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HOW DISNEY'S ABC AVOIDED REPORTING ELECTRONIC ARTS STAR WARS GAME MICRO-TRANSACTIONS

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HOW DISNEY'S ABC AVOIDED REPORTING ELECTRONIC ARTS STAR
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by

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May 10, 2018

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ABSTRACT

With advancement in technology in the context of high speed internet, smartphones, animation and videogames to name a few, companies like Disney have been harnessing this evolution to help prosper in a capitalist competitive environment. Through the incorporation of Huckin's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research observes Disney's attempt to fully leverage its newly acquired (costly) property, *Star Wars* in the realm of video games, to synergize promotional activities for the much more profitable films. The videogame is covered through articles and interviews on the *ABC* (American Broadcasting Company) news website and YouTube, respectively, and aims to report on the game. *ABC* fails to provide information regarding the implementation of the controversial loot boxes (virtual items purchased to further acquire randomized virtual items like weapons, attire, character skins, *etcetera*) and micro-transactions, which resonates with media concentration and ownership, the theme of this study.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family who emphasize the importance of education and the necessity to use knowledge as an asset for self-growth and evolution. They have been my friends and my guidance and have stood by my side during tragic times, financial assistance and moral support. Their presence has been invaluable for my journey as a student and above all else, as a human being. This is also devoted to my beloved dog Kalu, who we lost during my years at this university. You are missed and remembered.

Love you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Conglomerates like Disney are part of a capitalistic mechanism like others in the industry. With six companies like News Corp., Disney, Viacom, GE, Time Warner, and CBS controlling 90% of information, concentration of media is a growing concern (Lutz, 2012). Disney recently has been in the news for buying a majority of Fox's business for $52 billion in 2017. With the acquisition of Marvel Studios and *Star Wars* as well, it does not intend to stop in its relentless pursuit of expansion. Avengers: *Infinity War* (2018) recently became the fastest film in history to gross $1 billion worldwide (Mendelson, 2018). The success of the Marvel film is a testament to Disney's successful growth through these acquired established franchises.

Disney has been ingrained in the culture industry and with advent of superhero franchises and *Star Wars* films, the technology to enhance these characters on screen has contributed extensively and it "can no longer be viewed as only one of many threads that form the texture of our civilization; in less than half a century, it has become the prime source of material change and so determines the pattern of the total social fabric" (Kline, Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2014, p. 4). Disney uses these advancements and knows the potential of these franchises, because of their existence in our society in popular culture history. It is molding and updating itself accordingly.

I will be relying on literature tailored to the theme of media concentration and behaviour, and on the business operations of Disney and EA (Electronic Arts), the game publisher of *Star Wars:* Battlefront II (2017). Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model also will be relied upon to see how Disney fits within their structure to gain a better understanding of the media giant.

For the purpose of my research, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be employed to derive a conclusion that best serves the question, *how a property like Star Wars, owned by Disney is covered by ABC?*

Disney's relevance in today's times has only grown exponentially, especially with multiple Marvel movies coming out every year along with the sci-fi juggernaut, *Star Wars.* Furthermore, historical acquisitions like that of Fox, Marvel and Lucasfilms adds to the company's evolution to propel it further in regards to making profits. This research tries to seek out how the giant promotes its properties like *Star Wars* through owned mainstream media like *ABC* and also at the same time update the issue of concentration with respect to this case study.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Herman and Chomsky refer to propaganda as the "manufacturing of consent," which functions as an important role of the media. This is elaborated upon through the five filters of The Propaganda Model to have a better understanding of how news is manufactured by the elite for consumption by the people (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. ix). The current framework of mass media endorses the fact that news is manufactured by the elite for the masses. Media have adapted as times have changed throughout the years and are a conduit of information for the people.

When it comes to defining mass media, Street (2011) says that communication being a product of politics, economics and law, is structured by decisions about the allocation of access to systems of communication, about the rights (copyright, intellectual property) and constraints (libel, secrecy) attaching to communication; it is determined by the distribution of resources in both the production and consumption of communication (p. 6). Communication via media is intertwined with the economy in order to make it function and with it comes favoritism for the elite, who control such forms of communication, in a capitalistic system. The theme of my research topic is media ownership by conglomerates and how that affects journalism in regards to producing content to serve the interests of corporate owners of media who tap journalism for their advantage.

When it comes to media concentration, there has been a plethora of literature on it. The purpose of this section is to illustrate some of the available literature that tackles the question: "does media bias serve ownership?"

Media, tool for propaganda

When it comes to serving ideologies of the elite, Winter in his book *Common Cents* (1992) goes through eight case studies involving the Gulf War, Oka, the Ontario NDP budget, and the Montreal Massacre to paint a picture of how media operate, undermining the interests of the public all the while promoting the "national interest." Communication is tethered between the public and journalism and the book outlines how media play a vital role in creating a logic of certain perspectives which the audience is exposed to. The book recalls an account that occurred in 1991, in which Baghdad was pulverized by bombs during the air campaign of the Gulf War. There were many casualties including infants and their mothers at Baghdad's Saddam Central Children's Hospital. The incident at the hospital failed to make it in the news coverage as acts by America were ignored. The media never mentioned the United States as being an outlaw nation for violating the Geneva Conventions on chemical warfare by using napalm (Winter, p. 1, 1992).

The actual events were overshadowed by a portrayal of how Saddam Hussein was a hated dictator across the world along with the alleged atrocities of Iraq. In this respect mass media ignored the part played by the US to create information designed to serve corporate interests. The conclusion derived by Winter (1992) emphasizes mainstream media's role in the Gulf war as an important part of the State apparatus, which was the first Bush administration at the time (p.53). This example gives a glimpse as to how mainstream media tend to advocate the motives related to "national interests" and create an image that promotes the 'powers that be' as serving peace to justify their actions.

The role of media through various case studies is discussed in *Common Cents* and this solidifies the notion of media reporting of events as 'common sense' (Winter, 1992). It is the media that report on events for the public and working under conditions of control, restrictions, and profits, the results can have ramifications for the democracy of the country. Media concentration and its effects on news reporting have created their own versions of history throughout the course of pivotal events, especially the role of the US in various operations, whose violent acts are justified as a 'war on terror.'

Mainstream media are bound to the economic environment of a country and in the case of the US, conglomerates like The Walt Disney Company (*ABC, ESPN*, etc.), *News Corp.* (Fox Family channels), Comcast (*NBC*), National Amusements (*CBS* brands), Time Warner (*CNN*), *Google*, *Facebook*, *Amazon*, *etcetera* are some of the biggest corporations to own almost all of media. "Recognition of the problems of media concentration has arisen from understanding that economic, as well as social, controls constrain and influence media, just as significantly as governmental/political controls do" (Graber, et al., 1998, p. 193).

Also in his book *Democracy's Oxygen*, Winter (1997) outlines how commercial media distort the reporting of events and that as mentioned before becomes "common sense" for the public (p. xxvi), or in other words, how management controls the news In regards to the research topic for this paper, this ideology resonates with the problematic information distribution on part of mainstream media towards the audience, in this case, the sample reporting the game *Star Wars*: Battlefront II on the *ABC* website, owned by Disney. This 'infotainment' signifies that the rich own the media and in the case of *ABC*, entertainment and information attract diverse readers, congregating on a platform celebrating a *Star Wars* product.

Media Concentration

The hold of corporate power over media has been a much talked about subject among scholars. Eli Noam (2009), a professor of Finance and Economics at the Columbia Business School, inspects how American media are becoming concentrated (p. 4). He talks about how it is necessary to go through a variety of media forms and that people interested in specific forms like television, internet, *etcetera*, will find the industries outside their line of interest as overwhelming, but focusing on specific industries of interest will reveal greater detail.

In one of the articles covered on the *Global Research* (2015) website by Bishop, it is expressed how only six companies control 90% of the media and as a result, what we read, watch and listen, is engulfed in information filtered and distributed to us. The infographic on the webpage illustrates the difference in control by number of companies in 1983 and 2011 by 50 and 6 companies respectively. One can see how the power of fewer corporations controlling the media showcases their presence within our 'democratic' society. General Electric, News Corp., Disney, Viacom, Time Warner and CBS, 'the big six,' control 70% of the cable industry, with 178 million users exposed to Time Warner news and with News Corp owning renowned newspapers on three continents. The statistics validate the amount of global reach these few conglomerates have had over the years and what we perceive, imagine and materialize within our lives, has been influenced by these corporations. Additionally, the article also mentions that when it comes to radio, back in 1995, The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) prohibited companies from owning over than 40 stations and that Clear Channel surpassed that by 1,200 stations. The unprecedented control of radio stations also lead to 80% playlists matching each other in the US (Bishop, 2015). This gives an idea of the interconnectivity of the stations with the few corporations owning them.

Also when it comes to the movie industry, according to *comScore*, an American media analytics company, between Jan-Dec 2017, the domestic box office was at $11.12 billion, with companies like Disney garnering $2 billion annually in US/Canada ticket sales (D'Alessandro, 2017). With the current market trend, Chomsky's perception about media in the future increasing in concentration and "dominated by a few relatively focused integrator firms that put together elements provided by numerous smaller specialist firms," is a reality (Noam, 2009, p.6). With evolving technology and high speed internet, people are accessing information through their phones with the press of a button. According to *Comscore,* smartphone users in the US have increased from 2% in 2005 to 81% in 2016 (Lella, 2017). With mobile technology becoming rampant through media app usage and the internet, mass media owners are tapping that sector in this digital revolution. Apps for mainstream media like *BBC* and *ABC* news are reaching out to the audience through the mobile internet. "The internet has become an extension of television, newspaper, and radio, as huge media giants harness its ability to 'push' their commercial messages on the public" (Cooper, 2003, p.93).

On the Canadian front, according to the Canadian Media Concentration Research Project (CMCRP) report in 2017, the "big five" Canadian media companies: Bell, Rogers, Telus, Shaw and Quebecor, rule the roost and are "many times larger than Google and Facebook based on revenue from Canada" (p. 5). When it comes to radio, the report observes that "shuffling of several radio stations between Shaw (Corus) and Cogeco in 2011 helped bring about a long-term decline in concentration," but Bell's acquisition of Astral Media reversed the situation in 2013 and as a result Bell became the biggest radio broadcaster with the addition of 77 stations to the company's roster. Additionally, with newspapers, the report (2017) adds that concentration levels rose from 1984-2000 and dropping for a decade after, then rising eventually. "By 2011, the

four largest newspaper ownership groups accounted for 81.6% of the market: Postmedia (23.7%), Torstar (22.7%), Quebecor (23.7%) and Power Corp / Gesca Media (11.5%): (p. 47). It fell down in 2016 and in the case of Postmedia, its acquisition of Quebecor's Sun newspaper chain, meant it influences about 30% of the Canadian newspaper market (p. 47).

Also "concentration levels are much higher in local retail internet access and cable TV markets, however, where the top two firms generally account for 88% and nearly 100% of the market, respectively" (Canadian Media Concentration Project, 2017, p.2). The digital sector gives the audience many options to choose from to attain information they seek. Mainstream media salvage the potential of the internet to gain access to a wider audience for propaganda. "..…the core elements of the networked digital media may actually be more prone to concentration than was the case for traditional media, because digitization magnifies economies of scale and network effects in many areas: mobile wireless (*Rogers, BCE, Telus*), search engines (*Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo*), Internet access (ISPs), music and book retailing (Apple and Amazon), social media (*Facebook*), browsers, operating systems, and access devices (*Apple, Google, Nokia, Samsung*) (2017, p.13). According to the article by Kemp (2018), Global Digital suite of reports from *We Are Social* and *Hootsuite*, it is revealed there are around 4 billion people around the world using the internet, with a quarter of a billion users coming online for the first time in 2017. In 2018, the number of internet users has risen to 4.021 billion and 3.196 billion social media users. In my opinion, with the 81% smartphone users in the US as mentioned before and the above mentioned statistics, people are being exposed to various media outlets through social media platforms and app usage. The control by 'powers that be' over the news through digital algorithms is inevitable as a result.

Spindoctoring, a discourse for the elite

With the transition of media towards digital platforms, the control by ownership of the rich and powerful over media remains strong and has transitioned well. While traditional media outlets like television and newspapers still exist in this day and age, the diversity of the internet and its vast digital landscape proves a good resource for media to distribute information, especially with accessibility of internet nowadays and the rising smartphone users downloading various apps to get information, as mentioned earlier. With that in mind, throughout history, these tools have been used to modify events in favour of who the media represent or because of "national interests."

The terminology used for such an act is deemed as spindoctoring and that resonates with the example I had given in the beginning of the literature review regarding the involvement of the US in the Gulf War, and so on (Winter, 1992).

All propagandists—and I mean that in the most general sense of the word—by definition want their side of the story to be the first draft of history, and then to have that first draft used as footnotes for the rest of time. By equal definition, all propagandists—again, neutrally stated—want to de-legitimize anything that contradicts their version of events" (Goltz, 2012, p. 187).

The above quote resonates with the invasions by the US and the country's ideology, if not matched by others, becomes a threat for the US. In the case of the US, mainstream media support the atrocities committed in all parts of the world where the country has been involved as 'supposed' peacemakers. Chomsky refers to the term 'peace process' in the media as "whatever the United States happens to be doing at the moment…so it turns out that the United States is always supporting the peace process, by definition" (Mitchell & Schoeffel, 2002, p. 43).

