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Promoting a Galaxy Far, Far Away: Changes in Promotional Strategies Seen in Star Wars Marketing Campaigns

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Michael Fenton

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Promoting a Galaxy Far, Far Away: Changes in Promotional Strategies seen in Star Wars

Marketing Campaigns

Michael Fenton

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Abstract

This piece examines promotional material from the Star Wars campaigns for The Phantom Menace in 1999 and The Force Awakens in 2015 to find differences in promotional strategies with regards to globalization, fandom and fan perception and the use of online spaces. Trailers, tie-in product materials and websites are given visual and textual analysis to find how the films have evolved to accommodate a larger, more culturally diverse audience. In doing so this piece seeks to understand how the changing consumer landscape is impacting the way product are advertised, and how prospective advertisers can maximize their audience through adjusting their strategy.

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Introduction

For those that arrived early enough, the echoes of chatter from the tightly packed crowd mingle with the smells of butter and popcorn. The chatter gets louder and louder as more people from the packed line outside the theater, long enough to wrap around the building, trickle inside the theater. The first in the building are likely the super-fans, camping outside since the previous day, with the object of their desire now within grasp. Scattered around the crowd are the cosplayers; fans who express their investment through dress, their costumes ranging from pristine white Storm Trooper armor, accurate to the last detail, to brown bathrobes and toy lightsabers bought earlier that day. Casual viewers and those with a passing interest are still outside, having bought their tickets ahead of time or hoping against hope that some seats remain.

This scene has not only played out all around the United States, largely unchanged from theater to theater, but around the world, and throughout time. The excitement of a new Star Wars film is a global phenomenon that has embedded itself in global pop culture. More than a cheesy space opera, the terms Jedi, lightsaber and the idea of “the dark side” have made their way into the vocabulary and collective memory of countless everyday people and cultures.

It is, in part, because of this popularity and recognizability around the world that the Star Wars franchise is deeply interesting from a global marketing perspective. It is a product that does not have to appeal to a certain American demographic, but one that seeks to find success around the world, and as communication technology has developed, the opportunities for a franchise to reach a global audience has grown, along with their obligation to make a greater profit. The bigger, more culturally varied market could have

a substantial impact on the way a promotional team needs to approach how they display a certain product. Certain assumptions may be challenged and certain promotional approaches may provide a greater advantage in getting a wider audience. This paper seeks to answer the questions of what those changes are, how they are being successfully implemented, and what they may mean for the future of product promotion as technology advances, cultural norms are challenged, and the target audience becomes wider and more varied than ever before.

The Star Wars franchise is uniquely poised to help us answer these questions. It is a film series that has enjoyed phenomenal success around the world since its first installment, and it contains multiple trilogies that exist in separate and identifiable generations. A franchise like Harry Potter, or the Marvel Cinematic universe may be equally successful on the global scale, but these have not existed nearly as long, and do not have the generational quality from which could be drawn snapshots of promotional strategies over specific time periods. Films that have had remakes, re-imaginings or sequels long after the original such as *Planet of the Apes* or *Star Trek* may have the generational quality of Star Wars, but lack the status of global phenomenon that makes Star Wars unique.

This thesis focuses on the promotional strategies behind *The Phantom Menace* and *The Force Awakens* specifically. These two films are the beginnings of new trilogies in the franchise, and so share similar goals. The reasons I will not be including the strategies of the original 70's saga are differences in goals and limited resources. The 1977 release of *A New Hope* had studios skeptical of its potential success (Telegraph, 2016), and so it needed to establish itself as a worthy film, rather than a worthy addition

to an established juggernaut of a franchise. The prequel and sequel trilogies, conversely, are both additions to a film series, not looking to introduce audiences to its world, but attempting to add to what is already there. Fans and fan reaction are also major factors in marketing the start of the latter two series, a variable that did not exist for the 70's team.

For these films, I will answer the above questions by looking at both American and global promotional techniques, as well as how promoters are conceptualizing fans and fan culture. To accomplish this, I will first look at the differences between American and other cultural views on marketing and fan identity, as well as briefly looking at the uses of the online space. Following this, I will look at three sections of items for comparison: film trailers from *The Force Awakens* and *The Phantom Menace*, promotional material regarding ancillary products that better represent the conceptualization of fans, and the website www.starwars.com as it appeared in both 1999 and 2015. These artifacts will be looked at for their messages told through visual rhetoric and the emotional or informational goals achieved through their text.

Through this examination, we can understand how a product can better assert itself on a vast scale in today's world. This research aims to answer the question of how promotional teams are changing the content of the messages being sent, how the message is meant to impact the viewer, how the promoters conceptualize and represent their target audience, and how developing tools such as the internet are being used to connect a wider audience than ever. Understanding these changes may give some insight into how more organizations can alter their marketing strategies and maximize their own products.

Literature Review

To establish how current PR and marketing techniques are being used to achieve

the goals of Disney and Lucasfilms, we must first establish what those goals are. Disney is first and foremost a business and capitalist enterprise, and as such its primary goal is to generate money. Virtually all literature on capitalism agrees that “Capitalism legitimizes itself by generating wealth in the form of growth and profits (Buzan, 2014). Certainly there are individuals within the process of film and marketing creation that care about the quality of the piece for the sake of the art, but ultimately the brand decisions are going to be carried out by a need for financial success, and the quality of the piece is going to be considered in that a higher-quality film and campaign will result in greater financial success.

The movie industry in general is an example of a unique market due to its attempts to reach out to a multitude of audiences. Goff, Wilson and Zimmer (2016) describe film as a two-sided market due to its need to appeal to both “a mass market group and an artistic, elite group” (p.). The two-sided market, in this case general audiences versus invested audiences, is certainly a factor, but other sides of the market come into prominence as well due to the more global nature of the film market. In today's world specifically, every movie has to not only account for its domestic box office earnings, but the foreign market earnings that make up almost 70-percent of their annual revenue (Brook, 2014).

In terms of international marketing success, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* stands out as a monument to excellence, leading the entire Star Wars franchise in revenue with \$936,662,225 earned in the international box office, according to Box Office Mojo (2018). While *The Phantom Menace* was certainly not an abject failure, and indeed still sits within the top five highest grossing Star Wars films, its earnings totaled \$431,088,295

according to the same article (2018), indicated that the former film enjoyed the greater success. In the months leading up to the film's release, Disney CEO Bob Iger was reported as emphasizing the domestic and international marketing plan for the franchise, calling the plan and execution “extremely deliberate” in trying to appeal to all audiences (B. Iger, Hollywood Reporter, May 05, 2015).

Ticket sales were not the only area that *The Force Awakens* managed to trounce its predecessor in sales. A Forbes article from the 2001, mere months after the release of *The Phantom Menace*, calls the merchandise sales from the film a “merchandising flop” with experts in the field predicting excess inventory (2001). This is in stark contrast to the sales outlook in 2016 accompanying *The Force Awakens*, where it was reported that, as of September 4 of that year, “about \$1 of every \$11...was spent on a Star Wars toy.” Clearly whatever the promotional team had done differently between the release of the two franchises was having a more powerful impact than their prior strategies.

One of the biggest changes in the film market between the start of the prequel trilogy and the sequel films is the shift in international film markets. Iger reportedly commented on the challenges of trying to stay relevant in these new markets.

“There are markets around the world that weren't as developed back 10 years ago. China is probably the best example. It's now the number two movie market in the world. Obviously, when the last Star Wars film released, it was barely a market from a movie perspective.” (B. Iger, Hollywood Reporter, May 05, 2015).

In many ways, all American studios enter the fight for international appeal with a huge advantage, controlling half of the world's film market. Feigenbaum notes that even the best international competitors Hollywood had operate on a fraction of the budget,

coming nowhere close to the production value of American products (2011). Disney itself remains a media juggernaut, even in the context of American-owned film-producing organizations, giving it a distinctive advantage in terms of potential reach and financial resources. Business Insider (2014) goes so far as to call the notion of competing media brands the “illusion of choice”, stating that Disney is one of the “Big Six” conglomerates that as recently as 2011 owns 90-percent of American media. With Disney's purchase of the majority of 21's Century Fox (Zeitchik, 2017) this influence seems to be continually growing.

There, are obstacles in Disney's path, however, as in many cases other cultures may be resistant to the Americanization of their own culture through popular media, especially in the areas of film and television, fearing “that the dominance of American popular culture puts the vibrancy of all societies at risk.” (Feigenbaum, 2011). Despite being a juggernaut, even in terms of American film companies, Disney has had to shift their products to account for the international market in the past. *Dr. Strange* screenwriter C. Robert Cargill stated that the casting of “the Ancient One” (an originally Tibetan character) underwent a race change partially to avoid making a political statement that could offend the Chinese government (Desta, 2016). Even a powerhouse like Disney's near-universally popular Marvel franchise is takes into account an intercultural appeal to some level.

This literature review has a significant focus on comparing the American style of advertising and American attitudes regarding fandom and fan culture to the techniques and attitudes of non-western, less individualistic cultures. Doing to is useful in that it can help shed light on many of the specific assumptions that have previously dominated

promotional techniques and show how they may have shifted in a more culturally diverse consumer landscape. Globalist assumptions, in this case, are a tool that help unpack and highlight those differences that Americans may otherwise be blind to.

Promoting in America and the World

In terms of dictating how people are taught to see media, the United States has, as previously stated, some distinct advantages. Apart from the budgets and expenses the country's studios are willing to put into projects, the massive amount of media America has been able to put out has played a major role in creating worldwide symbols and dictating the standard by which they are consumed (Alden, 1999). However, it is useful to give some thought to how other, non-American and non-western cultures implement promotions.

A multitude of scholars act under the assumption that globalization means the world's various cultures are "becoming more alike", and that people the world over simply desire "goods of the best quality and reliability at the lowest price" (Levitt, 1984) without regard for the national or cultural origins of the product. Other research, however, indicates that these cultural marketing relationships are much more complex. Global Consumer Culture Positioning (GCCP) introduced by Alden, Jan-benedict, Ateenkamp and Batra (1999), frames international advertising as appealing to young people's (or young people in 1999) desire to feel cosmopolitan, or part of a more global culture (76). Interestingly, Alden et al also state that the use of English in an advertisement, far from turning off non-English speaking viewers of advertisement, symbolizes to them that the product is more cosmopolitan, and that participating in those

advertisements can generate the feeling of being part of a global culture (77). Two other major factors in GCCP include featuring visually appealing and easily digestible aesthetics and an identifiable narrative (77). Making these narratives and aesthetics more identifiable and pleasing could mean moving away from traditional American advertising values.

In her book *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, Marieke K. de Mooij (2014) outlines the significant difficulty inherent to appealing to even the most basic cultural values, pointing out that while Americans may value the pursuit of happiness above all things, a Japanese audience that constantly seeks fulfillment of obligations over their own self-satisfaction would find such an attitude incompatible with their own worldview (170). However, some researchers have suggested that we mitigate the issue of cultural differences through 'image advertising', or advertisements that contain very little information that could potentially confuse a diverse audience (Harris, 1984). This works with the notion of appealing to basic emotions rather than giving information, and relying on imagery rather than complex statement, which ties into the ideas of the hard sell versus the soft sell.

American advertising has, at its core, shown one major difference when compared to foreign types of advertising: its reliance on information dispensing as opposed to appeals to emotion. Even among Western cultures, the U.S. Strives, in its communication efforts, to relay information in an efficient, informative manner that does not try to ring with the audience from a cultural or emotional standpoint (Biswas, Olsen, Carlet, 1992). Mueller and Okazaki describe this phenomenon as the difference between a "hard" sell and a "soft" sell (2008), describing the former as being information and utility driven and

the latter as emotional and narrative-driven. Even studies done in the 2010's have confirmed this difference in promotional values, with emphasis on facts still dominating the west, where Lin (2001) states that “audiences are not presumed to rely as much on prior knowledge, and therefore more information is typically included in advertising appeals” (86). This reliance on prior knowledge becomes highly important when breaking down the different techniques used by more modern Star Wars films.

Exceptions to this trend obviously exist, and are typically considered highly memorable by Western audiences. The famous Old Spice “I’m on a Horse” ad, the tales of the Dos Equis “most interesting man in the world”, and many other ads that thrive on a quirky spokesperson's often unrelated antics could suggest some shift, though a slow one, where Western advertisers are taking note of the power of emotional appeals and the success that can come when the audience has a character to identify with.

When it comes to cross-national advertising, or promotions designed to be utilized in multiple cultures, research identifies two major strategies: prototype and pattern (Alden, Hoyer, Lee, 1993). In prototype advertising, the campaign is completely identical across all markets, aside from obvious translations and other necessary shifts, while pattern standardization is when “the overall campaign is designed for application in several national markets with some adaptation of content and execution” (66). Zou and Cavusgil (2002) identify three camps when it comes to the use of globalization in marketing: standardization, which would be similar to prototype; configuration-coordination and integration stating that standardization remains, as of writing, the most popular (41), and indicating that standardization assumes that a simplified advertisement that is translated as-necessary is best for an audience that it also assumes desires the same

thing across cultures (41). This is complicated in the advertising of the Star Wars prequel and sequel trilogies, and any globally-consumed form of media, in that the films are drawing perhaps less from the cultural knowledge and traditions of the various people being advertised to, but the shared cultural knowledge and iconography of an already-understood piece of media. Because of this reliance on a shared fan-culture, a standardized approach to the advertising campaign may best fit the nature of advertising Star Wars.

Visual and Community Rhetoric

Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2006) state that visual global communication plays a key strategic role in the success of many brands (49), but that a product being put on a global scale must be able to negotiate the gaps of language present between cultures on top of being memorable and eye-catching. Outside of text, voice, and audio tracks, they state that the visuals alone can be extremely complex, and can convey to the audience abstract ideas, actions and even metaphors in a way that does not rely on language.

There are several ways that visuals can appeal to an audience without have to speak a single word. Appealing imagery is one way to associate one's product as being "good" in the eyes of the audience, utilizing images of scenic locations, animals or attractive people can lead to a "direct affect transfer that occurs without semantic meaning" (Kim, 1998). Other models, such as the elaboration likelihood model, says that imagery has the ability to influence people when audiences are not feeling compelled to take a more active role in processing the information given to them by an advertisement. While a great deal of scholarly research focuses on the strength of language-based

messages, there is evidence that visual rhetoric can be inherently persuasive on their own (Blumer, 2006).

The primary challenge of utilizing visual metaphor alone as a way of advertising to audiences is that what those audiences will take out of a particular work is not going to be uniform from person to person. However, this approach of assuming that objects are simply meant to represent objects in a direct and literal sense may not be entirely accurate to what is happening when people look at various images. The way that individuals process what they see is formed by nature and society, teaching them how to interpret what their eyes are telling them in potentially different ways (Scott, 1994). In fact, Scott (1994) states that the assumption that pictures are simply tools that convey specific realities is an ethnocentric idea deeply rooted in a Western bias. Ultimately, a picture or image does not just literally represent the picture or image, but on a learned vocabulary of visuals from which an individual can draw meaning (Scott, 1994).

Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) provide some useful tools for discerning how objects within a visual structure can create meanings for the viewer in ways that do not rely on the Western bias of express windows to reality. They show two variables in the relationships between images: juxtaposition, or side by side images, fusion, signifying combined images, and replacement, which are images that highlight the absence of another image. These interact with the three types of ideas present in the second variable: connection, which states A is associated with B, similarity, which compares A and B, and oppositions, which contrasts A and B (Phillips, 2004). The relationship of the objects on the screen work to create a new meaning within the image that would not be directly apparent through just a literal interpretation of what is being presented.

Images can also have a great deal of impact on an audience's sense of community. In their work on environmentalist communities and the visual rhetoric connecting the members, Spoel and Hoed (2014) call these images "visual clusters" (269) that describe both a place and congregation of objects and people. These operate within the visual rhetoric framework described by Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) in that they create an association between the objects present, in this case happy people in a clean environment described in terminology understood by the community. A, B and occasionally C are associated in a way that is pleasing to the interpreter, and the absence of anti-environmental enterprises calls attention to itself via its absence (116). Visual rhetoric can also be used to tap into more specific lexicons, such as the ones commonly seen in fandoms.

Fandom

Visual rhetoric can, in the case of promotion and advertising, draw upon a complex lexicon that, as previously stated, is oftentimes shared by a particular group. In the case of a piece of popular media, like the Star Wars franchise, this group can take the form of a fandom. In trying to grasp the concept of fandom as a whole, Groene and Hettinger (2015) provide a useful distinction between the fan and the consumer, stating that the fan will be far more intellectually, emotionally, behaviorally and ideologically involved in the product than a consumer (2). They say that the first media fandom was created decades ago with the publication of *Amazing Stories*, a Science Fiction magazine, and that its fans achieved the distinction of fandom through their interaction with the magazine and each other through writing letters (2). Since that point, countless fandoms have formed for nearly every conceivable type of media, story or organization. Science

Fiction fandoms alone now include Star Wars, Star Trek, Doctor Who and countless others, and the genre has been joined by fantasy, horror, action, thrillers, sports and any other consumable topic.

