Making global audiences for a Hollywood 'blockbuster' feature film:

Marketability, playability and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012)

Charles H. Davis, Ryerson University

Carolyn Michelle and Ann Hardy, University of Waikato

Craig Hight, University of Newcastle

Abstract

This article interprets two key concepts in movie marketing (marketability and playability) through an empirical examination of the effects of commercial interpellation of audiences for a Hollywood 'blockbuster' fantasy film, Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012). The article reports results of two online surveys of *Hobbit* audiences, one in November 2012 in the weeks preceding theatrical release, and one in February–June 2013 among post-viewing audiences, employing a mixed-methods approach that includes Q sorting and a questionnaire. We identify and describe five main pre-release and five main post-viewing audience groups, showing that the film had greater marketability than playability. Three of the pre-release audience groups expressed a high degree of anticipation to see the film, but only one post-viewing audience group expressed a high degree of enjoyment, while the others expressed various degrees of disappointment. We discuss the attributes of the film that most affected the film's marketability and playability for each of the audience groups during the interpellation process from prefiguration to reception.

Introduction

Research on fans[1] demonstrates a wide range of identities, literacies, engagements and behaviours, and proposes criteria to distinguish fans from other audience members. These criteria may include degree or vigor of engagement; specific fan identities; authenticity; activity, creativity, or productivity; special expertise or literacy; adoption of tastemaking or gatekeeping roles; devotion; marginality with respect to 'mainstream' consumers; resistance to commercialism; and involvement in a community of persons with shared interests, tastes or views. The diversity of fans and fandoms serves to remind scholars, in their accounts of audience engagement, not to 'forfeit a sense of the variation and variety of meanings and self-understandings circulating within fan cultures' (Hills 2007: 151). Ultimately, however, 'the question of what should ultimately constitute the central object of fan studies is a crucial one' (Busse and Gray 2011: 432).

A possibly useful approach, which we explore here, is to examine varieties of engagement among specific audience formations. There are many possible ways to apprehend audience formations, most of which are based on behavioural or sociodemographic variables (Webster 2014, chapter 5). Since we are primarily interested in subjective engagement, we adopt an approach that theorizes and observes audience subjectivities. We therefore look in the direction of Fish's 'interpretive communities' (1979), which we conceptualize as groups of audience members with shared subjectivities or 'mattering maps' (Grossberg 1992). We propose a typology of *Hobbit* film audiences, partly in response to recent calls for audience research that supports generalization (e.g. Schrøder 2012) and audience typologies (Barker et al. 2008: 222), and also to permit comparison with published typologies of closely related audiences (as in Meers 2006; Mikos et al. 2008; Trobia et al. 2008). We employ Michelles Composite Model (2007) to provide a conceptual framework that distinguishes among modes of reception, and we use a mixed quali-quantitative approach borrowed from psychology – Q methodology – to help map, describe and interpret the shared subjective orientations that define audience groups in response to a specific text – in this case, Peter Jackson's 'blockbuster' feature film, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (*AUJ*, 2012).

The Hollywood entertainment industry seeks to manufacture and mobilize audiences for 'blockbuster' films via huge promotional campaigns that 'actively interpellat[e] viewers as fans' (Busse and Gray 2011: 431). By eliciting viewers' engagement, these campaigns attract not only conventional fans but also consumers who are encouraged to develop fannish dispositions such as a desire to learn more, meet like-minded people, or extend their enjoyment of a cultural product. But with neither deep roots in fan communities nor deep historical knowledge of a fan culture, fannish consumers may enact fandoms more closely resembling a hobby or style of consumption (Busse and Gray 2011).

In this article we are interested in what Gray et al. (2007: 16) call fandom's expansion into 'regular' consumption by investigating variations in audiences' responses to commercial interpellation in the case of a major Hollywood feature film. We investigate *The Hobbit*: *AUJ*'s 'marketability' and 'playability' in terms of audiences' subjective orientations towards the film before and after it was released. We identify and describe the principal pre- and post-viewing

audience groups, and discuss their positions with respect to the film and its perceived attributes. We show that viewers with differing literacies, motivations and intertextual allegiances responded differently to interpellations to engage with a commercial entertainment product. Our findings reveal that the film had greater marketability than playability. While many viewers responded favorably to the film, others expressed resistance through rejection of the text's preferred reading. Our findings contribute to understanding of fans and fannish audience engagement by identifying factors affecting audience retention or loss during the commercial interpellation process from prefiguration to reception.

Marketability, playability and blockbuster films

To counter increasing competition from screen-based entertainment on other platforms, Hollywood studios annually produces a few expensive, highly promoted 'blockbuster' 'tentpole' 'event-films' intended to appeal to large global audiences (Elberse 2013; Jöckel and Döbler 2006; Miller et al. 2005; Stringer in Lewis 2003). Blockbuster event-films are designed to have very high earning potential. They correspondingly have high production costs, large marketing budgets, and are released in thousands of theaters concurrently. Although North America is the reference market for Hollywood blockbuster films, most income is earned not in the North American theatrical market, but in other geographic markets, other media windows, and in downstream 'franchise' products such as merchandising and licensing, sequels and spinoffs. The film's performance in theatres is therefore important not only in terms of box office receipts, but in terms of demand for ancillary revenue-generating opportunities.

Commercial interpellation of audiences for major feature films takes place in two steps. The first step is to cultivate anticipation among potential viewers before the film's wide release in theatres, because of the crucial requirement to elicit sufficient interest among audiences to motivate them to travel to theatres during the film's theatrical viewing window. The second step is to create enough enjoyment to elicit positive word-of-mouth among viewers, attracting further theatrical attendance (Kerrigan 2010; Marich 2009). This must happen very quickly, because once a film has been released, the importance of 'owned' and 'paid' media visibility declines substantially, and 'earned' visibility via word-of-mouth and professional critical reviews determines the fate of the film in theatres (De Vany 2004; Lampel and Shamsie 2000).

Marketability, a film's ability to draw viewers into theatres, denotes 'how attractive a film is to its prospective target audience' (O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2013: 770). Attributes contributing to feature film marketability include genre, celebrities, release date, familiarity as an adaptation or sequel, use of computer-generated imagery, and volume and cleverness of promotional hype (Elberse and Eliashberg 2003; Krider and Weinberg 1998). Playability denotes 'how well the audience will respond to the film once they commit to watching it' (O'Reilly and Kerrigan 2013: 771) and consequently how well the film elicits positive word-of-mouth among viewers. Ideally, a film will have strong marketability and playability. Failing that, it must have strong marketability. Studios seek to build marketability and playability into their product in every

stage of the feature film innovation process, from script selection to screening pre-release versions of films for test audiences (Griff 2012; Shutt 2003; Silver 2007; Zafirau 2009).

