines, right?

The visual representation of the storyline in comics was also something that P2 appreciated. He also indirectly inferred to another benefit from making comics: it requires a relatively low budget compared to other mediums, such a television series, movies, and video games. This also allows the production team to be more creative, since anything can be possible with images and text on paper. P2 expressed one of the reasons he loves comics:

> Well probably how extra they can be: they can blow things completely out of proportion, and it doesn't cost a dime because it's just pictures. So, it's not like watching a movie or a TV show with a low budget that kind of takes it out, and then you're like "that could have been cooler, but it wasn't." But I just love that comic books can be exactly what they want to be. They don't have to lower anything because it's really what they want it to be.

When individuals read comics, they experience a narrative – which is typically one that they enjoy. Absorbing narratives has multiple benefits, as stories can be educational, help one

improve their reading, and provide lessons to learn from (for further details, consult the *Future Research Recommendations* section in the *Discussion)*. They are entertaining, as the storylines and images stimulate the readers' imagination. The visual representations are often perceived as artwork, which is one of the key elements making comic books part of pop culture today. Hence, comics are a unique storytelling method due to their visual narratives.

4.2.3 Artistically Immersing in the Narrative. Comic books hold a unique storytelling method: they combine visuals with text. With their nature consisting of being visual narratives, comics have become an art form of their own kind, which has taken a great place in pop culture today. There is a tremendous connection between comics' art and comic book readers' emotions.

The art in comic books has been an element that all participants appreciate, enjoy, and either like or love. P1 responded with how important the art style is to her in comics, and how she appreciates its variation and evolution throughout history. Like many participants, she enjoys looking in retrospection when thinking about the way that the author and artist depict their storyline: whether it is about reading an elaborated character's backstory, or depicting a fast-paced fight scene, what goes inside each and every single panel is crucial for comic book readers to feel the fluidity of a comic flawlessly. She enjoys all of it:

> Art style is a big one. I think it's really, really interesting to see, especially like in the post Twins' era. […] In comic books, I really do like the art style, and I really like how they use tropes and conventions to kind of make you feel things that they want you to feel or like they set up just because they like through obviously graphics and through dialog, they can make you slow down and really sit down and read like a huge backstory. Or if they want something quick, it's like they'll cut like shots of the face and then like cut the dialog into a different little panel. So, I think it's a really cool way of like having pacing in a way that, like, you don't really get in like especially a more like texture.

P2 discussed his appreciation for the artwork in comics as being one of his favorite forms. Similar to P1, he also enjoys pausing his reading to appreciate the art within comics, along with the way that motions are depicted through panels, which facilitates readability:

> Well, I really like, definitely, the art style; it is probably my favorite. I really love looking at the art style and taking a minute to really appreciate what it looks like because some people will just kind of skim through it and they'll read the words, they'll look at the picture for a split second, but I really take the time, almost like a regular book! And I really just look at the pictures. I take my time to, like, appreciate everything because a lot of people will just kind of look through it. […] I like that they're pretty quick to read for the most part, you know, not too many words to read. So, you just kind of find the time to read one and you put that time aside and it doesn't take you like a year to read it.

Likewise, P3 elaborated in further details through contrasting comparisons the difference between a comic that has visually displeasing art with a good narrative, versus a comic that has visually pleasing art with a bad narrative. He brings the approach that art is subjective, and that individuals who read comics can interpret the same story with the same visuals differently. He also compared comics to paintings, just like P11 did. The collaboration between comic book authors and artists must result in co-creation in order for it to set the narrative's fluidity and the proper mood for their readers. P3 later concretely mentions it when contrasting art styles with writing styles; both flow together into a successful merge when they represent each other:

> Definitely the art. I think I always have this debate: can a comic be great with bad art but good writing, or bad writing and good art? I think it depends. I think that there are some examples where I'll read something (and there has definitely been certain artists who I'm not a huge fan of and sometimes reading their comics), and the comics I would read are either by a favorite Raider, Mine or something and or just a title that I like or something I was interested in. And sometimes I felt like it took me out of this illusion because I just couldn't get past their art. I would just see things in a specific way. And what's so interesting about art is because it is so subjective. […]And also, the writing; I think there has to be this nice handshake between the writing and the art to really kind of set the story in the mood. If you have someone who is a writer who writes very dark, but the artist kind of can't capture that dark feeling. And maybe it falls on the colorist who wasn't able to, maybe it's not even the writer or the artist. Maybe it's a colorist or the anchor. And I've seen that happen, too, where sometimes that has taken me out of reading. And I think, you know, there really is just the subjective-ness of what's inside of the art. And then the right like, every little thing, even though the craftsman, the crafting of the panels and the word bubbles. […] And that's another thing: I like to see people who go and think outside the box. They try new things. The characters kind of come out of the panels or out of the comic. They just feel bigger than they are. But that's definitely really something that I love about it.

P3 analyzes in detail the comics that he reads, including the layout of panels on the pages he comes across. He also appreciates originality and creativity in comics, as it helps him become more absorbed when reading them.

The concept artistic immersion in comics also came up when P12 discussed what he enjoys in comics, along with his recognition of the creativity, dedication, and extensive load of work that come from the authors and artists. He loves being able to support them. He also believes that making a storyline flow, just as easily as in movies and books, can be more challenging for comic book authors and artists:

> What I enjoy the most in it is coherence. I think it's pretty cool how they can follow a story from one book to the other and not stumble movies, f**king stumble through this book, and imagine having to flip through pages and make sure everything continues! I think it's a lot of work, and I think these guys deserve a lot more credit than the people on camera. And I think there's a lot of dedication, because I draw, and when I see these guys' drawings, I'm like "dude, it's a lot of drawing, map drawing!" They just know how to pick the right imagery to depict something. It could be multiple things. We want imagery, and it's so cool! […] You have a close up of Wolverine's face looking like that, and it's enough. You're like "yeah, he looks shocked." I think that's what I enjoy the most about it. It's just the creativity, the level of creativity and dedication that it takes. And I really like to see people. I'm a huge fan of people who work hard. I love that when I see people can put time into stuff. I enjoy being a part of the work. I enjoy reading them.

P12 offered a great example at how comic book readers appreciate coherency and continuity in storylines and characters.

The appreciation of artwork, stories, and lessons in comic books also resurfaced with P13, who added that *efficiency* in comic book universes is presented not only through concise storytelling in panels, but it also results in easier and quicker readings:

> There are so many things in the artwork as well that I appreciate in the transition, the way that they're presenting a universe efficiently. So, a good writer doesn't need many pages of many panels, and a good illustrator as well to convey what they need to convey. And that's also the difference, I think. So, I shouldn't say that because that could be misinterpreted, but in a graphic novel that is independent for the seal or for the sake of saying its creativity, it's actually just a first draft. And that's the difference where because

> you're part of a publisher, I admire them. The ones that are doing their job correctly to nail down and actually know, redraw and redo and synthesize and synthesize in where what you thought would take five pages. No, one page is enough if you do it properly! And that's why you don't need to have 120 pages to explain the same thing.

Another concrete example depicting how crucial the visuals are for comic book readers is when P11 discussed what she loves about comics, while also adding that she loves the different adaptations that authors and artists can have when retaking a story. She enjoys the various aesthetic in comics (even when it is a retake of an older comic book), along with the evolution of the artistic depiction of comics throughout history. She also compared comics to paintings (like P3 did), but she specified that the art form of comics is not as appreciated as renowned artists or painters, despite their influence throughout history and in our modern day, including shaping pop culture today:

> I love a lot the aesthetic, the drawings, and I love how, sometimes, depending on who's drawing, the aesthetic changes, even if it's the same story. The evolution also changes because of the era it was drew in. […] For example, Superman's head seemed to be shaped more like a square in the 70s, 80s and 90s, but more recently, he looks more normal, despite having a square body, but he seems closer to looking like a real human than a drawing. I always loved art in general. Personally, comic books are a form of art that is very accessible, but that isn't as appreciate as a large painting from a renowned master or anything of the sort.

Aside from experiencing great absorbing narratives when individuals read comics, they gain the opportunity of appreciating a true art form – it is way more than being just about the drawings, the ways that panels are laid out, the artists' style, or splash pages.

Visual narratives allow individuals to become narratively transported, which in turns makes them feel like they are escaping their environment while diving into the comic.

4.2.4 Feeling Transient Emotions. Being narratively transported enables comic book readers to feel transient emotions, which can be either positive and/or negative, depending on the storyline and genre of the comic. These emotions are temporarily felt while reading.

Comics are enjoyable, as the drawings facilitate reading and ease the development of connections and feelings between the reader and the comic book character. P5 enjoys reading mangas, because:

> It's fun. I think it's easier to connect with the characters and understand the plot. I've always had trouble when I read books with words; I always had trouble actually connecting to the characters, and being like "OK, faster!" Mangas make it a lot easier to be like "oh, I'm rooting for you!" or "oh, I love them!" or something like that.

Yet comic book readers can also relate to comic characters to uplift how they feel, such as when P2 said:

> Let's say I'm going through a tough time, and I want someone to relate to, like Spider-Man, The Flash or just these fictional heroes [like] Scott Pilgrim […]. [Even if they're fictional] They're just the kind of people that bring up your spirits, because they can do these incredible things.

Individuals feel transient emotions while they are narratively transported, but turning points in comic books' storylines are also what makes them want to read more. Comic book readers can get emotionally invested with comics, due to their visual narratives, characters, and cliff-hangers to name a few. P15 said he enjoys everything in comic books:

> Yeah, everything. Like I said, character build up, the way it's drawn, the emotions that you can feel from throughout the page just by looking at it. The build-up is always a build up! There has never been a comic book where there's no build up! You think you hit the plateau, keep on going! I'm like "Oh, bro! Are you ever going to make my heart rate go down? Please!"

When individuals read comics, they gain transient emotions. Throughout all 15 interviews, there were recurring terms such as "love" and "enjoy." Moreover, stimulating the readers' imagination is beneficial, as it results in positive emotions, such as feelings of love, as P12 mentioned (see quotes in the section on *Limitlessness*). Comic book readers also appreciate coherency and consistency, particularly between mediums. Typical transient emotions that were felt were joy, enjoyment, happiness, thrills, excitement, enthusiasm. For example, P8 expressed

why he feels excited when reading comics: "I enjoyed talking about [comics] and also having the excitement of learning about distant places and different times." Respectively, comic book readers who are narratively transported can feel what living as comic book characters is like, which is thrilling due to their fictional, mystical, and fantastical traits in worlds of endless possibilities. P13 (a professional in the industry) expressed why he enjoys the transient emotions derived from reading comics: "Because they allow me to step into worlds that are not real. They allow me to not embody, but to live through the eyes of characters or live adventures I will never live. So, they're my parallel universe." Sadness and disappointment were expressed when discussing transmedia brands that were not coherent and consistent with the original stories found in comic books. For example, P8 explained that he sometimes does not finish watching movie adaptations from comics because of the limits of the particular medium, and how the storyline can be shortened "it feels like cutting down the original material and turning it into something else. […] Some of them were quite boring. […] I lacked the same level of engagement with comic books." Similarly, P13 discussed how he feels disappointed when one of his favorite comic book characters' adaptations are not coherent and consistent with the core of the character itself:

> Wonder Woman has had some great writers, and she's also had some really terrible writers. And it's tough! So, Wonder Woman is the character I can love, but it's also the easiest to disappoint me if they write her in a certain way, which some people do.

From a different context than the audience's, professionals in the comic book industry, such as writers and illustrators, try to infuse transportable storylines. Strong narratives depicted through artistic drawings are key factors that can lead to narrative transportation, as depicted in an interview with Tom DeFalco, a comic book author discussing his work on Spider-Man, on one of the comic book blogs: ComicsVerse (Escobosa, 2019). When

discussing his work with the artist Ron Frenz for the comic book series The Amazing Spider-Man, he explains: “Ron and I are very theme-oriented, and we are constantly using symbolism and visuals to push our themes.” The interviewer noticed that Peter Parker [Spider-Man]’s depression, his mental state, and his emotions were intense in the comic books; he was concerned that Tom was affected by the intensity of the narrative as he was writing it. Tom clarifies: “I try to work at a fever pitch intensity and translate that to my characters. It’s my job to make those emotions rub off on you.” He also explained that “costuming is very important,” as it brings characters to life. Transient emotions are felt, not only while individuals are reading comic books, but also by the authors and illustrators of that comic. When the professionals are emotionally invested, it usually rubs off their audience.

4.2.5 Being Narratively Transported. Reading a narrative that is complimented by visuals is a key element that leads comic book readers to being transported; transportation occurs once they are absorbed in a narrative. Narrative transportation gushes once individuals feel as if they leave the physical realm to enter the one within the comic book. This phenomenon occurs due to a *temporal thickness* (Russel & Levy, 2012), which translates as a suspension of time. In other words, comic book readers can dive into the comic’s universe, as the written narrative and visuals trigger their imagination to escape their surroundings. To illustrate, P9 mentioned how she stops focusing on the narratives along with the art once she becomes fully absorbed in the story; she cannot help herself from flipping through pages while reading a comic book when she becomes narratively transported.

Comic book readers experience the storyline as an uninterruptable flow that allows them to dive into their imagination and escape their surroundings. This is another factor that

contributes to narrative transportation, which can feel relaxing to some comic book readers, as depicted by P3:

> I can turn my brain off and really just get kept activated by the characters, no matter how fantastical, no matter how serious or funny or whatever the intent of the comic is. It's a nice way of transporting me almost to just another. Unless my imagination runs wild. When I'm reading a comic, I don't see it necessarily as panels: I see it as one long, fluid motion. And I think a lot of that, too, is attributed to my reading a manga because there's so many, especially ones that have fighting or something from, like a shown in Jump or one of those, like a Dragon Ball Z or a NATO. You can read one of those issues so quickly because there's a lot of fighting and you're writing, right? There's maybe like a small amount, but it's like a very small amount. And then the way that the panels are so small, and you can almost feel like every blow or this and your eyes are going left and right. And I love it because to me, it's almost like I'm watching an anime in motion, but it's a little slower, but in my head, I'm seeing it click! And it's the same thing with comics. I'm seeing it as one. It's like an episode of a TV show, right? It just transports me somewhere else, and I love that about it. It's different from a book, because sometimes I have a harder time reading a book (not because I don't have the imagination, or I don't appreciate it). But I think there's almost sometimes something that can be easy about a comic. Where with the book, you have to really imagine it. […] There are just so many different components that go into what makes a comic sick. But at the same time, you can also shut your brain off and read it and still have it still feel like you're getting something amazing out of it, like a five-minute break. When I used to commute to work, I would love – I would basically probably read maybe two or three comics on the subway. It was wonderful. I would have my headphones on, and I would just sit with my iPad and I would just read, and I loved it. That was on my favorite parts of I commute because it took me out of being stuck in a stupid subway car or on a bus or on a train or whatever it might have been. And it fills the gap to create such an imaginative, fun environment.

Narrative transportation allows comics to feel fluid and full of motions. As P3 explained, comic book readers feel transported into the visual narratives that they are experiencing. Put simply, individuals who read comics experience the sensation of escaping our world once they become narratively transported. During an interview, P1 explained the meaning of reading comic books to her. She brought up escapism and the importance of visual narratives, along with the impact that splash pages can have on her emotions:

> It's a really easy way for an escape, for sure. I don't read comics nearly as much as I used to; I don't read, period, as much as I used to. But I think in the sense that it's an escape to read any book! I think comic books are fun because it's really easy to follow. You have a

> lot of cool [visuals], you have a lot of very striking images that I find can be a little bit more impactful. And they stay with you, you know, like you think of, let's say… I'm trying to think of a really iconic splash page, like things that look like very, very visually striking really. It's like, oh, the phantom snap in the infinity, but then call her a war or whatever. I have both with the splash pages. Splash pages, they're also like [there so] you have to snap! I don't think it was a whole splash page, but it's like things that you remember, like "Oh! Sh*t happened!" And I feel like it's a really cool way to punctuate an important story. It's more so than it is in a real novel that doesn't really have any imagery. So, I find it's a really cool way to escape.

As seen in this quote, P1 recognized the uniqueness of comics' storytelling method: visuals are striking and can be so impactful that they give her something to remember. Becoming narratively transported can also be interpreted as the "escaping" sensation that many participants brought up, as part of the many emotions that they feel when reading comics.

In fact, comic book readers always have characters that they prefer for a multitude of reasons such as for their values, their perception of the world, and their morals. P14 (a professional in the industry) also referred to *escapism* in good narratives several times, such as when he discussed experiencing what authors wanted the comic book readers to feel:

> So, the joys you get out of a good narrative, different people's stories about the human condition. That's the thing, right? It's about the human condition. I'm less into the superpowers art of it and more like the reason why I like Wonder Woman is not her superpowers: she is the idea that "I'm an ambassador for peace. I will do everything I can to make peace. Having said that, if you insist on war, you're going to lose." […] I love when a proper writer captures that. It's great! It's values. Or the really good ones demonstrate a conflict between two legit sets of values. There was one where it's a bit silly, but the heroes are pondering to do this ethically problematic thing, and they were leaning towards "we're not going to do it." And then Wolverine was just like 'well, principals don't mean anything if you're not around to live them because they're like, we're looking at the end of the world. Our principals will be dead along with us.' And so, it's like, okay, so I don't necessarily agree with them, but it's a legit argument. It's a legit different point of view. It's different. The classics like Watchmen do stuff like that. Dark Knight Returns do stuff like that. Partly just because of my job; it picks my interest that way.

Additionally, P12 (a tattoo artist) mentioned how individuals who have a visual memory tend to be able to become more narratively transported (see quotes in the section on *Limitlessness*). This can be more pronounced when an individuals' professional line coincides with art.

When individuals read comics, they gain the experience of being narratively transported, which is something that all comic book readers enjoy. They are able to relax and let their imagination take over to experience extraordinary stories. When narrative transportation and temporal thickness both kick in, the sensation of escapism can become so strong that it can leave comic book readers with strong powerful and pleasant memories, often translating into the desire of wanting to re-experience those comics.

4.3 Comics Allow Identification through Limitlessness, Diversity, and Inclusivity

This section is about how comic book readers relate to limitlessness, diversity and inclusivity portrayed in comic books and their transmedia brands. Popular examples are with the Star Trek franchise, which "has always been known to push the boundaries of what is acceptable on mainstream television, and one of the ways it has done this is with explorations of LGBTQ+ themes" (Hanson, 2022). Another example of how comics have always been a haven for queer people who find safety in the inclusiveness portrayed are with Marvel's X-Men comics, first originating in 1963: "they've been fighting evil in a world that hates and fears them — and along the way they've been a big old beacon of queerness. The X-Men are a powerful metaphor for gayness, without their creators really even realizing why" (Rizzo-Smith, 2020).

4.3.1 Limitlessness

The pleasant and engaging artwork, the captivating narrative, the emotional states felt as the storyline develops, the recognition of artists' and authors' personal touch, are all elements

that lead to narrative transportation and escapism into universes that are *fun* and *imaginative*. In fact, individuals are fond of how comic books can surpass their own imagination; the creativity in comics has no limits. When discussing his love for comic books, P12, a tattoo artist, raised the notion of comic books' evolution throughout history, and how it fluctuates to adapt to society's progression. He also brought up how this concept leads to increased creativity, which encourages innovation. He referred to it as a quality that comic books possess *limitlessness*. This was also inferred by other participants when they compared comics to other mediums; comic books always held the possibility of creating infinite stories in infinite contexts, often surpassing one's imagination.

> Oh, boy! I like the evolution of it: the evolutionary stage of comics. Like, how it just keeps changing. And I find they do attempt to adapt to every society; as time has gone on, you have new comics that come out. In Marvel, you have different Earths, like Earth 62, and different multiverses. That way, it gives them more ability to expand on the creation. I think that's pretty cool! I think I like that one of the most: the limitlessness. It's limitlessness of creation – I think that's what's super cool about it. And I feel like it can reach (well with the MCU and the DCU out there, less people read comics), but I was going to say I find comics a lot, like, they could reach out to more people. But the MCU and DCU make it hard because people would just sit back and watch the two-hour movie of nothingness, and it's enough for them… But the comics reveal so much more, and it's like a book, but you also have imagery, so you're able to visualize things in your head. I think I'm speaking from an artist standpoint because I have a very visual memory, so I can read something and imagine it.

Correspondingly, P12 expressed how the limitlessness in comics offer him transient emotions that give him what feels like a brain massage:

> The brain massage: I think that's what I enjoy the most. It's like a little time away from reality because you own this book and anything's possible in this book; people can die and come back to life kind of thing. People can die, and you find out they're in a different universe, and this is the other fitting. It's a different universe in their life here. It's just that limitless!

Similarly, the infinite possibilities of visual narratives that comics offer, along with their requirement of smaller production budgets, and educational dimension, were all also brought up

by P9, a professional in the comic book industry, who won an award for a graphic novel. She said that what she loves about comics is:

> The world of the impossible in everything. On one hand, when I was younger, I was aligning myself more to make films. I studied in cinema, but to think that you can't make a film by yourself, and it requires a lot of money. On the other hand, comic books are in the world of impossibilities, as much as in terms of the quantity of topics, from the types of exploitation, to the mediums, to visual representations, to the tone, to the artistic representations, from where you make a comic to how you do it – you don't need a budget, all populations can do it, you don't need to draw well, you don't even need to have something to narrate because the narration can be done as you go through the comic! I think you just need to be human! I find that in terms of potential and usage, whether it's for the self, in dialogue, for others, for education, I find that a comic is […] like a storyboard. Someone that read my graphic novel told me that it connects to my inner movie; it's only missing sound as a dimension!

Comics being the way they are, mediums offering visual narratives appealing to great masses, result in the opportunity of reaching large audiences (typically seen in transmedia brands).

On a similar note, P13 expressed how he loves the limitless in terms of the stories and special effects that comics provide:

> Comic books could give you something else in the way that the special effects could be necessary and very good, because they're drawn and there's a lot of information that happens between panels. That's the specificity of comics, and that's also great!

In comics, drawings allow stories to be told in an infinite amount of possibilities. Furthermore, comic books' limitlessness also rubs off on their readers, who in turn feel empowered. For example, P12 illuminated how reading comics can relate to his real-life situations: "it's an outlet to feel powerful and limitless, versus reality where you have constraints, and you live within a structure. In comic books, you live within other structures. They're a little bit more beyond our physical realm." He explained that each of the comic book characters he reads about represents a side of him and his personality – it is provided by the limitlessness of comic books.

4.3.2 Bonding with Visible and Invisible Minorities

The limitlessness of comics offers a wide variety of stories, several leading visible and invisible minorities to bond with them. Diversity and inclusivity are a recurring theme that is important to individuals, but it is also to comics, as the ones who pertain it helps them distinguish themselves from other comics. As seen in the following example, P1 discusses what her favorite comic book publishers mean to her, which happened to be Marvel and DC:

> I think they're really interesting. I think they're obviously very marketable because people really enjoy them, but I think they do so many different stories, and they really try to tell so many different kinds of stories. I think Marvel, especially, is really interesting because they are one big company that's like an entertainment conglomerate, so they're trying, you can tell if the Marvel Comics are not completely independent of the Marvel Entertainment. I don't know how to explain it other than like Marvel Studios is also trying to make an impact on, like everyone and including everyone into their stories, the same way that the comics have been doing for so long. And I think it's really interesting to see the variety of the stories being told. So, there's obviously the classic stories of like some kid who is a big Marvel fan, and he has a hearing aid, and the Marvel creators made a comic book for him because […] he had some sort of hearing aid and that was like a superpower. Or they made Iron Heart, which was the offshoot of Iron Man, or like a Muslim American girl[2]. And then they had America Chavez [3] take up the mantle of Marvel. It's like they're taking very, very iconic mantles and passing them down to different people.

In this extract, P1 stresses how variety is important in terms of storylines, since it allows minorities to bond with comics that are inclusive. She also explains how diversity and inclusivity come into play, and how they expand transmedia brands' and comics' audiences. She appreciates the diversity and inclusivity that comic book stories can bring to the table. She referred to how Marvel created a new character, Blue Ear, to partner with the Avenger Hawkeye (a character from the 80s that wears hearing aids), after Marvel Comics' editor heard about a four-year-old

[2] She is referring to the comic book character Kamala Khan.
[3] Her parents are lesbian icons in Marvel Comics (Cadorniga, 2022).

who wanted to stop wearing his hearing aid because superheroes do not wear them (CNN, 2012). The editor said: "If there's one thing we know, it's what Stan Lee and Spiderman taught us: with great power there must also come great responsibility. Which means if we have the ability, we must do whatever we can to help others" (CNN, 2012). He added that if the child wears his hearing aids again "he'll be an honorary Avenger" (CNN, 2012).

A great example of how comic books in pop culture can expand to international communities and bring people together is through the embracement of diversity and inclusivity. Another example is through the evolution of a comic book turning into a global transmedia brand, particularly with her favorite comic book publishers, Marvel Comics. She described how she loves Marvel Comics and appreciates watching movies inspired from the comics. She identifies as someone who prefers content from Marvel, despite not shying away from other comics: "I really am a Marvel kind of person." P1 further explains her point of view with the example of *Black Panther* comics and how they evolved into a transmedia comic:

> I think they are really interesting to see those kinds of diverse stories eventually permeate larger culture, and I think it's a very cool way of having exclusivity. I think Marvel kind of is really leaning into that, well, especially since Black Panther… Because Black Panther was so popular in the comics for so long, and for I don't know for how many years – eight years at that point! People are like "all of the characters are White dudes, and that's not really exciting." And then T'Challa showed up in Civil War, and everyone's like "That guy is so cool! They're so cool!" And then they made a movie and then like "Oh, wow! That made so much more money than they thought!" So, obviously, the cynical part is they're going to follow the money, but I think it also shows that there's an appetite for different stories. I think Black Panther was a really interesting move, because it was really a cultural point of like we want to see different stories, so we want to see the into the Spider 'verse with Miles Morales, we want to see Shang-Chi, eventually we want to see Captain Marvel, and then eventually Black Widow's finally in there! And then I think they're also re-strategizing a little bit by doing the like Marvel shows on Disney Plus, because those lines are I think they're giving themselves like this weird flexibility of being like whatever the hell they want to do, that doesn't necessarily impact the larger MCU.

She explains the importance of variety in narratives to appeal to all audiences, and how diversity and inclusivity can bring people and communities together. It is also a great way to widespread knowledge and culture internationally. P1 finds that Marvel's attempts to be inclusive is very interesting, and that comics as a sole medium is also very interesting. Moreover, she mentions how a comic book character from Marvel's *Black Panther* comics was introduced into a movie about another one of their comic book characters, *Captain America,* in the 2016 movie *Civil War*. Incorporating characters from visible minorities led to the movie becoming a huge success, and led Marvel to producing movies about *Black Panther*, its characters and universe, in 2018 (Chitwood, 2021), and 2022 (Sandwell & Geisinger, 2022). According to Chitwood (2021), the first Black Panther movie that Marvel released: "became the first Marvel movie to win an Oscar and the first superhero movie nominated for Best Picture, it was also one of the most successful, best, and most thematically ambitious movies Marvel Studios had ever released."

Individuals who read comic books and dive into their transmedia comics want to absorb a variety of stories possessing different cultural points of view. P1 also pursued with another example of Marvel expanding storytelling that includes visible minorities, such as with the introduction of Miles Morales (a comic book characters in the Spider-Man universe) in his own animated movie in 2018, which will be receiving a sequel in 2023 (Power, 2022). Marvel also added Sam Wilson as the first Black Captain American in the MCU. Shang-Chi was also another comic book character that she mentioned; the character originally appeared in a 1973 special edition Marvel comic (Marston, 2021), and he finally received his own Marvel movie in 2021 (Anderton, 2021), almost 50 years later. P1 also elucidated on invisible minorities, by giving the example of Carol Denvers, a comic book character that received her own movie, *Captain*

Marvel, making it one of MCU's first LGBTQ+ headliners – while the comic book character might not be canonically gay, the movie suggests otherwise (Bonfiglio, 2022).

Creators of comic books always leave their own touch of personalization, even when working on characters of other comic book creators. Comic book communities can sometimes embrace them so deeply that this initial personal twist from the original stories becomes *canon*. This phenomenon is something that P11 loves in comic books. She gave an example of how comics can raise awareness for the LGBTQ+ community, and how comics can include diversity and inclusivity. Moreover, she discussed Tim Drake, a comic book character that lives in the Batman universe from DC Comics:

> What's fun is that every author and artist have their own vision of a character, and when they write or draw that character, they always add their own touch that, depending on if the fans accept that notion or not, it can become canon or not. For example, my favorite character, Tim Drake, recently became bisexual through a new author. And I went "Yes!" because love is love: no matter if it's with a guy or girl, love is beautiful. I'm happy that there's a lot more of that [LGBTQ+] community that's being represented, and that my favorite character can represent that. It would've been even more fun if it was one of the bigger, more famous characters (like Batman, for example, it would've been a hotter move), but it's a character in the comic book universe that's already being appreciated and that's really cool.

