

# **Selling Star Wars Battlefront II: A Paratextual analysis of video game trailers**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a paratextual analysis of the trailers of the game Star Wars: Battlefront II. Trailers of a game which was met with some controversy on release. This analysis focusses on the connection of the trailer to the Star Wars franchise to see how the trailers try to influence fans. The analysis shows how trailers can be used to influence fans in order to increase the hype surrounding the game and amplify the message of the trailers. Turning fans into brand ambassadors of the game. The success of the hype before the game lead to scale of the controversy when the game did not perform as fans had hoped. The analysis shows why it is important to stay critical of promotional paratext and to keep examining their intentions.

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# **Selling Star Wars Battlefront II: A Paratextual analysis of video game trailers**

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At the end of 2012, Disney bought LucasFilms for 4 billion dollars. After the announcement of a new trilogy, another big decision followed in 2014 that would drastically change the franchise. LucasFilms announced that they would partially reset the *Star Wars* continuity. The only elements from all previous publications that would be part of the official continuity were the original films and the *Clone Wars* animated film and series. This was done "... in order to give maximum creative freedom to the filmmakers and also preserve an element of surprise and discovery for the audience" (*Starwars.Com* 2014). It also negated the official continuity status of all the *Star Wars* games. Over three years later the first game in the *Star Wars* continuity, named *Star Wars Battlefront II* (SWBII from here on), was released by EA DICE on 17 November 2017<sup>1</sup>. This new addition to the continuity is what the research will revolve around, since the future of using games to expand the *Star Wars* continuity will be influenced by the success of this game. In a broader context, SWBII will also influence the way and to what extent games as a medium can be used in developing and broadening universes of other franchises. SWBII is especially relevant since the release was met with a fair amount of controversy (GameSpot Staff 2017).

The single-player mode of SWBII tells a story that will fit into the larger *Star Wars* continuity. This form of storytelling, telling a coherent story across multiple media platforms, is called transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006, 95-96). *Star Wars* was well known for using this type of storytelling, by doing so creating a large story world across many different media. All these media were part of the *Star Wars* transmedia franchise, colloquially referred to as the *Star Wars* extended universe. Now that most of the *Star Wars* story world has been reset, it has started to expand again. It is now at the point where transmedia storytelling through games is reintroduced with SWBII.

It is important for such an instalment of the game to succeed. The promotion of the game is therefore important. Trailers and other promotional material can focus on the existing fanbase of *Star Wars*, by promoting it as part of the *Star Wars* universe, for example. These are valuable to analyse since they are part of what is called paratext. This is a part of media that is often neglected. (Gray 2010, 8). Paratexts are texts that are not part of the main 'text' itself, in this case the main text being SWBII. Paratexts can be many things, disk cases, posters, reviews, trailers and the like (Gray 2010). Gray shows why paratexts are important to analyse. He showed how they could frame and influence the way people perceive the actual media text itself. They can, for example, create meaning before the actual text is consumed, which will influence the perception of the text. They "give us the resources with which we will both interpret and discuss that world" (Gray 2010,

1). This especially true for trailers. “As particularly strong paratexts [...] trailers and previews may dictate how to read a text” (Gray 2010, 51). The research will, therefore, focus on the trailers of the game that were published prior to the game’s release.

It is interesting to see how they promote a game that is in the position of both being in the Star Wars story world, as well as being the first game in the new continuity. The research will, therefore, focus on the following question: *How do the trailers as part of Star Wars Battlefront II’s paratext promote its connection to the Star Wars transmedia franchise?* With this question, it will be possible to reveal the methods with which the game appeals to fans. To answer this question, the analysis will examine which elements create a link with the transmedia franchise. The focus will be on how SWBII is established in the trailers as an important fan text by looking at the connection to Star Wars and what it offers in this connection to Star Wars. This will be done in a manner similarly to Gray (2010).

To properly look at the trailer as paratext, a paratextual analysis will be employed. An analysis of paratext also lends itself to look at the commercial side of the trailers, since they are vital to the industry in a commercial sense; “the industry desperately needs its paratexts to work, since both industry and audiences habitually count on paratexts’ relative success or failure as an index to the success or failure of the text as a whole” (Gray 2010, 39). The research will therefore mainly look at the trailers using the perspective of political economy. With this angle, the focus will be on how the game was promoted before its release to satisfy the commercial interests at hand. Gray’s work lends itself well to this approach since it contains a similar perspective.

