

## **Success Among The Stars:**

**An Exploration of the Star Wars Legacy, Social Identity and Marketing**

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**Abstract:**

Film has become an art of expression that has transformed the way in which people create and tell a story. Some films even have the power to influence an individual's social and group identity. The fandoms created by such films garner power and influence in the future decision making of the franchise. This group is not only a strong culture, but one that is highly sought after by marketers who wish to capitalize on their love of a franchise. These franchises have storylines, unique elements and characters which their fans identify with and look to emulate in their daily lives. The social and group identity factor of this fandom has allowed it to grow into a living, breathing, community. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, George Lucas' three Star Wars films were one of the first film franchises to result in the creation of such a fandom. Today, through the strength of these film's continued popularity (as well as the release of a prequel trilogy released between 1999 and 2005) this fandom has grown through three generations and is expected to continue to grow with this December's premiere of *The Force Awakens*.

**Intro:**

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far, away" the legendary Star Wars franchise began (Lucas,1977). Since its inception the Star Wars franchise has increased its net worth to over \$30 billion and profits continue to climb (Ogg, 2012). Not only does this franchise lead in net worth, but it has maintained one of the largest and most active fan bases in the film industry. These fans have evolved over the years, but they continue to grow in strength and number in anticipation of the December premiere of the next Star Wars film. There are three key reasons as to why this franchise has been able to continue finding success. The three reasons include the franchise's creative storytelling, the unique elements found in the Star Wars universe and the nostalgia factor involved with the franchise. Due to both the nostalgia factor and the large fan base, marketers have always been attracted towards using the Star Wars story in their advertisements. Today it is hard to go anywhere without seeing a reference to *The Force Awakens*, as both marketers and Disney amp up the hype for the premiere. The fans are one of the sole reasons why this franchise has found so much success and they are 100% participating in the hype for *The Force Awakens*.

**Theory Base:**

For Star Wars fans, being a fan is more than just liking a movie, it has become part of who they are as a person. The fans identify with the characters and stories within the movie franchise, finding similarities between their lives and the films. This connection allows the fans to imagine that they are part of a universe bigger than the reality in which they live. The fans can relate to other fans of the franchise and find

acceptance within this group. The fan group begins to function as a subset of society; a fully functioning social group much like that of an ethnic culture. For example, Star Wars fans can find similarities and common beliefs amongst each other, much like Italians, Irish or Germans can find common threads within their own cultures. Being part of this fandom becomes part of the individual's social identity and can have an affect on their personality.

Social identity is a "person's sense of self, derived from perceived membership in social groups," (Chen & Li, 2009). Social identity can be divided into a three step process. The first step is putting people into categories. For Star Wars fans this is the self recognition of their passion for the franchise. The second step is the identification of other groups with similar interests to yours. This is the point at which fans make a connection to the larger fandom. The final step is comparison, or, how an individual compares their group to others, "creating a favorable bias towards the group [they] belong," (Chen & Li, 2009). For Star Wars fans this bias is often created towards other sci-fi franchises such as Star Trek. While this bias does not often generate hatred, it will generate a joking sport between the two fandoms. This builds comradery amongst fans of each group, which helps bond an individual to the Star Wars franchise. According to Chen and Li, "once a person sees herself as part of a group, she claims self esteem from that group membership and adopts behaviors that are consistent with the stereotypes associated with the group identity," (Chen & Li, 2009). Star Wars fans often become confident in themselves from their interactions with the larger fan group. A janitor could be praised amongst the fan community for his knowledge of the franchise, while at home he is ridiculed by his family for not striving for a better job. He finds self

confidence amongst the community that appreciates him rather than solely from his physical community. This discovery of confidence from the franchise can be a beneficial outlet for individuals who lack full confidence in their daily lives. These individuals can find an additional confidence boost from a group with which they identify and are passionate about. In regards to group stereotypes, when an individual expresses their participation in the Star Wars fan community they are subjected to certain public biases. For example, an individual could be called a nerd by his peers for spending so much time with the fan community. However, there are positive stereotypes which derive from an individual's participation in the Star Wars fan culture. With the Christmas season coming up, an individual's self identification with Star Wars makes Christmas shopping easy for friends and family. This group has also opened a door for marketers to make a profit in anticipation of *The Force Awakens* December premiere. It is very difficult to do any Christmas shopping without running into at least one item branded with Star Wars imagery. Store ads are filled with lightsabers, R2D2 stockings, Star Wars ornaments, clothing and even batteries. An individual's identity with the Star Wars brand makes a marketer's job easy and family and friends can easily find gifts to appeal to the individual.

### **Literature Review:**

In a content analysis I conducted of the film's posters, trailers and advertisements, the the story, characters and elements of Star Wars universe emerged as a huge selling point for the franchise. It was these three factors which appeared most often in advertisements for both the film and products surrounding the

franchise. The unique universe George Lucas created was what sold the first trilogy back in the 70s. The Star Wars franchise changed the public opinion of sci-fi films and pioneered the way for the modern sci-fi genre. A science fiction film is "somewhat removed from everyday reality," and the story of Star Wars allows for the viewer to escape into another world (Lev, 1998). Lev identifies three factors of the Star Wars story line which account for its success. This franchise's narrative is a "modern quest...blending Paradise Lost, Lord of the Rings, The Wizard of Oz and more". By combining elements of classic stories, the franchise creates a plot line which the audience can easily recognize and identify with. Star Wars is a "myth of good versus evil. It refers to universals such as the battles between temptation and resistance, selfishness and generosity," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). These are all universals with which both children and adults can identify. This fact lends itself to the franchise's success across multiple generations. The story itself has a mythic, fairy tale dimension, with an overall lightness of tone. This allows the writers to have more free will with the way in which they create the Star Wars universe. It enables them to combine fantasy and reality in a way which reality based films cannot. Finally, the franchise owes a lot to the audiovisual team which created the sounds of the spaceships, space wars, planetary ecology and alien beings found within the plot line. For example, one of the most significant aspects of the Star Wars universe are the droids which aid the humans throughout the course of the story. The sound and behavior of two of these droids, C-3PO and R2D2, are "original, detailed and consistent" (Lev, 1998). In fact Lev believes that these may be the most interesting characters in the entire film (Lev, 1998).

A story's characters may in fact be the most important factor in a plot line. It is the characteristics of the characters which determine the ability of your audience to relate to your film. The ease with which one can identify with a character can influence an audience member's opinion of the whole film. With Star Wars, the way in which one identifies with a character determines if the individual relates to the Jedi or the Sith. This separation of Jedi and Sith is a factor unique to the Star Wars franchise. It forces the audience member to choose a side which determines how they feel about the overall franchise. Will they be happy when Luke Skywalker succeeds in destroying the Death Star, or will they mourn the loss of the empire along side the emperor? When advertising the premiere of a new film, the Star Wars franchise focuses a majority of the advertising time to both the characters and the story line. With the movie trailers, nearly half of the run time is dedicated to dialogue and the images of the male heroes (Brady, 2015).

It is not only the characters which sell this franchise, the elements unique to the Star Wars universe factor heavily into the film's success. The main elements which sell these films include lightsabers, spaceships, and droids. The movie trailers of this franchise spent on average 10 seconds on light sabers and lightsaber fights, as well as 6 seconds on droids (Brady, 2015). These two factors are elements specific to the Star Wars franchise which help to set the franchise apart from its counterparts in the sci-fi genre.

The *New Yorker's* John Seabrook says the franchise's secret is "its control of [the] kinetic aspects of movie making," (Lev, 1998). He goes on to say that Lucas' control of editing sets the pace of the films and helps to create energy. This energy is

what keeps audiences on the edge of their seats and coming back for more. Another reason fans continue coming back for the next installment of the franchise, is the nostalgia factor associated with the Star Wars name. With three separate trilogy's spanning 30 years, Lucas has succeeded in creating a multi-generational fan base. The fans who grew up with the films in the 70s took their children in the 90s and those children will now take their kids to the December premiere of *The Force Awakens*. For consumers, the sense of nostalgia they experience from a brand also "derives from their personal experiences with the brand during childhood," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). Consumers look back fondly on childhood as better days of a bygone era and when they hear the familiar Star Wars theme song or see a lightsaber, all of those fond childhood memories come seeping back. The brand of Star Wars "has magical powers to transport consumers back in time to thrill them in a way they have not been thrilled since they were children," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). "As a brand Star Wars represents a timeless tale of liberating empowerment," a statement which fans of all ages can identify with (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003).

The Star Wars franchise has one of the most supportive and loyal fan bases in the film industry. The fans are often compared to and overlap with the fan base of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings*. The reason these fan bases share a love for their trilogies is that Jackson and Lucas share an ability for combining "technology and mythology in the creation of authentic self contained alternate universes," (Shefrin, 2004). The films created by Jackson and Lucas can transport their audiences into a new world full of unique characters and adventures. These stories help an individual to escape from the daily toil of reality and have an appeal to those who wish to achieve more with their



lives. They can aspire to lead like Aragorn, or save the day like Luke Skywalker, something they may not be able to do in their lifetime. Over the years, both fan bases have "swelled the ranks of loyal audiences and have ensured the commercial success of the two media franchises," (Shefrin, 2004).

These fan bases are not only loyal to their franchise, but they are also active and play a key role in the success of each franchise respectively. Shefrin describes an active fan as someone who is a hybrid of a conserving agent. These individuals band together to form a subset of popular culture in which the legacy and details of a film's franchise survives. An active fan participates in a "multi textual environment" in which they can discuss the film. It is these discussions which keep the story alive and become the driving force in carrying on the legacy of the franchise (Shefrin, 2004). Using online chat rooms, social media and YouTube, fans are maintaining connections with each other and creating a virtual and physical fan community. This community allows fans to pool franchise knowledge with one another, as no one single fan can know everything there is to know about the franchise (Jenkins, 2002). Baum states that "A large group of fans...accumulates, retains and continually recirculates unprecedented amounts of relevant information," (Jenkins, 2002). Not only are they retaining and sharing their information, but this information is part of their passion for the franchise.

This fan culture is identified through the "substantial emotional and physical engagement with a particular narrative universe," (Shefrin, 2004). A loyal fan will always be on the lookout for updated products and enhanced engagement with the lexicon, or franchise. The Bourdieu Theory of Cultural Production, shows that this involvement of fans in the lexicon is becoming more "permeable with two way

communication flow between the dominant and dominated forces," (Shefrin, 2004). The dominant force in this case is the Star Wars franchise and the dominated forces are the fans. With the evolution of social media, movie franchises, such as Star Wars, are expected to maintain in contact with fans via the Internet. Fans are now able to follow up to date information on the movies, events, special promotions and interactions with the actors, directors and producers of the franchise. This interaction with fans has been key in the promotion of *The Force Awakens* before its premiere. Shefrin stated that "the size and dedication of a participatory fan base will affect both the amount of commercial risk and perceived...success of a proposed franchise addition," (Shefrin, 2004). By continually interacting with such a loyal fan base, Disney has been able to increase hype for the December premiere while strengthening their relationship with their newly acquired fans.

