

# STAR WARS BUMS ON SEATS

Bums on Seats on seats is a term which is defined as “the audience at a theatre, cinema, or other entertainment, viewed as a source of income.” This term also relates to the ways in which a production company or distributor of a film product will market and identify their target audience and the relationship between the audience and distributors themselves. The Star Wars franchise has changed drastically through the years, from the ways the films have been produced and marketed, the purpose of this article is to offer a brief insight into the ways in which Disney have created a relationship with the audience and the ways in which they have attempted to get their audiences ‘bums on seats’ in the theatres for the newest instalment in the series, Star Wars: The Force Awakens:



## Target Audience

One of the most important and base factors which needs to be considered is the target audience for the film itself. For Disney, this could have proven fairly challenging with their revival to the franchise due to the fact that the previous films already had established audience back in the 70's as one of the first blockbuster films along with starting the sci-fi boom in cinema and the early 2000's. Disney therefore had to find a way of appealing to both the older generations and finding new ways in order to make it appeal to an all new generation of audiences. Disney and Lucasfilm have collectively done this successfully in a number of ways through both the story of the film itself and the marketing and synergy of the film. For example, the use of revisiting the classic iconography such as its music and beloved characters and actors of the original trilogy such as Harrison Ford's character Han Solo. This in itself appeals to the older generations who were fans of the franchise in order to bring back as many people as possible due to their nostalgia for the franchise. This aim of appealing to this target audience has also been represented in the marketing of the film, for example using the same iconic music throughout the trailers and promotional material in order to bring back the nostalgia for these older audiences. Appealing to a new audience is where Disney and Lucas film will have struggled to aim towards, however it would have been necessary for them to do in order to bring an all new audience and appeal to future ones. Disney themselves have done this in a number of ways through their marketing strategies and merchandising, for example through the use of their own videogames, toys, and costumes designed to appeal to younger audiences. The use of Disney appealing to both old and new generations creates an interestingly unique target audience which is uncommon in typical blockbuster movies. Furthermore, the use of Disney appealing to both of these audiences helps to make The



Force Awakens the perfect family film, this is the exact type of market which Disney films are known for, thus allowing them to more effectively target their audience of a family film as the parents may be fans of the original trilogy and are passing it on to their children etc. Not only have Disney attempted to aim The Force Awakens at a new generation, it has also worked hard to gain the attention of more females to identify and enjoy the franchise, a great example of this is through the use of a Female lead to the new trilogy who is ‘force sensitive’ which has never been explored in the franchise before. This has also allowed Disney to widen their target audience further as female audiences can identify with the franchise more.

## Themes and Ratings

Disney have also tried to change their target audience for the film through creating darker and action packed themes within the film. For example: the theme of death with many of the characters such as Han solo's end, loss through the character of Leia as she seeks for her brothers return and her son and loneliness, explored through the character Rey, A scavenger on the desert planet Jakku. These dark themes were prevalent throughout the film, however with the the prequel trilogy, the themes explored were very different to the Force Awakens. For example the prequel trilogy was much more childish and aimed to appeal to a much younger target audience than the original trilogy,

# STAR WARS BUMS ON SEATS

such as through the largely disliked character Jar Jar Binks. The age ratings have also changed over the films, for example, 'The Phantom Menace' was rated 'U' by the BBFC, this means that a film should be suitable for all ages. However, the latest in the franchise 'The Force Awakens', was rated '12A' by the BBFC. This is where no-one under the age of 12 can watch the film unless accompanied by an adult. These factors along show how Disney are attempting to appeal the franchise more to teens other than the young audiences brought in by the prequel trilogy and the older fans of the original.

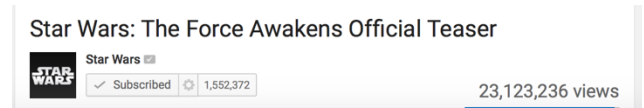
## Marketing

In the post-production stage of developing The Force Awakens, extreme marketing efforts will have had to be developed in order to make as many people as possible aware of the upcoming film. Disney effectively marketed The Force Awakens in order to make the film itself seem as a form of phenomenon, this involved Disney creating a marketing strategy which could both entice the older generation of fans and an all new one. The marketing strategies which were used by Disney spanned a wide range of different mediums, for example: Articles, interviews, teasers, trailers, TV Spots etc. This diverse range allowed Disney to maximise the potential for marketing the product and to reach as wider range as possible in order to generate as much profits as possible:

## Trailer Comparisons

One of these main areas I will focus on are trailers. A trailer is the primary way of marketing a film to an audience, most trailers are normally released online on social media sites such as YouTube, this allows distributors to reach a vast range of people at any time as virtually anyone can access it:

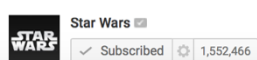
One of the first looks we got of The Force Awakens was through the teaser trailer released onto YouTube. The purpose of a teaser trailer to give audiences a very quick and vague look into the film, in order to build 'hype' or 'buzz' and curiosity in audiences for a film. The teaser trailer for The Force Awakens was released over a year before the release of the film, this shows how Disney were trying to get ahead of the game in their marketing strategy for The Force Awakens. The first teaser does just this, only 88 seconds long the trailer offers the audience a glimpse into the new film with only 7 single shots used. The teaser doesn't show any of the characters in detail and uses very little music until the climatic ending with the iconic Star Wars theme as the millennium falcon shoots across the sky. The teaser did exactly what it was supposed to do, grab the audience's attention and has accumulated over 23,000,000 views on YouTube since release.



The official trailer however is drastically different, it offers an extensive look into the film showing off the range of different themes, characters and planets which are explored and represented for audiences in the film. The trailer offered a range of different scenes, with a range of character dialogue and action. Furthermore, the trailer also showed more of the classics Harrison Ford's character Han Solo along with Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia, this is most likely to get not only the attention of the older fans through taking advantage of the nostalgia that audiences have for the franchise and these characters. The trailer also takes advantage of John Williams' score by using the original soundtrack but also new and original pieces. However, the trailer also 'kept its secrets close' by not revealing any of the major plot points within the film, for example the absence of Mark Hamill's Luke Skywalker in all of the promotional material. The main reason for this is again to keep the audience in the dark about the film in order to create more



Star Wars: The Force Awakens Trailer (Official)



# STAR WARS BUMS ON SEATS

anticipation for the film and to make sure audiences will go to watch it. The trailer was so successful and intriguing for audiences that it caused booking websites such as Fandango to crash for hours because of the extreme number of pre-sales for tickets to the film to be one of the few experiencing it first time. Furthermore, the way the trailer premiered was also out of the norm as it was premiered during an American Football match causing thousands of not only football fans but Star Wars fans to watch the big game in order to make sure that they are one of the first to experience some of the first few looks at the film. The trailer was then released onto YouTube and has since grown to over 92,000,000 views since its upload becoming one of the most viewed movie trailers online of all time. These factors make it seem like not only a film, but an event for audiences.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film\\_distribution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_distribution)

<http://www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/how-does-classification-work>

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

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

<http://screenrant.com/star-wars-7-force-awakens-marketing-franchises-trailer/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaser\\_campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaser_campaign)

<http://www.slideshare.net/poppyadams/the-purpose-of-film-trailers>