The cultural view of fans and fandoms is strikingly different between American culture and cultures around the world. Christine Yano (1997) states that fandoms in the United States are “negatively viewed as passive victims of manipulation who have easily fallen prey to the seductive power of mass media” (5). The fan, in her words, lacks individuality and relies on their status as a follower (5) which is very much in line with the general view of America as an individualistic society. It also could have a substantial impact on how a product is advertised to fans, seeing them as pathological, and somewhat pathetic, followers in need of the group's affirmation. This is parodied and exploited constantly in television and movies, with fans being treated as hordes of socially inept, often bordering on delusional, losers depending on the media as though it were a drug. Even when not participating in the object of their fandom, In his book *Textual Poachers: Television fans and Participatory Culture*, Jenkins (2013) notes that modern depictions of nerds still equate interests in the science-fiction and fantasy culture with the need to “get a life”, citing the depictions of characters in *The Big Bang Theory*, and *The 40 Year Old Virgin* as cases where an adult showing these interests are depicted as experiencing arrested development in their maturing (xv).

She also states that the foreign views of fandom, especially in more collectivist cultures, can be strikingly different and largely much more positive, in this case citing Japan. Yano (1997) presents a mutually dependent scenario in which “the fans support the public figure directly through economic means and the public figure supports the fans

indirectly through symbolic means.” (6). Values of loyalty and dedication in more collectivist cultures are applauded (9) rather than being seen as a sign of weakness. This also impacts how the people of other cultures view manipulation by the media. They view opinions, feelings and desires as almost tangible things that are crafted, rather than exploited, and view “the molding of desire by mass media as not so different from shaping a tree by pruning.” (10).

Despite this difference in cultural approach to fandom, the fans themselves exhibit remarkably similar views of how their relationship with the material operates. In their study of the Harry Potter franchise, Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2017) make the following observations.

Fans will exhibit behaviors that include seeking out repeated consumption or maintaining mediated relationships with characters in series...and with the end of a series viewers may feel intense emotional distress and anxiety, almost as if they terminated long-term interpersonal relationships with the characters (36).

This behavior goes beyond the simple view of the pieces of a work as mere sources of amusement and extends to those characters, settings and ideas being treated as though they were living, breathing, very real people, places and things that can be interacted with in complex ways well beyond a consumer-product relationship.

To say that American view of fans and fandoms has changed in recent years

would be the subject of another study entirely. However, the more accepting non-western¹ attitude towards fandom and recognition of shared fan attitudes has seemed to have an impact on the marketing of *The Force Awakens*, with promotional material featuring and marketing towards all ages without mockery of older audiences. This is crucial to the acceptance and celebration of their viewers as a community, and allows for the use of visual rhetoric that taps into the group's unique lexicon without the need to overcome a language barrier. This new acceptance of what was once considered immature may also be connected to the shifts in global age identification.

In his 1986 article, McCracken describes the cultural categories of the United States as blurred and indeterminate, that the “teenagers declare themselves adults, members of the working class declare themselves middle-class, the old declare themselves young, and so on” (72), differentiating this attitude from other cultural circumstances. This appears to have shifted to a more global phenomenon in recent years, as populations in other parts of world have higher and higher percentages of senior citizens (Harrington, Bielby and Bardo, 2011). Research into global age identity, or the age that a person “feels” they are as opposed to their physical age, would suggest that more people around the world in that bracket are identifying as “young at heart”.

Connecting with the fandom culture to ensure the commercial success of a product is nothing new. Peter Jackson attempted to connect with Tolkien fans during the pre-production of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy for the sake of not alienating the fans of the piece that made up a sizable portion of the target audience (Shefrin, 2004). This is in direct contrast with Lucas during the time of *The Phantom Menace*, who was being

¹Non-Western referring to non-American or Wester-European societies.

criticized harshly by his own fans over feelings of betrayal. Fandom, and keeping the fans from feeling alienated, has a drastic impact on the reception of the film in general, and with a broader, global audience in modern cinema, that risk of inciting feelings of fan betrayal is all the greater.

A large part of what allows a fandom community to thrive is its ability to offer a fulfillment of needs for the community members (Obst, 2002). This means that their membership must create positive experiences, and a sense of togetherness, as well as a sense of reward for being a part of the community. For a franchise such as *Star Wars* to create a fan community, it must foster this positive feelings for the members seeking to take part.

The Online Space

The effectiveness of any website is largely dependent on the needs and intention of the viewer. For online retailers such as Amazon, the criteria for efficiency may be much different than for entertainment sites like Youtube or social media pages like Facebook. Because these websites in particular are mainly promotional pages for products that cannot be purchased online (or at least not in the way that other online products work), it is more appropriate to consider an information-seeking approach, or browsing strategies, which are “informal and natural information seeking approach that depends heavily on the information environment and the user's recognition of relevant information” (Zhang, 2000). In this instance, the relevant information being recognized ties nicely into the visual and textual elements, as well as the use of the *Star Wars* lexicon.

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) define some forms of products that we consume as hedonistic experiences, where the purpose of the experiencing the product is the act of consumption itself, as opposed to products that used to achieve other goals (97). Several authors have used this idea to define promotion for travel and tourism (Human, Franks, 2005). Films, while smaller in scope and time investment, have the same end-goal: to give the audience an experience. Therefore, many of the principals used to examine websites that promote tourism can be applied to websites that promote films. For example, Human (1999) describes photographs used in marketing tourist destinations as a distillation of the location into a recognizable form:

The subject must be: uncontroversial; readily recognisable; designed to project the desired image of the destination; and aimed to appeal to the aspirations of the tourist, including projecting the exotic or otherness. The visual qualities are: colour; simplicity; and technical excellence. Thus at its simplest London becomes Big Ben, or red buses or Beefeaters; Sydney is its Opera House and New York the Manhattan skyline.” (2)

This principal is similar to the use of popular culture and fan community iconography used in the promotional websites of Star Wars in that it attempts to distill the experience of the films in to brief, easily digestible and comprehensible images that can represent larger parts. Instead of Big Ben being a representation of its home city, the images of the Star Wars franchise used by the websites use images like Darth Vader to represent their films. In either case, the goal of the images on the website are to link images with a larger experience.

Some researchers cite factors such as motivation to revisit as the hallmark of a

successful website (Kwon, 2015, Zhang, 2000), stating that such actions turn the visitors into costumers by encouraging investment.

For fans of a franchise however, an online space needs to look to do more than just promote a product and create new customers. Members of a fandom will often look to these online spaces to get or affirm a sense of community, even if it is with people they have never and will never meet face-to-face (Guschwan, 2016). In his research, Guschwan (2016) identifies that online fan communities tend be drawn to online spaces that recognize the participator fan-culture such as “drawings, poems and photographs” (359), tying its purpose into fan recognition and overall understanding of their target audience.

This research helps uncover a number of phenomenon useful for analyzing Star Wars related material First, understanding the methodologies utilized in advertising by western and non-western (or individualistic and collectivist) cultures can help identify the overall tone of the promotional material in question, be it information-driven due to an assumption of audience ignorance or emotion and character driven. Understanding visual and textual rhetoric will also work in identifying specific instances of one methodology over the other.

International takes on fan-culture will also assist in the analysis of materials in that the way fans are portrayed in said materials reflects how they are being conceptualized by the promotional teams. Individualist cultures, like traditional America, would theoretically paint these fans in an unfavorable light, while literature would suggest that more collectivist cultures would show them as being more positive.

Both of these factors will be useful in analyzing online material, as websites have

the unique ability to both feature and interact with fans, as well as place certain sections physically higher or lower on their page. All of these factors should illuminate how *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* represents changes in promotional strategies since *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*.

Methods

I have selected the late-1990's to early 2000's prequel trilogy to compare to the ongoing 2015 trilogy for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they both exist at a time in which the Star Wars franchise is already well-known to worldwide audiences, which gives them distinct advantages when it comes to the potential of their promotional campaigns. The original trilogy of films did not have the benefit of a visual lexicon, nor a community of followers that it could use in its promotional efforts, and is therefore not representative of the goals of this study. Audiences, either American or global, did not know what they were seeing when an image of Darth Vader was presented, or the Death Star came onto the screen.

The second reason for selecting these two eras of the franchise is economics. The original trilogy, especially the original film, operated on a very limited budget compared to the nineties and today. As such, the options that the first trilogy had to contend with when it came to promotions makes it an entirely different beast to the two continuations of the saga. By focusing on only the trilogies with maximum promotion budgets, it can be assumed with greater confidence that we are looking at only what was thought to be the most effective in terms of audience connection. The time between these two trilogies also saw the rapid development of the ways in which we use media, especially concerning the

growth of online platforms such as social media, fan blogging and video sharing, all of which could be accessed anywhere in the world with an internet connection, regardless of the material's country of origin.

Lastly, this project will primarily focus on the promotional campaigns leading up to the first film in each trilogy, *The Phantom Menace* and *The Force Awakens*. This is due to the similar goals each film had for their respective trilogy: acting as a jumping-off point that draws in new viewers as well as enticing back old fans.

For the purpose of narrowing the scope of the project and the ideas being explored to a useful level, I will be primarily looking at three groups of items: film trailers, websites and select tie-in materials utilized for promotions. The reason I have chosen to look at trailers is due to the stark differences between the trailers for *The Phantom Menace* and *The Force Awakens*, and how they exemplify the ideas of visual rhetoric and appealing to a community. Trailers, by their very nature, need to have visual appeal that grabs an audience's attention and creates excitement for the product being advertised.

When discussing how visual rhetoric is meant to evoke ideas, many of the authors mentioned in the literature review use phrases like "good" or state that the images are meant to evoke positive feelings based on ethics and values. For the purposes of these trailers, I propose replacing the phrase "good" with "intriguing" or "exciting". The reason being that the nature of a story, and a cinema experience, is not strictly for the audience to feel "good". While an overall good experience is certainly a goal of the medium, the story itself needs to contain something that will interest the audience. Given the good versus evil and conflict-driven nature of *Star Wars*, I do not believe that "good" is the most useful term to use as a metric for what feelings the images evoke.

The purpose of analyzing the website is to understand the role of the internet as a cross-national cultural tool that seeks to engage multiple types of audiences. The online world has seen probably the most dramatic change of any media since the 1999 release date of the first prequel movie, and the website should show just how the methods of reaching out to and recognizing audiences has changed in the past decades.

Tie-in material, meaning games, toys, events and ancillary products, are useful because they seek less to directly advertise the film, but rather to reach out to the audience and make them feel a need to engage in the product beyond the tentpole. This is where the studio has the chance to really show fans an opportunity to interact with Star Wars in a way that viewing a film does cannot.

In order to examine this material in a way that exposes the use of a visual rhetoric that can be decoded beyond cultural and language barriers, I will first define the elements present within every scene, here defined as a group of images separated by a scene cut or a website. These will be defined within the context of what they would mean to a member of the Star Wars fandom. For example, a scene in *The Force Awakens* trailer shows a black-cloaked figure gazing out a window while surrounded by a red light. The cloak, the red light and the sight of space outside of the window represent the elements that the scene conveys. As Blumer and Buchanan-Oliver (2006) say, “A single picture may contain numerous highly sophisticated, interrelated signs and multiple levels of meaning for many viewers or readers” and that “global advertisers create complex messages making extensive use of visuals that refer to pre-existing knowledge about products...” (50). This is a major factor in the Star Wars sequel and prequel trilogies. In the context of the Star Wars fandom, these otherwise meaningless objects are given complex meaning in

relation to one another. A black cloak and red light are considered hallmarks of the franchise villains, and from this simple image, the viewer is able to decode that they are getting a glimpse of an imposing villain, probably a force user, that will serve as a threat in the film. All of that is said without requiring a single phrase of spoken dialogue or written word.

While these elements are defined within the context of the Star Wars universe in the realm of the trailers, the website and tie-in materials will be approached and decoded slightly differently. For the website, images that ring familiar with the universe of the film franchise may still be abundant, but images of fans and communities are also present. Likewise, with commercials promoting tie-in material, the representation of the fans, in age, gender and race, says a lot to the viewer about the type of person that the product is being marketed towards. As such, while images from the movie canon will still be mentioned, the focus of examining these elements will be more geared towards their representations of the communities they are trying to reach.

C O M P L E X I T Y ↓	Visual Structure	RICHNESS →		
		Meaning Operation		
		Connection (A is associated with B)	Comparison	
			Similarity (A is like B)	Opposition (A is not like B)
Juxtaposition (Two side-by-side images)	Equal sweetener	Dexter shoes	Comfort fabric softener	
Fusion (Two combined images)	Discover card	Tide Reflex racquet	Kudos granola bar	
Replacement (Image present points to an absent image)	Silk soy milk	Welch's juice	Canadian magazine industry Sunny Delight	

Figure 1

(Phillips, Barbar J. McQuarrie, Edward F. (2004) *Beyond Visual Metaphor: A New Typology of Visual Rhetoric in Advertising*. *Marketing Theory*, 4(1) pp. 116

Defining the elements of the scenes in question will be the first step, but as Phillips demonstrates, the relationship between the elements are a large part of what gives them meaning for the viewer. Therefore, this paper will be using the method defined by Phillips (see fig. 1) to determine the relationship between artifacts and how they are being used to portray certain messages. Due to the nature of the *Star Wars* franchise and its use of familiar imagery mixed with new imagery, we will also add a fourth row to the Meaning Operations: Congruity, as defined by Mick (1981) and McCracken (1986) as the use of similarity in textual analysis.

It is worth noting that the sequel trilogy has some advantages when it comes to the

utilization of imagery understood by the fandom. By its nature as a prequel, many of the characters are either not relevant yet to the story, or are not visual recognizable as the person they are trying to represent (such as young Ewan McGregor representing Alec Guinness). That said, however, several elements of the Star Wars universe such as species, ideas, technology, and even a limited selection of previous characters (such as Yoda) were still available for use in the promotional materials.

It is also worth noting that the subjects defined in the tie-in commercials will not strictly be of the *Star Wars* mythos. These will be defined largely as more universally understood concepts such as friends, family, children, age and other concepts that can be grasped without any knowledge of the saga. This is due to the wider scope that *The Force Awakens* attempts to reach out to and the more focused demographic *The Phantom Menace* aims for, and the fact that the two trilogies are jumping off points of a new saga trying to get more viewers.

Research has indicated that this kind of consumption of advertising, that draws upon a previous knowledge base, is not a new concept. One strategy in obtaining success in the consumer market is to incorporate objects, characters and other messages that have been used previously to positive results (Hirschman, 1997). In this way, the characters, artifacts and scenes are not dispensers of information like in a typical American advertisement, but meaning-making devices that can be interpreted through an already-established visual lexicon.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis “often chosen by cultural media scholars” (Fursich, 2009) as it

allows the researcher to pick out patterns in a text, but also its omissions (241), such as congruency with established films or lack thereof. It can also be used to understand the industrial context in which artifacts were created (242), by looking at, in the case of this research, the common assumptions of the time period and the constraints of still-developing technology. Looking at textual analysis beyond, but wholly separate from, visual rhetoric, this analysis will be looking at Barbara Stern's work on methods, largely her arguments for utilizing a literary approach for discerning meaning and goals:

“What kind of fiction is it? What kind of reader response is it presumed to elicit? What does it reveal about the cultural context?” (Stern, 1996)

The question “what kind of reader response is it presumed to elicit?” (though in our case, the consumer is a viewer) is especially salient to those using the text to persuade.

Marketing professionals and promoters are using the trailers, website and ancillary product advertising to elicit a response from the reader that says “I want to see this movie”.

Stern highlights a three step process in her methods of textual analysis:

“identification of textual elements...construction of a provisional meaning...deconstruction of meaning” (p 62). Within the context of Stern's methodology, we will largely be focusing on the identifying elements step, often in conjunction with our search for visual rhetoric. Stern's use of this analytic method in her piece revolves around the poetic aspects of her artifact (as in, the text of the artifact is literally in poem form), so the methods will have to forego aspects of her method aimed specifically at poetry.

Aspects of Stern's methodology appear in more recent works, such as Vieira and

Queiroz's 2017 work on textual analysis, which they describe as "focus(ing) on selected aspects of meaning...related to the general question of the research" (12) with emphasis on description and interpretation of qualities. In the case of this research, focus will be placed on the impact the text will have on the audience, categorized largely by its quality as informational or emotional, as well as its congruence with the established franchise. After using these elements to construct the meaning, the meaning will then be deconstructed within the context of what it represents to a viewer, both casual a casual one and especially a member of the *Star Wars* fan community.

