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[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



As the main function of a film trailer is to market the film and promote to a range of audiences film trailers are also a form of persuasive art and promotional narrative, they are designed to make you want to go and see the film being shown at the cinema. As film trailers do give you the free sample of the film being advertised they also function as a tool to allow us to be aware of what films have been released on cinema and as Lisa Kernan states, ' Trailers are a cinema of (coming) attractions.'

And this essentially means film trailers are individual events allowing us to also see upcoming events in the future. Film trailers permit the viewers to generate opinions of their own so they can decide which films to go and watch. Trailers are my chosen topic for this dissertation, it will focus on the principle features of the film trailers, where I will analyse case studies to highlight the use of classic American film techniques and in return the analysis will answer the questions, what is a film trailer? How does a film trailer create meaning? Film trailers brought to my attention the ability they have to reconfigure a feature length film narrative into a short cinematic film. It is this factor which brings me to analyse film trailers closely.

I will be closely paying attention to a chosen element of the extensive range the marketing campaign. In particular I have chosen to look into film trailers. From Marketing I will move on to film trailers, where I am going to call attention to the design of film trailer, which will consist of analysing and identifying the principle features. These are its bare essentials, the Narrative, the Genre, the Sound; they are combined to create a film trailer. Each of these elements will be analysed along with several case studies to provide examples for the use of these elements.

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I will be looking for the use of editing techniques to determine how they create meaning and desired effects, such techniques include transitions, types of shot and bridging devices along with the use of captions. Other such techniques that will be brought up are the emphasis on the unique selling point of a film and using the star system to sell the film. These techniques in return will show how the narrative, the genre are some of the principle features constituting to the overall design of a film trailer. Further more into the analysis I will look at sound techniques such as voice over narration, the sound track and sound effects created for the film trailers.

These techniques will determine the meaning Sound brings to the film trailer. Overall by looking at these techniques in different film trailers I will show how these principle features create effects and show how they function and what meanings they generate. Once I have established the meanings of the design of a film I will look at the functions of a trailer in its intended market. I will talk about the functions of the marketing campaign as a total strategy.

I will broadly look into the marketing campaign to explain its importance in the film industry. Within in marketing I will be looking at the functions and effects of Distribution, promotion and advertising as the broader context in which film trailers fit into. I will consider factors such as market research into social cultures and why it is necessary, in addition with internet advertising and distribution as a tool for the mass audience.

Moving on from the marketing of film trailers to the actual creation and techniques used in trailers known as the design. First I am going to look at the film trailer in general and state briefly what elements are used to

construct the film trailer this will give us the groundwork's and background information for film trailers so I can start to distinguish the finer elements in detail. In general film trailers tend to show us the most interesting images from a film; the scenes that will appeal to the viewers or make them laugh or create a sense of fear, any thing to excite the audience.

To define a trailer to its bare essentials, I ask the question what makes a film trailer distinct and special. I believe that when certain key features are put together they create a powerful persuasive form of mini film. It is the use of techniques in which the trailers are created in there style that makes them distinct, as later I will prove in my analysis that each trailers approaches the design and style in showing the film in a unique and individual way while still employing classic Hollywood film techniques.

The use of different shots and combining these shots to emphasize the films best features as well as the use of transitions and graphics are some classic Hollywood techniques used in promoting a film trailer. My research in film trailers has lead me to believe that the use of montage sequences and shot selection are the elements that bring together the narrative, genre and sound to create the film trailers.

' It is the capacity of film trailers to convey information non-verbally through mise-en-scene, editing, camera movements and facial expressions that provides the power to promote in such a big way'

Contents

The first principle feature of film trailers is the narrative. The film trailer creates a separate narrative to present the narrative of the feature length film. Narration is the telling of a story, and the plot of a film trailer implies story information. It is the narrational component of trailers which is significant to their production of meaning. Some trailers focus more on this feature as the film most likely covers important issues or contain a meaning of some importance these types of narratives are known as non-fictional.

