

Disney-LucasFilm Acquisition: Campaign Plan

Company/Organization Overview:

The Walt Disney Company (NYSE: DIS), more commonly referred to as "Disney," is a large, multinational family entertainment and media enterprise. It is the largest mass media conglomerate in the world in terms of revenue, and consists of five distinct business segments that each work in tandem to promote The Walt Disney Company's mission and goals. The mission of the overall Walt Disney Company, however, unites the five segments under one central idea; in their own words, "The Walt Disney Company's objective is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information, using its portfolio of brands to differentiate its content, services, and consumer products."

The Walt Disney Company, known at the time as the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, was founded on October 16th, 1923, by brothers Walt and Roy Disney, and quickly established itself as a frontrunner in the American animation industry. In 1928, under the newly named Walt Disney Studios, the first Mickey Mouse cartoons were released and became the first cartoons, with sound, to achieve wild popularity. Walt Disney Studios, thanks to this success, was able to expand and establish three additional companies: Walt Disney Enterprises, Disney Film Recording Company, and Liled Realty and Investment Company. In 1937, Walt Disney released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first animated feature film ever produced. The following year, Walt Disney merged all of his companies under the name Walt Disney Productions; during World War II, production on films slowed while Walt Disney Productions focused its efforts into positive government media.

In 1950, Walt Disney Productions saw a revival with the production of their seventh animated feature, *Cinderella*. Two years later, Walt Disney began to quietly buy land and map out the beginnings of what would become Disneyland, a theme park designed for both parents and children to have family-friendly fun. The park opened on July 18, 1955, and plans to open a second park were quickly put into action after viewing the park's success. Walt Disney Productions continued to release several popular films a year, which expanded to include live-action films, the most popular of those being *Mary Poppins*. In December of 1966, Walt Disney died and his brother Roy took over as chairman, CEO, and president of the company. On October 1, 1971, Walt Disney World opened in Buena Vista, Florida. Roy Disney died of a stroke two months later, leaving the company in the hands of several individuals trained and vetted by the Disney brothers themselves.

Walt Disney Productions enjoyed continued success for the next twenty years, creating Touchstone Pictures as a more adult-oriented studio with more mature material. Walt Disney Productions also expanded to include a subscription-level channel on cable, as well as plans to create a new theme park, EPCOT. After some financial vulnerability in the early 1980s, Walt Disney Productions recovered and in the early 1990s experienced significant commercial success. This time period was dubbed the "Disney Decade" and under the direction of CEO Michael Eisner, allowed the studio to become the first in the field to record over \$3 billion in worldwide box office receipts. Over the course of nearly

nine decades, The Walt Disney Company evolved and expanded to include live-action films, television, travel, radio, music, publishing, and most recently, online and digital media.

As mentioned before, The Walt Disney Company is split into five distinct divisions:

- Media Networks, which focuses on broadcast, radio, publishing, and digital business. The Media Network segment is further split into two major divisions, the Disney/ABC Television Group and ESPN, Inc.;
- Parks and Resorts, which is composed of 11 theme parks and 43 resorts in 3 different continents, and includes 4 Disney Cruise line ships and 11 Disney Vacation Club properties;
- The Walt Disney Studios, which creates movies, music, and stage productions under several banners, including Walt Disney Animation Studios, Marvel Studios, and Touchstone Pictures;
- Disney Consumer Products, which extends the Disney brand to merchandise that includes clothes, toys, books, magazines, bed, bath, and beyond;
- Disney Interactive, the most recent division, which creates and promotes interactive entertainment through social and digital media, such as Disney.com and online virtual worlds.

Disney's general target audience spans a broad range of groups and varies, depending on which division of the Walt Disney Company is the one doing the targeting. Disney's Media Networks targets men and women between the ages of 15-75, through various media programming efforts; in addition, Disney's Media Networks targets primarily men between the ages of 12-65 through their ESPN sports networks, as well as an emphasis on Southern men, aged 18-24, through ESPN college networks. Disney's Parks and Resorts targets an audience of mainly couples with young children, combining the happy memories of the parents who grew up with the Disney characters with the creation of new memories within the parks for the children. The Walt Disney Studios targets young children through Walt Disney Animation Studios, and approaches a more mature audience, aged 15-35, through Marvel Studios and Touchstone Pictures. Disney Consumer Products, following the trend of Disney Media Networks, targets a wide range of individuals, from the child who wants a Mickey Mouse stuffed animal, to the longtime fan who owns a set of Disney coffee mugs, to the collector who purchases a collectible Disney Vinylmation action figure, worth money years down the line. Disney Interactive, the youngest division, targets the more media-savvy audience of young adults, teens and pre-teens, aged 12-25, through videogames and social media outlets such as Twitter and Tumblr.