Blockbuster films are very heavily promoted before release, exposing pre-release audiences to a huge volume of paratextual material designed to elicit desire to see the film.[2] Studios interpellate the pre-release addressee audience via conventional and social media to create market momentum through awareness of the film and elicitation of interest. Movie trailers suggest the film's value proposition, attracting addressee audiences and presumably also deflecting viewers who would not enjoy the film. Social media 'buzz' before release provides early feedback to the film's collective authors which may be used to modify the film's design.

However, 'as studios have discovered over the past several years, it doesn't matter whether or not blockbusters have playability. The key to their promotion and release is a marketability that is factored into the project from the very start of development' (Lewis 2003: 48). Yet there is a growing sense in Hollywood that the studios' emphasis on marketability over playability is having deleterious effects on moviegoing. Jeffrey Katzenberg, CEO of DreamWorks Animation, recently cited this as the reason why many movies 'suck':

> today the thing that is probably most askew in Hollywood is the issue of marketability versus playability. And what that really means is that there is this sort of unholy alliance that has existed forever between art and commerce, show and biz. And today it's out of balance and it's too much on the biz, and it's too much on the commerce and it's too much on the marketability. (as quoted in Mangalindan 2011)

The Hobbit: AUJ conforms well to the blockbuster model. According to the trade press, the first *Hobbit* film cost $250M to produce and $81M to market (Rosz 2012). Its marketing campaign included thousands of items consisting of news, gossip, production video blogs, posters, trailers, special previews at fan conventions, interviews with celebrities, an official Facebook page, YouTube channel, website, trailers, Twitter messages, a costume contest, and the launch of various items of themed merchandise. By the time of its release on 14 December 2012, 1310 websites were hyperlinked to the official *Hobbit* website, and *The Hobbit: AUJ* was the top-rated film in the IMDb MovieMeter (Fiorelli 2013). Released in over 4000 theatres in North America, the film's global earnings exceeded $1B by June 2013.[3] Although *The Hobbit: AUJ* continued playing in some North American theaters four months after its release, the film earned 78 per cent of its total $303M North American box office revenues in the two weeks between 14 December 2012 and 1 January 2013, illustrating the importance of timing and momentum in attracting casual moviegoers.[4]

A highly 'playable' blockbuster fantasy film mobilizes the conventions of the 'high-concept' Hollywood aesthetic (Wyatt 1994) to produce a powerful subjective experience which Olson terms *awe inspiring*:

> In the case of the Hollywood aesthetic, this is primarily instilled by high production values that present majestic vistas, lavish sets, and lush costuming…. New digital production techniques… further enhance the audience awe. (1999: 12)

The 'awesome' viewing experience provided by an event-movie is said to be

> like a theme-park ride, the sensations physically experienced are more important than any ideas the film may be articulating. Simple characters and narratives do not demand much thought from audiences and so can be more readily enjoyed. (Lacey 2002: 11)

Several high concept attributes were incorporated into *The Hobbit: AUJ* to enhance the theatrical cinematic experience on large screens and to broaden audience appeal. Jackson's adaptation combines advanced computer-generated imagery, stereoscopic 3D and high frame rate (HFR) to produce a hyper-realistic aesthetic that promised, to multitudes of Tolkien and *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy fans, a compelling immersive experience in the fantastical world of Middle-earth. 'Sensuous excess' as 'sheer sensory, narrative, and emotional overload' was also a highly valued experience among many viewers of Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films (Barker 2009: 301).

Translated into contemporary audience reception terminology, when viewers 'experience a high degree of cognitive and emotional engagement and full immersion in the text, are swept away by the story, and may experience strong feelings of identification with the central characters or textual themes' they are considered to experience the film in a *transparent mode* (Michelle et al. 2012: 110). In the case of fictional texts, viewers adopting a transparent mode

> temporarily suspend disbelief and critical distance to grant fictional worlds the status of 'real life,' or a 'realistic slice of life,' for the purpose of entering into the story and engaging in it. Indeed, suspension of disbelief is an essential precursor to deriving the specific forms of pleasure and enjoyment intended by the makers of such texts. (Michelle 2007: 196)

A multinational media conglomerate may 'activate' a particular reading of a text designed to appeal in specific ways to specific audiences (Waetjen and Gibson 2007). Although *The Hobbit: AUJ* promised multiple pleasures to pre-release audiences, the 'preferred reading' of the film (i.e., the value proposition as intended by the film's makers) undoubtedly lay in the promise of transportation to Middle-earth, conveying a sense of awe, immersion, and enchantment, as Peter Jackson himself made clear in his Facebook Q & A notes: 'I try to make my movies immersive. I want to draw the audience out of their seats, and pull them into the adventure' (https://www.facebook.com/PeterJacksonNZ/notes).

Methodology

We conducted an online survey of *Hobbit* pre-release audiences in the three weeks before the world premiere of the film, held in New Zealand (where the film was shot and postproduced) in late November 2012. This survey yielded one thousand usable responses from individuals in 59

countries (Davis et al. 2014). Following the release of the film, a second online survey of *Hobbit* audiences was conducted in the first half of 2013. The survey was offered in seven languages (English, French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Danish and Flemish), using an identical instrument that was translated into each language. More than 2800 *Hobbit* viewers from more than 80 countries participated.

We employed a novel mixed-methods survey technique combining Q methodology with a conventional questionnaire. Q methodology's purpose is to identify shared subjective viewpoints among respondents.[5] Q methodology involves creation of a model of the discursive field or 'concourse' of things that people can think or say on a particular topic. We collected hundreds of statements from social media sites, articles in the press, reviews and documents released by the film's publicity apparatus both before and after the film's release. We then selected a sample of statements (in this case, about 40) to represent significant issues or themes within the larger concourse during each period. The Q survey required respondents to sort these statements about *The Hobbit: AUJ* from +4 (most agree) to −4 (most disagree), effectively producing a descriptive model of each respondent's viewpoint. Respondents also provided qualitative comments about the statements with which they most agreed and most disagreed. The matrix of by-person Q sorts is reduced through principal components analysis with a commercial software program, PCQ, to permit identification of shared viewpoints among respondents. Although idiosyncratic viewpoints are always possible, typically the number of major shared viewpoints is relatively small – fewer than a half dozen. For our purposes, these shared viewpoints define the audience formations. The questionnaires collected qualitative information about respondents' consumption of the film and their comments about the film viewing experience, as well as relevant socio-demographic data.