Advertisers attempt to make an impact on the viewer through the textual use of contiguity and similarity (McCracken, 1981). Contiguity in this sense is the utilization of familiar people, artifacts and action in relation to the overall product. Similarity meanwhile inspires the audience to make connections between the elements of a product's advertisement. Mick (1986) gives the example of cigarette ads, which juxtapose the product with locker rooms and beaches, leading an audience to connect tobacco with health, goodness, wholesomeness and positive experiences (203). This utilization of familiar artifacts bears a great deal of similarity to use of community lexicons seen in the principles of visual rhetoric, and in many instances the two goals can be seen as overlapping, especially regarding the use of familiar symbols to create consumer response. Due to the broader nature of this semiotic approach however, it is able to cast a wider net that allows us to identify parts of the texts that go beyond visuals, such as audio cues and written words. However, this approach and identification is meant to categorize artifacts that appeal to consumers as a whole. Therefore, visual rhetoric and the use of the community lexicon is still relevant in that much of the material being analyzed

(especially regarding the sequel trilogy) attempts to reach a particular community as much as it does consumers as a whole.

Trailer Breakdown 1: *The Phantom Menace*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bD7bpG-zDJQ>

The first scene of the *Phantom Menace* Trailer is of a densely foggy landscape with some unknown computer-generated creatures walking towards the camera. This quickly cuts to a black screen with the words “Every Generation Has a Legend” in white text, already showing a reliance on language familiarity as opposed to visual rhetoric. That said, during the first scene, one of the iconic riffs from the original *Star Wars* soundtracks plays softly in the background, cluing the audience in without words that this is part of the familiar franchise. Ultimately the combination of fog and mysterious creatures emerging as visual could give an average viewer a sense of mystery and tell them that something is approaching, but do little to tie in to the visual lexicon as it relates to *Star Wars* as a whole.

Next, the camera pans across a desert shot with a single silver space-ship sitting in the sand, surrounded by a number of unrecognizable creatures. This cuts to the words “Every Journey has a First Step”, again in white letters. A large desert in the context of a *Star Wars* film would immediately bring up Tatooine (the home desert planet of Luke Skywalker and the first non-space location shown in the franchise) in the minds of those familiar with the series. While the spaceship in question does not mean anything in the *Star Wars* visual lexicon, it does indicate futuristic technology, and when seen side-by-side with the imagery of alien creatures could be assumed by audiences to be signs of a

space adventure purely through visuals, while the *Star Wars* music should leave most audiences, and especially fans, in little doubt as to what they are seeing.

The phrase “Every journey has a first step” would clearly evoke ideas of beginnings to viewers, since usually such a statement would be considered superfluous unless the idea of a start was critical to the plot. The phrase itself is relatively short at five words, and is largely (if indirectly) informational about the nature of the film.

At :31 the scene cuts to a CGI city with green, domed roofs and large statues in front of the largest building. Four ships are flying through the background with the sound effect typically associated with moving ships in the *Star Wars* universe. Apart from that sound, there is little here that would connect with fans of the original film trilogy. For a casual viewer, a bright, sunny day in such a scene may evoke positive feelings.

The scene fades at :36 to a single figure in an ornate red robe standing in front of a large window in a high-ceiling room with several marble pillars. The camera is able to very slightly zoom in on the figure before the scene fades to black with the words “every saga has a beginning”. Juxtaposed with the statues outside, the marble pillars could bring to mind powerful governments such as popular images of ancient Rome, while the ornate nature of the figure's robe could evoke a certain regalia. Once again however, these images do not draw on anything specifically from the community lexicon.

“Every saga has a beginning” once again draws attention to this film being the start of a larger saga, and is largely the same message as the first words.

At :43, the *Star Wars* theme music kicks in, and the camera cuts to a first-person view of someone piloting some kind of craft through desert terrain at high speeds, while engines noises whine in the background. Once again, in the context of the *Star Wars*

visual lexicon, the desert is associated with Tatooine, but two cylindrical objects with electricity between the means nothing to either *Star Wars* or casual fans. When the camera shifts to a third-person view of the right side of a cockpit, the sound of engines can be heard in a way that is reminiscent of car racing. This sound effect, and the speed at which the vehicle was moving in first-person, would signify to everyone present that this was some kind of race.

This seems confirmed when the camera cuts to a wider shot where one craft is passing a much larger version of the vehicle. These two vehicles, compared side-by-side may evoke a David-and-Goliath like feeling of one side being the underdog, but clearly passing the more physically imposing vehicle.

From this point until the :59 mark, the trailer goes into a series of very rapid cuts, each lasting a little more than one second at most, dumping an large amount of visual information on the viewer right away.

At :47 a woman in heavy makeup and a very ornate headdress is following a person in the extreme foreground with her eyes. The costume and makeup would certain hint to an audience that this character is a person of importance, but the headdress and makeup obscure the actress's expression and make it difficult to glean any element of emotion from the character.

The scene at :48 to the inside of a cockpit with three characters inside. The leftmost character, a completely CGI being, is flailing and making noise that may or may not be English. In either case, it is loud and shrill, giving its voice a sense of intensity. The animation of the creature is highly cartoonish (in this case referring to an exaggerated style of movement), especially compared to his relatively stationary and

stoic companions. The creature's voice and movements, couple with the sudden turn near the end of the shot, tells a general audience that there is some form of danger that the three are trying to avoid. The scene shifts to what the audience is to presume is the outside of the vehicle, which is revealed at this point to be underwater, and the source of the danger is revealed: a giant bio-luminescent fish. The audience is once again shown a character (or in this case a group of characters) what may be contention with something much larger than themselves, but the scene shifts be again before ship or creature do more than move a few feet. As with the desert scene, the giant, alien creature does convey to audiences that this is an otherworldly setting.

At the latter half of second :49 we are given our first brief glimpse of something that directly correlates to the *Star Wars* visual lexicon. A character with a braid over his right shoulder twirls a blue lightsaber in front of the camera. The shoulders of the characters outfit can be seen, and a brown garment with a hood can be made out. At this point, blue lightsabers had only been seen in the hands of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker, protagonists of the earlier films, telling audience that this character is most likely a Jedi.

At :50, the lightsaber twirl becomes the transition to a silver ship flying away from a larger structure consisting of a central orb and a horseshow ring. The scene at :51 consists of uniformed men and women ducking behind pillars as lines of green and red energy quickly travel across the screen, accompanied by a sound effect that should be familiar to *Star Wars* fans as the sound of a laser-based firearm, which, to use Stern's idea of construction (p. X), could be a textual element that evokes congruity with the prior series in the mind of the audience. Beyond this familiar sound, the image of A: people

diving for cover while B: projectiles cross the scene would indicate a battle sequence for the viewer.

At :52 a new CGI creature turns towards the camera with a grunting sound. It is another new creature without any sort of analogue in the established *Star Wars* lexicon, but for the sake of general audiences, the guttural grunt and what appears to be unkempt chin and neck hair could be interpreted as unpleasant due to a lack of cleanliness.

The tail-end of the :53 second mark fades into a scene of a character in a brown robe running towards the camera with a number of wild creatures as large machines plow down trees behind them. For general audiences, it is certainly an image of destruction, and the juxtaposition of object A: the living creatures running from object B: the large machines can be processed as feeling a large threat. For *Star Wars* fans specifically, the central character's wardrobe is similar to the costume worn by Obi-Wan Kenobi in *A New Hope*.

:55 cuts back to the CG creature from the cockpit of the vessel at :48, standing up between the cylindrical machines seen at :43 and getting shocked by the electricity between them. While the objects of a character in discomfort and a harmful object could be decoded by audiences to be indicative of unpleasant suffering, the context of the injury does not support that interpretation. Rather than behaving how a real thing would in the face of pain, the character's movements are once again exaggerated, including its tongue sticking out after the shock, and given the sound it makes when the injury happens, the incident has a slapstick, comedic tone.

The music changes at :59 to a quieter score, and the pacing of cuts slows dramatically. The CG character seen at :55 and the long-haired man seen at :48 and :53

are walking through a desert village with stone, dome-roofed buildings, looking at their surroundings with perplexed mannerisms. The desert environment and style of buildings are instantly recognizable in terms of the *Star Wars* visual lexicon as being a city on Tatooine, evoking similarity with the original trilogy in a direct way for the first time in the trailer. 1:02 cuts to a child wearing a simple, brown costume and black backpack turning to face the camera.

During these two shots we get the first line of dialogue from the film as a voice-over: “You refer to the prophecy of the one who will bring balance to the Force. You believe it’s this boy?” The sentence begins while the three characters walking through the city are on screen, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the character central to the shot is the one being spoken to, especially when we discover that he is not the one speaking. The middle section of the dialogue, “the one who will bring balance to the force” is said over the shot of the child turning towards the camera, indicating to the audience that the thought is attributed to this character. The scene changes at 1:04 to a close-up of the speaking character’s face.

These two sentences comprise 15 and five words respectively, making the former a relatively long statement if viewed as separate. The line itself contains one segment that could speak to the *Star Wars* fan community in the idea of bringing balance to the Force, and the intention otherwise is to bring raw information to the viewer about the film being advertised. It tells audiences that there is a prophecy, and someone believes this character to be the subject of it. It is a statement of facts and an assessment of the situation rather than referring to any sort of emotional state of the characters, making it in line with a very western, American style of hard-selling.

1:06 cuts to the same child character sitting down, looking up from a plate of food, then to a side view of the same character along with others seen previously in the trailer looking at a light source, while the Jedi character turns to look at the child. The voice-overs continue with a different character stating “he can see things before they happen.”, affirming that the character the audience is seeing is the subject of the discussion. At seven words, this line is far shorter and simpler, but is once again purely informational. It is a fact about the character in question. It is worth noting that the ability to see into the future is an established ability of a Jedi, so the information may hold a deeper meaning to fans of the original trilogy.

A woman at 1:09 looks past the camera, presumably to off-camera characters, and delivers the line “he can help you” while a blue and silver droid is visible in the background. The droid is recognizable as R2-D2 from the original trilogy to those already familiar with *Star Wars*, making this a potential use of congruity as a visual rhetoric tool by putting new and old characters in the same shot. At 1:10, what we can assume is the same woman is touching the face of the child character, while the previous male voice speaks again with the line “the Force is unusually strong with him.”. The image of an adult woman interacting with a child by touching their face indicates to the audience that the two of them, if not directly mother and son, share a close, positive relationship. The scene shifts at 1:11 to reveal that the long-haired character is the one making the statement. 1:12 returns us to the close-up of the woman as she finishes her thought with “he was meant to help you”.

The lines in this sequence are short, with the line regarding force aptitude being the longest at seven words. This particular line is a familiar one for *Star Wars* fans, as

previous protagonists in the original trilogy were often described the same way by their mentor figures. “He will help you” and “he was meant to help you” are also fairly short, though the latter line speaks to some abstract notion of destiny that adds some complication to the idea. Interrupting the woman’s statement with a line from the man adds more complexity to the thought, and could be confusing to non-English speaking viewers who could interpret their lines as a congruent conversation, when native speakers know that they are separate ideas. In terms of what these words are meant to display to the audience, they largely continue to be informational, reaffirming characteristics of the boy that were previously established. This much focus on this one character also establishes him as the main point of interest in the film.

At 1:14 we see the long-haired character looking past the camera while still in the desert, the silver ship sitting in the background. He shouts “Anakin”, just before the scene shifts to a whirl of black fabric and a red lightsaber swinging towards him. 1:15 shows the long-haired character activating a green lightsaber and shouting “tell them to take off?”. Visually speaking, a black-clad, hooded character suddenly swinging a weapon evokes immediate danger and confrontation in the eyes of any viewer, and this sense of danger is compounded by the sudden intensity in the character’s voice. In the visual lexicon of the *Star Wars* franchise, black hoods and red lightsabers are definite visual hallmarks of the series villains: the Sith.

“Anakin” is the shortest possible statement at a single word, and has a great deal of meaning in the *Star Wars* community, being the first name of the original trilogy’s iconic villain, Anakin Skywalker or Darth Vader. The fact that the character the long-haired Jedi is referring to is not on-screen could cause potential confusion to viewers not

familiar with the name, but given the amount of focus put on the child character both before and after this sequence, it is reasonable to assume that this statement is still referring to him. For fans, the information that the child is strong with the Force and emphasis on that fact would likely be sufficient to make the connection. “Tell them to take off”, meanwhile, is a simple five-word phrase that is, once again, purely instructional, only this time to characters within the scene rather than to the audience.

At 1:16, we cut back to the boy and woman characters from the shot at 1:10 in the same positions, with the boy asking, “will I ever see you again?” in a quivering voice. This cuts to looking over the boy’s shoulder at the woman’s face as she says “what does your heart tell you?”. These statements further cement the positive relationship between the two characters established earlier, and serve as the first lines of dialogue whose purpose is to evoke an emotional resonance with the audience through their relationship and the implication of a child being separated from his mother or mother figure as opposed to purely imparting information about the story or characters. While this does not have any bearing on concepts in the *Star Wars* universe, but the abstract notion of following one’s emotions rather than rationality is a glimmer of the trailer invoking soft-sell advertising.

1:20 shows a woman walking towards the camera on the surface of the same desert planet, on the right third of the shot asking “are you sure about this? Trusting our fate to a boy we hardly know?”, cutting roughly halfway through the thought at 1:21 to show the long-haired Jedi on the left third of the shot turning to face someone, implying that he is being addressed before quickly cutting to Anakin standing by his craft seen at :43 and waving to a large crowd, implying that he is the boy that their fate is being

trusted with. From a textual standpoint, this phrase casts doubt on the character, and may foreshadow what *Star Wars* fans already know: that the boy in question eventually turns evil.

1:25 shows the interior of the ship, with both previously seen Jedi as well as Anakin and R2-D2 sitting on the floor of a metal structure, presumably the interior of the silver spaceship seen a little over ten seconds prior. The long-haired Jedi gestures between them, saying: “Anakin Skywalker, meet Obi-Wan Kenobi.” This statement is a simple enough introduction, and serves the purpose of identifying the short-haired Jedi, as well as confirming that the previous shout of “Anakin” was directed at this character. For *Star Wars* fans, Obi-Wan Kenobi is, of course, a familiar character, though this new portrayal with a familiar identity could be a case of creating congruity within a single physical element, rather than by the comparison of two elements. This meeting may also hold a greater significance for fans of the *Star Wars* franchise that are familiar with the complex history between the two characters hinted at in the original trilogy and be meant to spark their interest by implying the film will delve into that history.

After a seemingly unrelated glimpse of a space battle at 1:27, the trailer transitions to a green, puppet creature that fans and most casual viewers will likely recognize as Yoda sitting in a red chair. During this shot, he states “I sense much fear in you”. At 1:31 the camera pulls back to a wide shot to reveal that he is address Anakin as part of a ring of humans and aliens surrounding the child while a new voice begins, saying “the boy is dangerous...”.

With only one recognizable character in the shot, it is difficult for an audience, familiar with the series or otherwise, to determine the exact nature of the group being

seen. However, having the child surrounded puts him at the clear center of attention for all present, which may indicate an examination or hearing. Although Yoda is talking about fear, a basic emotion that virtually all humans experience, it is difficult to say whether this is really an instance of promoting the film with an emotional draw like in the scene with Anakin's mother, as we are being told about someone's fear through a second party. That said, anyone who has been in the center of attention could likely relate to experiences of fear of the judgement of others. As we do not see Anakin's face, it is impossible to know if he is expressing fear or not.

However, the background music of the scene is a riff of the highly recognizable "Imperial March" from the original trilogy that played whenever Darth Vader would make an appearance. Because of this, the text appears to be less of an emotional draw and more of a technique to link this scene with the original trilogy and remind the audience that this character is a young version of the villain. This could be interpreted as an attempt to get fans excited by creating congruence with the story they were previously enamored with. The combination of music and the quote therefore, from a textual stance, aim to associate this film with the previous in the minds of the viewers.

Large metal doors open at 1:32 to reveal a figure in a hooded black robe as the voiceover that began with "they boy is dangers" continues with "they all sense it, why can't you?". The same ideas the black cloak invokes in the *Star Wars* visual lexicon are still present, but this time compounded with the riff of the "Imperial March" still playing in the background. General audiences and fans alike would likely assume that this is the same cloaked figure that attacked the long-haired Jedi at 1:14 and is therefore the villain.

1:35 is a slight zoom-in on a close-up of the long-haired Jedi with his lightsaber

activated, indicating action or a fight scene, before it cuts to a close-up of Yoda at 1:36 saying “fear is the path to the dark side”. This sentence is dealing in emotions once again, but is not an expression of the emotions of characters, but rather information on the connection of fear and the dark side. The dark side is universally known to fans as a fundamental idea of the series, and it is likely even casual viewers are aware of the concept. The comparison of the long-haired Jedi ready for action with Yoda speaking of the dark side, as well as the ominous music and focus on the dark side in general, indicates that is what the former shot is taking action against, defining the opposing sides.

Yoda continues to speak at 1:38, stating that “fear leads to anger” as the camera does a slight zoom-in on a close-up of Obi-Wan. Putting these elements side-by-side would indicate to the viewer that it is likely in reference to some kind of conflict Obi-Wan has to deal with in the film.

