

# Commodity Analysis: The Lord of the Rings series

Introduction to the Political Economy of Media (ZUR589p)

## Introduction

In this paper I have decided to analyse one of the most popular media commodity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Lord of the Rings. Originally the story is almost eight years old and written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. But thanks to new technologies most young people know the trilogy very well. My task will be exploring how it fits within a broader system of production. I will try to answer as many questions as possible however I am pretty sure that there is no chance to find answers to everything.

I will also dedicate to connection between the novel and its production. Aim of this paperwork is introducing more details about the media commodity than just a story of the novel.

## Historical/contextual Information for the commodity

The Lord of the Rings is an epic high-fantasy novel which had written by English novelist and scholar J. R. R. Tolkien. It is actually an extension of his work of art The Hobbit which was published in 1937. This work was really popular so the publishers of The Hobbit George Allen & Unwin requested a sequel. This was true reason for writing another story. Tolkien had started at the age of 45. Although the author did not want to the book of The Lord of the Rings was divided into the three parts cause of the business and earning more money. First publication is dated into 1954. From that time it is still one of the bestselling novels ever written, with over 150 million copies sold. In addition, the novel has been translated into nearly forty languages, including Czech which was launched into the market in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

But here is necessary to mention that the original novel is not the main commodity. I will put film series to the analysis. This series is made up of three high fantasy adventure films directed by Peter Jackson and it is based on the original novel. The Lord of the Rings was launched with subtitles The single parts call The Fellowship of the Ring (2001), The Two Towers (2002) and The Return of the King (2003).

I have chosen more interesting points which I assume that should be bringing out. It is made on the basis of assignment.

## Who or what company holds the copyright or patent for the commodity?

The rights for the trilogy The Lord of the Rings belong to WingNut Films which is the production company based in Wellington, New Zealand. It is an important fact for filmmaker

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia. "The Lord of the Rings." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Rings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings)

Peter Jackson who was born in New Zealand. They can easily collaborate and predominantly produce. Right he is the director of The Lord of the Rings trilogy.<sup>2</sup>

### **What company or companies produced the commodity?**

The director operated with an option that he would make only two films in the first place. For a long time he imagined no company would risk by investing so much money in to three very expensive films. But lastly he had found the American film studio named New Line Cinema with whom he made a decision to make three films. Therefore, with his two co-workers he had had to write three new scripts.<sup>3</sup>

### **What company or companies distribute the commodity? Who owns that company?**

The whole trilogy The Lord of The Rings was distributed by the same company which was by producer which means New Line Cinema. It is the American film studio label which was founded in 1967 by Robert Shaye. Originally it was a film distribution company but later it has become an independent film studio. The founder and former CEO of the company is Bob Shaye. In 1998 writer and director Peter Jackson brought in his twenty-five-minute pitch reel for a big screen epic of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings to New Line Cinema with hope that the three volumes of the novel push into two films. Shaye suggested Jackson make three films and green lit an unprecedented simultaneous production for all three instalments. And that was a good idea proves a fact that all together the trilogy was nominated for thirty Oscars and more than a half turned into gaining them, including categories like Best Picture, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay.<sup>4</sup> Ten years ago CEO of Time Warner, at the time Jeffrey Bewkes, announced a shutting down New Line Cinema as a separately operated film studio. Nowadays all films produced here are distributed by Warner Bros.<sup>5</sup>

### **How much does the commodity cost to produce?**

The trilogy of the author Jackson cost 281 million dollars to make in total. This series was ended up fifteen years ago so at that time it was an incredibly huge number. Revenue from the whole trilogy was nearly 3 billion dollars. But for example The Star Wars prequel

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia. "WingNut Films." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WingNut\\_Films](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WingNut_Films)

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia. "The Lord of the Rings (film series)." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Rings\\_\(film\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_(film_series))

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia. "Robert Shaye." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Shaye](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Shaye)

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia. "New Line Cinema." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Line\\_Cinema](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Line_Cinema)

trilogy cost 343 million dollars and the prequel trilogy for The Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit, cost even two times more. It was made between 2012 and 2014.<sup>6</sup>

### **Is the commodity available in other forms?**

Here it has not to be forgotten to mention the original books by Tolkien, animated films from 1970's or radio adaptations. But we cut down these "old versions" and will talk about the "new era" of The Lord of the Rings like the trilogy by Jackson other products have to be under consideration.

