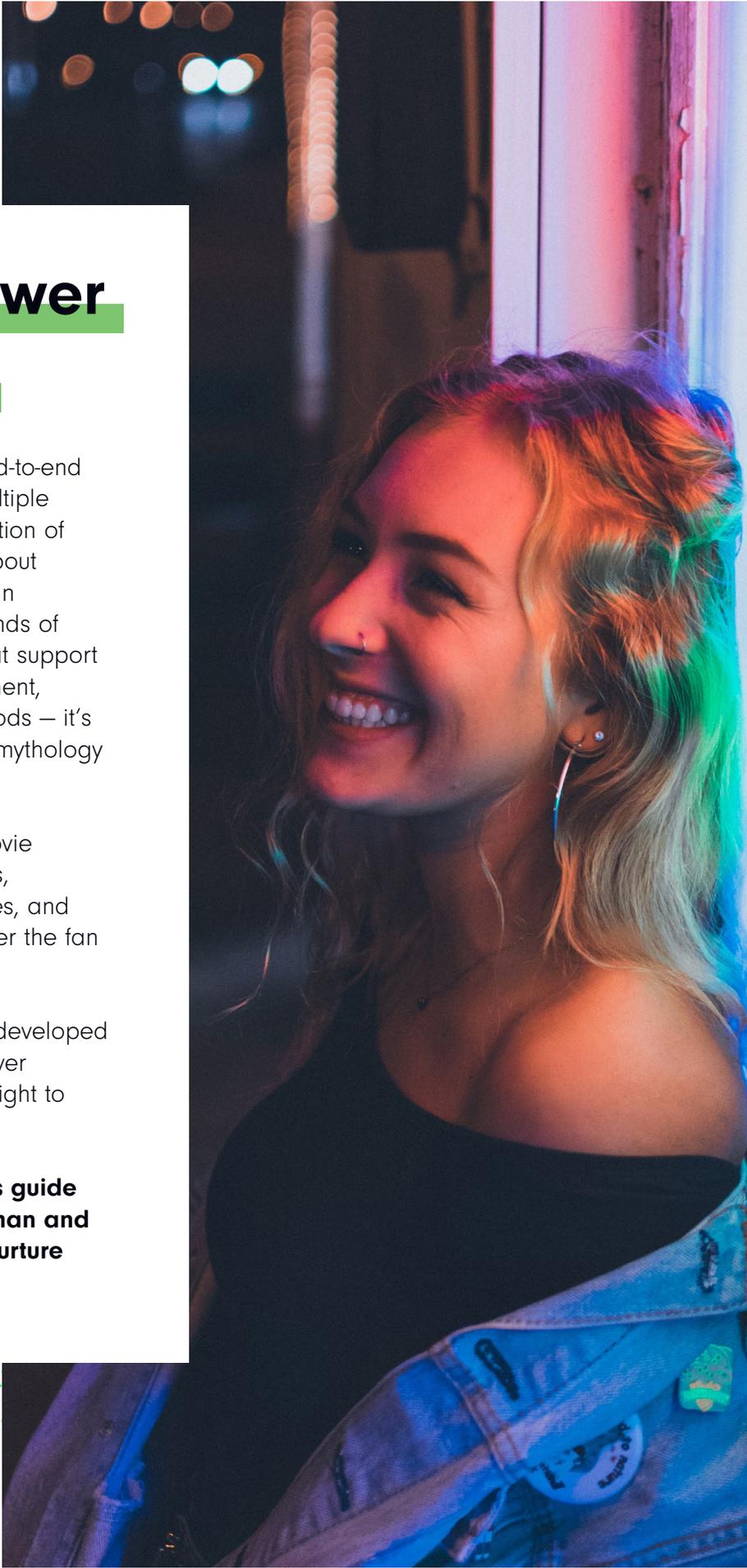


Unlocking the Potential of Franchise Mythology

A Framework for Brand Growth

MATERIAL+



Amplifying the Power of Your Franchise

A singular property can deliver a complete, end-to-end experience, but a franchise promises more: multiple narratives and experiences leading to the creation of a brand universe. And we're not only talking about superheroes and space operas — franchises can actively nurture the multidimensionality of all kinds of fandom, offering pathways for engagement that support community, identity, and enrichment. Entertainment, media (from TV shows to sports), consumer goods — it's possible to leverage the potential of franchise mythology across numerous categories.