Media Audit:

The Walt Disney Company has, for the most part, faced relatively positive media in the past few months. The majority of news coverage in recent weeks has focused on the acquisition of LucasFilm and the surrounding hype. The public has expressed concern with respect to the acquisition and how Disney will handle taking on such a major franchise such as Star Wars without damaging or insulting the existing fan base. The major complaint is that the new movies, as announced by Disney for release in 2015, will

not be “as good” as the original three films-or the “mediocre” prequels either. These articles come mainly from smaller, independent bloggers on the topic, but the acquisition itself has made national headlines and spurred discussion in major news outlets, such as *CNN Money*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The LA Times*.

The majority of news surrounding The Walt Disney Company unrelated to the acquisition deals mainly with financial news, through other ventures the company has chosen to take, and their recent profit earnings. The majority of recent news comes from news outlets such as *Businessweek*, *BizJournals*, *The Wrap*, and other news, and deals mostly with stock prices and annual dividends. Part of the media problem that The Walt Disney Company faces is that because of its enormous size and large reach, it is difficult for their public events and their publicity endeavors to stay afloat in their surrounding financial news. This is especially true with respect to the recent financial crisis and the impact that it had on the company (visitation of the parks was down, but stocks in the company soared).

Overall, The Walt Disney Company has not faced a great deal of negative media coverage in recent months, but instead faces the issue of too much media and too many messages. Disney is such a vast company, with reaches into so many different markets and demographics, that the messages that they try to put out often do not last for longer than a day or two, until the next Disney-related story takes over. If Disney wishes to make a message truly stick for more than a few days at a time, they must incorporate as many aspects of their company as possible and strive to push the message, not through their own media outlets, but through the participation and excitement of others spreading the messages themselves.

Situation Analysis:

On October 30, 2012, The Walt Disney Company announced that they had agreed to acquire Lucasfilm Ltd., a “leader in entertainment, innovation, and technology, including its massively popular and ‘evergreen’ Star Wars franchise and its operating businesses in live action film production.” With this acquisition of LucasFilm, Disney desires to rebrand the Star Wars franchise in a way that retains the core elements of the franchise that fans have related to for nearly three decades, while simultaneously enveloping Star Wars into the bigger “Disney franchise family.”

We will work with The Walt Disney Company to redefine the Star Wars franchise merger in a way that appeals to not only a brand new audience, but to the devoted fans that has kept the Star Wars franchise alive and relevant for thirty-five years. The Star Wars franchise will maintain its image as a cultural icon and a unifier across age, gender, and socioeconomic status-as well as a propeller for the interest in science and the genre of sci-fi as a whole. In addition, Disney will be viewed as a strong company that can amass a monstrous cultural phenomenon and positively represent the franchise to longtime, diehard fans and a new generation of Star Wars aficionados alike.

We will collaborate with the Walt Disney Company to create a viral market campaign that spans all five divisions of the Company, through targeted advertising and media

events embracing Star War's new place within the Disney parks and the overall Disney franchise. The advertising and media events will lead up to a major press event coinciding with the current "Star Wars Weekends," beginning in late May and concluding in early June.

Overall, the goal is to integrate the Star Wars franchise smoothly into the current Walt Disney Company, simultaneously engaging new fans and inviting them to enjoy the brand while retaining current fans and incorporating the "magic" Disney is known for into the Star Wars universe that the fans have created. Ideally, this will lead to increased interest and sales of specifically Star Wars related merchandise, as well as increased sales of Disney products overall. Park sales will increase with the popularity of new Star Wars related shows, parades, and a reintroduction of the *Star Tours* amusement ride. The publicity will also increase credibility for the Walt Disney Company from those loyal to the Star Wars franchise through events and advertising that ensures the original brand will remain intact, which has been a significant concern since the announcement of the merger. Looking towards the future, this media coverage will publicize the already-apparent popularity of the "Star Wars Weekends," and will create the opportunity for Disney to continue the process of acquiring and promoting major brands while maintaining the integrity of both the Walt Disney Company and the aforementioned brand.