These findings confirm how comics can become part of one's identity, due to their limitlessness in terms of storylines, their diversity and inclusivity. The evolution of comic book characters through various storylines and art styles can also transcend into appealing to different communities, which can help comic book readers further develop their own sense of identity, as seen in the following section.

4.4 Self-Discovery Through Comics

Comics help with identity. Aside from explaining his emotions that were generated by comics (see Appendix P4), P4 explained that reading comic books helps him to learn things, which can sometimes turn into elements that he learns about himself:

> Comic books, like every literary work, deserve to be told that people can learn things from them, because even if the drawings look childish, and that you tell yourself: "this is juvenile, or that it is about fighting, etc., but there is something in the background." If you do your research, there's truly a lot you can learn from comics. It's the same thing with mangas and other types of books – you can learn an enormous amount of things about life in general, but also about yourself. Sometimes, you can reflect with the character you're reading about. You can even tell yourself: "Wow this character really does resemble me! Didn't they take me for casting by any chance?" But, really, it's learning things that I find interesting in comics.

Additionally, comic books can relate not only to their readers' identity, but also to their creators'. This was observed in ComicsVerse, one of the comic book blogs in the netnography. As a comic book author and reader himself, Tom experiences narrative transportation; the interviewer asked him who was the Marvel character that he was able to relate to the most, and Tom answered: "Peter Parker. I'm always second-guessing myself and my work" (Escobosa, 2019). Hence, narrative transportation can also be felt by the authors and artists of comic books, which is usually intensified when they relate their identity with the character they are working on.

Many individuals tend to favor comic book characters that they relate to. Comic readers can connect with the characters they read about, such as when P2 said that he can relate to his favorite comic book character (see section *Indulging in Positive Emotions*). Similarly, P5 explained how reading mangas and watching *anime* (an animation of a manga) have both become a part of who she is today. Reading comics helped her with her identity: "For me, it's just like a lifestyle now. I've been reading and watching [mangas and anime] for years. So now,

it's just a part of who I am, essentially." Ritualistic consumption can become engraved enough to taint one's perception of self in a positive way through self-discovery.

Furthermore, P4 made an interesting contrast when stating that collecting comic books are similar to collecting oneself, which also relates to one's identity:

> Collecting comics is a bit like collecting yourself. That's a beautiful sentence. What I mean by collecting yourself is that every comic book can reflect yourself. If you don't think about its profitability threshold, every comic book can be reflected upon oneself.

He explains that individuals who read comic books can learn about themselves by finding an element within that comic that reflects on a part of them. He gave examples of those elements being values, morals, and principles, in narratives relating to movements, such as social contexts fighting against female injustice or supporting body positivity, for example. These ethical movements can be reflected within comic books, and sometimes, it can also reflect a part of their readers, since self-discovery helps individuals collect themselves, while also learning about themselves.

Evidently, comics detain the characteristic of being relatable, which fortifies the bond between the object and the reader, along with easing the connection to one's identity. To illustrate with an example, P8 explains that he enjoys reading comic books due to how their contents can be relatable, and how they make him learn about himself: "I enjoy reading their contents. So, that's one of the reasons why I enjoy reading comic books: because they are relatable. It tells things about myself; it helps me to make sense of my life experiences in a way." In other words, he learns about himself through his personal preferences, which help him to become more rational and pragmatic, as he learns to perceive and understand his life from a different angle. This displays another unique way of how comics can be educational (see section on *Future Research Recommendations*).

Similarly, when P2 described his transient emotions when he was narratively transported (see section *Feeling Transient Emotions*), he also explained that even if he reads or re-read comics about fictional characters, the charisma, personality, uniqueness, and nature of these comic book personas are all able to uplift him, along with improving the state of his emotions and feelings. These elements make certain comic book characters more relatable than others, which eases the association between one's feeling of identity.

4.4.1 Building Memories. Memories of comics are highlighted by the emotions attached to them; they allow individuals to connect with comic books. Strong narratives can translate into preferences and can leave an impact (such as a strong long-lasting memory) on comic book readers. Bonds between individuals and their comic books can become so strong that they keep specific memories that they are able to remember throughout decades. The majority of participants throughout this study recalled how they were first introduced to the world of comic books in their youth, and how their bond with comics grew throughout different life stages (further discussed in the section *Experiencing Comics in Different Life Stages*). An example is seen with P13, who still remembers the titles of comic books coming out when he was 11 years old. He also recalls how the quality of the paper in older comics was better and felt differently than the ones being printed today: "they had the paper quality that was much better. The inking process was crazy. And they had all these great artists that you were kind of following that all transferred to create – that, would create their own company's image."

P13 also recalls how he would purchase comic books with his brother when he was younger, so they could share issues between themselves – a tradition that remained in their adulthood, along with sharing with a friend of his. During their youth, they would save as much money as possible to purchase comics. He considers both of them lucky. in the sense that they

were able to witness comic books' transitions through time, such as with the company named Image Comics. P13 remembers first being introduced to comic books when he was approximately five years old, specifically when the sons of his babysitter showed him and his brother comics. At the time, he felt that he loved the colors so intensively, along with the power within comics; comic books made him feel empowered and struck his imagination. He also remembered how one of the comics captivated his attention when he first began reading it, due to its panels all being shaped as rectangles, yet they were different because they were drawn without borders. The importance of proper storytelling was also brought up when P13 stated that the nature of his brother's professional line of work (a television writer), along with his (teaching and incorporating comics in his course outline) values stories. Moreover, short or self-contained stories are prioritized since they have an ending, instead of just a beginning. Lastly, P13 expressed how society's view on comics also impacts his family by remembering his youth:

> My parents were okay with comics, but they have seen bad examples of people just looking at comics and not growing out of it; they were a bit worried. We didn't have a great example; the people that were reading comics were not paying too much attention to school, and were not doing anything much, or that's all they could talk about. My parents wanted us to have culture. And it's only after my PhD that my brother and I have met two different groups of people, different guys that were adults, that were cultivated, that were knowledgeable, that had accomplished themselves – we're still reading comic books! We were happy to see that, as adults, we could admit it, and that it's okay to consume and enjoy them. It was great to see that!

P13 gave a great example of how comics can bring people closer together, changing others' views and perceptions of comics, and how the sense of belonging to a comic book community is pleasant and empowering.

4.4.2 Object to Subject Bonds Becoming Collections. Bonds between comic book readers and the items themselves can grow so strongly that it can perpetually change their consumption behaviors. Similar to P4, P15 also expressed his habit of collecting comic books.

He recalled how he was first introduced to the world of comic books with his father, when he was either three or four years old. He remembered being in a toy store with him (the one where he got his first Atari video game console), when he came across of box of comic books: the first issue he picked up was the one where Spiderman was up against Venom on the cover page. Several years later and ever since his father gave him a box full of Spiderman comic books, his passion for collecting comics was initiated. His comic book collection initiated his consumption behavior to grow into a passion for collecting other items in general: "From that box, I started collecting; collecting figurines, collecting toys, collecting baseball cards and more! So, I kept on piling them up. These are all my gems."

Comic book collections become precious to their owners; they invested in expanding their valuable prizes. This can lead to strengthening relationships, since individuals of all ages can bond over reading comics. Sharing comic books is a great way of building and developing relationships (see section *Building Memories*). In fact, P15 treasures his comic book collection so much, that he wants it to be transcended through future generations of his family: for him, it means being able to pass on his comic book collection to his children. He also favors certain printed formats (particularly hard covers) since they are easier to grab and look through. Comparably, P13 enjoys sharing his passion and his love for comics with his children. He adapts the narratives and genres according to their preferences, but above all "it's important for me that the stories are great and they're complex and mature."

On a similar note, P7 adores being able to buy comic books, as expanding her collection allows her to share them with her friends:

> I adore sharing my books with my friends. I adore sharing books. I adore talking with someone and going "You would like this book. I will lend it to you." I really really love that, and when these are my books, I can do that! There's a sentimental side to it.

Owning a comic book collection allows her to not only expand her knowledge of comics, but also to be able to recommend them to her friends, as she knows which type of narrative and art styles they would enjoy.

For many comic book collectors, the era comics were published in matters. For example, P2 discussed how his comic book collection has different types of comics, varying from different eras. He especially enjoys owning vintage ones: "I love knowing that they're vintage. It's nice additions to a collection. It's very cool!" He explained that he takes pride in his comic book collection, and that it makes him happy.

Another great example to illustrate the emotional attachment and the value associated between individuals and their comic book collections is the following. P6 claims that she has always been a collector "without even realizing I was a collector." She remembers that she delved in that behavior as early as when she was 11 years old with items from the Lion King:

> I freaked out! […] When one of my friends showed me her collection, I discovered that I was a collector, and it was in my soul! […] After starting my Lion King collection, I fell into Batman, Superman, and Star Wars. […] I started collecting Sailor Moon in '94 […]

She explains that whenever transmedia brands would expand, her collection would too, such as when Sailor Moon[4] cards appeared on the market, and later on, a revamped television series was published in 2014. Her collection of Sailor Moon items did not stop at just assembling objects: it evolved into cosplaying: P6 cosplayed twice as different characters (from Sailor Moon) when she attended Comic Con. She also collects many figurines, including ones of Terminator and

[4] Sailor Moon is a manga that was first published in 1991, and a year later, had its own television series (Vrchoticky, 2020). Ever since the 90s, Sailor Moon exploded into a worldwide success: it is now considered by many to be an iconic feminist franchise (Vrchoticky, 2020). The manga's narrative was inspired by the author's personal experiences and struggles as a Japanese student in middle school (Vrchoticky, 2020). It is also known for its surprising amount of LGBTQ+ representations for its time, along with themes of empathy and friendship, leaving a lasting impression on audiences in Japan and abroad (Reuben, 2022).

Predator. She also claims that her collection, spread out across her entire home, has a specific section destined for superheroes.

In contrast, just like P6 when it came to owning a comic book collection, P7 was surprised to find that she possesses a collectors' trait. She explained what her collection of comics means to her, and how it generates positive emotions:

> It's funny because I am really not materialistic in life – honestly, I'll wear the same clothes until they fall apart. I didn't think I would have a collector's side, but comic books, as they are, are objects that make me trip! A book, in general, is an object that is fascinating, and that fascinates me […], which is exactly why I was telling you I don't trip when it comes to reading them online, but I love having a physical comic book. The majority of my reading will be done at libraries, in a world out of COVID, but I love having the books that I really loved, because they make me feel proud, they make me encourage these artists. I'm proud that someone looks at my bookshelf and asks: "How did she read all that?"

Clearly, her collection of comic books makes her feel positive. She also mentioned how her bookshelf full of comics is part of her home décor. She even placed them strategically: the local ones from the province of Quebec, Canada, are in the middle of her bookshelf, the ones she is less fond of are on the lower shelves, and the comic books that she is truly proud to own are in the first two top shelves. She claims that whenever she remembers them being there, they make her smile, and make her feel good. She is happy to own her comic book collection.

Briefly, reading and sharing comics brings people together, strengthens bonds between individuals and the object, along with strengthening the relationships between the individuals themselves. Sometimes, bonds between individuals and comics grow strongly due to the consumption choices that were propagated (e.g., transmedia comics). This can result into individuals expanding their consumption to develop their bond between themselves and the comics by creating and investing in a comic book collection.

4.4.3 Purchasing for Collecting and Reselling. Comic book readers who own a comic collection are proud and honored; they think it is cool, and love being able to share their knowledge (and comics at times) with others. However, not all comic book owners intend to keep them. For example, P4 discussed how he chooses comic books depending on his intent with the object itself. His approach changes depending on whether he wants to buy the comic to resell it, or to expand his collection:

> Everything depends on my goal. If my goal is to sell, I won't be going to big comic book stores. I'll go where it's really interesting for individuals to sell comic books: in large flea markets. […] Sometimes people don't have the time to look up comics on the Internet, to find their prices, and it's there that you can do business very quickly. Something that is very, very, very, very popular with sellers of comics are garage sales, which are usually like little comic kiosks, it's not huge, but sometimes that's where you can find one that is very rare and resell expensively. I've seen comics sell for a million dollars. However, if I'm getting comic for my own pleasure, I'll look for it a little bit everywhere. If the comic I read touched me, and it costs $300 or $350, I'll look on Marketplace. If I see a more regular comic, that's worth $60-70, you can notice that prices sometimes increase.

He explained that the ideal strategy when it comes to purchasing comics for reselling purposes is to buy them for cheaper in smaller-scaled stores that tend to have lower selling prices, and in locations that are closer to your location in terms of proximity. He then unfolds how his experience differs when purchasing comic books for leisure and his own pleasure, which he demonstrates with a concrete example of Catwoman comics, from DC:

> For Catwoman, it's really the conveyed message. That's something that's going to push me to keep a comic. I'll even hesitate to sell it when I can see the price it can be resold for. […] Authors are very interesting to me. When you're not passionate about comics, you kind of don't really care much about them, but once you really start entering the world of comics, it becomes important to see who the authors are. It's the authors that will determine the comic's price, it's the authors that will provide you a graphic lens that interests you, and it's also the authors that will give you the story that interests you.

He made a noteworthy contrast when comparing the notoriety and popularity of authors. During the interview, P4 explained that authors of famous comic book characters, such as Batman, can be compared to the financial stock markets: well-known authors can produce better storylines

than lower rated authors, yet the opposite can still happen with underdog writers creating better narratives than famous ones, resulting in improved and raised reputations among the comic book communities. This affects the price comics can be resold at.

4.5 Indulging in Positive Emotions

To summarize answering the first research question, the typical emotions that were generated from reading comic books are: happiness, enthusiasm, fun, love, nostalgia, relaxation, along with other transient emotional states (see section *Feeling Transient Emotions*). Reading comics can affect individuals in various ways through their different life stages (further explored in *Experiencing Comics in Different Life*), but the experience itself results in positive emotions due to individuals 1) being narratively transported, 2) how they identify with characters, the limitlessness, and the diversity portrayed in the stories, 3) self-discovery through comic characters, comic narratives, and nostalgia. An example that demonstrates how comic readers indulge in positive emotions was when P2 recollected with enthusiasm how he was first introduced to the world of comic books. He remembered that after watching television series about comic book characters, he became eager to read comics about them:

> It really started because when I was a kid, I watched those DC TV shows and stuff, as a kid growing up. So, then, any time we'd go to a bookstore or any type of store that had comic books, I'd be like "Oh my God! There's Batman, Superman on a comic book! I got to see this!" Comic books immediately grabbed my attention. I fell in love with them! As soon as I first discovered comic books, I loved them, and I'd always grab one or two every time I see something that's great!

Aside from falling in love with comic books, P2 also expressed how he feels when he is reading them: "it definitely brings me joy. It's a good, positive thing in my life when I can just sit down and read one." Furthermore, P2 discussed and explained who his three current favorite comic book characters are, notably, Scott Pilgrim, The Flash (from DC Comics), and Spider-Man (from

Marvel Comics): “I really love their stories, the background of their story, and how much time went into building their characters throughout the years. I just really love those characters.” However, when comparing his top three favorite comic book characters, he noticed that they raise different emotions: “Scott Pilgrim [his favorite out of the three], it’s just more on an emotional level.” In other words, his top favorite comic book narratives and characters entail more emotions out of him and connect with him on a deeper emotional level.

Another professional in the industry, P13, similarly expressed enthusiasm, while also referring to feeling happy and relaxed, when he explained the meaning of reading comic books: “Free time, happiness, paradise, well accomplished day, well deserved time alone!”

Comic book readers can feel different emotions from reading comics, according to their genres. Another great example of how individuals experience positive emotions when reading comics is when P3 (a professional in the industry who won a prestigious award) explained why he loves everything about comic books. Like many other participants, he compared comics as being a medium that stands between being a book and a movie, since the fluidity is a middle ground: it requires individuals to read and to flip through pages, like in a book, but the images supporting the written content make it more vivid, like in a movie. He was enthusiastic when expressing his appreciation for diversity in the storylines and drawings, along with how comics can easily depict sensitive matters. He also referred to the experience of reading comics as something relaxing, by mentioning his brain, like P12 did. Additionally, P3 discussed a comic book author that he really appreciates, along with his background and backstory on why he changed the ending of one of his narratives:

> Everything. I love that it’s something that I can like – it’s not like watching a movie, but it’s also like reading a book. There are so many different layers! Another thing that I love about comics is the amount of diversity, where you can read something that’s like an X-Men comic, where there are definitely some that are way more serious and deal with

> sensitive subjects. But then there's some that allow you to kind of turn your brain off and just enjoy, some action or whatever. But then there's Neil Gaiman, who's a little like Shakespeare when it comes to writing comics, like when I write Sandman and I always knew because I had read Alan Moore, Warren Ellis, like a lot of the guys who did superheroes, but also did things that were a little weird, like Grant Morrison. I found myself kind of like "I love that there's so much diversity". I love that you can have superheroes on one side, and then you could also have something that's very serious, very out there that makes you basically question reality in every way, shape, and form. Like everything I've read by Grant Morrison has made me think like "are we in a real reality, like what's happening?" I don't know if you've ever read *The Invisibles*, but […]And I love this sense of camaraderie to where if you find people who do appreciate comics, you can really just have such a wonderful friendship. Or like in my case, I didn't have tons of people who I knew who read comics growing up. So, a lot of it was like me internal. I'm not internalizing, but like only I was into it. I couldn't talk to anyone about it. There wasn't really a Facebook yet. There wasn't a Twitter like I couldn't find that group. And even when I was in college, I didn't find one, I found one person who liked comics. And so, I never had this little community. And it wasn't until I met my friend […] where I found such a kindred spirit and then even going to conventions because I went my dad would take me to conventions. I think when I was like 13, I went to my first convention. And really seeing that there are all these people who are also into this was just like really fantastic as well. And like meeting the writers and meeting the artists and just seeing how much bigger this world can be! You know, that's what I love about it. I love the energy. I love the excitement. There's a lot of things about it that I love. I could honestly talk about this for an eternity – I could go on!

Comics are also fun to share with others that are part of the comic book community; comic book forums, social media, and comic book conventions are a great outlet to do so. As I also noticed it throughout my netnography, P3 reflected on his feelings towards the comic book community; individuals who enjoy reading comic books can bond over their love and passion for comics, which ultimately brings people closer together and creates relationships. While P3 grew up in an era where the Internet was inaccessible for the public in the way that it is today, it was a lot more challenging for him to find individuals with whom he could share his love for comic books with: it left him without a sense of community. Today, comic blogs, forums, and social media all offer outlets that are easily accessible for the population to bond over comic books by discussing them, along with comic book characters, and comparing the original narratives in comics to other

mediums with transmedia comics. P3 also brought up how he felt about attending comic book conventions, which is something that several other participants also mentioned.

In a similar view, P6 discussed how she enjoys transmedia comics. P6 elucidated that what she loves about comic books is her attachment to the characters. She elaborated about comic book characters, and how she feels when they are represented identically in a movie that was adapted from a comic. These all result into positive emotions (which was also established by other interviewees, and was observed in my netnography). She also expressed the importance of values and how she links it with love:

> I attach myself a lot to the characters, to the story, and the values to retain. […] It's as if I was talking about love. Me, I love a lot loyalty, honesty; it's something I love very much. [….] When I'm interested in a character, […] I'll go read about him/her through comic books. And when I'm watching a movie or a television series, I adore knowing if it was the same thing.

Another recurring element that results in positive emotions is related to the infinite possibilities that visual narratives in comics offer to individuals, in terms of drawings and stories. A professional in the industry who did her undergraduate degree in comic books, P7, expanded on what she loves about comic books, the authors, the artists, the drawings, along with comic book readers. Similar to what other participants said, she made the comparison of comic books being a medium between novels and movies, and she also discussed her appreciation for the creativity and accessibility that comic books offer to the public:

> I find that they are one of the mediums that are truly the richest in terms of possessing the highest infinity of possibilities, since can speak to us in two types of ways: through words and through images. […] It comes closer to movies, because novels only describe images, except that [comics] have no limits in terms of budget and special effects; you can really go anywhere [with comics]. […] I find that [comic books] are accessible for everyone. […] When telling a story, comics are more creative […] and I'll have stories that, in my head, function better. […] I love comic books because as much as there are comics, that the drawings are traditionally beautiful, as much as I will adore them. Equally because I adore the styles.

All participants felt a form of love towards comics, such as with P4, who mentioned how comic books' art style stands out, along with the importance of social and historical movements being represented by authors and artists, and the impact it leaves on their readers:

> A lot of things! There are already the drawings (enormously, drawings). I'm not a drawer, I'm neither passionate about drawings, but I love the style. I love it a lot. It's a style that's a little bit like cartoons. It's a little bit attractive. I also love the conveyed messages. I even read a comic about Black Lives Matter! It's very recent, yet there's already a published comic about it! It's really something that's important, the conveyed message, but also the characters. Sometimes it's a good thing to see a character convey a message, but sometimes you like seeing charismatic characters, like Batman. You'll say: "Wow! It's a character that's so incredible because he's always in the dark, but you never see a glimpse of light in his soul. You're always under the impression that he's hidden, he's tarnished like ashes. And you have his enemy, the Joker, and you see how he's a polar opposite: he's eccentric, there's a lot of colors going everywhere. These are two opposites, and it's beautiful to see how they were ingenious about it. You see, not everyone would've done that! But authors too! There are authors that we prefer for a lot of things: sometimes it can be for their drawings, sometimes it can be for their narration; there's an enormous amount of things that we love about authors. Something that I find interesting is that an author can totally change the face of a comic. I saw someone who did tome 1. He stopped. Someone else did tome 2, which was very different, not less interesting, because both would mix together marvelously, even if they weren't by the same author!

Many participants, just as P4 did, deliberately made comparisons to contrasts certain elements about comics, whether it is about comics as a medium, the storylines being interpreted differently by authors and producers of other mediums, the artwork being drawn differently by artists, and the evolution of the genres of comics throughout history. In either case, comic books are a statement of their own kind.

The variety of creative storylines and the visual aesthetic of comics, combined with artwork depicting the vivid narratives that vary according to authors and artists, are all key elements that enable individuals to become narratively transported when reading comic books. In the context of this research, reading comic books always resulted in positive emotions, which sometimes led the participants to desire expanding their knowledge of the comic characters they

love, by reading more about them, looking into their transmedia brand, and consuming other mediums. Comic books have become so diverse throughout the past century, that any individual can find a comic book that would be tailored to their liking and preferences. Reading a comic book requires one to take a moment for themselves to become absorbed into a different universe, whether it contains fictional or historical elements. The characteristic of how comics can be educational, whether it is to help one improve their reading, teach the reader about historical events and social movements, and the message or life lesson conveyed, are all positively perceived by individuals (further debriefed in *Future Research Recommendations*). Many of the 15 participants in this research own a (printed) comic book collection of their own, while others either borrow several comics from the library or friends, and a minority of them own a monthly subscription to read online comics (such as DC Comics and Marvel Comics), or a monthly subscription to watch anime and television series inspired by comics (such as Crunchyroll and Disney Plus). It confirms how prevalent transmedia comics have become today.

Comics own a unique storytelling method: visual narratives make them a powerful outlet for communication, which is always important, especially in marketing. Hence, the power of comics comes from being a unique storytelling method that brings positive emotions to its readers: individuals experience indulging in positive emotions out of reading comics. Throughout the 15 interviews, there were many recurring terms such as “fun,” “love,” “happy,” and “cool.” More specifically, positive emotions can also be interpreted as the combination of [the codes] *fun* and *love*, which fuel passion. By the end of reading a comic, comic book readers feel emotions that are so positive that they will eventually read another comic. They sometimes engage in re-reading the same comic, either for therapeutic or nostalgic experiences (further discussed below).

4.6 How do Comics Engage Their Readers Continuously?

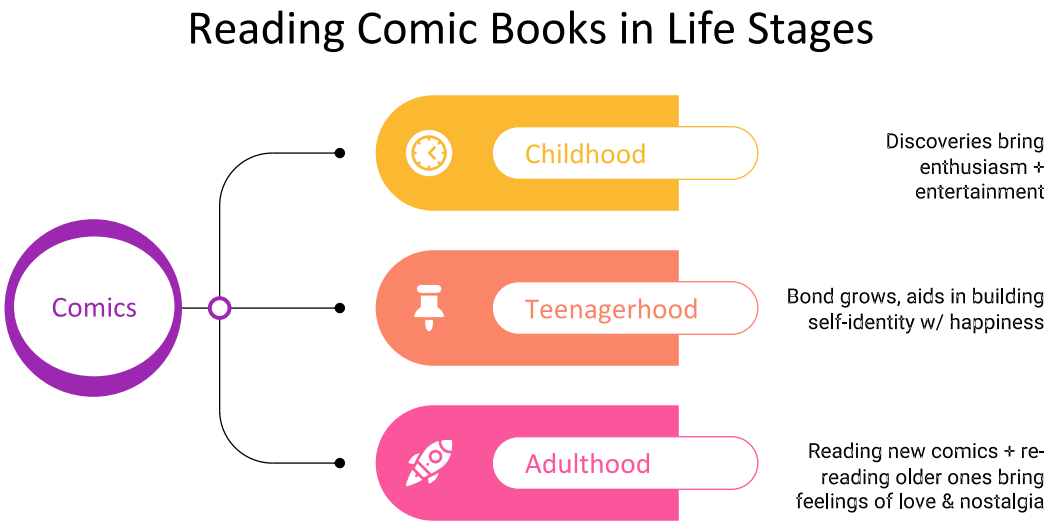
The emotional encounters created by the three elements that individuals experience when reading comics does not happen once: it is repeated for every read comic. This section presents how it is thus recurrent. In fact, comics engage their audiences throughout their life stages, which is facilitated by transmedia comics, as they can also turn into different mediums. Finally, many individuals decide to therapeutically re-experience comic books, due to the memories and emotions attached to the narrative transportation experienced when reading them.

4.6.1 Experiencing Comics in Different Life Stages

After understanding the global sensations that transmedia comics have become on a macro level, the second step to understanding how comics engage their readers is at the mezzo level, which is more or less from a collective point of view. Individuals experience comics through different life stages, and, often, it brings people together. Typical examples can be through sharing comic book suggestions and attending Comic-Con. Empirical evidence was provided from the codes deriving from the netnography and the interviews. Figure 2 explains how reading comic books can be divided into three life stages.

Figure 2

Reading Comic Books in Life Stages



Note. Passion for comics grows throughout the life stages.

Before becoming an adult, who enjoys reading a comic like the ones studied in this research, it is in the life stage of childhood where a majority of individuals were first exposed to comic books. Their initial discoveries bring them enthusiasm and entertainment, while comics' educational aspects help them polish their reading and writing skills, along with teachings of various contexts. It has also been observed through interviews that individuals recollected experiencing comics visually as children – before they were even able to read! An example is when P3 discussed how reading comic books as a child brought him to form a strong friendship with another child, which followed throughout their teenagerhood and adulthood (see quote p. 57). Similar to the majority of participants in this study, Zachary Levi (the actor of the superhero Shazam, in a live-action movie), was also introduced to comics during his childhood, specifically when he was four years old. He recalled absorbing the visuals in comics before he even learned how to read:

> I started recognizing that they were these cool pictures and things, but I couldn't read. That's also great for comics, because a lot of action is involved; I can kind of read that guy hits that guy - POW! Probably through middle school were my most fervent years […].

He then explained how comic books followed him throughout his youth: "I was a big Marvel kid. I was super into X-Men, X-force, X-factor – all of the Xs. I loved Gambit, he was my favorite of the X-men" (see Appendix L).

During a critical life stage, teenagerhood is when many of the individuals who read comic books started identifying with them. This stage encourages the bond between the subject and the object to grow. It also aids in building identity with feelings of general happiness. P3 described how comics could only be purchased on paper when he was a teenager, as digital versions were not yet available on the market. When referring to a Wolverine comic book issue #10 picturing him fighting Sabretooth, he recalls: "I think I paid $30 for that. And that I was like 'Oh my God! I paid so much money!' I think I was fifteen or sixteen years old. This felt like I was paying $10,000!" This example depicts how P3's love for his favorite comic book character grew; earlier in the interview, he explained that as a teenager, he had to be selective about spending his money, and comics were one of the few things he splurged on.

After the growth stages are over, adulthood begins. This is when reading new comics and re-reading older ones bring feelings of love and nostalgia. For example, P12 describe how the way he reads comics evolved as he aged: "Honestly, I read them mindlessly as a kid, but more consciously as an adult." In other words, the experience of reading comics changes as the reader grows.