Star Wars fans are passionate about their franchise and nowhere is this more evident than at Comi-Con. Comi-Con, or events like it, bring together the fan community in a physical setting. No longer hidden behind the virtual walls of cyberspace, the true power of the fandom is released. Often fans will cosplay as their favorite Star Wars character, some even create their costumes from scratch. Fans will spend long days and hundreds of dollars to create the perfect replica of their favorite character. Fans are not only cosplaying and discussing their love for Star Wars, recently they have taken a step into the filmmaking side of the franchise. Force Flicks lists almost 300 amateur produced Star Wars films currently in circulation on the web (Jenkins, 2003). This amateur fan film community has been made possible through a reduced cost of film making technology. In recent years the price of a DSLR camera

has dropped dramatically and you are now able to get more bang for your buck so to speak. In 2002, you could purchase a 3X zoom DSLR for \$500, today that same \$500 will get you a 16MP DSLR (“Camera Luxury”, 2015). Not only can you get more for your money, but the way in which DSLR cameras are being made has paved the way for more consumers to use them. The cameras themselves are becoming more user friendly, many DSLR cameras now even offer a point and shoot feature for those uneducated in photography. The creation of an interchangeable lens has allowed for a more versatile use of a single camera. This Black Friday, Canon offered a DSLR camera package with two lens for \$400 (Kohls, 2015). This is an accessible price for most Americans, which has opened the way for the creation of more amateur films. One of the most recognized Star Wars fan films is *George Lucas in Love*, which is a fictional telling of how the Star Wars script was born. Amazon reports that sales of this movie are even outselling *The Phantom Menace* among their video customers (Jenkins, 2003). Fans are not only financially supporting the Star Wars franchise, but also amateur Star Wars films such as *George Lucas in Love*.

The physical and virtual community created by the Star Wars fandom provides an outlet in which fans can find support and acceptance. A primary example of this support occurred earlier this year when a dying Star Wars fan asked permission to view *The Force Awakens* before its premiere. Daniel Fleetwood, a 32 year old man suffering from spindle cell sarcoma, was given only a few months to live and his dying wish was to see the next installment of his favorite movie franchise. Daniel has been a Star Wars fan since his dad showed him the series around age eight. His wife began an Internet campaign for her husband to view the movie and Star Wars fans quickly rose to support

Daniel. His wife's social media hashtag, #ForceForDaniel, quickly grew into a world trending topic (Cunningham, 2015). Through the support of the fan base, Daniel's situation was brought to the attention of the movie's actors, director J.J. Abrams, and Disney executives. Ultimately Disney executives and J.J. Abrams fulfilled Daniel's dying wish and allowed him to view *The Force Awakens*. Even knowing that they would not personally benefit, the Star Wars fandom fully backed Daniel's wish. This selfless support is the type of community the Star Wars fans have created for each other, which is just one of the reasons why the community continues to grow.

A group as strong and large as the Star Wars fan community does not go unnoticed, especially by advertisers. Since the first franchise, companies, stores and advertisers looked to capitalize on the lucrative market of Star Wars fans. The Star Wars universe is rich with "countless images, icons, and artifacts," which companies can reproduce in a variety of forms and sell to "diverse groups of customers," (Jenkins, 2003). With the release of the new Star Wars installment, this variety of goods is more present than ever before. You can buy Star Wars Pandora charms, Star Wars speakers, games, ornaments, stockings and even toaster ovens. The way in which marketers connect the Star Wars name to their products is through retro and repro-retro branding. Retro branding is when an advertiser combines an older product with a newer product, such is the case when iconic characters from the 70s trilogy appear on modern products. Repro-retro branding involves "second helpings of the past, as it revives or reproduces something that traded on nostalgia to begin with," (Brown, 1999). The first installment of the second Star Wars trilogy is a prime example of repro-retro branding. *The Phantom Menace* traded on the fact that consumers had fond

memories of the 1977 original trilogy (Brown, 1999). The children who grew up with the original trilogy were now old enough to take their own kids to *The Phantom Menace* and have enough disposable income to purchase franchise merchandise. The franchise rebranded *The Phantom Menace* as a "prequel [which] melted a familiar brand name with a new up to date product," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). How a film is marketed often determines financing and creates a burning desire to see the film more than once (Fisher, 2008). The marketing for *The Phantom Menace*, created a hype which led to fans camping out on sidewalks for over a month to be among the first people to see the film (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). We are currently seeing a similar pattern with the marketing for *The Force Awakens*. The marketing created such a hype that when tickets went on sale, fans crashed the Fandango, AMC and Regal websites. EW.com reports that *The Force Awakens* has already made \$50 million in advanced ticket sales, and Forbes predicts the film will earn between \$517 and \$625 million domestically (Pevos, 2015; Cuccinello, 2015).

The key factor in this marketing strategy is nostalgia. Classic brands such as Star Wars, embody moral values and transport the consumer back to their childhood. This personal nostalgia is "associated with the individual life cycle, as people age they want to reflect on the...days of their youth," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). Marketers find success with Star Wars because it is a cult brand "with high levels of customer commitment and strong ties to pop culture," (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). Today marketers can capitalize not only on the older generations of fans, but the new ones that are developing along with the hype for *The Force Awakens*. This fall major retailers instituted a Force Friday, similar to a Black Friday, in which they

released exclusive new Star Wars merchandise. Forbes predicted that retailers could earn upwards of \$1 billion in sales from Force Friday alone (Heller, 2015).

Marketers and stores are not the only ones cashing in on the new merchandise, George Lucas continues to make a large profit on his franchise. When the first Star Wars movie was released in 1977, George Lucas asked 20th Century Fox for the rights to toys and merchandising as part of his payment for directing the film. The studio thought so little of the movie that they agreed and Lucas continues to cash in on the huge profits from merchandise (Fisher, 2008). With the profits from merchandise, Lucas established his production company Lucasfilm, through which he controlled the production and licensing of the Star Wars franchise. Lucasfilm remained in command until 2012, when Disney acquired the studio for \$4.05 billion (Cuccinello, 2015). Disney owns 8 movie production companies and adding Lucasfilm to their holdings is sure to increase their profits exponentially (Fisher, 2008). However, this profit would be difficult to obtain if it wasn't for the large and loyal fan base of Star Wars fans who continue to support the franchise.

### **Primary Research:**

I recently conducted an in-depth interview with three die hard Star Wars fans, to learn more about their passion for the franchise and how the franchise has affected their personal lives.

Amanda Ott first discovered Star Wars at age 11, due to the release of the second trilogy. She says the glamour of Queen Amidala drew her in and watching the original trilogy got her hooked. She recalls walking around Kmart and seeing Star Wars

products everywhere, especially those featuring Queen Amidala. As a kid she watched the original trilogy almost every day for a whole summer and she often wished Luke Skywalker would transport her to the far away galaxy. In fact, Ott says Skywalker is her favorite character because he is "the ultimate Star Wars hero," (Ott, 2015). To Ott the lightsabers and "mysticism of the Force" is what separates Star Wars from other movies in the sci-fi genre. The reason this franchise continues to gain fans is that the story has something for everyone, there's "beauty, glamour, action, love stories, humor and an ongoing battle between good and evil," (Ott, 2015).

In regards to the fan community, Ott says she used to be a member of the Buffalo Star Wars Fan Club, but now she just knows other Star Wars fans who like the movie like she does. Ott participated in one Comi-Con, RocCon, for Star Wars where she dressed as Mara Jade Skywalker. She spent three days and \$100 on her costume and says researching details is what makes a Star Wars cosplay complete. After discussing her past Star Wars experience I moved to ask Ott about recent Star Wars marketing. She says the last Star Wars ad she saw was for the new Star Wars makeup collection by CoverGirl. Ott says she would not purchase this product because while the Star Wars theme makes the packaging cooler, it is the same makeup CoverGirl always sells. She said, "I need you to make the makeup Star Wars somehow, otherwise you're just being lazy," (Ott, 2015). Ott did not participate in either Force Friday or Black Friday, but she has purchased Star Wars merchandise over the past three months. Her most recent purchases include a storm trooper ornament and a droids friends forever shirt for her niece.

Ott says that a marketer's choice to use Star Wars in their ads would not change her opinion about a product, but she may be more likely to purchase something if it was Star Wars themed. She said, "It depends on if they just package it in Star Wars theme or if it is actually Star Wars themed. Like I would buy a Yoda shaped candle, but I wouldn't buy a candle with a Yoda photo on it," (Ott, 2015). In regards to *The Force Awakens* premiere, she plans on going to see the movie but she has not yet purchased tickets. In conclusion, Ott believes that the success of this franchise is "just keep it Star Wars, you'll have to use the Force." As to the longevity of this franchise over the next 30 years, "yes, Star Wars forever yo," (Ott, 2015).

Kyle Mecca says that even at 25 years of age, Star Wars still holds great nostalgic value for him. He says that at age six, he had the special privilege to view Episodes IV-VI for the first time in theaters in 1997. Mecca said:

Our local...movie theatre...Super Saver, showed all three as part of a special edition release. I was able to experience them like a kid from the 70s, the way my dad was able to experience them, but this time he was by my side. (Mecca, 2015).

Mecca went on to say that he would watch the trilogy whenever he needed to stay home sick from school. "It always made me feel better and brightened my imagination," (Mecca, 2015). He says the reason this franchise stands out from other sci-fi movies is that it sets high standards for a sci-fi adventure. He describes the original trilogy as a raw depiction of good versus evil. "It taught us about belief in oneself, fate, faith, love and that even in the best of times the worst things could often happen," (Mecca, 2015). Mecca says new fans will flock to this franchise because it



"stands out...and was full of imagination and spectacle, while telling you a simple, straightforward story," (Mecca, 2015). His favorite franchise character is Yoda because "his character is so developed and complex and he's a master Jedi in the least likely form ever." His favorite droid is R2-D2 because he "is the sassiest droid this side of Tatooine," (Mecca, 2015). Mecca went on to say that if the droids rule half of everything that we do in the future, we need one with personality. Mecca said that it isn't that the characters are unique, "it's that they're so relatable. The boy from a small place wanting more in life, the mentor that encourages you to believe in yourself and the friends that surround you to help reach your goal," (Mecca, 2015). As a child he always wanted a green lightsaber, but he got the blue one for Christmas instead. "Santa must not have been able to build it like Luke could," (Mecca, 2015).