In such a state, the oppressed is coined as a dictator, while the reality of it does not match up with the facts. Journalists strive to be objective in news reporting, but because of how the economy operates in capitalism, the media and the well-established

feed each other's interests to put across a certain ideology. That mind-set leaves little room for objectivity and because of it the people creating and depending on such media forms fall victim to biased perspectives. As mentioned by McChesney (2015):

The corporate media cement a system whereby the wealthy and powerful few make the most important decisions with virtually no informed public participation. Crucial decisions are barely covered by corporate media, or else are warped to fit the confines of elite debate, stripping ordinary citizens of the tools to be informed, active participants in a democracy" (p.281).

When we talk about that particular aspect, there are many instances throughout history where the media have actively participated in the promotion of ideologies adopted for political interests.

For instance, when it comes to the Bush administration, Kellner (2004) elaborates on how in the Iraq War, the media were tools for the propaganda. He mentions how the so called purpose of the war was to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, but behind that façade, the administration had ulterior motives of adopting a new doctrine of pre-emptive strikes, controlling oil, and aiding Bush in the 2004 presidential election. The invasion is masked by the media as an act of 'peace makers' on behalf of the US government and their interests align with each other for mutual benefits.

In a study of the controversial 'Saddam statue toppling,' the event covered by the US media could have been distorted upon closer analysis (Kellner, 2004, p.335). The 'supposed' cheering crowd exemplified the good cause of the invasive force and portrayed the Bush administration as liberators of tyranny in Iraq, in collaboration with the media. The glorification of war and the spectacle of it, all to promote the image of peacemakers and obliterators of terrorism, only worked in favour of the media and the government it supported. As Kinzer (2006) puts it in his book *Overthrow,* "both McKinley and Bush justified their overthrow of foreign governments by insisting that

the United States sought no advantage for itself and was intervening abroad only 'for humanity's sake to make the world more peaceful and more free'" (p. 301). Kinzer (2006), covers a little over 100 years of modern American history starting with 1893 coup in Hawaii, all the way leading up to the Iraq War in 2003. The book gives the reader a broad spectrum of the various interventions by the US by covering three eras of America's involvement in foreign shores, namely, the imperial, Cold War, and the invasion era. Kinzer's work gives an idea of how the US is unlike previous colonizers and that the country poses as benevolent peacemaker rather than an invasive force occupying foreign territories.

Furthermore, the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) was steered by Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement in retaliation against the government of the Cuban President Fulgencio Batista. Similar to the regime of Saddam Hussein, so many US mass media stories and reports lay emphasis on the totalitarian government's human rights violations, the affiliation towards communism, the 'dictator' leader Castro's tenacity of power and the disarrayed economy.

Winter (2007) elaborates on how Jimmy Carter's trip to Cuba in 2002 was a conduit for opportunity for the media to deploy all the clichés about Fidel Castro and to showcase their established ideological biases.

The ideologies were "centred primarily around the lack of democracy in Cuba, the communist if not totalitarian nature of Castro's dictatorship, and the natural right of the Bush administration to interfere openly in the affairs of Cuba, even to the point of funding and fomenting the overthrow of a government which does not have Bush's approval" (p. 192).

Adding to Winter's research, Landau says, "mass-media reporters still don't consider in their question formulation the significance of the original goals the revolutionaries had set and therefore don't comprehend Cuban revolutionary leaders' seeming obsession with national independence and social justice" (p.120). Furthermore,

it is mentioned that most of the journalists expect the standard US political outlook everywhere and this one can say promotes the language of the US elites, embedded within the perspectives of mass media. This shows how similar interests between media and politicians leads to biased news reporting and its inability to provide journalism rooted in good research and validity. That which does not align with the political framework of the US is alienated and considered an obstruction in the grand scheme of things. Further on the Cuban front, Landau (2006) expresses that a typical story focused on Castro's embrace of Soviet Communism and his 'betrayal' of the revolution's ideals. These reports coincided with US government policy (p. 123).

Also in his book *the media and political process,* Louw (2013) uses an interesting analogy of magicians, smokes and mirrors in context to politicians and the media. The creating of illusions by magicians is just what the elite do in collaboration with media, the spinning of information that is tailored to show them in a positive light. He further puts fourth five sets of players including politicians as performers, the spin doctors, media, audience and policy makers, who especially remain behind the scenes so as not to get directly involved in the smoke and mirrors show (pp. 143-145). This integrated machine then functions to promote elite ideas and interests in that process.

When it comes to spin-doctors, Louw (2013) also adds that "PRs/spin-doctors specialize in supplying the media with smooth talkers – people who can perform and can gloss over problem areas and thereby set agendas. In a situation where different factions of the elite are in competition, within Chomsky's "Bounds of the expressible," spin-doctors increasingly work to ensure that the politicians that they work for say nothing that may offend potential voters" (p. 81). Additionally when it comes to newsroom management:

Hiring, firing and promoting by publishers and management, are only the starting points for content control and effective socialization in the newsroom. Story assignments,

deciding what gets covered each day, is a management function. Producers and assignment editors tell reporters what to cover, often indicating how important the story is and how long. Besides owning papers, setting policies, and hiring and promoting employees, management may frame stories with a particular perspective. It also may suggest sources or contacts to interview or leads to follow. Also story can be rewritten once handed in by a reporter. During editing, additional changes can be implemented. Also the placement of the story is decided by the editor and can be dropped altogether. As far as the headline goes, management decides it. If reporters resist changes to the story, newspapers may remove their byline and they have no control over it and no right to insist that the management version, not appear in the paper.
(Winter, 1997, pp. 98-99)

This ecosystem comprising of politicians, the media and its management, and PR agents, strive to attain the end goal of promoting the values of the rich and Winter's (1997) elaborate detail on what happens in the newsroom informs us of how information is controlled and edited if need be.

Furthermore, to expand on politicians/elite being performers in this media environment, when we reflect back on the Obama campaign, its success is because of the celebrity status of Obama and his ability to get a hold of the media spectacle through orchestrated performances. The same can be said for Ronald Reagan who performed in his presidency as well. In recent events when we look back at the 2016 US election, Donald Trump is a product of that spectacle as he has had his own reality TV shows and limelight to 'perform' for the news. These staged performances and the wars ensued on part of US for the cause of 'liberation' has been nothing less than spectacles.

I would argue that in recent years U.S. wars have been orchestrated as media spectacle, recalling Bush Jr's 2003 Iraq shock and awe campaign for one example. Likewise, terrorism has been orchestrated as media spectacle since the 9/11 attack that was the most spectacular and deadly attack on the US heartland in history. As we know too well, school and mass shootings which can be seen as a form of domestic terrorism, have become media spectacles with one taking place in 2015 in Virginia on live TV, while the stock market, weather, and every other form of life can become part of a media spectacle (Kellner, 2016, p.5)

It is safe to assume that mass media and the constant headlines kowtowing to Trump's controversial campaign, sensationalizing the antics of Trump, contributed to his victory

in the elections. Also Hillary Clinton's inability to fashion a message as to why exactly she was running added to Trump's victory as well. As Kellner succinctly puts it in the quote above, spectacle has been a tool to achieve the "breaking-news" phenomenon in the politics of spectacle. One can assume that the visual imagery has repeated motifs involving a strong performance from politicians and elites, the rhetoric of discourse only becomes reiterated and congealed with news coverage and goals. In an essay by Ball (1996), various works are reviewed that deal with the intertwined relationships between the presidents, media, spectacle and language. They are useful in understanding the depth of works available on political communication and presidents. Ball points to "the centrality of language, particularly of persuasive discourse, in constituting the presidency (p. 178). Additionally, Ball (1996) adds how according to Liebovich, "Theodore Roosevelt began the policy of giving reporters regular stories from the White House, and the way Herbert Hoover came to view reporters as tools to be manipulated and 'not as independent guardians of the public welfare'" (p. 179).

Existing research

There have been much critical research so far regarding media ownership and corporate control. For the purpose of this section, we will look at a few of them to reiterate the concept of media ownership, national interests and concentration and my case study on Disney.

i) Terrorism and Islam

With the events of 9/11 and its aftermath, the fear of the 'other' intensified and the paranoia among the public was endorsed and played upon by the US government and the media. Powell's (2011) analysis is a good example of how media framed 'terrorism' after 9/11. This study proposes how violence through terrorism happening outside the US borders was given more attention as opposed to internal terrorism. The

image of the 'savage' Arab-Muslims was created by powers that be so as to 'civilize'
and to understand, we go back to Islamophobia and reflect on what Said (1978)
mentions:

On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the
former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding
real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things" (p. 57).

This quote fits with the post 9/11 America and the reign of the Bush administration.

Powell asserts that the Bush administration juxtaposed 9/11 and Iraq in its
rhetoric and the repetition of it was intensified by the media as they are owned by the
elite, which is why when the Iraq invasion happened, the media were in cahoots with
the government. The support for nationalism and the power held by the elite once again
triumphed to spread their voices. Thus emerged a US that alienated the East and
associated much that transpires within it as terrorism and the media supported it the
purpose of 'national interest' and profitable venture. As the research suggests, terms
like oil, Islam, Muslims, the control over resources and terrorism became associated
with what the East stands for from a Western perspective. "Orientalism is a style of
thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the
Orient' and most of the time 'the Occident''' (Said, 1978, p. 2). The ''Occident,'' or
the West, is placed in opposition to and as superior to the Orient. As a result,
Orientalism can be viewed as ''a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and
having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978, p. 3). To better understand the imagery
of the Orient created by Western media, the research focused upon sources such as *The
New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, and *FOX News* (Powell,
2011, p. 95).

Using content analysis, media frames of terrorism were recognized and National
media coverage for the two weeks after each of the 11 terrorist events was collected as

data for the purpose of the study. With print and Internet media as sources for the sample, the author came across labelling of Muslims as terrorists and stereotypes. Without further investigation, links between the terrorist Muslim and al-Qaeda were formed by the media. When it came to domestic terrorism, the agent participating in the act was considered as mentally stable, was personalized and was considered intelligent (Powell, 2011, pp. 98-99). Finding drastic differences between the representations of Christians and Muslims involved inside and outside US soil, in violence, reflects back to what I discussed earlier about pro and anti-US sentiments and how they shape the ideology of the country. The Las Vegas mass shooting of people in 2017 by Stephen Paddock is an example of how he was considered as being in physical and mental anguish. Had it been someone who was a Muslim in the same position, things would have been different. The results showed how the media portrayed international terrorists as more violent as opposed to the domestic agents and this is an evident pattern in mainstream media regarding reporting of news involving terrorism. It is interesting to note that when we reflect on the Bush administration, the government wanted to attack Iraq, even though the terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks mostly came from Saudi Arabia, an ally of the US.

Powell concludes by saying the climate of fear is used as a backdrop by the US to justify their acts of violence in order to eradicate 'violence' and endorse 'freedom.' The notion of the 'in' and 'out' group is seen through this investigation, that is, whoever does not match with the interests of the US are part of the 'out' group and those that align with the country's interests belong to the 'in' group. While the event is current and fresh, media uses the tool of 'breaking news' to sensationalize events and that holds true in this research.

The results in my opinion answer 'how Islamophobia serves elites?' as the other justifies domestic fear and instils aggression. With such practices of spindoctoring, the topic of concentration of media and ownership becomes more concerning.

In the context of Disney and politics, "its productions since 9/11 have been more controversial, yet few critics have gone so far as to argue that the messages produced by *The Path to 9/11* (two-part miniseries aired on *ABC* television in 2006) and *The Incredibles* (2004), do not support the status quo as much as they present a reactionary politics, which not only justifies the US military power abroad but also suggests deeply authoritarian ideas and practices are the best way to secure the ongoing domination of American culture identity at home" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p. 134). Even if through its products Disney implies that they are a source of entertainment, the above mentioned films "attest to the company's endorsement of, if not active participation in partisan, political issues, especially the "war on terror" (p. 134). Also the films "sacrifice an understanding of systemic causes of war and violence in favour of blaming individuals who (allegedly) exhibit pathological behaviours that go far beyond character flaws or mere cowardice" (pp. 134-135).

ii) Media control, ownership motives

In a research study about the hypothesis that firms originate and disseminate information to the media to influence their stock prices during corporate events, called *active media management*, Ahern and Sosyura (2014) suggest that information and stock prices can be manipulated by firms seeking to advance their interests through their media coverage (p. 242). The project offers that firms originate and disseminate information to the media to influence their stock prices during vital corporate events and it is also based on recent research which makes claims that media coverage drives market trading and affects prices of valuable and widely followed stocks (Ahern &

Sosyura, 2014, pp. 241-242). In relation to my research on media ownership, different facets of ownership by the elite on media are significant to understand the complexity of control and what that leads to. This investigation gives an idea of how firms manipulate media and information for the purpose of satisfying their capitalistic motives and most importantly adds to literature based on the role of media in the finance sector and economics (p. 247).

By collecting data on the timing of merger negotiations with a wide-ranging data set of media coverage, the research studies press releases, one of the main channels of active corporate communication with investors. In their results, the authors came across a pattern in the communication between firms and investors during the time of favourable valuation. They found out that "fixed exchange ratio bidders increased the number of press releases disseminated to financial media during the private negotiation of a stock merger, compared to floating exchange ratio bidders, who do not have an incentive to manage their media during the merger negotiation" (Ahern & Sosyura, 2014, p.288). Consequently, the press can be used by firms for the nurturing of their interests in exchange for profits, information and perks. Additionally, as per the objective of the research and the *active media management* hypothesis tested by the authors, the results are analogous with the theory, that with excess media coverage during merger discussions, there is subsequently an increase in a firm's share of merger gains (p. 288).