In a brief summary, individuals who experience reading comics become attached to them during all stages of their life, and consider them as being part of their identity, along with pop culture! Passion for comics evolves at all life stages. During childhood, the discoveries of comic

books bring enthusiasm and entertainment to the individuals reading them. During teenagerhood, the bond between readers and comics grows, as it aids in building self-identity with happiness. During adulthood, reading new comics and re-reading older ones bring feelings of love and nostalgia (as seen in the following section). No matter the life stage, comic books involve reading. Introduction to comic books as a child can easily transform into a passion for comics as a teenager, leading adults to discovering new ones and eventually re-visiting them.

4.6.2 Therapeutically Re-Experiencing Comics

When reading new comics does not fulfill comic book readers as much, they opt for re-reading comics they previously absorbed. Inspired by the four types of re-consumption presented by Russel & Levy (2012) in the *Literature Review*, it can be concluded that there are four types of comic book re-experiences:

1) Volitional re-experience: shapes one's identity and the meaning of the comic book;

2) Reconstructive re-experience: entails a forward-looking use to restore memories;

3) Reflective re-experience: involves a forward-looking use with a focus inward;

4) Ritualistic re-experience: represents a symbolic activity that is part of a routine.

Re-reading a comic book can be either one or a combination the four types of re-experiences (such as when P2 explained the emotional attachment associated to his favorite comic book, as seen on pages 43 and 55). Similarly, P10 has "no problem reading [a comic] that I read 100 times." She likes re-reading two types of comics before sleeping: either the ones that she first experienced when she was a child, which she finds them relaxing, or historical comics that feel pleasant.

Additionally, I established that two of the four re-experiences can be enlisted into two categories: backward processes and forward processes. Volitional re-consumption is preeminent

during individuals' youth, such as during their childhood and teenagerhood, while ritualistic re-consumption involves all the participants, since reading comic books is a ritual they have partaken with for several years, and sometimes decades.

Backward processes focus on nostalgic consumption; it entails a reconstructive (re-experience of a comic book) experience to focus on the pleasure felt in a hobby/passion/routine, usually dating from childhood or teenagerhood. In backward processes, comic book readers pick a genre depending on the emotions linked to the memories they want to feel. For example, P5 said: "I can feel the same emotions again when I'm reading them." Nostalgia is a big theme when re-reading comic books, as it englobes optimism, inspiration, and self-continuity.

Forward processes instead focus on therapeutic consumption; it involves a reflective (re-consumption of a comic book) experience focused on the self and emotions. Comic book readers pick a genre depending on what is the emotion they want to feel. Individuals choose to read a genre of comic based on what they want to enjoy. For example, P13 enjoys reading comics with worlds that are unrealistic. Likewise, P2 enjoys two specific genres: humoristic comics, and ones with superheroes, because he always loved them since he was young.

P12 affirmed that he enjoys re-reading comics to sometimes refresh his memory, but it is usually to see them from a different perspective as he ages. He explained that despite not recently reading anything new, he decided to re-read comics that he owns, as it would allow him to revisit old stories that he loves, such as with the series exposing Wolverine versus the Red Right Hand[5]:

> […] because you grow as a person, every time you will look at something that you saw before, you will have different views on it. And like I said, I'm a bit more smarter than I was two years ago, maybe I was like "Wow! That's like stripping the power away from

[5] According to a Marvel database (n.d.), the Red Right Hand is: "a criminal organization created by people whose lives had been tragically affected by Wolverine in some way or another."

> something you've always wanted so bad and something you crave that fulfills you. But, hey, it's gone." And that thing was like a strange act of violence, and there's a certain level of psychopathy involved in that, and it was super cool to read that because I'm still dissecting what part of the mind Wolverine's had, is so into feeling the need to want to finish the job. Maybe it's like a sort of routine for him when it comes to the job has to be done – done?

He explained that he perceived a certain scene in the comic differently than he did two years prior to first reading it, since he grew wiser and smarter as he aged. He expressed how his new perception allowed him to see Wolverine differently, and notice things he previously did not. Re-experiencing the comic made him question the character's logic and rationality. This is a great example of reconstructive and reflective re-consumption, since P12 said that he enjoys re-reading that story to refresh his memory while focusing inward on how he absorbed the narrative after aging.

Likewise, P14, a professional in the industry, explained that he loves re-reading comics to refresh his memory and to have a difference perception or intake on the comic's storyline. He enthusiastically recalled a specific printed comic book that was illustrated entirely through paintings, namely *Kingdom Come*. Just like P12, his perception of comics also changes as he ages, due to his values, morals and principles also developing, just as he depicted when he referred to himself as becoming more of a feminist and how his view on a book character, Wonder Woman, evolved through time. He also indirectly inferred to the phenomenon of comics' evolution changing throughout the years to adapt to society, just like P12 stated (see p. 28). The concept of *consistency* (further discussed in *Future Research Recommendations*) in characters was also referred to by P14:

> So, I love going back and reading again. […] Sometimes you're like "Wait! How did that happen? Which happened first?" Right? And you go back, and you read it. Other times, you go and you get another perspective. So, have you read the marker to Alex Ross' *Kingdom Come*? […] It's the most beautiful book I've ever read. […] Well, it's because of Alex Ross' art, right? So… It's painted! And the story Mark Wade writes is a story

> about in the future. There are tons more superpowered individuals. Superman is retired because people just find standing up for good to be corny and stuff like that. Anyway, it's a terrific, terrific, beautiful religious imagery. Terrific, terrific book! So loved it the first time I read it! Loved it! Second, loved it! Third time I read it! And then I read it a fourth time, and I was like "I'm not the biggest fan of how he's writing Wonder Woman." […] My perception changed, and partly it's because I'm more of a feminist now than I was 20 years ago. But yeah, it changes, and even the writer has come out and said: "Yeah, I would have written that a bit differently," which is nice: it's good to see that! So, if they ever did something else, hopefully the characters get treated with a bit more consistency… But it's just so gorgeous! And so sometimes you go back and you're like, oh, like about that first *The Death of Jean DeWolff* comic, your perception changes a little bit. And it's a sign about how you've grown as a person. If you're paying attention to things like "Whoa! How many White men are there? And versus people of color? Or women? Or whatever!" You sort of realize this has basically informed a lot of how we are, which is why I hated it when the guys sort of reverted everything back to the 70s; all you're doing is you're bringing back a lot of White men. And look, I'm not going to say White men are inherently bad, but you had good replacement characters. Well, they were good, and these replacement characters have been around long enough that they had their own individual fandoms. So, you had people who were fans of Wally West; they weren't fans of the Flash, per se, they are fans of Wally West. And then when you bring back Barry Allen, well, we don't know who this is!

Hence, aging, maturing, and one's growth, all impact the way that individuals absorb comic books. Revisiting them gives them a different perception. As previously established, diversity and inclusivity are extremely important nowadays, in all industries, including in comics. In the quote above, P14 inferred to it when he mentioned that aging and growing makes you more receptive of diversity and inclusivity; he even notices when it is lacking in comics. Since comic books have become a huge part of today's pop culture, it is imperative that they incorporate it. P14 gave a concrete example when comparing two comic book characters from DC Comics: Wally West and Barry Allen. As seen on a comic book blog from my netnography, Comic Book Resources (CBR), the comic book community has debates over the two characters, in terms of who is preferred, who is the fastest, and which one is the real Flash (Harth, 2021). The Flash initially appeared during the Golden Age, but the character's history in comics is long and multi-faceted, meaning that there is a lot of information that can be learned from the character due to

decades of developments (Harth, 2021). While Wally West is faster than Barry Allen, Barry previously was an icon prominent during the comics' Silver Age (Harth, 2021). Individuals also felt that Wally was more personable and relatable, since he "had an actual personality, was funny, and worked hard to become the best (Harth, 2021)."

Additionally, P3 mentioned how there are certain comic books that he would enjoy re-reading regularly, such as Scott Pilgrim:

> I read it probably at least once a year. I am just so in love with the world that Bryan Lee O'Malley created, and I can never get enough of it. I always find that part of the reason I love it is I remember when it came out, and I just felt like that was my life.

This depicts a volitional re-consumption, that is also reflective and ritualistic. It is most likely not reconstructive, since P3 remembers the stories due to reading them at least annually. Re-experiencing his favorite comic books brings him a lot of joy.

Unquestionably, narrative transportation can re-occur when re-reading comic books. Individuals can re-live the sensation of *escaping* when they become narratively transported. An example is portrayed with P11, who re-reads comic books to observe and analyze them from a different lens:

> My eyes will go look for details I haven't previously seen. I rediscover the comic, even if I already know the story, I'll go like "Oh I didn't see this before! Hey, I didn't think this passage went that way!" I re-interpret it, and I re-live it, but always with something new, every time.

She loves re-reading Sailor Moon comics, because they remind her of her youth; she reads these comic books once a year, and then re-watches its animated series. Hence, re-experiencing can come with novelty, as individuals who re-read comics can still feel new emotions, interpret it differently, and notice details they previously did not.

Lastly, another example of individuals re-reading comics came up when P7 discussed the emotional and sentimental sides that come from her comic book collection, along with why she enjoys re-experiencing them:

> Having moved this fall, putting them in boxes, and then taking them out to place them in my bookshelf, there's the aspect of how each book made me feel like, or how I was feeling at the time when I was reading that book. There are books that I re-read at that moment, because I realized that I'm somewhere else now mentally, and I want to find out how I'm going to feel about this now. I re-read *Les Misérables* by Samuel Quentin. It's a funny book, with dark humour, and I remember reading it when I was younger thinking "Oh my God! It's dark!" Today, now that I'm [working] in humour and that I'm less innocent, [....], I'm able to understand the gags better, and having studied humour, I'm able to understand better the gags, and how the author was thinking behind that. It was like a bubble. It was a new reading that was really interesting to do. As I'm saying this, I'm telling myself that I should re-read my comics that are more on the feminist side […].

This is another example of reconstructive and reflective re-consumption involving comic books. Like the other participants, she felt and believed that her perception and understanding of the comic would change as she aged. She enjoys revisiting comics, since they become a new discovery, as her understanding changes and improves as she ages. All of her favorite comic books are the ones that she will re-experience.

Similar results can be concluded from the netnography, notably when analyzing a forum post named "Comics you pick up regularly & why?" on the forum Spider-Man Crawlspace. An individual with the username "Antiyonder" initially created the board on the forum, on February 1st 2015, and lasted for six years, until May 31st 2021. A total of 45 posts were submitted through six years in the forum's *Board*, with Batman and Spider-Man both being equally mentioned each 17 times, and Star Wars for a total of 11 times. The thread was meant to have individuals from online communities disclose what are comics they consider to be good or ones that they like, along with discussing what makes them enjoyable. It was also specified that it had to be about comics that were picked up on a regular basis, whether it was monthly or came to every other

month. In other words, it was all about comic books that are worth re-experiencing. Many of the posts contained terms from the comic glossary (please see Appendix B). Among the favorite comics mentioned by the creator of the forum post, *Batman '66* was one of them, because of its "Silver Age vibe" and its television series is an "example of how to do the campy Batman right." He also brought up a comic book originating from a video game, *Mega Man*, saying: "I figured it would at best be a simple comic (fun mind you), but it's been a compelling read for pretty much all of the series. Good mixture of lighthearted and serious moments. Fleshes out the characters pretty well." This is another example depicting how character development is crucial for individuals who read and re-experience comics, as it affects them. Some of the pertinent replies involved comics about Edison Rex, because they are "pure uncompromising incredible fun. […] It's done in a wonderfully Silver-Age style. If you liked the Incredibles, late Silver Age DC, this is the title to look at." This also confirms that there are specific genre and artistic styles that individuals who read comics tend to prefer, with comics being published in the Silver Age era being one of the popular ones. Another user of the forum commented by divulging his favorite Marvel comics, such as the *Amazing X-Men* comics, which he finds are "So much fun. So much." He also "fell in love with the book" when he read *Captain Marvel.* He mentioned Daredevil comics by commenting "What hasn't been said about this book before?" and Superior Spidey comics by saying they were a "really fun series." When it came to comics in the DC section, he mentioned *Adventures of Superman,* since he has "fun out of continuity stories," along with comics from The Flash, because they are "one of my favorite series of all time. So much fun." He also enjoys the Harley Quinn comics, due to adoring the characters in it. He also added other to his list several comics from other comic book publishers. Comparably, another user also added the Daredevil comics to his list, stating:

> Honestly, I think it's been the most consistent book Marvel put out and has been, pretty much since Bendis, […] it's just been solid. Even though I prefer the gritty Noir of Bendis and Brubaker to Waid, Waid is still solid telling good somewhat singular stories currently and his somewhat Dark continuing story with Iron Maiden Bullseye screwing with Matt was good, also add in good use of The Spot too. The current Waid stuff plays on continuity by having him in San Francisco, it has happened before and it's enjoyable.

In other words, this user compares other authors to Mark Waid, whose storytelling is good; he appreciates the play on continuity, and the addition of other characters. Other users on the board displayed intense passion and love for characters, such as when one posted that he loves the comics about Doctor Who, "Because I love Dr. Who more than oxygen," with another stating a specific comic, *Amazing Spider-Man: Renew Your Vows*, because "read this book read this book read it read it read it." Two other users also referred to that same comic book, saying that experiencing it "feels like this is probably the comfiest title in Marvel's current lineup. More people need to read this," with the other one posted "because it's well written and doesn't treat growth as a creative problem." Another user mentioned Hawkman comics, due to "finally a creative team that understands the character and works him well with action and adventure and mystery." Furthermore, another user commented:

> As my interest in superhero comics started to Wane, which unfortunately includes current Spider-Man, I've always been able to go back to Snyder / Capullo's Batman title to get my comic fix. Even though I now wait for it to come out in trade, their whole run has been intriguing, creepy, and has some great character work and plots. Just consistently outstanding in a way many other comics aren't or can't sustain over time.

This depicts another great example of how consistency in comics is crucial because it affects individuals who read them (further explored in *Future Research Recommendation*). The ritualistic re-consumption is inferred when the user mentioned the need to get his/her/their "comic fix." This forum user also added how (s)he/they has favorite authors for Batman comics, such as Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo. Resembling several participants who were interviewed, (s)he/they also mentioned the importance of owning physical copies of comics, especially when

they are in trade paperback. This displays the importance of comic book collections, along with how re-reading them can help individuals feed their comic addiction.

Additionally, P1 explains why it is easier for her to re-experience a comic book instead of a regular book. She clarifies that visual narratives are easier to re-read, especially when it comes to re-visiting a moment within a storyline that is loved:

> I enjoy it because, for a lot of reasons, it's a really interesting medium that I think people take a really good advantage of. I think it's a good medium to follow. It's contained within a comic book; it's easy to pick it back up and re-read it, versus an actual novel. I know there's a little bit of a barrier to entry in terms of the larger narratives and sub storylines, especially in big collections like Marvel or DC, but I think it's relatively, like, if you're familiar with the story, it's easy to go back and visit what you love about them. I think it's a really, obviously, popular medium in just the general pop culture. If you're someone like me who really enjoys the discourse, it's obviously Marvel movies, and to some extent DC movies, are like really, really big touchstones, at least pre-pandemic in popular culture. So, if you want to know what you're talking about, they're a good place to start as well. So, it's accessible enough and it's also like easy enough to follow along if you really want to be part of cultural involvements.

She explained that she enjoys reading a comic book because of its nature as a medium, and its popularity in today's general culture. She also mentioned the ease of accessibility to individuals (like P4 did), and how comics are easier to follow than non-visual books, especially when there is a moment that one wants to re-experience. P1 added that comics can help one learn about culture, and that they provide the original backstories of movies that are either about or inspired from comic book characters. Like other interviewees, she researches many comic book characters before even reading their comics.

Re-reading a comic book activates the memories associated to the object and the life stage it was experienced in. For example, adults can feel nostalgic about comic books they discovered and read during their childhood.

Nostalgia can make comic book readers feel like it helped them find their identity when they were younger, since it came in play to shape who they became. This was observed when P3 discussed the meaning of comic book publishers to him:

> Marvel, to me, will always have a sense of nostalgia. That's what I grew up with. I remember. […] my friend whom I had gotten comics from here and there as a kid (was really one of my really good friends at the time who got me into comics), and he got me more into Marvel. So, there will always be a special place in my heart for Marvel. But I also still remember the first time I watched the Tim Burton 1989 Batman. And that also shaped me as a person. So, there's that sense of DC nostalgia that I also have.

This is a great example of how there is a sense of belonging to a community in a social setting; comic books can bring people together, no matter their age. In this specific example, comics brought two children together to form a strong friendship, as they shared a love and passion for a shared hobby – reading comic books. Yet comic books and their storylines depicted through other mediums can also have the effect of helping with one's self-identity, as P3 mentioned with a specific Batman movie that he watched when he was younger (as previously depicted in the section on *Self-Discovery Through Comics*). While Evans et al. (2020) proved that mental transportation mediates nostalgia's psychological benefits, comic book readers typically feel nostalgia positively, and often translates into re-experiencing a comic book. Hence, nostalgia is an emotion that is positively experienced.

P5 said that she loves reading comic books because it brings her happiness and puts her in a good mood, along with feeling very nostalgic. Reading comics has become a ritual that is part of her daily routine. She claims that she purchases and collects items linked to characters that she profoundly loves. She enjoys the feeling of nostalgia, as she associates it with positive events, such as childhood memories, living in the 80s, and seeing the first generations of items that became extremely popular throughout the later decades, such as The Care Bears and My

Little Pony. She said that a lot of the things she enjoyed when she was younger was judged upon, but that nowadays, society has accepted it and perceives it as "cool."

Nostalgia is positively experienced by comic book readers: it is a sensation that feels soothing. Another great example was when P10 discussed how that feeling can be comforting for her: "Comics are an area where I am in a safe place." She expanded on her statement by describing her ritualistic re-consumption: she enjoys re-reading comics with non-serious topics and happy endings, since they offer her peace of mind before she falls asleep. Most of the comics she owns are "tainted with Belgian humor," which gives her a sense of nostalgia. She established that the feeling of nostalgia was a "very comforting area," since it is one where she can find comfort in and makes her feel comfortable. She also explained another reason why she enjoys re-experiencing comics: she enjoys knowing what to expect when re-reading them. She said: "Worst case scenario, you can always read the end to make sure it ends in a good way." A specific example she gave was how she enjoys re-reading Tintin comic books several times, and that she knows "by heart what's happening, and it's always the same pleasure reading, and reading, over and over again." This confirms that nostalgia can be a pleasant feeling, especially when combined with re-experiencing comics, such as with ritualistic re-consumption that can feel comforting.

A user on the comic book forum from my netnography, Spider-Man Crawlspace (Antiyonder, 2021), mentioned nostalgia when it came to a comic book character in DC's Green Lantern comics, particularly when it comes to a specific character, Kyle Rayner:

> Green Lantern Corps is a matter of taste. I prefer stories that are much more down to earth. I have little affection for Hal, but for reasons of nostalgia I buy almost everything with Kyle in it. I'm not sure why I do that anymore. The best part of this book has been Guy.

In the forum post, the comic book reader, by the username Antiyonder, mentions it being one of the comics he enjoys re-reading. He ultimately became a collector of comics, but his love for that specific character, along with the feelings of nostalgia associated to it, turned into an addictive and compulsive experience, even if Kyle was not the best part of the book. The relationship he developed with the character became so intense that he was unable to rationalize his behavior. He mentioned that his favorite part of the comic book was another Green Lantern character, named Guy Gardner.

Ultimately, reading and re-experiencing comics help comic book readers understand themselves and relate to their own personal identity, which typically affects subject to object bonds into a growing passion that often turns into collections of comic items. Re-experiencing comics is often accompanied by feelings of nostalgia, which can be therapeutic for comic book readers.

The answer to my first research question englobes themes and concepts that are recurring in the second research question. Comics affect individuals through several elements: by being educational, by providing storylines and environments that are limitless in terms of possibilities, by incorporating diversity and inclusivity, by relating to readers' identity, and through their memories. Comic books also affect individuals in different ways: through their emotions, their consumption choices, their bonds, and their relationships. Comic readers bond with their comic books, and many of them collect them. Some resell comics as part of a hobby, while other attend conventions and even cosplay. Comic books are emotionally charged memories for their readers. Additionally, individuals who enjoy comic books will also typically enjoy being part of a comic book community.

Individuals experience visual narratives, that allow them to be narratively transported, which results into positive emotions. Ultimately, individuals become emotionally invested with comics, which leads them to experience with transmedia comics.

Reading a visual narrative, appreciating art, being narratively transported, feeling transient emotions, indulging in positive emotions, and at times, when narrative transportation and the memories attached to comics were both strong, individuals also desire to re-experience comics for their own pleasure.

All participants experienced the same iterative, evolutionary, and cyclical process; it should be interpreted as a circular model. Comics offer a unique storytelling method to individuals. Comic book readers initially gain a narrative/storyline, accompanied by visuals. This unique storytelling medium leads them to being narratively transported, or in other words, escaping one's reality and surroundings. This phenomenon entails that they feel transient emotions while they are reading. Comic book readers are also offered a different art style for every comic, making them unique; they appreciate the artwork that supports the narrative. Hence, visual storylines, combined with narrative transportation, lead to the generation of positive emotions. The process is usually repeated every time an individual reads a comic book. Yet, it is necessary to understand how comic book readers experience positive emotions from reading comics, as individuals gain something within each step of the process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

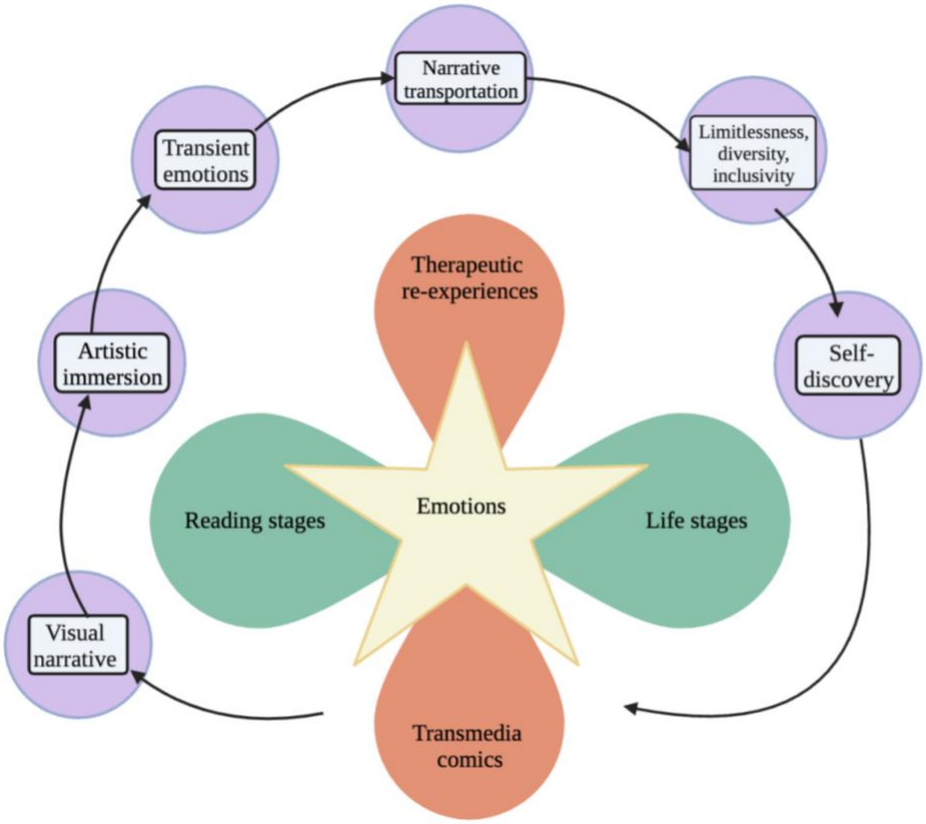
In my study, I demonstrate that individuals experience positive emotions from reading comics, due to the narrative found within comics, enabling them to being narratively transported. This in turn leads them to feel transient emotions, while also appreciating and absorbing the art they are presented. Comic book readers can also gain a compelling read once they feel emotions and love for comic book characters, especially when they find pleasure out of stories playing on continuity. They appreciate the quality of narratives in the long run. For the purpose of simplicity, this first research question was narrowed down to reading comic books – collecting them also results to the same conclusion, as it can be determined from the interviews and nethnography.

At the core of both answers to the two research questions lay emotions, which are what affect individuals and what they experience out of reading comics. Emotions rule! They are positive and can be transient or on a continuum. Feelings of happiness, love, passion, relaxing, enjoyable are all positive emotions.

As seen in Figure 3 below, comics bring positive emotions to individuals who read them. Everything is interconnected: what comic book readers experience makes them engage with comics. Figure 3 represents a dynamic model resulting in positive change.

Figure 3

The Process of Experiencing Positive Emotions from Reading Comic Books



Just like all the interviewees in this study, individuals who read comics believe and feel that comic books play a big role in today's pop culture. The four transmedia comics that were studied are a great example of how a simple character in a comic book can develop into a billion-dollar brand. More specifically, the storytelling method of comics is truly powerful: it incorporates visuals with writings, which is incredibly engaging in the long run. Its uniqueness distinguishes itself from other mediums, such as books, movies, television series and video games.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research unfolds a field of marketing that is underexplored: the marketing of comic books. Hence, this research is the first to display the psychological factors associated to reading comics, not only from the readers' point of view, but also from professionals in the industry, in terms of authors' and artists' perspectives. It is also the first study presenting the reading stages and the life stages of comics in terms of the before-during-after (BDA) approach.

This study also provides an extension on Russell and Levy's (2012) types of re-consumptions, by re-framing them within the context of comics as re-experiences, focusing on both backwards and forward processes. More specifically, this research confirms that there are four types of comic book re-experiences, namely: volitional re-experiences, reconstructive re-experiences, reflective re-experiences, ritualistic re-experiences. Additionally, this study asserts that re-experiencing comics can be therapeutic when individuals partake in forward processes, and that they associate nostalgia to positive emotions when they are involved in backward processes. All these four types of re-experiences can be bonded to transmedia comics thanks to comic books themselves and the impact they leave on readers.

This research also considers the complicated relationships among storyteller, story receiver, narrative transportation, narrative persuasion, storytelling methods, and transmedia comics. In other words, my thesis builds on previous research to refine and extend current knowledge for both academics and practitioners in terms of immersing oneself in transmedia storytelling, positively feeling nostalgia, experiencing comics through narrative transportation, the power that visual narratives hold, the uplifting emotions felt throughout all stages of experiencing and re-experiencing comics, along with the community derived from the worlds of comic books. Moreover, my thesis contributes to research on storytellers by determining that

authors and artists of comic books also become immersed in the creation of their visual narratives: they become narratively transported themselves as they work on the comic book's storyline. This research also contributes to the current knowledge on story receivers by presenting in-depth processes that they go through in the context of comic books: the before, during, and after (BDA) stages of reading comics, the life stages of reading comics, along with the way they experience comics and their consequences. This study also expands literature review on narrative persuasion by presenting the way that comics engage with individuals chronically, and how transmedia comics have become almighty. Lastly, this research discovers the unique storytelling method that comics possess: visual narratives and the power they hold.

Lastly, this research provides avenues and new opportunities for marketing experts and brand strategists to dive into, along with professionals in fields attached to marketing, such as sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, among many others. Moreover, this study expands the available knowledge on behavioral marketing, by displaying how comics can be highly effective in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the contexts of reading, purchasing, and collecting comics, cosplaying, attending comic book conventions, and experiencing other mediums attached to comics through transmedia comics. It also advances Russell & Levy's (2012) theory on re-consumption by presenting four types of comic book re-experiences. For psychologists, this research depicts human behavioral patterns that revolve around the world attached to comic books and pop culture. This study presents a way to understand people through the psychology in marketing with interests related to the comic book industry. In other words, it expands on the existing theories involving: the need of affect, narrative persuasion, recollecting memories, mental transportation, and nostalgia's psychological benefits. For sociologists and anthropologists, this research offers theoretical developments in the context of comics through

new discoveries related to consumption patterns, human behaviors, interactions, patterns, attending social events, and documenting cultures.

5.2 Practical Contributions

Briefly put, marketers and strategists should perceive comics as a powerful tool for communicating; comic books should definitely be included as a medium for all transmedia brands. They also ease conveyed messages concerning sensitive matters, which is a great tool for corporations and organizations to outlet profound topics.

Humans are visual creatures; our sight is the sense that we rely on the most. Comics should also be implemented in the educational field, since they hold many benefits, such as facilitating readability, improving reading skills, polishing one's vocabulary, and bettering one's communication skills. They are also entertaining in nature. Three participants in this study employ this medium through teaching: their students' learning outcomes are only positive.

The visual nature of comics is also pertinent for creators and artists of all kinds, as they can serve as a tool to advertise their services, their products, and to increase their audiences. They have been proven to be appealing and engaging.

Media companies should also consider comics as a powerful tool for promoting their mission and values, as visual narratives can easily communicate it, while also aligning content to their targeted masses. Comic strips for commercial uses can facilitate the conveyed message of their company, and the unconventional use of drawings and written content heightens visibility.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study uncovers an uncharted side of marketing: research on the individuals who experience comic books. Therefore, it entails limitations and future research recommendations for academia.

