

STAR WARS OLD FILMS FOR NEW

Star Wars is one of the largest franchises created within the film industry, from its iconic characters and setting, to the extreme merchandising and synergy demonstrated throughout the films. The original Star Wars film released in the summer of 1977, and was one of the first summer blockbusters in film along with Steven Spielburgs, Jaws. After the unsuccessful revival of the franchise in 1999-2005, 10 years later the franchise was back with Star Wars: The Force Awakens. In this article, I'll be discussing the ways that the Star Wars franchise has changed over the years through its marketing, synergy, vertical integration trends and Stars.

Synergy and Merchandise

Synergy is when different types of media products are linked together through their narrative, story or the characters involved, these products can be through Music soundtracks or records, toys and merchandise and even video games. The synergy of different media products throughout the Star Wars franchise has changed dramatically over the years, through the marketing strategies used for the films on different platforms, to the merchandise which can be bought surrounding the iconic franchise. The following changes to the franchise that I will discuss is largely due to the increased scale of the film franchise, improvements to technology, inflation, the industry as a whole and the horizontal integration involved in the franchise. However, the most important is the fact that the 34.6-billion-dollar brand, Disney bought the Star Wars brand along with its production company Lucasfilm from George Lucas, the founder of Lucasfilm for 4.05bn dollars. This multibillion dollar company, Disney has therefore not only produced an all new series of feature films for the franchise, but also extreme merchandising and marketing of the franchise through its horizontal integration and synergy.



Disney is buying Lucasfilm, the company behind the Star Wars films, from its chairman and founder George Lucas for \$4.05bn (£2.5bn).



George Lucas signs away his Star Wars empire to Disney's Robert Iger

The most considerable of changes between the original trilogy of the film and the new franchise is through the merchandising and the synergy involved. In 1977, there was little merchandise available to fans of the film due to the fact that no-one could have anticipated the critical success of the franchise. Just after the films launch however, the franchise took a dramatic turn in merchandising by a range of different action figurines, scale models, posters and clothing. These different elements of merchandising back in the 70's were also very undeveloped compared to now due to the scale of the industry and the money that is to be made compared to back then.

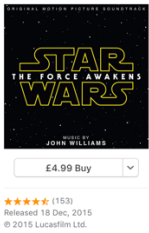


Back in 1977, this type of merchandise was very much divergent and was only purchased by the 'hardcore' fans at that time, however with the launch of the new film, ownership of these types of merchandise has become more mainstream in the public, for example big clothing brands such as Asos and Vans have featured the Star Wars brand on its products etc. Furthermore, the marketing had been extremely radicalised in the new franchise, for example the film itself became a form of phenomena and became one of the biggest film releases of all time through creating social trends and marketing strategies such as through social media sites like YouTube and Twitter or through prime time television, whereby the first looks at the films such as trailer premieres, or chat shows where the stars would promote the film to worldwide to audiences. This also shows how the producers of the franchise have taken advantage of new technologies in order to market the films and create social trends since the original films.



The Score

Another element of synergy which also took by storm was the iconic score by John Williams of the original films. Back in the late 70's this music was mostly distributed through Vinyl. However with the launch of the new film, the all new score, (again by John Williams) has become available both on analogue platforms and digital download such as iTunes or Spotify. This again shows how the franchise has adapted and utilised new technologies to make the film itself and merchandise available to a wider audience. It is also interesting to note that the composer for the score throughout the franchise, John Williams has remained the same. This is due to the fact that the music of Star Wars and the theme itself by John Williams has become so iconic that it is recognised instantly. The reason behind keeping him involved in the franchise is therefore that it would almost seem it would be wrong not to use him and his music throughout the franchise due to the success and the iconography behind the theme.



Star Wars: The Force Awakens (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack) John Williams >

Songs Ratings and Reviews Related

▲	NAME	ARTIST
1.	Main Title and the Attack on the Jakku Village	John Williams
2.	The Scavenger	John Williams
3.	I Can Fly Anything	John Williams
4.	Rey Meets BB-8	John Williams
5.	Follow Me	John Williams
6.	Rey's Theme	John Williams
7.	The Falcon	John Williams



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Gaming and Toys

The merchandise available for the franchise has changed dramatically most likely due to Disney owning the franchise, for example Disney alone have helped create a range of 'action figurines' of the characters, costumes of the characters, its own video game franchise and even miniature interactive toys which very much act like the robots in the film, for example the BB-8 interactive droid created by a tech company called Sphero. This example shows just how much the merchandising has been improved since the original films due to improvements to technology and the large increase in the film and games industries over the years.



Another aspect of Synergy involved in the franchise which has changed extensively is gaming, back in the late 70's, the only games that were introduced were board and party games for the franchise, however with both the extreme developments in technologies since the 70's and the reintroduction of the franchise has encouraged all new video games to be made, such as Disney's 'Infinity 3.0' videogame and the Star Wars Battlefront videogame created by Electronic Arts (EA) and Dice. Battlefront used all new revolutionary graphics in order to immerse fans in the Star Wars universe allowing players to explore the iconic: settings and locations, use the weapons, play as the heroes and villains, pilot different ships such as X-Wings and the Millennium Falcon all in-game for fans to dive into the authentic experience.



Lego

The introduction of the LEGO franchise has also added the the extreme scale of merchandising in the franchise, for example the creation of LEGO minifigures, sets and even its own videogame set to release later this year. The age ratings for these LEGO minifigures and sets are 9-14 year olds, this is also the case with the Disney's main target market audience itself (young kids and families), The Force Awakens is marketed to audiences rated PG 13 rather than the older audiences associated with the original trilogy, this makes it clear that Disney is attempting to make the Star Wars brand appealing to an all new generation of fans in order to carry on the 'flame' to an all new younger audiences.



CGI

Another element within the films themselves which has drastically changed throughout the years is the use of computer-generated imagery. In the original trilogy, there was very little GCI used, this was most likely due to the fact that the technologies available at the time were very limited and the fact that the budget was substantially smaller, thus preventing the use of GCI to enhance the experience. However, when it came to Lucas' prequel trilogy in the early 2000's, He took advantage of the available technology to such an extent that nearly all the sets were created by or used CGI. Many fans were not a fan of this change as they felt it took away from the original trilogy too much and almost relied on GCI to create the film. Lucas also went as far as to go back to his original films and alter them to add CGI into the scenes, again many of the fans of the original trilogy were not happy with these changes as they were viewed as unnecessary. The latest instalment however has strived to go back to its roots by minimising GCI by using real sets and practical effects for as much as possible in order to create a realistic and authentic tone like the original trilogy, for example using 'life-like' creatures by using animatronics and practical costumes rather than the overuse of CGI creatures and sets. The CGI that has been used in the newest instalment for example has only been used when needed, such as in order to make the experience more immersive for audiences. It is also important to note that the quality of the CGI has therefore been improved due to advances of technology over the years etc, this helps to make the CGI look as real as possible when it is used, such as the few GCI characters used in The Force Awakens.



Stars and Storylines

Interestingly, Disney have decided to use the not only the story and characters and actors of the original trilogy, but also a large amount of the behind the scenes aspects the same, for example the script writers, locations and Composers, this shows how Disney is also taking advantage of the nostalgia audiences will have from watching the original trilogy. Disney have therefore put these stars at the front of both the film's story itself and Disney's marketing strategies in order to widen its target audience to the older generations of fans in order to maximise its potential profits of the franchise.