This research as mentioned by the authors could further benefit from looking into other corporate actions besides mergers, like stock issues and repurchases, acquisitions, executive compensation, proxy contests, and product market competition. Since the research is articulated and executed with the acquisition of extensive data sets of articles comprised of such information, the result does give us a sound perspective

of who frames the news and why, especially in the case of mergers. Reitsma's (2012) research, is another example that showcases how in media coverage of organized labour bias in ways in which unions and their workers are presented. His thesis exposes bias in the *Windsor Star's* coverage of a 2009 municipal workers' strike in Windsor, Ontario, Canada; a public-sector strike. Using CDA on 480 texts regarding the strike in 2009, Reitsma found anti-union bias throughout the coverage. The image of public-sector workers was affected, discrediting them in their struggle against neoliberal power structures which minimize their influence in that process (p. iv). Both examples show how ownership leads to imminent bias because of influence by powers that be.

In the context of my case study of Disney, over the years the company has had various mergers with other corporations like Marvel, Pixar, ESPN and recently FOX to name a few. Further research may be conducted on stock behaviour of the company during these deals and what influence it might have had, if any, on information through media coverage. Since the conglomerate has been expanding its territory rapidly, such analysis would prove beneficial to get an understanding of Disney's business structure.

iii) Media concentration and advertising

In today's media environment, whether it be print, television, or the internet, advertisements plague the information realm, seeking out consumers for their products. According to Smythe (2014), the audience itself is the commodity form of "mass-produced, advertiser-supported communications under monopoly capitalism" (pp. 33. 31). In the capitalist economy, the media make audiences to sell to advertisers, also known as 'audience commodity.' As Herman and Chomsky (2002) comment, "the mass media are interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audiences per se; it is affluent audiences that spark advertiser interest today, as in the nineteenth century, and that the power of advertisers over media like television programming stems from

the simple fact that they buy and pay for the programs-they are 'patrons' who provide the media subsidy" (p. 16). The absorption of media through ownership and the selling off of customer information is part and parcel for the system if it has to work efficiently.

Duke's research (2006) explores how media concentration is a benefit for producers of branded products despite high advertising prices, because of economy of scale. He challenges the common intuition that advertisers should object to concentration in media industry as it leads to higher prices for advertising in return. As a result, the analysis tends to examine not just the relationship between commercial media and advertisers through advertising market, but also the audience for the media and advertisers who make choices both in media and product markets (Dukes, 2006, p. 128). Media are conduits to produce and promote products and audiences for advertisers and this is an attractive venture for both parties.

Events in media markets have been inspired by the desire to make media more attractive to advertisers by offering economies of scale in advertising's ability to reach desired consumers. Examples, such as the merger of CBS and Viacom and Clear Channel Communication's acquisition of over 1,200 radio stations, were inspired by the improved ability to reach and target potential customers, making the media firm more attractive to advertisers (Dukes, 2006, p. 130).

The potential for reaching mass audiences and strategic product placements within print, television or internet media gives the advertising space more potential. Through execution of an equilibrium model of the media industry, media firms (news, music, entertainment etc.), also referred to as *stations* by Dukes, give service to consumers and sell advertising space to the advertisers. The results of the research lead to the fact that advertisers through media differentiate their products from rivals and despite paying higher prices to obtain advertising space, they still end up gaining more profits due to access to larger markets/audiences/sales, all when the media market is more concentrated.

To sum it up, the focus of this investigation is another addition to the narrative of media control and ownership. Reflecting on the literature I have covered on the themes of ownership and how that affects information, my case study on the *ABC* news sample for the game *Star Wars:* Battlefront II, will give insight into how iconic popular culture icons of Star Wars 'pose' as advertisements to report on the game and will also open a window for further research to explore videogames, which are now implementing pay walls (locked in-game content that requires a fee to unlock) and loot boxes within games that the customer has already purchased; *Star Wars:* Battlefront II has been part of that capitalistic endeavour. My research will focus on Disney advertising their products through owned media to serve their bottom line without giving full specifics of features and locked content within the game and capitalising and promoting it on the basis of the *Star Wars* franchise.

Furthermore, the research through the chosen method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will help to answer my research question '*how a property like Star Wars, owned by Disney is covered by ABC*,' and analyse the language presented in the chosen sample so as to answer it. The established literature on this subject matter by Herman and Chomsky (1988) in their book *Manufacturing Content* will aid in conducting my research through the use of the Propaganda Model and its five filters (*ownership*, *advertising*, *information sourcing*, and *covering fire of flak*) and I will be discussing that in the following section in detail as mentioned, with respect to my case study. As I observe from my research, the catalyst of this problem does not completely reside in the hands of the elite, but also the information providers, the media, who also rest in the hands of the elite. Hence, one, not two.

As Herman and Chomsky (2002) say, "the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and

codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society" (p. 1).

It is through them that we receive information, be it through print or digital. Because of that, biased news which strives to fit within the ideological framework of the elite and the media, the seriousness of the issue becomes more alarming and with each research into it, the people have to be informed of the consequences that come with it. There is always room for further exploration in this territory and this research investigates this ongoing issue through digital media. This allows for a broader perspective on whether concentration affects language of information, or if the media report their stories without any bias.

iv) Disney, a conglomerate strategy

In recent years Disney has made various deals to expand their empire. The conglomerate did acquisition of ABC in 1995 for $19 billion, the media platform (Carillo et al., 2012, p. 2). Additionally the purchase of Pixar in 2006 and Marvel Entertainment in 2009, LucasFilm in 2012, along with the 2017 deal with FOX are some of the recent exploits of the corporation to increase its growth exponentially. Because of the acquisition of these companies Disney has managed to salvage franchises that come with the deals. With the recent flood of *Marvel* and *Star Wars* films dominating cinema, the company has evolved rapidly. "It represents a diversified, global corporation that is motivated by profit and many of its synergies have been in place for decades" (Birkinbine, Gomez, & Wasko, 2017, p. 17). The film releases are accompanied by "sale of merchandise, videogames, music, and books" (Birkinbine, Gomez, & Wasko, 2017, p. 17). With diversification in corporate expansion and using various media to use promotional activities for the profitable films, *Star Wars*: Battlefront II, the game that incorporated paywalls within the game mechanics, fits

perfectly within that ideology. With cultural influences like *Star Wars* and superheroes, Disney has recently managed to bring these icons under its banner and channel their reputation through synergistic promotional strategies. "Disney has understood the crucial connection between profits and selling cultures to mass audiences. But Disney has mastered an understanding of how people learn through media consumption and how this grants a corporation overwhelming power to shape people, politics, and the larger culture" (Giroux & Pollock, 2010, p. 208). Furthermore, when it comes to synergy, Disney "claims to be especially suited to such a strategy" (Wasko, 2001, p. 71). As one executive explained:

It's a unique attribute of the Disney Company, the ability to create synergy between divisions, whether it's interactive games, Buena Vista television, or the Disney Channel. We all work together and we do it on a year-round basis and we do it aggressively. The success of those ongoing roles makes everything in the company work better. We actually have people in every division that are responsible for the synergy relationships of the company and every division has that. We take it very seriously. Disney CEO Michael Eisner takes it very seriously (pp. 71-72).

With top brands like *ABC*, *Lucasfilm*, *Pixar*, *ESPN*, *FOX*, *etcetera* under their belt, we have to understand that these acquisitions showcase Disney's 'diversification for profits' strategy. With the adoption of three strategies that of investing in creative content, international expansion, and technological innovation, the company has created strong investments for itself over the years. With takeovers of various corporations, the Disney brand has reinforced (Pixar), and has expanded to various hitherto un-Disney type products (comic book heroes) and the franchises obtained in these purchases have huge carryover value in the company's parks and merchandise business (*Star Wars*, Marvel) (Birkinbine, Gomez, & Wasko, 2017, p. 17). The strategy helps the company to further increase the owned franchises' growth with the Disney brand. With new *Star Wars* and Marvel films hitting theatres every year, Disney uses horizontal integration by acquiring such properties and dominating markets through

merchandise practices, thus getting profits. Videogames, toys, clothing, books, *etcetera* become outlets for the profitable films. An example of this would be *Star Wars*: Battlefront II, which is part of the case study. The game was released on November 17, 2017, a month before the film *The Last Jedi.* The close proximity of the release dates of the game and the film shows the intentions of the corporation to maximize profits for the movie and also tap the games industry at the same time, to create a buzz for the franchise. Furthermore, when we look at the *High School Musical series*, the production of the brand is in Disney studios and marketed on their channel and ABC. Here vertical integration can be witnessed as the company creates, distributes and markets the various merchandise associated with the series. It is one of the largest corporations in the world and through diverse practices their scope and size are significant. As Birkinbine, Gomez and Wasko (2017) put it, "it is a strong influence on the building and reinforcement of consumer culture, producing and distributing massive numbers of commodities, promoting and marketing them effectively, and aggressively protecting their ownership rights. It is an active player in the concentrated media business and thus is active in shaping our cultural universe" (p. 24).

v) "EA Spouse": Crisis in videogame labour

In 2004, under an anonymous handle 'EA Spouse,' Erin Hoffman, author and wife of an EA (Electronic Arts) developer, posted a Live Journal account of the brutal working conditions and forced overtime at EA. The letter mentioned how initial enthusiasm for a job with the company "had evaporated, as seven-day, 85-hour work weeks, uncompensated either by overtime or time off, became routine. It told of EA's 'put up or shut up and leave…human resources policy" (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2006, p. 600). Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter examine the conditions producing the crisis in videogame labour, exposed by EA Spouse. In terms of the sources for the paper,

the authors looked at online discussions in forums, game-industry publications and mainstream press generated by EA Spouse's post. Also studies on "quality of life" in the industry by IGDA (International Game Developers Association), academic literature on video game industry and its gendered division of labour was taken into account. Lastly, in-depth interviews with game workers were conducted between 2002 and 2004 in the context of a larger study of the political economy of the Canadian games industry. The paper mentions that Canada is broadly representative of industry norms in North America in terms of workplace conditions (p. 603).

Furthermore, the struggle between game capital and game labour is analysed critically under four headings, enjoyment, exclusion, exploitation, and exodus (p. 601). Upon observations and survey based studies, the authors found gender imbalance. Additionally, according to IGDA survey reports, the research found that 60% work 46 hours or more a week. During 'crunch time' (industry term indicating unusual period of crisis in production schedule) more than 35% of respondents reported working 65-80 hours a week, with 13% doing more than 80 hours, with reports of 100 hour weeks also not unheard of (p. 607). The research mentions the reasons for such circumstances as due to design changes by publishers, delay in licensed assets, and late, buggy libraries (game glitches). Apart from this, the developers also have to face unforgiving deadlines.

This research gives an idea of the work ethics involved in the games industry in general and release date deadlines and working overtime are part and parcel of the ecosystem. In context to deadlines, EA's Patrick Soderlund had acknowledged that the reason *Star Wars*: Battlefront (2015) abandoned the single player format because of time constraints as the intention was to launch the game in time for *The Force Awakens* and that the 2017 sequel will "cure" the previous games poor critical reception (Cooper, 2016). As mentioned earlier, it can be said that this was an attempt by Disney to

synergise promotional activities for the movie, thus the restricted time for the game. The 2017 sequel, which is reported on by *ABC* (case study) makes the single player component of the game prominent, because of a lack of it in its predecessor (2015).

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is situated within Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model and in order to understand how the various elements work within the media world, it becomes imperative to describe my case study with respect to the PM. The PM was presented in the 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. They argued that "money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government to nurture their private interests to manufacture the consent of the public for the elite agenda" (Lukin, 2012, p. 99). The model implies that "media function as central mechanisms of propaganda in the capitalist democracies'"" (Klaehn, 2002, p. 148). My case study resonates with the structure of the PM and as Herman and Chomsky (2002) mention, "a PM helps us to understand how media personel adapt, and are adapted, to systemic demands. Given the imperatives of corporate organization and the workings of the various filters (*ownership, advertising, information sourcing, nationalism, and covering fire of flak*), conformity to the needs and interests of privileged sectors is essential to success (p. 304). The gargantuan popularity of *Star Wars*, the merchandising of the brand through a multibillion dollar game industry and the hype generated by information distributed by the controversial game, is a perfect mix of a good business strategy.

Furthermore in Herman and Chomsky's account, the media 'manufacture consent' because they 'serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them'; these powerful interests, thus, 'play a key role in fixing basic principles and the dominant ideologies' (Herman and Chomsky, 2002[1988]: xi); 'the powerful' are able to 'fix the premises of discourse', and in so doing they '"manage" public opinion' (p. lix). With the popularity of Disney and the

mass audience following their properties like *Star Wars*, *Marvel*, animated films, merchandising and other business ventures, "managing" public opinion and shaping them through their platforms is a perception that could fit within what Herman and Chomsky assert.

In terms of the shortcomings of the model, Herman and Chomsky state that "the PM cannot account 'for every detail of such a complex matter as the working of the national mass media' and that several secondary effects are left unanalysed and also the PM is not concerned to analyse practical, organizational or mundane aspects of newsroom work" (Klaehn, 2002, p. 149). Furthermore, the authors assert how the model focuses primarily on the patterns of media behaviour, thereby neglecting the effects of it. The five filters of the PM which will be discussed with respect to the research topic, tend to find those patterns within the chosen samples. Also the model assumes that the "the processes of control are often unconscious and meanings are 'filtered' by the constraints built into the system (Klaehn, 2002, p. 150). Also Herman and Chomsky do not propose that media only distribute propaganda. However, the PM is concerned with the forces that propel the media to play a propaganda role (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, pp. xi–xii). Furthermore, Klaehn and Mullen (2010a, 2010b) have contextualized and framed the PM within the tradition of critical sociological theory, highlighting the centrality of the concept of power in regards to conglomerates, for both sociology and the PM. According to the authors, the PM offers a way of understanding the relationships between media and society in capitalist, liberal-democratic systems that is firmly rooted within the Marxist-radical tradition, especially in the political economy approach based on a structuralist-conflict perspective.