In regards to the Star Wars fan community, Mecca says that he is unfortunately not an active fan member. He has not yet participated in a Comi-Con but it is on his bucket list. While he has not yet made a Star Wars cosplay, he has spent \$50 building a Marty McFly costume. He believes that details are what make a Star Wars cosplay legitimate. After discussing his past experience with Star Wars, I asked Mecca about the recent marketing for *The Force Awakens*. He says the last Star Wars advertisement he saw was on Amazon.com for the remote controlled BB-8. If Mecca had the money he would buy the little droid because its "like a new puppy." He did not participate in Force Friday but he did buy a Death Star waffle maker on Black Friday. Over the past three months Mecca bought the original trilogy on Blu-ray, a Force Awakens poster, and he won a Star Wars themed basket at a Chinese auction. He says that when marketers use Star Wars in their ads it does affect his opinion about a product. "The punny or

more detailed the better! The BB-8 toy is basically the real thing, I want it," (Mecca, 2015). He says since we are only 17 days away from the premiere that he is definitely more likely to purchase a product if it is Star Wars themed. Mecca can't wait for the December premiere, he was among the first to buy his tickets when they first went on sale. He says that the key to the success of this franchise is "new but old." He went on to say that the franchise needs to "capture the magic of the original trilogy by reinventing itself," (Mecca, 2015). When asked where he thinks the franchise will be in the next 30 years, Mecca replied:

Disney has said that they are going to release a Star Wars movie every year until we're all dead...it's going to stay here long after everyone's lifetime. That's how it should be, every child should be able to experience their own Star Wars along with our Star Wars. (Mecca, 2015).

Bryan Patrick Stoye says that he got into the Star Wars franchise later than most people so he cannot really call the franchise nostalgic. He watched the original trilogy for the first time at age 12. Stoye was originally a Star Trek fan so he had bought into the Wars vs. Trek mentality and thought you could only be a fan of one. It was his brother and cousin who eventually convinced him to sit down and watch the original trilogy. As a result of discovering the franchise later in life he says the franchise "has become a large part of my public identity," (Stoye, 2015). He believes that the "whiz bang appeal" of the franchise is what makes it stand out from other sci-fi movies. Stoye believes that Star Wars offers a good balance of comedy and reverence that most sci-fi movies cannot achieve. He adds that the story is "a simple tale of good vs. evil, and even at its most grim can still have an element of wonder and awe," (Stoye,

2015). When asked why he thinks the franchise is able to attract new fans, Stoye replied, "smart marketing has been on the side of keeping Star Wars alive, especially in times when the films were not being released," (Stoye, 2015). He also added that the expanded universe of novels, games, television shows and comics allowed for everyone to find something of interest. "These tertiary items are a way to give every person some way to make Star Wars personal for them," (Stoye, 2015). Stoye says that the true catch is that the Star Wars characters aren't as unique as you would think. Most are based on "character troupes from older literature...but they play these troupes so well that they resonate with an audience," (Stoye, 2015). He says that his favorite character is Luke Skywalker, he says that most of his favorite movie characters have a "strong moral compass" like Luke in the original trilogy. "Even when he got closest to darkness, he did what was good for goodness' sake," (Stoye, 2015). Stoye says the droids were never his favorite characters, but recently he is "all about BB-8. It's very classic sci-fi troupe for the old fashioned robot to appear and that's part of what makes Star Wars so timeless." I then asked Stoye if he had any special childhood memories surrounding the franchise. Stoye said:

I remember the first lightsaber I ever owned. Kenner had just put out Luke Skywalker's lightsaber from *Return of the Jedi*, which had lights and sounds and a telescoping blade. As soon as I got home with it I ran outside, despite it drizzling out, and started swinging it against the trees in our front yard just to hear the sound effects. It's really not much of a surprise that I own many more lightsabers today. (Stoye, 2015).

Stoye says his involvement in the Star Wars fan community has changed and evolved

over the years. He originally started out customizing Kenner action figures with his brother, then in college he was highly involved in fan radio shows. During this time he served as a co-host for a fan show entitled "Star Wars and Beyond", as well as acting in his own fan films. After his freshmen year of college he joined the Buffalo chapter of the FanForce fan club. Stoye says that the prominence of this club has dropped nationwide, but the Buffalo chapter still remains strong. His group does frequent costumed character appearances for local Buffalo charity events. Recently he has helped to create the post-game show for the Buffalo Bisons' annual Star Wars night. His work with cosplay eventually led him to join the Rebel Legion, which is the "equivalent of the 501st Legion costuming group," (Stoye, 2015). Stoye says he has participated in his fair share of local Comi-Cons and has traveled to Dragon\*Con in Atlanta twice. He has cosplayed as Luke Skywalker for most events, but this year he created a Mandalorian Warrior cosplay. This costume was his most time intensive cosplay and it took him three weeks to complete. His most expensive cosplay is his Luke Skywalker costume which including the lightsaber, cost him \$1000. Typically he spends a few hundred dollars to complete a costume. Stoye says the most important thing to make a cosplay legitimate is footwear. "Any cosplay can be ruined the second you look down and see a pair of Nikes."

After discussing his involvement with the fan community I asked Stoye about the recent marketing for *The Force Awakens*. The last advertisement he saw was a Duracell commercial which features a Star Wars theme. He thought it was a fun ad because it captured what it is like to play with lightsabers in the backyard, but he hasn't bought Duracell batteries because of the ad. Stoye also participated in Force Friday

and did most of his shopping at Toys R Us. He bought a lot of the new Funko Pop vinyl figures, Lego sets and a Kylo Ren ornament. Later in the day he purchased a BB-8 droid and a Black Series Force FX Kylo Ren lightsaber. Within the past three months he has also purchased Star Wars Christmas ornaments and a novel called *Aftermath* (Stoyle, 2015). Stoyle did not do a lot of Black Friday shopping and did not purchase any Star Wars items. In regards to advertisers using Star Wars in their ads, he says he appreciates a good Star Wars reference. However, when general companies use these references they "tend to go for the low hanging fruit, since they are targeting the casual fans or the parents of kids who enjoy the franchise...quote Admiral Ackbar and you'll probably get my attention," (Stoyle, 2015). Stoyle says he has been known to purchase a product because of a Star Wars theme but ultimately the product must provide value. As for *The Force Awakens* premiere, he has already bought his tickets. The first day the tickets went on sale, Stoyle purchased tickets to two shows on opening night. He believes the success of this franchise is due to the "avid fan base," who are "loud, proud and love talking about the franchise," (Stoyle, 2015). He says through his participation in the fan community, he has met a group of people he would have otherwise never gotten the chance to know. Stoyle is curious as to the future of this franchise under what he calls "the new Disney regime." Disney has chosen to do away with the story lines created by comics and novels in the expanded universe and instead start fresh. For die hard fans losing these characters and story lines from the Star Wars canon is a "tough pill to swallow," (Stoyle, 2015). The only thing Stoyle is concerned with is the possibility of over-saturation. There are three saga

films and three spin offs in the works, with this the franchise will double in size by 2020.

This November, I conducted a content analysis on the movie trailers, posters and advertisements from all of the Star Wars movies. I aimed to find the key themes or ideas which make the films so successful with fans. In terms of the findings for the poster and movie trailers, there was one significant factor which stood out. The original trilogy of Star Wars movies and *The Force Awakens*, all focus on the Jedi and their goal to defeat those on the dark side. The prequel trilogy of Star Wars movies follows Anakin's journey to the dark side and tells the story of how he became Darth Vader. Therefore the amount of time and space devoted to the Jedi in Episodes IV, V, VI and VII is significantly more than in Episodes I, II and III. This is the reason a lot of the commercials from the time period of Episode I, II and III have more of a dark focus. The main character is Anakin and his story leads to the dark side, therefore the audience becomes more sympathetic to the dark side of this franchise.

When it comes to the movie trailers, the data reflects this change from Jedi focus in the first trilogy, to the Sith in the second trilogy. In the first trilogy a lot of the trailer run time is devoted to images of the Jedi. In the second trilogy, especially Episodes II and III, the run time for the dark side is comparable, if not more than the run time dedicated to the Jedi. Another trend my data shows is that the trailers would spend anywhere from 16% - 41% of their run time focusing on the male character. As males are a significant portion of the target audience this dedication to the male character's screen time makes sense. The 16% of this skew came from the Episode V: *The Empire Strikes Back* trailer, in which a large portion of the run time was dedicated to text titles and

therefore affected the percentages for this trailer. The more the trailers focused on the male characters, the more time they allowed for their male fans to connect and relate to the characters. This in turn would peak their target audience interest and hopefully lead to increased ticket sales. It wasn't until *The Force Awaken's* trailer that a strong female lead was the focus for a comparable amount of the trailer's run time of the male focus. The change in the story line to include a more involved female lead could reflect the franchise's recognition of its large female following. The story is what sells this franchise to audiences worldwide, most of these trailers spent on average 40 - 60% of their run time on dialogue from the movie. This unique sci-fi universe created by George Lucas is what has captivated audiences for generations. Part of what makes the franchise successful are the unique characters and characteristics of this franchise. This is why most of the trailers spent at least 10% of their run time on spaceships and on average 10% on lightsaber fights. These two characteristics are unique aspects of the universe Lucas has created and the stories would not be the same without them.

A huge selling factor for this franchise are the characters that are unique to its story line. The franchise needs to sell these characters in order to sell the franchise. This is why over half of the trailer run time, and 75% of the poster space are dedicated to the characters themselves. These characters include more than just the human ones, they also include the droids, alien species and stormtroopers. This is also why the advertisements focused so much on characters such as Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. It is the characters which audiences most identify with and recognize.

In regards to the advertisements I focused specifically on lightsaber commercials and then on other products whose advertisements had a reference to the franchise. It

appears that the target audience of the lightsaber commercials is a young male. None of the ads featured girls and therefore makes it harder for this demographic to connect with the product. A majority of the ads featured iconic music which helped connect Star Wars fans to the product and the commercial itself. The earlier advertisements centered around the Jedi and encouraged their customers to portray the light side. The later ads encouraged their customers to choose a side and for a few ads even fully endorsed the dark side. This shift was due to a shift in the plot lines of Episodes I, II and III. These ads came out during the time period the later commercials were created and the plot line followed Anakin's journey to the dark side. The ads also all featured a narrator, I believe this helped sell the product to both the children and the adults by clarifying the images contained in the commercial. The ads also were never connected to a specific movie, this ensured that the company could advertise the products even when there was not a movie premiering.

Most of the additional ads featured products that were not specific to the Star Wars universe. However, the advertisers decided to connect their products to the franchise in the hopes to connect with a larger and possibly new audience. All of these ads except the 1977 Kenner ad, used iconic Star Wars music in the background to help to connect the viewer to the commercial. For the majority the target audience remained with a male focus, even though the age range varied. The only ad in which young girls could connect with an actress was the Duracell battery advertisement. For the most part these ads focused on characters in the Star Wars universe and not specific items (like a lightsaber) as a way to connect with the fans.



In conclusion, the factors which most sell this franchise are the characters, the story line, and the unique elements (such as lightsabers) that can only be found in George Lucas' Star Wars. It is this reason why fans continue to support the series and have spent over \$4 billion in ticket sales worldwide (Box Office History for Star Wars Movies, 2015).