The camera cuts back to Yoda saying “anger leads to hate,” then cuts again at 1:42 to show Anakin with a pair of unidentified hands coming down to touch his shoulders, making contact at the exact point that Yoda says the word “hate” in the phrase “hate leads to suffering” before cutting back once again to Yoda for the final three words. In total, this statement is 12 words long, making it one of the longer phrases used in either trailer, and is being used to describe the complex relations of emotions and how they lead to something bad. It must be reiterated, however, that this phrase is not being used in relation to the emotions of any specific character within the film, so it is difficult to consider it an appeal to emotion as a promotional technique. The phrase also has no new relevance to what the *Star Wars* fan community knows about the franchise beyond what was understood with the mention of the words “dark side”.

At 1:45 we see the black-clad figure again, this time without his hood, but the focal point of the shot is his lightsaber, which emits beams from both ends. This is an example of congruency that combines old and new for fans in that while the concept of a Sith is known, and that this character is familiar in that he has a costume and lightsaber that are congruent with that identity, a double-bladed variant of the lightsaber had never been seen before. Through this image, fans of the series are told that the familiar ideas they love are still present in this film, but that there are new things being added to the lore of the franchise.

After a brief look at another unfamiliar character, 1:47 is a brief shot of a woman in heavy makeup and a headdress reminiscent of the one seen at at :47, but with a different design and color, followed by a series of fast-paced action shots focusing almost completely on battle and conflict. Two shots of note here are the first close-up of the face of our main villain at 1:49, showing their horns and red-and-black face. Red and black, to the Star Wars fan, indicate a Dark Side using antagonist.

From a cinematography standpoint, the sequence beginning at 1:50 and continuing to 1:53 is highly reminiscent of prior *Star Wars* films, with the close up of a pilot framed exactly in the middle of the shot to the first-person view of the ship engaged in a space battle. There are really no subtexts to take away from this kind of a shot, as it is rather obvious what the characters are engaged in, but the presentation style could ring as congruent with examples of such conflicts the audience is already familiar with.

1:54 to 1:55 shows two droids, R2-D2, and what will be recognizable to fans of the franchise as an incomplete C-3PO. This is once again an example of congruence in the visual rhetoric as it combines the completely established and familiar R2-D2 (and to

an extent his constant partner C3-PO) with a new version of the latter.

The latter half of second 1:55 shows two armies facing off, followed by the two Jedi leaping at their opponent and finally at 1:58 an explosion that engulfs the screen before cutting to the opening title, which comes flying towards the viewer. All of these shots feature two forces in conflict preparing to engage in some kind of altercation, and the final shot literally and figuratively advertises and explosive experience.

The trailer for *The Phantom Menace* seems largely focused on relaying information to the viewer about the product, in line with the more typical western view of promotion. Dialogue, with few exceptions, is about who characters are and what their significance is to the plot. The primary exception to this is the dialogue between Anakin and his mother. For the Star Wars fan, the line “Anakin Skywalker, meet Obi-Wan Kenobi” does have special significance, as the history between those characters had been previously established, but it is still informational, telling the audience that those two characters will have an encounter.

Visually, there are a few isolated instances of congruence that link this film to the previous entries in the franchise, but for the most part the audience is presented with unfamiliar characters and locations. General visual themes such as juxtaposing images of space travel and aliens give the audience a general idea of a space-themed film, though not Star Wars specifically.

For the most part, this trailer seems to try to position this film as a new experience, with minimum text or visuals relating it to its preceding trilogy.

Trailer Analysis 2: *The Force Awakens*

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

The official trailer for *The Force Awakens* begins eight seconds into the video with a completely covered figure in the wreckage of some kind of large machine. A voiceover asks a three-word question: “who are you?”, which is likely what the audiences themselves are wondering at this stage. The figure rappels down into the depths of the vessel and the scene shifts at the :20 mark to a woman walking through the desert, accompanied by a spherical robot. This robot (BB-8), bears similar markings and a similar head structure to that of previous droid R2D2. A droid crossing a desert planet (or an instance of A and B) as seen here would have the implication of Tatooine to a previous *Star Wars* fan, a familiar starting place. This creates similarity through juxtaposition.

As the figure walks towards the horizon, we get a three-word response to the question asked previously with “I am no one”. These two very brief, under five-word sentences are in stark contrast to the five to over fifteen word-expository phrases being used when voiceovers began being used during *The Phantom Menace* trailer. The simplicity and shortness allows the visuals to take center-stage in the trailer, and convey ideas that would run into a minimal amount of direct translation issue. As opposed to talking about prophecies, they are instead discussing very simple concepts.

After finally showing the LucasFilms logo, the trailer does a sweeping shot of a large number of gathered storm troopers. This is followed by a close-up of another storm trooper, this one doing something audiences have never seen in a *Star Wars* film before and taking his helmet off, the expression on his face one of shock and fear. Subjects A and B in this instance would be the Storm Trooper’s uniform and the person himself, an

association that goes beyond the confines of the original chart and mixes the familiar with the new, a tactic that is seen several other times during the course of the trailer. The next scene shows what is recognizable as a tie-fighter being shot down, then the same trooper in the desert, without his armor, looking over a small settlement.

These four three brief cuts, under fifteen seconds in total, tell an entire narrative entirely through visual cues and references to images that would be well known to the *Star Wars* lexicon. It establishes that we are with storm troopers, that one of them is in distress, and that he ends up on we can only assume is the same desert planet from the start of the trailer after his ship is shot down. Elements such as storm troopers and tie-fighters give the audience a sense that this is familiar territory, but events following an unmasked and clearly distressed storm trooper present this familiar setting in a new light. In the final shots of the Storm Trooper on the desert planet, elements A and B draw not only from the *Star Wars* lexicon, but from elements that have previous been established within the context of just the trailer itself.

There are two more lines of dialogue, presented as coming from the trooper himself. “I was raised to do one thing” and “but I’ve got nothing to fight for.”. While these are technically two parts of the same sentence from a grammatical standpoint, they are intercut by the scene of the crashing tie-fighter, dividing the sentence into two parts. Without the conjunction “but”, they are also perfectly comprehensible, simple sentences on their own. As such, they are being counted as two short statements rather than one long sentence. These sentences are somewhat more complicated than the first two lines, bringing up abstract notions of motivation for engaging in violence, but are also relatively short statements at seven words apiece.

A black interior of some kind of structure with a bright red light coming in from the windows and the silhouettes of several figures makes up the next shot. The camera zooms in to the back of the center figure, wearing a helmet and black cloak. The juxtaposition of red and black as simple color elements has a unique meaning in the eyes of the *Star Wars* fandom as being the color primarily associated with villainous characters and draws associations with the iconic villain Darth Vader from the original trilogy. Likewise, a figure dressed in all-black surrounded by what appears to be people in similar uniforms to the ones seen used by the Empire in the original trilogy further cements the association between the character in the focal point and the villains of the previous trilogies. This elements create what Phillips' (2004) chart would define as a fusion of elements whereby they create meaning through similarity, or that combined images signifying that A is like B (116).

These associations are compounded by the voice-over and the front-view shot of the character. The elements that further this connection are the mask attached to the helmet, and the voice modulation effect being done on the voice-over. "I will finish what you started" does not necessarily even have to be understood by a non-english speaking audience for those familiar with the franchise to understand that this character is meant to be the new villain. This interpretation of symbols is confirmed when the camera cuts to a slow zoom-in on the burned helmet of Darth Vader himself, which serves as the first direct artifact from the original trilogy shown in this trailer. As if to really drop the rhetorical hammer on this comparison, an astute viewer can also make out the sound of Darth Vader's artificial breathing sound in the background of the shot.

Just past the one-minute mark, we see the character from the previous shots

holding out his hand towards a new character's face. The new character is clearly in discomfort and distress, as shown by his expression and the perspiration coating his face. The character in black (element A), holding interacting with the new character as he expressed intense pain (element B) visually tells the audience that the person in black is doing something to harm the new character. To cement this unpleasant imagery, the shot of the man crying out fades into some kind of explosion that appears to be incinerating nearby landscapes.

These brief scenes are highly effective at using very little exposition to hammer in a simple idea to the audience: this new character is the villain. Many of the elements being join in-tandem with one another in this instance are not only callbacks or homages to previously familiar aspects of the trilogy (such as the voice-altering mask, red light and black costume), but also direct references to those aspects (such as Vader's helmet and the surrounding officer uniforms). From a more universal perspective, having the figure in black clearly and knowingly inflicting pain associates that character with unpleasant feelings in the eyes of the audience. In approaching the new elements from angles that are familiar to fans and universal emotions, the trailer is able to forgo explanations of what is happening by drawing upon that which most audiences are already going to be familiar with, and would likely be effective with anyone that has even a passing knowledge of the franchise.

At 1:05 we are shown the Millennium Falcon avoiding fire from a pair of tie-fighters on what the viewer would presume is the same desert planet as shown previously. This leads to a shot within the ship where two of the three previously established characters (the woman and the storm trooper) are looking at something behind the

camera. The next cut reveals what they are looking at to be Han Solo speaking to them. This cuts to a scene of the Falcon making the jump to hyperspace with the image of starlight stretching into blue lines, an effect that was first seen in *A New Hope*, where it was also done by Han Solo in the same ship.

There are two lines of dialogue in the Millennium Falcon segment, the first being a question, that the viewer assumes is attributed to the female character at the start. She says “there are stories about what happened”, to which a male voice (Harrison Ford’s) replies “it’s true, all of it”. Once again the sentences are under ten words, and express fairly simple ideas, and are an acknowledgment of the original trilogy. By this point in the trailer, and especially after the reveal of one of the primary characters of the franchise, it would be more than reasonable to expect an audience to have enough context to understand that “stories about what happened” is in references to the events of episodes four through six. Even though the words *Star Wars* have not yet appeared, there has been enough imagery linked to the series by drawing on the visual lexicon of the fans that virtually all viewers should be on the same page at this point.

The phrase “it’s true” is part of an ongoing sentence that lasts from 1:12 to 1:40 in the trailer, meaning it takes 28 seconds to get the full sentence of “It’s true, all of it; the dark side, the Jedi, it’s all real.” Given how spread out the sub-sections of this phrase are, and their contextual relevance to the imagery being shown at the specific time of their utterance, they will largely be examined as separate phrases. As a full phrase, the 13-word through comprises the longest sentence in the trailer, but as we will see, it is parsed out into very simple, understandable sections.

From here, the familiar *Star Wars* music (though not the opening song) begins to

play, and the trailer begins cutting shorter, more fast-paced shots together, similar to the structure of the *Phantom Menace* trailer at this same point. The difference between the two is that while the *Phantom Menace* trailer utilized scenes largely comprised of unknown characters staring into the middle distance while being relatively sedentary, with familiar elements occasionally sprinkled in, this portion of the *Force Awakens* trailer has a focus on action and familiar *Star Wars* elements that a viewer with any background knowledge of the series can easily comprehend as part of the franchise.

At 1:22, after the title card with the words “This Christmas”, we get a brief flash of a red lightsaber held by the same masked figure seen earlier. The combination of lightsaber, the color red and the black outfit confirms to the viewer that this character is a dark-side user. An element of mystery is juxtaposed with the familiar in this instance via the character being surrounded with other black-clad figures with very similar costume designs.

The shot at 1:25 gives us a glimpse of a squadron of X-Wings flying over water, followed by a behind shot of several storm troopers on a shoreline taking aim at oncoming objects, and a single-second shot of a Tie-Fighter being pursued by an X-Wing over a small body of water. When the scene cuts to the troopers, Ford’s voiceover can be heard saying “the dark side”.

While there are few instances of multiple elements working in tandem in the first and second shot in this sequence, it would be reasonable to treat them as part of the same scene. The cut from fast moving ships over water to troopers facing some fast-moving group of objects over water, while potentially drawn from different scenes in the film itself, is clearly meant to represent the same scene to the audience. Therefore, for the

purposes of analysis, these two shots will be treated as parts of the same picture for the purpose of this analysis.

X-Wings, in the context of the *Star Wars* lexicon, are most closely associated with the Rebels, or the protagonist forces in the story, while Storm Troopers obviously represent the Empire, or the antagonists in the story. Juxtaposing A (the Rebels) and B (the Storm Troopers) in this instance represents a clear confrontation between the two sides. This confrontation is confirmed for those not as familiar with the prior films in the brief dog-fighting shot, which also takes place over water and is therefore being presented as part of the same scene. Apart from the voice and music, the swooping sound effect as the tie-fighter goes towards the camera is another element lifted directly from the original trilogy during ship-to-ship combat sequences.

The phrase “the dark side” is clearly meant to be an extension of Han Solo’s prior line, but with an over ten-second gap between “all of it” and “the dark side”, along with the radical shift in pace, scene and music, this phrase can arguably be viewed as a separate thought in the context of the trailer. “The dark side” is not just an element of the franchise, but a core concept and fundamental idea of the narrative introduced in the original trilogy. The fact that this is said over the imagery of members of the antagonist group further justifies it as a separate thought that is, in this case, being used as an identification of the characters currently on screen.

At 1:29, the trailer cuts to a shot on the ground where a man in an orange and white uniform is ducking under an X-Wing and greeting the former storm trooper seen at the start of the trailer. They are on a green landscape surrounded by other people, some in the same orange and white uniform as the focal character. As this character touches the

shoulder of the former storm trooper, the camera switches focus to follow him as he takes a few steps in the opposite direction and turns towards the camera. Ford's voice gives another line with "the Jedi". While the character in orange and white is the same as the one seen in pain just after the first minute of the trailer, the differences in the shot (extreme close up in the prior scene, medium shot in motion here), and limited view of the character's face makes it plausible that audiences would not connect the two. That said, the uniform is highly recognizable within the *Star Wars* visual lexicon as that of an X-Wing pilot, placing this character as a member of the protagonist forces.

The two main elements of the scene are said pilot and the former Storm Trooper established near the beginning of the trailer. In this instance, A is interacting with B via a hand on the shoulder and a smile, both nonverbal signs of a positive relationship between the two characters. This interaction, as well as the presence of the former Storm Trooper amid the multitude of Rebel soldiers, also implies that the former Storm Trooper is now integrated with this new group.

There is a five second gap between the phrases "the dark side" and "the Jedi", with the latter being said while the former Storm Trooper is turning towards the camera. Given the use of the phrase "the dark side" said over the Storm Troopers previously, it's reasonable to say this was another instance of using the phrase for identification, or at least to steer the audience into that way of thinking.

We see two explosions in time with the music from 1:36 to 1:37, the first being a Tie-Fighter being destroyed by an X-Wing in the previously established scene over a body of water. This transitions to another explosion on the desert planet from the beginning of the trailer, with the former Storm Trooper, young woman and droid

recoiling. This cuts to a front view of the two presumably looking at the explosion with expressions of shock. In this instance, subjects A and B are the characters and the explosion, with their expressions in the face of the explosion indicating danger.

There is a very brief shot at 1:40 which shows a beat-up droid being touched by the robotic right hand of a hooded figure while some kind of fire is kindling off-screen to the camera's left. Although this scene lasts less than a single second, there is a great deal of meaning made for those familiar with the *Star Wars* brand through the use of visual rhetoric. The droid itself is R2-D2, a primary character of both the original and prequel trilogy. Although we cannot see the face of the person in the cloak and hood, the presence of both the cloak and the robotic arm (characteristics of object A) are shown side-by-side with subject B (in this case R2-D2) in a way that renders even the clear visual confirmation of the character's face unnecessary for fans to piece together that the hooded figure is Luke Skywalker. The scene is also reminiscent of the opening of *A New Hope* where the same droid interacted with Princess Leia in a similar way.

The following two shots at 1:41 through 1:43 show a large ship landing amid a burning settlement. Again, while these two scenes are not remotely connected in the film itself, they are presented in the material in a way that makes them seem congruent through the nighttime scenery and fire. Storm Troopers are marching through the settlement, with the focus of the shot following one in a cloak and chrome armor. Once again the audience is given a juxtaposition of the familiar with Storm Troopers and the unfamiliar with a new style of uniform. The final shot during the nighttime fire sequence is the black-masked figure swinging a lightsaber at the camera to lead into the next cut. By putting this scene after the shot of R2-D2 and potentially Luke Skywalker, the viewer

is told that the heroes are under attack from a familiar threat.

A line of dialogue from an unfamiliar female voice overlays these two scenes saying “the force...it’s calling to you.” The concept of the Force, arguably the most important central mechanic and theme of the *Star Wars* franchise, is not something that likely needs to be explained to audiences with even the most casual understanding of the universe. What is interesting in this statement is the use of the phrase “it’s calling to you”, specifically the choice to use the word “you”. Clearly this is meant in the context of the movie to be said to a specific character, but no character is named, and six characters are shown over the course of the statement. As an audience member, this does not give us context to tell us which character the “you” is referring to, and from a promotional standpoint, the use of this line could be interpreted as the trailer directly addressing the viewer.

From this point forward, the overall pacing of the shots becomes faster while the time between cutaways decreases to the point that many shots are under a single second. The overall feel of the scenes being depicted are large more fast-paced and action oriented, accompanied by swelling in the musical score that compliments the change in tone. The final shot that the audience gets a clear image of is the former Storm Trooper activating a blue lightsaber, facing a figure in black wielding a red one. As the two begin their swings at one-another, the camera cuts to black.