We conceptualize and measure marketability of *The Hobbit: AUJ* as the degree of anticipation to see the film among pre-release audiences. Respondents in the pre-release survey were asked to indicate 'How important is it for you to see *The Hobbit*?' on a five-point scale from 'not at all important' (1) to 'extremely important' (5). We also created an index of anticipation by adding the scores from eight Q statements expressing interest in seeing the film (from 1 = most strongly disagree to 9 = most strongly agree).[6] Table 2 presents the eight statements used to create this index, the scores for each statement for each of the five principal pre-release audience formations, and the mean score for the index of anticipation.[7]

We conceptualize playability as highly enjoyable subjective transportation into the film's storyworld. We call this immersive experience 'enchantment'. Immersive enchantment among *Hobbit: AUJ* viewers is measured with an index of six Q statements expressing feelings of absorption or, conversely, boredom.[8] Table 4 presents the six statements we used to create the index of enchantment, and the scores on each statement for each of the five principal post-viewing *Hobbit* audiences.

Marketability and pre-release Hobbit audiences

Our survey of *The Hobbit: AUJ*'s pre-release audiences identified five major groups, two of which clearly were the film's core addressee audiences (see Table 1).[9] LoTR film fans (here labelled H0:G1)[10] regarded *The Hobbit: AUJ* as an extension of Jackson's previous *LoTR* film trilogy, and in describing their anticipation for the forthcoming film often made reference to their very positive experience of these previous films. As a 58-year-old Canadian woman explained,

> I've been a Tolkien fan for most of my life and after loving what Peter Jackson did with the LotR trilogy, I can't wait to see this new movie.

A second highly interested segment, Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2), approached the film as an adaptation of a familiar and cherished children's book that tapped deep feelings related to childhood and family. While quite enthusiastic about the forthcoming film, this audience expressed some apprehension about the fidelity of the book-to-film adaptation. Said a 19-year-old Filipino woman,

> I read [The Hobbit] when I was a child… This book and its influence on me has been a crucial part of my life and even though I'm scared that it would not live up to the hype, I *need* to see it... The book is one of the few things my father and I bonded over when I was young. Seeing this with him in the movie house would be something that I never imagined as a kid. (italics in original)

Of the three other pre-release audience groups, one (Celebrity followers, H0:G3) consisted mainly of females interested primarily in the film's actors rather than in the Tolkien storyworld, another (Anxious investors, H0:G4) consisted of persons concerned about the film's economic and reputational spillovers in New Zealand, and one (Angry and disappointed Jackson critics, H0:G1-) was outraged over certain political and creative aspects of the film.[11]

Figure 1 summarizes the degree of anticipation among the five pre-release audiences. The two most eager groups were LoTR film fans (H0:G1) and Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2). Almost 94 per cent of LoTR film fans and 89 per cent of Tolkien aficionados believed it to be 'quite' or 'extremely' important to see the film. These two groups responded very favorably to the film's promotional campaign, illustrating the high level of loyalty and eagerness among these pre-release audience groups, of whom some members had been waiting for many years to see *The Hobbit* on-screen (Davis et al. 2014). LoTR film fans and Tolkien aficionados scored 55 and 53 out of 72, respectively, on the index of anticipation, and their mean scores were respectively 4.6 and 4.4 out of 5 on the scale of perceived importance of seeing the film (Table 2).

The promotional campaign also caught the attention of Celebrity followers (H0:G3), audiences with a particular interest in the show's cast. Celebrity followers scored 50/72 on the index of anticipation and 3.9/5 on the scale of perceived importance of seeing the film. A total of 69 per cent of Celebrity followers considered it to be 'quite' or 'extremely' important to see *The Hobbit: AUJ* (Figure 1).

But the interpellation orchestrated by the movie marketing apparatus did not convince the other two pre-release audience groups to see the film. Anxious investors (H0:G4) were ambivalent and in no hurry to see it, while Angry and disappointed Jackson critics (H0:G1-) objected to the film, and in many cases planned not to see it at all (Table 2). These groups scored very low on the scale of perceived importance of seeing the film (2.6 and 2.0, respectively). Fewer than 20 per cent of Angry and disappointed Jackson critics (H0:G1-) or Anxious investors (H0:G4) considered it to be 'quite' or 'extremely' important to see the film (Figure 1).

The top interests and motivations of each pre-release audience group to see *The Hobbit: AUJ* are shown in Table 3. The broad appeal of the *Hobbit* book or of J.R.R. Tolkien across all audience groups except Celebrity followers (H0:G3) is evident; particularly notable is the very strong interest of Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2) in Tolkien and his works (87 per cent of mentions). Celebrity followers, on the other hand, were attracted overwhelmingly by one of the stars in the film (76 per cent of mentions).

Respondents were asked to indicate what they were most looking forward to in *The Hobbit: AUJ*. Interest in the book-to-film adaptation, and curiosity about the ways the film-makers would 'realize' Middle-earth on-screen, are evident across all five pre-release audiences. The film's marketability to audience group H0:G3 was enhanced by the inclusion of certain admired actors. However, the core addressee audience segments, LoTR film fans (H0:G1) and Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2), expressed strongest interest in returning to Middle-earth. Thus, the most enthusiastic pre-viewers of the film anticipated a powerfully immersive viewing experience. This was the key to the film's marketability to individuals with interest in Tolkien's storyworld through Tolkien's writings or via Jackson's earlier *LoTR* film trilogy.

Playability and post-viewing *Hobbit* audiences

Playability is the film's power to induce positive responses in viewers, eliciting high levels of word-of-mouth referrals. Among *The Hobbit: AUJ*'s post-viewing audiences, one group expressed a very strong positive response, which they associated with a sense of transportation to Middle-earth. They strongly agreed with Q statements referring to experiencing an overwhelming sense of joy and enchantment, a loss of awareness of time passing, and the desire to remain even longer in the fictional storyworld offered by the film (see Table 4). We call this audience group Enchanted Hobbit fans (H1:G1). Said Enchanted Hobbit fans:

> The film was so beautifully done – characterizations, scenery, costuming, storyline. It was all so rich, like being at a feast. I saw the film twice, and each time felt like I could sit through another few hours and wanted to go back for more. (American woman, 39)

> I literally cried. Multiple times. I'm a 33 year old man and I cried right at the beginning, and especially when I saw Galadriel. I absolutely loved it... I LOVED the 48fps 3D version. Loved it. It took about five minutes to get used to, and I was there, in Middle-earth, with old friends. (American man, 33)

> If I could, I would sit down and watch all three movies at once. Once the movie starts, I am attentive to every detail. I am not bored or restless. The movie flowed perfectly.... I have seen the movie seven times now and I still think the same thing each time. The longer the movie the better. (American woman, 36)

Immersive transportation to Middle-earth was so strong that some H1:G1 viewers experienced a sense of dissonance when returning to the real world at the end of the film:

> From the first bars of the music to the end credits, I was mesmerised. Left the cinema in a trance and wandered around the city for an hour feeling as if I'd landed on another, unfamiliar, and unappealing planet. (German woman, 52)

Also, for many H1:G1 viewers, the film had a deeply personal meaning that spilled over into real life. Said a 21 year old American woman,

> As I told Peter Jackson at a screening of the film the night before the NYC premiere of *The Hobbit*, 'Your films changed and saved my life.' The first installment of the *Hobbit* trilogy gave me something to look forward to when nothing else seemed enough. While it may seem horrendously hyperbolic, waiting to see *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* saved my life.[12]

With strong emotional attachment to the film, Enchanted Hobbit fans were very enthusiastic about their viewing experience, and they were consequently eager to communicate their enjoyable experience to others, as suggested by the preponderance of H1:G1 viewers among our survey respondents.