Fictional films tend to focus on explaining the background information to establish the story, I am going to look at a specific genre of film trailers, I have chosen action films spanning over the 1970's 80's and 90's. The Terminator film is a perfect example of a trailer that employs a specific technique of plot development. The narrative function is to introduce the character, in this case study it is 'The Terminator' where the story implies a search and destroy plot. The voice over states what the plot is going to be about by saying a few facts, the last few words that are said explain the type of plot development you can expect in the film,

It will have only one purpose, to return to the present and prevent the future. This weapon will be called The Terminator.

With out this information the audience would be confused and the trailer would become arbitrary; it is the narrative that gives the film context first along with the images which reveal more of the plot. The use of narrative to explain the films meaning and purpose is essential, the function of narrative in this trailer shows the technique of a goal orientated plot.

...there are goal orientated plots, in which a character takes steps to achieve a desired object or state of affairs

Plot development is a technique employed in many other action film trailers as I have noticed. The Die Hard film trailer reveals a plot where the central character John McLain is trying to save his wife who has been taken hostage among many others in a building. This plot reveals patterns of repeated action. Trailers use plot patterns to allow the audience to expect a certain type of plot, the audience create their own more specific intentions, as the trailer goes on revealing the audiences expectations become more precise.

Aliens is a perfect example of a search and destroy plot pattern that is identified in the first scene of the movie where the female heroine known as Sigourney weaver asks a question and gets a simple reply. This small amount of dialogue explains the development of plot you can expect to see in the film itself.

Just tell me one thing Berk, we're going out to destroy them...rite, not to study, not to bring back, but to wipe them out? ...That's the plan!

Although this dialogue alone is unjustified until you see the action that follows it. This statement implies that there is something out there and not of a friendly nature, Sigourney's intentions are to go out there and destroy something. It is clear that narrative in trailers plays an integral role in the creation of meaning in delivering the narrative plot of the feature length film correctly, without revealing too much but making it interesting enough.

The two trailers mentioned above use voice over to narrate the story information where as my next example employs the use of inter titles. The inter titles are words on a blank screen or superimposed over images, which contribute to the meaning of the plot or story information. In addition they are used as a transition between time and space, the connotative meanings of the words are interpreted by social cultures who relate the words to the nature of the society in which they live in. The trailer lets the images reveal more about the style and dialogue of the film, while the inter titles connote different meanings and informs the audiences of what to expect in the film. This is a different technique to inform the audience of the type of plot development they can expect.

In addition to the narrative development of plots, the middle portion of the trailer displays the events that define action and adventure are the causes of the delays of expected outcomes. These events may cause suspense, fear, excitement and surprise. For example in the Die hard film trailer the number of obstacles John McLain has to fight through to save his wife are just the delayed expectations, creating suspense and progressing through to the final climaxes of the film. Although this true film trailers differ slightly in the fact that scenes are shown leading up to the climax but you have to remember it is only a trailer and its purpose is to interest you, so the climax is never shown.

This brings me to talk about the narrative in its effect of making audiences want to experience the action and fear created buy viewing through the safe environment of the cinema. By only seeing certain key scenes in a film

trailers they allow you to create affective expectations and generate your own intentions of what the full feature will contain. These expectations from the audiences are what Wolfgang Iser calls 'Textual Gaps'. The film industry assume the audience will generate there own desired intentions, emotions and expectations after viewing the trailers.

For example a trailers principle features or rhetoric might highlight a films quality of music or sound and spectacle or narrative. This is vital in terms of audiences having there own intentions and wanting to go and see a film they desire rather than seeing the real film. The point being, plot developments in trailers only reveal a certain amount and their purpose is to inform but then entice audiences to fill in the remaining information with intentions then effectively the trailer has fulfilled its job in attracting the viewer.

The narrative explanation of story plot and information is closely related to the genre in terms of the style in which this narrative is represented and in a form that audiences can recognize. Some trailers focus more specifically on the dialogue, sometimes the trailer will focus more on the spectacles or just show who stars in the film and name the most famous actors. This usually identifies quickly the genre and type of film trailer you are viewing. For instance the Die Hard film sets the narrative and then the remainder of the trailer focuses more on display of the established conventions recognised by the American society such as the use of guns and explosions that are emphasized on.

Another film that I will analyse approaches the genre in a similar manor.