### **Conclusion:**

The Star Wars franchise is a multi-medium universe containing film, toys, novels and television shows. This franchise continues to gain fans due to the unique universe created by George Lucas and the characters which live within it. Iconic hero characters, such as Luke Skywalker, inspire children to lead and aim higher in their lives. The droids, lightsabers and spaceships connect with the inner child of adults. For some fans, like Stoyke, this franchise has helped to shape their personal identity. Being part of this fandom means fans find a family in a community outside of the reality in which they live. Fans connect across the globe through the Internet and meet at Comi-Cons to share in their love of this franchise. Star Wars is more than just a set of films, it is a subculture of living, breathing, individuals who share a common identity. This franchise has developed a multi-generational fan base like none before and will continue to grow with the December premiere of *The Force Awakens*. Now a new generation is dressing like Han Solo and Princess Leia, playing with droids and sharing in the Star Wars tradition alongside their parents. This Christmas lightsabers, Millennium Falcons and BB-8s will emerge from beneath wrapping paper, as the next generation begins to carry on the love and appreciation for the timeless story that is Star Wars.

## Appendix A

### (Annotated Bibliography)

Box Office History for Star Wars Movies. (n.d.). Retrieved November 17, 2015, from <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/franchise/Star-Wars#tab=summary>

This was a source I cited in my original content analysis. Since I used parts of my analysis in this paper I had to re-cite this source.

Brady, D. (2015, November) Content Analysis: Star Wars. Buffalo State College.

I conducted this Content Analysis for a class at Buffalo State College. The findings and topic of the analysis was relevant to my thesis topic, which is why I selected this source. This not only helped with my topic discussion but also gave me a springboard to go from to find more research.

Brown, S. (1999). Retro-marketing: Yesterday's tomorrows, today! *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* *Marketing Intelligence & Plan*, 17(7), 363-376.

This article discusses the difference between repo, retro and repo-retro marketing. Repo-retro revives or reproduces something that trades on nostalgia. Jenkins discusses how *The Phantom Menace* is an example of repo-retro marketing and exploits nostalgia of past fan generations to make a profit. He concludes that Lucas' decision to revive the franchise was based on post *Return of the Jedi* cinematic flops. The article focuses mainly on the relaunch of the Star Wars brand in the 90s, following the success of the original trilogy. Overall the article is a good source for detail behind what makes the Star Wars franchise profitable and why it continues to sell merchandise.

Brown, S., Kozinets, R., & Sherry, J. (2003). Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(3), 19-33.

This article focuses on using a retro brand in marketing to sell products. It talks about the impact of nostalgia, brand extension and brand revival. It discusses the difference between personal and communal nostalgia and will be useful in explaining the impact Star Wars has on different generations. It also discusses how brands can link people together and the impact cult following has on certain brands. It then goes further to discuss the impact *The Phantom Menace* had on the Star Wars fan base and why the franchise as a whole has such an impact on individuals.

Camera luxury. (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2015, from <http://cameraluxury.blogspot.com>

This citation was used to determine how much the price of cameras has dropped over the years.

Chen, Y., & Li, S. X.. (2009). Group Identity and Social Preferences. *The American Economic Review*, 99(1), 431-457. Retrieved from <http://jstor.org/stable/29730190>

Using the Buffalo State Library database, I conducted research into social identity. This piece went into detail on the social identity process and the way in which individuals can identify with a group. I will be using this source in my theory section to further show the impact of group and social identity on the individual. This article was important in understanding the impact the fan community has on individuals in the Star Wars franchise.

Cuccinello, H. (2015, October 20). 'Star Wars' Presales Crash Ticketing Sites, Set Record for Fandango. Retrieved December 12, 2015, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/hayleycuccinello/2015/10/20/star-wars-presales-crash-ticketing-sites-sets-record-for-fandango/>

This article by Forbes covered the impressive ticket sales by *The Force Awakens*, ticket pre-sale. The fans crashed some of the most powerful ticket sites in the country and hit record breaking sales. The article also discussed Disney's acquisition of the Lucasfilm studios.

Cunningham, T. (2015, November 3). 'Star Wars' Fan's Dying Wish to see 'The Force Awakens' Early Receives New Hope. Retrieved November 10, 2015, from <http://www.thewrap.com/star-wars-fans-dying-wish-to-see-the-force-awakens-recvies-new-hope/>

I used this source to gather more information on the support that the fan community provides for Star Wars fans. It was impressive to see such a strong rally for David and see the stars and director of the movie support him as well. It shows just how strong and supportive the fan community is to challenge Disney executives to release the film.

Fisher, A. (2008). Marketing the Movies. *Journal of the University of marketing and distribution sciences. Humanities, arts & sciences*, 20(2), 1-15.

This article covers the evolution of the role of marketing in the film industry. It covers the span of time from the origin of film to today. The article also discusses how shifts in public taste have influenced the marketing of films themselves. It goes on to discuss the holdings owned by Disney, which is relevant to the fact that they now own Lucas Films (which makes Star Wars). Finally the article discussed the term "blockbuster" and the evolution of marketing techniques and technology which have led to the current marketing status of films.

Heller, L. (2015, September 4). Star Wars Force Friday a \$1Billion Boon for Retailers. Retrieved December 7, 2015, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/lauraheller/2015/09/04/star-wars-force-friday-rings-retail-registers/>

I came across this source in my research regarding Force Friday. The article by Forbes introduced some helpful insight into how the stores set up and handled Force Friday. Heller researched and reported that the stores stand to make up to \$1 Billion from this event.

Jenkins, H. (2002). Interactive audiences? The collective intelligence of media fans. *The new media book*, 157-170.

Jenkins discusses the emergence of 3 new trends in fan participatory culture. The three trends include new technology, DIY productions, and new economic trends. These trends contribute to the rise of fandoms in the science fiction community. He goes on to discuss fandoms as virtual communities and how these communities feed off each other's knowledge of the fandom's franchise of choice. The fandom is a huge factor behind the success of this series as a whole. This franchise has one of the largest and most active fandoms in the movie industry. Star Wars has fans who dress up for Comicons, write fan fiction, and even name their children after its main characters. Fans this dedicated are what keep the franchise alive and relevant in today's pop culture.

Jenkins, H. (2003). "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence and participatory culture." *Rethinking media change: The aesthetics of translation*, 281-312.

Force Flicks lists "almost 300 amateur produced Star Wars films currently in circulation on the web." This is the level of dedication of the Star Wars fan community. Star Wars fans are not only creating fan based media content, but they are making content that can hold its own against the original films. *George Lucas in Love* is one of the most popular short films and has even found success beyond the fandom. This article goes on to discuss the importance of media convergence for the Star Wars franchise and how businesses stand to make even more money off the fans. Jenkins also discusses how licensing has provided Lucasfilms with a successful way to make large amounts of profit off of its films.

Kohls. (2015, November). Black Friday Advertisement. *The Buffalo News*.

While doing some holiday shopping I came across this ad in the newspaper. I used the advertisement to quote the price of a DSLR camera Kohls was offering to show how easy it is to purchase a quality camera in this day and age.

Lev, P. (1998). Whose future? Star Wars, Alien, and Blade Runner. *Literature film quarterly*, 26(1), 30.

This article examines Star Wars film's ability to create an optimistic vision of the future. It examines why the science fiction genre has become successful and how Star Wars has impacted this genre as a whole.

Lucas, G. (Director). (1977). *Star Wars Episode IV - A New Hope* [Motion picture]. USA: LucasFilm, 20th Century Fox.

This was the source for the quote in the opening paragraph of my introduction. Just dotting the i's and crossing the t's.

Mecca, K. (2015, December 4). *Star Wars Identity* [Personal interview].

This is the citation for my second in-depth interview subject. I met Kyle working films this summer and knew his insight into the franchise would be valuable. As an individual working in the film industry Kyle has a knowledge of how the industry and franchise movies operate.

Ogg, J. (2012, February 10). *The Force: Star Wars Franchise Worth Over \$30 Billion and Growing*. Retrieved December 7, 2015, from <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2012/02/10/the-force-star-wars-franchise-worth-over-30-billion-and-growing/2/>

I found this source while researching how much the Star Wars franchise is worth. I used it to cite the figure in my opening paragraph. The article also had other interesting ideas which led me to more research but they were all speculations so I did not use them as sources.

Ott, A. (2015, December 3). *Star Wars Identity* [Telephone interview].

This is the citation for my in-depth interview with Amanda Ott. I had to interview her over the phone due to her time constraints.

Pevos, E. (2015, November 20). *How much 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' has made in advance ticket sales*. Retrieved December 12, 2015, from [http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/11/how\\_much\\_star\\_wars\\_the\\_force\\_a.html](http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/11/how_much_star_wars_the_force_a.html)

I came across this source in my research for ticket sales for *The Force Awakens*. There author give figures has to how much the film has made so far in ticket sales.

Shefrin, E. (2004). Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, and participatory fandom: Mapping new congruencies between the internet and media entertainment culture. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(3), 261-281.

This article compares the interaction of directors Peter Jackson and George Lucas, and their interactions with the fans of Lord of the Rings and Star Wars. The article describes Lucas' beginnings as a successful Hollywood film maker who had little interaction with fans. It goes on to describe the interactions between movie producers and what Shefrin calls "active fans". These fans are interested in maintaining the purity of the movie's franchise and have the power to influence the production. Ultimately these fans become a fandom which maintains the knowledge of the entire franchise.

Stoyle, B. (2015, December 4). Star Wars Identity [Telephone interview].

This is the citation for my third in-depth interview subject. I met Bryan working in films this summer, during which he expressed his love for Star Wars. I have worked with Bryan on Star Wars evens before and knew he would be a great asset to my research. I had to conduct the interview over the phone due to Bryan's work commitments.

## Appendix B

### (Personal Reflection):

I have been on a galactic journey all semester, as I became a fan of Star Wars. I have only recently been introduced to this franchise, but I can already see the strength and support of the fan community. It is an exciting time to be a Star Wars fan and the hype for *The Force Awakens* premiere only goes to further prove this fact. While I became a fan a little late in life for this franchise to affect my personal identity, I can see the effect this franchise has had on others. The story line and message of the films, especially the original trilogy, are a great way to help shape the morals of a younger generation. When I was in middle school my friends and I were into Japanese manga and anime. We scoured the Internet for comics and shows and found an online fan community. This love of Japanese culture has become so much of a part of my identity that I have always aspired to travel to Japan. Without the means to travel, I found a common bond with manga and anime friends across the globe through social media. I can understand the effect that the Star Wars franchise has had on its fans, as I have experienced the same effect with Japanese culture.

It is amazing to see the impact that *The Force Awakens* has had on popular culture, despite the fact that it has not yet premiered to the public. Star Wars merchandise is everywhere this holiday season and advertisers are definitely doing their job. I have fallen victim to one too many Star Wars ads myself and now have a small collection of merchandise at home. Marketers have a plethora of markets to advertise Star Wars merchandise to as the fan base now spans three generations. The amount

of product you could make to sell to these diverse generation groups is beyond me.

The Disney executives knew what they were doing when they acquired Lucasfilm.

Disney now stands to make billions in profits and have already begun to do so. I think it

will be interesting to see the impact of the next Star Wars installment on the next

generation of fans over the next thirty years.