It is important to understand the context of the culture and practices in which SWBII and its trailers are released. Transmedia storytelling is a practice within convergence culture as described by Henry Jenkins (Jenkins 2006, 95-96). The Star Wars franchise falls within convergence culture as a transmedia franchise. An important part of a media franchise is that “... media franchising pursues horizontally multiplied production of media related through some shared, familiar content ...” (Johnson 2013, 41). It is important to create many different media related to one another. This is what happened to one of Disney’s franchises, namely the Marvel Cinematic Universe, another franchise that has been bought by Disney. It is organised in a way that the multiplied production can proceed in a way with minimal licensing. This way there can be more control over the media and its content (Johnson 2012). The Star Wars franchise is structured in a similar way. The licence for Star Wars games is solely licenced to EA (*Starwars.Com* 2013). This way it is easier to keep control over the Star Wars games that are to be released. In order to make transmedia franchises successful in the age of media convergence, media corporations increasingly rely on fans (Hassler-Forest 2016, 43). This is why the success of SWBII is also reliant on the fans.

## POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PROMOTION

First and foremost, it is important to look at these media from the perspective of political economy, since political economy factors are an important influence on these media and can shape them. Promotional paratexts like trailers are often intended for fans since fan culture has proven to be a source of revenue. Fans are willing to spend more money on their respective fandoms, for instance on purchasing special editions. In the case of SWBII this was the case with pre-orders and a deluxe edition (Hassler-Forest 2016, 45; Reed 2018). Fans can also be important in another role than that of consumer. While devoted fans can often remain a niche, they can become a brand ambassador and in that capacity help interest lesser fans and the general public (Hassler-Forest 2016, 107). This way fans can be used to generate hype. Therefore, it helps to get fans hyped with paratext such as trailers. It is therefore important to analyse how trailers address and try to interest the fans of Star Wars.

One of the things that interest fans of these kinds of transmedia story worlds is "... their 'drillable' nature: highly accessible to casual audiences but deliberately layered to offer rewards to 'fannish' groups willing to invest more time and energy." (Hassler-Forest 2016, 16). Not only the prospect of new stories or experiences but also the incorporation of known, recognisable elements like characters that cross over from other media in the story world help establish fan interests.

Crossover characters act as catalysts for new stories and new marketing opportunities, while also functioning as familiar narrative signposts directing fans to important moments and events within the transmedia universe of Star Wars. (Geraghty 2017, 128)

To be popular among its fans, new media instalments in a franchise must offer new experiences to be drillable but also include known elements as a signal to fans of the importance of these new stories and experiences. This is precisely the connection to the rest of the franchise that is the focus of this analysis.

Something that makes games unique in this regard is the immersion and player agency they offer. This means that for fans, a game offers an extra experience, or as game critic and historian J.C Herz expresses it in the context of the MMORPG Star Wars Galaxies, 'not just to press your nose against the window of this universe, but to actually be a living, breathing part of it, and have thousands of people implicitly acknowledge that you are part of it' (2002, 119). While this experience is limited by the rules defined in the algorithms, players still have agency to a certain extent (Glas 2010, 67). This extra value is what is marketable to fans. This is what can peak additional fan interest compared to other franchises, brother game franchise Battlefield for example, which features settings from history. For this reason, the focus will be on the way the trailers convey the connection to Star Wars.

To properly look at the trailers, it is important to see them as part of SWBII's paratext. It is therefore important to get a proper understanding of what paratext means. Genette is the academic who first coined the term. He defines it as something that surrounds the text. "More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold" (Genette 1997, 1-2). Moreover, it

... constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that - whether well or poorly understood and achieved - is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (Genette 1997, 1-2).

In short, the paratexts surround primary text and readers interpret these primary texts through them. In his book, he focusses mostly on literary work, but he also states that paratexts could be used to look at other forms of media.