Additionally, according to the PM, "the filter constraints are the most dominant elements in the news production process, and they continuously interact with one

another and operate on an individual and institutional basis (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 2; Rai, 1995, p. 40).

Klaehn's (2002) assessment of the various critiques aimed at the PM concludes by avowing that:

The thesis put forth in *Manufacturing Consent,* that consent in a 'free society' is manufactured through manipulation of public opinion, perhaps even more now than when their book was originally published, bespeaks journalistic self-censorship in an era in which corporate ownership of media has never been as concentrated, right-wing pressure on public radio and television is increasing, the public relations industries are expanding exponentially, and advertising values dominate the news production process. If ever there was a time for the PM to be included in scholarly debates on media performance, it is now. (p. 174)

i) Size, Ownership, and Profit Orientation of the Mass Media

According to the first filter of the PM, mass media corporations are part of bigger conglomerates and their primary motive is to earn profits. They serve the rich to reach out to people and the complexity and gravitas of concentration is a concerning issue that needs attention for the purpose of social justice.

With the aid of the media firms, the elite do whatever it takes to push their interests through media to achieve their end goals of gaining wealth. As Herman and Chomsky mention, "the dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 14). In the context of ABC/Disney, in an article in *The New York Times* from August, 1995, it is stated how Disney announced the acquisition of *Capital Cities/ ABC* Inc. for $19 billion. By owning ABC it can be safely assumed that with the deal, Disney would use the media platform to promote their interests with the audience.

With ownership comes a responsibility to cater to the interests of Disney and with the sample which is supposed to be analysed for the research, the framing of

information without mentioning the controversial game mechanics of *Star Wars*, it comes as no surprise that serving dominant interests are is a priority for media. We can look at ownership by businesses as the golden rule of he who owns the gold, makes the rules. With companies like Disney controlling and channelling information through ABC, "media would serve 'political ends' by patterning news choices, marginalizing dissent, by allowing 'the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public'" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 2). Reflecting on the acquisition of ABC in 1995 and Lucasfilm in 2012, the approach to make franchises like *Star Wars* grow through media like EA's (Electronic Arts) videogame, Disney showcase a business standard that they want to exploit through profitable franchises.

When we look at *Star Wars*: Battlefront II, the coverage of the game by *ABC* is strategic as the sample is published around the time frame of the game's release, November 17, 2017. Also with the film *The Last Jedi* that came out in December 2017, a month after the launch of the game, it would become a conduit to gain profits for the film, as a result. The game is part of the merchandise machine that creates hype and curiosity for the film counterparts. As Pedro (2011) mentions:

Media products are merchandise, and as such, their value and capacity to yield a profit depends on the laws of the market—not on public interest, democratic value, or the satisfaction of needs. It is the exchange value that predominates over the use value. Audiences must consume content designed in such a way that the time and attention they dedicate make the product profitable in terms of advertising investment. Media products must therefore be geared toward creating an audience that constitutes a group of potential consumers, rather than a group of individuals with diverse media needs or members of a democratic society. (p. 1875).

Then with respect to ownership, the 'powers that be' use mergers to take control of media firms and make calculated decisions of accessing an audience and creating profitable outcomes in that process.

Furthermore, as Bagdikian "has thoroughly documented, the number of dominant major corporations in the U.S. media market dropped from 50 in 1984 to 26 in 1987, to 10 in

1996, and finally to 5 in 2004. Added to these *Big Five* is another group of around 100 second-tier firms that also operate internationally, and which collectively handle the majority of the world's mass media (McChesney, 2008, pp. 318–320).

Because of how a capitalist market operates, Pedro (2011) points out that as corporations need to expand, evolve and take risks with diversity, there has been an urgency towards more mergers, "resulting in a greater concentration of ownership in the industry" (p. 1877). With the recent attainment of a majority of 21st Century Fox's business for $52.4 billion by Disney, the company is growing with these acquisitions.

ii) Advertising, medium for business/profit

May the 4th signifies the enduring legacy of *Star Wars* and fans across the world celebrate the day to recall the franchise's enigmatic presence it has managed to establish since its infancy. In today's times, with accessibility of the internet and the variety that is displayed by technology, people are more connected to the cultural phenomenon than ever before. GIFS, memes, images of iconic characters of *Star Wars*, whether officially by Disney or through fan art, the brand has risen exponentially because of this connectivity. In this ecosystem, visuals of *Star Wars* have become advertisements representing the icon as a whole, in a metaphorical sense. The reputation of *Star Wars* has proved beneficial to make the science fiction adventure become part of people of all ages. When we look at *ABC news.go.com* and their YouTube channel, the articles and the videos are embedded with images of iconic characters like Boba Fett, storm troopers, and *Darth Vader*, to name a few. They represent the cultural impact of the franchise and because of their familiarity, people identify with their physical persona quickly, thus *Darth Vader* posing as advertisement for the game, comes as no surprise. The readers exposed to this information are attracted by the visuals accompanied with text, and they manage to grab the attention of the reader, which according to Clark (1994) functions, "to regulate the amount of additional processing effort a stimulus

receives (p. 70). Even though in context to the advertising filter, this does not directly relate, as Herman and Chomsky (2002) remark that "ad-based media receive an advertising subsidy that gives them a price-marketing- quality edge" (pp. 14-15), it does though have symbolic significance with respect to how advertisements attract people and what they mean. With images of *Star Wars* saturating the digital realms of the internet and spreading its popularity, the audience is becoming part of this inadvertently; they are the consumers the brand is subjecting its 'image' to.

Furthermore, with the changing technology, media are adapting with it. Also Herman (2000) reflects that the first and the second filters of the PM are now more enhanced than ever in his retrospective. He says that because of the changes in the economy, the communications industries and the politics have inclined on balance to enhance the applicability of the PM. Furthermore, the first two filters of ownership and advertising have become even more important. This perspective resonates with the digital era and the ability of advertisements and mass media platforms to make their ventures more profitable as a result of diversity of the internet.

When it comes to lack of criticism of advertisers in media, in *Lies the Media tell us,* Winter (2007) covers an incident of the *Windsor Star* involving James Bruce, the former editor of the paper and publisher. The book mentions how on February 5, 1996, the *Star* ran a story which slightly criticized car dealers. In response to the story, James Bruce rendered an apology through a letter on page 4 claiming that sometimes stories come out that do not meet the high ethical and journalistic standards of 'balance,' 'fairness,' and 'factual accuracy,' for which the *Star* endeavours. Also he claimed that the story discredits the dealers and employees of members of the Windsor Essex County Dealers Association, who "adhere to the highest of ethical standards and provide their customers with first rate standards of service" (pp. 24-25). Winter questions James

Bruce's authority for making this claim of vouching for 'all' local car dealers. One could say his letter of apology contradicts standards of balance, fairness and accuracy because of taking a defensive stance for the dealers. Furthermore, Winter mentions that James Bruce's generalization appears to be based upon car dealer advertisements in his own newspaper.

When we look at this example and the ideology of media and advertisements, its goal of gaining profits and the integrated working mechanism of how news media work with advertisers becomes more problematic, especially in the digital age. With regards to *ABC* and visuals of the game appearing on the webpages, their persona is powerful to attract the attention of the reader because of the legacy constructed by *Star Wars* over the years, compelling the people to pay heed to information regarding the franchise in any shape or form.

iii) Information Sourcing

According to the third filter, the dominant elites provide media with information for news. Media get admittance to buzz reporting and sections directly from those in power and, sources that cannot be questioned for their reliability. Studies show media print press releases from buzz unedited and also show sources as being official in regards to their credibility. Adding to that, Herman and Chomsky (1988) mention:

The relation between power and sourcing extends beyond official and corporate provisions of day-to-day news to shaping the supply of "experts." The dominance of official sources is weakened by the existence of highly respectable unofficial sources that give dissident views with great authority" (p. 23).

Additionally, Herman and Chomsky (2002) express how "mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest and that the media need a steady reliable flow of the raw material of news" (p. 18).

In addition, the third filter "stresses that the opinions and analyses that are expounded by corporate and state sources are adapted to dominant class interests and market forces" (Klaehn, 2002, p. 159). With that constraint, it can be said that media would have bias towards those providing them with information. In the literature review section, I had given an example of the research done by Ahern and Sosyura (2014) on the merger deals and the press releases forwarded by firms during mergers to influence their stock prices during corporate events. It indicates how much of an influence corporations can have over media and the favouritism towards corporations giving information for headlines, comes naturally from the media. Constant deadlines and gaining breaking news headlines to be in the top spot in a competitive environment, government and corporate information sourcing create an inevitable synergetic relationship as implied by Herman and Chomsky. The bias of news then cedes to the interests of the rich and therefore succumb to their ideology, disregarding public interests and credibility in that process.

With respect to my case study, *ABC*'s reliability on Disney for information and access to the game before launch reflects the information sourcing aspect, which is why 'bias by omission' is bound to happen in their coverage for the game.

iv) Covering Fire of Flak

According to Herman and Chomsky (2002), Flak refers to "negative responses to a media statement or program. It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, law suits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action" (p. 26). The goal of corporate interests in this case is to manage public opinion so as not let it stray from their own established interests of profit making or permissible boundaries of expression. Discrediting sources, trashing stories and diverting conversation is part of the Flak machine. It is interesting how popular

game websites like *Polygon* and *Eurogamer* were vocal about the loot box issue leading up to the launch of the game on November 17, 2017. Mainstream media like *Forbes* in one of its articles (published on November 14, 2017, the same time frame my sample was published on *ABC* and its YouTube channel on October 19, November 13, and November 17) mentions:

I realize that voting with your wallet is itself an imperfect solution. It's no fun to miss out on a new game, especially a new *Star Wars* game. But enough is enough. If we ever want this kind of terrible business practice to end, we need to put our collective feet down. Ultimately, this will benefit everyone including EA, by making video games better and healthier and putting an end to this kind of self-defeating revenue scheme. (Kain, 2017).

Following closely behind on one of *CBC*'s (2017) audio podcast on November 17, one commentator regarding the game said that, "this is the dirtiest pay-to-win trash that we have ever seen" (CBC.ca). If we look at the timeline and how the game's loot box controversy started, the October 2017 multiplayer beta version (refers to the first publicly available version of a game. Public betas are effective because thousands of people may find bugs that the developer's testers did not) revealed to players about loot boxes and how the progression system encouraged them to purchase loot boxes with real money to advance more quickly in the game.

On the Star Wars Battlefront II *Reddit* page, a user voiced frustration after taking advantage of one of the micro-transaction options, purchasing 12000 Crystals for $80 (with 10% EA Access discount). Unbeknownst to the player, the Crystals could not be used to purchase the various hero characters, which are only available to buy in the form of Credits. This user wanted to purchase the *Darth Vader* hero, who at the time cost 60,000 credits (*Gamespot*, 2017)

If we look at the timeline of the controversy, as mentioned, it started in October with the release of the beta version of the game and the *Reddit* post by a player further escalated the issue (*Gamespot*, 2017). With mainstream media like *CBC* and *Forbes* voicing strong opinions about the game's economic system, especially around the time

the sample was published, *ABC*'s stance to report good things about the game, thus discrediting what was happening before and after the launch, reflects on the *flak* filter. It showcases how *ABC* was avoiding what was happening around them in regards to various media talking about the paywall feature of the game at the time.

Furthermore, within the concept of the Flak filter, the corporate sponsored research centre like The Fraser Institute in Vancouver, B.C. is also a good example. Gutstein (2005) in an article about the Donner Canadian Foundation and their contribution of half a million dollars to the institute along with $200,000 for Donner Awards in the Delivery of Social Services. The author also mentions this as a move to undermine the government and implying that the voluntary sector is doing better than the public sector in delivering social services. Donner has had a history of giving out large sums of money to right-wing causes. The article states how without Donner, the Right would have made little progress in Canada. The work handled by the division includes people who have no affiliation with science or statistics. This fits organically within the fourth filter and gives a sense of how control of opinion can be manipulated, in this case criticizing reportage of media and favouring the right inevitably.

Furthermore, Gutstein (2014) revisits the Tobacco papers which shatters former executive director of Fraser Institute Michael Walker's denial that the people funding the institute have authority over the researchers. The documents comprised letters written by Walker and Sherry Stein, the Fraser Institute's chief fundraiser. They revealed the institute setting up free-market solutions to social policy problems like drug use, poverty, *etcetera*. To achieve this, tobacco company Rothman International was giving $ 50,000 a year. As if the institute backing such corporations was not enough, a book was published to coincide with bylaws enacted by municipalities to regulate smoking in public places. The book was aimed at thwarting the bylaws, thus rescuing

the tobacco company. With Rothman's takeover by British American Tobacco (BAT), the Fraser Institute proposed to reiterate the funding as well that was being provided by Rothman initially. With further proposals consisting of large sums of money for the cause of BAT's support, the transparency of the documents emphasize the institute's role in eliminating threats against corporations who fund it. The flak machine does its job in discrediting valid concerns regarding smoking as a result (Gutstein, 2014).