## **Appendix C:**

### **(In-Depth interviews)**

***Question 1: Does the Star Wars franchise have any nostalgic value for you? If So why?***

**Amanda:** Yes. When I was 11 I discovered Star Wars because of the new trilogy. The glamour of Queen Amidala pulled me in, and watching the original trilogy got me hooked. I watched the original trilogy almost every day for a whole summer when I first discovered it. I was a nerdy kid and wanted Luke Skywalker to come fly me away to a galaxy far, far away.

**Kyle:** Even as a 25 year old, Star Wars still pays great nostalgic value to me. While most would assume I would be a fan of the most recent trilogy of episodes I-III, since I was 9 when the first came out, I was a fan of the original trilogy for years beforehand. I had the special privilege to see episodes IV-VI for the first time ever in theaters in early 1997. Our local cheap movie theater called the "Super Saver" showed all three as part of Special Edition release that year, with each coming out in succession each month starting in January. I was able to experience them like a kid from the 70s, the way my father was able to experience them, but this time he was by my side. Soon afterward I was the proud owner of them on VHS, and would watch the trilogy as tradition whenever I needed to stay home sick from school. It always made me feel better and brightened my imagination, just as it was made to.

**Bryan:** Star Wars has become a big part of my life. I got into the franchise far later than most, but it became a large part of my “public identity”; most of my friends and colleagues tend to use “the Star Wars fan” as a label for me quite often. I have to say, since the franchise has never left my life, I can’t really call it nostalgic.

***2: What is it about this franchise that makes it stand out from other sci-fi movies?***

**Amanda:** Lightsabers and the mysticism of the Force!

**Kyle:** It set high standards for a sci-fi adventure, many of which have never been met since (some not even episodes I-III could not repeat). It was the most raw and yet simple depiction of good versus evil, and for a kid it was full with imagination and spectacle while telling you a simple straight forward story. It taught us about belief in oneself, fate, faith, love, and that even in the best of times the worst things could often happen. Basic structure and understanding in story mixed with beautiful concepts of light sabers and death stars.

**Bryan:** Star Wars is fun. It has a “whiz-bang” appeal that most franchises can’t crack; most go too far into comedy or camp, or take themselves way too seriously. Star Wars offers reverence but with a large dose of lightheartedness. Even with the Prequels complicating the plot, the story is a simple “good vs. evil” tale and even at its most grim can still have an element of wonder and awe. They also tend to keep it simple. Most casual fans of the Avengers may not remember the name of the alien race that Loki brought to Earth (the Chitauri for those keeping score), but most people can remember “The Empire” and “The Rebels” pretty clearly.

***3: Why do you think this franchise is able to attract new fans despite the 30 year age?***

**Amanda:** There's something for everyone. There's beauty, glamour, action, love stories, humor, and an ongoing battle between good and evil.

**Kyle:** New fans will always flock to this franchise for the same reasons people did the first time: It stands out, its good vs. evil, it takes place in worlds different from ours, and the nostalgia of loved ones showing it to their children. And I believe the new director J.J. Abrams has felt all of this and knows that's exactly what the newest installment must repeat.

**Bryan:** Smart marketing has been on the side of keeping Star Wars alive, especially in times when films were not being released. West End Games kept things alive in the late 80s after television runs of Ewoks and Droids cartoons. The "Expanded Universe" of novels, games and comics started in 1991 to serve as a near-decade-long initiative to keep Star Wars alive before the release of the Prequel Trilogy, and lasting in that role until last year. No matter your interest, there was something Star Wars to suit you. Many times the genres had subsections; such as the novels. There were more mystical fantasy books like those written by Kevin J. Anderson, a book trilogy regarded by many fans as what the next movie trilogy should have been by Timothy Zahn, and more esoteric views at Rebel Pilots with the X-Wing novel series by Michael A. Stackpole and Aaron Allston. Even the video games ranged from side-scrolling action games on earlier consoles, to First-Person-Shooter style games or racing games or MMORPGs. These

tertiary items are a way to give every person some way to make Star Wars more personal for them.

#### ***4: Who is your favorite Star Wars character? Why?***

**Amanda:** Luke Skywalker. He's totally the man. Unlike his father Anakin, he was able to be trained quickly in the Force late in life and not turn to the dark side. He is the ultimate Star Wars hero.

**Kyle:** Yoda from *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. His character is so developed and complex and he's a master Jedi in the least likely form ever. Perfect character writing. He's playful, yet incredibly wise, and encompasses good. In the newer episodes he became a wooden personality and lost almost all of his charm. Everything he stood for was compromised. He should have always been that same creature we came to love in the swamps of Dagobah.

**Bryan:** I have always gravitated towards Luke Skywalker. I realized later in life that many of my favorite characters are the ones with the strong moral compass, and Luke's trials in the Original Trilogy were something that sticks to that very much so. Even when he got closest to darkness, he did what was good for goodness' sake.

#### ***5: What do you think makes the Star Wars characters so unique?***

**Amanda:** Cool outfits and hair.

**Kyle:** It's not that they're so unique, it's that they're so relate-able. The boy from a small place wanting more in life, the mentor that encourages you to belief in yourself, and the friends that surround you to help reach your goal.

**Bryan:** The true catch is that Star Wars characters really aren't that unique. They are all based on character tropes from older literature or storytelling; many story elements are based on King Arthur in their broadest strokes. But they play those tropes so well that they resonate with an audience.

**6: *Let's talk shop...how about those droids? Which is your favorite droid? How do you think droids impact the Star Wars universe?***

**Amanda:** C-3PO. They give you loveable characters that you can love like a pet.

**Kyle:** R2-D2...He's the sassiest droid this side of Tatooine. You need one with personality especially if they half rule the galaxy in everything we do in the future.

**Bryan:** I liked the droid but they were never really my favorite characters of the films. However, I'm all about BB-8, the new astromech droid from *The Force Awakens*. I like that little droid's style. It's a very classic sci-fi trope for the old-fashioned robot to appear, and that's part of what makes Star Wars so timeless.

**7: *At what age did you watch Star Wars for the first time?***

**Amanda:** 11.

**Kyle:** 6 years old.

**Bryan:** I was a late bloomer for Star Wars -- I watched the Original Trilogy when I was 12. I was actually resistant to watching it for a few years; I had gotten into Star Trek when I was 9, and as a naive child would, I bought into the "Star Trek vs. Star Wars" mentality where you could only be a fan of one and not the other, but my brother and cousin sat me down to watch the films and I was hooked.

**8: *Do you have any childhood memories of the franchise or the toys and products surrounding it?***

**Amanda:** I got interested in the movies by Kmart being all decked out in Star Wars. Queen Amidala was so cool looking I had to see what it was all about.

**Kyle:** I always wanted a green light saber, I got the blue one for Christmas instead. Santa must have not been able to build it like Luke could.

**Bryan:** I remember the first lightsaber I ever owned. Kenner had put out Luke Skywalker's lightsaber from "Return of the Jedi" which had lights and sound and a telescoping blade. I bought that and as soon as I got home with it I ran outside, despite it drizzling out, and started swinging it against the trees in our front yard just to hear the sound effects. It's really not much of a surprise that I own many more lightsabers today.

**9: *Are you active in the Star Wars fan community? If so how?***

**Amanda:** Not anymore. I was a member of the Buffalo Star Wars fan Club and used to dress up in costume. Now I just kinda know the people who love Star Wars like I do.

**Kyle:** I unfortunately am not.

**Bryan:** My fan involvement has gone deep and has changed a lot over the years. When I first got into Star Wars, my brother and cousin were into customizing the action figures, and I started doing it too. Back in the mid-90s, only so many Star Wars characters were action figures, as then-Kenner's (now Hasbro) re-launch of Star Wars toys had begun in 1995. So some fans would take an action figure and repaint it, add modeling clay to it,

swap parts, or do other similar modifications to make a new action figure representing a character they did not have.

My first year in college I became highly engaged in fan films as well as fan radio shows (the predecessor of podcasts). During my college years I would go on to participate in acting in (and trying to create my own) Star Wars fan films, none of which were ever completed or released. For about a year in college I briefly served as co-host on a fan radio show entitled "Star Wars and Beyond", and voice acting in a friend's fan audio drama called "Always in Motion" playing a Jedi Padawan in an interactive "choose your own adventure" story.

After my freshman year of college, I joined the then-relatively new fan club The North Ridge, which is Buffalo's chapter of the FanForce fan club, which is run through TheForce.Net. FanForce used to be quite prominent nationwide during the Prequel releases, and while many chapters no longer exist, Buffalo is one of a few that have remained strong. The North Ridge does many costumed character appearances at events local to Buffalo, raising money for local charities.

My participation with the North Ridge also led me to help create the post-game show for the Buffalo Bisons' annual Star Wars Night event. The group was invited to appear, and as the event grew in popularity, members of the group started putting on little lightsaber duel performances in between innings and after the game. The team asked us to come up with an entire show to "do whatever we wanted" for the following year, so I helped craft a performance for the group to put on, reminiscent of a theme

park stunt show, with a storyline allowing for as many lightsaber duels as desired. The following three years, I took up the part of writing, directing, producing and performing in the post-game show as Luke Skywalker, telling a trilogy of sorts in a new story that incorporated the North Ridge costumed characters with the Bisons team mascots. The show grew so popular that by my last year directing in 2013, the Star Wars Night event became a sellout, and the Bisons bestselling promotion.

Costuming with the North Ridge parlayed into joining the Rebel Legion, the good guy equivalent of the 501st Legion costuming group. Appearing at one Rebel Legion event in Ohio led me to meet comic book artist Joe Corroney, who took some snapshots of my Luke cosplay, and later used them as a reference for a print he drew for the Star Wars Celebration IV convention in 2007.

***10: Have you ever participated in a comi con?***

**Amanda:** RocCon

**Kyle:** No. Life goals though.

**Bryan:** I have attended my fair share of conventions, mostly local. I have also traveled to Dragon\*Con in Atlanta twice. I've mostly gone just as a general attendee, though I have also served as a booth volunteer for various groups a few times as well.

***11: Have you ever cosplayed as a character from Star Wars? If so, who?***

**Amanda:** Yes. Mara Jade Skywalker. Who probably no longer exists.

**Kyle:** I have not, but if I did I would do Boba Fett.



**Bryan:** I have cosplayed Star Wars A LOT. I have mostly been cosplaying as Luke Skywalker with the North Ridge since 2005. My most recent Star Wars character was to allow for a helmeted character; a Mandalorian Warrior (a la Boba Fett) with a paint scheme inspired by the White Ranger from Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers.

**12: On average how much time do you spend creating the cosplay outfit?**

**Amanda:** Took me probably 3 days to put it all together

**Kyle:** Goose egg.

**Bryan:** Time has varied. I have bought full ensembles which only needed slight modifications to make it satisfactory, I have pieced together a few costumes from various costume makers or vendors that sell cosplay items. For those it only takes the days of shipping, more or less. I did create my Mandalorian over many sleepless nights in about 3 weeks, as it was a rush job to have it for this year's Star Wars Night.