The interaction of the two elements, the former Storm Trooper and the figure in black, continues the overall theme of conflict and action from this section of the trailer. For *Star Wars* fans, the use of blue and red as lightsaber color choices is a symbol of good versus evil.

With the screen cut to black, we hear the same voice that said the previous statement give another line: “just let it in”. During this statement, there are no other visual or musical elements at all, lending credence to the idea that, in the context of the trailer, this is a line that is meant for the audience as an incentive to see the movie.

Overall, *The Force Awakens* trailer differs from the trailer of *The Phantom Menace* in several ways. Most immediately noticeable is the amount of spoken dialogue, with *The Force Awakens* contains eight lines of spoken dialogue, with the longest being 13 words spread out over the course of 28 seconds. These statements are also far simpler than those in *The Phantom Menace*, with many of them simply naming defining elements of the *Star Wars* universe that had already been established by previous films. The most complicated sentences are not summaries of the plot, but expressions of emotion by the characters, such as the former Storm Trooper’s statement of loss and feelings of being directionless. A heavier use of emotion over exposition is a hallmark of “soft-sell” advertising that is more widely embraced in non-American markets, which would indicate that the trailer itself is gearing towards a more global audience.

There are clues to the plot of the film, but instead of being told through exposition and complex explanations, they are almost exclusively told through the visual elements. The former Storm Trooper almost has a self-contained story arch, complete with transformation as a person, all through visual elements alone. By drawing on both the *Star Wars* community lexicon as well as what people are able to decode as pleasant versus unpleasant in general (such as the friendly pat on the shoulder versus the young woman with tears on her face), this trailer sets up characters and conflict without anyone needing to be introduced or explained.

The Force Awakens trailer also utilizes elements from the established *Star Wars* canon much more liberally than *The Phantom Menace*, and minimizes the introduction of new elements without the grounding of something familiar to fans and audiences. In many ways it puts more faith in the knowledge base of its audience, trusting that the viewer will understand what is happening with minimal hand-holding.

Another way in which this trailer could appeal to fans the world-over through this trailer is the tone. There are no child characters getting the focus, very few CGI cartoon creatures and no instance of slapstick humor in sight. The darker music, emphasis on struggle and suffering and even the more toned-down color pallet indicate a more serious movie meant for a more mature audience. This relates to McCracken's stance on global age identity, wherein more people are identifying as feeling younger while still being adults, and going from a total American idea of Sci-fi and Fantasy being for the weak and childish to the more global ideology where membership of a community is treated seriously and can be celebrated. In short, *The Force Awakens* trailer portrays *Star Wars* through visuals and emotions, with words being relegated to basic ideas and character emotions, while maintaining a tone that caters to adults and celebrates their communal knowledge of the franchise.

Ancillary Product Analysis

For promoting the franchise through ancillary products, in this case toys, we will examine Toys R' Us commercials from 1999, the year of *The Phantom Menace* release, and 2015, preceding the release of *The Force Awakens*. These two commercials were selected specifically due to not only attempting to promote the same kinds of products,

but because they have the additional advantage of being created by the same company, for the same purpose, that is to advertise the overall toy line available for the *Star Wars* film being released at the time. The second commercial, created by Pepsi, is useful in that it shows a representation of a member of the *Star Wars* fan community, something which the 1999 toy commercial severely lacks. This representation can be compared to the 2015 Toys R' Us commercial to show how fan communities were perceived differently by companies between the releases of the two movies.

Similar to the analysis of the trailers, we will be examining these trailers from the perspective, or best imitation of the perspective, of a person who has not seen the specific movie these products are representing, as that was the audience that these commercials were made to cater to. It will be noted when fans of the franchise are presented with familiar imagery juxtaposed, compared or seen in congruity with new material. Also similar to our examination of film's trailers, use of words and text will be examined for length, complexity of ideas and textual relation to both the viewer and the previously established *Star Wars* canon.

Where the analysis of these commercials differs from that of the trailers is that this analysis does not only represent elements of the films or products, but also how marketing teams are defining the identities of their fan bases through their representation of those utilizing their products. These are not, in essence, reviews of the quality of the products being displayed, but an examination of just who the promoters are trying to reach and who they are valuing as their relevant stakeholders. Because of this, we will be closely examining the identity of the actors at play as well as their behaviors and overall portrayals.

1999 Advertisement 1: Toys R' Us

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

The first shot of the 1999 commercial is of a figurine in robes with a lightsaber facing the camera as it zooms out. A voice-over states: “They are good” as the screen fades to black and the same words appear in writing in white letters. At :03 the figurine is turned towards the camera during a close-up, putting the lightsaber in the center of the shot. The lightsaber in hand and choice of costume would register in the Star Wars visual lexicon as indicators that the character is a Jedi. For other audiences, the phrase “They are good” would likely indicate that this is a protagonist character.

After the figurine faces the camera, the camera cuts back to black at :04 with the words “They are evil” on screen and voiced by the narrator. This fades to a pair of doors opening to reveal a figure in a black hooded robe, as a rebreather sound plays in the background. This may be confusing to a Star Wars fan in that element A (the figurine) is clearly Darth Sideous, while element B (the rebreather effect) is clearly referencing a separate character, Darth Vader. Both elements, however, invoke the traits of the series antagonists. Casual viewers would also likely understand that these are meant to represent the villains through the voice over.

:07 cuts to titles again, this time with text and narrator saying “They are alien”. This fades into a shot of a humanoid alien riding atop a large amphibious or reptilian creature. Neither creature has any meaning within the Star Wars visual lexicon at this point. Both they and casual viewers are meant to take the accompanying text as a literal explanation in that these things are, in fact, aliens.

“They are wise” is stated and written at :10, which then fades to a blue, opaque figurine of a small, pointed-ear alien. Audiences both casual and in the fan community should reasonably understand that the statements preceding each shot are descriptive qualifiers meant to dispense information about the objects being shown. Fans of the series can draw from their community lexicon and recognize Yoda, and that his coloring is a reflection of his ghostly appearance in *Return of the Jedi*.

The shot cuts to toy tie-fighters being carried by disembodied child’s hands as laser sound effects play in the background at :12, then at :13 to a new kind of ship not seen before in the franchise. This is one of the many clear instances of congruity in this promotion, as the familiar (Darth Sideous, Yoda and tie-fighters) are shown among shots of unfamiliar elements, such as the unknown Jedi, aliens and ships. Considering the promotions for the movies themselves rarely featured any elements of the established canon, it is interesting that the toys would try to evoke imagery that, at the time, was multiple decades old.

The screen fades to black one more time with the voice and text stating “they are available” at :14. The voiceover continues through the rest of the commercial with “at Toys R Us, you can find the complete collection from Star Wars, Episode 1. It’s a selection of epic proportions, and they are waiting.”. These statements, like the briefer one’s prior, are entirely instructional, describing characteristics of the characters being portrayed by the product, and ending in a call to action for the viewer to purchase them. The text itself is meant to evoke a reaction of excitement and positive feelings centered around the toys themselves. By providing only information on the products, and instruction and incentive to buy them, this commercial very much behaves like a typical

American hard-sell angle with no characters or emotions to speak of.

The overall text, like the 1999 trailer, is descriptive in nature, giving the viewer information about the product, or in this case the characters that the products are associated with. Said products also take center-stage in the promotion, with almost no representation of the target audience apart from the very end. Visually, this promotion has some instances of congruity with the original trilogy in the forms of Yoda, tie-fighters and Darth Sideous shown alongside new aliens and characters.

1999 Advertisement 2: Pepsi

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

The initial intention of this section of analysis was to find a second commercial from the *Phantom Menace* that portrays fans of the Star Wars franchise, to get an idea of how marketing teams were conceptualizing their target audience. This proved problematic, as locating any commercial that showed the fans of the franchise directly, as in real people who were acting as fans of the franchise, was difficult. Pepsi, however, did release a series of advertisements based on a “fan” character by the name of Marphalump.

This commercial begins with an establishing a shot of an unknown, alien creature looking at the camera saying, “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...” There is nothing visually recognizable about the shot, save a model of the Millennium Falcon in the back of the room and the words “Star Wars” on the creature’s shirt. The statement

itself is the iconic opening of every *Star Wars* film, and from a textual standpoint serves to clue the audience in on what is being talked about during this add. This is compounded by the use of the *Star Wars* opening theme being used as background music.

At :05, the alien is suddenly holding two aluminum cans with faces printed on them, saying “Obi-Wan, we’ve got to save the queen!”. Obi-Wan as a name draws from the fan lexicon as an established character, but no kind of queen has been previously mentioned in the franchise. The fact that the creature is holding the blue can closer to the screen may be meant to indict that he is doing the talking, and that the picture on the green can is Obi-Wan, but neither actor have portrayed a character in the franchise before, so it is difficult to say from a fan perspective.

The rest of the advertisement plays in largely the same fashion, with the alien character rapidly cutting between holding one to three cans, all with new, unknown characters on them, spouting quick, brief lines that are meant to be summaries of plot points and characters. Textually, the purpose is not to poetically inspire emotion, but to dump information on the audience about the film and give character to Marphalump.

At :21 the camera cuts to Marphalump’s perspective to show that he’s giving this performance for a young woman who states, “this is the weirdest date I’ve ever been on”. As the camera cuts back to the original shot at :23, she is walking past Marphalump saying “I’m out of here”. Marphalump himself is holding a green can with Yoda, and doing an impression of the character by responding with “go, you must”, followed by “farewell. Bye-bye, said in unrecognizable voices.

Visually, Yoda is the first thing seen at the forefront of the commercial that has meaning within the *Star Wars* visual lexicon, and is compounded by Marphalump’s

impression of his distinct speaking style. Textually, the woman's response to Marphalump's hyperactive enactment of the film is deadpan and monotone, creating comedy through taking the audience through a sudden mood shift.

The scene closes at :27 with an announcer proclaiming, "Star Wars: Episode One cans, collect all twenty-four this summer". On-screen, Marphalump is humming the Star Wars theme while drinking Pepsi with two of his arms and conducting himself with the other two. The Pepsi logo appears at the center of the screen, with the phrase "The Joy of Cola". The statement is a basic direction: there are twenty-four different cans, you should go collect them all. It is informational and instructional; a typical example of hard-sell advertising.

What is interesting to note about this commercial is the behavior of the main character. Marphalump is definitively an obsessive kind Star Wars, with childish, hyperactive behaviors. He also lacks an identity outside of his single-minded focus on the franchise and nature as an alien. Marphalump is also rejected and abandon by his date, who finds his expression of fandom "weird".

What is interesting to note about this commercial is the behavior of the main character and how it reflects the promoter's perception of their audience. Marphalump is definitively an obsessive kind Star Wars, with childish, hyperactive behaviors. He also lacks an identity outside of his single-minded focus on the franchise and nature as an alien. Marphalump is also rejected and abandon by his date, who finds his expression of fandom "weird". The fact that he is on a "date" with what appears to be an adult woman seems to indicate that he himself is an adult, showing a perception of the adult fan as largely negative.

Admittedly, this character is less a direct representation of a Star Wars fan, but a parody. However, in the context of a Star Wars commercial, we can assume that he is designated the protagonist, someone whose enthusiasm the target audience is meant to share, if not directly emulate.

Textually, Marphalump's dialogue can be interpreted as a very rapid-fire summary of the films, and his use of Pepsi cans as aids creates a visual juxtaposition and fusion that ties the product in with the franchise.

Ancillary Product Analysis: Toys R' Us advertisement (2015)

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

The 2015 commercial for the Toys R Us Star Wars line begins with an adult white male looking down at the camera holding a Darth Vader and Yoda toy in each hand. He is waving the Yoda doll and doing an imitation of the character's voice saying "Yoda. The Force is strong with you." The camera cuts to the man's perspective, looking down at an infant child, which begins to cry. An admonishing female voice at :04 identifies the man as "Steven".

:06 pulls back to reveal the actors in a bedroom with a crib in it. An AT-AT vehicle first seen in *The Empire Strikes Back* sits on a dresser on the left side of the shot. The focus of the shot, however, remains centered on the man as he turns towards a person entering the room, presumably the female that said his name. Steven begins a statement to justify his actions against the admonishment with "I...". At :08 the camera focuses over his right shoulder, keeping the AT-AT toy on-screen, while the man is interrupted by a woman picking up the baby and comforting it with "Come here" and a series of "shush" noises. At :10 the woman leaves with the baby, their backs turned to the man, as he looks

down at the toys in either hand.

“Yoda. The Force is strong with you” as a statement is very simple, identifying a character familiar to audiences, especially Star Wars fans, followed by a phrase very strongly associated with the franchise and its major ideas. On the surface, the text appears purely informational, but within the context of the scene the fact that it is an adult, likely the father, performing for his infant child, indicates a familial bond and an attempt at creating a personal connection make the scene as a whole an instance of utilizing emotion.

This is emphasized when the baby has an emotional reaction in the form of crying, followed by an emotional reaction by the woman, who we may assume is the mother, in the form of the admonishment. The assumption of the woman being in a motherly role is justified by her attempts to comfort the baby at :08. The man’s interrupted attempts at defending himself, on top of casting his gaze downward as the woman and child walk away from him, emphasize separation and defeat. This sequence also emphasizes the ad’s overall tone as a soft-sell over a hard-sell, given that while the Darth Vader and Yoda toys are given prominence within the shots, and the AT-AT is on screen, the focus of the advertisement is on the father character and his story rather than the products.

At :14 we cut to a pair of feet sticking out from under a furry garment of some kind. The leaves, carved pumpkin top, carving tools and seeds in the background would indicate to western audiences, particularly American ones, that this new scene takes place during Halloween. At :15 the camera shifts to a medium shot giving us a side angle shot of two characters: the man from earlier and a young child in costume. Said costume is

clearly recognizable in the Star Wars visual lexicon as being Chewbacca, given the hair and bandolier. For non-fans in the American and western markets, the full Jack-O-Lanterns and skeleton decoration seen in the background confirm this is indeed Halloween. The background music comes in during this scene, a soft, almost restrained melody almost entirely comprised of what sound like string and wind instruments. It is not any kind of music related to the Star Wars franchise. Steven is painting the child's face, telling them "you look amazing". At :16 we cut to a close-up of the child's face over Steven's left shoulder. After a moment, the child looks to their left and calls out "Mom..." in a very uncertain voice.

It's interesting to note that despite being a toy commercial, there are no toys or products immediately identifiable as being on-display here, except maybe the Chewbacca costume itself, which is portrayed as ill-fitting and possibly homemade. This is in stark contrast to the 1999 commercial, where the same company chose to promote the same kind of product line purely through images of the products themselves. Instead, we get a display of approval from the father in the form of a simple, three-word sentence, and a potential rejection or at least extreme uncertainty of that approval from the child. Calling for the other parental figure to intervene is likely a sign that the child is once again rejecting the father's attempts at connecting through the franchise. These elements are continuing the story of these two characters rather than putting the focus on any particular product, reinforcing that this advertisement is going for a soft-sell, emotional and story driven pitch than an informational one.

:18 shows us a close-up of Steven looking up at something, while lightsaber noises are heard in the background, an immediately identifiable sound in the Star Wars

fandom and popular culture in general. Cutting behind Steven at :20 shows that he is watching the lightsaber fight between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader from *The Empire Strikes Back*. A Darth Vader figurine sits to the audience's left of the television, and the decorations above the fireplace indicate that time has shifted forward to the Christmas season. A figure walks into the shot at :21 and the shot at :22 confirms it is a female child, presumably the one from the previous scenes. As she walks towards the camera, her eyes are fixed upwards, indicating she is watching the film as well. Her wide eyes and open mouth seem to indicate a high level of interest. At :23, the father becomes aware she is behind him, turning and asking "hey honey, do you want to watch Star Wars with me?". Though she is out of focus, it is possible to see the girl quickly look away when the father turns around, and at :27 she once again offers reject in response with "I'm busy, dad". The camera returns to the close-up of Steven at :30, this time showing his eyes as downcast and brow furrowed, indicators of sadness or defeat.

The purpose behind the dialogue is largely the same as before, with Steven, the father figure, making some attempt to engage in an activity with the daughter character, and then being rejected. The passage of time from infant to child, as well as the passage of seasons, indicates that this exchange has been ongoing for the duration of that time period, adding to the emotional distress of the father character. As the scene prepares to shift, however, the music begins the first notes of a large slow build that lasts throughout the sequence and indicates that something is being built up towards.

Halfway through the commercial at :30 we see the two characters passing under a cardboard archway adorned with both the Star Wars logo, as well as characters from *The Force Awakens*. From the audience perspective, a new droid and female character are on

the left, in congruent with Storm Troopers on the right. Steven does a 360 degree turn, admiring the displays, before the voice of Darth Vader coming from an action figure on the shelves attracts his attention, saying “release your anger”, albeit quietly and in the background. Given the distinctive voice and the image of the Darth Vader action figure at :35, it is reasonable to assume that the viewer understands who is speaking regardless of whether they understand what is being said. This is the first time that toys are taking the focus as a primary element of an image in the commercial, though it still being presented to audiences as being compared to Steven. Steven and the Darth Vader toy (as well as the display in general) act as the side-by-side A and B elements that together are supposed to invoke a visual portrayal of almost childlike wonder in the mind of the viewer.