Additionally, the monthly *On Balance* (OB) newsletter was a part of the National Media Archive (NMA), a division of the Fraser Institute. The first issue of the journal was published in 1988 and included articles that were critical of the media coverage of the free trade debate. The results were taken from the NMA's archive of CBC and CTV, through the method of content analysis (CA). Hackett, Gilsdorf & Savage (1992), analysed the first fourteen issues of OB and found that the "rhetorical mode of reporting results implied a politicized interpretation of news (p. 1). Study deconstructs false claims of bias by *CBC,* from the Fraser Institute. The authors found contradiction in findings along with vagueness and inaccuracies. With many loopholes within the results, it is problematic how the claim was considered "newsworthy" by columnists, thus leading to CBC director John Crispo calling the study "definitive" (Hackett *et al*, 1992, p. 2). The rhetoric of the results can be considered as an indirect gesture of being watched and to mould the decisions of newsmakers so as to benefit the elite.

The lack of freedom of thought in my opinion gives no room for objective reporting and the example of James Bruce of the *Windsor Star* as well gives us a sense of how ultimately power controls and validates information and "that there are powerful interests that routinely encourage right-wing bias in media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, pp. 27-28).

v) Nationalism

Post 9/11, the slogan 'war on terrorism' has become the ideal perspective of the West towards the oriental/East. The US government has had a history of invasions based on the slogan to 'purify' the 'oppressed' lands outside their territory. Communism or what was often nationalism then and now, are ingredients to foil the plans of the elite in amassing wealth. The constraint suggests that the media, in league with the elite, generate the fear of the 'other' and that is a way of diverting the attention of the public from more pressing matters. To manufacture consent you need a common enemy and that notion has never been more applicable than now, post the US terror attacks. The propaganda for patriotism and nationalism is used to catch the attention of the people and escalate fear of terrorists, immigrants, *etcetera*. That rhetoric was also used by now US President Donald Trump in the presidential elections to create a false sense of patriotism. As expressed in the literature review, the US government has been using the baton of 'peacekeepers' to invade the Middle East and the media has played along spreading nationalism along the way. In his assessment of the PM, Klaehn (2002) points out to what Chomsky mentions regarding the filter:

…it's the idea that grave enemies are about to attack us and we need to huddle under the protection of domestic power. You need something to frighten people with, to prevent them from paying attention to what's really happening to them. You have to somehow engender fear and hatred, to channel the kind of fear and rage – or even just discontent – that's being aroused by social and economic conditions (p. 161).

With respect to *ABC* and my case study, even though the fifth filter does not directly intervene with the game coverage, the idea of the common enemy/terrorist is embedded in the pop culture phenomena, such as *Star Wars*. The dark side/evil empire can be interpreted as the US, whereas the rebel forces led by Princess Leia, Hans Solo and Luke Skywalker can be assumed as nationalists, fighting against the empire. They can be compared to terrorists, immigrants, and the ninety nine percent fighting against

the dark side/conglomerates. Since the *Star Wars* brand is famous across the world, such prevailing themes in the stories can help corral public opinion. Fantasy is conjured as an inspiration from reality and the *Star Wars* franchise is no exception in that context. The message that describes foreign affairs by the media conjures violent images of terrorism to rile up the sentiments of the people, thus sparking a propaganda of patriotism and the urgency of uniting for a common cause of 'overthrowing' those who oppose US elite ideologies; that motive works for the people in power, thus eliminating constraints threatening their position at the upper echelon. Furthermore Chomsky (1987) mentions:

The central concern, with regard to the Third World, is to defend the right to rob and to exploit, to protect "our" raw materials. More generally, the concern is to maintain the Grand Area subordinated to the needs of US elites and to ensure that other powers are limited to their "regional interests" within the "overall framework of order" maintained and controlled by the United States. In the words of George Kennan, the leading dove among early post-war planners, we must put aside "vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization," and be prepared to use violence if necessary to achieve our objectives, not "hampered by idealistic slogans. The main enemy is the indigenous population who attempt to steal our resources that happen to be in their countries, who are concerned with vague and idealistic objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization, and who, in their backwardness and folly, find it difficult to understand that their "function" is to "complement the industrial economies of the West" (including Japan) and to serve the needs of the privileged groups that dominate these societies (p. 27).

The above quote by Chomsky aligns with the ideology of the dark side in *Star Wars*. The US like the Empire has dominated and spread its influence and in its quest to attain profits, like the dark side, it expects the people to not question its motives. Throughout its invasions in history, it has implied the 'right' to 'their' resources salvaged from the oppressed and this perception is analogous to the dark side's quest for acquiring power by control.

To sum it up in the words of Herman and Chomsky (1988):

The five filters narrow the range of news that passes through the gates, and even more sharply limit what can become 'big news,' subject to sustained news campaigns. By

definition, news from primary establishment sources meets one major filter requirement and is readily accommodated by the mass media. Messages from and about dissidents and weak, unorganized individuals and groups, domestic and foreign, are at an initial disadvantage in sourcing costs and credibility, and they often do not comport with the ideology or interests of the gatekeepers and other powerful parties that influence the filtering process. (p. 31)

These five filters will help me to understand how mainstream media like ABC under the influence of the elite, frame information that is restricted in objective opinion and contradicts the ethics of news reporting. The PM dismantles the messages of mass media and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will help to better elaborate on that in the next section.

CHAPTER III: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

For the purpose of my research, I will be using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the chosen sample articles of *ABC*, covering *Star Wars*: Battlefront II. I lay stress on the decision of selecting this method because it aims at "dealing with an oppositional study of the structures and strategies of elite discourse and their cognitive and social conditions and consequences, as well as with discourse of resistance against domination" (Van Dijk, 1995, p.19). The language and the connotations that come from it are imperative to comprehend the themes of linguistics framed and distributed by media for the people and CDA is a creative tool that situates itself within the philosophy of interpreting texts and also, "the primary activity of CDA is the close analysis of written and oral texts that are deemed to be politically or culturally influential to a given society" (Miller, 1997, p. 80). For the purpose of my research, I intend to use Huckin's perspective on CDA. He mentions that even though CDA interprets texts, it does not give exhaustive details of any particular text. It focuses on texts that stand out from a critical perspective and are interwoven within discourse as manipulative and non-democratic in nature (Huckin, 1997, p. 81).

When it comes to the implementation of the method, he expects the user to look at a given text in two stages. The first stage involves an uncritical approach while reading a text. In my opinion, this tactic helps one to get familiarized with the theme of the text from the general reader perspective. The second stage asks for a critical attitude towards the text and according to Huckin (1997), "it involves revisiting the text at different levels, raising questions about it, imagining how it could have been constructed differently, mentally comparing it to related texts, *etcetera*" (p.82). While in this stage, an emphasis is also laid on not losing sight of the first stage and as I had mentioned before, the ordinary reader viewpoint then becomes essential so as to critique

and point out elements that are manipulative and misinform the reader. Furthermore elaborating on the second stage, Huckin deploys three sub-categories consisting of reading the text as a whole, sentence by sentence and words and phrases. These three components would help to detect the various connotations imbued within the body of the text, which are generally overlooked by the reader.

When it comes to reading the text as whole, Huckin (1997) suggests the genre:

Allows the analyst to see why certain kinds of statements appear in the text and how they might serve the purposes of the text-producer, as encoded in that genre. It can also help the analyst imagine what has been left out--what could have been said, but was not (p. 83).

If we categorize the text within a certain genre, a style of writing, it would help to locate what is usually expected from the identified genre and if that information is included or not. In my chosen samples of the *ABC* coverage of the Star Wars game, it is *informative* in nature as it is an accumulation of interviews and reporting of the game. With locating the style of writing for my case study, I will be able to analyse the text as a whole, critically and efficiently and see whether the associated signifiers that should be included in the genre are present or entirely omitted.

Transitioning from going through the overall body of text critically, the next step according to Huckin is framing. It lays stress on the presentation of the body of text, its style and importantly, what perspective the author has taken. Questions like how has the author framed the information and why, what sort of perspective does the author have while writing the text and what that entails, are some of the questions that I intend to pursue while analysing my samples. In context to the game coverage by *ABC* on their website and Youtube, I would look for information and if it consists of a unified whole or not, as Huckin says that, "a text cannot simply be a collection of details" (p. 83). Also, as mentioned by Huckin, "one particularly powerful way of framing a text

is through the use of *visual aids*" (p. 83). I believe images are powerful conduits that attract people the way they are presented within any medium, in this instance, my case study. They have been significant throughout history as a source of language and information to attract us and there is a universality that revolves around them. We are saturated with images because of the accessibility of the internet and the evolution of technology and incorporating them within news coverage is part and parcel of the information highway.

Additionally in relation to *framing*, *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* are part of CDA and they focus on what is being emphasized more or less in a text, resulting in giving more relevance to information which the author wants to make prominent for the reader as opposed to information situated near the end of an article. "The top-down orientation of news reports decrees that sentences occurring early in the report will be foregrounded while those occurring later will be backgrounded" (Huckin, 1997, p. 84). I can use this tool to see what has more prominence in the game coverage and what does not. It will help to unravel meanings associated with game coverage by *ABC* and what bias, if any comes with it. Furthermore a component of backgrounding is omission, and this is important for my case study as it directs towards information not being present in the body of text, thus possibly never being realized by the reader. It insinuates that material omitted is not worthy of the audience's time in my opinion. Also as the sample gives information about the game, the author(s) infers it as media to attain an experience that is immersive and has a relationship to *Star Wars* canon (officially part of the fictional universe of a story, in this case, Star *Wars*) material. This presupposition is also an aspect of the method and will be used in my analysis.

Also Huckin asserts that the second sub category is going through the text sentence by sentence. It is an intricate look at sentences which are topics in themselves

and if those themes linger on in the next set of sentences, it leads to reinforcing the theme through the pattern for the reader, thus making it more prominent. In case of this research, this feature will be integrated to see what game features are given more relevance at the sentence level and does that sustain throughout. According to Huckin (1997), "often the topic of one sentence continues as the topic of the next, reinforcing its importance in the text. *Topicalization* is thus a form of sentence-level foregrounding: In choosing what to put in the topic position, writers create a perspective, or slant, that influences the reader's perception" (p. 85). Huckin also argues that there are *agent-patient* relations in sentences which connote agents who are active, initiating action. Contrary to that there are passive agents lacking activeness and being receivers to actions of agents in charge. Questions thus arise as to who are those agents? What motivations are being insinuated by them? To whom are the actions being addressed? Who is the audience? These associate with my samples as in my opinion the sample's informative nature cajoles the researcher to seek answers to the questions.

Similar to reading a text as a whole, at the sentence level also there is the agent-*deletion/omission* component. In context to my study, it helps focus on repetitive elements within the samples and omission of information within sentences, necessary for the purpose of informing the audience about the game and marketing the product. Furthermore, *presupposition* also occurs at the sentence level and that too is an important tool to use for the samples. It would help reveal certain inferences that could tell where the author is coming from.

Lastly, Huckins (1997) suggests going through *words and phrases* to seek "additional, special meanings (or connotations) that certain words and phrases carry" (p. 86). Metaphorical meanings can be derived on this level because of words structured within the text by the author.

Using Huckin's CDA, his perspective and application of the method, I can use the various components for the purpose of perceiving my sample critically. The outcomes of the analysis and things that could have been framed and added to provide the reader/consumer with complete information would arise as a result of using CDA. *Star Wars*: Battlefront II videogame is a valuable franchise for both Disney and the game developers making the game. The strategic marketing through *ABC* coverage and creating the hype for it through the brand and the movie released during the time of the game's launch, all are a part of a conglomerate that wants to garner profits without being questioned and the discourse that ensues in such a promotion has to have a significant rhetoric to get the attention of the audience. In an ecosystem that revolves around the manufacture of dialogue by the elite, my analysis through CDA aims to analyse it and go beyond the traditional meaning that is usually attained by the audience/reader to whom it is being targeted. Elements like foregrounding/backgrounding, omission/deletion, presuppositions, metaphors, *etcetera* then become vital to interpret the signifiers that the elite incorporate within the dialogue, usually unbeknownst to the audience. I intend to point them out and give opinions on improving on such discourse so that it is fair for the people consuming such content, in that process.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF ABC COVERAGE OF STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

The sample under review for this paper consists of two online articles written by the same author Michael Rothman, who is an entertainment reporter for ABC. There is also a video talking about the game *Star Wars:* Battlefront II. The sample under analysis is from the second half of 2017, at the time of the game's release. Based on Huckin's work on CDA and the varied tools at my disposal, this sample will be studied in order to answer my research question; *how a property like Star Wars, owned by Disney is covered by ABC?* It was important to keep in mind that texts cannot be just read on a surface level. In fact, it was imperative to decipher the intentionally-embedded meanings which the authors place within texts and the video. The signifiers within language are tethered together in relation to other words to create meaning as a whole from the texts, in my opinion, and as a result:

"Meaning of texts is inseparable from surrounding texts, be they illustrations, footnotes, conversations or teacher or student talk. The resonance that texts have to one another, both those that are close and those that are distant in time and space, have generated what the French philosopher Kristeva calls "intertextuality." We are often not aware of the extent to which our discourse is filled with the words and voices of others and how texts echo other texts. Texts attempt to position their readers in quite specific ways by evoking worlds, mental representations, or schemata that they assume are shared between them and their readers" (Miller, 1997, p. 52).

With the background of the five filters of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, the results from CDA will give insight to how words have been constructed by *ABC* to report about *Star Wars*: Battlefront II.

