

Research on Movie Trailers' Effectiveness in Attracting Audiences and Enhancing Marketing Strategies

Yilong Yan^{1,*}

¹Nanjing Foreign Language School
British Columbia Academy, Nanjing,
Jiangsu, China

*Corresponding author: Ian.Yan26@
nflsba.com

Abstract:

The dynamic film industry has witnessed significant growth in theaters, movie screens, and new releases, making movie trailers a crucial element in shaping viewer perceptions and driving box office success. However, current trailer marketing strategies face challenges, including excessive use of spoilers, lack of originality, and a stagnant approach to trailer formats, which risk diminishing audience interest and engagement. To address these issues, businesses can implement spoiler warnings, emphasize unique selling points (USPs), and leverage audience data to create more targeted and effective trailers. Additionally, fostering creativity by exploring diverse formats and techniques can help distinguish films in a crowded market. This paper introduces the concepts of cross-cultural marketing and audience targeting, analyzes the phenomenon of over-marketing on social media platforms like TikTok, and offers practical suggestions to enhance trailer marketing strategies. By adopting these innovative approaches, the film industry can improve the movie-going experience while optimizing marketing efforts and sustaining its growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Keywords: Movie Trailers; Effectiveness; Audiences; Marketing Strategies

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In 2023, a total of 3990 theaters and 33896 movie screens were built [1]. Additionally, 590 new movies have been released in America, revealing a growth rate of 20.9% compared to 2022 [2]. It fostered a business empire that generated \$79.22 billion in the

US. The statistics show how successful movies are in attracting audiences. However, the cinema industry is currently in the process of regaining its peak in 2018, when the yearly revenue reached remarkable levels of 113.63 billion until the COVID-19 pandemic halted its growth. To sustain the fast expansion of this sector, it is crucial to comprehend the reasons behind the appeal of particular films, the strategies employed by the movie industry to boost sales effi-

ciently, and the niche techniques they utilize. An effective tool in achieving box office success is the movie trailer, which this paper will thoroughly examine. After acquiring knowledge of these elements, people may get huge advantages. For studios, such knowledge enables the establishment of suitable marketing strategies to attract bigger audiences at a reduced investment. For small to medium-sized studios with restricted marketing expenditures, this is especially vital. It would be a pity for high-quality films to remain inaccessible to broader audiences. Gaining knowledge about this subject helps spread various cultures within society, as movies serve as a platform for worldwide cultural influences. Furthermore, by this research, individuals can be aware of significant social issues by viewing films that depict environmental difficulties, social inequality, and historical events. In summary, this paper will focus on studying a vital instrument for movie advertising, the movie trailers, to know about how they attract the audience and utilize marketing strategies.

1.2 Literature Review

Boksen & Smidts proposed that human brains can respond to film trailers by measuring electroencephalography (EEG) and use it to measure one's preference for the movie [3]. Therefore, it can also be used to study the effectiveness of movie trailers. In their paper, they utilize EEG data to predict box office numbers and come to the conclusion that brain information from EEG can be used to predict a film's financial performance. They asked volunteers to watch some of the trailers and rank them. Based on volunteers' feedback, Johnston and Vollans found a direct relationship between neural responses and movie preference. Ultimately, people were able to measure audience engagement and optimize marketing strategies. In conclusion, their EEG analysis offers a method that provides more scientific insight into the emotional and cognitive involvement of viewers with trailers, enabling people to investigate the specific aspects of a trailer that strongly resonate with audiences.

Boksem & Smidt concentrated on the brain activity of viewers to forecast box office, and Johnston & Vollans suggested that viewers' emotions also matter and can impact how effective trailers are [4]. Because most people will watch trailers to know about the movie, trailers will greatly impact people's first impressions. Warm and happy content will arouse positive feelings. Human feelings are related to their own experiences and memories, which means it is possible to arouse their empathy through these kinds of trailers. In summary, the trailers aren't just used to inform the audience but also serve as a place to express people's emotions. In addition, Johnston & Vollans dis-

cussed the impact of audiences' disappointment on the trailers. They found that adding new content that will not appear in movies into trailers will certainly make the trailers more attractive to the audience and raise their expectation. However, because the content doesn't show up in the movie, people will feel a sense of contrast, leading to strong disappointment. This will have a negative effect on movie sales, and it is inevitable.

