“The refutation of Expanded Universe as non-canonical sources is a betrayal of decades of organic Star Wars plot progression and of the fan base that these writings supported from post Return of the Jedi to The Phantom Menace.”

Disney’s decision to rebrand the Expanded Universe to the Legends category, while making sense operationally for Disney, is an affront to the Star Wars fan base that has stayed with the brand for decades and is short sighted. While creating a clear slate for future growth allows flexibility for Disney in a manner that conforming to the Expanded Universe would not be conducive to, it simply did not take into account what the Expanded Universe meant to the fans and to the Star Wars brand as a whole.

Post Return of the Jedi, the Star Wars brand languished. The fan base remained, yet the scant offerings of Ewok movies and other children focused media did not provide growth for the product. The watershed moment was with the Timothy Zahn penned Thrawn Trilogy. This body of work reinvigorated the Star Wars fans and showed that Star Wars literature could a national best seller. The hundreds of books and comics that came out in the early 1990s and continued throughout the decade was the catalyst that showed the viability for further Star Wars movies and products. Without the initial spark of the Expanded Universe, Lucas may have not had the backing to go forward with the Prequel movies, let alone the massive cash-cow that came from it. If not for the Expanded Universe, Star Wars would not have been as profitable, and Disney may indeed not have spent the billions of dollars it did acquiring the Expanded Universe.

The sad fact that the Expanded Universe’s success ultimately lead to its undoing is perhaps foreshadowing for what Disney may ultimately do with the brand. If such an extensive and lauded body can be swept aside to simply allow a free constructive hand for Disney’s investment, what does that say to the fan base? Is the fan base, the core fans who have stuck with the brand for decades, replaceable for a younger, larger, more broad-based market segment that will be casual fans? There are many considerations to both refute and support this stance.

Lucas was not immune to creating a movie with broad-based appeal that appeared to refute the origins of the brand. The Phantom Menace was widely panned by Star Wars fans as being too childlike and over commercialized, even for a science fiction movie. However, subsequent movies, literature, and other media offerings reverted back due to the backlash. Will Disney, with its core customer base being the children market be willing to forgo maximizing its profit stream to put out a better product? Lucas, as the creator of Star Wars, had a vested interest in its success and had a nuanced understanding and perception of the demands of his fan base. Disney is one of the world’s largest multination conglomerations; it is just another piece in the product portfolio, albeit a profitable and prestige acquisition.