Motivation for study

ABC, which is owned by Disney reported on *Star Wars*: Battlefront II at the time of launch in 2017. During its release, while other game websites and mainstream news were talking about the controversial paywalls and loot boxes, the coverage of the

game by *ABC* seemed problematic because of the 'omission' of this vital information. With the evolving gaming industry, the incorporation of loot boxes and in-game economy is similar to the mobile gaming framework. Titles like Middle Earth: *Shadow of War*, Destiny, *Star Wars*: Battlefront II *etcetera* are part of this shifting ecosystem. Since the gameplay relies on these paywalls and encourages its use, its absence encouraged me to pursue the concept of media concentration with respect to these recent events. Also looking at *ABC* and their audience/readers who consume information, we have to understand where the website traffic comes from. *Alexa*, Amazon's virtual assistant calculates website traffic and the results show that the United States with 81.8% of visitors, dominates as opposed to other countries visiting the website, with 99.5% traffic visiting the subdomain *ABC*.go.com (alexa.com). Also according to Nielsen Digital Ratings (2017), *ABC* witnessed approximately 5.2 million audience in November 2017, the month *Star Wars*: Battlefront II was launched for all gaming platforms (Wallbank, 2018).

Such demographics consisting primarily of United States traffic, one can predict that the content on the media website is popular among visitors and the population would include people consuming information for entertainment/news purposes, depending on the subject matter they prefer.

Disney and EA relationship

Before venturing into the territory of inspecting the sample, we have to first understand the relationship between Disney and EA, the game publisher for *Star Wars*: Battlefront (2015) and *Star Wars* Battlefront II (2017). According to *Polygon* (2013), EA and Disney signed a multi-year licensing deal for the publisher to create *Star Wars*

games for the conglomerate. Frank Gibeau, the president of EA labels quoted *Star Wars* as saying:

"An epic world that had a powerful influence on my life." He added, "The magic of *Star Wars* is interwoven into the worlds, characters, planets and amazing battles. It is a universe that lends itself perfectly to gaming. Our agreement unlocks a whole new future of *Star Wars* games that will span consoles, PCs, tablets, mobile and more." Further in the article, Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy inspects the deal stating, "When we looked at the talent of the teams that EA was committing to our games and the quality of their vision for *Star Wars*, the choice was clear."(Sarkar, 2013).

Examining EA's history in the games industry, they have been notorious for using micro-transactions, lacking creativity, employing DRM's (Digital-rights management) in games leading to purchased titles not working, making DLC (Downloadable content) for games which should have been available in the retail versions from the start, *etcetera* (Gesualdi, 2013). With such a track record of the game publisher and the controversial EA Spouse (live journal post by Erin Hoffman in 2004, wife of EA developer) that questioned the labour practices of EA studios, elaborated in detail in the literature, the deal between Disney and EA does not give promise for good game content on part of EA resulting in the motives being questionable on the part of both companies.

Restrictions of study

Because of the limited study sample, my analysis is restricted to three data sources. This is the reason why a video will also be analyzed through CDA, even though the method primarily focuses on text. I believe the components of the method can be used in a visual medium like video as well. It consists of actor Janina Gavankar (voice for protagonist of the game, Iden Versio), being interviewed by an ABC journalist. It will give further insight into my research question, *how a property like Star Wars, owned by Disney is covered by ABC?* The themes from the two online articles will be

correlated with the video interview for the purpose of interlinking them and finding patterns and meanings embedded in them. This is also what CDA strives for and thus will be incorporated in my research.

For the purpose of the research as mentioned before, the two articles written by Michael Rothman, published on October 19 and November 13, 2017, along with the video, streamed on November 17, 2017 on YouTube, will be analyzed with the CDA tools to form a conclusion.

i) Body of text

The article "*'Star Wars': Battlefront II: New story takes place from Imperial perspective,"* was published on October 19, 2017 by Michael Rothman. It is short in text, comprising 198 words. At a first glance, one can notice the implementation of visual images and videos of the game, adorning the article. This shows how the author depends on it to attract the attention of the reader. The two embedded videos consist of the single player campaign trailer and a brief 4:45 minute overview of different aspects of the game. Whatever lacks in written content is made up through visual imagery. The title engulfs the bad guy perspective the developers have undertaken to arouse the curiosity of the reader. Tailored specifically to give importance to the single player story, which was incorporated in this game as opposed to the first title, *Star Wars: Battlefront* (2015) which only had a multiplayer component because of time constraints, the videos and imagery in the article give snippets of the story (Cooper, 2016). This move was made so as to launch the game just in time of the *Force Awakens* (December 18, 2015). In my opinion this gives an idea of how Disney wants to use interactive media game hype for the profitable *Force Awakens* film.

Also the article expands on what the trailers showcase. The author brings about a sense of hype for the game and tries to be informative by writing about the trailer and reporting about the game, an opinion piece. In regards to *genre*, the piece uses the inverted pyramid structure, which means what the reporter places first, will be considered important by the reader, as suggested by Huckin and Miller. This is achieved through the visual medium deployed by the author and the inclusion of text talking about the story and the launch trailer for the game.

Similarly, when we look at his other article, *"'Star Wars: Battlefront II' aims to appeal to all ages, genders and Evil Empire supporters,"* published on November 13, 2017, that too uses *visuals* comprised of a live action trailer for the game and in game screenshots and GIFS, supporting the text of the article. There is a similar pattern here used by the author like the previous article. Also he writes about the game in terms of the single player campaign and its female protagonist Iden Versio, through the perspective of her voice actress Janina Gavankar. Here the author again fits important information at top, stating the release of the game and how it differs from its predecessor, *Star Wars: Battlefront* (2015), because of the single player story this time.

"What that means is the game comes equipped with a new tale that fits into the official main "Star Wars" storyline, in which fans will be able to see the after-effects of "Return of the Jedi" from the perspective of the Imperial forces." (Rothman)

"We listened to the fans after the first 'Battlefront' that having a single-player campaign and story element was important," Reilly said. "We gave [EA, the developer of the game] the freedom to come to us with a story that inspired them." (Lucasfilm Games Vice President Douglas Reilly)

The above quotes imply the significance of the story and the feature of the narrative this time gains relevance because of the lack of it in the previous game (2015). Right after mentioning the single player, focus shifts to the single player ad campaign, the live action trailer imitating the story events of the game, which as a result also gains importance because of its position in the inverted pyramid structure.

Like the two examples, the video, *"Star Wars: Battlefront II" video game demo with star Janina Gavankar,* enhances the reporting on the game through the casual setup of the interview, covering the actress's experience with the game and her thoughts on it. It aims to be informative in the context of what people can expect from the game. This is achieved through the actress playing a small section of the game, while being interviewed. Clocking in at 21 minutes 33 seconds, in my opinion, it embodies a prolonged advertisement stunt, promoting the game and most importantly Disney's franchise *Star Wars.* Looking at the three examples, the underlying theme of the story mode and the integration of visuals complementing the texts and in case of the video, the enthusiasm generated by the host and the actress playing the game, generate hype. Furthermore, it is an attempt by Disney to leverage its acquired property *Star Wars*, through interactive media and synergize promotional activities for the profitable movies of the brand, in this case, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, which came out on December 15, 2017, approximately a month after the game's launch, November 17. It speaks of the company strategy to capitalize on the *Star Wars* brand through the evolving game industry and create further hype for the profitable film market because of it.

Furthermore, since *ABC* produces television programming, distributing it through its network comprising of 239 local stations (99% US television households), including eight stations owned by Disney, it only gives validity to glamorizing of the game by the *ABC* website, resulting in 'promotional tactics' of the examples of this research (Birkinbine, Gomez & Wasko, p. 14).

When it comes to *framing*, in regards to the October 19th article there are excerpts like:

A new "Star Wars" game lets you watch certain classic events from the perspective of the Evil Empire. (Rothman)

"Battlefront II" just dropped a new trailer for the EA game out next month and its single player-story mode actually takes place from the perspective of the Imperial forces. (Rothman)

This is the sequel to 2015's very successful "Battlefront" and it features a story that, much like the new books, shows and movies, is canon material. (Rothman)

The author introduces the 'new' game and emphasizes the single player trailer that came out for it. He generates curiosity in his readers by positioning words like 'classic events' and 'perspective of the Evil Empire,' to gain attention. He uses the game's 'unique' bad guy perspective in the initial sentence and can be noticed in the heading "Star Wars: Battlefront II: New story from Imperial perspective," as well. The feature of a story in the game is at the forefront and Rothman makes that important for the readers to know. Similar to this example, the November 13 article by Rothman emphasizes the inclusion of the story in the game. This is shown in:

To the delight of "Star Wars" fans everywhere, EA's "Battlefront II" is out later this week and will differ from its 2015 original in that there's now a single-player story mode. (Rothman)

"….the game comes equipped with a new tale that fits into the official main "Star Wars" storyline, in which fans will be able to see the after-effects of "Return of the Jedi" from the perspective of the Imperial forces." (Rothman)

"There's also a PlayStation ad campaign that mirrors the new story, one of the first commercial spots brought to you here exclusively by ABC News." (Rothman)

They reiterate about the single player and the initial section with the announcement of the release date of the title, sets the tone for the article. Also it gives a short summary about the PlayStation ad campaign, a marketing of the title through the console platform, despite the game also coming out on Microsoft XBOX and PC. Also mentioning the ad campaign sounds like a 'news scoop,' giving it importance and generating excitement for it. It helps focus on how EA, the game publisher, has heard the people who were disappointed by the lack of story in the previous game (2015). It

also states that they listen to the fans and thus their image is shown in a good light. The quote "listening to the fans" appears midway through the article and is cited as a subheading. It connotes the importance of implementing a single player campaign within the new game. When its predecessor (2015) came out, various review outlets and people on forums alike felt that the game should have had a story, because of the graphical prowess the game showcased and the promise it had, which is why in context to the new game (2017), the existence of story became important for EA and Disney. This act by EA aims for a broader appeal for the people, thus leading to more profits.

Furthermore, "for everyone," "personal connections," and "take experiences and hand them down to their kids," are used to create depth for the game and the franchise too. These perspectives by Rothman decide the overall *framing*, thus imbuing opinions of people associated with the game and the franchise to indicate experience that comes, if one is affiliated with the brand *Star Wars*.

As far as the video goes, it is an exclusive look at the game through the perspective of the actress Janina Gavankar. How the interviewer and the actress converse about the game and sometimes deviate to the actress's personal gaming tastes, is all orchestrated to catch the attention of the people. The host and the actress dominate the centre stage, with a television set displaying the game in the background. Like the articles, the host announces the launch of the game as the video is uploaded on the same day as that of the game, November 17, 2017, eventually leading in to the actress talking about her character Iden Versio, thus implying the importance of the story aspect. All three examples promote this extensively and the single player feature dominates the sample analysed.

In context to *visuals*, the single player trailer and the brief feature overview video are part of the October 19th article. Also iconic *Star Wars* characters like Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and the game's protagonist Iden Versio decorate the text in the form of GIF images. This approach is synonymous with advertisements too as in marketing in order to sell any product, the visuals accentuate the purpose of the product information and consumers might react to it favourably. Furthermore, it relates to the *advertising filter* of the Propaganda Model as the goal of any advertisement is to attract consumers to sell products. The visuals of the game compliment the text to attract readers and provoke them into checking out the article. The game includes popular characters and events, and the author uses visuals to add weight to the information. This similar approach can also be witnessed in Rothman's November 13th piece as well. Images and videos accompany the frame of the story. The visual aids comprising of the ad campaign, short interview with the voice artist with gamers playing in the background, and trailer for the story coincide, implying the intention of the article, to sell the product to the reader. The alleged excitement for the game throughout the interview with the actress conjures hype and that visual aspect is crucial for ABC and Disney's message. Additionally, screenshots of the main character and other iconic characters adorn the article. All these tactics are employed to create positivity for the product. The images are positioned in the centre like the previous example and are large in size. This gives weight to the story aspect of the game, the selling point for the game publishers and Disney alike.

Looking at *Star Wars* from a franchise perspective, the images of popular characters may tend to appear as mascots for the brand. Storm troopers, Darth Vader and the main protagonist can then become symbols that promote meaning for the brand they are part of and their widespread acceptance in popular culture helps to make words

more pronounced through images of these characters, which the words of the author evoke. According to Kahle and Kim (2008), "for businesses a powerful brand image created by strong brand associations can to some extent influence consumer buying behaviour. More importantly, image has the ability to evoke unique psychological patterns of behaviour in consumers and influence information processing individuals" (Kahle & Chung-hyun, 2008, p. xv). In this regard, *Star Wars* has had a long merchandizing history consisting of toys, videogames, clothing apparel, *etcetera*. The presence of the franchise reverberates through different mediums to reach out to the people and induce psychological patterns in behaviour because of its popularity, as the quote implies.

When it comes to the video interview with the actress, the third example, the set is engulfed in *visual* imagery that also, like the articles, heightens the theme of the interview. With game characters displayed during the interview, along with Janina Gavankar playing the game, the audience is exposed to the 'excitement' for the game. The visuals enhance texts and like the articles by Rothman, the video is no exception as it follows suit, thus repeating the pattern of visual aids to assist in informing the people about the game.