Similar to Johnston & Vollans' ideas, Karray and Debernitz discussed that trailers conveying appealing plots would lead to greater abnormal returns in the future [5]. But they also discovered the influence of trailers on the company's income. On one hand, trailers can also be used as a source of information and attract investors. Investors can evaluate the risk and profit of investing through trailers. In this way, the companies can sustain financial health and guarantee the quality of the movie once they are invested. On the other hand, companies can create brand awareness through trailers, gaining long-term advantages and rising stock prices.

Gutzeit & Tiberius mainly introduced the role of social media in film marketing. By posting trailers or advertising on social media platforms, companies can receive real-time feedback quickly and make adjustments. Also, when people write comments, it is easy to start a discussion on whether the movie or the trailer. This promotes the effects of Word of Mouth (WOM), and when other people see the reviews and discussions, they may become interested and thus become aware of this movie.

Most research is dedicated to viewers' emotions, neural responses, and commercial purposes. However, people seldom investigate the long-term negative effects of the over-promotion of movie trailers on social media. Also, seldom do people investigate the benefit of cross-culture marketing and audience targeting.

For this paper, the author will introduce cross-culture marketing and audience targeting, and then, the author will reveal the phenomenon of over-marketing of movies on social media, such as TikTok. After that, this paper will give some suggestions according to the problems that may enhance the marketing strategies.

2. Case Description

Social media has developed so rapidly that it has become part of people's life. According to the graph, there are about 5.17 billion social media users worldwide [6]. It has become an important medium for both entertainment and receiving up-to-date information. The case is more obvious in China; more than 1.05 billion people use social media, and movie trailers are very common and popular on social media [7]. Based on a survey, in October 2023,

content related to movie trailers on TikTok reached a total of 26.827 billion views, marking a year-on-year increase of 213.78% [8]. Over 410,000 videos were posted, with more than 361 million likes. The movie trailers catered to the taste of most people and used trending events cleverly to gain attention. Moreover, companies worked with celebrities to promote the sales. Social media also provides people with opportunities to interact with the movie company. For example, people can send messages privately or share content with their friends. The information about the movie could be spread wider, including movie release time, character information, and some plot. It was a great success for movie companies as they could convey messages so conveniently. However, it also caused some problems. In order to increase box office performance, some companies created a massive quantity of trailers. For example, the famous movie *No More Bets* created 55 trailers on TikTok containing the main characters, main plot, movie scenes, and the ending of the movie.

3. Analysis on Problems

3.1 Influence Factor

3.1.1 Cross-culture marketing

Mooij, Marieke, and Hofstede have conducted research on cultural differences in consumer preferences [9]. They also suggested companies take a nuanced approach in order to have successful marketing. By understanding the cultural differences between different regions, companies may make different types of marketing strategies to fit the various cultures. Sobrepere's study, for example, shows the different versions of Netflix accounts [10]. US accounts provide more informative data, while Spanish accounts share humorous content. This adaptability enhances the audience's engagement and increases the possibility of finding a client. By applying cross-culture marketing to trailers, it may help open up a foreign market.

3.1.2 Audience targeting

Audience targeting enables studios to focus on a specific group of consumers who are most likely to purchase a film ticket. It includes the process of identifying the audience. For example, a superhero movie will mostly attract teenage boys. According to Shellhammer, There are two factors for audience targeting: Psychographics(study of consumer's lifestyles, interests, and values) and demographics(study of age, gender, and income) [11]. Psychographics are essential, and trailers should be suggested to add more content that satisfies emotional needs and improves the audience's engagement. With the help of social

media and based on your demographic viewing habits, the platforms can recommend movies that cater to audiences' tastes. Studios should make different trailers that satisfy people of different ages.

3.2 Problems Identified Analysis:

3.2.1 Too much spoiler-filled trailers

Some movie trailers add the most exciting part or even the deleted scenes into the trailer. This hype advertising will make the movie less mysterious and lower the audience's expectations. It may have a short-term effect on the box office, but eventually, it will hurt the company's credit. Besides, the large number of trailers will not only disgust the audience but also cause the Psychological Reactance Theory to happen. Brehm claims that one tends to do things opposite to what is being advocated or forced to do [12].

3.2.2 Similar trailers

Many companies paid social media in order to have more people see trailers. They use similar ways of advertising. This lacks the precise targeting of potential audiences and is not creative. There will be less competition, as people cannot find a reason to choose between movies. Moreover, the movies may be more and more alike and lose their distinctive qualities. It may be hard for a brand to set up a unique identity.

3.2.3 Lack of innovation in trailers

Most trailers on social media show scenes in the movie that rely too heavily on conventional structures. This may cause monotonous or even stagnation in trailers.