Other audience segments expressed responses ranging from moderately enthusiastic to strongly negative. These viewers experienced the film in different varieties of a *mediated* mode. In a mediated mode, viewers are overtly aware of the

> constructed nature of the text as a media production – as an elaboration of established media codes and conventions. Mediated readings are thus generally characterized by a more distant or separate relationship between text and viewer…. In adopting a mediated mode of reception, viewers characteristically draw on (often quite considerable) knowledge of aspects of media production, aesthetic ideals, generic conventions, and the functions and motivations of the film and television industries. At times, this knowledge may interrupt the process of identification and/or militate against viewers' engagement with the message content of media texts. (Michelle 2007: 203)

While experiencing a spectacular fantasy-action film in a mediated mode may yield viewing pleasure, it does not yield the enchanted 'preferred reading'. Disruption of the transparent preferred viewing experience was provoked, among some viewers, by specific film attributes: the liberties taken by Jackson in adapting Tolkien's book to the screen, the unpleasant perceptual effects generated by the film's technological enhancements (3D, CGI and HFR), the perceived tedium of the action sequences, and the length of the film.

A mediated mode of reception was evident among Disappointed Tolkien readers (H1:G2), who felt *The Hobbit: AUJ* failed to capture the spirit of the novel. They compared the film unfavorably with the book, strongly agreeing with statement 17 that 'There was too much deviation from the book and too much emphasis on adding action scenes. I wish it had stuck more closely to J.R.R. Tolkien's original story in tone and emphasis'. Disappointed Tolkien readers considered that the film emphasized action at the expense of character development, attributing this to commercial pandering to the lowest common denominator of taste. Commented a South African man (36),

> I got the feeling that the 'volume' was just turned up too high in general. Wherever violence was avoided in the book, it seemed to be relished in the movie. It was untrue to the spirit of the novel in that sense, and I felt it sold its soul to please the unthinking masses.

Another post-viewing audience group, Critics of technological 'enhancements' (H1:G3), also experienced the film in a mediated mode. H1:G3 viewers found the combination of CGI, HFR, and 3D to be unpleasant because it seemed artificial:

> Everything had this shiny 'look at me I'm CGI' look to it. The glowly effect on a lot of CGI elements was also particularly unappealing. The naturalism that comes from using CGI only when necessary and relying more on practical effects was lost, and as a result the movie had a rather distasteful visual aesthetic. (American woman, 23)

Some Critics of technological 'enhancements' expressed mild enjoyment of the film despite the disruptive sensations they experienced from the 3D, CGI and HFR.[13] Said a Filipino woman (age 27) residing in Canada:

> I did not care for the High Frame Rate as it reminded me of watching my boyfriend play video games on our high-definition TV. I know it was supposed to give the film a more 'realistic' and 'natural' sense, but it was the total opposite for me. Visually, the movements of the actors appeared insanely rushed and frantic and it was actually very unnerving. I could not stop thinking about the effects and the high definition video the entire time, which completely pulled me out of the experience of getting lost in the film. This gave me a little bit of a reason to dislike the film, which I 'fixed' by watching it at the normal frame rate in 2D.

The fourth principal H1 audience group, Mildly entertained casual viewers (H1:G4), also experienced the film in a mediated mode, finding the film to be tediously long, with too many pointless action scenes. While enjoying the New Zealand scenery and not objecting to the textual details of Jackson's book-to-screen adaptation, to these viewers the film was needlessly stretched out. Said a British man (38) residing in the United States, 'At the end of the film it seemed like very little had actually happened on the journey aside from a few minor encounters. Compared to the excitement of Fellowship this was a let-down'.

The fifth principal H1 audience group, Bored and disillusioned Hobbit critics (H1:G1-), expressed very strong antipathy towards the film, finding it to be excessively long, clownish, superficial,

untrue to Tolkien, and packed with meaningless action sequences. Said a Canadian woman (19),

> If I weren't with family, I would have left the cinema… it seemed like the film was swallowed up by needless action scenes, with little time spent actually making me care about the characters. It was very long, very dull, and very poorly edited, and left me completely uninvolved emotionally.

Table 4 shows the scores of the six Q statements forming the index of enchantment for each of the five post-viewing *Hobbit: AUJ* audience groups, and the respective enchantment scores. Clearly, Enchanted Hobbit fans (H1:G1) were the only audience members that were truly moved and transported by the film, and for whom the film had highest playability. The film did not have high playability for the other audience groups. Critics of technological 'enhancements' (Group H1:G3) were sympathetic to the film but unhappy at the disruption of a hoped-for immersive experience by the visual artefacts generated by the film's particular combination of advanced cinema technologies. Audience groups H1:G1-, H1:G2 and H1:G4 were put off by other aspects of the film and did not enjoy it as hoped, if at all.

Discussion: Playability, audience fragmentation and fan partisanship

As an expensive contemporary blockbuster feature film, *The Hobbit: AUJ* is evidently positioned in many respects within the 'high concept' design framework proposed by Wyatt (1994). It has, however, extratextual, intertextual and paratextual characteristics that were not so apparent two decades ago and hence are not discussed by Wyatt, but which have become major factors in the marketability and more especially the playability of highly promoted contemporary media offerings.

While clearly intended, designed, and financed as profit-making cultural commodities with high-concept blockbuster attributes, the proximity of the *LoTR* and *Hobbit* films to the rich Tolkien canon gave them access to an audience that was much larger and potentially much more knowledgeable about the extratextual storyworld than were audiences for comparable 'blockbuster' film products such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Shrek* or *Da Vinci Code.* The *Batman*, *Spiderman*, *Superman*, *Twilight* or *Harry Potter* franchises perhaps provide closer comparisons, but their followings arguably fall some way short of the long and rich history evidenced in Tolkien scholarship and fandom since the 1960s (Barker 2006; Brayton 2006). Crucially, the *LoTR* film trilogy and the Tolkien written corpus each cast very long shadows over audiences' expectations regarding the film version of *The Hobbit*, leading *LoTR* film fans and Tolkien readers to have dissimilar expectations of *The Hobbit: AUJ* (Davis et al. 2014; Michelle et al. 2015b). The film was marketable to the two groups, but was much more playable to LoTR film fans than to Tolkien readers.