Obviously, the main product for this commodity is the film itself. It comprises from a projection in the cinemas, televisions or DVDs. Besides that there are a lot of other kinds of merchandise such as board games, card games, video games or CDs with soundtrack. Then you can wear T-shirts or sweatshirts with the main characters, drink from mugs with them or write with pens and them also. There are various other products on The Lord of the Rings theme, for example online shops offer almost two hundred different things.<sup>7</sup>

Also, in the Czech Republic were projected all three films to the accompaniment of live symphony orchestra. First night was in 2016 and the last one in 2017. Each one was held in the biggest Czech sports area in Prague for nearly 9 thousand people.<sup>8</sup>

And finally, extremely likely we will be witnesses of new TV series very soon. It was announced by studio Warner Bros and heirs of the author Tolkien.<sup>9</sup>

### **Is this commodity distributed locally, regionally, nationally, and/or internationally?**

As you can see above The Lord of the Rings was distributed by New Line Cinema and reception was unexpectedly good. The whole series was received by viewers and also critics with overwhelming praise and it was recorded a major financial success. Although the films came into being in early 00's they are among the highest-grossing film series of all time. The film were critically acclaimed and heavily awarded. Especially thanks to its innovative special and visual effects.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Variety. "'Hobbit' Trilogy Has Cost \$561 Million So Far." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: <http://variety.com/2013/film/news/hobbit-trilogy-has-cost-561-million-so-far-1200694351/>

<sup>7</sup> Fantasyobchod. "Pán prstenů." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: <https://www.fantasyobchod.cz/pan-prstenu>

<sup>8</sup> Týden.cz. "Pán prstenů se symfoniky: pokračování uvede O2 arena příští rok." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/kultura/film/pan-prstenu-se-symfoniky-pokracovani-uvede-o2-arena-pristi-rok\\_374689.html](https://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/kultura/film/pan-prstenu-se-symfoniky-pokracovani-uvede-o2-arena-pristi-rok_374689.html)

<sup>9</sup> Fandíme seriálům. "Pán prstenů se vrátí v seriálové podobě." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: <http://www.fandimeserialum.cz/clanek/11752-pan-prstenu-se-vrati-v-serialove-podobe>

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia. "The Lord of the Rings (film series)." [online] [Accessed 6. 5. 2018] Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Rings\\_\(film\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_(film_series))

And right here we can talk about globalization, The Lord of the Rings series is definitely an obvious protagonist of this phenomenon. Revenue in the United States of America was only one third of total revenue worldwide. Most characters from the films are well known around the world and people from all over the world travel to New Zealand just for visiting the places where the series was shot.<sup>11</sup>

### **How/where is the commodity consumed?**

It was probably already said. Apparently, this commodity is consumed all over the world. It does not matter if it will be in the cinema, at home from the television or actually by buying some stuff from this brand. You can listen to soundtrack on CD, play computer games with the main characters or visit some well-preserved places in New Zealand.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I deal with one of the most successful film series of all time. The Lord of the Rings has been a well-known story already since 1950's. But after the film trilogy directed by Jackson it has become worldwide phenomenon. This series belong to the most successful film projects with profit over a billion dollars. I have found the answers the crucial questions which were possible to find.

Last but not least there is an option to say that The Lord of the Rings series, made between years 2001 and 2003, is one of the best examples of globalization in the world of media. The rights held WingNut Films, and, in these days, it exists more hundreds of stuffs with this theme.

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<sup>11</sup> iHNED.cz. "Dvě trilogie v číslech: jak si stojí Hobit ve srovnání s Pánem prstenů." [Accessed 6. 5. 2018]  
Available from: <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-63243600-hobit-pan-prstenu>

## Supplements

Here is the table where you can the summarization of the whole series.

<b>Directed by</b>	Peter Jacskon
<b>Produced by</b>	Barrie M. Osborne, Fran Walsh, Peter Jacskon, Tim Sanders (just The Fellowship of the Ring)
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Fran Walsh, Phillipa Boyens, Peter Jacskon, Stephen Sinclair (just The Two Towers)
<b>Based on</b>	The Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien
<b>Starring</b>	Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Liv Tyler, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Cate Blanchett, ...
<b>Music by</b>	Howard Shore
<b>Cinematography</b>	Andrew Lesnie
<b>Edited by</b>	Michael J. Horton, John Gilbert (just The Fellowship of the Ring), Jabez Olssen (just The Two Towers), Jamie Selkirk (The Return of the King)
<b>Production Company</b>	WingNut Films
<b>Distributed by</b>	New Line Cinema
<b>Release Date</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> of December, 2001 18 <sup>th</sup> of December, 2002 17 <sup>th</sup> of December, 2003
<b>Running Time</b>	558 minutes (Theatrical edition length)
<b>Country</b>	New Zealand, United States of America, Germany
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$281 million
<b>Box Office</b>	\$3 bilion (aproximately)

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Rings\\_\(film\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lord_of_the_Rings_(film_series))

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