For Genette, paratextual analysis requires the study of the characteristics of the paratextual message, which are its spatiality ("determining its location"), temporality ("the date of its appearance and, if need be, its disappearance"), substantiality ("its mode of existence, verbal or other"), pragmatics ("the characteristics of its situation of communication - its sender and addressee"), and functionality ("the functions that its message aims to fulfill") (Genette 1997, 4).

Gray has done just that in his book *Show Sold Separately* (2010). Gray expands and builds upon Genette definition of paratext. He also noted on how it steers the perception of the text. "Much of the media's powers come not necessarily from being able to tell us what to think, but what to think about, and how to think about it." (Gray 2010, 3) For example, watching a trailer determines what can be thought about by what was shown in the trailer, and how to think about it is determined by how it was shown in the trailer. Even if someone disagrees or dislikes the trailer, the what and how is still determined by the trailer.

This is especially true for promotional material like trailers. They "... construct early frames through which would-be viewers might think of the text's genre, tone, and themes." (Gray 2010, 2) The promotional material is meant to generate hype. While many consumers dislike hype, it is also relied upon. "Decisions on what to watch, what not to watch, and how to watch are often made while consuming hype, synergy, and promos, so that by the time we actually encounter "the show itself," we have already begun to decode it and to preview its meanings and effects." (Gray 2010, 3)

One of the challenges regarding paratext is distinguishing between text and paratext. In the case of SWBII, one could see SWBII as paratext for the films in the franchise informing and influencing your reading of those films. It is also possible to see it the other way around, where

the films are part of the paratext of SWBII. Gray, therefore, states that the distinction is made for an analytical purpose. Paratext actually constitutes a part of the text itself (2010, 34-35).

Gray also defines some important properties that are relevant to analyse. Furthermore, he makes a time distinction between the perspective of the consumer and the intended order of reading. He distinguishes between entryway paratexts and in medias res paratexts. Entryway paratexts are those that determine and control the entrance into a text, in medias res paratexts police certain readings during or after viewing the text (Gray 2010, 18).

It is also important to note who are targeted and who are alienated by the paratext. Paratexts can function as gatekeepers for the text as a filter that must be passed on the way to the text itself. It will only greet certain audiences. (Gray 2010, 17) It is possible to analyse who the paratext was intended for. This is much more specific than Genette's addressee. This points to a type of person with certain characteristics that is targeted. Logically, this also reveals what people and characteristics will be turned away. This is especially relevant in the case of promotional entryway paratexts as it defines whom the author or publisher intended the text for.

## THE TRAILERS

As stated this will analyse the trailers for SWBII, specifically the trailers that were released before the game's release. Here the trailers will be analysed through paratextual analysis where SWBII is the main text. This means the trailers shown in table 1 will be analysed.

Trailer	Release	Length
Reveal Trailer	April 15, 2017	2:18
Multiplayer Trailer	Jun 10, 2017	2:00
Behind the Story	Jul 15, 2017	4:06
Starfighter Assault Trailer	Aug 19, 2017	1:24
This is <i>Star Wars</i> Battlefront 2	Sep 26, 2017	4:45
The Single Player Story	Oct 19, 2017	1:50
Launch Trailer	Oct 30, 2017	1:06
Star Wars Battlefront II release worldwide on November 17, 2017		

**Table 1:** Trailers relevant for the analysis

There are some shared characteristics that every trailer has. All of them can be found in the same place. They are all in the trailer section of SWBII's website as embedded YouTube videos<sup>2</sup>. They were not solely found on the website but also actively spread through other media, which includes social media. This way the trailers did not have to be actively sought out. The fact that the trailers were released online gives the publisher more control over the way it is spread. This,

in turn, offers more control over the interpretation of the eventual game. The online videos make it easy to watch it multiple times and to spread it, which is what further increases the spread and control over the interpretation (Gray 2010, 71-72).