Meers (2006) suggests that Hollywood 'blockbuster' films elicit specific forms of fandom. He identifies three types of fans of Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy: persons invested in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, fantasy fans and blockbuster fans. In his research, *LoTR* fans were

the most highly engaged of the three forms, conducting multiple readings, seeking out errors or discrepancies in the film, and participating in fan-related public debate and social activism.

Hobbit film audience formations have evolved since Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, when 'viewers' had much less textual knowledge of Tolkien than 'readers' (Mikos et al. 2008). In the case of *The Hobbit: AUJ*, audience members oriented towards *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy (H1:G1) had almost as much Tolkien literacy as Tolkien aficionados (H1:G2), although many expressed preference for the visual medium. Before release, *The Hobbit: AUJ* seemed likely to follow in the footsteps of the *LoTR* films in matters of look, feel, and the director's artistic license vis-à-vis the Tolkien corpus. Potential viewers of *The Hobbit: AUJ* already knew about Peter Jackson's cinematic style and preferences, confirmed by viewing the trailers or Jackson's production blogs (Davis et al. 2014).

However, some audience groups expressed disappointment ranging from modest to severe. The price of appealing to the H1:G1 audience group was to disappoint audiences who were relatively more attached to the written Tolkien corpus than to Jackson's *LoTR* films, who were not enchanted by action spectacles, or who preferred greater story and character development. The disenchantment among the H1:G3 audience segment, comprised of individuals who had high expectations about enjoying the film, was due to the disruptive effects of the film's technological enhancements, which according to H1:G3 audience members were not only unpleasant or jarring, but also compared unfavorably with the visual effects craftwork they so admired in the *LoTR* films.

The production of a 'preferred reading' for a particular audience at the perceived expense of other interested audiences, many of whom also considered themselves to be stakeholders in the Middle-earth storyworld, elicited fan partisanship. Negative word-of-mouth is amplified in social media just as strongly as positive word-of-mouth, and warring assessments of the quality of the film among different audience groups ultimately became burdensome to some highly engaged viewers.[14] While conducting our research, we observed regular reminders on a number of fan discussion boards for members to remain courteous and mind their netiquette, along with allusions to somewhat aggressive posturing and argumentation amongst some contributors. As one of our respondents noted, excessive promotional hype and competitive partisan interaction within online fan communities appeared to take its toll on the pleasurable engagement of some viewers who wished to position themselves within the 'moderate middle':

> Due to The Hobbit films, I have removed myself from involvement in the Tolkien communities apart from managing a popular blog. I feel like The Hobbit film was meant to bring fans of the Legendarium together on a very large and public scale, and to welcome people who have discovered Middle-earth through the films. However, I feel like the opposite is happening. The 'fandom' part of the community, as we call it, subtracts from the positive experience I have in viewing The Hobbit and waiting for the next films. The anticipation has bloated to a point where it's become tiresome to me: there is too much hype from young fans, too much 'news' from certain websites, and even fans of the films' actors who are disrespectful to the story. At the other end of the spectrum, the more cerebral and Luddite community members can be exclusive,

unwelcoming, snobby and harsh with their uncalled-for gatekeeper-ship, especially with the films and folks who enjoy the films. This lack of community spirit is very disappointing and has sworn me off the traditional Tolkien sub-communities. Overall, Middle-earth is a happy place for me and I do not care to see people being negative about different interpretations and other people's tastes and preferences. As someone who sits in the middle, I feel very excluded and oftentimes stressed when these two extremes of the community clash and fight. The films have brought out the worst of Peter Jackson and Tolkien fans, making everything that surrounds the films an unpleasant and negative place to be. As much as I love the films, I can't wait for The Hobbit: There and Back Again to be out and done so the community in general can go back to some semblance of normality. (Canadian woman, 26)

Gray (2010) similarly alludes to the competitive intertextual feuding and occasionally aggressive assertion of disparate preferences and priorities among *LoTR* fans within discussion forums such as TheOneRing.net, which seem to have come into play once more with the latest addition to the Tolkien film franchise.

Although *AUJ* remained marketable to global audiences, earning over $1B in worldwide revenues, it did not receive much critical acclaim, with many viewers regarding the film as 'just another Hollywood blockbuster' that had been excessively shaped by commercial interests. Our subsequent research on receptions of the second and third episodes of *The Hobbit* shows declining playability, with some erosion of the core group of enthusiastic viewers, and expansion of oppositional readings, with frequent resort to mediated modes of reception. Clearly, the social environment of pre-viewing and viewing created by massive audience engagement, hyper communicability, and competitive intertextual feuding among polarized taste subcultures can shape and inform viewers' engagements with a film, affecting the playability of the film and the marketability of the subsequent episodes.

References

Barker, Martin (2006), 'On being a 1960s Tolkien reader', in E. Mathijs and M. Pomerance (eds), *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, pp. 81–100.

_____ (2009), 'Fantasy audiences versus fantasy audiences', in Warren Buckland (ed.), *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 286–309.

Barker, Martin, Mathijs, Ernest and Trobia, Alberto (2008), 'Our methodological challenges and solutions', in M. Barker and E. Mathijs (eds), *Watching the Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences*, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 213–40.

Biltereyst, Daniel, Mathijs, Ernest and Meers, Philippe (2008), 'An avalanche of attention: The prefiguration and reception of *The Lord of the Rings*', in M. Barker and E. Mathijs (eds), *Watching the Lord of the Rings. Tolkien's World Audiences*, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 37–58.

Brayton, Jennifer (2006), 'Fic Frodo slash Frodo: Fandoms and *The Lord of the Rings*', in E. Mathijs and M. Pomerance (eds), *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings*, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, pp. 137–54.

Brown, Steven R. (1980), *Political Subjectivity: Applications Of Q Methodology In Political Science*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bulbeck, Pip (2014), '"Hobbit" trilogy reportedly cost $745 million to make', *Hollywood Reporter*, 21 October, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hobbit-trilogy-reportedly-cost-745m (accessed 22 June 2015).

Busse, Karen and Gray, Jonathan (2011), 'Fan cultures and fan communities', in V. Nightingale (ed.), *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 427–42.

Chakravarty, Anindita, Liu, Yong and Mazumdar, Tridib (2010), 'The differential effects of online word-of-mouth and critics' reviews on pre-release movie evaluation', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 24:3, pp. 185–97.

Cucco, Marco (2009), 'The promise is great: The blockbuster and the Hollywood economy', *Media, Culture, and Society*, 31:2, pp. 215–30.

Davis, Charles H. and Michelle, Carolyn (2011), 'Q methodology in audience research: Bridging the qualitative/quantitative "divide"?', *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 8:2, pp. 559–93.

Davis, Charles H., Michelle, Carolyn, Hardy, Anne and Hight, Craig (2014), 'Framing audience prefigurations of The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey: The roles of fandom, politics and idealised intertexts', *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 11:1, pp. 50–87.

De Vany, Arthur (2004), *Hollywood Economics: How Extreme Uncertainty Shapes the Film Industry*, New York: Routledge.