Alien V Predator Requiem starts of by presenting a very calm environment

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then suddenly turns to show action and gun fire. To show the audience the genre of the film both these trailers employ similar techniques. Both these trailers point to the use of Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory, in which the narrative situations take transformational steps in the process of cause an effect principle. This is evident in Alien Vs Predator Requiem trailer where equilibrium is stated with an establishing scene of the town location, a disruption is outlined in the trailer by the entrance of an unknown object through the sky and the following scenes displays the killing of a father hunting in the forest with his child.

As a search party make there way through the forest to find a body, becomes the recognition of the disruption. The footage that follows, display the attempt to repair the disruption caused in the earlier stages of transformation of the narrative. Anomaly with film trailers is that the last stage on transformation known as the reinstatement of the initial equilibrium is not shown as this lures the audiences into going to see the full story.

Although I have analysed a film trailer with the use of a narrative theory while talking about genre, it is relevant for the following reason. The nature in which the story follows the stages of transformation also shows that action has to be taken against the disruption of the equilibrium. This allows the images to focus on the action and genre of this film trailer. It is the formation of selected shots which appear to present itself in the form of this ' causal transformation'

All film trailers will have establishing scenes with a message clearly showing the films genre, either by showing particular scenes or putting emphasis on

the story and actors. I will be closely analysing the Die Hard trailer as a case study to distinguish the meaning of genre and how it is created in trailers. An important technique to describe here is the unique selling point of film trailers in which the films most attractive features are shown and emphasized on. I believe this technique is directly linked in identifying the genre of action films.

This is evident in the Die Hard trailer as the big spectacles are emphasized on to present the action in a loud and interesting manner, therefore the unique selling point of the trailer being the action. This leads to the use of conventional genre ideas that are recognised by many audiences in the broader perspective. These conventional genre ideas being such features as guns, big car chases as well as car crashes and explosions of some nature. These events inform the audience of particular attributes that allow viewers to distinguish action films from horror films. These traits are quickly recognisable features within a cultural society of film viewers.

Further more one technique of defining a film trailer through genre is the selection of shot types used in creating the trailer. The editing technique is very important in the creation of the trailer, because the selection of shot determines the effect achieved on screen and also the use of shot can explain clearly what the scene is showing. As the die hard trailer starts, Christmas music is playing, the setting and environment looks natural as the equilibrium has been set, until the trailer changes its mood.

A close up shot of the villain shows him shooting a number of bullets into the air. This scene of a gun being fired defines the trailer as an action film, as the

scenes to follow show more action. The audience only know this through past cinematic experience which implies action films have a number of set agreed cinematic conventions to which the audience identify film trailers through.

Another action genre film trailer also employs the same techniques of unique selling points and the use of shot selection to present the action such as *Alien Vs Predator Requiem*. The trailer begins with a slow tempo and an establishing shot to show the peaceful environment, at this point the genre is fairly unclear. Around the middle of the trailer the mood changes and a medium shot shows a ball of fire entering the scene, this implies an object has shot past from outer space. This is the definitive scene in the trailer because it shows a change in the narrative. The following scene show more action and the trailer then goes on to show the films unique selling point, the Alien.

In addition actors are also used to sell films because of their star status. This is evident in my next case study *Pulp Fiction*. The scenes in this trailer are used to show the large cast starring in the film, while still showing the film in a clever design. The unique selling point of this film trailer is the use of the actor's star status as well as the action in the film. While this film lacks big spectacles it is still an action movie but focuses more on the dialogue and narrative. The trailer introduces the idea of different stories taking place while putting the emphasis on the cast.

The trailer uses intertitles to bridge the first story from the second, in between these scenes the trailer uses inter titles to display the words 'loyalty', 'betrayal' and 'crime' to separate the stories, at the same time

very little is revealed. By introducing the cast through each of the stories, the use of the inter titles using words associated with the stories the film trailer sets the genre as well as the unique selling point of the film. Because the focus is directed more on the cast and the narrative the action comes across as equal as the other features.