5.3.1 Limitations

There are several limitations that may have impacted my findings. The netnography consisted of a dozen websites targeted at the comic book community; more differences may have emerged if online data sources targeted at gamers and movie fanatics were qualitatively analyzed. It is possible that these individuals who prefer other mediums in transmedia comics experience comic books differently. Additionally, a broader sampling size would improve the generalizability of my study. Analyzing more websites, watching more videos, interpreting more podcasts and transcribed interviews, along with interviewing more comic book readers and professionals in the industry could only help strengthen the results of this research. Hence, my research may not be applied to most contexts nor to the majority of individuals, due to my data collection being limited to its specific sampling size and my usage of non-probability samples. The four transmedia comics cases chosen may also have similar consequences, as what happens in one industry may not be replicated or may not resonate with other industries.

In terms of other limitations, this study did not contain participants interviewed from South America, East Asia, and Oceania. Incorporating interviews from comic book readers and professionals in the comic industry from those geographical regions may result in different findings. For example, comics are not as popular in India due to the affordability and availability of comics being limited, along with the literature tradition revolving around novels and poetry, as opposed to visual media (Anand, 2022). Another similar example is the comic book industry in

Australia: the gradual disappearance of comic strips in Australian newspapers, the arrival of television, and the overly high importation of cheap comics all led to the popularity of comics being on the decline (New Matilda, 2014). The cultural acceptance has also been negatively impacted by Australia's history with comics; the country banned all their importation for many years (the ban was eventually lifted), and the National Library of Australia refused to house comics for several decades (Pop Matters, 2012).

5.3.2 Future Research Recommendations

This study opens doors to upcoming research on comic books within the field of marketing in many ways. The sensory characteristic of comics should be further investigated, as participants confirmed how the physical aspect of turning pages feels pleasurable. Whether comics are being read online or on paper, comic book readers eventually forget that they are flipping pages: due to enjoyment and aesthetics, visual narratives become a fluid motion. Another topic that was beyond the scope of this research concerns ethics and children: digitalization and lack of regulation can make it easier for them to fall upon stories that are not targeted to them with sensitive matter. Depending on the topic, viewer discretion is advised!

There are diverse experiences out of reading comic books; none of the participants in this study had negative emotions. This may be due to a limitation in my study; it would be pertinent for academic researchers to consider the effects of reading comic books that disappointed individuals, causing a general negative emotion. In this context, I am referring to Romani et al.'s (2012) scale of six brand-related negative emotions, namely: anger, discontent, dislike, embarrassment, sadness, and worry. Hence, I suggest it as part of the future research recommendations, since none of the participants have mentioned it in this given study. P11 mentioned that she sometimes cries once she becomes narratively transported when she re-

experiences her favorite comic book, but that this negative was experienced positively. I believe that investigating the impact of experiencing negative emotions when reading comics can hurt the image of transmedia comics, as negative word-of-mouth has been proven to hold the power of harming the image of companies and brands (Gildin, 2003). However, there may be a positive side to experiencing negative emotions through comics, as it can spark conversations among individuals: storytelling elicits emotions, which can lead to debates on sensitive topics around injustice, racism, and inequality, which could raise awareness and shed light on other of our societal issues (Keggeries, 2022).

Moreover, three pertinent themes should be further looked into: 1) the educational aspect of reading comics, 2) how comic book readers value consistency in adaptations, and 3) individuals discovering a side of them through cosplaying (these are further discussed in Appendix N). Investigating these phenomena will open paths for future academic research in this underexplored dimension of marketing.

My data also showed that comics are educational, but it was beyond the scope of the study. Therefore, future researchers should continue to investigate how companies and brands can convey their message or their lesson through visual narratives and comic strips. This may also impact advertising positively. These also have managerial implications, as marketing managers and management strategists should beware of not incorporating a valuable lesson within a comic's narrative, and of not preserving the consistency in comic book characters – especially when they presented under a different medium.

My findings confirm that comic book readers value consistency with original storylines, yet it was beyond the scope of this paper. Consequently, future research should examine one of the components that facilitates narrative transportation when reading comic book: the

consistency with original storylines, or in other words, if they are authentic faithful adaptations. This also applies to other mediums employing characters from comics, such as companies and brands operating in the entertainment industry. In transmedia comics, the interpreted narrative depends on its twist with the original storyline; some artists and authors value consistency, while others do not. Since this research only discovered that individuals value consistency, future researchers should consider the perspective of the ones who do not, and the consequences left on the targeted market.

Lastly, my results affirm that many comic book readers will cosplay and attend Comic-Con, which have become a globalized sensation. However, it is over the current scope of this research. Since cosplaying can lead do self-discovery, future researchers should explore this behavior in additional settings and contexts. They should also investigate differences in Comic-Con across the globe, as there are many different types of comic book conventions that affect pop cultures. There is a wide variety that is currently underexplored in marketing, such as gaming conventions, furry conventions, horror conventions, and science fiction conventions (Delfi, 2017; Glossop, 2022).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To conclude, comic books are way more than mere products to individuals: the outcome of reading them always leaves readers wanting more. Taking the time to be alone with a comic book, whether it is to look at it, skim through a couple of pages, deciding to add it to a comic collection, or reading it, are all different forms of intimacy. In any of these given contexts, comics bring positive emotions (such as happiness, excitement, and enthusiasm), along with feelings of attachment due to narrative transportation. Many individuals who grew up with comic books feel that comics have become a part of their identity, especially since, in one way or another, they take a form of amplitude in their lives.

"Experiencing comics books brings happiness!" – Dania Kyle

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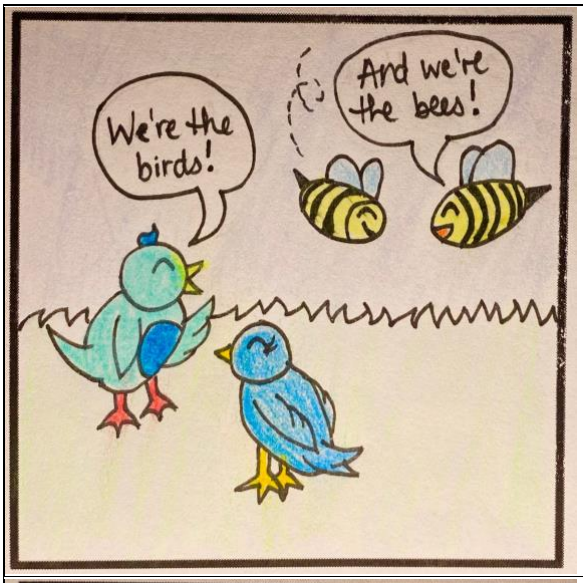
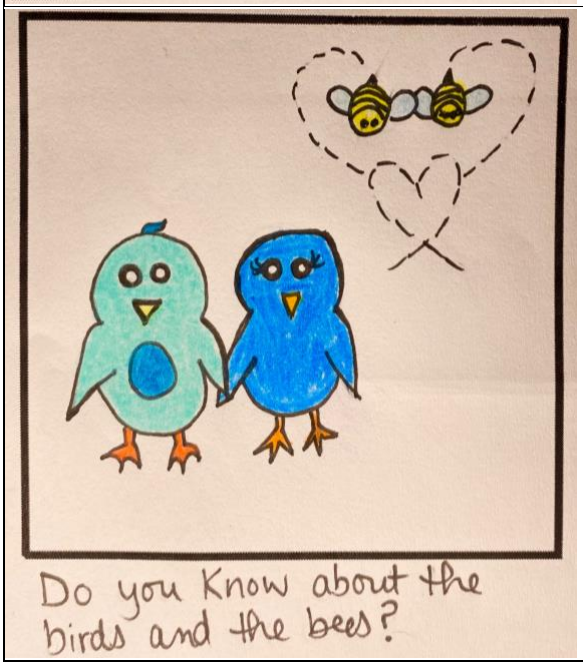
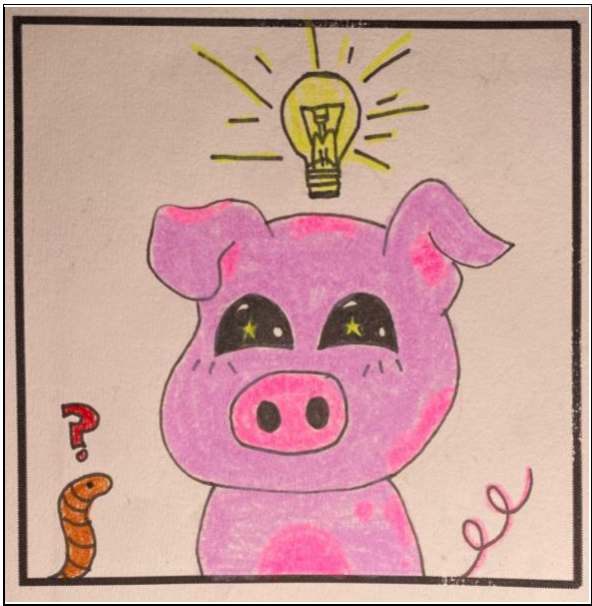
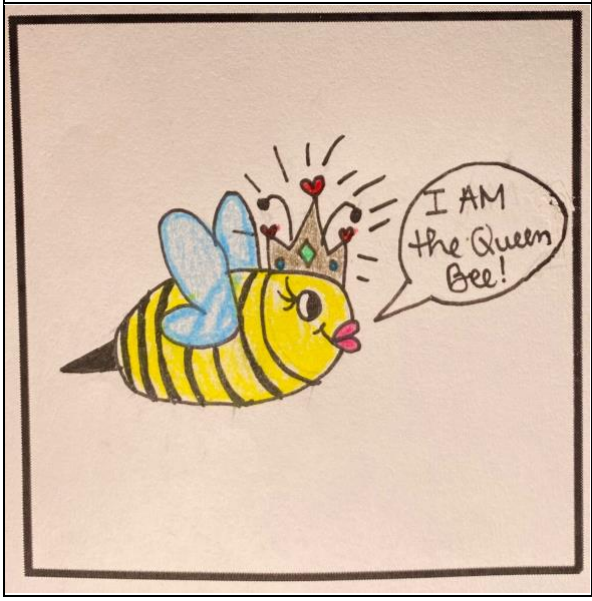
Appendix A

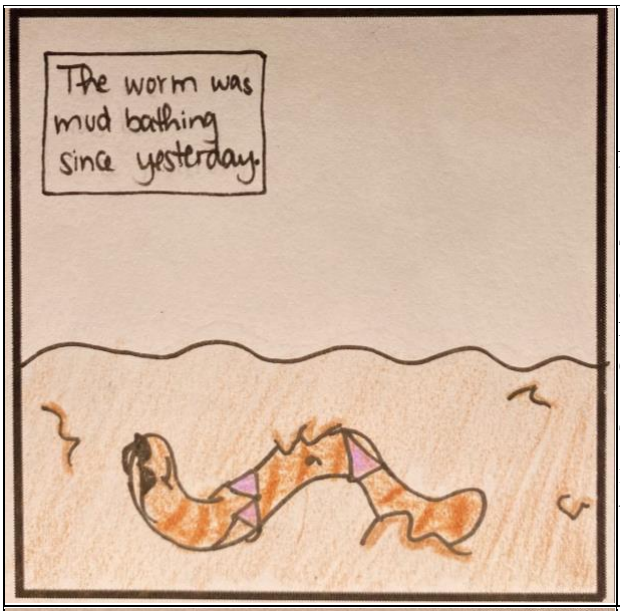
This appendix consists of Figure A1 depicting the eight types of text containers, accompanied by visuals, which can be found in comic books, according to Gardner (2006). I drew all of the eight comic panels in Figure A1.

Figure A1

The Eight Types of Text Containers

	*Balloons* are also known as *speech balloons* and *bubbles*. They carry the dialogue for the comic characters to speak. Balloons are shaped differently; they can be rectangular, with smooth edges, ragged, or with abnormal edges, depending on the emotion that is portrayed. They are typically round.
	A *caption* is written content that is directly addressed to the reader. It is often presented below a comic panel, but it can also be emplaced beside the panel or above it.

	*Emanata* can be either icons or text that depict what is happening inside a comic character's mind. They should not be confused with motions and speed lines, which depict the movements of characters. Examples of emanate can be a question mark to denote confusion, a light bulb to announce an idea, the subsequent letters "ZZZ" to infer sleeping, or special characters like "@$#%" to depict cursing and/or anger.
	*Labels* vary; they can be names, content written on a character, or any type of label that is associated to a character belonging to a particular group. They are often employed in political scenes to distinguish specific public figures.

	*Narratory blocks* are also known as narrative boxes and voice-overs. They are normally depicted through rectangles and squares. Narratoy blocks are either from the narrator or a character, and are used to share dinstinct information with readers. Typically, they narrate an event that is going on in a scene, or that previously occurred prior to the scene in the panel.
	*Signs* are a specific type of label: they consist of written text on objects. They can be used to pinpoint and identify an object, or to offer additional data that is meaningful to a scene. There is a variety of signs: they can consist of familiar objects (for example, a stop sign), and they can also identify unclear ones. They help the reader.

	*Sound effects* are words that denote a noise or a sound in a scene, to supplement a comic panel. They are not always written in capital letters or followed by exclamation points. Common examples of sound effects are: bang, pow, boom, wham, boing, crash.
	*Thought balloons* demonstrate a comic character's thoughts through text containers. They are also known as *thought bubbles*, due to the shape of the balloon, along with the trail of smaller bubbles connecting the thought balloon to the character.

Appendix B

Table 1

Glossary of Comic Terms

Comic Term	Definition	Reference
Canon	In pop culture, it refers to "the aspects of a story or fictional world or universe that are considered to be official." In other words, something is *canon* when it has been confirmed to be within an original story or interpreted faithfully.	Random House Unabridged Dictionary (2022)
Classic cover	It is a particular "cover considered by collectors to be highly desirable because of its subject matter, artwork, historical importance, etc."	Overstreet (2004)
Comics Code Authority (CCA)	It is "a voluntary organization composed of comic book publishers formed in 1954 to review (and possibly censor) comic books before they were printed and distributed. The CCA's emblem is a white stamp in the upper right corner of comics that are dated after February 1955. The term "post-Code" refers to the time after this practice started, or approximately 1955 to the present."	Overstreet (2004)
Con	Attending a *con* refers to going to "a convention or public gathering of fans."	Overstreet (2004)

Comic Term	Definition	Reference
Crossover	It is "a story where one character appears prominently in the story of another character," and it is sometimes written online as "x-over."	Overstreet (2004)
Golden Age	The era in which comics were published from approximately 1938 (Action Comics #1) to 1945.	Overstreet (2004)
Issue number	"The actual edition of a given title."	Overstreet (2004)
Modern Age	The era where comic books were published from 1980 and onwards.	Overstreet (2004)
PB	It is the anacronym for "paperback".	Overstreet (2004)
Origin	It symbolizes the moment where "the story of a character's creation is given."	Overstreet (2004)
Silver Age	The era where comic books were published from 1956 to 1969.	Overstreet (2004)
Splash panel	It can be defined as either "the first panel of a comic book story, usually larger than other panels and often containing the title and credits of the story, or an oversized interior panel."	Overstreet (2004)
Splash page	It is a splash panel that takes up an entire page.	Overstreet (2004)
Super-hero	It is "a costumed crime fighter with powers beyond those of mortal man."	Overstreet (2004)

Appendix C

This appendix consists of the Research Protocol that was submitted in July 2021 to Concordia University' John Molson School of Business.

SUMMARY PROTOCOL FORM (SPF)

Office of Research – Research Ethics Unit – GM 900 – 514-848-2424 ext. 2425 – oor.ethics@concordia.ca – www.concordia.ca/offices/oor.html

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL RESEARCHERS

Please take note of the following before completing this form:

- **You must not conduct research involving human participants until you have received your Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects (Certificate).**
- In order to obtain your Certificate, your study must receive approval from the appropriate committee:
  - Faculty research and student research involving greater than minimal risk are reviewed by the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC).
  - Minimal risk student research is reviewed by the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER)
  - Minimal risk student research conducted exclusively for pedagogical purposes is reviewed at the departmental level. **Do not use this form for such research.** Please use the Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form, available on the Office of Research (OOR) website referenced above, and consult with your academic department for review procedures.

  Note that activities of this nature are considered to be a pedagogical exercise and not research meant to contribute to the body of knowledge of the field. As such, while results may be disseminated in the public domain, they cannot be published in peer reviewed journals or presented at conferences as research findings.
- Research funding will not be released until your Certificate has been issued, and any other required certification (e.g. biohazard, radiation safety) has been obtained. For information about your research funding, please consult:
  - Faculty and staff: OOR
  - Graduate students: School of Graduate Studies
  - Undergraduate students: Financial Aid and Awards Office or the Faculty or Department
- Faculty members are required to submit studies for ethics approval by uploading this form, as well as all supporting documentation, to ConRAD. Access to ConRAD can be found in the MyConcordia portal.

- If necessary, faculty members may complete this form and submit it by e-mail to oor.ethics@concordia.ca along with all supporting documentation.
- Student researchers are asked to submit this form and all supporting documentation by e-mail, except for departmental review. Please note:
  - Handwritten forms will not be accepted.
  - Incomplete or omitted responses may result in delays.
  - This form expands to accommodate your responses.
  - Please ensure that all questions are answered completely (provide as much information as possible) and that samples of all materials are provided.
- Please allow the appropriate amount of time for your study to be reviewed:
  - UHREC reviews greater than minimal risk research at the monthly meeting, which is usually scheduled on the second Thursday of each month. You must submit your study by the 1st of the month to be reviewed at that month's meeting. Please confirm the date of the meeting on our webpage/FAQ section or with the staff of the Research Ethics Unit. Expedited reviews conducted by UHREC require a minimum of 8 weeks.
  - CER reviews generally require 4 to 6 weeks.
- Research must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:
  - The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*
  - The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
  - The *Official Policies of Concordia University*, including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.
- The Certificate is valid for one year. In order to maintain their approval and renew their Certificate, it is the researcher's responsibility to submit an Annual Report Form one month before the expiry date that appears on the Certificate. Research must not be conducted under an expired certificate.
- Please note that all changes to an already approved protocol must be submitted for review and approved by the UHREC prior to being implemented. As such, you must submit an amendment request to the OOR.
- In order to ensure that ongoing research is compliant with current best practices and that the documents on file reflects the research activities researchers ate carrying out, complete resubmissions are required every 5 years.
- Please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at 514-848-2424 ext. 2425 if you need more information on the ethics review process or the ethical requirements that apply to your study.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS

- If your research is part of your faculty supervisor's research, as approved, please have him or her inform the Research Ethics Unit via email that you will be working on the study.
- If your research is an addition to your faculty supervisor's study, please have him or her submit an amendment request, and any revised documents via e-mail. You must not begin your research until the amendment has been approved.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

- Please note that the SPF was designed to prompt reflection on the research project and all its possible implications. Please take the time to consider each question carefully in order to determine if and how it applies to your project.
- Please make sure that you are using the most recent version of the SPF by checking the OOR website.

- Please answer each question completely and provide as much information as possible; if you believe the question is not applicable, enter not applicable and provide justification.
- Do not alter the questions on this form or delete any material. Where questions are followed by a checklist, please answer by checking the applicable boxes.
- The form can be signed and submitted as follows:
  - Faculty research submitted on ConRAD will be considered as signed as per section 16.
  - SPFs for faculty research submitted via the faculty member's official Concordia e-mail address will also be considered as signed as per section 16.
  - Both faculty and student researchers may submit a scanned pdf of the signature page by e-mail. In this case, the full SPF should also be submitted by e-mail in Word or pdf format (not scanned).
  - If you do not have access to a scanner, the signature page may be submitted on paper to the OOR.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Please submit any additional documents as separate files in Word or PDF format.

STUDY TITLE: The Marketing of Comic Books

1. BASIC INFORMATION

Principal Investigator's Status:

☐ Concordia faculty
☐ Concordia staff
☐ Visiting scholar
☐ Affiliate researcher
☐ Postdoctoral fellow
☐ PhD Student
☒ Master's student
☐ Undergraduate student
☐ Other (please specify):

Type of Submission:

☒ New study

☐ Modification or a resubmission of an approved protocol. Approved study number (e.g. 30001234): _____

Where will the research be conducted?

☒ Canada

☐ Another jurisdiction: _____

2. STUDY TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Role	Name	Department	Phone #	Email Address
Principal Investigator	**Dania Kyle**	**Marketing**	**514-893-9656**	**d_neh@live.concordia.ca**
Faculty Co-Supervisor (For student research only)	**Michèle Paulin**	**Marketing**	**514-8482424 ext. 2954**	**michele.paulin@concordia.ca**
Faculty Co-Supervisor (For student research only)	**Zeynep Arsel**	**Marketing**	**514-8482424 ext. 2956**	**130eynep.arsel@concordia.ca**

Additional Team Members

Please provide names of all team members that will be interacting with human participants or handling research data, as well as those authorized to correspond with the OOR on behalf of the PI

Role	Name	Department /	Phone #	e-mail address

Committee Members (For research conducted by PhD/Master students):

Committee Member	Department

Multi-Jurisdictional Research

Does the research involve researchers affiliated with an institution other than Concordia? If so, please complete the following table, including the Concordia researcher's role and description of the activities to be conducted at Concordia. If researchers have multiple institutional affiliations, please include a line for each institution.
If applicable, please provide a copy of any additional submissions and ethics certification from the collaborating institutions.

Researcher's Name	Institutional Affiliation	Role in the research (e.g. principal investigator, coinvestigator, collaborator)	Research activities that will be conducted at this specific institution

3. PROJECT AND FUNDING SOURCES

Please list all sources of funds that will be used for the research. Please note that fellowships or scholarships are not considered research funding for the purposes of this section.

	Project Title*	Award Period†

Funding Source		Start	End

Notes:
* Please provide the project title as it appears on the Notice of Award or equivalent documentation. † If you have applied for funding and the decision is still pending, please enter "applied".

4. OTHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

a. Will the research take place at the PERFORM Centre?

☐ Yes ☒ No

b. Does the research involve any of the following (check all that apply):

☐ Controlled goods or technology
☐ Hazardous materials or explosives
☐ Biohazardous materials
☐ Human biological specimens
☐ Radioisotopes, lasers, x-ray equipment or magnetic fields
☐ Protected acts (requiring professional certification)
☐ A medical intervention, healthcare intervention or invasive procedures

Please submit any certification or authorization documents that may be relevant to ethics review for research involving human participants.

5. LAY SUMMARY

Please provide a brief description of the research in everyday language. The summary should make sense to a person with no discipline-specific training and it should not use overly technical terms. Please describe the project and its objectives, including any research questions to be investigated. Please also include the anticipated value or benefits to society of the research. Finally, how will results be disseminated (e.g. thesis, presentations, internet, film, publications)?
Please do not submit the thesis proposal or grant application.

This research is about the marketing of comic books. The objective of this project is to discover the *power of storytelling* through its educational dimension, a strategy often used in marketing, within the context of illustrated narratives. The relationship between comic books, marketing and education consists of the stories found within every comic book: they each teach a lesson to readers through storytelling, a tactic employed in marketing to educate clients on a brand, a product, or a service. Hence, the research question that will be investigated is: *what do individuals gain from reading comic books?*

The anticipated value of this novel research involves expanding the lack of current available marketing literature on comic books, which will benefit society in general. This research will not only provide knowledge on the behavior of comic book consumers, but by understanding how storytelling and narrative transportation works in comic books, my findings will also inform how businesses use *storytelling* in marketing communication: aside from being an absolute necessity in comic books, it can also be a powerful tool for brands, companies, customers, marketers and scholars who can create an emotional connection and build trust with their audience. The results will be disseminated through a thesis, and potentially research publications.

6. RISK LEVEL AND SCHOLARLY REVIEW

As part of the research, will participants be exposed to risk that is greater than minimal?
Greater than minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of possible harms and risks implied by participation in the research are greater than those encountered by participants in aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.

☐ Yes

☒ No

Has this research received favorable review for scholarly merit?
Scholarly review is not required for minimal risk research.

For faculty research, funding from a granting agency such as CIHR, FQRSC, or CINQ is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the name of the agency.

For student research, a successful defense of a thesis or dissertation proposal is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the date of your proposal defense.

☐ Yes Funding agency or date of defense: _____

☐ No
☒ Not required

If you answered no, please submit a Scholarly Review Form, available on the OOR website. For studies to be conducted at the PERFORM Centre, please submit the Scientific Review Evaluator Worksheet.

7. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Will any of the participants be part of the following categories?
Please only check a box if the category of participant is a target population for this study.

☐ Minors (individuals under 18 years old)
☐ Individuals with intellectual disabilities
☐ Individuals with cognitive disabilities
☐ Members of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples
☐ Vulnerable individuals or groups (vulnerability may be caused by limited capacity, or limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities and power, and includes individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of the research project, or those who live with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis)

a) Please describe potential participants, including any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

Potential participants: comic book readers, comic book fans and comic book collectors.
Inclusion criteria: comic book consumers who agree to participate in an interview.
Exclusion criteria: minors.

b) Indicate if participants are a captive population (e.g. prisoners, residents in a center) or are in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher such as being students, clients, patients or family members. If so, explain how perceived coercion will be addressed in order to ensure that participants do not feel pressure to participate or perceive that they may be penalized for choosing not to participate.

Participants will not be part of a captive population and will not be in any kind of conflict-of-interest relationship with the researcher.

c) Please describe in detail how potential participants will be identified, and invited to participate. In addition, please submit all recruitment materials to be used (e.g. poster(s), flyers, cards, advertisement(s), letter(s), telephone, email, and other verbal scripts).

Note that while the snowball method of recruitment is acceptable, in order to protect the potential participants' right to privacy and confidentiality, the researcher is not permitted to initiate direct contact with a potential participant whose contact information is not publicly available. Rather, recruitment material must be provided by the researcher to their contacts for further dissemination. Those interested would then contact the researcher directly.

Potential participants will be identified through snowball sampling and public calls for participation. They will contact the principal investigator directly through either email, telephone, or a social media post, such as on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Snapchat, in order to protect their confidentiality.
To be more precise, the calls for participation will be publicly posted on the principal investigator's social media platforms and will also be sent to her contacts, who will forward them to their friends and/or acquaintances. Potential participants will contact the principal investigator after receiving the recruitment material by either acquiring the calls for participation through their personal friends and/or acquaintances, by viewing the public social media posts on the principal investigator's social media platforms, or, if possible, by viewing a printed call for participation in at least one comic bookstore located in Montreal.

The principal investigator may post the recruitment material on websites/blogs or online community forums related to comic book collectors and/or comic book fans. They have not yet been determined. They may come out from a few open interviews.

The following is an example of the content that will be in the social media posts:
The Title: Call for Participation
The Content: Are you someone that enjoys reading comic books? If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study on the marketing of comic books! For more information or if you are interested in taking part, please contact: Dania Kyle, MSc Student at Concordia University in Montreal, at d_neh@live.concordia.ca or at [the name of the principal investigator's social media account which will depend on the platform it was posted on]

d) Please provide the anticipated start and end date of the research project.

Note that recruitment or direct interaction for data gathering purposes with human participants is not permitted until full ethics approval is awarded. Conducting research

without valid ethics approval is considered research misconduct. Only UHREC/CER approved versions of research documents can be used.

June 1st, 2021 – March 31st, 2023

e) Please provide a detailed, sequential description of the procedures to be used in this study. Describe all methods that will be used (e.g. fieldwork, surveys interviews, focus groups, standardized testing, video/audio taping), as well as the setting in which the research will take place. In addition, please submit all instruments to be used to gather data, for example questionnaires or interview guides for each type of participant.

An online fieldwork will be conducted to analyze comic book forums and comic book consumers' narratives through YouTube videos. An online fieldwork, also called *netnography*, consists of analyzing data that is found online: it can contain non-participant observations, participants' interactions, photography, and videography. The principal investigator will not have direct contact with any of the participants that have interacted on the chosen online sites.

A written consent form will be sent out to the potential participants who have reached out to the researcher.
Depending on the circumstances of the pandemic in the fall of this year, the settings of the interviews will be conducted either in-person at the Concordia university with audio recording, or online through a video-call on the Zoom platform with video recording.

A preliminary version of the interview guide has been attached in this email. The version to be used with participants will be sent to the co-supervisors and the Thesis Committee and will only be used after receiving their approval. If there would be a change within the interview guide, it would be minimal in terms of interview questions, as the purpose of the study, as seen in the Summary Protocol Form, will not change.

f) Please describe any compensation participants may receive. Indicate the terms for receiving compensation, its value, and what happens to the compensation if a participant withdraws,

Participants won't be compensated.

g) Do any of the research procedures require special training, such as medical procedures or conducting interviews on sensitive topics or with vulnerable populations? If so, please indicate who will conduct the procedures, what their qualifications are and whether they have previous experience.