**13: On average how much will you spend on a cosplay outfit?**

**Amanda:** \$100

**Kyle:** Most I've spent is \$50 on designing a Marty Mcfly costume.

**Bryan:** My most expensive would be the Luke Skywalker from Return of the Jedi, which, counting the lightsaber replica, cost nearly \$1000. Most of my other costumes are far cheaper, but I typically spend a few hundred for a quality costume one way or another. The leather goods are typically what will bump the cost up more than anticipated.

**14: What other factors go into making a Star Wars cosplay seem legitimate?**

**Amanda:** Researching details.

**Kyle:** Details, details.

**Bryan:** FOOTWEAR! Any cosplay can be ruined the second you look down and see a pair of Nikes, Marty McFly cosplayers obviously get a pass. Buying boots do wonders for achieving the right look. Even cheap costume boots, or buying loafers and spats or riding chaps to make it look like you're wearing boots can make for a much more authentic Star Wars look than the New Balance logo.

Using the right fabrics can also go a long way in making the soft goods part of a costume look interesting and authentic, especially on prequel costumes which were made in the current era of "add texture to all of the costumes since we have high definition now". I completely respect anyone who makes a Jedi costume out of simple broadcloth or bargain cotton from the fabric store, but using crinkle cotton or linen allows for a different hang for each costume, making them unique and offering a lot of extra texture

**15: Name the last Star Wars commercial (toy, product or service) you saw? Was it a tv or internet ad? What were they selling? Would you buy it?**

**Amanda:** TV ad. Cover Girl Star Wars makeup. I wouldn't because I felt that they just took the normal makeup and put Star Wars on it. Sure it makes the packaging cooler, but it doesn't change the makeup. I need you to make the makeup Star Wars somehow. Otherwise you're just being lazy.

**Kyle:** On Amazon, the mini remote control BB-8. I would if I was willing to drop the money. He's like a new puppy.

**Bryan:** Duracell had a great ad for their batteries, featuring kids dressing up like the new Star Wars characters and interacting with many of the established ones. It was a fun ad that captured the imagination of playing Star Wars in the backyard. I haven't exactly bought Duracells because of it. If anything I think the choice of actions in the commercial indicated what the Rey character might be in the movie, but that's all fanboy speculation.

***16: Did you participate in Target's Force Friday? If so what did you buy?***

**Amanda:** No.

**Kyle:** I did not.

**Bryan:** My Force Friday was all over the place. My friends live in the southtowns and we went to the Toys R Us in Hamburg, right across from the football stadium, so we were waiting in line for Star Wars toys while being serenaded by the One Direction concert. But hey, yay fireworks. My friends stocked up on a lot of the new toys, especially the Funko Pop! vinyl figures and the Lego sets. I bought a Kylo Ren Christmas ornament. After Toys R Us, we headed over to Wal-Mart where a colleague of mine was working. They had a few cupcakes left over from midnight so we ate cupcakes and perused the toys they had. I picked up a BB-8 t-shirt. I was looking for two specific items, neither of which I found while out at midnight. My wish list consisted of the Sphero BB-8 app-controlled droid and the Black Series Force FX Kylo Ren lightsaber. I was thankful enough to pick up more during the day on Force Friday; including ordering the BB-8 online and finding the Kylo Ren saber at Target after work.

***17: What Star Wars items have you purchased over the last three months?***

**Amanda:** Storm trooper Christmas ornament, and a droid friends forever shirt for my niece.

**Kyle:** I bought the original trilogy on Blu-ray, Force Awakens poster, and won a Star Wars themed basket at a Chinese Auction.

**Bryan:** Force Friday purchases aside, I have since bought a few Star Wars Christmas ornaments, as well as the “Aftermath” novel, which is part of the new post-Return of the Jedi timeline.

**18: *Did you buy any Star Wars items on Black Friday?***

**Amanda:** No but I don't shop on Black Friday.

**Kyle:** A Death Star Waffle maker.

**Bryan:** I don't typically do a lot of Black Friday shopping; I didn't buy anything Star Wars-specific.

**19: *Would a marketer's choice to use Star Wars references in their ads change your opinion about a product?***

**Amanda:** No.

**Kyle:** The punny or more detailed the better! The BB-8 toy is basically the real thing--I want it!

**Bryan:** I do appreciate a good reference and I think some companies like ThinkGeek have branded themselves for the niche audience where they pull it off quite well. Companies like that can get away with clever and esoteric references better than other

brands which mostly appeal to general consumers. Those brands, if they bother at all, tend to go for the "low hanging fruit" since they are targeting the casual fans or the parents of kids who enjoy the franchise. I get it; it's just not my cup of tea when being marketed to. Quote Admiral Ackbar and you'll probably get my attention.

**20: *Would you be more likely to purchase a product if it was Star Wars themed, of if the ad for the product included Star Wars references?***

**Amanda:** It depends on if they just package it in Star Wars theme or if it is actually Star Wars themed. Like, I would buy a Yoda shaped candle. But I wouldn't buy a candle with a Yoda photo on it. If that makes sense.

**Kyle:** Right now, yes. We're 17 days away!

**Bryan:** I have been known to buy something since Star Wars strikes my fancy. It will pique my interest but the product eventually has to follow through on providing value. Timing is also important; simply making a Star Wars reference is great when there is not much else going on in Star Wars marketing.

**21: *Do you plan on going to see The Force Awakens? If so have you purchased tickets? When did you purchase the tickets?***

**Amanda:** Yes! No, not yet.

**Kyle:** I bought tickets within minutes of it going on sale on Fandango. I have the 7:00pm showing on Thursday, December 17th!

**Bryan:** Oh I will be going to *The Force Awakens*. I will be seeing it opening night on the 17th at 7pm, and going to see the IMAX version at 10:30 that same night. I purchased

tickets once they became available for sale in October, thankfully early enough in the evening before Fandango and all of the movie ticket sites crashed from the demand. I was lucky that my audition was running late or else I might not have gotten tickets!

***22: What factors are key to the success of this franchise?***

**Amanda:** Just keep it Star Wars. You'll have to use the Force.

**Kyle:** New but old. They need to capture the magic of the original trilogy by also reinventing itself and giving us more imagination to feed off of. Keep it practical and real and avoid what happened in the prequels. Even if this new episode turns out to be what some fans believe is a "best of Star Wars movie" they would have still sold me, because that means that episodes VIII and IX are going to be total surprises.

**Bryan:** An avid fanbase. Star Wars fans are typically loud and proud and love talking about the franchise, and expressing it somehow. But that expression is also incredibly diverse. One thing I've appreciated about the North Ridge is that you discover a group of people you never would have known otherwise, except for one common interest, but even there that interest is appreciated in different ways. Regardless, there's something about the franchise that makes someone join a fan group, or go make memes or fan art or fan films or podcasts, or collect action figures, or read novels or play games or wear t-shirts or do whatever it is they love to do with a Star Wars slant.

***23: Do you think this franchise will have the same longevity in the future that it has maintained over the past 30 years?***

**Amanda:** Yes. Star Wars forever, yo.

**Kyle:** Disney has said they are going to release a Star Wars movie every year until we're all dead. It doesn't matter what we think anymore, it's going to stay here long after everyone's lifetime. But...that's how it should be, every child should be able to experience their own Star Wars along with our Star Wars.

**Bryan:** I'm curious about that, mainly because I worry about oversaturation; with this first phase of films, 3 "Saga" films then 3 spin-offs, the movie franchise will have doubled in size by 2020. It's funny since it's the reverse of the problem Star Wars has had most of its history, however the franchise did double from 3 movies to 6 after the Prequels. Most of the time the franchise has been relying on tertiary storytelling with the Expanded Universe novels, comics and games, as well as roleplaying games and merchandise to keep things going. In my time as a fan, I've noticed that "the state of fandom" has shifted a lot; when I was young in the early 90s, there was a lot of new Expanded Universe material coming out but it was mostly reliant on the Original Trilogy; the prequel films were just being announced. In the later 90s through 2005, there were always film releases to make Star Wars fandom more popular to the public interest, even though the Special Edition releases and Prequels are the items that fans "love to hate". Post-2005, it went back to being something a bit more niche but still popular thanks to social media keeping it alive in people's minds, as well as new television projects. And now, we're under what I like to call "The new Disney regime." It will be different. A long part of the last three years for me was somberly saying goodbye to the Expanded Universe; Disney had decided to not use the storylines created by those books and comics for their future releases and instead start fresh with a new storyline of events outside the films. A smart plan, for them. But from someone who's been reading

those stories since my fandom started, it was a tough pill to swallow. Many of those characters were just as “Star Wars” to me as Luke and Leia; however now they are no longer a part of the Star Wars canon. But, that doesn’t mean Disney won’t put out a great product. I’d like to think we’re all trying to keep an open mind. If nothing else, I hope it’ll be fun again.



## **Appendix D:**

### **Content Analysis**

#### **Part One:**

#### **Objectives, Methodology & Logistics**

**Research Question:** When reviewing advertisements, movie trailers and posters from each Star Wars film, what are the key themes or ideas which make the films so successful with fans?

#### **Objectives**

- 1) In order to find the key themes of each advertisement, I will look at a few popular advertisements from each time period a film was released and compare the focus to the other film's advertisements. In order to find the key themes of each movie trailer, I will calculate the time spent on each of my predetermined categories in each trailer. In order to find the key themes of each movie poster I will calculate how each poster falls into my predetermined categories.
- 2) With this focus I aim to see if the ads look to appeal more to male or female audiences, how they use key elements of the movie franchise, and connecting similar patterns between the different media used by the franchise.
- 3) When the advertisements, trailers and posters are categorized, I will find the percentage of each category for each film.
- 4) I will also be making comments on any similarities and or different strategies used by the advertisements, trailers and posters.

- 5) The main objectives of this content analysis is to see the similarities (if any) used by the Star Wars franchise to connect and remain relevant with its fan base over its 30+ years of existence. I aim to learn what makes this franchise and any product it touches so successful.

## Sample, Logistics, Methodology

### Advertisements:

In order to find a plethora of advertisements to choose from I looked to YouTube as a content source. Here many fans or advertisers have posted old and current versions of Star Wars advertisements. Often subscribers made video compilations of Star Wars commercials spanning many years. I was able to find one video that had compiled all of the lightsaber commercials and used this in my research. I also added commercials that focused on other products and were from around the time each film was released.

I viewed each advertisement and proceeded to compare the content of the ads using my chart categories. I looked for any dramatic changes in the way the advertisements were formatted and how they connected their products to the Star Wars franchise.

### Movie Trailers:

In order to find both old and new trailers from each film I once again turned to YouTube as a source. I was able to find multiple versions of each movie's trailers used by the franchise to advertise the movie's premiere. I pulled the original trailers from each film and compared the trailers using a set of predetermined categories. My aim was to see how much time was spent on each of my categories in each film. I drew conclusions on the structure of each trailer based on the time spent on each category. I looked to see if each trailer spent similar time on certain categories over others and I looked to see if the time spent on certain categories changed over the years.