3.3 Reasons for Problems

First, the company may want to maximize attention and appeal to a wider range of audiences. Second, some companies face budget crises; they are forced to deal with the pressure of ensuring box office success. Thus, they must persuade more people to watch their movies. Third, with so many trailers, companies can easily stand out from the crowded market and make the brand more eye-catching. Finally, by selecting successful trailers and putting them into research, companies can gain valuable experience in trailer making.

By copying similar background music, editing methods, and illustrative sequences, companies can generate lots of trailers in a very short amount of time. With that quantity, there will always be a trailer that becomes viral. Second, it is a low cost to reuse those successful templates. Third, Alamgir's study found that people prefer social media that offer immediate gratification with minimal cognitive

demands [13]. Because of this, making similar trailers reduces viewers' time spent contemplating, and people may prefer these kinds of trailers.

On the one hand, small studios don't have the ability to take risks by posting innovative trailers, but they get low returns. They would rather use a safer and conventional trailer.

4. Suggestions

In recent years, movie trailers have evolved into an essential marketing tool for the film industry, capturing audience attention and building anticipation before a film's release. However, they can also present issues, such as revealing too much plot information, which can dampen the overall movie experience for viewers. To create a more engaging and effective trailer strategy, a combination of creative, regulatory, and technological solutions can be implemented. Below are suggestions on how companies, governments, and social media managers can improve trailer production and marketing while enhancing the viewer experience.

4.1 Implementing Warning Signs and Reducing Spoilers in Trailers

One of the most common complaints about modern movie trailers is their tendency to contain spoilers or reveal major plot points. To address this, companies should consider including a warning sign at the beginning of each trailer, informing viewers that it may contain spoilers. This would give the audience the option to avoid spoiler information and preserve the movie's surprises.

In addition, movie companies should aim to reduce the number of trailers they release for a particular film. Many films release multiple trailers and teasers, which sometimes collectively reveal key elements of the plot. By cutting back on the volume of promotional material, filmmakers can create a sense of mystery around their project. Furthermore, instead of crafting trailers that simply provide a synopsis of the film, companies should focus on making trailers that evoke emotion and curiosity, drawing the audience in without giving away too much.

To ensure high-quality production, studios can hire experienced professionals in the film industry, such as directors or screenwriters, to assist in creating trailers that are both compelling and artistic. These experts can help balance the need for excitement and mystery while avoiding overexposure. Moreover, studios should pay close attention to audience feedback on social media and other platforms, making timely adjustments to future trailers based on viewer preferences and criticisms.

4.2 Creating Targeted and Unique Trailers

To further optimize their marketing efforts, companies should focus on emphasizing their unique selling points and distinct features in trailers, helping to differentiate their films from others in a crowded market. By identifying the film's most compelling aspects, whether it's a particular actor, storyline, or genre, companies can highlight what makes the movie stand out and pique viewer interest. In addition to emphasizing uniqueness, big data and social media analytics can play a significant role in refining trailer strategies. Companies can use data to measure audience demographics and psychological preferences, allowing them to create highly targeted campaigns. For instance, trailers can be tailored to appeal to different age groups, regions, or even individual interests. Through precise targeting, companies can ensure that the right people see the trailer, maximizing the film's potential reach and impact.

To enhance these efforts, social media managers should establish guidelines on the number of trailers a single movie can release to avoid overexposure. Hiring teams to monitor trailer releases and ensure quality control is also crucial. Moreover, movie associations can implement regulations prohibiting the inclusion of fake or deleted scenes in trailers, which can mislead audiences and cause disappointment.

4.3 Supporting Creativity and Diversity in Trailer Content

Governments can play a role in fostering creativity within the film industry by providing financial support to smaller studios and encouraging them to experiment with innovative trailer formats. By funding indie studios, governments can help produce a more diverse array of creative content, offering audiences a broader selection of films and promoting cultural expression.

Moreover, the structure of movie trailers should evolve to be more than just a brief outline of the film's plot. Incorporating interviews with the cast and crew, behind-the-scenes footage, bloopers, or parodies can add layers of originality and charm to trailers. For example, including humorous bloopers or quirky Easter eggs can give audiences an insider's perspective on the filmmaking process, making the trailer feel more engaging and personal.

By expanding the format of trailers beyond simply promoting the movie, studios can foster a deeper connection with potential viewers. Creative elements can generate buzz on social media, encouraging audience interaction and word-of-mouth marketing. Importantly, trailers that are designed to entertain and surprise viewers are likely to be more memorable, translating into increased interest and higher ticket sales.