Elberse, Anita (2013), *Blockbusters: Hit-making, Risk-taking, and the Big Business of Entertainment,* New York, Henry Holt and Company.

Elberse, Anita and Eliashberg, Joshua (2003), 'Demand and supply dynamics for sequentially released products in international markets: The case of motion pictures', *Marketing Science*, 22:3, pp. 329–54.

Epstein, Edward Jay (2006), *The Big Picture: Money and Power in Hollywood*, New York: Random House Trade.

Fiorelli, Gianluca (2013), 'Prelaunch and the marketing of suspense: The Hobbit History case', IMDB MovieMeter, http://www.stateofsearch.com/hobbithistorycase/# (accessed 24 September 2014).

Fish, Stanley (1979), *Is There a Text In This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Grainge, Paul (2007), *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*, Routledge.

Gray, Jonathan (2010), *Show Sold Separately. Promos, Spoilers and Other Media Paratexts*, New York: New York University Press.

Gray, Jonathan, Sandvoss, Cornel and Lee Harrington, C. (2007), 'Introduction: Why study fans? Introduction', in J. Gray, C. Sandvoss and C. L. Harrington (eds), *Fandom. Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 1-16.

Griff, Catherine (2012), 'Film audience testing in Australia: Capturing the audience before it bites', *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, 6(2), pp. 159-174.

Grossberg, Lawrence (1992), 'Is there a fan in the house? The affective sensibility of fandom', in L. A. Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring Audience. Fandom and Popular Media*, London: Routledge, pp. 50–68.

Gwynne, Owain (2014), 'Fan-made time: The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit', in K. M. Barton and J. M. Lampley (eds), *Fan CULTure. Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, pp. 76–91.

Hardy, Jonathan (2010), *Cross-Media Promotion*, New York: Peter Lang.

Hills, Matt (2007), 'Review essay', *Popular Communication*, 5:2, pp. 149–54.

Jöckel, Sven and Döbler, Thomas (2006), 'The event movie: Marketing filmed entertainment for transnational media corporations', *The International Journal on Media Management*, 8:2, pp. 84–91.

Johnson, Derek (2013), *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*, New York: NYU Press.

Kerrigan, Finola (2010), *Film Marketing*, Amsterdam: Elsevier..

Krider, Robert E. and Weinberg, Charles B. (1998), 'Competitive dynamics and the introduction of new products: The motion picture timing game', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35: February, pp. 1–15.

Lacey, Nick (2002), *Media, Institutions and Audiences*, New York: Palgrave.

Lampel, Joseph and Shamsie, Jamal (2000), 'Critical push: Strategies for creating momentum in the motion picture industry', *Journal of Management*, 26:2, pp. 233–57.

Lewis, Jon (2003), 'Following the money in America's sunniest company town: Some notes on the political economy of the Hollywood blockbuster', chapter 2, in J. Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters*, London: Routledge, pp. 61-71.

Luthar, Breda (2008), 'Promotional frame makers and the meaning of the text: The case of *The Lord of the Rings*', in M. Barker and E. Mathijs (eds), *Watching the Lord of the Rings. Tolkien's World Audiences*, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 59–68.

Mangalindan, J. P. (2011), 'Jeffrey Katzenberg: Why movies "suck" now', Fortune, 29 July, http://fortune.com/2011/07/29/jeffrey-katzenberg-why-movies-suck-now/. Accessed 10 October 2014.

Marich, Robert (2009), *Marketing to Moviegoers: A Handbook of Strategies and Tactics*, Carbondale, Ill.: SIU Press.

McKeown, Bruce and Thomas, Dan (2013), *Q Methodology*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Meers, Philippe (2006), 'Fandom en blockbusters. Aanzet tot een typologie van Lord of the Rings-fans', *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 34:1, pp. 69–87.

Michelle, Carolyn (2007), 'Modes of reception: A consolidated analytical framework', *The Communication Review*, 10:3, pp. 181–222.

Michelle, Carolyn and Davis, Charles H. (2014), 'Beyond the qualitative-quantitative divide: Reflections on the utility and challenges of Q methodology for media researchers', in F. Darling-Wolf (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Methods in Media Studies, v. 7: Research Methods in Media Studie*s, New York: Wiley, pp. 1–23.

Michelle, Carolyn, Davis, Charles H. and Vladica, Florin (2012), 'Understanding variation in audience engagement and response: An application of the composite model to receptions of *Avatar* (2009)', *The Communication Review*, 15:2, pp. 106–43.

Michelle, Carolyn, Davis, Charles H., Hardy, Ann and Hight, Craig (2015a), 'The Hobbit hyper-reality paradox: Polarisation amongst audiences for a 3D HFR film', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, Published online before print May 18, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1354856515584880.

_____ (2015b), 'Pleasure, disaffection, conversion, or rejection? The (limited) role of prefigurative expectations in shaping audience engagement and response', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Published online before print March 12, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1367877915571407.

Michelle, Carolyn, Hardy, Ann, Davis, Charles H. and Hight, Craig (2014), 'An unexpected controversy in Middle-earth: Audience encounters with the "dark side" of transnational film production', *Transnational Cinemas*, 6:1, pp. 49–66.

Mikos, Lothar, Eichner, Susanne, Prommer, Elizabeth and Wedel, Michael (2008), 'Involvement in *The Lord of the Rings*: Audience strategies', in M. Barker and E. Mathijs (eds), *Watching the Lord of the Rings. Tolkien's World Audiences*, New York Peter Lang, pp. 111–130.

Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang (2005), *Global Hollywood 2*, London, bfi Publishing.

Olson, Scott Robert (1999), *Hollywood Planet: Global Media and the Competitive Advantage of Narrative Transparency*, Mahway, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

O'Reilly, D. and Kerrigan, F. (2013), 'A view to a brand: Introducing the film brandscape', *European Journal of Marketing*, 47:5/6, pp. 769–89.

Rosz, Jeff (2012), 'How much did the first "Hobbit" movie cost to make and market?', *Media Market Journal*, 4 December, http://www.mediamarketjournal.com /2012/12/how-much-did-the-hobbit-an-unexpected-journey-cost-to-make-and-market/ (accessed 3 March 2013).

Sashi, C. M. (2012), 'Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media', *Management Decision*, 50:2, pp. 253–72.

Schrøder, Kim Christian (2012), 'Methodological pluralism as a vehicle of qualitative generalization', *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 9:2, pp. 798–825.

Shutt, Buffy (2003), 'Research and the movies', in Brenda Laurel (ed.), *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 293–300.

Silver, Jonathan Derek (2007), 'Hollywood's dominance of the movie industry: How did it arise and how has it been maintained?', Doctoral dissertation, Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.

