

The Lego Movie Video Game: Industry and Audience



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Media industries

The following subject content needs to be studied in relation to *The Lego Movie Video Game*:

Key idea	Learners must demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of:
Media producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the nature of media production, including by large organisations, who own the products they produce, and by individuals and groups.• the impact of production processes, personnel and technologies on the final product, including similarities and differences between media products in terms of when and where they are produced.
Ownership and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the effect of ownership and control of media organisations, including conglomerate ownership, diversification and vertical integration.
Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the impact of the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different platforms and different national settings.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the importance of different funding models, including government funded, not-for-profit and commercial models.
Industries and audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• how the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale and reach both large and specialised audiences.
Media regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the functions and types of regulation of the media.• the challenges for media regulation presented by 'new' digital technologies.





Media Audiences

Key idea	Learners must demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of:
Targeting audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, from small, specialised audiences to large mass audiences. how media organisations categorise audiences. the ways in which media organisations target audiences through marketing, including an understanding of the assumptions organisations make about their target audience(s).
Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of media technologies in reaching and identifying audiences, and in audience consumption and usage.
Active audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ways in which audiences may interpret the same media products very differently and how these differences may reflect both social and individual differences theoretical perspectives on audiences, including active and passive audiences; audience response and audience interpretation.
Uses and gratifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the social, cultural and political significance of media products, including the themes or issues they address, the fulfilment of needs and desires, and the functions they serve in everyday life and society the ways in which people's media practices are connected to their identity, including their sense of actual and desired self Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory.
Changing audience responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how audiences may respond to and interpret media products and why these responses and interpretations may change over time.