Temporally the trailers can be placed in two contexts. When placed in the larger context of the Star Wars franchise, the trailers and the game come after a rich history of Star Wars games. Star Wars was one of the first franchises that tried creating games to complement the films. This is a successful history, that counts more than 120 unique titles (Hall 2017, 90-91). These games were very successful, and were created under LucasArts, a subsidiary game studio to LucasFilms. Ever since the acquisition by Disney, however, they only licenses games and no longer create them (Hall 2017, 99). The two Star Wars games licensed when the trailers were released are Star Wars Battlefront and the unreleased SWBII, which were licenced to EA. Since the continuity reset, SWBII is the first game with a story set in the new continuity. This explains where the trailers are in relation to the Star Wars games timeline: squarely set in the current continuity alongside the films. Besides the games, it comes at a time where the continuity is expanding rapidly again after the reset.

In relation to the game, the trailers came out before SWBII's release. This deliberate choice for prior paratext makes sure that the trailers are clear entryway paratexts. This selection can make visible how the trailers are meant to shape one's interpretation of the game before playing the game since promotional material tries to steer towards "proper" and "preferred" interpretations. (Gray 2010, 49 & 72) This way the focus can be on how the trailers determine and control the entrance into the game. When looking at the timeline, it is visible that they released a trailer roughly every month with an extra trailer, 18 days before release. The two trailers from two and four months before the release of the game ('Behind the Story' & 'This is *Star Wars* Battlefront 2') seem to contain more information since they are by far the longest of the trailers. This might give them more control over the hype. Even these more important trailers seem to be evenly spread out. This shows that the trailers were used to control and generate hype over a period of seven months. With this continuous release schedule, the trailers can continuously shape hype and the interpretation of the upcoming game. This steady shaping of the interpretations will also shape the discourse in between fans, as well as in news sources within the hype.

## TRAILER CONTENT AND AUDIENCE

Shaping the hype and interpretation is part of the functionality of the trailer. A more specific description of the general function is to persuade people to buy the game. The focus here is on how it generates hype by establishing the interpretation that this game is an important fan text. That is why when looking at the functionality of the trailers the focus is on following aspects of

the content; the link of SWBII to Star Wars by referencing the franchise and story world, the drillable content, and the immersion into the world of Star Wars. As discussed earlier, these are aspects that appeal to fans. These are not mutually exclusive aspects but will nonetheless be looked into separately for the sake of clarity. This will help show how the trailer tries to appeal to fans and generate hype among them. From the type of content, the audience of the trailers can be deduced. This more specific defined audience can in turn help to gain more insight into the function of the trailers.

## Link to Star Wars

The first aspect that will be looked at is how the trailers link to the rest of Star Wars. The reveal trailer is the first visual reveal of the game and mostly sets the tone for the game and trailers to come. This trailer seems to be mostly focused on making a connection to Star Wars. It opens with a shot of the iconic location Starkiller Base of the last episodic film released at the time, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* which is the first film of the sequel trilogy, immediately evoking the memory of a film which is relatively fresh in the minds of fans. After this, the trailers show a new character travelling to the Death Star II, the predecessor of Starkiller Base an era earlier in continuity. The voiceover even references thirty years of waiting during the shot of Starkiller Base, the time that has surpassed since the destruction of the Death Star II. The trailer continues to show the new characters at the battle in which the Death Star II was destroyed. This establishes a link to two eras of the story world. This connection is emphasised by a voiceover of the emperor, the leader of the empire, who are the main antagonists of the original trilogy. Other crossover characters included are Luke Skywalker and his robot sidekick R2D2, both main characters in the original trilogy.

The 'behind the story' trailer focusses on the single-player story. After a short introduction, the trailer references *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* by asking the question "What happened after Return of the Jedi?", showing two shots of the funeral of Anakin Skywalker from the movie. This also connects to the end of the original trilogy, now referencing actual footage. The trailer also tells the viewer that the story of the single player starts around that moment.

The trailer reuses footage used in previous trailers. Part of this footage is the explosion of the Death Star II and the shot of Luke and R2D2. Reusing footage is what happens a lot in these trailers, although every trailer does offer new footage. This continues to emphasise these specific connections and gives more weight to them. Another part of the footage that is reused is a shot that offers a split-second glimpse at a robot with the holographic face of the emperor. This establishes a visual link with the character, instead of a link by voice. With this shot, the trailers confirm that the character will actually appear in the game in some form, strengthening the

connection that was already made. This is also strengthened by revealing more characters connected to the story.