Steven realizes that his daughter is no longer in sight at :37 and looks around his immediate surroundings asking “Katie?” twice out loud. Steven performs another complete turn, and this time, instead of his attention being grabbed by a toy, his attention is taken by the daughter, who can assume is the Katie in question, in one of the aisles playing with a kind of lightsaber not previously seen in the prequel or original films. As she is brought into shot, the buildup in the musical accompaniment reaches its resolution, indicating musically that the problem presented by the commercial’s plot has also reached a resolution.

:43 shows a slow zoom-in on Steven’s face while he watches his daughter, and when it cuts back to :45, Katie is standing with the lightsaber held straight in the air. This pose is a reference that fans of the series would recognize as the one Luke Skywalker takes in the original poster for *A New Hope*. At :47, Katie looks forward towards her

father, and at :49 Steven states “I am your father”, in clear reference to Darth Vader’s line to Luke Skywalker during *Empire Strikes Back*, which is pervasive enough in pop culture that even non-fans are likely to recognize it. Katie’s face breaks out into a grin at :53, finally responding positively to her father’s Star Wars fan identity.

At :54 the screen goes black, and the Toys R Us logo appears with the subtitle “Destination: Star Wars” and the URL for where to find the toy line on the internet across the bottom. Interestingly, even this final screen lacks narration, as well as anything actually telling the consumer to even buy the product.

Making the characters a grown male and a female child is a drastic departure from almost all commercials for *The Phantom Menace* promotional material, which attempted almost exclusively to aim itself at male children. The use of characters from different generations carries a great deal of meaning, with subject A being an adult and subject B being a child, side-by-side imagery of them both finding enjoyment in the series tells the audience that this is a series for people of all ages. It also paints Star Wars as a family experience, evoking positive emotions about connecting with those close to you.

Textually, the statements and phrases in the commercial are geared towards encouraging the audience to identify with the emotions of the characters as well as invest them in the ongoing narrative. The ideas being presented by the dialogue are a blend of references to Star Wars at the beginning and end, and attempts by the father to connect with his daughter on a fan level. Overall, while Star Wars is a major element of the promo, what it is about is the struggle for a familial relationship, which the text seeks to clarify and emphasize.

This commercial is also an incredible example of soft-sell advertising. At no point

do the products have sole dominion over the focus, which rests solely on the characters being represented and a story that largely takes place through their emotions towards Star Wars, but especially one another. Apart from the end of the advertisement, which takes place inside a Toys R Us, the actual products being sold are virtually never even seen. This is in stark contrast to the 1999 commercial from the same company, which relied entirely on showcasing the products themselves and information about their characteristics.

Also related to a non-American approach towards understanding fans, this commercial does not portray the adult fan in a harsh or negative light for putting so much of his identity within the franchise. The fact that the ending celebrates being together within the bounds of a fan community flies in the face of typical American idealism when it comes to perceptions of belonging to fandom, making this commercial more appealing to the values of an international community.

Website Breakdowns

Website analysis has a few critical differences with trailer and commercial analysis that ultimately changes the way they should be analyzed. Going scene-by-scene is obviously not an option when it comes to static pages, therefore pages will need to be individually analyzed for text and visual material. Of course, there is far too much material to individually analyze every individual page, nor is it likely that each page would produce unique information worthy of that level of attention. Therefore, only pages that directly link from the home pages (and represent the different sub-sections of the websites) will be analyzed.

Another difference inherent to website analysis is that these sites were set up after the release of their respective films. As such, characters that are recognizable from *The Phantom Menace* and *The Force Awakens* (as in characters that were seen and named within the film) can be seen as deFinned artifacts.

The 1999 archive of www.starwars.com presents certain challenges in that the host sites for many of the pictures being displayed no longer exist. As a consequence, specific details about the pictures cannot be analyzed, but the overall content of the picture can be inferred from the labels. A picture on the homepage titled “Famous Mother” over a summary of an article about the motherly character Shmi Skywalker, can reasonably be assumed to contain the character or the actress, and can therefore be considered not in congruity with the original trilogy. Labels who’s contents cannot be reasonably inferred, such as “Episode 1 Snapshot” will not be discussed, as any analysis would be based purely on conjecture.

The 2015 version of www.starwars.com presents its own unique problems for analysis in that there is a significantly larger amount of content than in its prequel incarnation. As with the Phantom Menace, we will be looking only at pages that link from the main page, but due to the sheer amount of links, we will largely focus on the top row of icons. Also, we will largely focus on the material that appears when the page first loads, as it can be assumed that what is presented to an audience first is what is being considered the most important to the website creators. Links and content below these sections will be summarized due to the amount and repetition of themes.

Website Breakdowns: November 15, 1999

<https://web.archive.org/web/19991114063444/http://www.starwars.com:80/>

The overall color scheme of the November, 1999 www.starwars.com is black and white, with the most prominent feature being the logo and character graphic on the top left. This includes the series title with the tagline “Welcome to the Official Site” over a picture containing the congruent juxtaposition of characters familiar to fans of the series: Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader and droids C3-PO and R2-D2 next to new characters representing *The Phantom Menace*. The logo is most likely recognizable to fans even if they do not speak English, and that recognition is only aided by the presence of the familiar characters.

On the top right of the screen is a corner tab with another new character and the words “Intro to Episode One. This link leads to a sub-page dominated by white text on a black background. This would indicate that the purpose of this page is to cater to users looking solely for information. The language used in the text itself varies from section to section, with the recaps of the original trilogy and the overview of *The Phantom Menace* using colorful language to describe “extraordinary realms”, “terrible secrets” and “a galaxy in crisis” are there to evoke excitement. The text also uses some forms of congruence, boasting the use of familiar actors and characters alongside new faces to the series.

The site does utilize some pictures, though fans of the series would likely only recognize that of the series’ creator George Lucas. The second picture from the top is of an unknown character, but one who appears to be holding a lightsaber, giving the fan audience a clue to this character’s nature as a Jedi. The topmost picture is of a brand-new

character to the series, while the bottom is a glamour shot of an actress, not in character so far as the viewer can tell.

The first link in the main body of the home page goes to a list of characters with accompanying pictures. While this page contains far less raw information than “Intro to Episode One”, and utilizes far more visuals in the form of pictures, the vast majority of the pictures are of characters that neither fans nor casual audiences would recognize. The exceptions to the rule are, in order of recognizability, Princess Leia, a main character in all three movies, Luke Skywalker’s aunt Beru Lars, who appeared only at the start of the first film, and Mon Mothma, a character seen in the first film with a minor role, but who was not named. The picture labeled “Yaddle” would be partially recognizable to fans, being a green creature with large, pointed ears similar to original series mentor Yoda. These pictures together, with Leia in the center, use congruity to an extent by placing the old characters next to new ones.

Each picture links to a biographic page consisting of the same picture in the upper-left corner, with a brief text description of the character. The language on each page is once again entirely informational, giving some biographical information to side characters and recapping the actions of established characters in previous films. It is worth noting that this section of the website is highlighting female characters of the series specifically, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to the female demographic and widen the fan-base.

Below the link to the character section on the main page are four links to The Phantom Menace-specific sections of the site. The first (going from left to right, top to bottom) is shop.starwars.com, which the text boasts contains “action figures and toys,

books and magazines, collectibles, and more, all available for purchase directly over the Internet”. As with much of the previous texts on this site, text here is an informational list, telling the viewer what is available and how they may be obtained.

The link to the online store leads to a front page highlighting specific items from the available toy and book lines. The top of the page highlights the “Mace Windu Preview Figure Special Offer”, describing the character with “a trusted member of the Jedi Council, Mace Windu was one of the best Jedi there ever was...Get yours before the Sith wipe them out!”. While still largely informational, this text does attempt some emotional draw through instilling a sense of urgency. The most textually detailed item on the page is the “Episode I LEGO Mindstorm R2-D2. This section has no pictures, but is an example of a typical western “hard-sell”, which focuses almost exclusively on the specific features of the product.

Sub-pages in this section comprise of bare-bones pictures of the product, product name, price and purchasing option.

Visually, the page has very few pictures, with the most recognizable in the Star Wars fan community being at the top: a scene from Tatooine, and a picture of R2-D2. The other pictures solely draw from imagery in episode one, such as the picture of a long-nosed alien creature or an unfinished droid at the bottom. Once more, the website is combining known elements from the Star Wars universe with the new ones to give fans a sense of congruity.

The next section off of the main page, to the right of the store options, leads to a “news” section that details upcoming events, products and announcements. Interestingly, the article previewed on the front page is not on the link, but focuses on the actress

playing new character Shmi Skywalker and her role in an upcoming television film titled “Mary, Mother of Jesus”. This article is associating this character with Christian influence puts this character in a specific cultural background.

The news page itself is laid out like previous pages, with a black background and the heavy use of white text. There are five stories on the page, the first being for a video game titled “Jedi Power Battles”. The second is for the Star Wars prequel expansion novels, and the third item covers charity screenings of *The Phantom Menace*. The final two stories discuss the anniversary of the first film trailer, and scenes from Fox Studios Australia’s opening ceremonies. These sections are almost entirely text-based, with one or two pictures for each article. The X-Wing, while not appearing in the prequel film, is an example of congruity with the previous trilogy. In the picture on the right it is flying over what looks like a real-world setting, and may invoke some feeling of wonder through the way the fictional ship and real street are interacting. The rest of the pictures are completely unrelated to one another, creating virtually no message beyond putting an image to their respective stories.

A video section is linked below and to the left of news, with the description text calling it “a treat for our fans...”. It is worth remembering that this website predates online video uploaders such as Youtube, and that, at time of release, the *Phantom Menace* trailer was famous for drawing people to theaters just to see it. There is not much information, textual or visual, to be gleaned from this page, as it is largely just links to various promotional videos, most notably the trailer that was discussed earlier in this paper. One interesting thing to note is that the Japanese version of the trailer has also been made available through this site, showing that the website is giving at least some

thought to international viewers.

The fourth and final link on the bottom-right of the four is a “snapshot” section, described in the text as “a unique look at the Star Wars film, from behind-the-scenes images to art production sketches and even final shots from the new movie”. The section itself is just that: screenshots from the movie and behind-the-scenes snapshots with labels.

Below the four links that comprise the main page, there is a link to the official Indiana Jones website, and below that links in various languages labeled as “International Episode One Introductions.” Each one contains blocks of text describing the film, the production and the actors presumably identical to the “Intro to Episode I” link at the top right of the main page. There are links to different sections of the website, but these links all lead to sub-pages written in English, which could be confusing to non-speakers. '

Given its place among the links, it can be interpreted that the digital store front is meant to be a major part of the website’s function for its audience. Both the text in this section and the majority of the website’s remaining links are informational with a heavy focus on text as opposed to any sort of visual medium. The content being described by this text is almost purely informational, with a great deal dedicated to databases on various aspects of the franchise or news on recent events.

The only prominent mention of fans comes in the video section, which describes itself as a “treat”. This description does not imply any kind of interactivity between the product and the viewer. Rather, it points to the videos as something being granted to fans by the product in a very one-way interaction.

Overall, the website seems to be made in a typical hard-sell tone, where

information about the product(s) is given priority over any kind of emotional connection with an audience, or any kind of active participation. The 1999 starwars.com tells a visitor what Star Wars is, what the current status of the franchise is, and where the viewer can spend their money.

Website Breakdown: December 26, 2015

<http://web.archive.org/web/20151226033343/http://www.starwars.com/>

The first and most extreme difference between the two versions of the website is the use of pictures over text. Whereas each link in the 1999 version had at least one or two full sentences of description in relation to the title, accompanied by a tiny picture, the 2015 website is almost entirely dominated by pictures, each accompanied only by a title. This presents the viewer with a significantly reduced amount of information in their first viewing, and may make it seem more accessible to viewers.

The next biggest departure from the old website is the amount of space each link is given to present itself to a potential viewer. The first image of the website, without scrolling down, contains only five links, (not counting the top bar icons) three of which take roughly one-quarter of the overall viewing area. This allows the pictures to be comparatively quite large and better able to speak to the viewer through visual rhetoric.

On the top of the screen is a series of icons that lead to the various sections of the website. Going from left to right they consist of “news and blog” with a blue circular icon that has no meaning that a viewer would be aware of, a “video” section with an orange play button that fans and casual viewers would recognize, an “events” section with the

symbol of the Rebel Alliance (or Resistance) that fans of the series would recognize, and “films”, which is symbolized by small blocks of yellow. These blocks are arranged to create a facsimile of the Star Wars opening text crawl, a convention ingrained deeply enough in general popular culture that it would likely be safe to assume most visitors would recognize the symbolism. To the right of this symbol is the “TV shows” section, symbolized by a green television, “games and apps” symbolized by a tie-fighter icon, and “community”, symbolized by a Storm Trooper helmet. With the exception of TV, the symbols here draw once again specifically from the Star Wars lexicon. Finally, “databank” is symbolized by an unfamiliar purple symbol.

Looking at the pictures in clockwise order, beginning from the top-left, we see a widescreen version of the film's poster with the tagline “in theaters now”. The picture itself contains a number of familiar images such as storm troopers, the Millennium Falcon, Han Solo and Chewbacca, as well as new characters Rey, Finn and Kylo Ren. The picture is a great example of congruity and juxtaposition that evokes previous series posters and elements while inserting new characters alongside them. The phrase “In Theaters Now” is short and purely instructional for the purposes of the viewer.

To the right of this image is a desert scene with the BB-8 droid and a combination of people in and out of costume, telling the viewer through juxtaposition that this image takes place backstage during the film's creation. The text underneath the picture reads “BB-8: From Sketch to Screen- Star Wars: The Force Awakens Featurette”. This can be broken down into two parts: the title of the feature and the second half which categorizes it. These are both informational, but there is some slight poetic element to “From Sketch to Screen” in that it does not directly present information, but indirectly tells the audience

that the feature is about the development of the BB-8 character.

Directly below that image is the smallest picture on the page, and the only one to be smaller than the space taken by its accompanying text. The picture is directly taken from the film and depicts Finn and Rey running, with a Storm Trooper in the back. This is not related to the accompanying text, which titles the link as “8 Star Wars: The Force Awakens Characters We Want to Befriend”. The subtitle beneath this text expounds on this with “Who do we want to hang out with from the latest Star Wars flim? Droids, generals and more!”. This is an interesting text because at first glance it's purely an informational summary of what the content behind the link is about. However, the idea presented is not informational in the same way that the character biographies seen in the 1999 website (which summarized the canonical history of the characters) were presented. This is less of an informative piece and more of an emotionally-based opinion section that expresses the desire to connect with characters in the franchise on a more personal and emotional level. What makes this interesting is that by putting it on the front page, in a position where a person could see it when first going to the website, it is implied that this sort of dedication to the brand is not only tolerated, but celebrated as a major part of the franchise. This flies directly in the face of how Western culture typically views fan investment, especially when it comes to the point of emotional investment that goes into wanting to be “friends” with a character.

Directly below that link is a CG picture of the character Finn in Storm Trooper regalia, minus the helmet. The partial image of the tie-fighter nearby would indicate the specific scene this is emulating to a fan of the film. The text with the image states “Star Wars The Force Awakens Pay Set: Official Trailer: Disney InFinnity 3.0” with the subtitle

“Available now!”. This is clearly a direct advertisement that purely exists to label a particular product for potential buyers without emotional or poetic charge.

To the left of this picture is another image where the juxtaposition of elements tells both fans and casual viewers that they are looking at a behind-the-scenes shot from the making of the film. Specifically, Kylo Ren and the costumed Storm Trooper juxtaposed with the green-screen background and people holding camera and lighting equipment in the foreground. The text beneath this image reads “Star Wars: The Force Awakens “Legacy” Featurette (Comic Con Experience, Brazil)”. Of note is that a video created for use outside of the United States is being given footing on top of the main page, an example of presenting Star Wars as a global experience.

The rest of the front page has a variety of content from the different sections listed at the top, but mostly consists of news stories, video clips and behind-the-scenes footage from various Star Wars projects, including films from the original trilogy and spin-off televisions series. There are a few instances of interactive material as well, in the form of quizzes and mobile apps. Quizzes on the content of the Star Wars universe are arguable purely for the benefit of fans of the series, as they are designed to test one's intricate knowledge of the universe and production, and would provide little enjoyment for casual viewers and non-fans.

The banner at the top of the “News and Blog” section depicts the scene from Empire Strikes Back where Darth Vader reveals he is Luke Skywalker's father. This scene, and its context is instantly recognizable to series fans. The pictures related to the articles on this page are no longer available, and there is not enough contextual information to make an informed assumption of what they were. Looking at the first five,

each of which represents a different topic, we first see an article titled “Happy Holidays” with the subtitle “A landmark Star Wars year ends, and another is about to begin.”, which is labeled as part of the Fans and Community topic. The “Happy Holidays” title could have a number of connotations, as the phrase is typically used in the United States as general wintertime well-wishing that does not privilege or assume a particular celebration. From an international standpoint, however, it does presume that a wintertime, end-of-calendar-year holiday is being recognized, which could target more of a Western audience. The subtitle is meant to celebrate the accomplishments of 2015, but also evoke excitement for the viewer in that more is on the way in 2016.