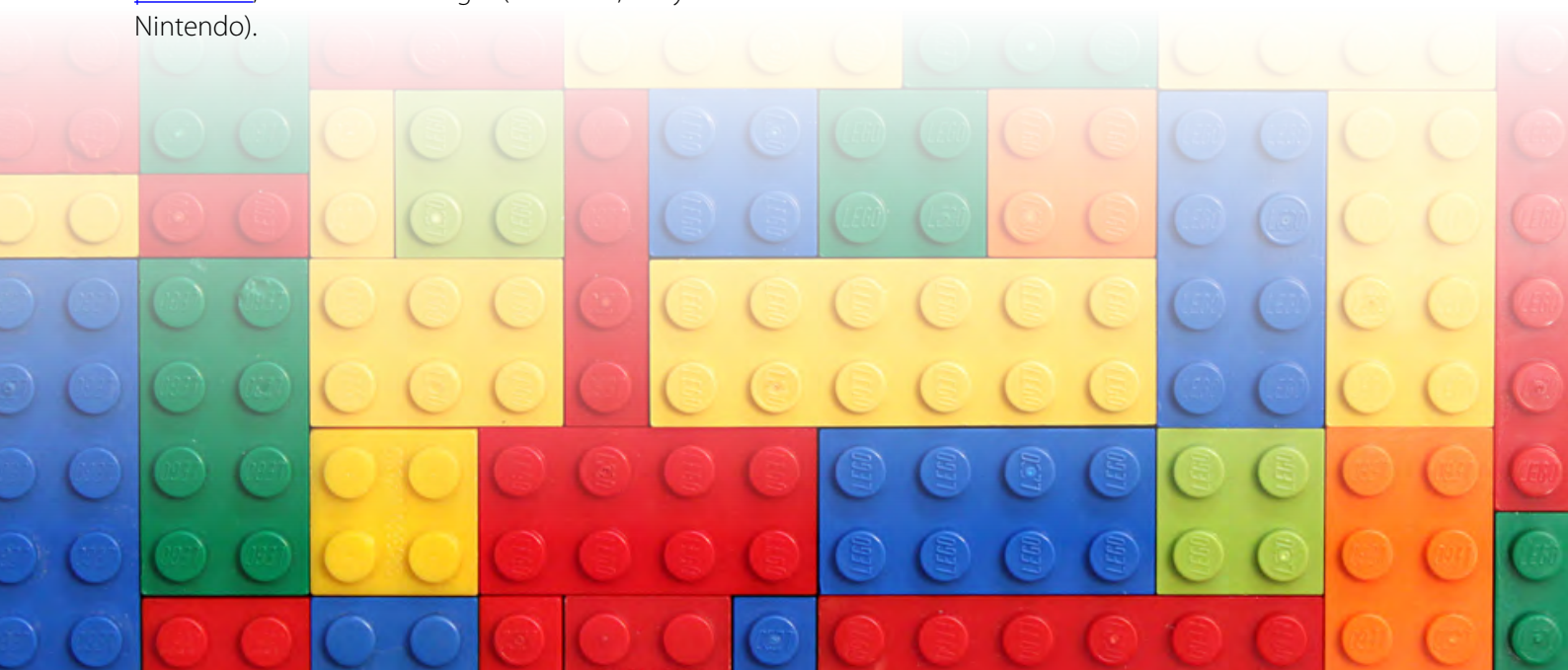


Media producers

- [WB Games](#) is the trade name for Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. WB Games is a publisher, developer, licensor and distributor of entertainment content for '[the interactive space across all platforms, including console, handheld, mobile and PC-based gaming for both internal and third party game titles](#)'.
- WB Games started in 1995 by licensing their first game (based on the plot of '[Batman Forever](#)'). They continued to do this until 2003, when they co-published their first video game, based on '[Looney Tunes: Back in Action](#)'. In 2004, Warner Bros. acquired [Monolith](#), a video games developer. In 2005, WB Games was launched. Together they developed MMO (massively multiplayer online game) *The Matrix Online* (with SEGA).
- TT Fusion is a British video game developer that is a division of TT Games. In November 2007, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment acquired [TT Games](#) as part of their move into the video game market.
- The video game was directed by Matt Palmer (who was known for his work with Tim Burton's [Corpse Bride](#) and [The Animal Shelf](#)).
- As with the film WB Games had to consider Lego's status as a globally popular franchise that has left a significant mark on today's popular culture. Aside from the iconic plastic inter-locking bricks, there is now a plethora of accompanying merchandise, including 'Minifigures', construction kits and play sets aimed at a wide variety of different ages. Both the game and film had to be constructed to faithfully reflect and respect the universal Lego toy brand.
- It is worth noting that Lego's brand extends beyond construction kits; there are eight [Legolands](#) globally (Billund, Denmark, Windsor (UK), California, Germany, Florida, Malaysia, Dubai and Japan) although owned by Merlin Entertainments rather than Lego. There are currently two further under construction in South Korea and Shanghai and another planned for Orange County, New York.

Ownership and control

- Lego had been a well-established household brand until 1998 - and it had never reported a loss. [By 2003 Lego was \\$800 million in debt](#). With the appointment of [Jorgen Vig Knudstorp](#), the brand changed direction (creating partnerships for their Legolands and digital content) and raising the profile of its fan base.
- 2010 saw the online [LEGO Universe](#) launched, but was then closed in 2012 due to the lack of success of its monetization and [fee-paying customers](#). This was controversial as many of the 2 million players felt abandoned and the closure of the associated studios affected 115 employees.
- However, this negative experience supported Lego in creating future partnerships for both its digital content and video game development with TT Games and Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment.
- TT Games initially developed the Lego franchise games with Lego Star Wars released to strong commercial acclaim in 2005 and Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy in 2006. Before this, branded video games aimed at children hadn't always had the best critical success but the Lego Star Wars series changed this.
- Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment purchased TT Games in 2007 and the Lego video game franchise continued with TT Games acting as subsidiary of Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment.
- Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment currently owns the intellectual property (IP) to multiple high profile video games and several video game developers [which now makes it one of the largest video game publishers](#), outside of the 'big 3' (Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo).
- The *Lego Movie* Video game saw the [game characters move like the ones in the film](#) with animations and likenesses mimicked to the style of animation used in the film.
- Lego works with Warner Brothers in various ways. The video game division of Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment is part of the larger Warner Bros. conglomerate, which produces the Lego movies, distributes the films to a large number of countries theatrically, as well as using their own subsidiaries to release the DVDs and BluRay discs. This is an example of **vertical integration**.
- Vertical integration enables a business to maximise the potential of brand, in this case Lego. It gives the existing audience new experiences and further pleasures outside of the film and to reach new audiences e.g. non-cinema going video games players.
- Today there is a successful global sub-culture of Lego due to its vertical integration of films, games (on and offline), magazines and competitions. As a result, the Lego brand can reach out to a larger market through its range of products.
- [In 2015, Lego](#) was named [Brand Finance's](#) most powerful brand of the year - over Apple and Ferrari - and [is set to be awarded this again in 2017](#).