The ‘This is *Star Wars* Battlefront 2’ trailer expands this cast of crossover characters by showing a shot of Kylo Ren, a character from the sequel trilogy. He is shown after the trailer mentions that the story is supposed to bridge the gap between the original and the sequel trilogy, this time confirming the connection that was hinted at in the reveal trailer. The voiceover also explains that there will be a few familiar faces along the way, while the video shows the shot of Luke and R2D2 and the shot of Kylo Ren. His shot was used in the trailers before, but not in the context of the single player storyline. Now that the connection to *The Force Awakens* is explicitly made for the first time, the trailers come forward and present a new crossover character from the sequel trilogy. Now there are signposts to the importance of the story pointing to the game from two different eras.

A month before release, the single player trailer is released. This trailer makes the strongest link to *Star Wars* out of all the trailer. It features many of the old shots from previous trailers but also introduces new ones. There are shots of Maz Kanata and her castle, an iconic character and location from *The Force Awakens*. It also features Leia on Naboo, an important protagonist from the original trilogy on a location from the prequel trilogy. Towards the end there is a new shot of Kylo Ren. This trailer further adds to the repertoire of characters from the story world featured in the trailers as part of the single-player story. As the last trailer focussed on this story, it gives the last boost to importance of the story by showing the largest cast of crossover characters shown up until that point.

The multiplayer links differently in the trailers. The multiplayer cannot use crossover characters like the single player can, since there is no story there to stress the importance of. The multiplayer, however, still has a link to the *Star Wars* franchise. The player has the chance to fight in iconic battles as iconic heroes. This aspect mostly has a separate part of a trailer or a separate trailer all together. The Multiplayer Trailer, for example, focusses on the multiplayer, only showing a glimpse of the single player featuring the emperor after the SWBII title screen at the end. When trailers focus on the multiplayer, the way the connection is promoted differs. It is mostly presented in a fast montage of locations and characters across all eras of *Star Wars*. The Starfighter Assault Trailer also focusses on multiplayer. In this case the focus is on the starfighter assault game mode, mainly in spaceships. It does show a lot of iconic ships, but the main link in this trailer is the variety of locations and characters. This trailer labels the locations on screen for a more explicit link to the wider story world of *Star Wars*.

The ‘This is *Star Wars* Battlefront 2’ trailer is the longest trailer of them all. It also is the most information packed and discusses most parts of the game. Along with this information, the trailer establishes a new type of link. This link is made through the fact that John Boyega is

featured in the trailer. He is one of the main actors in the ongoing Star Wars sequel trilogy, playing the role of the protagonist Finn. Using an actor can attach their aura and meaning as celebrity to the eventual product (Gray 2010, 28). Using Boyega in the context of a link to Star Wars attaches the aura and meaning of Finn to SWBII. Boyega explains most aspects of the game by voiceover, also telling the viewers that Finn will 'of course' be in the game. This conveys all the details of the game together with the aura of Finn.

These are all the ways in which the trailer establishes a link to the Star Wars franchise and its story world. The fact that the content is linked to Star Wars mainly appeals to the fans of Star Wars or people who enjoy Star Wars. This is, therefore, the audience of these parts of the trailers. The audience that the parts will turn away is anyone with a dislike towards Star Wars.

### **Drillable Content**

Now the links toward the rest of Star Wars are revealed, it is important to focus on what these links connect to within SWBII. This is where the focus will be on the drillable nature of the game. This is the extra story and information that a fan will be able to find within the game. The trailers themselves are also drillable, only giving away new information one trailer at a time. The reveal trailer is only showing new things that would raise questions, which would presumably be answered when playing through the game. It shows new characters fans do not know and does not fully introduce them. The phrase "The day the real war began" referencing a war not shown in any of the movies, a war presumably featured and explained in the game.