Below this article is a quiz titled “Which Star Wars Character Should You Invite for the Holidays?”, with the subtitle “Is your celebration fit for a queen, or a Hutt?”, categorized in the Quizzes and Polls topic. Like the quiz on the front page, this content shows an interesting shift in the view of fan involvement and investment in fictional characters, entertaining the notion of bringing those characters to your real-life celebrations. The subtitle is interesting in that that a casual non-fan could likely understand what “fit for a queen” means, and through context understand that a “Hutt” would be the antithesis of that notion, while a fan would know what a Hutt is and how it relates to the topic. In this instance, both casual viewer and non-fan could likely understand the meaning.

The next article is titled “Star Wars: The Best of 2015” and subtitled “Looking back on a year that will be long remembered.”, which is relatively self-explanatory. The fourth article is the “Characters we want to befriend” quiz from the front page, but the fifth article is noteworthy in that it is specifically geared towards celebrating a non-US

and non-Western Star Wars event. This article is titled “Luhan Becomes a Jedi in China’s Star Wars: The Force Awakens Promo”, with the subtitle “The popular singer stars in a new short- along with some special guests!”. This article is categorized specifically as a “The Force Awakens” piece. As a United States citizen, this article presents an interesting opportunity to see an article on a topic that American fans are completely unfamiliar with, and therefore all observations are legitimately from the perspective of an outsider.

Luhan is an unfamiliar name, but sufficient information and context is provided to understand that this is a musical celebrity. Stating that Luhan will be accompanied by some “special guests!” is meant to evoke curiosity and excitement in the viewer, and those that are unfamiliar with Chinese popular culture can infer that these are also likely to be well-known national celebrities. As an outsider, the fact that this culture’s involvement in the franchise is presenting the Star Wars brand as a global entity, perhaps trying to capitalize on the international, cosmopolitan appeal described by Alden (1999) in Global Positioning Theory.

The banner headlining the “video” section of the site shows several characters from *A New Hope* in costume on the left, with film crews and camera equipment the right. The video thumbnails presented on this page are largely the same as the ones shown on the front page, with the exception of actor interviews on the right-hand side. The first of these shows the actor portraying Poe with the title “Hard Hitting Questions for the Star Wars: The Force Awakens Cast and Creators”. The phrase “hard hitting” tells the viewer that these are going to be deep, serious, interesting and potentially heavy questions. The video below, conversely, has the actress playing Rey as its thumbnail image with the title “starwars.com Gives Lollipops To the Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Cast”. This evokes anticipation of a much lighter, potentially humorous video despite not really saying what the near two-minute video is going to contain.

Below these feature videos are a series of small thumbnails that depict a wide variety of images. Familiar characters and scenes appear, such as Han Solo, BB-8 and Storm Troopers, but these are congruent with images from the spin-off shows, of cast and crew and of fans in costume. This, along with the hard hitting and light-hearted pieces above, show that there is a great deal of variety in the videos available.

A convention or event stage headlines the “events” page, with something similar to R2-D2 facing a crowd of fans. The juxtaposition of the droid on the stage and the people packed together, cheering or holding cameras in the front visually evokes the wild popularity of Star Wars and the enthusiasm of its fans. The page focuses on three events: the first titled “Rebel, Jedi, Princess, Queen: Star Wars and The Power of the Costume”. The image associated with this event is C3-PO, which by itself does not visually indicate the purpose of the show, but when put next to the title is clearly meant to depict an example of a complex costume.

The event promotion comes with a short description:

“From the mind of creator George Lucas, to the concept artists who put these ideas to paper, to the artisans and costume designers who produced these fantastical, iconic wardrobes, Star Wars and the Power of Costume examines the complex process of costume making.” (2015).

This text is meant to impress upon the viewer the complex process that goes into creating these costumes, evoking feelings of awe and driving them to see the exhibit. The title “Power of the Costume” evokes ideas of strength and impressive qualities. It is also

worth noting that this is the only event on the page taking place in the United States.

The next event is labeled “Star Wars: Identities: The Exhibition in Vienna”. The picture accompanying this title appears at first glance to be of Darth Vader, but upon closer inspection is revealed to be several ships from the Star Wars universe compiled in a way that resembles the character. The description of the event reads:

“For thirty-five years, audiences around the world have followed the adventures of Luke and Anakin Skywalker, the Jedi heroes of a galaxy far, far away. And now, a new exciting exhibition comes to our own galaxy with Star Wars Identities, a redefined modern exhibition experience in which we will rediscover the unforgettable characters of Star Wars in a whole new way. Exhibit runs through April 16, 2016.” (2015).

This description makes heavy use of emotionally-charged words, describing the characters of Star Wars as “heroes” and “unforgettable”, and describing the event itself as “exciting”. It also points out the global aspect of the series' popularity by describing how its enjoyed by “fans around the world”. This global aspect is emphasized contextually, as the exhibit is meant to appear outside of the United States.

The final event is called “Star Wars Celebration Europe 2016”, which is a fairly self-explanatory title. The picture largely consists of that title, with a central graphic perhaps meant to resemble the Rebel Alliance logo in some way, making it recognizable to Star Wars fans. This event has the shortest description of the three with “Star Wars Celebration is headed back to London for the first time since 2007. Tickets on sale now!” (2015). This is obviously supposed to evoke excitement by emphasizing how long London Star Wars fans have waited for the event to return to their area.

Obviously the majority of Star Wars fans are not going to travel intercontinental for a fan-event, so we have evidence that this website is meant to appeal internationally without a great deal of regional change. It also further emphasizes the nature of Star Wars as a global phenomenon.

The “films” section of the site largely exists to categorize the content of the website into which film the piece covers. The banner portrays an upper-atmosphere shot of a planet with a moon in the background, recognizable to fans as the opening scene of the first film. Below that and the website section icons is a simple bar labeled the “Star Wars Film Selector” with Roman numerals to go directly to each film. The top section of the site contains images of Rey and Finn from *The Force Awakens* accompanying links to the trailer, an image gallery and ticket information. Below this section are sections of the posters of each film, each accompanied by their title and a short description. The purpose of this section of the website is largely to act as a directory for the viewer, and a tool for organizing the contents in a particular way.

The section labeled “TV Shows” is headed with a picture of tie-fighters over a planet. The page itself is divided into sections on each show, *Star Wars: Rebels* and *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. Each section here consists of a picture accompanied by a label with little description as to the section’s contents. When there is description, the words often fade beyond the boundaries of the link, meaning the viewer needs to follow said link to get the entire message.

The characters seen in the images related to *Rebels* would presumably be recognizable to fans of the shows, but are foreign to fans of just the film series or casual viewers. The character on the largest image is holding a blue lightsaber, which would tell

the fans that he is a good-aligned force user.

The images the *Clone Wars* section are more familiar, with pictures of characters from the original and prequel series, as well as the specific scene at the end of *Return of the Jedi* where the deceased Jedi appear as ghosts. This image comes with the title “The Lost Missions Q&A: Force Ghosts”.

What appears to be a hand-drawn image dominates this section, with a black-and-white section on the left and a colored section on the right, implying the section is about the process of creating the art. This section is titled *The Clone Wars Legacy* which does not imply much to the viewer.

The “Games and Apps” section of the site is headed with an image from a chase scene in *Return of the Jedi*, and its top content features videos about video game tie-in material being produced. The thumbnails for these trailers contain images of familiar characters and technology from the films, rendered as they would be in the video games. Like the “TV Shows” section, the accompanying text consists largely of labels with little more information.

The section below this contains links to interactive material on the website itself, including a soundboard, which features a picture of destruction of Alderaan in *A New Hope*, an image fans would recognize, and way for viewers to create their own version of the iconic opening crawl discussed previously. The fact that these are not placed at the top of the section indicates recognition that interactivity is not likely the highest priority for someone visiting the site. The bottom two sections of the page contain links to mobile and online games not hosted on the website.

One of the more interesting differences between the 2015 website and its 1999

counterpart is the use of a “Community” section. The banner of this page is a large group of Star Wars fans in costume, which appears to be recognizing the size and passion of the fan community. Under the page icons is a piece titled “Force for Change” which claims to “support the immense passion and goodwill of our fans and promote change through inspiration, stories and meaningful partnerships.” (2015). Promoting that fan support is not just appreciated, but can be used for the betterment of the world at large through the power of a community is a vast departure from an attitude that holds that only children isolated losers are fans of a series like Star Wars.

The rest of this section of the page deals with fan art, fan projects and event participation. This represents recognition and celebration of fans that are invested in the series beyond simply buying the films, but who dedicate other parts of their life to their enjoyment of the franchise. Of particular note is the picture of a group of San Francisco Giants fans wearing team regalia as well as Storm Trooper and Darth Vader helmets customized to support their teams.

This kind of fandom combination, juxtaposing a love of sports (a more typically acceptable kind of fandom) with a science fiction fandom (which is more likely to be looked down on) gives the science fiction fandom more credibility as a group of socially acceptable adults.

Below this is a series of videos labeled the “2015 Star Wars Fan Film Award Winners”. Not only does this section showcase intensive work by the fan community, but labeling this recognition as an official award implies that the team behind the website is trying to actively interact with the community, as opposed to just showing off pieces of fan work.

The last, and largest, section of this page is devoted to recognizing and listing individual Star Wars fan communities, ranging from fan organizations, to collectors to fan-content producers. There are so many listed that the standard page length is unable to contain them, necessitating a “show more” feature at the bottom of the page. The purpose of this page is not to simulate interaction through a digital medium directly, but another means of distributing information, this time regarding where fans can find venues for online interactions.

Finally, the “databank” section of the website is headed by a picture of Obi-Wan Kenobi in the Jedi archives from *Attack of the Clones*. This is a fairly straightforward information base, with links consisting of pictures of the relevant character or place and their name. Some of the highlighted articles contain previews of their contents, but similar to fig. 4, these descriptions are not complete without going to the specific page.

There are some noteworthy differences and similarities when looking at the purposes and techniques utilized by the 1999 and 2015 websites. One major aspect they share is a recognition that visitors are motivated by a need for information. Even when the 2015 website is promoting interactivity, it typically does not host said features on their site, but directs the viewer to a website that can fulfill that need. Likewise, the 1999 version of the site relies heavily on giving the viewer information on the films, production and actors. Both also contain very similar databases for franchise lore.

Where the two sites differ is in secondary purposes and their interpretation of how fans may want to use online spaces to interact. The 1999 version of the website seems to try and fulfill a secondary purpose of being a merchandise storefront, with links to purchase a wide variety of items related to the franchise. The 2015 version of the website,

meanwhile, has no direct links to purchasing options, but has a great deal of information regarding events, fan material and other online communities, which the 1999 version lacks.

Both websites feature international material, but go about it in different ways. The 1999 website largely recognizes international viewers with translated introductions. The 2015 www.starwars.com, meanwhile, integrates international news and events related to the product into the English version, treating the franchise as not being constrained to the visitor's home country.

Analysis

Advertising Methods

Among trailers and commercials, one major difference between the promotional campaigns of *The Phantom Menace* and *The Force Awakens* is their reliance on the “hard-sell” versus the “soft sell” (Mueller, 2008). In the case of the former, the trailer relies largely on informing the audience about plot points and character traits, telling us that the child, named Anakin, is the subject of a “prophecy of the one who will bring balance to the force”, and that “the Force is unusually strong with him”. Other lines detail aspects of the plot, while several shots are used to give the audience a glimpse of new characters that will be appearing in the story. With the exception of Anakin's interactions with his mother, there is very little time spent developing an emotional investment in those characters.

In the trailer for *The Force Awakens*, however, there is no mention of names, and the amount of information given to the audience is largely comprised of emotional appeals and very basic phrases that do not contain a great deal of information themselves,

such as “I have nothing to fight for”. The vast majority of the information presented in this trailer is visual, utilizing the combination, juxtaposition and congruence of images to create concepts and ideas in a way unlikely to be confusing. They are “easily digestible” and contain “identifiable narratives” as described by Alden (1999). The self-contained narrative of the rogue Storm Trooper crashing on a desert planet is a prime example of how the trailer utilizes visual rhetoric and image advertising to convey its ideas in a way that bypasses cultural confusion. By relying on showing familiar imagery, such as the Millennium Falcon and Vader's helmet, as well as text based in fan knowledge such as “the Dark Side...the Jedi...”, the trailers get away from assuming audience ignorance that would necessitate detailed explanation.

The advertising for ancillary products is similar in its departure from the hard-sell. In the 1999 commercial for the Star Wars toy line at Toys R Us, the focus of the promotion is on the products themselves, with only the briefest glimpse of a human being. Narration tells us about the figurines, where are there, and that they are available for purchase. The 2015 commercial for the same franchise, at the same retailer, meanwhile, does not even focus on the products themselves, instead looking at the interaction between characters: an enthusiastic father and an uncertain child. Through use of the father's antics combined with the reactions of the daughter, the audience is presented with a situation that is more based on emotion than any product (in fact, the products are almost never the focal point of the piece). Visual cues such as holiday decorations and the aging of the child tell the audience that this is a narrative taking place over time, and the overall message of the piece is less about buying the toys, but creating an emotional connection between people wherein the toys are involved.

The two versions of the website also contain differences which point to changes in our ideas of global marketing. The 1999 version of the website does use some language that indicates emotion, describing elements as “extraordinary” and telling viewers to “get your (products) before the Sith wipe them out!” to instill urgency. However, the bulk of the 1999 website is purely informational with little emotional connection to the information being presented, especially in terms of the merchandise it attempts to sell, such as referring to a toy weapons as simply a “Tatooine blaster”. While the majority of the 2015 website is also dedicated to information, there are more attempts at forging emotional connections with the material, such as with the lighter features interviewing cast members and interactive sections that ask viewers to think of characters as friends or close relations.

There are some differences in the ways that these two websites showcase their information. The 1999 version of the website presents information on the series in a very dictionary-like manner, with directories that have characters, vehicles, locations and other categories presented in alphabetical order. This means navigating the information present is akin to navigating a very basic online directory. The 2015 version of the website presents the information in a similar way, with categories divided almost identically, and the subjects within those categories listed in alphabetical order. The 2015 version of the website does utilize pictures to a much greater degree, both in the directory and in the individual articles, while the 1999 version relies much more heavily on presenting its information through text. The 2015 versions of the databanks also include full articles, but to reach them, a viewer must scroll past relevant video and interactive segments, perhaps indicating that these are being assigned a greater value than the text.

The 2015 version of www.starwars.com also differs from its 1999 incarnation through its heavier use of picture and image content. While the 1999 website was dominated by text, with a few small pictures to accompany the words, the 2015 website is largely dominated by picture content with brief titles and small description sections, if any. The more recent version of the website also utilizes a great deal more video “features” in place of traditional text articles, although this could well be a difference in technology rather than a promotional choice. In any case, the more modern version of the website puts more of an emphasis on fan interactions through various apps, quizzes and other features, as well as placing a higher value on visual messages than textual. This is another move towards acknowledging the established visual lexicon and a more global style of advertising, relying on the website visitor’s prior knowledge and recognition of elements rather than needing to have everything explained.

GCCP also plays a much larger role in www.starwars.com than other promotional material in that it recognizes the global Star Wars community to a much greater degree. The 1999 had traces of this in its design, with multi-language versions of the site’s introduction, but one of the standout choices in the 2015 version in terms of Global positioning is its integration of non-American and non-western events in the main part of the page, such as Star Wars events happening in Europe and reporting on how international celebrities are connected to the franchise. By putting international news and events on the same page as American ones, and embedding international Star Wars stories among the American or non-region-specific pieces, the website presents its product as part of a global culture, appealing to the desire many people have for being part of that global community.

Ultimately, going by definitions of soft-sell set by Biswas, Olsen, Carlet, (1992) Mueller and Okazaki (2008) and by the promotional idea of image advertising described by Mooij (2014) and Harris (1996), one of the major ways that more modern Star Wars promotional material seeks to work at an international, intercultural level is through adopting a more global stance on presenting their product and reducing confusion through more emotional and image-based strategies. Another technique present in the choice of images being used, however, is the decision to tap into visual lexicon of the Star Wars fanbase and popular culture at large to help identify themes, characters and ideas. One striking example of this is in the “films” section of the modern website, which is denoted by what are, objectively-speaking, just an assortment of yellow rectangles of various sizes, but with knowledge of pop culture can be understood as the iconic opening text crawl of a Star Wars film. In the commercials for paraphernalia, no one has to explain how the costume Steven is making for his daughter is meant to be Chewbacca, because fans already recognize the distinctive features of the Wookiee.