No.

h) When doing research with certain groups of participants (e.g. school children, cultural groups, institutionalized people) and/or in other jurisdictions, organizational /community/governmental permission is sometimes needed. If applicable, please explain how this will be obtained. Include copies of approval letters once obtained.

Not applicable.

8. INFORMED CONSENT

Please note that each participant should be provided with a copy of the consent form in addition to the one they sign, which is to be kept by the researcher.

Written consent forms and oral consent scripts should follow the consent form template available on the OOR website. Please include all of the information shown in the sample, adapting it as necessary for the research.

a) Please explain in detail the process for soliciting informed consent from potential participants. In addition, please submit the written consent form.

Depending on the platform of recruitment, potential participants will first interact with the researcher through their original platform of communication, which can be either by email, telephone, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Snapchat. After establishing that the potential participants understand what this research is about and that they are interested in being part of this project, I will invite them to read an emailed copy of the written consent form, which will be the document that will authenticate their participation as a voluntary agreement once it is signed.

The written consent form is provided in attachment (*Information and Consent Form for the Study of the Marketing Behind Comic Books*).

b) Please note that written consent is the preferred method for obtaining consent. However, in certain circumstances, oral consent may be appropriate. If oral consent will be used, please submit a consent script, and describe how consent will be documented.

The use of an oral consent procedure needs to be justified and its approval is at the discretion of the applicable ethics committee (either the UHREC or CER). Note that convenience cannot be used as justification.

Only written consent will be used for this research. Depending on the circumstances of this pandemic, the researcher's copy of the written consent form will either be signed electronically or in-person.

c) Does the research involve individuals belonging to cultural traditions in which individualized consent may not be appropriate, or in which additional consent, such as group consent or consent from community leaders, may be required? If so, please describe the appropriate format of consent, and how it will be solicited.

No.

9. DECEPTION

a) Does the research involve any form of deception of participants? If so, please describe the deception, explain why the deception is necessary, and explain how participants will be de-briefed at the end of their participation. If deception is involved, please submit a debriefing script.

Please note that deception includes giving participants false information, withholding relevant information, and providing information designed to mislead.

No.

b) If deception is involved, please note that participants must be provided with the opportunity to refuse consent and request the withdrawal of their data once they know the details of the study. This should take place while it is still possible to give participants this option (e.g. prior to de-identification, publication, etc.). Please explain how this will be done and what timeline will be provided to participants for withdrawal of their data. Include a checkbox in the debriefing script so participants can clearly indicate their choice and a section for the participant's signature. Please provide a copy of the debriefing script.

Not applicable.

10. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Please explain how participants will be informed that they are free to discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequences.

It will initially be in the written consent form that the participants have signed, but also verbally mentioned prior to the beginning of each interview: participants will also be reminded that they are free to exit prior or during the interview at any time, and that their answers can be removed from this research project upon request after the interview within ten days of participation, as previously mentioned in the written consent form that they signed.

b) Please explain what will happen to the information obtained from a participant if he or she withdraws. For example, will their information be destroyed or excluded from analysis if the participant requests it? Please describe any limits on withdrawing a participant's data, such as a deadline related to publishing data. Note that a clear deadline such as a specific date or timeframe must be provided.

If a participant decides to withdraw their participation, all of their information will be destroyed and completely excluded from analysis. The timeframe provided in the consent form to participants will consist of the first ten (10) days after their participation.

11. RISKS AND BENEFITS

a) Please identify any foreseeable benefits to participants.

The participants may benefit from a better understanding of their own behavior as comic book readers, comic book fans or comic book collectors by participating in this research. Every participant will be asked at the end of the interview if they want to receive a copy of the aggregate results by email after the Thesis Committee has approved it.

b) Please identify any foreseeable risks to participants, including any physical or psychological discomfort; emotional, social, legal, or political risks; risks to their relationships with others, or to their financial well-being. Please take the time to consider this question and mention any type of risk, no matter how remote the likelihood of it occurring.

There are no critical risks involved in this study. Some participants might experience discomfort due to the personal nature of questions. They might also recall unpleasant memories or recall disturbing content of some comic books. If this happens, I will pause the interview, let the participant decide if they want to continue and how they want to

continue. I will also remind them that they do not have to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable and
skip, pause, or discontinue the interview if they wish.

c) Please describe how the risks identified above will be minimized. For example, if individuals who are particularly susceptible to these risks will be excluded from participating, please describe how they will be identified. Furthermore, if there is a chance that researchers will discontinue participants' involvement for their own well-being, please state the criteria that will be used.

The potential emotional risk will be mentioned in the written consent form prior to the interview. Participants will also be verbally reminded at the beginning of the interview that they are free to leave at any time. If the participant feels uncomfortable to pursue the interview, he or she is allowed to exit it immediately.

d) Should the risks detailed above be realized, please describe how the situation will be managed. For example, if referrals to appropriate resources are available, please provide a list. If there is a chance that participants will need first aid or medical attention, please describe what arrangements have been made.

If participants express the need for mental health medical attention, the principal investigator will do her best to connect them with public mental health specialists that are available in their geographical location. They are also allowed to contact the principal investigator before, during or after the process of conducting interviews to ask questions and to provide feedback.

12. REPORTABLE SITUATIONS AND INCIDENTAL FINDINGS

a) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a situation that would have to be reported to appropriate authorities, such as child abuse or an imminent threat of serious harm to specific individuals? If so, please describe the situation, how it would be handled, and who the proper authorities are.

Please note that legal requirements apply in such situations. It is the researcher's responsibility to be familiar with the laws in force in the jurisdiction where the research is being conducted.

Not applicable.

b) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a material incidental finding? If so, please describe how it would be handled.

Please note that a material incidental finding is an unanticipated discovery made in the course of research but that is outside the scope of the research, such as a previously undiagnosed medical or psychiatric condition that has significant welfare implications for the participant or others.
Not applicable.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY, ACCESS, AND STORAGE

a) Please describe the path of the data from collection to storage to its eventual archiving or disposal, including details on short and long-term storage (format, duration, and location), measures taken to prevent unauthorized access, who will have access, and final destination (including archiving, or destruction).

All of the data collected will be stored on the principal investigator's personal computer under Word document files and media files (the format of audio recordings will be M4A files, and the format of video recordings will be MP4 files) that will each be stored within separate folders (according to the fake names representing the participants, according to their coded names) that are password-protected, in order to prevent unauthorized access. The principal investigator will be the one who has access to the data, unless either one or both of the co-supervisors require to have access. If files must be destroyed due to a participant withdrawing their participation in this project, all the data related to the participant will be permanently deleted. Otherwise, the data will be archived on the principal investigator's personal computer after one year of the thesis defence, and will be destroyed five years after the end of the study.

b) Please identify the access that the research team will have to participants' identity:

If you check more than one box, please specify the category of participants it applies to.

	Category	Definition	Category of Participant
☐	Confidential	The research team will know the participants' real identity, but it will not be disclosed.	
☐	Participant Choice	Participants will be able to choose which level of disclosure they wish for their real identity.	
☐	Disclosed	The research team will know the participants' real identity, and it will be revealed in accordance with their consent.	
☐	Anonymous	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it, and the risk of identification of individuals is low, or very low.	
☐	Anonymous results, but identify who participated	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it. The research team knows participants' identity, but it would be impossible to link the information provided to link the participant's identity.	
☐	Pseudonym	Information provided will be linked to an individual, but that individual will only provide a fictitious name. The research team will not know the real identity of the participant.	
☒	Coded	Direct identifiers will be removed and replaced with a code on the information provided. Only specific individuals have access to the code, meaning that they can re-identify the participant if necessary.	
☐	Indirectly identified	The information provided is not associated with direct identifiers (such as the participant's name), but it is associated with information that can reasonably be expected to identify an individual through a combination of indirect identifiers (such as place of residence, or unique personal characteristics).	

☐	Other (please describe)		

c) Would the revelation of participants' identity be particularly sensitive, for example, because they belong to a stigmatized group? If so, please describe any special measures that will be taken to respect the wishes of the participants regarding the disclosure of their identity.

Not applicable.

d) Please describe what access research participants will have to study results, and any additional information that will be provided to participants post-participation (e.g. resources, etc.).

Depending on the recruitment material, the research participants can contact the principal investigator by either telephone, email or social media, pre- and post-participation. All participants will be offered the option of receiving an emailed copy of the aggregate results, allowing them to study the results of their participation. They will also be told that they are welcome to email their comments and their feedback post-participation.

e) In some research traditions, such as participatory action research, and research of a socio-political nature, there can be concerns about giving participant groups a "voice". This is especially the case with groups that have been oppressed or whose views have been suppressed in their cultural location. If these concerns are relevant for the current participant groups, please describe how they will be addressed in the project.

Please note that for the purpose of this evaluation, co-researchers in a participatory research action are considered participants and must consent to participate and provide oral or written consent.

Not applicable.

14. ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the conduct of this research. For example, are there responsibilities to participants beyond the purposes of this study?

Not applicable.

G. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

Study Title: The Marketing of Comic Books

I hereby declare that this Summary Protocol Form accurately describes the research project or scholarly activity that I plan to conduct. I will submit a detailed modification request if I wish to make modifications to this research.

I agree to conduct all activities conducted in relation to the research described in this form in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:

- The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*
- The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
- The *Official Policies of Concordia University*, including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.

Principal Investigator Signature: Dania Kyle

Date: July 20th, 2021

FACULTY SUPERVISOR STATEMENT (REQUIRED FOR STUDENT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS):

I have read and approved this project. I affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval, and that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human participant research at Concordia University. I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures in relation to this project.

Faculty Co-Supervisor Signature: Michèle Paulin

Date: July 20th, 2021 

Faculty Co-Supervisor Signature: Zeynep Arsel

Date: July 20th, 2021 

Appendix D1

Table 2

The Evolution of Batman: From Comic Book to Transmedia Brand

Date	Events	References
May 1939	Batman first appears in a detective comic	DC (2019)
March 1940	The first Batman comic book appears	DC (2019)
April 1940	The duo Batman and Robin first appears in a comic	DC (2019a)
January 1966	The colorful Batman television series debut (for two years and return in 1977)	DC (2019b)
June 1989	The first Batman movie premieres	DC (2019c)

Note. A copy of the detective comic in which Batman first appeared in sold for over $1M (in U.S. dollars) in 2010 (DC, 2019). *Detective Comics* continues to be the longest-running comic book in history, and reached its 1000th issue in March of 2019 (DC, 2019e). Since April 1940, Batman comics have been released continuously on a yearly basis (DC, 2019a). The first Batman movie became the fastest movie to gross $100M (in U.S. dollars) at the time (DC, 2019c).

Appendix D2

Table 3

The Evolution of Batman: From Transmedia Brand to Franchise

Date	Events	References
June 1992	The second Batman movie is released	DC (2019c)
1992	The first Batman animated series makes its debut on television	DC (2019c)
1993	The first fully animated Batman movie is released	DC (2019c)
2005	Another Batman movie is released and becomes one of the highest-grossing movies of all time, with over $1B (in U.S. dollars) in the worldwide box office, and an Oscar-winning performance	DC (2019d)
2009	The first Batman video game comes out	DC (2019d)
Summer 2018	In the United Arab Emirates, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi opens to the public and features "a themed Gotham City land filled with Batman-based rides and attractions, such as *Batman: Knight Flight* and *The Joker Funhouse*"	DC (2019e)
March 2022	The latest Batman movie, called *The Batman*, is released in theaters by Warner Bros. Pictures	Bergeson (2022)

Note. Since 1992, multiple animated series and fully animated movies have aired out since (DC, 2019c). The first Batman video game became one of the best-selling and best-reviewed console games (DC, 2019d). In the 2010s, more video games, comic books, animated shows, live-action

series, and movies aired out (DC, 2019e). The latest Batman movie is inspired by the comic series *Batman: The Long Halloween* (Liyanage, 2022).

Appendix E1

Table 4

The Evolution of Spider-Man: From Comic Book to Transmedia Brand

Date	Events	References
June 1962	Spider-Man's first appearance was in a Marvel comic	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
March 1963	The first Spider-Man comic appears	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
1967	The first Spider-Man animated series debut	Beard (2018)
1977	The first Spider-Man movie is released	Kelly (2020)
1982	Spider-Man becomes the first video game to feature characters licensed by Marvel Comics	Kane (2018)

Note. Today, the copy of the comic book (in which Spider-Man first appears in) in mint condition is worth over $1M (in U.S. dollars) (Martin & Sanderson, 2022). One of Spider-Man's comic series ran for 263 issues, from 1990 to 2001 (Martin & Sanderson, 2022). Spider-Man comics have been released continuously on a yearly basis since. The rebooted version of Spider-Man's first movie was released in 2002 and earned over $800M (in U.S. dollars) worldwide (Martin & Sanderson, 2022).

Appendix E2

Table 5

The Evolution of Spider-Man: From Transmedia Brand to Franchise

Date	Events	References
1996	A Spider-Man radio show airs	Comics On The Radio (2011)
1999	Sony Pictures Entertainment acquires the Spider-Man film rights	Reyes (2019)
2004 and 2007	Two other Spider-Man movies are released	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
2009	The Walt Disney Company (Disney) buys Marvel Entertainment for $4B (in U.S. dollars)	Stanford (2021)
2011	The first Spider-Man Broadway debuts	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
2012	An animated series is rebooted	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
2014	An animated series is rebooted	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
2017	A Spider-Man comedy appears	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
2019	A Spider-Man animated movie wins "the Academy Award for best animated feature"	Martin & Sanderson (2022)
December 2021	The most recent Spider-Man movie, named *Spider-Man: No Way Home,* is released in theatres	Hector & Power (2022)

Note. Multiple Spider-Man video games have aired out since 1990 (Kane, 2018), with the most recent one being from 2020 (Martin & Sanderson, 2022). Marvel Entertainment now called "Marvel Cinematic Universe" (MCU) (Martin & Sanderson, 2022). Spider-Man appeared in other superhero movies from MCU in 2016 & 2018 (Martin & Sanderson, 2022). *Spider-Man: No Way Home* has been ranked as the second fastest movie of all time to gross $100M (in U.S. dollars) at the domestic box office: it earned almost $122M in 24 hours (The Numbers, n.d.). This comic book movie became the second highest opening ever at the domestic box office (D'Alessandro, 2021), making it the highest opening of the pandemic (Whitten, 2021a), breaking a pandemic record by bringing over $1B (in U.S. dollars) at the box office worldwide in the second weekend (Crow, 2021; Lancaster, 2021; Rubin, 2021).

Appendix F1

Table 6

The Evolution of Star Wars: From Movies to Transmedia Brand

Date	Events	References
May 1977	The first Star Wars movie is released by George Lucas, owning Lucasfilms Ltd	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
July 1977	The first comic book created for the saga becomes available	Marvel (n.d.)
May 1980	The second Star Wars movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
1982	The first video game is released for the Atari 2600	Brown (2014)
May 1983	The third Star Wars movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
1986	Lucas establishes a partnership with Disney parks	Lang (2020)
1987	The first Star Wars attraction opens at Disney parks	Lang (2020)
1991	Dark Horse Comics purchased the rights to publish comics from 1991-2014	Schneider (2014) Spry (2021) Wookieepedia: The Star Wars Wiki (n.d.-b)

Note. The first comic series of Star Wars was published by Marvel Comics until 1986 (Wookieepedia: The Star Wars Wiki, n.d.).

Table 7

The Releases of Star Wars Movies

Date of Release	Name of the Movie	Releasing Ranking	Company Publishing
May 25th, 1977	Episode IV – A New Hope	First movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
May 21st, 1980	Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back	Second movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
May 25th, 1983	Episode VI – Return of the Jedi	Third movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
May 19th, 1999	Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Fourth movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
May 16th, 2002	Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Fifth movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
May 19th, 2005	Episode III – Revenge of the Sith	Sixth movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd
December 18th, 2015	Episode VII – The Force Awakens	Seventh movie released	Walt Disney Company (Disney)
December 15th, 2017	Episode VIII – The Last Jedi	Eighth movie released	Disney
December 20th, 2019	Episode IX – The Rise of Skywalker	Ninth movie released	Disney
August 15th, 2008	Star Wars: The Clone Wars	First animated movie released	Lucasfilm Ltd

Date of Release	Name of the Movie	Releasing Ranking	Company Publishing
December 16th, 2016	Rogue One: A Star Wars Story	Standalone film	Disney
May 25th, 2018	Solo: A Star Wars Story	Standalone film	Disney
November 17th, 1978	Star Wars Holiday Special	First movie produced for television (spin-off)	Lucasfilm Ltd
November 25th, 1984	The Ewok Adventure	Second movie produced for television (spin-off)	Lucasfilm Ltd
November 24th, 1985	Ewoks: The Battle for Endor	Third movie produced for television (spin-off)	Lucasfilm Ltd

Note. The references for this table were taken from Wookieepedia: The Star Wars Wiki (n.d.).

Appendix F2

Table 8

The Evolution of Star Wars: From Transmedia Brand to Franchise

Date	Events	References
May 1999	The fourth Star Wars movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
May 2002	The fifth Star Wars movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
May 2005	The sixth Star Wars movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
August 2008	The first Star Wars animated movie is released	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
October 2012	Disney buys Lucasfilms Ltd. For $4.05B (in U.S. dollars), marking the start of a new era for the Star Wars franchise	Whitten (2018)
2015	Star Wars returns to Marvel Comics, which is owned by Disney	Schneider (2014)
2016-2019	Four Star Wars movies are released by Disney	Encyclopedia Britannica (2021)
2019	Disney starts the series *The Mandalorian*, inspired from Star Wars characters, on Disney Plus (a streaming service), and is still running presently	Opie et al. (2022)
2022	Dark Horse Comics reclaims publishing rights for Star Wars comics	Perry (2021a) Spry (2021)

Note. The Mandalorian show has become the most streamed series, earning Disney Plus an extra 26.5M subscribers after the first season, with 5.42B minutes of viewing time (Fernandez, 2022). The series saved Hasbro's 2020 sales due to Mandalorian toys like Baby Yoda, growing their Star Wars revenue by 70% (Whitten, 2021).

Appendix G1

Table 9

The Evolution of Pokémon: From a Pair of Video Games to Transmedia Brand

Date	Events	References
February 1996	Originally called "Pocket Monsters," Pokémon is first created in Japan as a pair of video games, *Red* and *Green*, officially released for the Nintendo Game Boy console	Diver (2021) Logo Designs (n.d.)
October 1996	A special edition of the video game, *Blue*, is released	Diver (2021)
October 1996	In Japan, Pokémon trading cards first appear	BBC News (2021)
November 1996	The first original Pokémon manga is based off the video games, named *Pokémon Pocket Manga,* and is released only within Japan, due to panels with crude humour, nudity, and vulgarity	Bulbapedia (n.d .) Hoffer (2018)
April 1997	after its first animated television (TV) series, also inspired from the video games, (the Japanese term is *anime*) premiered in Japan on April 1st, 1997, and a year later in North America	Bulbapedia (n.d .) Edmundson (2021)
August 1997	*Pokémon Adventures* manga launches; it becomes the most successful Pokémon manga, which is also more popular in the Western world	Bulbapedia (n.d .) Edmundson (2021)
July 18th, 1998	The first animated movie *Pokémon the First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back* debuts in Japanese theatres	Bulbapedia (n.d .)

Note. The first animated movie *Pokémon the First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back* was introduced in the United States in November 2018 (Bulbapedia, n.d.), generating $172M (in U.S. dollars) at the worldwide box office (Hawke, 2021).

Appendix G2

Table 10

The Evolution of Pokémon: From Transmedia Brand to Franchise

Date	Events	References
1998	"Pocket Monsters" is renamed as "Pokémon"	BBC News (2021)
1999	Trading cards arrive in the United States	BBC News (2021)
July 1999	The second animated movie, *Pokémon the Movie 2000*, is first released in Japan	IMDb (n.d.)
2000	*Pokémon the Movie 2000* spreads to the United States and Canada among other countries, grossing a worldwide box office of almost $134M (in U.S. dollars)	IMDb (n.d.)
2000	*Pokémon Live!* Arrives a musical stage show that tours the USA and Canada, and eventually spreads to other countries after 2001	McNab (2021) Plunkett (2022)
2005-2006	Pokémon theme parks open in Asia	Eker (2020)
2016	The mobile game *Pokémon Go* is released, breaking world records with over 1B downloads!	Elderkin (2016) van Boom (2019)
2019	The first live-action movie, Detective Pikachu, is released	Fullerton (2019)
2021	Netflix confirms that it is developing a Pokémon live-action series	Yaden (2021)

Note. The most expensive Pokémon trading card dates from 1998, and is called "Pikachu Illustrator," which sold for $900K (in U.S. dollars) on February 24th, 2022, and was recently sold for $6M (Koepp, 2022). Since 2000, more than 20 Pokémon movies were made (Bulbapedia, n.d.-a; Martin, 2019; Pokémon, n.d.; Wiggan, 2021). The Pokémon Company and Universal Studios Japan announced in October 2021 that their long-term partnership would bring back Pokémon to attractions in its theme park in 2022 (Diaz, 2021; Stella, 2022).

Appendix H

The following is an example of an open call for participation, written in both English and French. It was used in a comic book store located in Montreal, Canada.

Call for Participation

Are you someone that enjoys reading comic books? If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study on the marketing of comic books! For more information or if you are interested in taking part, please contact:

Dania Kyle, MSc Student at Concordia University in Montreal, at d_neh@live.concordia.ca or @juicydna on Instagram

Appel à la Participation

Aimez-vous les bandes dessinées? Si oui, vous pourriez être éligibles à participer dans une étude de recherche sur le marketing des BD! Pour plus d'information ou si vous êtes intéressés, SVP contacter :

Dania Kyle, étudiante à la maîtrise à l'université Concordia, à d_neh@live.concordia.ca ou @juicydna sur Instagram

Appendix I

The following is the written consent form that was signed by all 15 participants in this study.

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: *The Marketing of Comic Books*

Principal Investigator:
Dania Kyle, Master's student in Marketing
Researcher's Contact Information: 514-893-9656; d_neh@live.concordia.ca

Faculty Co-Supervisor:
Michèle Paulin, Professor in Marketing
Faculty Co-Supervisor's Contact Information: S-MB13301, John Molson Building, 1450 Guy St, Montreal, Quebec H3H 0A1; 514-848-2424 ext. 2954; michele.paulin@concordia.ca

Faculty Co-Supervisor:
Zeynep Arsel, Associate Professor in Marketing
Faculty Co-Supervisor's Contact Information: S-MB11109, John Molson Building, 1450 Guy St, Montreal, Quebec H3H 0A1; 514-848-2424 ext. 2956; 162eynep.arsel@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study:

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

G. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to investigate the marketing of comic books, with the precise objective of learning about the behavior of comic book readers, comic book fans and comic book collectors, along with expanding the lack of current available research on the marketing of comic books.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to sign this written consent form prior to being interviewed. You will be asked to answer a series of questions during the one-on-one interview, which will be recorded through audio taping if conducted in person or recorded through audio and video taping, if conducted online.

In total, participating in this study will take approximately one to two hours.

As a research participant, your responsibilities would be signing the consent form prior to the interview to confirm your voluntary participation and answering all questions truthfully.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are no known critical risks that you might face by participating in this research. The only potential risk that may occur involves the emotional aspect of discussing why you enjoy reading comic books and when did you start getting into comic books. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time, without negative consequences. You are not obligated to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. If ever you decide to withdraw from this research study after the interview has been completed, please inform me within the first ten days after your participation.

You might or might not personally benefit from participating in this research. Potential benefits include: understanding what makes you read comic books, learning about your own behavior regarding comic books, discovering the marketing behind comic books and the strategy of storytelling. You may also request a copy of the results after I have received the Thesis Committee's approval.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: your background and demographics, your personal experiences, behaviors, opinions and preferences on comic books, your thoughts on their characters, and your habits and practices when it comes to buying comic books.

By participating, you agree to let the researchers have access to information about you and your experience with comic books, as well as your thoughts and feelings within the topic of this interview. This information will be obtained from the answers you provide to the interview questions.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, regulatory authorities might examine the information gathered. By participating, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

We will protect the information by ensuring confidentiality: your personal identity will not be revealed in the research reports. The information gathered will be coded: in other words, we will protect your identity by assigning a fake name to our research study, as your real name will not be used. The researcher is the only one in possession of this identity marker (your first and last name). Only the information being pertinent to this research will be kept.

We will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided will not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before the end of the first ten days following your participation.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix J1

The first part of this appendix presents the English version of the interview guide that was used for the comic book readers and collectors.

An Introductory Script

After small talk, I will explain the interview procedure (with enthusiasm) and tell my participants what I expect of them, in order to establish roles prior to recording.

> "So, as you know, we are gathered here together today because doing a master's degree requires me to conduct interviews for my thesis. I am interested in learning and saying something about individuals who read and collect comic books, which is why I expect you to share stories with me about your experiences. I am really grateful for your participation in this study, and I appreciate you signing the written consent form. Here's how the interview will go: we'll start off with easy questions about yourself, and then you can tell me all about comic books! Your answers to my questions will only be used for this research and do not harm. Would you like to ask me anything before I introduce myself?"

Then, I will follow by introducing myself, and by explaining why I am interested in this topic, before broadly clarifying the research context. I will then ask them if they have any questions before I begin recording the interview on two separate devices.

> "Well, I'm Dania, 26 years old, currently doing a Master of Science in Marketing at JMSB. I am a huge pet lover, a skincare enthusiast and I somehow can't help myself from collecting comic books. I love comic books so much that I had to conduct my thesis on this topic and felt the need to discover not only about the marketing, but also about the readers behind them! Do you have any questions before I start recording our interview?"

Preliminary Questions on Background

- Can you tell me about yourself? (includes age, educational/family background)
- How would you describe your current lifestyle as? (concepts: job, social class/educational/family background, rituals, routines)
- Can you tell me about your typical morning and evening? (What does your morning and evening ritual look like?)
- What are your hobbies? (How often do you practice them? Concepts: social class background, rituals, routines)

Conceptual Questions

- How were you first introduced to the world of comic books? (How did you first feel? Concepts: family background, education, memories, triggers, story/process)
- When and how did you start getting into comic books? (What was that like? How did it make you feel? Concepts: memories, triggers, story/process)
- What do you love about comic books? (Could you tell me a bit more about that? Concept: emotions)
- Today, what does reading comic books mean to you? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Can you tell me about how you choose comic books? (That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? Focused concepts explaining why they stick by comic books: attitudes, process, contrast, consumption, attributes like favorite characters/superheroes, adoption/loyalty, trends.)
- What does collecting comic books mean to you today? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Has the pandemic affected the frequency at which you read comic books? (That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? Concepts: COVID-19 impacting practices, social class background, consumption)
- Can you tell me how much you spend and how often you shop for comic books? (concepts: collecting, budget, frequency, social class background, rituals, consumption, loyalty)

Topical Questions

- What do you consider a comic book to be?
- Why do you enjoy reading comic books? (What do you mean by [what participant said]? / Really? Concepts: process, frequency, emotions, meanings)
- What do the comic book publishers you choose mean to you? (concepts: emotions, preferences, meanings, loyalty)
- What do you enjoy in comic books? (What does X mean for you? Can you tell me how that is different from other books? Concepts: meanings, contrast, emotions)
- Can you tell me about your favorite comic book? If you have more than one, you can tell me about your top three. (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Why is it/are these your favorite? (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Can you tell me about your favorite comic book character or superhero? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- What are the genres of comic books that you enjoy? (If participant is not sure, I can ask them which ones out of: adult, crime, erotic, romance, superhero, manga, autobiographical, humour, non-fiction, mystery, history, science-fiction, fantasy, action and horror)

- What do you think makes a comic book better or more successful than another one? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- How would you compare the narratives in comic books with the ones in movies?
- What is a comic/manga that you would love to see in another form (animated series, movie or video game), and why?
- When do you find a comic book to be more enjoyable than a movie?
- When do you find a movie to be more enjoyable than a comic book?
- When do you prefer a video game over its comic/manga/series/movie?
- Would you like to be emailed a copy of the aggregate results after I receive the Thesis Committee's approval?

The Last Question

"Is there anything I have not asked regarding your experiences that you would like to tell me?"

Probing Questions

- How do you feel about that? (concept: emotions)
- What did you think about that? (concept: attitudes)
- What was that like? (concept: emotions)
- How do you do that? (concept: story/process/)
- Can you tell me how that is different from X? (concepts: contrast, clarification)
- What is easy/difficult about that? (concept: pain points)
- That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? (concept: verbalizing experiences)
- What do you mean by [what participant said]? (concept: clarification)
- How does that feel exactly? (concept: emotions)
- What does X mean for you? (concept: emotions)
- What's your definition of X? (concept: elaboration)
- That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? (concept: verbalizing experiences)
- Really? What is that? (concept: elaboration)
- Could you tell me a bit more about that? (concept: elaboration)

Appendix J2

The second part of this appendix presents the French version of the interview guide that was used for the comic book readers and collectors.