The trailer ends with a voice over reading out the names of the actors that star in the film, the scenes also follow each other rapidly and are timed with the names being read out. This type of sequence is known as the montage sequence. A montage sequence is where a series of shots are arranged in a particular order for a particular purpose. The sequence is more about presenting the footage in a different way rather than providing the illusion of natural continuity. In the Pulp Fiction trailer this sequence was used to show the actors when their names were being read out. At the same time this sequence was used to show more scenes from the film. Overall the trailer doesn't reveal much about the story but highlights the Genre and actors very well.

I think the trailer is cleverly created in the sense that very little is revealed yet enough is seen along with the three descriptive words giving a definition of the story for the audience to associate what is seen with the titles describing what will occur in the film. These words leave the narrative open for the audience's imaginations to build up a film they would like to see. In effect the use editing techniques such as montage sequences and selection of specific shots and transitions trailers form ways of presenting the narrative of a film with aesthetic.

As genre and narrative work hand in hand to show the plot and genre another principle feature of a film trailer is the use of Sound. Sound in film trailers is very important, it forces the viewers to use more than just the visual sense, and instead the sound engages the aural senses of the viewers. As sound is as important as the visual footage it can achieve very strong effects and yet remain unnoticed, it is very unlikely a spectator comes out the cinema and acknowledges the film for its aural efforts. As Sergei Eisenstein called 'synchronization of senses' known as combining the image and the sound to create a single rhythm or expressive quality. I have picked a trailer for my case study where I think the synchronization of sound with image is important in the creation of meaning and overall mood of the film.

The sound used in films is known as the film sound track for example the Rocky film trailer. This trailer uses music to create emotion and mood in a way that emphasizes the emotion created in the scenes, this emotion is used to reach out to the audience for them to engage with the characters feelings. The Rocky trailer uses a specific sound track to create emotion around the story for example the tempo and rhythm changes according to the images. The music changes dramatically in the scene with Rocky and the women kissing, this scene implies romance but the music sets a specific mood that an audience can relate to, it creates an atmosphere to go with the scene.

The next scene shows a man having a talk with Rocky, the music changes instantly to imply chance, possibility and the intention of something happening (Cause and Effect) the music here changes from the piano to a

kind of tower clock bell ringing. This trailer uses music to create emotion but it is in excess of change, the mood in the trailer changes to often and switches from romance to opportunity then back to sad music then to energetic music, the positive side to this music is it displays an emotional plot and the Rocky's struggle to make something of his life.

This kind of sound is known as nondiegetic sound. Nondiegetic sound is represented by sources existing outside the story world. As I carrying out analysis on action film trailers nondiegetic sound is important as music is the most commonly used type of sound in action films to create effective emphasis on the action: ' Viewers understand that the " movie music" is a convention and does not issue from the world of the story'

A trailer is defined as a brief film text that uses images from a specific feature film while asserting its excellence, its purpose being to project in theatres to promote a films theatrical release. A film trailer is an essential marketing tool and the nuclei of the promotional effort being an advert for a film the trailers design features are as important as its other functions. The most important principle of a film trailer is what it functions as best, its distribution, promotion and marketing of an upcoming film. This process occurs before the product reaches the viewers. ' There are many forms through which we can communicate.' I consider this statement as a starting point linked to film trailers because trailers are presented in many mediums to a wide range of audiences to different cultures.

This is also where the idea of promoting trailers and marketing them begins correctly. There are many different processes to consider in knowing the

target audience and what type of category the film fits into. As I am going to be looking at the action genre in film trailers, the target audience will be a 'core audience' who is attracted by the varying story lines but the essential action is what appeals to them. Films are put into certain categories known as genres, these films having different attributes which in turn address different audiences. Attracting a huge audience starts with knowing the genre and type of film, this leads to the right distributor who is required to get the film to the exhibitors.

The marketing campaign also lets the audience know the film is in the process of being produced and when the release date has been set for. The idea of releasing the trailer early is to create a fan base or create enough interest for a potential audience and to generate enough hype up until the film is finished and ready to premiere. The importance of marketing a film can affect the overall outcome of the film in theatres.

The marketing of a film includes the total strategy required to sell a film. This strategy includes the different types of advertising, promotion and distribution of a feature length film.