Key Messages:

The overarching message of this campaign is to celebrate Disney's acquisition of LucasFilm (and the consequent acquisition of the Star Wars franchise) and to open up the legacy of the Star Wars franchise to a new generation to appreciate and enjoy, while simultaneously embracing the long-term Star Wars fans and their dedication to retaining the honor of the original films. Disney is a company that respects the cultural significance of these films, and will do these films justice in their future presentation to a new generation.

Communications Objectives:

- We plan to embrace the massive fan base that currently surrounds the Star Wars franchise and cater to their desire to see the franchise remain intact, as it has for the past three and a half decades; and to rejuvenate their love and passion for the films that has made their fan base so strong.
- We plan to approach new fans by introducing Star Wars through more familiar endeavors, such as well-known Disney characters, to make the franchise appear more family-friendly and approachable, and to help bring Star Wars to a new generation.
- The Star Wars Franchise will retain the integrity that their fan base is concerned with losing through the acquisition.
- The Walt Disney Company will gain positive public perception by being able to acquire major franchises without disruption of the fan base while simultaneously introducing the legacy to a younger generation, therefore creating and increasing brand loyalty to Star Wars and to Disney as a whole.

- The Walt Disney Company will see a shift in news coverage as more events are tailored to a Star Wars specific crowd, and stories will be introduced to a more national audience, as Walt Disney will advertise these events across the country in hopes that families will visit the parks.

Target Audiences:

- The viral video campaigns will target younger fans already familiar with the Star Wars franchise, typically pre-teens and teenagers (aged 12-25). The message conveyed through the viral video will be one of a new beginning for the Star Wars franchise, through undercover advertising and hidden cultural appearances.
- The animated video spaces will target new, young fans, and children of existing fans in older generations (aged 5-13). The message through these videos is that Star Wars exists in the realm of Disney now, and opens up a new world for these young fans to enjoy.
- The incorporation of Star Wars into parades, merchandise, and park entertainment will target current fans and parents who grew up with the Star Wars franchise. They will receive a message that Star Wars does have a place in the Disney universe and can still remain the epic movies that they have enjoyed for years.
- The socioeconomic demographic being targeted is the middle class family, as that is the typical demographic that will purchase Disney and Star Wars merchandise, as well as take their family on a vacation to Disney World or Disneyland.

Strategic Communication Tactics:

Overview:

The Walt Disney Company will engage in a multi-level campaign in order to bring awareness to their acquisition of Star Wars. The first aspect of this campaign will create "viral videos," placed on several social media platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter. These videos will portray Star Wars characters exploring the Disney parks and resort complex as if they just another set of guests. The videos will not appear to be professionally filmed, potentially being filmed from a cameraphone, and being posted to social media accounts not directly linked to the Disney franchise. One example would be a video uploaded to a website like starwarssightings.tumblr.com from a personal Tumblr account. (Note: The characters will also be in plain view of Disney guests, allowing them to film the antics as well and post them to their own social media platforms). The hope is that these videos will be shared across the Internet and generate hype to those who aren't necessarily there to see the media event in the parks themselves.

The second aspect of this campaign will be to insert several, minute-long animated clips into the Disney straight-to-video releases, as well as any DVD releases, and to upload these clips to the Disney Youtube sites as weekly "webisodes." These webisodes would feature different Star Wars characters interacting with traditional Disney

characters in an attempt to be welcomed into the "Disney Family." The clips may also be shown in lieu of commercials on television channels that The Walt Disney Company already owns, such as ABC family, ABC proper, The Disney Channel, Playhouse Disney, etc.

The third (and largest) aspect of this campaign is to incorporate Star Wars into the already existing structures in place in the major Disney theme parks and resorts. Disney will feature a new Fantasmic! show; several new parades during the days and nights, that feature the Star Wars characters and themes; and live entertainment shows at various locations in the Disney Resort Complex. Disney will also include new footage and features into existing rides, such as Mickey's Philharmagic, to include Star Wars themes and characters. There will a total renovation of rides that already incorporate Star Wars, such as Star Tours, and an expansion of shows such as the Jedi Training Academy (currently located in Disneyland) for all park guests. These inclusions and shows will culminate during Star Wars Weekends, typically held in late May and early June, where the parks will transform into a Star Wars haven for fans.