An Introductory Script

After small talk, I will explain the interview procedure (with enthusiasm) and tell my participants what I expect of them, in order to establish roles prior to recording.

> « Comme tu le sais, nous sommes réunis ensemble aujourd'hui car ma maîtrise me demande de faire des entrevues pour ma thèse. Je suis intéressée à apprendre et à raconter quelque chose qui concerne les individus qui lisent et collectionnent les bandes dessinées, ce qui explique pourquoi je m'attends à ce que tu partages des histoires avec moi sur tes expériences. Je suis très reconnaissante pour ta participation dans cette étude, et j'apprécie que tu aies signé le formulaire de consentement. Voilà comment l'entrevue va se dérouler : nous allons commencer avec des questions faciles et simple sur toi, et après tu pourras me parler des bandes dessinées ! Tes réponses à mes questions seront utilisées seulement pour cette recherche et ne font pas de mal. Aimerais-tu me poser une question avant que je m'introduise ? »

Then, I will follow by introducing myself, and by explaining why I am interested in this topic, before broadly clarifying the research context. I will then ask them if they have any questions before I begin recording the interview on two separate devices.

> « Alors, moi c'est Dania, j'ai 26 ans, et je fais présentement une maîtrise de science en marketing à l'école de commerce John Molson qui est à l'université Concordia. J'adore énormément les animaux, j'aime beaucoup les soins pour la peau et je n'arrive pas à arrêter de collectionner des bandes dessinées. J'aime tellement les BD que je devais faire ma thèse sur ce sujet, et je ressentais le besoin de découvrir non seulement le marketing, mais aussi les lecteurs derrière les BD. As-tu des questions à me poser avant que je commence à enregistrer notre entrevue ? »

Preliminary Questions on Background

- Peux-tu me parler de toi ? (includes age, educational/family background)
- Comment décrirais-tu ton mode de vie présentement ? (concepts: job, social class/educational/family background, rituals, routines)
- Peux-tu me raconter tes matinées et soirées typiques ? Quels sont tes rituels ou tes routines ? (What does your morning and evening ritual look like?)
- Quels sont tes passe-temps préférés ? (À quelle fréquence les fais-tu ? Concepts : social class background, rituals, routines)

Conceptual Questions

- Comment as-tu été introduit au monde des bandes dessinées la première fois ? Concepts : family background, education, memories, triggers, story/process)
- Quand et comment as-tu commencé à t'intéresser aux bandes dessinées ? (What was that like? How did it make you feel? Concepts: memories, triggers, story/process)
- Qu'est-ce que tu aimes à propos des bandes dessinées ? (Could you tell me a bit more about that? Concept: emotions)
- Aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce que lire des bandes dessinées signifie pour toi ? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Peux-tu me raconteur comment tu choisis des bandes dessinées ? (That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? Focused concepts explaining why they stick by comic books: attitudes, process, contrast, consumption, attributes like favorite characters/superheroes, adoption/loyalty, trends.)
- Qu'est-ce que collectionner des bandes dessinées signifie pour toi aujourd'hui ? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Est-ce que la pandémie a affecté la fréquence à laquelle tu lis des bandes dessinées ? (That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? Concepts: COVID-19 impacting practices, social class background, consumption)
- Peux-tu me dire combine tu dépenses et à quelle fréquence tu achètes des bandes dessinées ? (concepts: collecting, budget, frequency, social class background, rituals, consumption, loyalty)

Topical Questions

- Qu'est-ce que tu considères une bande dessinée ? C'est quoi pour toi ?
- Pourquoi aimes-tu lire les bandes dessinées ? (What do you mean by [what participant said]? / Really? Concepts: process, frequency, emotions, meanings)
- Qu'est-ce que les maisons d'éditions que tu choisis signifient pour toi ? (concepts : emotions, preferences, meanings, loyalty)
- Qu'est-ce que tu aimes dans les bandes dessinées ? (What does X mean for you? Can you tell me how that is different from other books? Concepts: meanings, contrast, emotions)
- Peux-tu me parler de ta les bande dessinée préférée ? Si tu en as plus qu'une, tu peux me parler de tes top 3. (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Pourquoi est-ce que c'est ta (ou elles sont tes) préférée(s) ? (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Peux-tu me parler de ton personnage ou superhéro préféré ? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Quels sont les genres de bandes dessinées que tu aimes ? (If participant is not sure, I can ask them which ones out of : adulte, crime, érotique, romantique, superhéros, manga, autobiographique, humour, non-fiction, mystérieux, historiques, science-fiction, fantastique, action and horreur)

- D'après toi, qu'est-ce qui fait en sorte qu'une bande dessinée soit meilleure ou aie plus de succès qu'une autre ? That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Comment pourrais-tu comparer la narration des bandes dessinées avec celles des films ?
- Quel serait la BD/le manga que tu aimerais voir dans un autre format (séries animées, film, ou jeux vidéo), et pourquoi ?
- Quand trouves-tu qu'une BD est plus amusante qu'un film ?
- Quand trouves-tu qu'un film est plus amusant qu'une BD ?
- Quand préfères-tu un jeux vidéo plutôt que sa version BD/manga/séries/film ?
- Aimerais-tu recevoir une copie par courriel des résultats que j'aurai assemblés une fois que je reçois l'accord du Comité d'Éthiques ?

The Last Question

"Il y a-t-il quelque chose que je ne t'ai pas demandé concernant tes expériences que tu aimerais partager avec moi ?"

Probing Questions

- Comment te sens-tu par rapport à ceci ? (concept : emotions)
- Qu'as-tu pensé de ceci ? (concept : attitudes)
- C'était comment ceci ? (concept : emotions)
- Comment fais-tu ceci ? (concept : story/process/)
- Peux-tu me dire comment ceci est différent de X ? (concepts : contrast, clarification)
- Qu'est-ce qui est facile/difficile à propos de ceci ? (concept : pain points)
- Ceci doit être très [excitant/décevant]. Peux-tu m'en parler davantage ? (concept : verbalizing experiences)
- Que veux-tu dire par [ce que le participant a dit] ? (concept : clarification)
- Comment est-ce que ceci te fait ressentir exactement ? (concept : emotions)
- Qu'est-ce que X signifie pour toi ? (concept: emotions)
- Quelle est ta définition de X ? (concept : elaboration)
- C'est intéressant ! Peux-tu m'en parler davantage ? (concept : verbalizing experiences)
- Vraiment ? Qu'est-ce que c'est ? (concept: elaboration)
- Pourrais-tu me parler un peu plus à propos de ceci ? (concept: elaboration)

Appendix K1

The first part of this appendix presents the English version of the interview guide that was used for the professionals working in the comic book industry.

An Introductory Script

After small talk, I will explain the interview procedure (with enthusiasm) and tell my participants what I expect of them, in order to establish roles prior to recording.

> "So, as you know, we are gathered here together today because doing a master's degree requires me to conduct interviews for my thesis. I am interested in learning and saying something about individuals who read and collect comic books, which is why I expect you to share stories with me about your experiences. I am really grateful for your participation in this study, and I appreciate you signing the written consent form. Here's how the interview will go: we'll start off with easy questions about yourself, and then you can tell me all about comic books! Your answers to my questions will only be used for this research and do not harm. Would you like to ask me anything before I introduce myself?"

Then, I will follow by introducing myself, and by explaining why I am interested in this topic, before broadly clarifying the research context. I will then ask them if they have any questions before I begin recording the interview on two separate devices.

> "Well, I'm Dania, 26 years old, currently doing a Master of Science in Marketing at JMSB. I am a huge pet lover, a skincare enthusiast and I somehow can't help myself from collecting comic books. I love comic books so much that I had to conduct my thesis on this topic and felt the need to discover not only about the marketing, but also about the readers behind them! Do you have any questions before I start recording our interview?"

Preliminary Questions on Background

- Can you tell me about yourself? (includes age, educational/family background)
- How would you describe your current lifestyle as? (concepts: job, social class/educational/family background, rituals, routines)
- Can you tell me about your typical morning and evening? (What does your morning and evening ritual look like?)
- What are your hobbies? (How often do you practice them? Concepts: social class background, rituals, routines)

Conceptual Questions

- How were you first introduced to the world of comic books? (How did you first feel? Concepts: family background, education, memories, triggers, story/process)
- When and how did you start getting into comic books? (What was that like? How did it make you feel? Concepts: memories, triggers, story/process)
- What do you love about comic books? (Could you tell me a bit more about that? Concept: emotions)
- Today, what does reading comic books mean to you? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Can you tell me about how you choose comic books? (That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? Focused concepts explaining why they stick by comic books: attitudes, process, contrast, consumption, attributes like favorite characters/superheroes, adoption/loyalty, trends.)
- What does collecting comic books mean to you today? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Has the pandemic affected the frequency at which you read comic books? (That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? Concepts: COVID-19 impacting practices, social class background, consumption)
- Can you tell me how much you spend and how often you shop for comic books? (concepts: collecting, budget, frequency, social class background, rituals, consumption, loyalty)
- What was your career trajectory like? (How did your professional journey make you feel? Concept: emotions)
- Throughout your career, what kind of audiences have you worked with? (What was that like? Concept: emotions)
- What would you say are the necessary skills for successful storytelling? (How are these different from other skills? Concept: elaboration)
- Can you tell me about your everyday experiences linked to your creative talents, such as writing, drawing and/or filming? (What does X mean for you? Concept: emotions)
- How would you compare the narratives in comic books with the ones in movies?
- What is the favorite project you have worked on? (What made it special? How did it evolve over time? Concept: elaboration)
- What is one project of yours that you would love to see in other formats (could be a film, a video game, etc.)? (That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that and why would it be this project specifically? Concept: verbalizing experiences)

Topical Questions

- What do you consider a comic book to be?
- Why do you enjoy reading comic books? (What do you mean by [what participant said]? / Really? Concepts: process, frequency, emotions, meanings)
- What do the comic book publishers you choose mean to you? (concepts: emotions, preferences, meanings, loyalty)

- What do you enjoy in comic books? (What does X mean for you? Can you tell me how that is different from other books? Concepts: meanings, contrast, emotions)
- Can you tell me about your favorite comic book? If you have more than one, you can tell me about your top three. (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Why is it/are these your favorite? (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Can you tell me about your favorite comic book character or superhero? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- What are the genres of comic books that you enjoy? (If participant is not sure, I can ask them which ones out of: adult, crime, erotic, romance, superhero, manga, autobiographical, humour, non-fiction, mystery, history, science-fiction, fantasy, action and horror)
- What do you think makes a comic book better or more successful than another one? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- How would you compare the narratives in comic books with the ones in movies?
- What is a comic/manga that you would love to see in another form (animated series, movie or video game), and why?
- When do you find a comic book to be more enjoyable than a movie?
- When do you find a movie to be more enjoyable than a comic book?
- When do you prefer a video game over its comic/manga/series/movie?
- Would you like to be emailed a copy of the aggregate results after I receive the Thesis Committee's approval?
- Since this is my first time interviewing a professional and I'm still learning, would it be okay if I wanted to ask you more questions in the future?
- I don't know if you've had the chance to discuss it with your colleagues, but do you think any of them would be willing to participate in an interview for my study?

The Last Question

"Is there anything I have not asked regarding your experiences that you would like to tell me?"

Probing Questions

- How do you feel about that? (concept: emotions)
- What did you think about that? (concept: attitudes)
- What was that like? (concept: emotions)
- How do you do that? (concept: story/process/)
- Can you tell me how that is different from X? (concepts: contrast, clarification)
- What is easy/difficult about that? (concept: pain points)
- That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? (concept: verbalizing experiences)
- What do you mean by [what participant said]? (concept: clarification)

- How does that feel exactly? (concept: emotions)
- What does X mean for you? (concept: emotions)
- What's your definition of X? (concept: elaboration)
- That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? (concept: verbalizing experiences)
- Really? What is that? (concept: elaboration)
- Could you tell me a bit more about that? (concept: elaboration)

Appendix K2

The second part of this appendix presents the French version of the interview guide that was used for the professionals working in the comic book industry.

An Introductory Script

After small talk, I will explain the interview procedure (with enthusiasm) and tell my participants what I expect of them, in order to establish roles prior to recording.

> « Comme tu le sais, nous sommes réunis ensemble aujourd'hui car ma maîtrise me demande de faire des entrevues pour ma thèse. Je suis intéressée à apprendre et à raconter quelque chose qui concerne les individus qui lisent et collectionnent les bandes dessinées, ce qui explique pourquoi je m'attends à ce que tu partages des histoires avec moi sur tes expériences. Je suis très reconnaissante pour ta participation dans cette études, et j'apprécie que tu aies signé le formulaire de consentement. Voilà comment l'entrevue va se dérouler : nous allons commencer avec des questions faciles et simple sur toi, et après tu pourras me parler des bandes dessinées ! Tes réponses à mes questions seront utilisées seulement pour cette recherche et ne font pas de mal. Aimerais-tu me poser une question avant que je m'introduise ? »

Then, I will follow by introducing myself, and by explaining why I am interested in this topic, before broadly clarifying the research context. I will then ask them if they have any questions before I begin recording the interview on two separate devices.

> « Alors, moi c'est Dania, j'ai 26 ans, et je fais présentement une maîtrise de science en marketing à l'école de commerce John Molson qui est à l'université Concordia. J'adore énormément les animaux, j'aime beaucoup les soins pour la peau et je n'arrive pas à arrêter de collectionner des bandes dessinées. J'aime tellement les BD que je devais faire ma thèse sur ce sujet, et je ressentais le besoin de découvrir non seulement le marketing, mais aussi les lecteurs derrière les BD. As-tu des questions à me poser avant que je commence à enregistrer notre entrevue ? »

Preliminary Questions on Background

- Peux-tu me parler de toi ? (includes age, educational/family background)
- Comment décrirais-tu ton mode de vie présentement ? (concepts: job, social class/educational/family background, rituals, routines)
- Peux-tu me raconter tes matinées et soirées typiques ? Quels sont tes rituels ou tes routines ? (What does your morning and evening ritual look like?)
- Quels sont tes passe-temps préférés ? (À quelle fréquence les fais-tu ? Concepts : social class background, rituals, routines)

Conceptual Questions

- Comment as-tu été introduit au monde des bandes dessinées la première fois ? Concepts : family background, education, memories, triggers, story/process)
- Quand et comment as-tu commence à t'intéressé aux bandes dessinées ? (What was that like? How did it make you feel? Concepts: memories, triggers, story/process)
- Qu'est-ce que tu aimes à propos des bandes dessinées ? (Could you tell me a bit more about that? Concept: emotions)
- Aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce que lire des bandes dessinées signifie pour toi ? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Peux-tu me raconteur comment tu choisis des bandes dessinées ? (That's interesting! Can you tell me more about that? Focused concepts explaining why they stick by comic books: attitudes, process, contrast, consumption, attributes like favorite characters/superheroes, adoption/loyalty, trends.)
- Qu'est-ce que collectionner des bandes dessinées signifie pour toi aujourd'hui ? (How does that feel exactly? Contextual concepts: meanings, emotions, rituals)
- Est-ce que la pandémie a affecté la fréquence à laquelle tu lis des bandes dessinées ? (That must be very [exciting/upsetting]. Can you tell me more about that? Concepts: COVID-19 impacting practices, social class background, consumption)
- Peux-tu me dire combien tu dépenses et à quelle fréquence tu achètes des bandes dessinées ? (concepts: collecting, budget, frequency, social class background, rituals, consumption, loyalty)
- Le déroulement de ta carrière, c'était commen t? (Qu'est-ce que ton parcours professionnel te fait ressentir?)
- À travers ta carrière, quels sont les types d'audiences avec lesquelles tu as travaillé? (C'était comment ça ?)
- D'après toi, quels sont les compétences nécessaires pour le succès d'une narration ? (Comment est-ce que ceux-ci sont-elles différentes des autres aptitudes ?)
- Peux-tu me parler de tes expériences quotidiennes reliées avec tes talents créatifs, tel que l'écriture, le dessin et ou la cinématographie ?
- Comment comparerais-tu les récits des BDs avec celles des films ?
- Quel est le projet préféré sur lequel tu as travaillé ? (Pourquoi était-il si spécial ? Comment a-t-il évolué à travers le temps ?)
- Quel serait un de tes projets que tu aimerais voir dans d'autres formats ? (ça pourrait être un film, un jeux vidéo, etc.) (C'est intéressant ! Peux-tu m'en raconter plus et me dire pourquoi ce projet spécifiquement)

Topical Questions

- Qu'est-ce que tu considères une bande dessinée ? C'est quoi pour toi ?
- Pourquoi aimes-tu lire les bandes dessinées ? (What do you mean by [what participant said]? / Really? Concepts: process, frequency, emotions, meanings)

- Qu'est-ce que les maisons d'édttions que tu choisis signifient pour toi ? (concepts : emotions, preferences, meanings, loyalty)
- Qu'est-ce que tu aimes dans les bandes dessinées ? (What does X mean for you? Can you tell me how that is different from other books? Concepts: meanings, contrast, emotions)
- Peux-tu me parler de ta (ou tes) bande(s) dessinée(s) préférée(s) ? Si tu en as plus qu'une, tu peux me parler de tes top 3. (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Pourquoi est-ce que c'est ta (ou elles sont tes) préférée(s) ? (What does X mean for you? Focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Peux-tu me parler de ton personnage ou superhéro préféré ? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Quels sont les genres de bandes dessinées que tu aimes ? (If participant is not sure, I can ask them which ones out of : adulte, crime, érotique, romantique, superhéros, manga, autobiographique, humour, non-fiction, mystérieux, historiques, science-fiction, fantastique, action and horreur)
- Qu'est-ce que tu penses qui fait en sorte qu'une bande dessinée soit meilleure ou aie plus de succès qu'une autre ? (That's interesting! Can you tell me why? / Can you tell me how that is different from X? focused concepts: trends, preferences, emotions, contrast, clarification, meanings)
- Comment pourrais-tu comparer la narration des bandes dessinées avec celles des livres ?
- Quel serait la BD/manga que tu aimerais voir dans un autre format (séries animées, film ou jeux vidéo), et pourquoi ?
- Quand trouves-tu qu'une BD est plus amusante qu'un film ?
- Quand trouves-tu qu'un film est plus amusant qu'une BD ?
- Quand préfères-tu qu'un jeux vidéo plutôt que sa version BD/manga/séries/film ?
- Aimerais-tu recevoir une copie par courriel des résultats que j'aurai assemblés une fois que je reçois l'accord du Comité d'Éthiques ?
- Est-ce que ça te dérangerais si je te demandais d'autres questions dans le futur ?
- Penses-tu qu'il y aurait un de tes collègues qui aimerait participer dans une entrevue pour ma recherche ?

The Last Question

"Il y a-t-il quelque chose que je ne t'ai pas demandé concernant tes expériences que tu aimerais partager avec moi ?"

Probing Questions

- Comment te sens-tu par rapport à ceci ? (concept : emotions)
- Qu'as-tu pensé de ceci ? (concept : attitudes)
- C'était comment ceci ? (concept : emotions)
- Comment fais-tu ceci ? (concept : story/process/)
- Peux-tu me dire comment ceci est différent de X ? (concepts : contrast, clarification)
- Qu'est-ce qui est facile/difficile à propos de ceci ? (concept : pain points)

- Ceci doit être très [excitant/décevant]. Peux-tu m'en parler davantage ? (concept : verbalizing experiences)
- Que veux-tu dire par [ce que le participant a dit] ? (concept : clarification)
- Comment est-ce que ceci te fait ressentir exactement ? (concept : emotions)
- Qu'est-ce que X signifie pour toi ? (concept: emotions)
- Quelle est ta définition de X ? (concept : elaboration)
- C'est intéressant ! Peux-tu m'en parler davantage ? (concept : verbalizing experiences)
- Vraiment ? Qu'est-ce que c'est ? (concept: elaboration)
- Pourrais-tu me parler un peu plus à propos de ceci ? (concept: elaboration)

Appendix L

Celebrities Go Comic Book Shopping

As previously mentioned in the Method section, seven YouTube videos, from the YouTube channel *Collider Extras,* were qualitatively analyzed. The beauty behind this YouTube channel consists of not only viewers detaining the opportunity of seeing what comic book experts recommend to celebrities when they go comic book shopping, but viewers also get to discover new comic books through the hosts' suggestions in several comic book stores throughout the United States. At times, viewers can come across comics they previously read, which allows them to revisit their memory with a host of a YouTube channel, highlighting key pages and moments to a celebrity. The audience targeted also learns about the cost of comic book shopping, within the context of having a celebrity budget.

Three Actors who Played Roles in Movies Deriving from Comics

David Harbour, the Main Actor in *Hellboy*. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Hellboy Star David Harbour Goes Comic Book Shopping, Talks Black Widow and Stranger Things." The video lasts for a total of 13 minutes and 47 seconds. This YouTube video had 185,763 views on May 8th and increased to 187,082 views by July 15th, 2022. This might be due to the new fourth season of Stranger Things. It amassed 188K views as of November 14th, 2022. The video premiered on April 16th, 2019. During the video, a virtual panel explains that the origins of Hellboy were first from a comic book in 1993.

David is part of the three actors studied in the netnography who played roles in movies deriving from comics books. During the video, David Harbour goes comic book shopping with

Coy Jandreau, the host of the show, at Golden Apple Comics, "in the heart of Hollywood on Melrose," in Los Angeles, California. David acts as Hellboy, the main character in the movie. A virtual panel pops up to explain to viewers that "Hellboy first appeared on Dime Press #4 (Cover) and San Diego Comic-Con Comics #2 (4-page storyline) in 1993."

When asked about reading comics during his childhood, David said "I was more of like a video games kid... Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Lord of the Rings were a big thing for me. The actual comic books, I didn't really get into until I got into graphic novels, kind of in my 20s. Thor and Aquaman [from DC Comics], and all those guys were more cartoons and video games for me." This is another example depicting that even celebrities encounter characters from comic books during different life stages, as early as childhood, and that transmedia brands engage individuals through various mediums, such as video games and television series, just like with David. He later delved into the world of comics after expanding his consumption of transmedia brands through their other mediums. David added that he both saw and really liked watching all the DC and Marvel movies that are based on comic books, and that his favorite character from those two universes is Batman:

> I've always been a huge Batman fan, and I even like the Adam West show, and certainly like Michael Keaton, and Christian Bale, and Ben Affleck! Messed up guys who decide to take vigilante justice in their own hands – yeah! That's my kind of superhero! Like, not so into the pure-hearted ones, like Superman who does it for the good of humanity. I like the ones that do it for selfish reasons of working out their own personal demons, right from the therapist's couch, right to the street, you know what I mean?

This here depicts how David enjoys Batman as a comic book character through different mediums, just as much as Batman's personality developments. David is able to relate to the comic book character due to his realistic traits, and how he has inner battles with himself.

The following depicts a great example of how visual representations are crucial when a comic book character is being adapted into another medium. Coy leads David to a section where

Hellboy comics are displayed in the comic bookstore, which also happened to be right next to the Stranger Things comics (originated as a television series). When the host questions David about how well the movie adapted the Hellboy character visually, the actor explained:

> A lot of that was done by Joel Harlow, who's the makeup guy for this – Joel is a huge Hellboy fan. He was really excited to be able to do this with makeup, I mean he's an old classic monster guy, and was able to do it practically and not have it be CGI at all! An entire practical outfit! We did stuff with scarring on his face, and kind of all throughout his body; he's a bit more busted and scarred up. Then, the other thing is I was really interested in the coat, and even rips in the particular coat as he fights: there's an iconic rip that he always gets on his shoulder, and you see this shoulder, we recreate that rip in one particular aspect of the fight. And also, even this little thing, it's an interesting, almost British style overcoat, because it has this indented lapel-ish type thing up here, and you see how it does buckle a little bit like that. I remember being very stood with the costume designer, where we put a wire in it, so that it could have this buckle to it. We've done a little bit of work with the Hellboy on these horses, and like kind of direct shots of the Osiris club [from the comic book "Hellboy: The Wild Hunt #1 from 2008] going out fighting these giants Hellboy in these shots that are like pulled right from the comic and that I found that really exciting about this piece!

In other words, being consistent with the main character's outfit, along with re-enacting him, was crucial to a faithful adaptation. To be more precise, the actor recommended individuals who have not previously read a Hellboy comic to read the ones that highly inspired the movie: Hellboy's The Wild Hunt, Conqueror Worm [#1 from 2001], Hellboy in Hell [from 2012], and Hellboy and the B.P.R.D., among others.

Another example of a transmedia brand is Stranger Things; Coy presents to David a comic book that was inspired by the original television series. He tells him: "it's a different perspective than the show, so it actually feels like a side mission," to which the actor responds: "yeah that's super cool." Yet when David finds out the character he played (Chief Hopper) was not included, he cracks a few jokes, making Coy giggle, and says: "they forgot a major character," while gently throwing away the comic in the air. Then, the host shows David a comic book from the Marvel Universe that was remastered and painted for Marvel's anniversary. Coy

explains that the painted comic presents "iconic and classic bits in the Marvel Universe" from the audience's position, and how the end presents where the remaster comes from, "what panel reflects what and every bit of the universe." The actor looks astonished and says: "Wow! This is some nerdy stuff right here – this is a geek paradise!" He then picks up the comic he threw away earlier, apologizing multiple times, claiming his ego got carried away.

David explains how he is very excited to be part of the new Marvel Black Widow movie. He said he loves Coy's recommendation to buy Alan Moore's Batman: The Killing Joke (1988), which is one of the stories implicating The Joker's origin. David said he heard of it previously, but has not read it yet, despite growing up loving the Batman universe. Coy follows by suggesting several comic books from Marvel's Black Widow. As the two of them walk around the comic book store, the actor takes the initiative of telling Coy:

> You've made a lot of decisions here, you've put me in a lot of directions. I'm sure there's something you know, but it's something that I just love – I wasn't even aware there was a comic world around it, but I love Rick and Morty! That television show, I dig it, it is brilliant! Stranger things is the best show on television, but it is the second best show on television! And look there is a Versus Dungeons & Dragons issue! This seems like it was written for me! Thank you, guys, for writing this, and I'm going to go home and read this. And you get your own copy as well [as he hands a second copy to Coy].

A virtual panel also shows up stating that two Rick and Morty stars appeared on Comic Book Shopping in 2017. This is a great example of how mediums that add comics to their transmedia brands can also bring happiness, joy, excitement, and other positive emotions to individuals who appreciate them.

David expressed that he was introduced to comic book characters during his childhood through video games and movies, and that he later delved into the world of comics in another life stage: he expanded his consumption of transmedia brands through comics during his early adulthood. This example depicts that even celebrities encounter characters from comic books, and that transmedia brands engage individuals through various mediums, such as video games and television series. His favorite comic book character is Batman – he considers himself to be a huge fan. He explained that he enjoys him as a character in different mediums because of Batman's evolution and personality developments; David relates to the comic book character due to Batman's realistic traits and how he has inner battles with himself. He said he loved Coy's recommendation to buy Alan Moore's *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988), which is one of the stories implicating The Joker's origin. David said he heard of it previously, but has not read it yet, despite growing up loving the Batman universe.

The following is a great example of how visual representations are crucial when a comic book character is being adapted into another medium. When the host questions David about how well the movie adapted the Hellboy character visually, and how the protagonist's design from the movie was very similar and "looked like he was ripped out of these [Mike Mignola's comic book] frames." The actor explained that the majority of the technical work of representing Hellboy faithfully in the movies was done by the makeup artist, who also happened to be a huge fan of Hellboy comics. His costume barely needing any CGI due to its accurate representation: from the scars on Hellboy's face and body, to his ripped coat. David expressed the costume was very important to him, and that the movie producers recreated an iconic rip that lays on Hellboy's shoulder through a fight. He also said that he noticed how Hellboy had a buckle on his British style overcoat, and he ensured with the costume designer that it would be added. He

wanted the scenes in the movie to be felt like they were "pulled right from the comic, and I found that really exciting about this piece!" In other words, being consistent with the main character's outfit, along with re-enacting him, was crucial to a faithful adaptation. David even pinpointed specific comics that highly inspired the movie (please refer to Appendix B). To contrast with an example that displays an unfaithful adaptation, David was disappointed when Coy presented him a comic book about a transmedia brand that originated in a television series (he previously acted in Stranger Things), since the comic did not incorporate a character he acted as.