Marketing is the strategy employed to find the most effective way to get to your audience or buyer

Once a film is complete, marketing supplements the various forms of conventional advertising (Trailers, Television, Radio, Press, Poster Campaigns and the Internet).

The idea of marketing lies around creating a positive image around the film which has been produced. As quoted above the conventional advertising practices, one has not been mentioned, name tie-ins. Tie-ins are contracts between companies selling consumer products with distribution companies. The consumer products can be of everyday use such as food labels carrying images and titles of the films, toys and cloths, all of which promote the film.

Although advertising is a specific strategy to expose a feature length film, the marketing is more about the total exposure to the general public on the whole. An important part of the marketing process is known as Market research. This element is vital to the success of a blockbuster movie of contemporary cinema. Its function is to monitor the response of the public's reception towards an advertised film and to change the marketing strategy accordingly.

The three most significant events in selling a film are the pitching of a film idea, finding the distributor and finding an exhibitor. First the distributors or financiers have to finance a movie where a script has been written by someone who wants it to be made into a film. The financiers or the distributors are known as the first buyers. From this the distributor must market the film further and pitch the finished film to an exhibitor.

Just as the distributor brought the script and idea of the film so does the exhibitor wish to view the completed film before deciding to show the film in all of its chain of theaters. The Exhibitors are known as the Second Buyers. Finally the advertising and promoting a film to an audience is known as the third buyers. The promotion and the advertising is the job of the distributor

and the publicist. All these processes fit together as the marketing (selling) of the film to a potential audience.

Trailers are basically another form of advertising a product, where the film is the product and the trailer being the advert. ' Attempts were made to advertise films with trailers as early as 1912.' Promotion is a form of advertising; the devices involved in promoting haven't changed drastically since the exhibitors first started promoting in the film industry. I believe that the function of promotion is to inform society and different cultures that a product is out and available. It was the arrival of Nickelodeon around 1905, which fundamentally changed the advertisement strategies.

Promotion of feature length films began when the amount of exhibitors grew and the competition for the amount of films released also grew. The exhibitors felt the need to advertise their films so as to attract the public to their theatres. The exhibitors put up posters, made flyers and distributed them to the homes of the general public as well as even hiring barkers to shout out information about their films. From 1908 onwards promoting products seemed the only way to reach out to the public to seek there attention and compete against other exhibitors.

At this point only the exhibitors were concerned about promoting there products and fighting of other competition the studios and producers of the films were more concerned about the machines that made films. As promotion became increasingly important so did there efforts in seeking the publics attention. Weekly or monthly bulletins were produced listing up coming features; they focused on the plots, sets and stories of the films.

Exhibitors set the trend with promotion of films, studios quickly caught on and opened up advertising departments in their companies. These departments controlled the production of posters and other advertising tactics; they supplied these in the form of press books to theatres during the silent and classical eras. These advertising departments established their promotional practices which also continued on into the classical era. Companies such as MGM also began using promotional campaigns; it became the standard procedure to promote films. Trailers on the other hand started appearing around 1912 but didn't become coherent until a few years later.

It is clear that within a decade of Hollywood cinema the promotional campaign was the most important element in the film industry. Moving towards the classical era, trailers are the one practice where they have changed according to the lengths and qualities of the feature length films. As in the silent era films were not long enough to have trailers but in the classical era trailers generally consisted of voice over narrating on top of film footage, including text over the image using hard-sell tag-lines to sell the picture. I came across an example of a classic film containing these hard-sell tag-lines.

The King Kong (1933) trailer is a perfect example of these inter titles emphasizing the film as a must see feature, one of the inter titles reads: 'Still...the most amazing show on any screen! Although this function was more important in the silent area the voice over was more relied on in the classical era. The basic premise, of reminding viewers that trailers are only a

quick guide to the full length feature, are still proving that these inter titles are promotional messages. I believe this promotional practice is the most effective out of the whole marketing campaign.

Most of the promotional tactics that exist today-trailers, print advertisements, press books, posters, promotional tie-ins, and star premieres- were in place by 1915, although their forms have changed since then.