In recent years, we've partnered with major movie studios, video game developers and publishers, professional sports teams, global toy companies, and more to surface authentic opportunities to further the fan experience and drive brand growth.

Through this extensive portfolio of work, we've developed a framework and multi-phase approach to deliver consistent success — and we felt the time was right to share.

It's our hope that you'll come away from this guide knowing what it takes to translate deep human and cultural understanding into strategies that nurture current fans and capture new ones.

The Franchise Opportunity Framework

It's our approach to conducting research that leads to action. Because the best opportunities don't come from simply extending an existing property – they come from forging deep connections with fans at the intersection of the world they know and a world of new possibilities.

By keeping fans – superfans, casual, lapsed, and potential – at the center of everything you do, you can surface authentic opportunities that further their experiences while remaining true to the source.

The World Fans Know

What are the themes and values your franchise taps into, and how do they manifest in culture today?

Relevance

New Worlds of Possibility

How are your fans evolving, and what will they be looking for in tomorrow's landscape?

How will you create an authentic connection with fans that deepens over time?



Propelling Your Brand Forward

With this framework as our guiding light, we've developed a process to create growth-focused franchise strategies for brands across a diverse array of categories:

PHASE 1 Brand & Franchise

Understand the role of your brand and franchise within today's cultural context.

PHASE 2 Audience & Fans

Identify your current and potential fanbases to ensure successful targeting.

PHASE 3 Positioning & Strategy

Develop best practices for attracting audiences in the current landscape.

PHASE 4 Activation & Implementation

Socialize key insights and themes to spark internal activation.

Phase 1: Brand & Franchise

The Goal

Explore the cultural conversation around your brand and franchise, as well as your broader category, to contextualize future insights.



The Steps

- **Conduct an Ignition Session** – Gather cross-functional stakeholders for an hour-long work session to generate well-reasoned hypotheses to test in your upcoming research. Potential thought starters include: *What differentiates your franchise from other franchises? What do you know about your fans today, both domestically and globally? What attributes can you not afford to lose to remain true to your brand/franchise?*
- **Practice Deep Listening** – Look to anonymous, unprompted online conversations about your franchise and competitor franchises from the last few years to explain experiences, motivations, beliefs, and behaviors. We suggest using computational linguistic analysis to identify and isolate the most valuable and relevant fan discussions. This retrospective look blends qualitative and quantitative analysis to establish a baseline for how fan discussion has evolved and to identify shifts in the dialogue based on events, advertising, and communication.
 - ◇ **Questions to consider:** *How do topics and sentiment drivers in your franchise conversation compare with those in other franchises? What role does your franchise play in fans' lives today? Which elements of your franchise brand and story are your fans talking about online? How has this evolved? Where do your franchise fans gather online and what other topics gather their interest?*
- **Leverage Cultural Insights** – Once you've looked back, it's time to assess where things are heading. Marrying research with cultural insights will reveal how deep-seated needs are evolving within a swiftly changing cultural landscape and help you predict consumer trends (instead of just reacting to them). Understanding the competitive landscape of franchises gives you an overview of key trends and cultural shifts driving the entertainment landscape today and in the future, allows you to audit the tactics and executions other successful franchises have leveraged, and gives you a foundational understanding of the key themes to adopt moving forward.

Phase 2: Audience & Fans

The Goal

Understand and size the fanbase to define the recruit and inspire the discussion for a rich, qualitative exploration with loyal fans.



The Steps

- **Create a Global Fan Sizing Survey** – Send a comprehensive online survey to an external panel sample in key countries to define and size fans, determine their history with the brand, and explore their interest in your new content. A twenty-minute online survey of 2,000 respondents per country, in up to ten countries, is large enough to reliably profile all fan groups and provide data cuts by key demographics in each country. Consider including some of the following components in your custom questionnaire:
 - ◇ **Entertainment habits and cultural awareness:** *Attitudes toward entertainment, drivers of best entertainment, desired fan benefits, entertainment engagement, movie genre preferences, awareness and perceived relevance of cultural trends*
 - ◇ **Franchise perceptions:** *Fan engagement level, recency and frequency of engagement, length of fandom, perceived cultural relevance, likelihood to recommend, interest in future content*
 - ◇ **Franchise deep dive:** *Introduction to franchise, interest in key franchise elements, favorite characters*
- **Bring Your Fanbase to Life with Qualitative Research** – Use key qualitative methodologies – like focus groups, in-depth interviews, and online communities – to illuminate your survey findings and achieve a more nuanced understanding of your audiences. Hear, in their own words, what current and potential fans are looking for, and where your franchise does and does not fit in their lives.