When the host shows David a comic book from the Marvel Universe that was remastered and painted for Marvel's anniversary that turned out to be a painted comic, the actor's enthusiasm could be felt, as he looked astonished and said: "Wow! This is some nerdy stuff right here – this is a geek paradise!" His happiness intensifies when he discovers a comic book that was published by his favorite television show. While browsing around the comic book store, David takes the initiative of telling Coy:

> […] it's something that I just love – I wasn't even aware there was a comic world around it, but I love Rick and Morty! That television show, I dig it, it is brilliant! Stranger Things is the best show on television, but it is the second best show on television! And look! There is a Versus Dungeons & Dragons issue! This seems like it was written for me! Thank you, guys, for writing this! And I'm going to go home and read this! And you get your own copy as well! [as he hands a second copy to Coy]

I have met the writer of this specific comic book and the artist at Comic Con in Montreal in July 2022. He was very open and enthusiastic about discussing how he has been a professional in the field of comic books for years, and he was honored that the producers of Rick and Morty approached him to create a comic book. This is a great example of how mediums that add comics to their transmedia brands can also bring happiness, joy, excitement, and other positive emotions to individuals who appreciate them.

Lastly, an example of ritualistic consumption occurred when David mentioned reading comic books before he goes to sleep, as he was shown a comic book about Batman and a villain, Bane, in a "cat-and-mouse game of psychological warfare," to which David responded by saying how much he loves brutality, that this comic book is right up his alley, and that this is for his bedtime reading.

Zachary Levi, the Main Actor in *Shazam!* This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Shazam Star Zachary Levi Goes Comic Book Shopping." This video lasts for a total of 11 minutes and 17 seconds. This YouTube video had over 254K views on August 12th, 2022, and amassed 262K views as of November 14th, 2022. The increase of views might be due to the new release of the movie Black Adam in October 2022, which is connected to Shazam!, and is also from the DC Universe (Jennings, 2022). This video premiered on April 2nd, 2019. The character Captain Marvel, also known as Shazam, originated from a comic book in 1939 from DC Comics (Jennings, 2022; Knight, 2019; Sandwell, 2019).

Like the majority of participants in this study, Zachary Levi (the actor of the superhero Shazam), was also introduced to comics during his childhood, specifically when he was four years old. He recalled absorbing the visuals in comics before he even learned how to read:

> I started recognizing that they were these cool pictures and things, but I couldn't read. That's also great for comics, because a lot of action is involved; I can kind of read that guy hits that guy – POW! Probably through middle school were my most fervent years […].

He then explained how comic books followed him throughout his youth: "I was a big Marvel kid. I was super into X-Men, X-force, X-factor – all of the Xs. I loved Gambit, he was my favorite of the X-men." Many of the participants also mentioned their love for those comic book characters, and how they related to them during their childhood and teenagerhood. Zachary also

recalled that when he was 12 years old, he told all of his friends that he wanted to be Wolverine, while he ran around them, pretending to be his favorite character. He also stated that Deadpool was another of his favorite characters, because of his "really cool and fun personality," which also turned out to be a favorite comic book character among many participants that were interviewed.

The following is another example describing movie adaptions of comic books, along with the perception of the main actor as the protagonist. The host of the show, Coy Jandreau, questions Zachary about his thoughts on how DC made a movie out of the Shazam comic books. The actor said:

> This is so insane for DC to basically recover, rebrand Shazam to tie in with the movie. And then the parallel, having all these side-by-side incredible art that's coming out, that people are doing these variants on stuff in the past.

In other words, he expressed his appreciation for re-interpretations and how comics are continuously being re-vamped through different perspectives and personal touched. Zachary then explains how he felt when he found out he was going to act as the main character for the Shazam movie:

> Getting the role was an incredible experience! It's a complete dream come true, and not just for the kid in me that always wanted to be a superhero, but for the actor in me that knew these are types of movies we can make now!

He also compares his role in Shazam! To another one he did for Marvel:

> It was super dreamy to get to play Fandral in the Thor franchise that was a supporting character that didn't really have that much to do. I'm so grateful to have been able to be a part of that, but always hoped and believed that I could be my own superhero. And, so, to get to be the titular character of this franchise, hopefully it brings honor to it and all the fans for many, many years, [from] Marvel fans all the way to Shazam fans. That's all super, super cool and surreal.

This here represents how even celebrities, and more precisely an actor, can feel grateful about having the opportunity to act as comic book characters in movies. He also described how it is

important for him to honor comic book fans throughout the movie with its faithful adaptations, and how even for him, as a famous actor, the entire experience can feel surreal. Zachary admitted not knowing about Shazam at first, but when he received the script, he went ahead and researched the character. This highlights the importance of consistent representations and faithful adaptions in transmedia brands. Zachary joked and said that he has always been a "man child." He gives viewers an example, by describing how he was thrilled with being able to "show up on set in my super suit, telling the crew:

> What are we doing? Come on! Let's go save the world! It is so fun to be able to allow the kid in you to let it be him. I have always really genuinely tried to have an optimism and a lust for life and an openness in that, and love toward people, and I think those are huge parts of the character. He has a fun attitude, but he's got such a big heart, so you can't hide it.

This confirms that the actor wanted to embody the comic book character's nature, his traits, values, and personality, as he wanted viewers of the movie to recognize how he portrayed the protagonist's uplifting attitude and kind heart. Being perceived positively by comic book communities mattered to him.

In relation to the Glossary (please see Appendix B), Zachary mentioned the Silver Age era and recalled it as a period where comics were innocent but had a "tremendous sense of wonder."

Like the participants in this study, Zachary Levi, the actor of the superhero Shazam (who is also known as Captain Marvel), was introduced to comics when he was four years old. He recalls:

> I started recognizing that they were these cool pictures and things, but I couldn't read. That's also great for comics, because a lot of action is involved; I can kind of read that guy hits that guy - POW! Probably through middle school were my most fervent years: Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld for Marvel then starting to image that whole era of mass which was a dope era of comics.

Later in the video, after Zachary mentioned his perception of comics' Silver Age era, he stated how Spider-Man and Deadpool comics have a big sense of comedy.

Jake Gyllenhaal, Actor for a Villain in a Spider-Man Movie. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Jake Gyllenhaal Talks *Spider-Man: Far From Home* While Going Comic Book Shopping." The video lasts for a total of 13 minutes and 18 seconds. This YouTube video was more popular than the latter, as it amassed more than 437K views on August 13th, 2021. It amassed 457K views by November 14th, 2022. The increase in views could be due to the most recent Spider-Man movie being released in December 2021 (Hector & Power, 2022). The YouTube video premiered on July 2nd, 2019.

The villain that Jake acts as is named Mysterio, who is a character that originated in 1964 through his debut in the 13th issue of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko (Keaney, 2019).

When discussing his role as an antagonist for the movie, Jake talked about how he was wearing a fishbowl as part of the creation of his costume, while also trying on a re-designed suit: the actor wanted to bring the supervillain to life in an appealing and cool way for the comic book community. He explained that there was a foundation set up with the creative team of the movie, but he was able to shape his ideas about Mysterio, the villain he had to re-enact. Jake loved learning about comics, and said it was one of the best parts of his job:

> I had fun doing it. Playing dark characters, it's what I love, it brings me joy […]. Being an actor, just like in comics, you need your imagination, and if you lose your imagination you're done for. […] Playing Mysterio was so cool because so much imagination was needed […]. I try and find honesty with characters I play.

This depicts how honesty is vital when bringing a comic book character to life in a movie, and how in both cases, especially when a comic book character was never acted previously in a movie, using imagination is critical. The actor also described how he appreciated being able to

adapt the supervillain in his own way, since Mysterio is not as popular as in the other comic book characters: “I love that about him, as a character, because he’s not as known, in a popular sense, I could do a little bit more, some different choices with him.”

Towards the end of the video, the host, Coy Jandreau, commented on how comic books can present our values in non-conventional and creative ways: “with the infinite budget of comics, it really educates you about what the core of humanity is, by ways of showing you non-humans.” This also represents how comic books can be educational in their own unique way.

Two Famous Professionals in the Comic Book Industry

Frank Miller, A Living Legend. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: “Frank Miller Reveals Western Sin City Prequel in the Works & Goes Comic Book Shopping.” This YouTube video had 137,753 views on July 16th, 2022, and 139,878 views by August 5th, 2022. It amassed 141K views by November 14th, 2022. The YouTube video premiered on August 9th, 2017, and lasts for a total of 11 minutes and 11 seconds.

Jon Schnepp, another host for the same show, hung out at a comic book store in Hollywood, California, with Frank Miller – writer, penciller, drawer, inker, colorist, designer of artist covers, and director of comic books.

The following is a great example of how authors and artists have an impact on their readers; storylines and superhero crossovers obviously have consequences on comic book readers, but they also do on their creators. This also portrays volitional re-consumption, whether it is for remembering a story or revisiting a storyline to re-experience emotions and feelings that

were first felt. Jon brung up for discussion *Batman: The Dark Knight* up. As suspenseful music starts playing for the viewers of the video, Frank elaborated on its origins:

> I had a chance to do Batman, and I was 29 years old, and I was dreading the nightmare of turning thirty. And so, I figured that man's got to be older than me! So, I made it impossible – age of 50. From that sprung everything about the story. That gave me the opportunity to put him in a really dystopian world, but really justified there being a rough-and-tumble Batman. And casting Superman in a very questionable – all this government stooge. I originally planned it on being a very simple straightforward story, which Batman came out of retirement, fought the bad guys and died in a hail police gunfire. But as I was working on it, I realized that didn't really work. Also, the other characters started crawling, and it became a story about Batman and Superman. And this little girl became Robin, and the whole thing just got bigger and bigger!

In this example, Frank provides his personal sources of inspiration for the creation of a legendary comic book. He also expressed how he wanted Batman to be different in his story, he wanted his storytelling to be unique by presenting Batman atypically in one of his later life stages – an older adult. Frank also added how easily adding side-characters can turn out to be. Jon explained to the comic book creator how he felt when he read the comic itself, and how his interpretation changed as he grew older:

> Well, it's truly one of the greatest comics ever written! I mean, I got chills when I – from a kid reading it, to my adult age, now, reading it again! I always get chills on certain pages! Every single writer who's ever read The Dark Knight, it's burned into them, and then their take on Batman is forever partly yours.

Frank seemed touched and replied to Jon by saying how he felt when reading others' interpretations of Batman comic books:

> Well, that's the way it was for me with Dick Sprang's Batman [issue #20 from 1943], and with Neal Adams' [Batman #227, from 1970]. It's part of the process of handling these old characters; it's that you go in, you do your best work, and you hope that you've not just had your fun with the toys, but you've actually done something you'll [comic book readers] remember.

Another example of the feelings and emotions felt was brought up by Jon. He described the intensity of what he felt, after he told the viewers and his guest:

> Now here's something that just recently came out: this is the collection of Dark Knight 3. I read it, and actually, I got to be honest with you, the 9th issue… I got a tear in my eye at that last page when it went full circle… […] Oh man! Well, it might have been three [tears] Frank.

Frank smirked and referred to the emotional content to contain a character who let comic book readers down. This is about recounting the emotions felt when reading comics, and the explanation of the types of consequences comic books can have on its readers due to powerful storytelling. Stories depicted with images, such as in comics, can trigger emotions and feelings that are felt and lived.

The following presents another example of how consistency is key for a movie's adaption of a comic book. As the video displayed a shelf with comic books labelled "Frank Miller The Art of Sin City," Jon asked his guest about another source of inspiration: the one that made Frank decide on creating his own comic books. The guest explained his relationship with the comic book publisher: "well that started really with *Sin City*. If I'm going to do something original, why not with a young vigorous company? And the relationship with Dark Horse turned out to be very, very strong – unwavering strong." As he spoke, the video showed pages from Frank's first comic book with his own story: *Sin City The Hard Goodbye* (1993). Jon then told him that he believes the first *Sin City* (2005) movie "was really amazing" because Frank was behind it. The guest clarified the importance of co-creation by working hand in hand as a director, with a director:

> Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute! Sure, it was great that I was involved, but it was also absolutely important that it had the vision and energy of Robert Rodriguez behind it. And, also, that he had a big enough (and healthy enough ego) to say that he wanted me, shoulder to shoulder, through the whole thing! And he was as generous of a collaborator as you could ask for. Good man.

This is also an example of how transmedia brands can expand ethically, preserving the comic's essence through the expansion of its storylines to another medium.

The video then filmed a comic book cover stating: "Daredevil by Frank Miller & Klaus Janson," while the guest told Frank that a television series on Netflix was inspired by his comic book. He then asked him, as the creator who "originated and created" Elektra (a panel stated that it is a character featured in Daredevil #168 in 1981), how did he feel about others' interpretations of her through movies and television series, while they "go back to the original source material." Frank explained that he is not in a position to be territorial; "I came in and I was playing with their toys – and all that's fair game." Comic books are bount to be re-interpreted through other mediums, as they have been doing historically. A second example of a comic book becoming a major blockbuster movie is with *300*. Jon told Frank: "Well, we love 300 [issue #1 from 1998]! It's a fantastic graphic novel! If you're familiar with the movie 300, there's an incredible comic book that this man wrote and drew called 300! Get it!" The previous examples depict how storylines in transmedia brands and comic books can quicky be adopted successfully.

Frank's passion for comics was up for discussion. Jon asked Frank Miller: "what got you involved in comic books?" to which he replies:

> My mother tells the story that I was five years old when I told her that I was going to draw comic books for the rest of my life. I grew up reading, you know, comic books, and my father was a traveling salesman, and would come back from trips to New York City; he'd bring comic books, you know, that I couldn't get in the small town I grew up in. So, yeah, I just devoured them, and I wanted to do them!

Like the majority of the interviewed participants, Frank was also introduced to comic books during his childhood. His passion grew tremendously as he grew older, and he always knew that he would devote himself to the field of comics as a professional. With a subtle notion of nostalgia, Jon then asked his guest if he held memories of "the spinner rack." Frank said enthusiastically: "absolutely! I've got one of my own. [he turns towards the camera to speak to all viewers of the video] If you don't have a spinner rack, get one!"

Another life stage was brought up for discussion when Jon explained that we have all entered a Golden Age of comic books due to transmedia brands: "we've got giant $100 million movies like Wonder Woman coming out and making tons of money. What are your feelings about the Marvel and DC movies?" Frank smiled and responded: "I could only take one at a time. The good ones are really good and the bad ones aren't worth mentioning. That's why I'll mention Wonder Woman; it was absolutely terrific!" Since Wonder Woman is from DC Comics, Jon then asks if Frank enjoys any of the Marvel movies. The guest replied by relating the concepts within transmedia brands to youth and being a teenager:

> I enjoyed the last Spider-Man a lot. I liked the kid who played Spider-Man [Tom Holland], and some of the touches were so gentle and clever. The fact that he was shorter than Mary Jane Watson – doesn't that take everybody back to their adolescence?

This was a great depiction of how comics can be nostalgic, bringing readers to an earlier stage of their lives, and reminiscing their youth.

Frank Miller also gave advice to any aspiring comic book writer and artist who want to get involved in the industry:

> If you want to draw comics, the most important thing is to learn to draw. In order to draw a figure well, you have to learn how the muscles and bones work. A lot of people learn a lot of surface anatomy because they study comic books, but they don't even know which bones go where, and you've got to know that first and foremost! I was taught that very early on in my career, and it's been the most valuable lesson I learned!

This was a relevant and revealing recommendation to practitioners in the field of comics books. Interestingly enough, and right in line with the topic of this thesis, the following is about the importance of storytelling in comic books and in marketing, along with the impact of reading comic books during different life stages. Jon asked his guest: "what is it about comic books that are so effective storytelling techniques?" [A pop-up shows up saying: "Famed cartoonist Will

Eisner is best known for his series The Spirit, created in 1940." The famous Eisner Awards are given in his honor. Frank replied:

> I've got to quote somebody who was much wiser than I am: this is Will Eisner. He said to me that what would make comic books so special wasn't they could do extraordinary wild crazy things all over the place; he said it was because they were intimate. Now, I half agree with Will about that, because what I also love about comics is they can do ridiculously extraordinary things, but the intimate nature of the form is very important. The fact that you own a comic, and you're alone with it, is a big thing that makes them special. Also, they help you learn to read.

This is a great example of how an iconic professional in the industry discussed an individual who influenced and inspired him. Aside from revealing their creative nature that fuels readers' imagination, Frank disclosed that the object to subject bond makes comic books intimate. He also stated their educational aspects.

Jon Schnepp hangs out at a comic book store named Meltdown Comics, in Hollywood, California, with Frank Miller. The beginning of the video starts with the host who enthusiastically says: "I'm standing with the legendary Frank Miller! That's right, you know him! If you don't, you're crazy!" He then turns to his guest and tells him:

> Frank, it's an honor to have you on the show. […] This man has done so many incredible comics! I can't even begin to list them, but guess what? I'm going to! He's got DareDevil, he's got [Batman] The Dark Knight Returns, he's got Batman Year One, you've got Martha Washington, you got Sin City! Let me just start off: what genre haven't you tackled yet?

Frank replied "Westerns. I've really got a Western! I want to do it. It's for Sin City. I figured all that all the superhero books get an origin story – why shouldn't Sin City?" As the host asks for details about it to Frank, the guest tells him that he cannot answer some of his questions – creating a comic book easily takes several years.

As both the host and the guest stand in front of a bookshelf where a section is labelled "Frank Miller," the host looks at Frank and tells him: "your career spans so many amazing

things; you actually pretty much launched the regenesis of comic books in the 80s. Let's talk about Ronin." The guest looks at the host and recalls:

> Well yeah! Ronin! I got hit by two really big influences at the same time. I was exposed to Lone Wolf and Cub and at the same time, I was exposed to Jean Giraud [the comic book artist for] "Moebius". At that age, at that time, hit by all this material, I just threw everything into a giant stew pot, and made it [a] completely insane comic book to combine them.

A panel shows on the screen to display pages from Frank Miller's comic books #1 and #2 "Ronin," published in 1983. Jon tells all viewers that he highly recommends them to read those two comic books if they have not already. Frank discussed his influences when he was younger.

When asked about how his inspiration for creating the storyline of the third Batman comic book *Dark Knight Returns*, Frank explained: "these characters are a well that you can keep going back to; it's like, when I finished the first Dark, and I thought 'that's it! I'm done! There's no coming back' – and you know… That sort of thinking is always wrong."

Watching Frank go comic book shopping was definitely entertaining: not only did he smile most of the time, but his passion and enthusiasm for comics shined through the camera. While some comic book covers drew his attention, he went for others once he recognized authors and/or artists he knew of, such as when he called himself "a fan" of theirs. He also admitted that he received many comic books, since he is Frank Miller after all! One of the popular comments (it received 98 likes), under the video, said: "There's something magical about seeing someone like Frank Miller be excited about comic books." I could not agree more.

Damon Lindelof, an Expert at Filming. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Watchmen's Damon Lindelof goes Comic Book Shopping." This YouTube video had 47,335 views on May 5th, 2022, and 47,731 by July

7th, 2022. It premiered on October 29th, 2019, and amassed a total of 48K views by November 14th, 2022. The video lasts for a total of 12 minutes and 46 seconds.

During the video, Damon goes comic book shopping with Coy at Golden Apple Comics, in Los Angeles, California. According to an article from *The Famous People* (n.d.), Damon is a comic book writer, screenwriter, and producer, well-known for his multiple Emmy Award winning television series, such as *Lost*, *The Leftovers* and *Watchmen*. The original Watchmen comic series originated in 1986 from DC Comics, and was created by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons (Gonzalez, 2019). Damon was the executive producer and writer for HBO's television series of *Watchmen* that made its debut in 2019 (Gonzalez, 2019).

During the video, a banner shows up explaining that Damon was a co-creator of the television series called *Lost*, running for six seasons and 121 episodes. When Coy asked Damon: "you've talked about Watchmen informing a lot of Lost by the themes and you growing up on that; is there anything that you see from your world of Lost differently now that you've been living in the Watchmen space?" The actor replied:

> No, not necessarily. I mean I think I openly acknowledged that Lost has appropriated or borrowed, or let's just be completely and totally honest – ripped and stolen like many, many ideas from Watchmen. And, so, when people would say to me "Oh my God! This idea of doing flashbacks or jumping around in time doing nonlinear storytelling or having an episodic construct that was focused on a single character," and I'd say I learned all of that from Watchmen! One of the most exciting things for me was between season one and season two of Lost, a new Watchman trade [PB] came out, and I was blurted on the back of it, it's [written]: "the greatest piece of popular fiction ever created [produced]," and I was like "oh my God! Like, I'm blurted on the back of Watchmen! That's incredible!" That was really sweet.

Damon explained the impact that creating the television series about the comic book had on him: he learned how to create nonlinear storytelling, and how to expand sporadic construct while focusing on one character at a time. He also expressed his happiness when he discovered his influence on a new comic adapted from his television series. As an expert in cinematography, he

explained how a comic book was able to inspire him, even if the television show had nothing to do with the universe of that comic – Watchmen was still educational for him, and he incorporated what he learned into the production of the Lost television series.

The actor and co-creator of several television series declared that he reads and owns comic books, which he calls "trades," and can pinpoint when authors incorporate themes from comics into television shows. Damon considers himself a Saga fan, which are comic books inspired by Star Wars. The actor seems enthusiastic about comic book shopping, as he tells the host "Let's keep on stacking!" He later expresses how comics influenced him during his youth. A banner shows up approximately in the middle of the video to explain that Damon produced the reboot of Star Trek and its sequel, as the host asks him if he believed in alternate realities with quantum theory. Damon replied:

> For those of us who were basically born in the 70s and raised in the 80s, this culture, Star Wars, Star Trek, Watchmen, was so much a part of our childhood. Now, we are professional movie and television writers and producers; we're just basically writing fanfic that people are making, because I wrote this stuff like really bad, you know, Star Trek and Watchmen fanfic when I was you know 14 and 15 years old. The idea that we get to sort of play in this universe is very much like the world of comic books where, you know, Batman, Superman, these are characters who were created in the late 30s and early 40s, and we are in the year 2019, and they're still thriving! And you look at the lexicon of writers and artists that have interpreted these characters over the years and you sort of start to realize these stories are so much bigger than us! The fact that I get to do this for a living is incredible! The downside, of course, is there is also a real appetite for original storytelling out there, and so the challenge for us becomes: how do you put an original spin on something that's already beloved and you maintain the Canon? It has to feel like it's Star Trek, but at the same time, I think people are really hungry for new ideas.

Damon stressed how comics and their transmedia brands took a big place in his childhood, and how it also impacted many other individuals who were born in the same era as him. He loved certain characters and comic book universes so much that he would enjoy writing his own fan fictions during his teenagerhood. Damon also added that professionals like him in the film industry are re-working previously written stories, and that the majority of transmedia brands

today that initiated as comics are stories that are loved for almost a century. He is grateful for his career, despite it possessing the challenge of constantly creating unique storytelling that remains faithful to its original adaptations. He also mentioned how individuals crave innovation, especially when it comes to transmedia brands.

When the host presented a Spider-Man comic to Damon, he said "I'm very happy that you're giving me this," right as he saw the cover of the comic book, where a side character (J. Jonah Jameson) was also on it. The guest explained how the original comic also served as cannon to writing the Watchmen television series:

> When we put the writers room together there were 12 of us to basically start the world building we treated the original Watchmen as cannon, but half of the writers that we hired had no real knowledge or intimacy with Watchmen, and the other half had Watchmen knowledge ranging from "I sleep with this under my pillow" to "I saw the movie, for people who never read it," to say this is what I took away from it, and the fact that it's still shocking is just a testament of its staying power.

When done correctly, adaptations of mediums from comics can remain as testaments with staying power. He also explained how he watched every single interview that the writer of the comic book *Watchmen*, Alan Moore, and that he perceived Watchmen "as sort of like it's simultaneously worshipping the medium of comics, but it's just not afraid to take the piss out of it." Comic books continuously leave impressions on individuals and society, as they have tremendously influenced today's pop culture. The term *canon* was coined to refer to authentic adaptations, as previously determined in the Glossary (please see Appendix B).

Lastly, the concept of how comics and transmedia brands can incorporate inclusivity and diversity exploded when the host questioned Damon on his decision to start the Watchmen show with a historical event about the Tulsa massacre of 1921, Black Wall Street. The guest explained: "if ever there was a like a piece of popular culture that could take real history, particularly the sort of the ugliest sides of American history, and shine a light on it, it was Watchmen, and then

the two things just sort of seemed to fit together perfectly." This clarifies the importance of accuracy in historical events depicted in transmedia brands, as they have become part of today's pop culture.

The video ends with the host and his guest walking to the cash register, where viewers learn the total amount of the bill, along with the prices of each comic book purchased. Coy refers to Watchmen as being part of the Golden Age, and after thanking his guest and the comic book store, he said: "I would like to thank comic books for existing," and looked at his guest and said "let's go read some comics," as they both walked away together.

Two Groups of Musicians

Linkin Park, a Rock Band. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Linkin Park Goes Comic Book Shopping With Collider." This YouTube video had 197,025 views on July 16th, 2022, and increased to a total of 197,837 on July 28th, 2022. It was originally published on July 5th, 2017, and amassed a total of 198K views on November 14th, 2022. The video lasts a total of 13 minutes and 21 seconds.

Linkin Park is a rock band. The host for this video is also Jon, yet the location is different: Torpedo Comics, in Las Vegas. The first guest that appears is Joe Hahn, followed by Brad Delson, and Mike Shinoda (who are members of the band). Jon and Joe are seen shopping at Torpedo Comics, which the host describes as "one of the greatest comic book stores I've ever been in, especially in Las Vegas; I mean just looking around here! I can't stop sweating! I want to buy everything!"

Joe mentioned how he enjoys even more the Spider-Man #1 [from 1990] series of comics, which he calls "epic," and appeared earlier than Spawn.

In the middle of the video, Jon and Joe enter a room inside the comic book store, called Superman's Fortress of Solitude. The walls are plastered and display comic books individually, each in protective cases; the space is filled with first issue comic books. I would call it a comic book collector's paradise. As suspenseful music is playing, Joe said with a big smile: "everything here is museum quality." The guest then invites the owner of Torpedo Comics, John Dolmayan, to further discuss the placement of each comic [the slobbing system]:

> It's essentially a way for people to have confidence in what they're buying, you know, what you're getting. The grades right there [the screen zooms in on the upper left corner of comic books and shows "Off White-to-White pages" followed by a number, graded out of 10], you can do a little research and find out what it's going for as far as prices right. and then, you pick up a book and you have confidence in.

A pop-up window shows up and says to viewers "Rare and valuable comics are graded by third-party companies on a scale of 0.5 (Poor) and 10.0 (Gem Mint)."

The host later on tells the comic book store owner: "let's head to the Gotham Bank," which the guest follows, and to our surprise, John opens a metal door used just like for bank vault. With the same concept as the previous room, both guest and host enter the secluded room with a big smile on their faces, almost looking in awe. Jon said to the owner: "this is really incredible I mean these are just priceless comics to me, like, some of the best comics! Just tell me about these comics that you have in here!" John then said:

> Well, first of all, it's all this stuff that I could not afford when I was a kid. So, it's really a pleasure to have them now! I'll start with a couple of really great keeps. So, right up here, you have the first appearance of Spider-Man. Not all the characters appeared in their own books first. For example, the Fantastic Four, which I will show you a copy of in a minute, did appear in their own title. The Hulk appeared in his own title book, but most characters appeared somewhere else. And what they [Marvel] were doing at the time was they were trying out the characters in different books. Usually, the book wasn't selling very well. So, Amazing Fantasy [a panel shows the cover page of the Spider-Man comic book, with the issue #15 from 19622] was nearly canceled, and that was pretty much the last issue; this copy right here is restored, and it's signed by Stan Lee, which of course makes it very special. That's $125,000. If it was unrestored, it would be about $1.4 million. Then, you have the first appearance of Doctor Doom, which is my favorite character of all time,

> in Fantastic Four #5 [a panel shows the cover page, it's from 1962. I own a NFT copy]. So, here we have something that is unique, because it is the best-known copy in the world. It is a 98th copy of the first appearance of Electro [a supervillain is shown next to Spider-Man on a comic book cover, issue #9 from 1964], that's worth $75,000. […] Again, they weren't printing a lot of these books. You know, that's why they're so unique and rare. Marvel really was almost going to go bankrupt at the time. They were down to like maybe 10 titles. When Stan Lee came in, he completely revitalized it [Marvel in the 1960s, and according to a panel that shows up on the screen, it was also with the help of artists like Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko].

The owner follows by presenting more comic books to both the guest and host of Collider Extra. In this situation, viewers are presented concrete examples of the grading system and how it affects prices when a comic book is rare, vintage and in great condition.

A key theme in my research are transmedia comics. The topic comes up when the host of the show tells Joe:

> So, we are in the Golden Age of comic book movies and television shows; like, when I was a little kid, they had, like, a comic book movie every three years, and sometimes, it sucked! So, you had to wait another three years for another one. So, I love the Fantastic Four, they're my favorite characters. Of course, most of the movies that had involved a Fantastic Four just completely f**king suck! So, we can't even really talk about those what are the cognitive movies they bring out to you.

