Marvel was founded in 1961 (though technically its predecessors date back to 1939 when it was known as Timely Comics). 1961 marks the date that the modern incarnation of Marvel came to be with the launch of The Fantastic Four. Chances are, even if you don’t know much about Marvel, you’ve heard of one or two of its characters.

For a franchise to be considered transmedia it must be created by more than one visionary. In 1961 creators Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko- among others- made it possible for Marvel to become the transmedia franchise it is today.
Stanley Leiber is perhaps the most well-known Marvel creator, though most people will know him as Stan Lee. Lee made his debut in 1941 (while it was still known as Timely Comics) with ‘Captain America Foils the Traitor’s Revenge’, a filler in Captain America Comics No. 3. He worked on a number of different genres of comics until rival DC Comics brought back the superhero archetype. The first group of superheroes Lee created, alongside Jack Kirby, was the Fantastic Four. With Kirby Lee produced the Hulk, Iron Man, Thor, and the X-Men. With Bill Everett he created Daredevil and with Steve Ditko he created what is arguably Marvel’s most well-known character- Spiderman. All of these characters lived in a shared universe.

Another requirement of transmedia franchises is that content must be presented in at least three different mediums and that each medium must have differing content.

Although the characters started in comics you can find them through the years in animated films and television shows, video games, websites, toys, clothing, and live action television shows and films.
Comics are still being published today and you can even get digital comics on the Marvel website.

In 1993 Marvel Studios was formed. Marvel Studios includes Marvel Television, Marvel Music, Marvel Animation, and MVL Productions LLC. A number of live action films were made by the studio but the first big break the studio seemed to get was with the 2000 release of X-Men. The studio has been involved with many attempts to bring the characters of Marvel comics to life on film, including three film series that have exceeded 1 billion dollars- X-Men, Spiderman, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe which includes characters from The Avengers such as Thor, Iron Man, and Captain America.

In 2009 Marvel Studios was acquired by the Walt Disney Corporation as a subsidiary of Marvel Entertainment. Marvel Studios now works with Disney for distributing and marketing. The current film distributors Marvel has deals with are Disney and Universal. Right now, Marvel has five movies in various stages of post-production including Thor: The Dark World, which comes out in November.
There are various games based on the Marvel Universe including Lego games, movie games, and superhero games on different platforms including console, online, Facebook, and mobile. These games allow fans to learn more about the Marvel universe and its characters and to interact with the universe.

Right now, Marvel has four active television shows. There are three animated series - Avengers Assemble, Hulk and the Agents of S.M.A.S.H, and Ultimate Spider-Man. There is also a new live action show, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D, that relates directly to the movies of the Marvel Cinematic Universe with some of the more minor (but well-loved) characters from the films, Agent Coulson and Agent Hill.

There have also been TV specials that have featured the Avengers. The Avengers and Spiderman appeared on the animated series Phineas and Ferb. Before the release of Iron Man 3 earlier this year, the Disney Channel played special advertisements with behind the scenes information about the film.

You can visit Disney Parks and experience Marvel as well. For a limited time you can check out Iron Man Tech Presented by Stark Industries as well as Thor: Treasures of Asgard which allow fans to interact with the world of Marvel.
One reason that recent Marvel projects have been so popular is the 2000 release of the ‘Ultimate Marvel’ comic series. This series featured reimagined characters that catered to the popular audience at the time.

One thing that Marvel does well—much better than their rivals at DC Comics—is continuity. The Marvel Universe is huge and features hundreds of characters. They’ve gone so far as to designate a senior member of staff to look after continuity. This allows them to bring out and introduce rather unknown characters. An example of this is Marvel Studios’ newest project, ‘Guardians of the Galaxy’ slated for release in August of 2014.

Marvel isn’t only a corporate community though. There are many instances of grassroots communities, especially in the online community. These communities can either help the image of the Marvel universe or hurt it, just like every other transmedia franchise.
Fanfiction websites like fanfiction.net contain thousands upon thousands of fan-made stories that, like most fanfiction, range from child-friendly to NC-17. These sites allow fans to post and read their own stories about the characters in the Marvel universe.

YouTube hosts a number of fan-made videos that both promote and make fun of different aspects of the Marvel universe. You can find parody videos, cartoons made by fans, criticisms of recent films, and fan-made videos using clips from both animated and live action films and television series.

The Marvel universe exists in many forms and each form gives the world a different, but still exciting edge. Whether you partake in all forms or only one or two, you are sure to learn something about the Marvel universe.
Fans can access the Marvel world on many different platforms. Marvel characters have become iconic in today’s pop culture and people of all ages are still enjoying the world built back in the 60’s.
References


Marvel Database, [http://marvel.wikia.com/Main_Page](http://marvel.wikia.com/Main_Page)