Especially the Behind the Story trailer is focussed on showing why fans should dig into the game if they want more information about their beloved story world. The first minute of the trailer features almost exclusively questions which presumably will be answered in the story of the single player campaign. This strategy of asking question is used again later in the trailer, albeit for a short period. The trailers seem to try and make the fans ask the same questions and wanting to find the answer for which they would need to buy and play the game. At the start of the trailer, the viewer is told that the story is essential to Star Wars. It also focuses on the unique perspective from which the story is told. The story is told from the point of view of an imperial special forces soldier, which means it is told from the side of the villains. This perspective will offer new information which would otherwise be inaccessible. The trailer focusses on how this is a novel thing with new information. Before the partial reset of the continuity, however, there was already at least one game that offered a nuanced story from an imperial perspective (Hall 2017, 98). The trailer seems to forgo mentioning this nuance to focus on the novelty of this perspective in the current continuity, thereby appealing more strongly to the demand for drillable content. The trailer also gives a few bits of information, making the trailer itself part of the drillable content. The trailer only gives a vague impression of where the story starts, with some general background

information on the characters in the story without going further. To find out what happens from there with these characters and get information from this new point of view, the game has to be played. The only thing that is shown is that the story comes across Luke and R2D2. Raising questions how they fit into the story. Later trailers add even more characters, adding to the questions that a fan would want answered. This continuous release of new information makes the rest of the trailer also part of the drillable content. This makes fans want to watch the other trailers to for glimpse of new information.

The last chunk of information on what can be found in the story comes from the Single Player story trailer. It features many new shots and quotes from the game that are mostly out of context. The shots and quotes are dramatic and seem to hint at different kinds of conflict, with the enemies of empire but also with allies within the empire. The drama and conflict come across as exciting things to explore. The last big appeal to the need for drillable content for fans, promising not only new and important information but also exciting information.

The parts of the trailer that show the drillable nature of the game will mostly appeal to the more enthusiastic fans, who are willing to invest more time (Hassler-Forest 2016, 16). While it does not necessary have a strong appeal to the less invested fans, it does not reject these fans either. It only rejects people with a dislike towards Star Wars, because they would not like to get more information about it.

## **Immersion into the world of Star Wars**

The multiplayer cannot really offer much in the way of new drillable content. The multiplayer is not a world that players can explore together like an MMORPG but it is filled with set battles on specific locations where teams play against each other. The added value for fans is that they can be immersed in these battles in the Star Wars universe. The single player can offer a similar appeal by experiencing an immersive story in which the player actively takes part. The trailers try to appeal to fans by emphasising this value. It mainly shows when the trailers focus on the gameplay, since that is where the immersion will eventually take place.

This is why the first trailer to convey that these games will be immersive is the Multiplayer Trailer. The longer sequence of a battle on Naboo shows first and third-person perspectives of soldiers on both sides of the battle. While some of these shots are recognisable as shots of actual gameplay, the fact that they are is downplayed by not showing the user interface that would normally show when playing the game, making the gameplay shot look more like they could be part of the actual film the battle was featured in. By hiding the user interface, the footage comes across as more immersive. The trailer could also have featured accurate gameplay footage, but it does not. The footage was likely chosen for its appeal. All the other trailers do not feature a user

interface either, except for a short shot in Behind the Story, continuously making the gameplay seem more immersive.

Another part that adds to the immersive appeal is the scope of the game. The trailers show many different locations and characters players will get access to, offering a variety of experiences fans can immerse themselves into. This is Star Wars Battlefront 2 emphasises this scope by stating that it almost three times as much content as its predecessor, content that will continue to grow after the game is launched. It also emphasises the fact that this content comes from all three eras, focusing on the diversity of the content and with it, the immersive experiences.

The immersion into the world of a video game appeals to most gamers, but in this case, there is the added appeal for Star Wars fan because it is an immersion into the world of Star Wars. This aspect of the trailers, therefore, has a general audience of gamers, who it welcomes, but it is extra welcoming towards fans of Star Wars. This seems to correspond with the trailers as a whole. The trailers address the viewers only two times and use the words 'gamers' and 'players'. This suggests that gamers are the general audience for the trailers. The focus on the Star Wars content, through both the links and the drillable content, makes the trailers more welcoming to fans. The more invested the fan is, the more welcoming the trailer will be through the drillable content. This corroborates the appealing nature of fan media; highly accessible to casual audiences but with more appeal for fans who are willing to invest more time (Hassler-Forest 2016, 16).