Improving the effectiveness and creativity of movie trailers requires a multi-faceted approach involving studios, social media managers, and even government intervention. First, including spoiler warnings and reducing the number of trailers can protect the audience's experience while ensuring that promotional material remains fresh and engaging. Additionally, studios should focus on highlighting their unique features and use big data to deliver targeted trailers to specific demographics. Finally, governments can provide support to small studios and encourage them to experiment with creative formats, incorporating a variety of entertaining elements into trailers. Through these combined efforts, the film industry can produce trailers that resonate with audiences, enhance viewer engagement, and ultimately boost box office success.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the ever-changing and dynamic film industry emphasizes how important movie trailers are to influencing viewer perceptions and achieving box office success. The industry is still a major player in the entertainment sector, as seen by the rise in theaters, movie screens, and new releases in recent years. However, in order to maintain and accelerate this growth, the problems and obstacles related to movie trailer promotion must be resolved.

A review of trailer marketing strategies in use today highlights a number of important problems. When spoilers are used excessively, the overall movie experience may suffer, and audience interest may be reduced. Similar trailers devoid of originality and inventiveness can dilute the distinctions between different films, which lessens their capacity to stand out and contributes to viewer fatigue. Moreover, the absence of creativity in trailer forms indicates a stagnation that may make it more difficult for studios to hold viewers' attention successfully.

The use of strategic approaches aimed at improving audience engagement and trailer efficacy is necessary to address these issues. Businesses can lessen the negative effects of excessively detailed trailers by putting in place explicit cautions about spoilers. A more focused and powerful trailer may be made by highlighting USPs and utilizing audience information from demographics and psychographics. Additionally, encouraging inventiveness in the trailer-making process by utilizing a variety of formats and techniques would aid in setting movies apart in a competitive market.

In the end, the film industry may enhance its capacity to draw in and hold the attention of viewers by tackling these problems and implementing more innovative and strategic ways of trailer marketing. This improves audiences' entire

movie-going experience while also benefiting studios by optimizing their marketing expenditures. Sustaining the expansion of the film business and navigating the intricacies of movie trailer marketing will require constant research and adaptation as the industry continues to change.

References

- [1] Cinema Advertising Council. National Theater Summary, 2024.2.12 https://www.cinemaadccouncil.org/_files/ugd/644f80_32f0c1ae13574f338ae6103f736be867.pdf
- [2] Box Office Mojo, Domestic yearly box office, 2024. https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/?ref=bo_nb_di_secondarytab
- [3] Boksem, Maarten A. S., and Ale Smidts. Brain Responses to Movie Trailers Predict Individual Preferences for Movies and Their Population-Wide Commercial Success. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2015, 52 (4): 482–92.
- [4] Johnston, Keith M., Ed Vollans, and Fred L. Greene. Watching the trailer: Researching the film trailer audience. *Participations*, 2016, 13 (2): 56-85.
- [5] Karray, Salma, and Lidia Debernitz. "The effectiveness of movie trailer advertising." *International Journal of Advertising*, 2017, 36 (2): 368-392.
- [6] Dixon, S. Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027. Statista. com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20use%20social,almost%20six%20billion%20in%202027> (2022).
- [7] Weng, Jie, Wang Li, and Xinru Zheng. Internet use, income mobility and the expansion of the rural middle-income group: Evidence from China. *Heliyon*, 2024, 10(16).
- [8] Huang, Wei. A Brief Analysis of the Trend of Film Streaming. *Western Radio and Television*, 2024, 45 (1): 173-176.
- [9] De Mooij, Marieke, and Geert Hofstede. Cross-cultural consumer behavior: A review of research findings. *Journal of international consumer marketing*, 2022, 23(3): 181-192.
- [10] Perelló-Sobrepere, Marc. Cross-Cultural Marketing in the 21st Century: Why Any Future Scope Needs to Look at Information and Communication Technologies. In *Global*, 2020, 4: 51.
- [11] Orth, Ulrich R., Mina McDaniel, Tom Shellhammer, and Kannapon Lopetcharat. Promoting brand benefits: the role of consumer psychographics and lifestyle. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 2004, 21(2): 97-108.
- [12] Brehm, Sharon S., and Jack W. Brehm. *Psychological reactance: A theory of freedom and control*. Academic Press, 2013.
- [13] Hossain, Md Alamgir. Effects of uses and gratifications on social media use: The Facebook case with multiple mediator analysis. *PSU Research Review*, 2019, 3 (1): 16-28.