Like the majority of individuals in this study, one of the members of the rock band was introduced to comic books during his childhood. Joe discussed the first comic that made him passionate about comic books:

> I remember being a kid. I'm just going to the grocery store and looking at the comic book rack and seeing the Incredible Hulk. There was one cover, it was a green cover, […], and then I remember also seeing the Hulk holding up a giant rock and all the superheroes on meets for Secret Wars [Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars #4 from 1984], and I was like that's pretty interesting! Like, I'm going to get that and check it out! That's where it kind of started.

The host managed to find a copy of the exact comic book (Incredible Hulk #377 from 1991) that Joe first saw when he went to the grocery store as a child. The musician said that he was probably in the first grade when he encountered it, and that he still remembers its art cover,

either because of the colors or the art. This displays how memorable comics' artwork is: the emotions a comic book cover triggered can stain individuals' memories positively and be linked to nostalgia. The guest of the show explained that this comic was released at a period where Marvel Comics was testing different artistic styles of comic book covers, and that it does not surprise him that Joe can still remember it since his childhood, due to the green and purple on the cover being "super vibrant colors". The artist nods his head and further explains: "that affected me, and then, I eventually just became a big comic book fan!"

Another example of how comics can be inclusive and diverse to their readers is when the video turned to Mike, who said that the Fantastic Four comics were one of his favorites growing up, and that he also loved the Usagi Yojimbo series (from Dark Horse Comics), because he is half Japanese. The host and Joe who are comic book shopping then reappear. After the musician declared his love for Spawn comics and how he owns all of them because he thinks they are cool, the guest and host both seemed to bond over a conversation about Spider-Man; Jon describes how he particularly loved the way that McFlaren [the artist] drew the webbing of the superhero, which Joe acknowledges by nodding, and points out how there would be "little coils around it." The guest then says: "everything he drew very, very like arachnid element." This refers to the theme of consistency between the comic book characters and their personalities that are brought to visual presentations through the artist. The Linkin Park member then counts a story:

> When I was young, I saved up all my lunch money, so I didn't eat at school. So, you go every Wednesday to the comic book shop, and I remember when his [McFlaren's] books came out, I was an event for me. […] It was an ROI.

Comic book stores typically have discounts offered on Wednesdays, which is a recurring theme throughout my research, especially the interviews I conducted: many participants and individuals

from my netnography describe how they were introduced to comic books as children, and how they would typically go comic book shopping on Wednesdays. This explains how the grading system works with comics, and how a comic's rarity, age, and condition all affect reselling prices.

After being given a tour of the comic book store, Jon told Joe that he can start picking out the comics that he wants, to which Joe smiled to and responded: "that's the fun part right!" As both of them are having fun comic book shopping, they come across someone who's left arm is entirely tattooed with different styles of The Joker comics. After walking around a little bit with Jon, Joe already amassed a pile of comics, after saying "I was really into Thor when I was young," as he picked up a *Thor vs Thanos* [2013] comic book, retailed at $24.99 US. He then enters the Bank of Gotham room, as the guest asks Joe "what is going to put the icing on the cake?" The artist knew right away exactly the new rare and vintage comic book he wanted to invest in:

> I want to pick up this Thor #165 [from 1969, which he purchased at $700 US]. It's the first full appearance of Adam Warlock, who's going to be in the next Guardians of the Galaxy Film. I'll probably sell it back to John ten times more [they all laugh – at the end of the video, the host explains that this specific comic will "just keep going up in price"] […] I want all these books John!

This shows that the emotional attachment one develops, as a child growing up with comics, stays even as an adult. Expanding one's comic book collection is something that makes the comic book reader happy.

As Joe Hanh checks out his comics, he tells the host he's really excited to read all of the comic books he is purchasing and even turns towards the camera to say "Woohoo!". His grand total of nine comics accounted for $899.98 US.

Two Members from The Black Eyed Peas. This section consists of a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the YouTube video named: "Black Eyed Peas' will.i.am and Taboo Talk Creating Their Own Comic and Go Comic Book Shopping." This YouTube video had 69,544 views on July 16th, 2022, and 69,882 by July 25th, 2022. It premiered on Aug 23rd, 2017, and amassed a total of 70K views on November 14th, 2022. The video lasts a total of 10 minutes and 34 seconds.

Will.i.am and Taboo are members of The Black Eyed Peas, a musical group with styles varying between hip-hop and pop. During the video, the two musical artists, Will.i.am (also referred to as Will), and Taboo (also referred to as Jimmy), go comic book shopping with Jon Schnepp at Meltdown Comics, located in Hollywood, California.

The first artist who shows up is Will, who keeps his sunglasses, hat, and earphones around his neck throughout the video, unlike all the other guests on the show. Jimmy appears later on during the video and also keeps his sunglasses.

Will presented his comic book, named Matches in the Sun, in collaboration with Marvel. He then mentions Jimmy Guapo, with the stage name of Taboo, who arrives on the scene, as Jon says: "the mothership has arrived!" Will elaborates on the plot of his new comic book: "we wanted to base the story in the 80s, when crack hit our inner cities right, and living through it you know. We wanted to do a fantasy version of that, but not really – like the hammer on the nail and call it crack, and call it a Z-drop, another hammer on the nail and call it a crackhead, we call it a zombie, but not zombie in traditional zombie sense, right, this is, we have our twist on the zombie genre, and there's a reason for it that goes back to Egyptology. So, we borrowed from a lot of like you know historical facts and conspiracy theories that we all just like mixed up and sampled and treated it like hip-hop." Jon then flips through Will's graphic novel. A panel shows

up stating that Masters of the Sun was written by Will.i.am and Benjamin Jackendoff. Will explains "it took four years, like trial and error, you know. I don't like those color schemes or how about this and then, once we had it all you know, on a PDF, we came to melt down and just hunted for like, you know, books that looked amazing. What I hate, is like, somebody built this amazing world, and it's on some floppy whimsy paper that's prone to being thrown away right. And this being our first graphic now, well, that's the last thing I wanted to do is like, be arrogant because we had success in one genre and think that we don't have to do the hard work and the research to honor this genre, and all the other folks have been doing it for years."

Will's favorite comic book character that influenced him is a Marvel Comics superhero: "Iron Man because that's plausible! I think we're like 20 years away from having a real live Iron Man. I would probably be one of those guys trying to make one of those suits."

Midway throughout the video, the two artists go comic book shopping with Jon. Intriguingly, Jimmy asked the host: "when you read a comic, when then you see the movie that comes out, are you a purist when it comes to line for line or verbatim with the movie?" Jon replied with "absolutely not! It's all transformative! You know what I always say? I always have the comic."

Unlike the majority of individuals in this study, Will started off by explaining that his background in comics first came from hip-hop:

> Groups like Soul Sonic Force [the screen shows an example with the colorful album cover named "Renegades of Funk" by Afrika Bambaataa & Soul Sonic Force], Wu-tang Clan [another example pops up during the video with Wu-Massacre with a small rectangle at the bottom stating "Collector's Edition Variant Cover #3 of 3"], their usage of comics on their album covers inspired me to take an interest in the world of graphic novels seeing what we tended from hip-hop. Like, one day, I want to make a graphic novel; so, it was it was an innocent entrance.

This illustrates how comic books have also influenced the music industry. When Jon asked him about how older hip-hop legends' influence, Will explained:

> Their imagination was so big that they built these worlds; they built these characters. They go to soundtrack to this movie that never happened. The unfortunate side of things is our imagination in popular music today, it's like people are really dreaming up worlds.

Imagination is again key when it comes to promoting oneself, which in this case was in the context of artists. In Will's example, hip-hop artists were able to create their own personal comic book characters to promote their music. He then explains the process of creating his first graphic novel, in collaboration with Marvel Comics (see Appendix H).

Jon then asked Jimmy to discuss the comic book characters that influenced them. Jimmy started off by discussing a Native American superhero:

> So, Red Wolf is one of the major influences in my life. Just recently, I started understanding his storyline, his backstory, and with him being part of the Marvel world, in the Marvel Universe, it's, I mean, it goes hand in hand with what where our mission is, as a person, as a platform and a voice to be able to be a leader in my communities. I'm inspired by that comic book.

Red Wolf is a great example of incorporating diversity and inclusivity in comics. Later on, when Jimmy arrived in front of a showcase of figurines, he said:

> This type of stuff I geek out over, like, collecting vintage toys! I'm an old school kid when it comes to the figures. I mean, these right here Shogun Warriors [a banner pops up saying that "Mattel inc. licensed the Shogun Warriors toy line in 1977"] hell yeah classic like a bow Shogun warrior, you have the bigger version. You know, here in the U.S., we call them trans or Z. Overseas, they're called Shogun warriors.

The host then looks into the camera and explains: "there's a whole side industry of people who go to Japan to bring back cool toys for people lme who have never made it." Jimmy has been multiple times to Japan and referred to his crew (The Black Eyed Peas) going there on a Thursday. Jimmy further explained:

> So, actually, it's kind of like digging into crates, when you're looking for samples, same thing when you're collecting: you're hunting for those exclusive toys. That nostalgia we

> were talking about, because it takes me back to an era, my childhood, and that's the thing that I get is like how do I keep my inspiration going? Because the toys inspired me to create music. I know there's a lot of people who probably have a misconception like all Black Eyed Peas, you know, what do they know about collecting? What do they know about comic books or toys?"

Jon replied: "turns out, a lot!" This is a great example of how personal preferences can impact one's interpretation of transmedia adaptations, and how brands' expansions are appreciated, even when it comes to collectible figurines. Expanding one's collection about items related to comic books is increasingly easy, and perhaps addictive! It can lead to compulsive buying and brand addiction.

At the end of the video, Jimmy stumbled upon The Walking Dead comics and says right away, while grabbing a copy: "I like *The Walking Dead*, I'm a big Walking Dead fan." As both artists check out their pile of comics with the host and cashier, their total amounts to $567.79 US. The most expensive comic book purchase was "Iron Fist #1" for $95.

Wrapping It Up

To conclude, these seven examples of celebrities who went comic book shopping are pertinent in terms of how famous individuals with high social statuses engage with comics through various ways. These are also examples representing how they, too, indirectly help others to engage with comics, whether it is due to their reputation, their following, their fans, or their celebrity status.

Appendix M

Table 11

The Participants' Background

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Favorite comic book and/or character	First introduction to comics
P1	27	Works at a marketing agency	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic book: House of M. Favorite comic book characters are: Iceman (his alter ego is Bobby Drake, also known as Robert Drake), Rogue & Gambit, Scarlet, and Maximo in X-Men (all from Marvel Comics)	Read comic strips in newspapers at 7 years old
P2	30	Works at a vegan restaurant	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic book is Scott Pilgrim. Favorite comic book character is The Flash (from DC Comics), who has had five different alter egos	Started as a child
P3	35	Professional in the comic book industry who won a prestigious comic book award (also a partnership manager and comic book editor, previously worked for DC Comics and Nickelodeon)	New York, USA	Favorite comic books are: The Invisibles (from DC Comics), The Sandman (from DC Comics), and Scott Pilgrim. Favorite comic book characters are: Wolverine (from Marvel Comics, in the issue #75), and Rahne Sinclair from X-Men (from Marvel Comics), Spider-Man (from Marvel Comics), and Harley Quinn (from DC Comics)	As a baby (between 2 and 4 years old), but his passion really grew when he was in 3rd grade
P4	18	Student and active member of the Feelings Institute for the autistic community	Laval, Canada	Favorite comic book and character is Deadpool (from Marvel Comics), his alter ego is known as Wade Wilson	Started with YouTube videos about comic cartoons as a teenager

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Favorite comic book and/or character	First introduction to comics
P5	20	Undergraduate student in psychology (who particularly enjoys reading manga)	Portland, USA	Favorite comic book character is Kyoko, from her favorite manga, Skip Beat!	"When I was a kid visiting the Philippines."
P6	39	Auxiliary nurse	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books and characters are all from the Sailor Moon mangas. Also really enjoys Daredevil, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and X-Men (all from Marvel Comics).	Watched the Star Wars movies when she was a child, and always enjoyed Superman, Batman, and Supergirl. She became an avid comic book collector when she was 30 years old.
P7	27	Humorist, and professional in the comic book industry (graduated with an undergrad with a major in comic books)	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books: The Pineapples of Wrath, This is How I Disappear, and This Woman's Work (all three are originally in French, from Montreal). Her favorite comic book characters evolve through time, but at the time of the interview, they were the ones that she was currently working on for her own comic. She also loves characters from the manga, My Hero Academia	As a child, even before she knew how to read. "It's always been part of my family, we've always had books."
P8	29	Industrial organizational psychologist	Istanbul, Turkey	Favorite comic books series: Tintin (a Belgian comic), Olympians (from Marvel Comics), and Asterix (a Franco-Belgian comic). His favorite comic book character is Sinam, from a Turkish magazine (by Umut Sarıkaya)	As a child, it was "very early when I was a kid"

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Favorite comic book and/or character	First introduction to comics
P9	41	Professional in the comic book industry who won several comic book awards (author and illustrator), and consultant specialized in EDI	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books: My Favorite Thing is Monsters (a comic from Chicago, USA), Epileptic (originally in French, from France), and Paying the Land (the American author visited the First Nations in the North-West of Canada). Favorite comic book character is Joe Sacco, who is a comic book author that includes himself in his own comics (he made Paying the Land).	As a child, she would pick up a comic book every week at the library, with her mother and brother (such as Garfield and The Smurfs).
P10	49	Senior researcher and lecturer, associate professor in marketing for a business school	Casablanca, Morocco. She is Belgian (educated in Belgium and France)	Favorite comic books and characters: Tintin, Lucky Luke (Belgian comic), Asterix, and the Smurfs (Belgian comic).	Introduced to comics when she was 3 years old; she learned how to read with her sister thanks to comics
P11	40	English teacher at a primary school	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books: Superman Secret Identity (from DC Comics), Teen Titans (from DC Comics), and all the Sailor Moon mangas. Favorite comic book characters are from DC Comics: Tim Drake comes first, but there's also Superman, Batman, and Superboy (also known as Kon-El Kent)	She was 18 years old. Her passion for comics initiated when a television show announced that a comic book was going to be published to explain events happening within the television series.
P12	26	Tattoo artist	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic book: Spawn Origins (from Image Comics), Wolverine (from Marvel Comics), and Deadpool. Favorite comic book characters: Spawn and	As a child, "I was young […] The imagery drew me in. […] I think Batman was the first one. […] I liked Spider-Man a lot!"

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Favorite comic book and/or character	First introduction to comics
P12 (continued)				The Punisher (his alter ego is known as Francis "Frank" Castle, from Marvel Comics)	
P13	41	Teaches a comic book chemistry class at a cegep (professional in the comic book industry)	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books: The Watchmen (DC Comics), Punk Rock Jesus (from Vertigo Comics), The Walking Dead (from Image Comics), The Invisibles, and Girls (from Image Comics). Favorite comic book characters: Superman, and Mister Fantastic (also known as Reed Richards, from Marvel Comics)	As a child, "maybe five years old," with his brother, through the sons of his babysitter
P14	47	Teaches a comic book humanities class at a cegep (professional in the comic book industry)	Montreal, Canada	Favorite comic books: Cassandra Cain as Batgirl run (from DC Comics), Daredevil (runs by Brian Michael Bendis, and by Ed Brubaker), and Wonder Woman (by Greg Rucka). Favorite comic book characters: Daredevil, Barbara Gordon (also known as Batgirl), Cassandra Cain, and Wonder Woman.	As a child, about ten years old, through spin racks with comics at a drugstore (a cover that blew him away is Spider-Man punching Daredevil) , also noticed Superman and Batman on lunchboxes, and collecting action figures. It was around 1985.
P15	35	Biochemist	Montreal, Canada (born in Brooklyn)	Favorite comic books: Wolverine: Origins, Old Man Logan, and Death of Wolverine (all X-Men comics). Green Lantern comes close (from DC Comics). Favorite comic book characters: Wolverine in Marvel Comics, and The Joker in DC Comics	He was either 3 or 4 years old. "My dad brought me to a toy store that was more like for fans of anime, the DC Universe, and the Marvel Universe."

Appendix N

The following presents data from my research that supplements the propositions in the section for future research recommendations.

Comics are Educational

A great example illustrating how comic books hold an educational side was seen on one of the comic book blogs, CBR. Method Man, a very famous rapper who is part of Wu-Tang Clan, opened up about how comics helped him and about their positive impact. Today, he is a huge advocate for comics, as he said during an interview: "The stories taught me how to read better, taught me words that I wouldn't have known if I hadn't picked up the books, gave me a moral code that I didn't know I had" (Patterson, 2020). He owns over 30,000 comics (AMC Talk, 2017) – one of them is worth over $23,000 US (Spencer, 2022)!

Narratives can be educational, as seen in an interview on one of the comic book blogs in my netnography, with an author for Batman comics, James Tynion IV. He discussed the future of Batman through his new comic book *Joker War*, with The Joker being one of Batman's supervillains (Grunenwald, 2020). In light of events displaying excessive police force in North America, James decided to reconcile Batman's capitalism and *copaganda*[6] with what happens in our real world (Grunenwald, 2020). The writer says: "Batman comics are perfect both for leaning into stories about that and for leaning away from them." James explains that there have been conversations about addressing social movements in Batman, since this medium's story offers a specific benefit to comic book readers: "[a comic book like *Joker War]* is not meant to be a

[6] It can be defined as a one-dimensional display of police being uncomplicated, friendly, heroic, allies, and good through the use of media (Corbett, 2020).

grounded story, […] but that core aspects of the story are relevant [to what is happening in the world]" (Grunenwald, 2020). James also added that future comic books will further address the social aspects of Batman, particularly: "Batman being confronted with the ways in which he should do more in Gotham City, and the ways in which he wants to do more and wants to be better" (Grunenwald, 2020). Correspondingly, comic book themselves are a great medium to learn from, due to their written narratives, as Frank Miller said: "they help you learn to read" (see Appendix L; Collider Extras, 2017). Each narrative holds a story that is ultimately a lesson. Additionally, in an interview with a comic book writer for Spider-Man, when Tom DeFalco was asked if there were any lessons that he would have hoped particularly impacted his readers – he declared: "You can only lose if you give up." (Escobosa, 2019).

The educational aspect of comics is a benefit that comes with this unique storytelling method. In another context, P11, an elementary teacher, discussed how she encourages children to read by making them take a minimum of a 10-minute period to read as a transition between starting teaching after they come back from recreation and lunch time. P11 said that:

> It allows all of us to calm down. It encourages reading. Even when they have comic books, and they ask me "can I read a comic book?" I tell them "Of course! Get in there! Go! It's reading! Reading won't be as long, you might read two or three comics during your reading period, but at least you will read!

Furthermore, comics are not only used as a tool in education (due to the lessons found in their storylines), but they are also used as a form of entertainment. Individuals of all ages can enjoy reading comic books, since this medium combines sequences of images to stimulate the readers' imagination. P4 expressed that learning something new from comic books makes him feel good:

> I tell myself that something that looks childish and simple is at first glance. Once you look more into it, it becomes more complex, and then it makes you feel less of a fool. At first, I told myself that comic books were only read by the youth, but now I find myself reading them. I tell myself: "Wow! Comics opened so many doors for me!

Therefore, the educational aspect of comic books results in positive outcomes.

Every comic book holds an element of novelty, whether it is through its artwork, storyline, or its conveyed message. P4 explained how comic books provide knowledge, not only in terms of its storyline's lesson, but its background does too. Researching on it can teach one about philosophy, history, and other cultural events – but it can also teach one about oneself, through preferences, likings, and penchants for certain characters, storylines, genres, art styles, and universes. Experiencing visual narratives also means gaining an educational dimension, since comics can be fun and enjoyable, while also being an easy and cool way to convey historical events, social movements, and philosophies. They can also improve comic book readers' vocabulary, written, reading, comprehension, and verbal skills. This pleasurable educational dimension is due to comics' unique storytelling method: visual narratives. These are be achieved through creators' co-creation, permitting comic books to be a form of art in today's pop culture, an efficient medium that eases even sensitive topics, irony, and foreshadowing.

Creating a comic book is an art of its own – the collective co-created work of authors and artists has brought individuals together for over a century. P9 (a professional in the industry) says that she loves reading comic books because they allow her to experiment, more specifically with knowledge through a variety of visual narratives. Comics leave her in a state of admiration:

> It's theoretical, but [comic books] allow the sharing of experiential knowledge. They allow us to experiment being in someone else's skin, or to be in someone else's shoes. I think that's what I love the most about them. But, also because that it's a beautiful axe between written and visual evocations. There are three types of information: the written, the visual, and the meeting of the two. I'm impressed and fascinated with visual representations in comic books more than the written ones, because I'm an anthropologist who draws, but I don't have any background in drawings. I do mine quickly! Being able to see the talent and the creativity, the ways to evoke, it puts me in a state of admiration. […] I find them to be a beautiful deployment, and that they are intelligent. Sometimes when I'm not focused on the writing or drawings, I'm just in the third, I'm just flipping pages.

This represents an interesting contrast, as experiential learning has increased in popularity through active teaching in academic settings (Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2012; Temurnikar, 2019); comic books provide an unorthodox form of experiential knowledge, helping individuals to experientially learn while being narratively transported. It is an indirect way that authors and artists bring people together; through the combinations of their work and talents, they create bonds and relationships within comic book communities. Comics offer an original way of learning how it can feel like to live as someone else, even if it is for a brief and temporary moment. They can also help building and developing the traits of empathy and/or sympathy, along with altruistic characteristics.

In the previous example, P9 uses comic books to learn about contexts and storytelling, which can be useful for her expertise. She is aware of how visuals and writing are fused together, where art can be a way to communicate and learn for readers. Comic books are a vehicle for her to learn, while it is also a distraction that provides a sense of escape: comics offer an original way of learning.

Valuing Consistency with Original Storylines

A great example of valuing consistency comes from a blog in my netnography (Comicsbeat), in an interview with the producer, Butch Lukic, and the screenwriter, Tim Sheridan, who discuss their adaption of *Batman: The Long Halloween* for animation (Dar, 2021). When asked if storyboard artists studied the original artwork or relied on the script, Butch stated:

> Everyone had the book. I got the graphic novel for everyone to look through and see what scenes we could adapt for the screen and retain or what could influence someone to push forward something they were doing in an action sequence. The books were definitely out for everyone. Also, I had blow-ups of panels put out all over the walls as a reminder or reference for people. (Dar, 2021)

In other words, consistency was valued: everyone on the team owned the comic book to ensure and guarantee a faithful adaptation from its origins. The producer analyzed the comics' panels to decide on the scenes that would be re-enacted into a screen. He did not shy away from also adding other reminders to his colleagues by displaying giant panels from the comic book in his work environment.

However, slight changes were added to the animation to keep comic book readers hooked with the new narrative, which is typical in transmedia comics. Butch explained:

> There's a sequence where we change the circumstances of that character's part in the story going forward. So, it's going to be different in that respect. But it's also going to make people who have read the book go, "Oh, wait a minute." We're not too clear if it's the same as the storyline in the book. We are trying to consciously make sure there is still a mystery here because a lot of people have read the book. (Dar, 2021)

This falls on the same line in comparison to what Damon (an expert in filming, see Appendix L) stated regarding the addition of innovation in storytelling and adaptations: expanding it to another medium requires slight twists of originality while remaining faithful to its origins. Similarly, when asked about the process of dividing a narrative for the animation into two movies, the screenwriter explains the importance of remaining consistent by highlighting the importance of *authentic faithful adaptations*. Tim answered:

> It occurred to me the minute I sat down to break down the story that there was no way to be faithful to the book and the compromises I would need to make in order to fit into one movie would have just changed it into something vastly different. A movie is going to be different than a book. That's always going to be the case, even a comic book. As much as we could, we wanted this to feel like an authentic faithful adaptation and we couldn't do that unless we did it in multiple parts. Happily, the minute I suggested it the producers said, "Absolutely. Let's do it." The executives at the studio, everyone at DC, everyone said, "Let's do it." So, there was no hesitation. It was the easiest part of the process […].

He also brought up how differences will always exist when turning a comic book into a movie or television series. Him and his team were able to co-create together to produce what felt like an

authentic faithful adaptation. To put it differently, staying coherent with the core of comic book characters throughout various mediums, despite minor changes in the comic universes, leads to their audiences believe it is an authentic faithful adaptation due to consistent components. When it is successful, it is in turn referred to as "canon" by the comic book community (see Appendix B).

In another blog from my netnography, ComicsVerse, an article by Escobosa (2019) summarizes an interview between Tom DeFalco, "one of the greatest comic book writers of all time," who left an incredible legacy with the series of comics of The Amazing Spider-Man, drawn by the comic book artist Ron Frenz. In fact, Tom was responsible for one of the most iconic storylines, and was also the co-creator of Spider-Girl, who is the daughter of Peter Parker (Spider-Man) and Mary Jane (Spider-Man's main love interest, and later on, wife). The interviewer brought one of his concerns to Tom: "With so much Spider-Man mania going around, they keep adapting him and re-interpreting him in different ways. I worry that the essence of Peter Parker will eventually be lost as people stray further and further away from the source material." He then asked him how he would describe Peter Parker, and Tom replied: "An average guy who is always wishing he could do better." The interviewer then asked: "When you think of Peter Parker, what do you think of as his essential characteristics?" Tom replied: "His humility and sense of responsibility." This can also be linked to characteristics or traits that the author relates to, as he said that Peter Parker was the Marvel character he relates to the most.

Essentially, for Tom, these characteristics must remain consistent throughout various mediums in order for Spider-Man's adaptations to remain authentic to the comic book. He further explained after the interviewer asked him "In general, how do you believe superhero characters should develop over time? Should they remain static for new readers?" Tom said:

> I think the essence of a character or a comic book series should always be consistent [Spider-Man is a series that is all about responsibility]. I think the flash details of the series can constantly evolve [where he works, goes to school or dates].

It is important for transmedia comics to remain consistent with the essence of their characters, especially when they originate from comic books, since continuity follows. For example, Marvel Comics typically reuse their comic book characters' stories in different settings, different contexts, different environments, different universes, and with new characters. P3 refers to it positively: "I'm very big on a continuity and seeing things from the beginning. And I'd like to see where things came from or started." Similarly, P8 says: "I love the continuity of the storyline in different contexts." This explains why big comic book publishers, such as DC Comics and Marvel Comics, have kept the consistency of their comic book characters for decades while playing on continuity for novelty.

Aside from gaining original storylines that value consistency and continuity, reading a comic book generates positive emotions, which is illustrated with the top four key codes deriving from my netnography, which are: *really cool*, *fun*, *consistency* and *art style*. Reading comic books and being able to detain a role of a comic book character in a movie are both considered *really cool* (according to the netnography and Appendix L). Comics are *fun* because they are an "easy read," which participants in the interview also affirmed. Comics are entertaining and bring joy to comic book readers. They are also an amusing way to improve one's reading skills. The consistency in comics is incredibly important to comic book readers: *consistency* is appealing to the comic's audience and fans. Staying true to a character originating from the comic book is crucial for them, no matter the medium. This concept also applies to transmedia c originating from comic books. The *art style* of comics is visually engaging and applies to every type of medium that includes comic book characters. While many comic book readers are drawn to

certain characters because of their costumes or the era comics were drawn in (which can bring feelings of nostalgia), others are fascinated by the entire universe the characters live in, including the antagonists and side-characters. While some comic book readers have favorite writers, others have favorite artists; but in either case, the artists' drawing style always impacts the author's narratives. Thus, *consistency* between the storyline and the artwork are also crucial to comic book readers. It is an important concept to master when adapting a narrative originating from a comic into another medium, as comic book characters' stories will vary through time. Moreover, individuals love the new discoveries they make when reading a comic book, which usually translate to the use of other mediums in order to find *continuity* in storylines. Hence, continuity in comics should retain consistent elements, mainly revolving around the core of who the comic characters are.

Cosplaying and Comic-Con

Some comic book readers discover a new side of themselves by entering the world of cosplaying. P6, a comic book reader who attended several comic book conventions, discussed how much she enjoys them. She added that she also loves cosplaying; she has been dressing up as particular characters with two costumes. She explained how she even cut her own hair to embody the comic book character she wanted to re-enact, along with buying hair extensions and dyeing her own hair. Personal transformations are necessary to guarantee an accurate representation of the characters she wants to embody. P6 also said that when cosplaying, it is important to adopt not only the characters' physical appearance, but also their personality and lingo. According to her, expressing yourself verbally and embracing the comic book character's manners and body language also comes with mastering cosplaying. She clarified: "I'm a

perfectionist. […] But some people will only incarnate [the comic book character] physically. Me, if you come talk to me, I will talk to you like the character."

She also discussed how she was introduced to the world of Star Wars as a child. She has an extensive collection of figurines, representing all her favorite characters. She sent pictures of her home; all rooms contained shelves filled with collectors' items. Aside from appreciating comics' art and visual aspects, she also enjoys how easy reading them can be, especially since she can have difficulty concentrating while reading. She said it is very easy to engage with comic books when it comes to reading them.