Trobia, Alberto, Scianna, Serena, Mendola, Sonia and Panzica, Marco (2008), 'Il pubblico del Ritorno del Re in Italia: risultati dell'indagine campionaria', in A. Trobia (ed.), *Sociologia del cinema fantastico. Il Signore degli Anelli in Italia: audience, media, mercato/*The audience of the Return of the King in Italy: survey results, in Sociology of fantasy films: The Lord of the Rings in Italy: audience, media, market, Torino: kaplan, pp. 107–38.

Waetjen, Jarrod and Gibson, Timothy A. (2007), 'Harry Potter and the commodity fetish: Activating corporate readings in the journey from text to commercial intertext', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 4:1, pp. 3–26.

Watts, Simon and Stenner, Paul (2012), *Doing Q methodological Research: Theory, Method and Interpretation*, London: Sage.

Webster, James G. (2014), The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wyatt, Justin (1994), High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood, Austin: University of Texas Press.

Zafirau, S. (2009), 'Imagined audiences: Intuitive and technical knowledge in Hollywood', Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California.

Table 1: Audience segments.

Pre-release audience segments

- Eager and enthusiastic fans of Jackson's *LoTR* film trilogy (H0:G1), a group whose principal frame of reference consisted of Jackson's previous screen adaptation of Tolkien's work.
- Angry and disappointed Jackson critics (H0:G1-) who were unhappy, for political or aesthetic reasons, with the ways that Jackson was bringing *The Hobbit* to the screen.
- Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2) whose expectations were framed mainly by their reading of Tolkien.
- Celebrity followers (H0:G3), a mainly female group whose members were primarily interested in the forthcoming film's actors.
- Anxious investors (H0:G4), a mainly New Zealand group whose members were more concerned about the film's reputational and economic spillovers than with the film's storyworld.

Post-viewing audience segments

- Enchanted Hobbit viewers (H1:G1), who reported a powerful experience of immersive transportation.
- Bored and disillusioned Hobbit viewers (H1:G1-), a group that was very critical of the film and enjoyed it very little.
- Disappointed Tolkien readers (H1:G2), who were displeased with the film's many divergences from the Tolkien canon.
- Critics of technological 'enhancements' (H2:G3), a group who found the cinema technologies (CGI, 3D, and HFR) to be unpleasant or disruptive.
- Mildly entertained casual viewers (H1:G4), who found the film overly long and repetitive.

Table 2: Anticipation among pre-release *Hobbit* audience segments.

Statements from the Q-sample (below) scored by audience segment (at right). Scores range from +4 (most strongly agree) to –4 (most strongly disagree)	Angry and disappointed Jackson critics (H0:G1-)	Eager and enthusiastic fans of Jackson's LoTR film trilogy (H0:G1)	Tolkien aficiona-dos (H0:G2)	Celebrity followers (H0:G3)	Anxious investors (H0:G4)
7. My disinterest grows with each passing bit of media and publicity released. I am underwhelmed by what I've seen and heard so far.	3	–3	–2	–4	1
12. I'm looking forward to seeing the beautiful New Zealand landscape on the big screen again.	–1	1	2	3	2
13. The Hobbit is definitely on my 'must go see' list for this year. It will be a major cinematic event.	–2	2	3	4	–1
15. Based on the trailer, this film seems like some producer's attempt to appeal to the lowest common denominator.	2	–2	–1	–3	–1
19. The more I hear about what they are doing with this movie, the more I don't want to see it.	2	–2	–3	–3	–2
20. I am especially looking forward to see the film with my friends / family.	–1	1	3	2	0
35. This film can't get here soon enough. I've been waiting for this my whole life, and I can't wait to see this adventure up on the big screen.	–3	3	1	–1	–4
38. I am really looking forward to returning to the wonderful world of Middle-earth.	–3	3	3	0	0
Anticipation Index (mean; max=72; min.=9). Statements 7, 15 and 19 are reverse coded for consistent valence.	29	55	53	50	42
How important is for you to see The Hobbit? (mean; 5 = extremely important to 1 = not at all important)	2.0	4.6	4.4	3.9	2.6

Table 3: Top interests and motivations to see *The Hobbit* among the five pre-release audience groups (as percentage of mentions).

|	Angry and disappointed Jackson critics (H0:G1-)	Eager and enthusiastic fans of Jackson's LoTR film trilogy (H0:G1)	Tolkien aficionados (H0:G2)	Celebrity followers (H0:G3)	Anxious investors (H0:G4)
Most important motivation to see the film (top items)	• Fan of The Hobbit book or of JRR Tolkien (43%) • Not planning to see the film (35%) • Other minor motivations	• Fan of The Hobbit book or of JRR Tolkien (48%) • Fan of the LoTR films (36%) • Fan of one of the stars in the film (8%)	• Fan of The Hobbit book or of JRR Tolkien (87%) • Fan of the LoTR films (10%) • Five other minor motivations	• Fan of one of the stars in the film (76%) • Fan of the LoTR films (12%) • Fan of The Hobbit book or of JRR Tolkien (6%)	• Fan of the LoTR films (26%) • Fan of The Hobbit book or of JRR Tolkien (20%) • Film trailer (9%)
Most looking forward to (top items)	• Nothing (30%) • Faithful adaptation (15%) • Film adaptation, realization (8%)	• Return to Middle-earth (8%) • Film adaptation, realization (7%) • Continuity with LoTR films (5%)	• Film adaptation (7%) • Return to Middle-earth, realization, faithful adaptation, character - Smaug (6%)	• Actor - Richard Armitage (38%) • Realization, landscape, score, story (6%)	• Realization (8%) • Technology, cinematic experience, social - family (7%)

Table 4: Experience of immersive enchantment among segments of post-viewing Hobbit

audiences (from +4 = most strongly agree to –4 = most strongly disagree).

Statements from the Q-sample (below) and scored by audience segment (at right) (from 4 = most strongly agree to -4 = most strongly disagree)	Bored and disillusioned Hobbit viewers (H1:G1-)	Enchanted Hobbit viewers (H1:G1)	Disap-pointed Tolkien fans (H1:G2)	Critics of technological enhance-ments (H1:G3)	Mildly entertained casual viewers (H1:G4)
11. Time flew by so quickly, I barely noticed. I wished the film didn't have to end so soon; I could easily have kept watching for another hour or two.	–4	4	–4	–1	–4
13. It took me back to the place I love the most – Middle-earth. You really get the sense that this is an old world rich in history, places, people, kingdoms, magic and wonders.	–2	2	0	2	0
18. Within seconds I was transported back to Middle-earth, completely immersed, and upon leaving the theatre felt like I was having culture shock, back in the modern world. I just wanted to go back.	–3	3	–3	1	–1
21. Watching this film I felt enchanted and had an overwhelming sense of joy. I laughed and smiled much of the time, and almost cried in some parts.	–3	3	–3	0	–2
32. I felt bored and uninterested at times. It was very long and drawn out, and lacked momentum.	4	–4	1	–1	3
33. This first film just didn't give me enough to make me care. I probably won't watch the next two films in theatres	4	–4	–2	–4	–2
Enchantment Index (mean; max = 54, min = 6). Statements 32 and 33 are reverse coded. -------------- Most frequently mentioned meaning of the film (% of mentions)	18 Disappointment / failed adaptation (52%)	43 Adaptation of favorite book (16%)	26 Disappointment / failed adaptation (28%)	33 More of LoTRs, prequel (14%)	24 Adaptation of a favorite book (17%)

Figure 1: Percentage of each pre-release and post-release audience segment for whom it was 'quite' or 'extremely important' to see *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.