Furthermore, through the tools of f*oregrounding*, *backgrounding* and *omission*, further light is shed in regards to how information is relayed in the sample. When it comes to the October 19th piece, the information of the newly released trailer for the game is foregrounded along with the story, the details for the mechanics (loot boxes) of the game are backgrounded into omission, specifically in the text. In the brief overview of 'this is *Star Wars*: Battlefront II trailer,' the information on the paywall system is non-existent. The narrator mentions obtaining characters, vehicles and gear through loot crates in the trailer, but never states their true purpose and leaves out that

information, thus also leading to omission. The intention of the video is to give a summary of all elements of the game, but excluding the controversial economic system is suspicious on the part of EA, the game publisher and also importantly by the author of the article. The loot box is briefly mentioned in the video and its role in the game is never touched upon. Transitioning to the second article by Rothman (November 13), like the previous example, the single player narrative and the PlayStation ad campaign are foregrounded. Themes of 'female empowerment are touched upon midway in the article and are not elaborated in detail. The quote:

"I think there's this perception that we are suddenly now bringing female protagonists to this universe," he said. "I want to remind people that maybe the first empowered female protagonist, at least in this genre, started 40 years ago in 1977 with Carrie and Leia." (Reilly)

This quote comes under the sub heading *"'Star Wars'" and female empowerment,"* and it is interesting to note how the author foregrounds this particular theme. It states how this promotional campaign emphasizes an appeal to female gamers (and *Star Wars* fans) through the theme of female empowerment, which fits with the inclusion of female protagonists in the movie franchises, especially *Star Wars*. It resonates with the character of Rey from the new *Star Wars* films, *The Force Awakens* (2015) and *The Last Jedi* (2017) and also Jyn Erso from *Rogue One* (2016). Also the appeal to female gamers is important because they are a growing, yet still underserved market where Disney and EA see potential growth in a saturated market space of largely male gamers. According to *Statista* (2017), it was calculated that women accounted for nearly 42 percent of all gamers in the United States, a slight increase over the previous year. This gives an indication of the growing female gaming audience and why this motive of companies like Disney and EA to encourage female-centric characters would prove beneficial for the companies, especially in regards to videogames. In the age of the post-Gamer Gate (movement concerning issues of sexism and progressivism in

videogame culture), beginning in 2014, the quote by Reilly, the foregrounding of Iden Versio and her implied comparisons to Carrie Fisher and Leia, connotes the ideology of Disney and EA to market the game and importantly films at the same time towards females for company goodwill and brand positivity.

Also as Reilly remarks about Leia as the earliest sci-fi heroine, we have to remember that despite her having pivotal roles in the films, she is clad in a bikini in the *Return of the Jedi* (1983) and is sexualized in a compromised position. This facet is backgrounded into omission. The article fails to take note of that and the allegation is therefore questionable. According to the *Bechdel Test,* its three criterias are: that of two named women in a movie, they talk to each other, and about something other than men. Films like *Return of the Jedi* (1983), only passes one of the three rules, *Empire Strikes back* (1980) fails to meet any criteria and *A New Hope* (1977), manages to meet one criterion (Bechdel Test.com). Popularized by Alson Bechdel in 1985, it implies how female characters like Leia are not the 'female empowered' characters as Reilly indicates in his comments in the article. Also gameplay elements of the title are pushed into omission and are not fleshed out to inform the reader as it should have been. Films have always included women, but including Leia and promoting feminism are two different things.

But in addition to the new story, fans can still play with some of their other favourites in multiplayer modes with Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and newbies like Rey and Kylo Ren. There's also Darth Vader. (Reilly)

Looking at the above quote, in the game, the iconic *Darth Vader* are locked behind the game paywall system and here the way the author uses Reilly's quote, it implies the mention of *Vader* as an afterthought by him. Adding to this further, the audience read the article without seeing information on the game's subject on micro-transactions which ask the player to spend real world money to acquire locked content

is excluded and the reader. It is omitted as well. It could have been mentioned to inform the reader of what they can expect if they purchased the game. The absence of this information only speaks about the author's lack of transparency. The commercial and single player are given more importance and the mechanics that drive the game topography are absent from the article.

Furthermore, looking closely at the third example of the video interview of actress Janina Gavankar (November 17), the single player again is foregrounded and thus again nothing is shown regarding the acquisition of hero characters and the gear, similar to what I observed in the two articles. Janina Gavankar is playing throughout the interview and the viewer does not see her accessing loot boxes. This is subtly omitted. The environment is controlled and only two levels are played by the actress and none of them contribute to giving information about the various game mechanics. In between there are snippets of the actress doing motion capture, but then again that does not tell much to the viewer about the paywalls embedded within the mechanics. Also the semi-formal setting could have allowed for the opinions of the players situated in the background, but their lack of involvement in the interview only works against the article, when it comes to transparency.

Unlike *ABC*, mainstream media like *CBC* discusses the consumer backlash against the game because of micro transactions on their website through podcast, the same day the video of the actress was streamed, November 17, 2017, calling it "dirtiest pay-to-win trash, as I had mentioned earlier (CBC.ca). It gives one an idea of how ABC glorifies the game, resonating with Chomsky's propaganda model, specifically the three filters as that of ownership, advertising and sourcing, when we look at what the examples have offered to the reader so far, through CDA. The symbiotic relationship

between *ABC* and Disney can be observed through the examples so far, especially how the interests of *ABC* are tethered with that of its elite owner.

When we talk about *presupposition*, words like 'canon material' in the article (October 19), tend to portray the game as revolutionary and the only interactive medium through which fans and consumers alike can get the best immersive *Star Wars* experience. This again harkens back to how Disney and EA synergize promotional activities for the profitable movies. The words used by Rothman then imply the importance of movies and how their essence within the game makes it a conduit to 'experience' *Star Wars*. Looking closely at the November 13th article, the heading *"'Star Wars: Battlefront II' aims to appeal to all ages, genders and Evil Empire supporters"* and also the content, presupposes the fact that because of the inclusion of a female protagonist, the publisher understands the importance of gender diversity and because of the appeal of *Star Wars*, people of different ages, sex and aficionados of games and the franchise will have an experience like no other. It is an attempt by the author to aim for a broader appeal, which would lead to more sales and eventual profit earnings. Following along the same lines as these two examples, the video (November 17) presupposes the game being ground-breaking. This is implied through numerous dialogue exchanges between Gavankar and the host and the depiction of the game throughout the process adds to that presupposition. Furthermore, the title of the article, especially "Evil Empire supporters" is analogous in implication to the fifth filter of the Propaganda Model, *nationalism*. U.S. President Ronald Reagan had used the phrase 'evil empire' in the context of the Soviet Union during his presidency and recalling this aspect in relation to the heading of Rothman's article, does resemble the filter as a result. As I had said in the theoretical framework, the dark side of the *Star Wars* narrative relates to the US and the country's exploits throughout history in terms of occupation

of other countries. Reagan's view on the Soviet Union being an evil empire does spark a similarity between the heading of the example and the filter in that respect as the Soviet Union then metaphorically takes the place of the rebels in the *Star Wars* narrative, people to be feared and who do not follow 'the Empire's'/US ideology .

ii) Sentence level analysis

For the purpose of *topicalization* in the article (October 19), I would like to point out quotes like:

A new "Star Wars" game lets you watch certain classic events from the perspective of the Evil Empire. (Rothman)

"Battlefront II" just dropped a new trailer for the EA game out next month and single player story mode actually takes place from the perspective of the Imperial forces. (Rothman)

The trailer for the game features Iden Versio, played by "True Blood" and "The League" actress Janina Gavankar, as she watches the Empire crumble at the hands of Luke Skywalker and the Rebel army. (Rothman)

"…the story will span several years between the events of "Episode VI" and "The Force Awakens." That means there could be tie-ins for the upcoming "Last Jedi" out in December. (Rothman)

From a text perspective, these sentences imbue Rothman's implementation of repetitiveness so as to reemphasize the story element of the game. The topicalization here is evident as one can notice how he introduces the game in the first sentence and transitions towards the single player trailer, eventually expanding on the story and how it fits within film narrative version of *Star Wars,* promotional synergy tactic for the movies through the medium of videogames. The theme of the story is present in the sentences.

"…step into the boots of Iden Versio in the new single player campaign" (video)

In the trailer that is a brief overview of the game, the aspect of the story is presented in the beginning. It has to be noted how within text, the author comments about nothing

but the star attraction of the game, the narrative of the single player. The inclusion of the actress and her affiliation to 'True Blood' and 'The League' is used by the author to create further hype. This is further accentuated in the video of the overview, which starts off with actor John Boyega's introduction, the actor playing Finn in the cinematic versions. The accessibility of the actors in this medium speaks of the power displayed by Disney through various properties they own and most importantly fits within the *information sourcing* filter of the propaganda model, which in this case is the roping in of the actors of the film to talk about EA's game and *ABC* eventually using that material for reporting on the game. With such resources available to media like *ABC*, the existence of bias only becomes apparent in my opinion.

According to Gavankar, the story will span several years between the events of "Episode VI" and "The Force Awakens." That means there could be tie-ins for the upcoming "Last Jedi" out in December. (Rothman)

This particular quote catches the curiosity of the reader and fans alike, because of its association with the films. Rothman places this quote of the voice actress within the article to highlight the importance of the game narrative. Employing the story as canon to the film gives the game a form of validity within the franchise universe in my opinion. Also it speaks of the synergy of promotional strategies for the profitable movies for Disney as mentioned before. As Jenkins (2006) comments, "extension, synergy, and franchising are pushing media industries to embrace convergence" (p. 19). On that note, it then only becomes credible for the repeated connection of the game with the films in the examples to achieve more profits for conglomerates like Disney.

We receive information from the author and also through Disney, sourcing it. It is important to ask the opinions of the players and what they feel about the game, but they have no agency, compared to the host and Janina

Gavankar. Also the game is aimed at people to buy for the *Star Wars* 'experience'
and they are the recipients of the information given by ABC. They are exposed
to it with a flair of universal positivity through colourful visuals, juxtaposed with
the brand. Additionally, when we factor in the omission component, the article
again fails to specify the multiplayer aspect in the text. It confirms in regards to
this case study how convergent media have failed in providing the people with
'complete' information for the game. Also we do however get to see some facets
of the multiplayer through the overview trailer and how that ties in with the game.
But I observed here as well that the narrator of the video only mentions the
availability of iconic vehicles, gear and characters from loot crates and in doing
so omits the in-game economic system.

*"...be it a trooper, a vehicle, reinforcements or Hero (characters). You can find
them in crates or craft and upgrade them using parts."* (Video)

The above quote reflects the adamant marketing campaign in the context
of leaving out information that could be controversial and incorporating other
elements like story and actors to divert the attention of the reader. It mentions
how various gear can be crafted by using specific items in the game and does not
expand on 'crates,' as they are the controversial loot boxes. Also iconic
characters like Finn and Captain Phasma are introduced in the overview trailer
and how they can be obtained is presented in a vague fashion, thus not giving the
reader a complete picture of what to expect. Certain elements related to obtaining
items in the game are backgrounded extensively.

Also when we look at the video, at the sentence level, quotes like
"this is a *Star Wars* experience like none other with greater depth and progression

like never before," implies a tone that portrays the game as an interactive media that gives players an unrivalled experience. This presupposition of the fact that this title is the only conduit to 'be part' of the brand concerns me. Unbeknownst to the reader, it generates a hype for the product, which escalates further, in this case with the *Last Jedi* film released a month after the game's launch on December 15, 2017.

Like the previous example, the other article (November 13) on the sentence level also showcases repeated motifs.

EA's "Battlefront II" is out later this week and will differ from its 2015 original in that there's now a single-player story mode. (Rothman)

"What that means is the game comes equipped with a new tale that fits…"(Rothman)

"The game and story also follow in the footsteps..."(Rothman)

"Reilly said having Versio at the forefront of this story…" (Rothman)

"The story from this game is just one of the more recent pushes from the Lucasfilm Story Group to fill in…" (Rothman)

"We listened to the fans after the first 'Battlefront' that having a single-player campaign and story element…" (Reilly)

But in addition to the new story, fans can still play with some of their other favorites in multiplayer modes with Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and newbies like Rey and Kylo Ren. There's even Darth Vader. (Rothman)

There are numerous times when the single player campaign topic is prominent in the story and is topicalized. It is repeated like the other article by Rothman, to accentuate the importance of its creation just for the game. Rothman reiterates that unlike the first game (2015), which only had a multiplayer component to it, *Star Wars*: Battlefront II has a single player narrative that exists within the movie universe, thus making it canon. The story feature is repeated to give it importance. Additionally, one interesting thing to note about the last quote above is that the multiplayer element is a huge part of the game and it is cited in

one sentence versus two for the single player, despite being a prominent part of the game. Because of the integration of economic system within the multiplayer, this motive signifies the backgrounding of the component to avoid bring up the topic of micro-transactions. Furthermore, I will point to some quotes to reiterate how conglomerates like Disney and EA would like to tap the female audience through their products:

"Reilly said having Versio at the forefront of this story shouldn't surprise "Star Wars" fans…" (Rothman)

"I want to remind people that maybe the first empowered female protagonist, at least in this genre, started 40 years ago in 1977…" (Reilly)

"Janina is just an extension of that legacy," Reilly said. (Reilly)

To recall what I had observed earlier regarding the 'female empowerment' stance that Douglas Reilly implies and Rothman includes in his article, looking at the sentence level, it is obvious how the above quotes signify strong female characters in *Star Wars* and that creates a good image for the company encouraging gender diversity. The author forgets that there have been characters like Lisa Carol (Grace Kelly), from *Rear Window* by Hitchcock in 1954 and she had important role in the film. When we observe the franchise revenue comprising of all *Star Wars* films so far, it is $42,850,000,000 (statisticbrain.com). With that in mind, it becomes imperative for the company to adopt approaches that lead to efficient growth for the franchise. Furthermore there are quotes:

