

The Lego Movie: Industry



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Media industries

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

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 Producers

- [Warner Bros. Pictures](#) is a major player in the motion picture industry. WB Pictures produces a wide slate of big-hitting box office movies each year that are released across the globe. 2016 marked the tenth consecutive year that WB Pictures crossed the £3 billion mark at the global box office.
- [Dan Lin](#), a Taiwanese-born American film producer initially conceived the idea of the *The Lego Movie* film in 2008 - he left Warner Bros. as an Executive to become CEO of [Lin Pictures](#) (a TV and film production company based at Warner Bros.). Lin and producer, [Roy Lee](#) (who is known for making American remakes of Asian film - like *The Ring*) discussed the idea.
- Lin is known to have researched Lego heavily before he [pitched the idea](#) to them and had to convince them it would be a success. Following the release, *The Lego Movie* challenged the balance [between the medium of film and marketing techniques](#), just as *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014) also did.
- Writers/directors Christopher Miller and Phil Lord initially pitched their idea for *The Lego Movie* whilst '[21 Jump Street](#)' was in production.
- Warner Bros. loved Miller and Lord's take on this and they both wrote and directed this, their third film. Following this, they were then asked to also write the script for the upcoming *The Flash* film.
- Lin Pictures were the primary production company on *The Lego Movie* and Warner Bros. acted as the distributors.
- *The Lego Movie* enabled Warner Bros. to become a major player in animation.
- *The Lego Movie* supported Warner Bros. to work in conjunction with Lin on several more films, based on Lego merchandise, and gain critical success at [the box office which they had been lacking](#).





Ownership and Control

- Lego's status as a globally popular franchise 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.
- Given the worldwide success and love for the brand, it was obvious that the film was always going to be at least a cult success. Lego however did not produce the film, nor have the initial idea for the film. Lego were in fact cautious and [felt the film might actually 'hurt' the brand rather than help it.](#)
- The main issue is that the film is a completely branded product - it is there in the name! [It could have been seen as one long advert for the Lego brand,](#) but with the narrative and stars it attracted, it ultimately was the blockbuster of the year.
- The Lego brand works with Warner Brothers in various ways. The Warner Bros. conglomerate produces the Lego movies in conjunction with Lin Films. Warner Bros. distribute the films to a large number of countries theatrically, as well as use their own Warner Bros. subsidiaries to release the DVDs and BluRay discs. They also own the videogame division (Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment) who produce and release the video games. 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.
- The budget for *The Lego Movie* was an [estimated \\$60,000,000](#). It recovered this in its first weekend in the USA alone. [BoxOfficeMoJo](#) state it has a worldwide gross of over \$311 million. Here is the worldwide breakdown via [BoxOfficeMoJo](#).
- Lin, Lee, Lord and Miller all went onto produce the following Lego films; [The Lego Batman Movie](#) and [The Lego Ninjago Movie](#) (both released in 2017).
- There are plans for [The Lego Movie sequel](#) and, a further spin off, [The Billion Brick Race](#) in 2019.

Convergence

- The film is part computer generated imagery (CGI) and part real Lego bricks. [Lego brand designers](#) were heavily involved in the construction of the film's content. Their ideas were then used by the Australian animators who made the film.
- [The Lego Group announced in 2009](#) that there was a plan to 'develop the first ever feature film based on LEGO bricks and icons'.
- Accompanying the film were several tied in merchandise releases. [This included 17 different Lego sets, based on the different 'worlds' in the movie \(City, Wildest, Space and one named 'Wyldstyle Chase'\)](#). There were also 16 collectable Minifigures that included iconic Lego characters. Other merchandise included [The Lego Movie Game](#) from TT Games, and [ranges of school supplies, stickers and activity books by a range of global partners](#).
- The Lego Movie [twitter site](#) and website (now unavailable) were launched in 2012.
- The Twitter page currently has over 69K followers and promotes all of the other Lego films.
- Lego's YouTube channel (which was established shortly after the release of YouTube in 2005) released 'sneak peaks' of the characters, like [President Business](#), in the run up to the film release and before the trailer of the first trailer.

Audience

- There is a global sub-culture of Lego with supportive films, games (on and offline), magazines and competitions. [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](#).
- As well as the toys, 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.
- There is also [a growing online and videogame market](#) linked to the Lego movies and the playsets.
- The idea of a '[shared childhood experience](#)' was key in attracting mixed-age and gender groups for the audience. This resulted in whole family viewings and purchases on the film after its theatrical release. The film was aimed at both younger children who played with Lego and their parents who had in the past. In [this presentation](#), the marketing team knew that, 'in order to hit box office expectations it was important for it to be seen as a film that would not only be enjoyable for all the family but would appeal to regular young adult cinema-goers too (an incremental adult audience to those who would be taking kids)'.
- One of the marketing ideas around the release of the film was the '[The Lego Movie Break](#)' for the UK. For more information [read the following from the marketing team](#). This Lego recreation of ITV adverts (during peak time) drew in a further 1 million online viewers after the initial 6 million who saw it in real time. See the ad break [here](#).
- The film was released in Denmark (home of the [Lego Group](#)) and USA on 1st February 2014. Both had premiere showings. It was then released worldwide between the 6th February - 17th April 2014.



Regulation

- 2014 was the 80th birthday of the Lego name (1934). In 1934 the founder of the company, Ole Kirk Kristiansen, launched a competition to find a suitable name for the company. He won the competition himself by combining the first two letters of the words LEg and GOdt into the name 'LEGO'.
- 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.
- The film was ultimately [a Universal film rating in the UK](#) due to the '[mild fantasy violence and very mild language](#)'.





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