### Movie Posters:

Using Google Images, I compiled a folder of the original posters for each Star Wars film in the franchise. After compiling all of the posters I used categories to compare the content of each poster. I was once again looking for any similarities in the structure, content and themes of the posters to determine what the primary focus of each poster was. Using the similarities (or differences) of the posters I was able to determine what the focus of poster advertisement was for the Star Wars franchise.

Between the advertisements, trailers and posters I looked at over 20 different forms of media examples related to the Star Wars franchise. This gave me a good idea of if the franchise has changed its marketing strategy over the years and what the franchise focuses on in each of these marketing tools. I hoped to determine if the key themes of each of these pieces of media is what makes the franchise so successful with its fan base.

## **Part 2 Operationalizing**

### Advertisements:

1. *Product sold:* What was the product the advertisement was trying to sell.
2. *Music from movie:* Did the advertiser choose to use iconic Star Wars music in the back ground to help sell their product? This can include actual pieces of music or specific sound effects such as Darth Vader's breathing.
3. *Kids or Adults:* Was the primary focus of the ads kids or adults? Who is using the product in the commercial?
4. *Number of Boys:* How many boys or males, appear in the ad. This is going to compare to the number of females in order to determine which demographic is the focus of the advertisements.
5. *Number of Girls:* How many girls or females, appear in the ad.

6. *Hero or Villain focus*: Is the ad trying to align their product with the Jedi or the Dark Side.
7. *Number of times the word 'Force' is used*: The force is a key part of the Star Wars universe, in order to tie a product to this franchise this word may be used in the commercial. How many times does it appear?
8. *Narrator*: Is there a narrator selling you the product or are there visual aid doing the narrator's job?
9. *Movie ad at end*: Does the product encourage the audience to go view the next installment in the Star Wars franchise?
10. *Slogans/comments*: What slogans or themes are present in each ad which helps to drive home the Star Wars connection?

#### Movie Trailers:

1. *Lightsaber fight*: The number of seconds spent on lightsabers and lightsaber duels. The lightsaber is another key part of the Star Wars universe, it is a unique weapon which may be focused on in the trailers in order to peak audience interest.
2. *Droids*: How much time does each trailer spend focusing on the droids? The droids are another unique aspect of the Star Wars universe which help to establish this franchise as a sci-fi film.
3. *Dialogue*: How much time, if any, does the trailer allow for movie dialogue to be included?
4. *Time on male*: How many seconds does each trailer spend focusing on the male characters. This will help to determine who the studio is trying to get as their key audience.
5. *Time on female*: How many seconds does each trailer spend focusing on the female characters of the Star Wars universe?

6. *Narrator*: Is there a narrator present explaining the trailer to the audience? Or does the trailer let the movie speak for itself?
7. *Time on spaceships*: How much time in the trailer is spent focusing on the spaceships? Does the trailer appear to use the spaceship chase sequences as a means to sell the film?
8. *Objectifying shot of male/female*: Does the trailer use sex appeal to sell the Star Wars movie to the audience? This can include shots where characters appear in short dresses, cleavage, bare chests, or any naked forms.
9. *Time on Darth Vader*: How many seconds does each trailer spend highlighting this key villain of the Star Wars universe?
10. *Time on the 'Light Side'*: How much time is spent focusing on the 'heroes' of the movie. Does it appear that the audience is supposed to identify with the heroes in this film?
11. *Time on 'Dark Side'*: How much time is spent focusing on the 'villains' of the movie. Is the audience supposed to identify with the villains in certain films?
12. *Length*: What is the overall length of each trailer? Are some significantly longer than others?

#### Movie Posters:

1. *Female Focal*: How many female are focused on in each poster.
2. *Male Focal*: How many men are focused on in each poster.
3. *Number of Lightsabers*: How many lightsabers are present in each poster. The lightsaber is another key part of the Star Wars universe, it is a unique weapon which may be focused on in the poster in order to peak audience interest.
4. *Number of Spaceships*: How many spaceships appear on each poster.

5. *Objectifying clothing*: Do any of the characters appear in objectifying clothing? This can include short dresses, cleavage, bare chests, or any naked forms.
6. *Movie Quotes*: Are there any key movie quotes or slogans being used to sell the film through the poster?
7. *Ethnic Characters*: Do any ethnic characters appear on the poster. How many? This will allow for insight on the ethnic makeup of the Star Wars universe.
8. *Children Present*: Are there any children used in the poster advertisements of the films? A child present could be a way for children to connect to and want to see the film.
9. *Droids Present*: Are there any droids present on the poster. How many? The droids are another unique aspect of the Star Wars universe which help to establish this franchise as a sci-fi film.
10. *Aliens*: Are there any alien species used in the advertisement of the film? If so how many? This will help to find out the character makeup the franchise wishes to advertise for the upcoming movie.

In order to evaluate the content of the advertisements, trailers and posters I created a coding system for each category. I chose to create different coding systems for each medium due to the different ways in which each of these mediums can sell the movie to the public. Advertisements look mainly to connect with Star Wars fans. My coding system for ads was based upon what key factors I believed the advertisers would try to connect their products to. I was also trying to see if there was more of any attempt to connect with male or female demographics based upon the number of each gender appearing in each commercial. For the movie trailers, I chose to base my coding system on time because it would make it easy to determine percentages for each category. Once I timed each category, I could divide by the trailer's length in order to find out how much of the commercial was spent on each category. For the movie posters I chose my coding categories based on visual cues. The presence and

frequency of each category would determine which helps to sell the franchise through a print medium.

When looking at each of these mediums, I thoroughly analyzed each to ensure I calculated the presence of each category correctly. In addition, the use of multiple coding sheets allowed me to remain organized which was beneficial when determining my findings. This allowed my findings to be true to the research and remain as accurate as possible.

Although it appears that I did have a large base of data to pull from, I spent considerable amount of time on each medium. I spent 3 hours combing through and analyzing the advertisements. I spent 4 hours watching each of the trailers multiple times to time each category and I spend an additional 2 hours on the posters. Overall I spent around 9 hours compiling my research for this content analysis.

### **Part 3: Findings**

#### **Advertisements:**

1978 Lightsaber commercial:

This lightsaber was manufactured by Kenner toys and was aimed at a primarily young male audience. The actors in this commercial were four young boys and they demonstrated the toy while a narrator described it to the audience. The word force was used twice in this commercial and there was no connection to a specific movie.

1981 Lightsaber commercial:

This ad combined a Kenner lightsaber with a Yoda puppet. The two boys in there commercial demonstrated the toys and towards the end a narrator came in to finish describing the toys to the audience. This commercial used two boys and therefore the target audience was once again focused towards young males. The word force

was used 5 times throughout this advertisement and there was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 1996 Lightsaber commercial:

This ad was manufactured by Kenner to advertise their Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader Lightsabers. The commercial used a boy who portrayed Luke and an adult male who portrayed Darth Vader. This commercial was still targeted towards young males and wanted them to identify with the young boy playing Luke. The ad used a narrator over the images of the two individuals dueling. The word force was not used in this commercial and there was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2005 Lightsaber commercial:

This advertisement was a turning point in my lightsaber commercial research. At this point in time it appears that the company Hasbro took over the lightsaber manufacturing industry. This ad used two boys, one portraying Anakin and the light and the other portraying Darth Tyranus and the dark side. This commercial was also different because it showed that the target audience could choose to be light or dark. By having two boys portray each side of the force the audience could identify with either of them and choose to purchase one or both of the lightsabers. The word force was used once in this ad and there was a narrator. There was once again no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2006 Lightsaber commercial:

This advertisement was created by Hasbro and was once again geared towards a young male audience. The commercial portrayed two boys, one representing the Jedi and the other representing the Sith. The word force was used three times in this



advertisement and there was a narrator. There was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2008 Lightsaber commercial:

This lightsaber ad was created by Hasbro and was the first Hasbro ad to include iconic Star Wars music. It was also the first to contain a large number of actors. There were a total of 10 boys in this ad, 5 representing the Jedi and 5 representing the Sith. The goal of this ad was to inspire lightsaber battles among friend groups. You could not participate in a battle if you did not have a lightsaber and therefore the goal was to boost sales. This was the first lightsaber to include a slogan, the slogan was “Ignite the Fight.” The word force was not used in this ad and there was a narrator. There was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2008 Lightsaber commercial:

This ad was created by Hasbro to advertise their dual action lightsaber. This blade featured two light colors so the customer could “choose their own destiny”. The dual action light, allowed to user to turn the blade blue for the Jedi and red for the Sith. One boy starred in this ad as a narrator described the new blade. The word force was used three times in the ad and there was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2009 Lightsaber commercial:

Hasbro created this ad in 2009 which starred two boys. One boy portrayed the Jedi and the other portrayed the Sith while a narrator described the blades. The word force was not used in this ad and there was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2013 Lightsaber commercial:

Hasbro continued to dominate the lightsaber industry and this 2013 ad featured only one boy. The target audience still remained young males and the focus of this ad was the Dark Side. The boy was dressed to imitate Darth Mal and the word force was not mentioned in the ad. There was a narrator in this ad and there was no connection to a specific movie.

#### 2015 Lightsaber commercial:

This ad was created by Hasbro and featured iconic music portraying the Dark Side. One boy starred in this ad and portrayed the Sith. The word force was not used in this ad and there was a narrator. There was no connection to a specific movie.

#### Lightsaber advertisement conclusion:

It appears that the target audience of the lightsaber commercials is a young male. None of the ads featured girls and therefore makes it harder for this demographic to connect with the product. A majority of the ads featured iconic music which helped connect Star Wars fans to the product and the commercial itself. The earlier advertisements centered around the Jedi and encouraged their customers to portray the light side. The later ads encouraged their customers to choose a side and for a few ads even fully endorsed the dark side. This shift was due to a shift in the plot lines of Episodes I, II and III. These ads came out during the time period the later commercials were created and the plot line followed Anakin's journey to the dark side. The ads also all featured a narrator, I believe this helped sell the product

to both the children and the adults by clarifying the images contained in the commercial. The ads also were never connected to a specific movie, this ensured that the company could advertise the products even when there was not a movie premiering.

#### 1977 Radio Controlled R2D2 commercial:

This commercial featured a boy and his father playing with the R2D2. There were no girls in this commercial and the target audience was geared towards young males. The focus was on the Jedi and there was a narrator describing the toy. There was no connection to a specific movie, however, the ad did use iconic Star Wars music.

#### 2006 Diet Pepsi commercial:

This commercial featured an adult male and Yoda. The target audience for this ad was an older demographic than the previous ads I looked at. Most likely this was geared towards men 18 and up because these men have the disposable income to buy Diet Pepsi. There was a focus on the Jedi and the use of the force to transport materials. The narrator finished up the commercial by encouraging the audience to drink Diet Pepsi and see *Revenge of the Sith* in theaters. The commercial did use iconic music.