"There's also a PlayStation ad campaign that mirrors the new story, one of the first commercial spots brought to you here exclusively by *ABC* News." (Rothman)

"And that was the idea behind the new PlayStation campaign and commercial…"

"Reilly and Yee said it took months to film the new spot…" (Rothman)

Yee said the idea of the campaign and the game…(Rothman)

"It really gave the piece heart," Reilly said of the concept. (Reilly)

The ad campaign is given importance by the author and it imitates the story of the game. As a result, this directs us yet again to the repetitiveness of the narrative element introduced for the game and constant stating of that fact overshadows facets of micro transactions in the game leading to omission/deletion of the gameplay mechanic. Also "brought to you hare exclusively by *ABC* news," gives a sense of uniqueness, implying that the information given on the website makes *ABC* distinct from other media in that context. Comparable to the above mentioned articles in context to sentence level analysis, the video (November 17), of the actress interviewed by the host falls victim to the receptiveness of the introduction of a story and themes of relationship the game has with the films, to reemphasize Disney's profitable ventures in the film market, through the videogame medium of the franchise. We see that in quotes like:

"I play Commander Iden Versio. She is a commander for special ops Imperial team." (Actress)

"There is a book, which is a prequel and has all of the backstory on this character and the dawn of the Inferno squad which takes you right into this game which starts on the moon of Endor." (Actress)

"…in that beautiful forest, which they scanned for the game. So they went and scanned the actual forest that is in the movie. It is crazy stunning to look at." (Actress)

"This picks up where Return of the Jedi left off. You are playing here from the perspective of the Empire, you are the bad guys." (Host)

The initial set of dialogues between the host and Gavankar revolve around the story. From one conversation leading to another, the story takes the centre stage yet again. The repeated pattern like the previous examples can be witnessed here as well. The theme of the conversation is restricted to what to expect from the story and the part where the actress compares the forest of the

game as "stunning" displays the game in positive light from the actress giving voice to the character. Also she tries to add intrigue to the narrative by connecting it with the films. Furthermore looking at the last quote, "…from the perspective of the Empire, you are the bad guys," I would like to remind how the Empire's perception and activities resemble that of the US and this particular quote reiterates that notion. I can say that because of the highlighting of the story at the start of the interview, it is *topicalized* at the *sentence level*. At the 5 minute 20 second mark, the actress mentions a "third act to the story" which implies about the story as well. Quotes like "So you have always been a huge gamer" by the host asking about the actresses' gaming background insinuates that it is a way to appeal to the female gamer in my opinion. She is pictured as someone who has a gaming background to justify her perceptions of the game as important for the viewers. The conversation between these two people implies that they are in charge and that they are the ones initiating the action, what with promoting the game and playing it on stage. The whole segment does not mention micro transactions and loot boxes, which are thus omitted entirely. The video had a chance of showcasing different parts of the game, but that is a missed opportunity in this case. Additionally, close to the end of the interview Gavankar describes the game as "it's great," "super beautiful," and "it took so many people to make this thing." Her words presuppose the game as something that needs to be bought because of its unrivalled essence and also because of the devotion invested by the developers to realize it. In the midst of the interview the host also expresses how she can just watch the actress play the game as it looks good and "compelling," cementing my opinion of portraying it in a fashion that puts the game on a pedestal and as a must-buy. Also when the host mentions in the middle

of the interview that "everyone out there who plays it, gets to be a part of it" implies that in order to celebrate *Star Wars* and embrace the pop culture icon, the game is a conduit just for that.

iii) Words and Phrases

In this level of analyses, the article (October 19) brings forth *connotations* by incorporating words/phrases having deeper meanings. I noticed how through words like 'canon material' and 'very successful,' the author exploits the brand name's popularity to infuse hype for the game in the article. When I looked further at the overview video explaining the different facets of the game, I observed through words like 'experience like no other,' 'thrilling,' and 'greater depth and progression' the narrator for that does what the author does in his article, he creates bombastic propaganda. Additionally, phrase like "*Star Wars* icons" in context to the game only reaffirm the author's intentions of using popular characters to sustain the interest of the reader in this short article. The November 13th article is analogous to the Rothman's previous piece in word/phrase context as it gives prominence to the *Star Wars* brand. Phrases like "we listened to the fans…," and "we gave EA the freedom to come to us…," by Reilly, gives off connotations of how a company like EA, were given creative 'freedom' especially knowing their background and the hate towards them among the gaming community in general. It also leads to suspicion on Disney's part to encourage them to make the games, implying how both companies strive for profits. Such quotes dominate most of the column. The supposed factual information regarding what the game is about is only minimal in nature. It is layered with rhetoric of what *Star Wars* means to people and the participation of developers and Disney alike towards bringing diversity of gender through

videogames through the medium. It is a medium that nurtures those people who love *Star Wars* and allegedly also those who seek strong progressive female characters in games and really, any living, breathing potential consumer. Game websites like *IGN* in its review mentions how Iden Versio is given a "decent job" of introducing her, but fails to have a "believable arc" because of the fragmented story (Marks, 2017). This gives an idea of how the character does not reach her full potential because the 'story' is lacking in cohesiveness. Adding to the idea of character development, in my opinion the roles played by female characters should be central to the narrative depending on where they are situated and how they serve the plot, whether games or films, but because of the story holding back the main protagonist, Iden Versio's character growth is hindered as a result.

Lastly, closely following behind the themes of Rothman's articles, the video (November 17), employs words like 'it's beautiful,' 'I get to be a part of *Star Wars*,' and 'it's super emotional' are part of the rhetoric from the discourse. The focus of the presentation aligns with the positivity of the game, using persuasive rhetoric in the process. '…you enjoy this so much,' 'great' and 'beautiful' are foregrounded explicitly. They act as metaphors indicating a digital realized world of a popular culture icon that nurtures the fan base and at the same time enlisting the people to be part of the world, which is *Star Wars*. Within this realm created by the discourse, there is no room for controversies regarding micro transactions and that is what could be highlighted through *ABC*, as was done by *CBC*, but Disney controls the strings from above.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

ABC/Disney, *Star Wars:* Battlefront II report is a quintessential example of how Disney uses their media platform to inform about the game partially (micro-transactions and loot boxes) and at the same time use interactive media to create hype for the profitable films in that process. The results obtained from the analysis of the *ABC* articles and YouTube video align with ideas stated in the literature section. With the help of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the themes of media concentration and ownership are realized in this research as well, but what it brings new to the table is that conglomerates like Disney do not want to have missed opportunities in regards to *Star Wars* as a profitable medium, especially after its acquisition by the corporation in 2012. Upon close inspection of the sample through CDA, it is clear that the company wants to exploit its *Star Wars* property to synergize promotional tactics for the profit oriented films, especially now when the films are released on a yearly basis. The study shows how the sample wants to also appeal to the female audience through videogames as they are male dominated still. It signifies Disney's criteria to use films and games as outlets promoting diversification, thus creating a symbiotic rapport between both films and games in that context. Additionally, with the information about the game on the ABC platform and the exclusion of information relating to paywall features in the game, the *ownership* filter of the propaganda model comes into perspective. This is so because of *ABC*'s responsibility to 'serve' the interests of the corporation that owns them, especially with the relationship between them in terms of getting access to information and revenues from Disney. Further adding to that, when I look at the conclusion, the existence of implicit flak, the fourth filter of the model does come into perspective too.

Although another aspect of flak is when other media criticize Disney/*ABC* for their coverage, but such is not the case regarding this case study. Although the coverage by *Forbes* and *CBC* criticise the incorporation of loot boxes in the game, along with game journalism websites like *Polygon* and *Eurogamer* talking about it before, during and even after the launch of the game, ABC ignores it by not mentioning the paywall feature of the game and instead primarily focusing on the 'newly' introduced story component for the title. Information about in-game paywalls and the economic system that prohibits players from accessing iconic game characters is simply discredited by 'omission,' when it comes to reporting it on their website and the YouTube video.

With changing times, the videogame industry has adopted certain questionable motives that serve capitalist agendas. Battlefront II is like many other existing games nowadays that have adapted to the shifts within the game industry to use micro-transactions and paywalls so as to generate revenue sources for companies and game developers. It is similar to mobile games and MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) like World of Warcraft, Destiny, *etcetera.* The analysed examples exclude the incorporation of this controversial element, which is a vital part of the game's mechanic structure, thus further adding to what the literature implies in terms of media concentration and its adverse effects on information distribution by media.

With *ABC* owned by Disney, like other media the motivation to give 'complete' information to the public has been lacklustre on the part of the company. The results of the research speak for themselves in that sense. All three examples promote *Star Wars*: Battlefront II in a good light and there is no criticism or defects in the coverage.

With no mention of the controversial micro-transactions and loot boxes, it only shows the absence of honesty by *ABC* in its coverage of the game. It reiterates that concentration of media and Disney's profitable ventures from its costly properties gives hype but does not justify as legitimate information for the readers/viewers, specifically in regards to 'complete' product details.

Disney and *ABC* want to reach out to readers through sheer brand goodwill like that of *Star Wars* and market it through means of gender 'diversity' and importantly, the inclusion of a story in the game this time around, unlike its 2015 predecessor, *Star Wars*: Battlefront.

The questionable practices of Disney in regard to media concentration becomes more prominent as a result. *The Propaganda model* and the five filters elaborate how media operate and the hierarchy of power in the capitalism ecosystem and my study supports the notion of elite control. The literature illustrates the role of media during pivotal moments in recent history and how it has been tightly controlled by the government to express propaganda, whether the post 9/11 events, the topic of terrorism, the image of the east through the lens of the west, Disney's conglomerate strategy and EA's controversial history of making developers work like slaves and meet arduous deadlines. The research might be limited because of the only available three examples from *ABC*, it does though give an insight into the workings of the media in relation to Disney and what that means in terms of corporate influence. Future research in this area along with a separate analysis of micro-transactions in videogames could shed light on the current game industry business trend and add to this research.

As Winter (2007) puts it, "media help us to formulate our views, ideas, beliefs, and oftentimes they actually shape our views because what they tell us is all we know about an issue" (p. 2). His thought resonates with what is going on recently and in relation to information about the game and how it has been relayed by *ABC*. Readers following *Star Wars* or ABC are susceptible because of the rhetoric. As a result, they inadvertently are victims in this grand exploitative motive on the part of conglomerates like Disney. In *The Mickey Mouse Monopoly*, former Walt Disney CEO Michael Eisner is quoted as saying, "We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective" (Sun, Picker, Fordham, Mizell, Berkower & Inouye, 2002). The quote reflects Disney's capitalistic tenets like every other major corporation. With the recent acquisition of brands like *Marvel* and *Star Wars*, the profit machine for Disney is churning rapidly.

The day the game was launched on November 17, 2017, EA decided to remove the micro-transactions from the game amidst the backlash from the people. This does give hope to the fact that people will not succumb to such practices despite brand names or culture industry icons. EA decided to remove micro-transactions from the game. Patrick Söderlund, the chief design officer of EA was quoted as saying, "I'd be lying to you if I said that what's happened with Battlefront and what's happened with everything surrounding loot boxes and these things haven't had an effect on EA as a company and an effect on us as management. We can shy away from it and pretend like it didn't happen, or we can act responsibly and realize that we made some mistakes, and try to rectify

those mistakes and learn from them." (Webster, 2018). Chomsky (2002)

mentions:

"The public has become drastically more dissident and sceptical. The reality is that people either know or can quickly be convinced that *they* are not involved in policy-making, that policy is being made by powerful interests which don't have much to do with them" (pp. 67-68).

Adding to the above quote, Chomsky (2002) mentions how Haiti, an

impoverished country, during the late 1980s, created an organized civil society.

The slum-dwellers and peasants succeeded in creating unions, grassroots

organizations, and network of popular groupings that managed to take over the

government, despite lack of resources (p. 386). He implies that ultimately the

people have power to overthrow corporations looking out to nurture their own

profit making endeavours. Looking at how the gaming community responded to

the loot box fiasco of *Star Wars*: Battlefront II, ultimately leading to its shutdown

by EA, the gaming movement against such notorious business practice is a good

example of how change can be instigated under such odds. So, despite the

propaganda of Disney/*ABC,* the collective intolerance of the people and the

coverage by other media regarding the controversy, forced EA to give up the

feature in the game.

This can be considered as an ineffective propaganda, but only

temporarily as it is only a small fish in a big pond. If we reflect on the beginnings

of micro-transactions, they have been a huge component of mobile games like

Candy Crush and The Elder Scrolls IV: *Oblivion*, which came out back in 2006

for Xbox 360 and PC. Over the years with the transitions in the game industry,

it has led to game publishers and developers alike adopting such practice more

frequently when it comes to console gaming. With the current trend, it can be

assumed that at present micro-transactions are here to stay despite the small victory attained over Battlefront II. Future investigation regarding the pattern in this trend could update this research and also shed light on the notorious business practice and how other media cover that trend, similar to *ABC* on *Star Wars*: Battlefront II.

Lastly, I want to emphasize on the central problem here, which is both Disney and EA's goal to maximize profits through greed. This motive keeps with the predictions of the PM. The corporate greed of EA led to loot boxes and the eventual public protests. The failure to rein in EA by Disney exasperated the problem. Unfettered neoliberalism is at fault and the incorporation of such business practice in games for children, which imitate casino gambling, is a serious issue that needs to be looked into further.

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