Pre-release audience groups
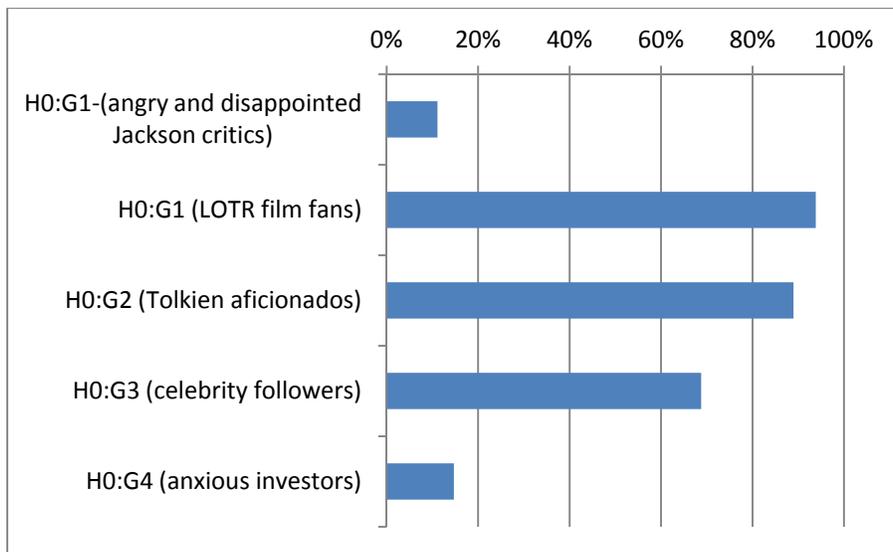
Post-release audience groups
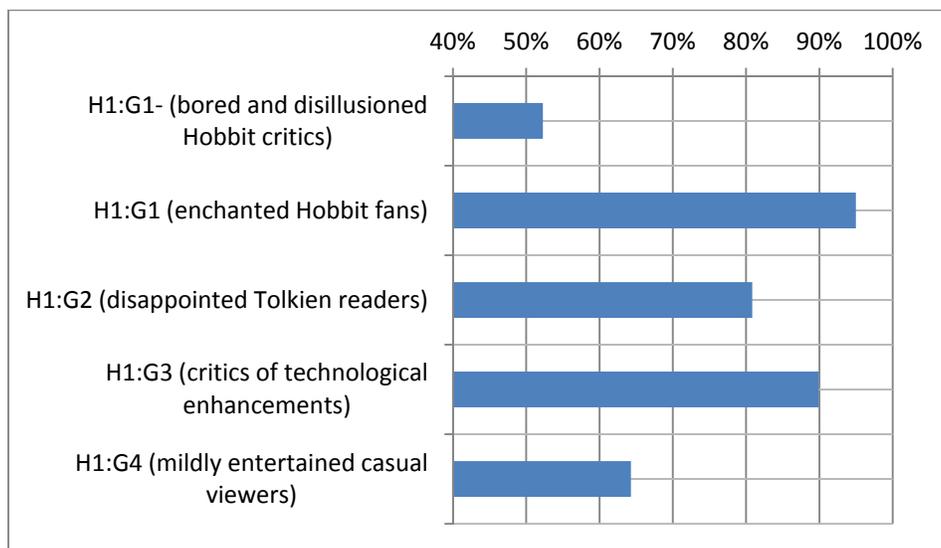
Notes

---

[1] Here, fans are provisionally defined as persons who have a significantly higher degree of psychological engagement with an 'object' and relational engagement with others who are also engaged, than persons who are passively involved, interested but inactive, or largely indifferent (Sashi 2012).

[2] On the promotion and business models of blockbuster 'event-films' see Cucco (2009); De Vany (2004); Epstein (2006); Grainge (2007); Gray (2010); Hardy (2010); Jöckel and Döbler (2006); Johnson (2013); Kerrigan (2010); Marich (2009); and Stringer (in Lewis 2003). On the promotional campaign of the *Lord the Rings* films see Biltereyst et al. (2008) and Luthar (2008).

[3] As reported in BoxOfficeMojo.com.

[4] As calculated from information in BoxOfficeMojo.com.

[5] For discussion of the use of Q methodology in audience research see Davis and Michelle (2011) and Michelle and Davis (2014). Brown (1980), McKeown and Thomas (2013), and Watts and Stenner (2012) provide extended treatment of Q methodology from technical and operational standpoints. For an example of previous audience research using the same methodological approach, see Michelle et al. (2012). It is important to note that the purpose of Q methodology is to identify and describe shared viewpoints. The methodology is not suitable for measuring the *distribution* of these viewpoints throughout a population.

[6] The index of anticipation has acceptable scalar properties (α is 0.72).

[7] The statement scores are from the factor or 'typal' arrays for each model viewpoint. They are calculated according to the loading of each response on the respective factor, using dedicated Q methodology software. For methodological details see Brown (1980), McKeown and Thomas (2013) or Watts and Stenner (2012).

[8] Some statements were reverse scored. The index of enchantment has good scalar properties (α is 0.83).

[9] For further discussion of these pre-release *Hobbit* audience segments see Davis et al. (2014).

[10] The nomenclature we use to describe Hobbit audience groups is read as follows: H0 refers to the pre-release audience and H1, H2 and H3 refer to the viewing audiences for each film in the trilogy. Audience groups are referred to as G1, G2, etc., and are described qualitatively in the text. Thus, audience group 2 in the first Hobbit: AUJ reception survey is labelled H1:G2, audience group 3 in the pre-release audience survey is labelled H0:G3, and so forth.

[11] An analysis of the reasons for anger among H0:G4 and H0:G1-audiences is provided in Michelle et al. (2014).

---

[12] Gwynne (2014) suggests a parallel between the passionate waiting of *Hobbit* film fans for the release of the film, and Tillich's account of humans' passionate waiting for the appearance of God.

[13] For deeper discussion of responses of *Hobbit* audiences to technologically enhanced cinema see Michelle et al. (2015a).

[14] Also, negative word-of-mouth has been found to have strong effects on infrequent or casual moviegoers (Chakravarty et al. 2010).