Phase 3: Positioning & Strategy

The Goal

Develop and define new positioning territories.



The Steps

- **Develop Territories** – Host a digital workshop to collectively land on a few distinct positioning directions for your franchise. This lays the necessary foundation to catalyze reaction and creativity. Following the workshop, develop 5-6 territories that are crafted to give fans a range of ideas to respond to and build upon. The territories should consist of:
 - ◇ **Territory descriptions:** Copy to capture a big idea, reflecting a distinct tone, voice, and unique value propositions
 - ◇ **Moodboards:** Collections include visual styles, moods, functions, lifestyles, materials to elicit deeper emotion and uncover needs/associations with the territory
 - ◇ **Reasons to believe:** List out themes and values within the stories and narratives
- **Create a Digital Community** – Engaging with loyal fans through an interactive digital community establishes deeper understanding and develops longitudinal insights over time. The community should deliver two key objectives:
 - ◇ **Fan Deep Dive:** Bring to life fans at different stages of fandom and unpack the core values that hook them into your franchise
 - ◇ **Push Creative:** Explore future brand direction and essence that is most compelling in today's landscape.

Community prompts and suggestions:

- ◇ **Lifestyle overview:** Participants describe their lifestyles, values, and motivations to better understand their perspectives and influences
 - ◇ **Fan journey:** How did they first discover your franchise and how has that relationship grown?
 - ◇ **Franchise photo album:** Photos reveal how your franchise has infiltrated participants' homes
- **Sensemaking** – Come together as a group to socialize insights and brainstorm opportunities. During your session, be sure to:
 - ◇ **Review** the results, fan profiles, territory do's and don'ts, and video clips from the interviews
 - ◇ **Synthesize** the key takeaways and align on creative priorities for cross-functional teams
 - ◇ **Ideate** on outstanding questions, specifically how you believe other international markets will differ

Phase 4: Activation & Implementation

The Goal

Synthesize key insights and themes to spark internal activation.



The Steps

- **Create a Franchise Playbook** – Communicate insights in a concise, compelling manner, tailored to the way your team can best internalize the information, in an effort to catalyze action. Include findings and recommendations on strategic ways to position the franchise in the future. Sections to include:
 - ◇ **Brand & Franchise:** Your brand essence and recommendations to solidify the franchise within fans' lives
 - ◇ **Audience & Fans:** The consumer insights story and key audience personas – who the fans are, what drives their passion for your franchise, and the evolution of their relationship with it
 - ◇ **Positioning & Strategy:** Resonant messaging and positioning territories, recommendations for new franchise additions based on insights (e.g. characters, story hooks, etc.), including whitespace opportunities in the franchise ecosystem
- **Present Your Findings** – To build organizational momentum, present your findings to your stakeholders. Include information from across all research phases and facilitate creative exercises to achieve the following goals:
 - ◇ **Share** the key insights, themes, and storyline
 - ◇ **Engage** the team in internalizing the insights and ensure group alignment on the key targets and opportunities
 - ◇ **Devise** the strategic and tactical imperatives to prioritize and activate initiatives for change
- **Ongoing Franchise Tracking** – To ensure our strategy comes to life effectively, it will be important to track the health of your franchise over time. We recommend two key methodologies, alongside strategic work sessions with your team:
 - ◇ **Brand Health Survey:** Field a survey at key intervals (to be determined with your team) to measure KPIs such as awareness, fan status, fan engagement level, and franchise appeal. Use this survey to determine lift in KPIs (based on activities such as marketing, advertising, movie content, etc.) and inform if any adjustments need to be made in-market for optimal engagement with the franchise.
 - ◇ **Online Anthropology:** Track online conversations surrounding key launch dates or at other intervals deemed important (i.e. quarterly) to understand organic chatter around the franchise and respond in near real-time to public reactions to enhance engagement and love for your franchise.

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materialplus.io
310.479.4040

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