#### 2007 Legos commercial:

This lego ad was connected to the *Attack of the Clones* film but was never verbally specified by the narrator. There were no actors in this ad which allowed the focus to remain on the lego play set. It also opened the target audience to girls that may play with legos. This commercial did use iconic music. The focus was on the Jedi and the narrator encouraged the audience to take on the Republic.

### 2008 Spike Tv commercial:

This commercial featured three adult males and Darth Vader playing golf. The focus was on Darth Vader and the dark side as he used the force to cheat at golf. When a man protested he was struck down. The target audience of this commercial were those fans of the original trilogy who were now old enough to purchase cable TV. This commercial did use iconic music. There was no narrator and no connection to a specific film.

### 2011 Volkswagen commercial:

This ad followed a young boy dressed as Darth Vader as he tried to use the force to move household objects. The ad concluded when the dad used the remote start to let his son think he turned on the Volkswagen with the force. The ad also featured a female who portrayed the mother. The target audience for this ad was also an older Star Wars fan, with the disposable income to purchase this vehicle. This commercial did use iconic music. There was no narrator and no connection to a specific film.

### 2015 Duracell commercial:

This ad followed a boy's imagination as he used Duracell batteries to power his lightsaber and fight the dark side. It also featured C3pio and R2D2 and for the first time featured a young girl wielding a lightsaber. The focus was on the Jedi and there was no narrator. The target audience for this ad includes new generations of Star Wars fans as well as their parents who could purchase the batteries. There was a tie to the upcoming movie *The Force Awakens*.

### 2015 BB-8 toy Droid commercial:

This was a longer Internet ad created to explain the complexity of this new toy from Disney and Sphero. The ad featured a boy playing with the droid while iconic Star Wars music played in the back round. The focus was on the Jedi as BB-8 is part of the light side. The ad also showed that the droid is controlled by an app and a mobile device. There was no narrator in this ad and *The Force Awakens* was not specifically mentioned.

### **Other advertisements conclusion:**

Most of these ads featured products that were not specific to the Star Wars universe. However, the advertisers decided to connect their products to the franchise in the hopes to connect with a larger and possibly new audience. All of these ads except the 1977 Kenner ad, used iconic Star Wars music in the back round to help to connect the viewer to the commercial. For the majority the target audience remained with a male focus, even though the age range varied. The only ad in which young girls could connect with an actress was the Duracell battery advertisement. For the most part these ads focused on characters in the Star Wars universe and not specific items (like a lightsaber) as a way to connect with the fans.

### Movie Trailers:

Episode IV: *A New Hope*

Lightsaber fight: 11.57% of trailer

Time on Droids: 11.14% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 19.52% of trailer

Time on male: 31.02% of trailer

Time on female: 4.52% of trailer

Narrator: yes

Time on ships: 21.45% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 6.75% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 34.82% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 19.64% of trailer

*Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*

Lightsaber fight: 1.59% of trailer

Time on Droids: 6.97% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: None

Time on male: 16.45% of trailer

Time on female: 18.49% of trailer

Narrator: yes

Time on ships: 4.55% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 10% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 34.08% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 11.36% of trailer

*Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*

Lightsaber fight: 8.17% of trailer

Time on Droids: 2.60% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 63.8% of trailer

Time on male: 33.66% of trailer

Time on female: 8.17% of trailer

Narrator:No

Time on ships: 10.48% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: Yes but less than 10 secs

Darth Vader on screen: 16.03% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 45.27% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 24.66% of trailer

Episode I: *The Phantom Menace*

Lightsaber fight: 10.82% of trailer

Time on Droids: 10.75% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 50.82% of trailer

Time on male: 26.71% of trailer

Time on female:11.5% of trailer

Narrator:No

Time on ships: 15.07% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 0% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 32.74% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 13.0% of trailer

Episode II: *Attack of the Clones*

Lightsaber fight: 13.2% of trailer

Time on Droids: 1.32% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 51.99% of trailer

Time on male: 41.19% of trailer

Time on female: 4.9% of trailer

Narrator: No

Time on ships: 19.14% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 0% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 45.36% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 7.35% of trailer

Episode III: *Revenge of the Sith*

Lightsaber fight: 10.53% of trailer

Time on Droids: 1.19% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 47.88% of trailer

Time on male: 41.59% of trailer

Time on female: 3.91% of trailer

Narrator:No

Time on ships: 10.79% of trailer



Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 1.46% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 25.23% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 35.96% of trailer

Episode VII: *The Force Awakens*

Lightsaber fight: 6.73% of trailer

Time on Droids: 4.81% of trailer

Dialogue from movie: 25% of trailer

Time on male: 21.28% of trailer

Time on female: 14.23% of trailer

Narrator: No

Time on ships: 16.41% of trailer

Objectifying shots of male/female?: No

Darth Vader on screen: 2.24% of trailer

Time on Heroes: 25.26% of trailer

Time on Dark Side: 15.90% of trailer

Movie Posters:Episode IV: *A New Hope*

A majority of this poster was Darth Vader in the background. Luke and Leia were significantly smaller than Vader and were both clad in revealing clothes. Luke was the only one with a lightsaber and in the back round 18+ spaceships were circling. There were 2 droids present and a quote from the movie.

Episode V: *The Empire Strikes Back*

Once again the largest focal point was Darth Vader in the back round. Luke, Hans, Leia and Lando were on this poster. Landon, Hans and Leia were all the same size and Luke and Chewbacca were slightly smaller. There was one large spaceship in the background and both C3pio and R2D2 were present. This was the first poster to contain an ethnic character; Lando. There was also a movie quote at the top of the poster.





### Episode VI: *Return of the Jedi*

The largest focal point of this poster was Darth Vader in the background. However, Luke was not much smaller and is located in the center of the poster. Hans, Leia and Lando are all relatively the same size and located towards the bottom of the poster. This is the first poster to give large space to alien characters. There are three on this poster and the Wookiee is the same size as Lando.

### Episode 1: *The Phantom Menace*

The largest focal point of this poster is Darth Mal in the background. The second largest character is Qui-Gon Jinn followed by Padme and a young Anakin. There is one spaceship on the poster and both C3pio and R2D2 are present. There is also a new alien character named Jar Jar Binks and an older version of Anakin. There is a movie quote located at the top.



### Episode II: *Attack of the Clones*

For the first time the largest focal point on the poster are members of the Jedi. Anakin and Padme are the same size and located towards the center of the poster. The next largest character is Obi-Wan Kenobi, who is wielding a lightsaber, followed by a stormtrooper and Mace Windu. Both R2D2 and C3pio are on this poster as well as a number of spaceships.



### Episode III: *Revenge of the Sith*

Darth Vader is back and is once again the main focal of this poster. The next largest character is Anakin, followed by Padme and Obi-Wan Kenobi. Also present are Mace Windu, Supreme Chancellor Palpatine and two Jedi dueling. Yoda is the only alien species on this poster and the droids are absent. There are two spaceships below Yoda and there is no quote.



### Episode VII: *The Force Awakens*

The largest character on this poster is Kylo Ren who is a member of the Dark Side. The next largest character is Rey, the first female character to appear solo in the center of a poster. She is followed in size by Finn, Hans, Leia, Chewbacca and Poe Dameron. There are also stormtroopers, R2D2, BB-8, and C3pio on the poster. There are 8 spaceships and two alien species.

### Trailer and Poster conclusion:

In terms of the findings for the poster and movie trailers, there is one significant factor. The original trilogy of Star Wars movies and the most recent one, all focus on the Jedi and their goal to defeat those on the Dark side. The prequel trilogy of Star Wars movies follows Anakin's journey to the dark side and tells the story of how he became Darth Vader. Therefore the amount of time and space devoted to the Jedi in Episodes IV, V, VI and VII is significantly more than in Episodes

I,II and III. This is the reason a lot of the commercials from the time period of Episode I, II and III have more of a dark focus. The main character is Anakin and his story leads to the dark side, therefore the audience becomes more sympathetic to the dark side of this franchise.

When it comes to the movie trailers, the data reflects this change from Jedi focus in the first trilogy to the dark focus in the second trilogy. In the first trilogy a lot of the trailer run time is devoted to images of the Jedi, in the second trilogy, especially Episodes II and III the run time for the dark side is comparable, if not more than the run time dedicated to the Jedi. Another trend my data shows is that the trailers would spend anywhere from 16%-41% of their run time focusing on the male character. As males are a significant portion of the target audience this dedication to the male character's screen time makes sense. The 16% of this skew came from the Episode V: *The Empire Strikes Back* trailer, in which a large portion of the run time was dedicated to text titles and therefore effected the percentages for this trailer. The more the trailers focused on the male characters, the more time they allowed for their male fans to connect and relate to the characters. This in turn would peak their target audience interest and hopefully lead to increased ticket sales. It wasn't until *The Force Awaken's* trailer that a strong female lead was the focus for a comparable amount of the trailer's run time of the male focus. The change in the story line to include a more involved female lead could reflect the franchise's recognition of its large female following. The story is what sells this franchise to audiences worldwide, most of these trailers spent on average 40-60% of their run time on dialogue from the movie. This unique sci-fi universe created by George Lucas is what has captivated audiences for generations. Part of what makes the franchise successful are the unique characters and characteristics of this franchise. This is why most of the trailers spent at least 10% of their run time on spaceships and on average 10% on lightsaber fights. These two characteristics are unique aspects of the universe Lucas has created and the stories would not be the same without them.

A huge selling factor for this franchise are the characters that are unique to its story line. The franchise needs to sell these characters in order to sell the franchise.

This is why over half of the trailer run time, and 75% of the poster space are dedicated to the characters themselves. These characters include more than just the human ones, they also include the droids, alien species and stormtroopers. This is also why the advertisements focused so much on characters such as Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. It is the characters which audiences most identify with and recognize.

In conclusion the factors which most sell this franchise are the characters, the story line, and the unique elements (such as lightsabers) that can only be found in George Lucas' Star Wars. It is this reason why fans continue to support the series and have spent over \$4 billion in ticket sales worldwide (Box Office History for Star Wars Movies, 2015).

### **Appendix C: Sources**

#### **Charts:**

Charts are attached below as I had to make them a separate pdf.

#### **Online data:**

Box Office History for Star Wars Movies. (n.d.). Retrieved November 17, 2015, from <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/franchise/Star-Wars#tab=summary>

#### **Advertisements:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qW2DwcoLMrM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g2SAuXCHN0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzSCIk070XQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0OI8GwhQuU>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_\\_CTejhHZSU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__CTejhHZSU)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIn3cdhhEEI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD-f8T25JRg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF0LUnuCUm4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhNus5u1zCs>

***Movie Trailers :***

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hW1d43TtFBw>

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hW1d43TtFBw>

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=OvUh9\\_GFXA0](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=OvUh9_GFXA0)

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo--sWDK\\_nU](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo--sWDK_nU)

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gYbW1F\\_c9eM](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gYbW1F_c9eM)

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=5UnjrG\\_N8hU](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=5UnjrG_N8hU)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sGbxmsDFVnE>