Before internet advertising, the conventional Hollywood marketing campaign consisted of successfully advertising through well known mediums such as the Posters, the Radio, through newspapers and the T. V. These practices had remained consistent and familiar with the American cultures until 1995 media and advertising took a major leap and began a new type of advertising tactic. This tactic was known as internet promotion.

In the summer 1995, media and advertising executives announced that the internet had become the “ new frontier” in film productions.

The internet plays an important role in the marketing of films, it is such a big platform for a film to be advertised. As genre is concerned it would be difficult to direct a film trailer towards a specific audience, the internet is such a level playing field that the trailer would be open at any and everyone. As Vinzenz Hediger notes, in the contemporary market, trailers are very cost effective since they utilize approximately 4. 5% of the advertising budget of a given film, while generating at least 20% of the films box office revenue.

This fact adds to the reason why film trailers are my chosen topic of interest, I consider them the most effective feature in a marketing campaign.

It is the visual elements and the free sample of the actual event that attracts social cultures. The internet has a big role in this. Although the internet had been around since the 1960's the main use for it was text based. Towards the late 1990's faster connections were produced opening up the opportunities to promotions and advertisement to a mass audience over a new platform. The reason for this being the internet allowed for communication through to the social cultures as well as society being able to communicate with each other.

Trailers come in many formats over the internet; they can be downloaded, watched online and even downloaded to mobiles. In a professional context companies are competing on the same level, as a website nowadays can be put up fairly quickly, the only implication here is that some websites get more attention and visits than others.

Marketing *Batman Forever* (1995) was the first major Hollywood feature to get advertised using a website as the centre piece for the campaign. As the arrival of the T. V. disrupted the flow of the film industry it seemed like the internet could possibly do the same for advertising on the T. V. This website contained more information about the films sets, plots and textual narrative all on the same website. This type of promotional campaign became more of an interactive activity which encouraged society to engage with the film experience. Through my research I have learnt that the promotional campaign has always had to adapt to the arrival of new mediums, but I have

also learnt that society has adapted to. The marketing of promotional tactics is getting more and more sophisticated but also becoming more effective.

Although I have covered promotional strategy and its importance in the film industry in improving the cinema's cultural standing I have yet to explain the role of the distributor. In the film industry the distribution company is seen as the agent between production and exhibition. The companies carry out the following tasks such as sales: securing the rental contracts for specific play dates, advertising directed to theatres through trade publications and to film goes through print and electronic media. The function of the distributor is very important in Hollywood film, it is their responsibility that the timing the release of the film to the different markets is crucial.

As I have mentioned before trailers are part of a package that is a marketing campaign. Along with posters and adverts and tie-ins trailers have a more significant role. Trailers carry the meaning of the film with visual images; this brings in to the argument the T. V, Cinema and the Internet as media platforms to display these trailers. During the silent era only the cinema existed, therefore cinema dominated.

During the classical era as technology became better the arrival of the T. V competed with advertisement on a new level. As more platforms arrived and new strategies to advertise promotional campaigns had to change. Seems that every type of platform available to advertise has been exploited to continue to hold a position in Hollywood cinema with the American Culture. To maintain the power and success of Hoolywood Cinema in the contemporary age amongst the American Culture it seems that the

marketing strategy has exploited every type of advertising platform available.

By the early 1970's, promotional budgets sometimes exceeded a film's production costs. As new technologies change the ways in which films are viewed, from television, to video, to DVD's and digital downloads, they have also changed promotions, many of them using a number of media platforms.

The internet as a media platform, for trailers began with the most famous advertising campaign known as the Blair Witch Project (1999). Although becoming the most famous internet campaign the film was seen as less important than the actual advertisement of the film. This did not change the way in which marketing strategies unfolded but did catch the attention of directors and producers, who began to request internet campaigns for the films they were producing.

The point here is to stress on the promotional campaign, and not to over see the campaign's effects on attracting huge amounts of success from advertising a feature film on the internet, the novelty and the timing were important factors that helped bring success to the film. The timing is crucial to the success of a film within any medium, in terms that if trailers are released too soon viewers will lose interest but if a campaign is released too late the distribution company will face the responsibility of not exposing the film long enough to the public.