The choice to utilize popular culture as a visual lexicon is perhaps seen to the greatest degree in the trailers. *The Phantom Menace* is not entirely devoid of this strategy. Some characters wield iconic weapons, such as lightsabers, and wear costumes recognizably similar to those of the original trilogy, such as Obi-Wan Kenobi's robes. These are small examples of utilizing the visual technique of connection through fusion, where associating objects create meaning (Phillips, 2004). There are even a few instances of established characters being used alongside new ones, such as brief glimpses of R2-D2 and the use of Yoda, creating congruence with the franchise as a whole. Even certain scenes, such as Tatooine, evoke the memory of places visited in the original films.

However, the vast majority of the trailer utilizes all-new characters and set pieces that have little to no basis in what was seen before, presenting itself almost entirely as a “new” experience. Images of what fans now know as Naboo, and characters like Queen Amidala are neither from the original trilogy, nor do they resemble anything from them.

The 2015 trailer for *The Force Awakens*, by contrast, makes heavy use of the fandom and popular culture visual lexicon to ensure the audience understands the ideas and characters presented with as little confusion as possible. One of the most obvious instances of association via fusion comes during the introduction of Kylo Ren aboard his ship. The imagery used in this shots associates this character with costume artifacts with his black cloak, the color red, and finally in a combination of association and congruence, Darth Vader's helmet. These associations tap into the visual lexicon of the Star Wars fan by utilizing outfits and color schemes associated with villains, as well as connecting this scene and character with an artifact from previous films with the helmet. Similar techniques are used by showing characters with lightsabers, or in recognizable uniforms, such as a new rebel character in a familiar orange and white pilot's uniform.

Through its use of congruity, the trailer also shows a great deal of comparison and contrast. By placing original trilogy heroes and villains next to new ones, it draws parallels between them that the audience interprets as similarity, but can also serve to highlight the differences between the old and new cast. A character may have association with the Rebel Alliance through his uniform and X-Wing, establishing congruence and similarity, but the character is still a new character, so a degree of contrast is inevitable. Showing new characters on the Millennium Falcon along with Han Solo and Chewbacca tells the audience that those characters are protagonists, but younger, different

protagonists. The meaning the audience is meant to take away is that while these characters are in familiar positions, connected to the old characters, they are still new.

Text and visuals work together in a number of instances to juxtapose images and establish congruity between them, such as when Han Solo states “the dark side” and the “the Jedi”, which effectively labels the images on-screen at the time with language drawn from the Star Wars lexicon. In this particular instance, as well as the shot at the one-minute mark, having the two side by side uses juxtaposition to represent conflict. The 1999 trailer does this as well, though with more expository dialogue that relates Anakin to “the prophecy”, something that had never been mentioned in the Star Wars canon previously.

Ancillary product advertising also uses the established visual lexicon to strengthen its use of imagery and minimize viewer confusion. The 1999 Toys R' Us commercial uses congruence more often than the trailer, utilizing toy versions of original trilogy characters such as Yoda and the Emperor, often in between shots of new material. This kind of promotions utilizes visual rhetoric in conjunction with the community lexicon in much the same way as the trailers. The only human image being that of a male child, as well as almost exclusively male figurines, may have the unintentional effect of drawing meaning through absence by the ages and genders excluded.

The 2015 Toys R' Us commercial also uses visual rhetoric, but in a different way. Instead of drawing upon an established fan lexicon, it draws on general ideas of family relationships and connections. Images of the mother taking the crying child from the dejected father's presence evoke sadness and longing, while the image of the child finding enjoyment in the subject of the father's passion associated with the joyous

reaction of the father come together to make a generally positive meaning. Associated both a child and an adult with the brand, and encouraging the audience to empathize with them, also creates meaning in the inclusiveness of who can enjoy the product.

Ultimately, the difference between the advertising campaigns for the prequel and sequel trilogies is based in the hard sell versus the soft sell, use of congruence with the established franchise, and use of a basic visual lexicon that relies on established fan and pop culture icons as well as basic human emotions. Advertisements for *The Force Awakens* are narratives instead of information deposits that attempt to invest the viewer emotionally, instead of highlighting specific features or selling points. Talk of prophecies and descriptions of character traits and plot points are replaced with set pieces that convey the same message through visuals, while the words and texts that are present either harkens back to the ideas established in episodes four through six or talks about the emotional situation of the characters. By making these choices, the producers have created simplified advertising that limits the confusion for a global audience.

Perception of Fans

Treatment of fans is another aspect of the promotional campaign that has radically shifted between 1999 and 2015, beyond leveraging the existing fan lexicon as a visual and textual shorthand. The 1999 trailer reflects the idea of fandom as being immature and childish largely through its tone at various points. CG characters engaging in slapstick antics, such as Jar Jar receiving a comedic shock, and a child protagonist being the focal point of the film reflect an interpretation of the franchise's audience as very young. This is in contrast to the 2015 trailer, which utilizes a much darker, heavier atmosphere, more

serious tone and notable lack of comic relief, implying that its being taken much more seriously for a more mature audience.

Where the difference in perception of the fandom truly shines through, however, is in the ancillary product commercials, most notably the difference between fan depictions in the 1999 Pepsi ad and the modern Toys R' Us ad, and their contrasting depiction of the adult fanbase through the characters of Marphalump and Steven respectively. How these two characters are depicted and how their behavior is treated during these ads clearly demonstrate how those identifying as fans are conceptualized by promotional teams.

It is important to note that Steven and Marphalump are both “fans” of the Star Wars franchise as described by the literature. Both “seek out repeated consumption or maintaining mediated relationships with characters in the series” (Tsay-Vogel, 2015), and both go beyond the simple, uninvolved consumption of the medium that separates the fan from the general consumer (Groene, 2015). Their differences, therefore, are not the difference between fan and consumer, but differences in personality and behaviors.

The 1999 commercial personifies fans through a bizarre, obsessive creature whose life has been totally consumed by Star Wars. Marphalump surrounds himself with Star Wars, has no identity outside of Star Wars, and is oblivious to the negative reactions of others around him, in this instance the date he's brought home. While his age is not stated, it can be inferred that he is supposed to be an adult, given that the commercial analyzed states he is on a “date” with an adult woman. His choice to spend this time reenacting various scenes from the original trilogy (paraphrased in a hyperactive manner) using faces printed on soda cans, is labeled weird by his companion, who immediately

leaves. This immaturity, social ineptitude, and the fact that another commercial in the series depicts Marphalump living in his parents' basement, put this interpretation of a Star Wars fan as in line with the stereotypical negative depiction of a fan described by Yano (1997) and Jenkins (2013).

This is in sharp contrast to the father character, "Steven" from the 2015 commercial, who is still portrayed as being a fan, but not in a demeaning way. All of Steven's actions that we see revolve around Star Wars, but having a wife and child allows the audience to infer that he does lead a healthy adult life outside of the series. Also similar to Marphalump, his interest in Star Wars causes him to face rejection, in this case through his daughter. Steven, however, is upset by his rejection, expressing the desire to connect with his family, unlike Marphalump who's interest renders him socially oblivious, ignoring his rejection to continue his obsession. Steven's promo ends with him ultimately getting the acceptance of his daughter, and the two connecting through the Star Wars fandom. This dedication goes from being a point of rejection to a point of celebration more in line with how Yano (1997) describes the non-western view of fandom and is a shift to a more global view of fan conceptualization in terms of the promotional strategy.

The Star Wars website also has a number of instances where changes were implemented to the presentation to recognize and interact with the fan community and celebrate their investment. Perhaps to avoid the fan backlash described by Shefrin in his 2004 article, the creative team behind the 2015 website has an entire section devoted to their fan community and fan projects. This includes showing fan art, displaying pictures of those in costumes, and even acting as a kind of directory to the various fan community

sites that exist across digital space. This goes beyond providing information to consumers, but celebrates what Groene (2015) described as the intellectual and emotional investment that belongs to fans of a product. What makes this fan interaction rather than simply taking and displaying fan work is sections such as the “Fan Film Awards”, where the promotional team behind the website have play an active role in the fan community's creative enterprises.

Another interesting way the 2015 website accepts and celebrates fan behaviors that are typically not considered admirable is the interactive material that encourages fans to think about characters as more than just fictional people. The quizzes that tell people which character they should be friends with, or which ones they would bring to social gatherings is exactly the sort of behavior that Tsay-Vogel describes when she discusses “maintaining mediated relationships with characters in a series”. Like the treatment of Steven versus Marphalump, this tactic is a celebration and encouragement of community behavior, rather than a parody or rejection.

The difference between the how the fan community is portrayed between Star Wars films, as evidenced by the material, is a recognition of maturity and acceptance (or at least tolerance for a profit) of fan groups as legitimate communities. In taking a more active role in praising and interacting with these communities, the Star Wars brand shifted its focus from being “for kids” to being “for families and communities across generations”. In terms of global appeal, the viewpoint that fan communities are to be tolerated and celebrated is much more in line with traditional non-American views of fans and could go a long way in securing more global acceptance.

Use of Online Space

The internet was much more of an unknown factor in 1999, with few established conventions and not enough information to really understand how browsing habits operated. One of the aspects of using an online space that drastically changed between the start of the prequel and sequel trilogies was the use of space to make information more “easily digestible” (Human, 2004). The 1999 website had a greater emphasis on relying on text-based description of its content to entice viewers into following links, presenting information in a similar way to traditional print articles, while the 2015 website makes much heavier use of large, easily recognizable pictures to accomplish much of the same task. Everything from the specific videos and articles to overall sections of the website are condensed into icons for ease of use, such as the various basic icons categorizing content at the top of the page.

As stated above, the 2015 website also has a great deal more content geared specifically for the fan community, which Guschwan describes in his 2016 article as an important aspect of a digital space. Drawings, videos and other participatory fan action is displayed and recognized in a way that fans would find appealing, unlike the 1999 website that does not feature any such sections. Again, this recognizes the community and encourages interaction with the franchise on the online space.

The 2015 website also takes greater strides to position itself as a global brand. While the 1999 version of www.starwars.com includes some translated material and offers the visitor the option to download foreign versions of *The Phantom Menace's* trailer, the 2015 version of the website embeds international news, events and communities in the main page. This positions Star Wars as a phenomenon that is

experienced on a global level, and makes fans feel like they are part of something greater than themselves through participation.

It is interesting to note that despite its greater emphasis on pictures and ease of digestibility, the primary function of both the 1999 and 2015 websites are to convey information about Star Wars films, characters, and actors. Even when highlighting options to interact with the fan community through group spaces, the 2015 version of the website still does not directly host said communities, but rather acts in a way that points the viewer to the sites they may be interested in. Said community's have their own online space where they communicate with one another. Interaction with the team behind the franchise seems to be delegated to social media, such as the Star Wars and Star Wars Movies Facebook pages and the Twitter accounts of various cast and crew members. However, the inclusion of fan recognition, embedding of international content and use of interactive features to encourage viewers to think of the material from a fan perspective rather than a mere consumer perspective shows a shift toward many of ideas and practices seen in other promotional material.

Conclusions

The 1999 promotional material of Star Wars showed a great deal of biases that are associated with purely Western American advertising. It emphasized specific features and information, telling the audience who certain characters were and how they fit into the franchise in an attempt to hard-sell the product with very limited use of specific imagery, ideas or artifacts from the previous series. Anakin Skywalker is not only named, but we are told that he is essential to “the prophecy of the one who will bring balance to the

force”. Promotional teams conceptualized their fans as being young, in this case meaning children or immature adults, and that notion became apparent in how fans were portrayed in promoting products, such as in the general behavior of the character Marphalump. Their enjoyment of a franchise as part of their identity was viewed as abnormal and something to be made fun of. Online spaces were viewed as a means of giving raw information and selling toys, with the 1999 version of the website dedicated almost entirely to either databases or methods of making purchases.

2015's promotional campaign saw a radical departure from most of, if not all these practices. Narratives drove advertising, and emotional investment was emphasized as a goal. Instead of giving the audience bullet points about the story's narrative, the trailer opted for simpler phrases driven by either emotion, such as “I have nothing left to fight for” or that relied on popular culture's familiarity with the franchise, such as “it's true. The Jedi, the Sith, all of it”, allowing for a promotion with a severely reduced risk of confusing audiences outside of the United States and English-speaking countries. The idea these teams had about what a “fan” of the series was saw a dramatic shift, away from a childish, socially inept loser as seen with the character Marphalump, and more to a normal, function adult like Steven that happened to find joy and connect with others through their product. Those fans and their communities are celebrated, even if for the purpose of profiting from them, and online spaces integrate them and the international impact of the franchise with their data on characters and places.

In order to market Star Wars to a broader, more international audience, the promotional team had to work to get away from western biases in advertising based on features and their view of fan culture as something for children and immature adults.

They had to simplify messages for international appeal by utilizing visual rhetoric, emotional draws, and recognition of elements in the Star Wars universe already familiar in popular culture. Promoters had to recognize their established fan community as a valuable, functional part of their brand and work to integrate and accept their role and passions into promotional efforts.

This research indicates a number of things that promotional teams ought to consider when marketing a product with similar goals to that of Star Wars, ‘similar goals’ in this instance meaning additions to a globally recognized property looking for a maximum intercultural viewing audience. Pure new information, textual or visual, is perhaps not the most effective means of hooking a modern, global audience. The slew of new characters in *The Phantom Menace* trailer, seen in single-second shots, along with expository messages, such as “you speak of the prophecy of the one who will bring balance to the force...” do not seem to have been as effective as the emotion-driven text in *The Force Awakens* trailer, with phrases such as “I have nothing to fight for” and “I am no one” coupled with a heavier use of established, already recognizable characters and elements that do not require explanation due to a previously understood visual lexicon, such as R2-D2 and Han Solo. Where new elements must be introduced, Star Wars seems to highlight the advantages of using congruence to define those elements for audiences using visual shorthand via congruence with material that many audiences do not need explained to understand, such as portraying the villain alongside Darth Vader’s helmet, or putting a new rebel character in an X-Wing.

This heavy emphasis on relating the old with the new creates an aesthetic that is largely a visual showcase of the franchise’s unique properties. An unknown spaceship and

unknown aliens in *The Phantom Menace* may make audiences think of an interplanetary story, but X-Wings and Tie-Fighters dogfighting in *The Force Awakens* clearly says Star Wars. In these ways, the trailer for *The Force Awakens* not only emphasizes the franchise's unique identity, but revels in it, not just in characters and items, but in its use of scenery and color pallets, such as Kylo Ren's ship. Advertisers do not have to promote their product as a purely new thing, but can find a great deal of profit in tying its various aspects to its own established history.

Utilizing an established visual lexicon and previously understood ideas to create rhetorical short-cuts may not be possible for franchises that have not experienced the same worldwide success as the Star Wars franchise, but there are still ways that other products, films especially, can use this information to their advantage. Views on relationships and social expectations may vary from culture to culture, but very basic ideas, such as feeling like one is danger, as seen during chase or torture sequences, or experiencing sadness, like Steven's sadness at his failure to connect with his daughter, can be expressed through action scenes and emotion-based action and text in a way that minimizes cross-cultural confusion. Star Wars has an advantage in that more complex ideas can still be understood due to being previously established within popular culture, but those basic ideas and emotions are still useful for promoting to a variety of cultures.

Teams working to promote future material should also consider how they are approaching their previously established fan communities, and how they can leverage that sense of community to encourage passion for their product. This is seen in both the ancillary product advertising and the use of the online space between the two trilogies. Where the commercials for *The Phantom Menace* products are either entirely product-

driven, such as in the 1999 Toys R' Us Commercial, or portray a negative representation of fan enthusiasm, *The Force Awakens* shows fandom not only as something to embrace, but something to pass on to children. Steven's continual efforts to get his daughter to enjoy Star Wars with him is not portrayed as bizarre or irritating, but sympathetic, and the tone of the ending implies that the audience is supposed to react positively to his success. This message not only takes a more approving tone regarding fandom, but from a business standpoint encourages current fans of the series to create new customers in the form of their own children, cynical though that stance may seem. In the online space, the shift from *The Phantom Menace*-era website's information dump and online store to *The Force Awakens* highlighting and embracing the fan community does not strictly pass on a generational message, but still marks fandom and fan culture as aspects of the brand to be celebrated and encouraged rather than lampooned. Other brands can use the lesson from Star Wars success in this manner by adopting a similar stance to their fan-communities, celebrating them and encouraging greater passion for their products.

Limitations

Star Wars as a franchise obviously holds several advantages that other, less iconic franchises may not enjoy. Not every product will have characters, artifacts or ideas as deeply embedded in popular culture around the world, and so relying on reputation may not be as simple of an option. Few organizations can match the overall spending power and cultural influence held by Disney, and so their own promotional campaigns would likely have to be more limited in scope. Third, this research applies to the entertainment industry, specifically filmmakers, and those promoting products that are not centered on

storytelling may not be able to utilize emotional attachment in the same ways as the Star Wars franchise.

However, by utilizing simpler, easier to understand promotional techniques in the soft-sell, using emotional draws where possible and understanding what can be explained visually, and respecting fan communities as valuable aspects of the brand, many companies seeking to grow a worldwide audience could imitate what helped to make *The Force Awakens* the most profitable film in a massive, money generating machine.

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