Convergence

- Digitally convergent media is when digital/online media content, networks and technologies are interconnected.
- Video games consoles are an excellent example of a digitally convergent device; as well as play games you can also access social media, surf the internet, stream films and TV content and upload content into cloud based servers.
- The video game offers 15 levels and 90 playable characters, many of which can be purchased as Minifigures, so the Lego brand benefits from this as both the game and the film also act as an advertisement for their consumer products.
- The Lego Movie Video Game was the first Lego video game where everything in the gaming world was made out of bricks. This allowed a cross-over for the plastic construction bricks within a gaming world for audiences and vice versa - although it was not a game where you could use the bricks for construction like Minecraft (which [Lego Worlds](#) arguably mimics).
- Cross-media products (Minifigures) were also available [in some of the products](#). For example Emmet was available from EB Games and Gamestop, Radio DJ Robot from Walmart.
- Cross-media content helps maximise profits and also improve reach to new customers. The Lego Movie Video game was released across all major video consoles and platforms (Microsoft X360, Sony PS3, Nintendo 3DS, Sony PS4, Nintendo WiiU, Xbox One and 360, Sony PSV and PC) in 2014.
- In [2015 Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment made the game available on Apple iOS](#).
- [Lego Dimensions](#) was released in 2015 by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. This followed the toys-to-life format of using Lego Minifigures and a toy pad, which is then played with the game. [No more expansion packs will now be developed](#), mainly due to the lack of profit and the ever-increasing amount of Lego figures on the market.
- Merchandise for the film and game are interchangeable as they include the same characters and worlds in the main.
- *The Lego Movie Video game* was launched the same week as *The Lego Movie*.
- The mobile video game is a port of a console game which meant there were two ways to control the action on the screen. This was either using direct touch controls or a virtual onscreen touch tad. The trailer for the IOS [is here](#).



Regulation

- Lego were keen to ensure that their [reputation](#) with parents was left intact and did not want the brand connected with inappropriate language, extreme violence and sexual scenes.
- Although *The Lego Movie* was awarded [a Universal film rating](#), [The PEGI Award](#) for *The Lego Movie Game* is '7' years of age. This is as the content of the game includes 'non-realistic looking violence towards fantasy characters' and 'violence that is set in a cartoon, slapstick or child like setting that could be upsetting to very young children'.

Audiences

- As we know, media practices are widely connected to Blumler and Katz's *Uses and Gratifications* theory, in terms of the audience's sense of identity. The sense of actual identity and aspirational identity can be seen in the use of a first-person protagonist (to associate directly with the gamer) and the 'quest' to explore new worlds in *The Lego Movie Video game*. The theme of good versus evil is often a key social value in video games and is at the heart of this game too.
 - Arguably the target audience for the video game is younger than the film. This can be seen through its level of difficulty, which provides a younger audience with an entry point to the franchise, without needing to watch the film. Criticism was mixed for the game and its narrative as it takes elements of the film's narrative but lacks the cohesion and humour of the film. [Critics recommended seeing the actual movie](#) and seeing the gameplay as a stand-alone.
 - The Lego Movie Video Game is a cross-media promotional product as it advertises a range of Lego characters and icons, like the superheroes and 'Benny the Spaceman'. Both the movie and the video game are part of a larger Lego video game franchise that existed before *The Lego Movie* resulting in intertextuality for the audience and a deeper relationship with the Lego brand. The superheroes featured (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman) are also part of the larger Warner Bros./DC superhero franchise so the video game also acts as an introduction point to those characters and helps to cross-promote this superhero franchise in terms of other Lego video game products (e.g. Lego Batman) and films (e.g. Justice League).
- Purchasing the game provided childhood nostalgia for parents (a brand they might have played with when young themselves) and allowed them to play with their children. This also illustrates how the audience for video games might interpret the same product differently, e.g. young and old getting different pleasures from the product.
 - *The Lego Movie Video game* was number 1 in the [All Formats Chart](#), the sixth Lego video game to do this. It was released available across a wide range of popular console, PC and Mac platforms.
 - *The Lego Movie Game* for mobile devices included in-app purchases but required a larger memory ([over a Gigabyte of space](#)) which met to further mixed responses.
 - In the same week (Feb 17th 2014) there were [five Lego video games in the top 40 All Formats Chart](#) meaning that Lego games made up one eighth of the total chart.
 - The game was released onto mobile devices due to the market being worth [around \\$21 billion in revenues](#). As the game appealed to families and children alike the hope was they would attract a mixed-age audience.





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