## **FROM TRAILERS TO STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II**

These trailers of SWBII seem to be carefully orchestrated to shape the hype in the period leading up to the game. Each trailer mostly focusses on one of the aspects analysed here or has separate segments with a different focus. In combination with the timing of the trailers, this makes it clear that the trailers were carefully planned. They emphasise the game's connection to the Star Wars franchise as a way to experience the story world and explore a new part of this world. With this picture imprinted on the hype surrounding SWBII, the game was released. An important thing to note is that trailers do not have to represent the final piece of media, the content of trailers can even clash with the final product (Gray 2010, 67). This is the case with SWBII.

The trailers seem to be carefully created to generate a lot of fan hype around SWBII. The game, however, performed rather poorly. This seems to be the result of some controversy about in-game purchases and gambling (GameSpot Staff 2017). These technical aspects of the game seem to hinder the experience of the game. The controversy included the time or money needed to play as Luke or Darth Vader (Good 2017), two figures shown multiple times in the trailers. The difficulty of getting to play as these characters clashes with the expectations generated by the trailers, which might have added to the negative reaction. The negative reaction was of a very large scale and even broke a record on the popular social media platform Reddit (Schreier 2017).

This seems to imply that the game had garnered a large interested audience, which was disappointed by some of the technical aspects of the game when it was released. The trailers were therefore still successful in generating positive fan hype. The hype only turned sour when the fans found out that their expectations were not met. This generated a lot of bad press and negative fan reaction online. In this manner, the negative hype spawned new negative paratexts surrounding the game, made up of negative news reports and negative threads across multiple social media platforms.

## **CONCLUSION: THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE**

Putting all aspects of the paratext together, it becomes clear that one of the ways the trailers try to influence the hype surrounding the game was with a consistent rhythm of trailers that try to appeal to the fan's interests in Star Wars with varying means. The main three aspects of the trailers which can interest and excite fans are; referencing the other aspects of the story world, offering new drillable content, and showing that the game offers immersive experience of the Star Wars storyworld. While not mutually exclusive, most parts of the trailers fall mostly under one of these aspects. Only the first three cover all three aspects. This becomes clear in the first three trailers. The first mostly establishes links to the rest of the Star Wars and builds from there. The second trailer focusses on the immersive gameplay experience. The third focusses on the drillable nature of the single player. The trailers seem to be balanced out to convey all these three aspects to generate hype from the fans.

These hyped fans can then pre-order the game and buy the deluxe edition. In this way, it is important to hype fans for the upcoming game because they are a viable source of revenue. However, more importantly, these fans are good ambassadors for the game. Fans can give media an aura of authenticity. In this way they can legitimise media for a wider audience, spreading the hype even further (Hassler-Forest 2016, 43). Steering fan hype has become one of the strategies that can be employed to increase the size of the audience.

Especially since audiences are not pure purely passive reactive agents. Different promotional paratexts like trailers compete for the attention of audience, who will decide what to play or watch based on these paratexts (Gray 2010, 26). Fans can help get through the competing promotional paratext to increase its reach. That is why it is important to understand how these paratexts influence an audience, especially since they have often been neglected.

The trailers of SWBII show how paratexts can specifically try and influence fans by promoting its connection to the Star Wars franchise. As trailers for a game, they had more material to appeal to fans, namely the immersive experience of the Star Wars storyworld. The hype that was generated turned sour when it became known how difficult it was to get to some of these experiences. This controversy shows that video games and their trailers have aspects

which set them apart from other media like film. It also shows that there is not one primary paratext and that the hype can continue to change under the influence of other paratexts, such as bad press and negative threads in fan communities. As such, the paratexts always have an influence on the audience and continue to be an important tool for marketing to control this influence. It is therefore important to keep critically reflecting on the paratexts that are produced.

## ENDNOTES

1. The predecessor, *Star Wars Battlefront* (EA DICE 2015), is not included in the continuity because it did not contain a story.
2. The fact that they are separate from the game makes them fall under the category of epitext in Genette's theory (1997, 3). This is not as relevant in this analysis since the trailers were released before the SWBII's release.

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