Spokespeople:

- For any sort of interview that requires a member of the Disney Administration, the spokesperson will be Kathleen Kennedy, current co-chairman and future president of Lucasfilm. When necessary, Disney CEO Robert Iger will also be present to conduct certain interviews, as needed.
- Considering that the campaign is an attempt to embrace the marriage of Star Wars and Disney, it makes sense to take advantage of the spokespeople already in place-in this case, recognizable characters from both franchises such as R2D2, Darth Vader, Mickey Mouse, and Goofy-as well as cast members already working in the parks.
 - Cast members within the Disney parks will be provided with limited-edition pins as part of the Disney Pin trading phenomenon, encouraging trade with guests to provide them with the opportunity to acquire the special Star Wars themed pins.
 - During these trades, the cast members will be able to discuss the new characters found within the parks and the new Star Wars features that the guests will be able to take advantage of.
 - Cast members within the Disney parks will be playing the roles of Darth Vader, Storm Troopers, C3PO, and other recognizable characters. They will be located in areas that are appropriate for their characters, such as Tomorrowland in the Magic Kingdom or Hollywood Studios. This allows for guests to film their encounters with the characters and place them on the Internet for further media coverage. (Note: Sporadically, these characters should be found in atypical locations, such as lounging poolside at Blizzard Beach or waiting in line for Test Track in EPCOT.)
 - Characters such as R2D2 and C3PO will chatter with guests about their "new planet" and carry on conversation much as they did in the movies.

- Characters such as Darth Vader and the Storm Troopers will not speak to the guests and interact only minimally, as if they were “minding their own business” like any typical park-goer.
- Cast members within the Disney parks who are playing more traditional roles, such as Peter Pan or Aladdin, can be used to “talk up” the new villain and characters they have seen in the parks, creating hype for when guests do catch a glimpse of Darth Vader and his Storm Troopers wandering about the park.
 - Their talking points will include how excited they are to have new friends at the park, and how there seems to be a new villain lurking about that they keep running into (Darth Vader).
- Animated versions of the characters will serve as spokespeople by presenting themselves in weekly “webisodes” as a friendlier, more approachable way for younger fans unfamiliar with the franchise. Their images should be more “cartoony,” with softer images and kindlier features.
 - Their message will be that they are trying to befriend the more traditional Disney characters in their quest to meet Mickey and truly feel at home on their “new planet.”
 - Merchandise will be based off of these animated version, including new plush dolls of the characters as well as “crossover dolls,” featuring Darth Vader with Mickey Mouse Ears, or Mickey dressed as Luke Skywalker.

Earned Media Targets:

Television and video will be the primary focus of earned media attention from this campaign. The aforementioned spokespeople, specifically the cast members portraying the characters, will be the spotlight of the viral video campaigns, and will help to promote the message from within the park outside to the general public in a quick and effective manner.

- Viral videos will promote the idea that if you come to the parks, you can see for yourself that Darth Vader and his fellow characters are alive and well in the parks; videos will also allow fans unable to reach the parks to be exposed to the message. The videos will be distributed to various news stations in the hopes that the story will be picked up, as the videos gain popularity.
- Interviews will be provided to local and national television stations by cast members fully in character, as both traditional characters and Star Wars characters, to promote the message of a new home for Star Wars and the exciting changes that will be taking place. In addition, when possible, Ms. Kennedy and Mr. Iger will be present for interviews as well.
 - Examples of television stations include: WESH, WKMG, WFTV, WKCF, WUCF, WRDQ, WRBW (all located in Orlando, FL), KCBS, KNBC, KTLA, KABC, KCAL, KTTV, KXLA, KDOC (all located near Anaheim, CA).
- New merchandise promoting the acquisition will be distributed to actors and actresses that currently hold contracts with The Walt Disney

Company, as well as executives from the various news stations that The Walt Disney Company owns, in the hopes that they will wear the clothes and use the products in public.

- This will appeal to younger fans in the 12-25 range, as they will be looking towards these celebrities for inspiration and trendsetting in both clothing choices but potential hobbies and interests.

As a secondary approach to earned media, we will approach several of the well-known, established Disney bloggers that routinely write on the current goings-on within the parks, as well as several well-known Star Wars bloggers that write on developments within the series.

- Specialized press packets will be given to the bloggers in the hopes of spreading good sentiment, including limited edition merchandise celebrating the Disney/Star Wars acquisition, as well as detailed information regarding the future of LucasFilm and future events and endeavors that Disney will be putting on.
- Interviews will be given to many of the blogs through both the characters and cast member who have been working on this campaign.
 - Examples of Disney blogs that will be approached include: The Disney Blog, DisneyShawn, Stitch Kingdom, WDW News Today, The Daily Disney, Re-Imagineering, etc.
 - Examples of Star Wars blogs that will be approached include: Star Wars Blog, AllTop, Wookieepedia, Star War Aficionado, The Force, etc.

Digital Media:

The primary focus of this campaign is through digital and social media.

- As mentioned previously, one of the main focuses of the campaign is the viral videos that will be posted to raise awareness of the Star Wars characters presence in the parks, and their new role in the Disney family overall.
 - Platforms on which the videos will be posted include: *Youtube, Vimeo, Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat.*
 - Reaction videos will be filmed of guests interacting with the new characters and will be posted to the appropriate social media platforms as well.
- In accordance with past Disney policy, specific Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Youtube handles will be created and maintained for the promotion.
 - (TENTATIVE) The Twitter handle, as well as the Facebook page, will be created as if they were being run by the Star Wars characters themselves, and would promote various new activities and events within the parks, as well as the release of new merchandise.
 - Specific blogs would be created for certain characters and run through those personas, chronicling their new lives in the Disney parks and their adjustment to such.

- The social media platforms would engage the audiences by asking them for specific feedback upon the appearance of Star Wars within the parks, and related aspects of the campaign. Questions may include:
 - Where have you seen Darth Vader?
 - What do you love about Star Wars?
 - What will happen when Mickey finally meets Darth Vader?
 - What's your favorite Disney/Star Wars memory?
- The Disney website will feature a specific tab on their page that will detail every aspect of this campaign.
 - Links will be provided to the other social media outlets on the website.
 - Dates and times will be provided for specific events and shows, such as a Star-Wars themed Fantasmic! show, or a live-action show being held in one of the parks.
 - Dates would be provided for the Star Wars Weekends, as well as links to buying tickets and hotel rooms for those dates.

Other Potential Earned Media Tactics:

- A special Breakfast with the Characters will be hosted for members of the press, immediately following a short press conference held by Kathleen Kennedy, the new President of LucasFilm (underneath The Walt Disney Company), and Robert Iger, CEO of The Walt Disney Company. Members of the press will be able to interact not only with prominent members involved in the merger, but with the characters as well.
- Press releases will be released bi-weekly and preceding any major events, providing the press with information on the current updates within the campaign and relevant information.
- A press conference will be held after several major events held in the parks.
 - These events include: The implementation of Star Wars into the Fantasmic! shows, the implementation of Star Wars into the daily Disney parades, the addition of Star Wars characters and music into rides such as Mickey's Philharmagic, and the weeks leading up to Star Wars Weekends.
 - (TENTATIVE) The press conferences will be held with Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Iger, a representative from the PR campaign, and at least one of the characters in full costume, to make light of the situation and make the press conference seem friendlier.
- A satellite media tour will be implemented for both local and national media, especially following the release of the first of the viral videos.
 - National media will be monitored for the pickup of the videos, and any of the news media that picks it up will be granted an interview with a representative from the PR team, as well as Ms. Kennedy and Mr. Iger, when possible.
 - Examples of these include: The Today Show, The Early Show, Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, World News with Diane Sawyer, CBS Evening News, etc.
 - Several Disney "Imagineers," individuals who work to come up with, invent, and implement new and innovative ideas within The Walt Disney

Company, will be on hand to explain the new changes that guests may see in the parks, as well as the creative processes that they go through in order to see an idea to fruition.

- These interviews would be broadcast to various trade shows and business outlets, like DisTECH, Fortune Tech, Wired, Disney By The Numbers, etc.
- These interviews would also be broadcast to Disney Channel and other children's networks in order to garner interest in how the magic of Disney is created for their entertainment, and how they managed to bring Star Wars into the "Disney family."

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