

The impact of motion picture trailers on movie going intentions

by

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of
Mary Elizabeth Brantley
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory to the following women who have touched my life in countless ways and are responsible for many fond childhood memories.

Janet Brantley

Reba Cone

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on motion picture trailers shown exclusively in theaters (as opposed to television, the Internet or those broadcast over the radio) as a technique used to promote new films and favorably enhance movie-going intentions. It offers a theoretical framework that outlines the potential antecedents of intentions to see a movie, including the characteristics of trailers potential moviegoers are exposed to, the characteristics of the audience group and the traits of the actual movie being promoted. This exploratory study asks: When an audience is exposed to a movie trailer in a theater, what characteristics of the trailer provoke a desire to see the film? Are audience and movie characteristics important determinants of movie going intentions as well? This study hopes to add to the literature concerning the impact of film promotion efforts. By understanding what characteristics of a movie, its trailer, and targeted audiences affect movie-going intentions, specific advertising messages can be constructed and strategies can be deployed that could ensure higher theater attendance.

Quantitative and Qualitative data for this study were gathered using focus groups in which subjects were exposed to two trailers promoting two movies. Subjects responded to a structured questionnaire and a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit their movie going habits, their assessments of the trailers, their information seeking/sharing patterns to form movie going decisions, and their movie going intentions.

The results indicate that of the line-up of variables theorized to have an impact on information seeking/sharing and intentions to see a movie, only the actors and actresses appearing in the movie showed a significant effect. That is, those who star in the films are the

only significant determinants of greater information seeking/sharing and on a favorable intention to see the film.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A film's success or failure cannot be determined by a specific variable; however, Zufryden (2000) found that "advertising efforts have a statistically significant impact on a film's box-office performance and life cycle" (p. 55). There are several techniques which the motion picture industry uses to promote new feature films, including press kits, interviews with the actors and actresses appearing in the film, web pages, movie premieres, award shows and festivals. It can be argued that the most utilized and noted by audiences is the preview or trailer for the film which, over the two past decades, has become just as entertaining as the film itself.

According to Eastman et al. (1985), "a new theatrical release is typically announced to the public by means of a short preview, called a trailer" (p. 52). Very short announcements are called "teasers," which usually last for a minute, while trailers can run as long as five minutes. Movie trailers introduce the audience to the film by exposing them to part of the story line and to the characters in the film. If people are sufficiently intrigued by the trailer after exposure to it over a period of time, the probability of seeing the movie will likely increase.

This thesis focuses on motion picture trailers shown exclusively in theaters (as opposed to television, the Internet or those broadcast over the radio) as a technique used to promote new films and favorably enhance movie-going intentions. Chapter one introduces the concept of motion picture trailers, offers a brief history of motion picture trailers, and discusses the rationale driving this study. Chapter two reviews relevant literature regarding the topic and relates it to the current line of inquiry. It also offers a theoretical framework that outlines the potential antecedents of intentions to see a movie, including motion picture

promotion through trailers. Chapter three describes the methods of data gathering and analysis used in the study. Chapter four discusses the results of the study, and Chapter five issues the conclusions derived from data, addresses the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research.

Trailers: A Short History

The idea of promoting future films was one that captured the true advertising potential of theater promotion. The first trailer was shown on a white sheet at an amusement park in Rye Beach, New York in 1912 for the film *Adventures of Kathryn*. In the silent era of film history, the coming attractions followed the films, thus creating the name “trailers” (Austin, 1989). As this new system became popular, projectionists began putting trailers together by cutting and rolling film on the spot before the feature presentation. In 1916, Paramount became the first studio to release trailers, and by 1919, the studio had formed its own trailer division that assembled all previews for its upcoming features.

In the early 1920s, the National Screen Service (NSS) was formed in New York. With studios not being able to physically distribute trailers due to the lack of staff, the NSS became the distributors of trailers all over the United States. The success of the NSS ran through the mid-1960s until studio-advertising executives began looking for new marketing strategies (www.movietrailertrash.com).

After the fall of the NSS, several companies began to form “trailer houses,” companies that managed the entire production process of movie trailers. Each company brought new styles and techniques to the creative and artistic form of trailer production.

In the early 1970s, studios began to realize the potential of television advertising. The feature *Jaws*, in 1975, was the first film to initiate a platform release, meaning that the same

movie opened the same day in theaters all over the United States. As trailers began to change with the push for new advertising appeal, music was added at the same time, coinciding with the premiere of MTV and the first music video in 1981 (www.movietrailertrash.com).

Today, studios spend millions printing and sending trailers to theaters nationwide. Studios will now typically produce more than one trailer and prepare multiple versions of the trailer to appeal to more audiences or to perhaps coincide with other films. This was the case with *Chicken Run* and *The Gladiator* where two trailers were created to correlate with each other, in hopes that the trailers would increase the appeal of both films (www.movietrailertrash.com).

Rationale for the Study

Adams and Lubbers (as cited in Eastman, 2000) best describe the current condition of motion picture promotion research by stating, “To date, less than a dozen published studies amid the wealth of academic writing about movies have dealt directly with aspects of movie promotion” (p. 232). While many researchers have studied the actual content of television and film, few scholars have examined motion picture trailers.

Faber and O’Quinn (1981) found that theater previews were the most useful source used by college-age students as well as the most influential in determining movie attendance than any other mass media outlet, such as television. The study’s purpose was to determine how moviegoers perceive and evaluate different information sources, starting from their hypothesis that “among the mass media sources, television ads were considered to be significantly more important than either radio ads or critic reviews” (p. 376). Eastman et. al (1985) manipulated trailers for the film *Thief* in an in-theater study and “examined audience expectations about the film to analyze the effects of the movie’s previews on audience

expectations” (p. 52). Three treatments were shown to three audiences and the conclusion was made that previews and trailers do increase the expectation for the film, specifically longer length trailers. These two studies, although dated, are the closest academic studies that have attempted to research motion picture trailers in this fashion. The current study takes a more in-depth look at theater trailer characteristics and how they impact movie-going intentions.

Considering the foregoing literature and the limited research on this topic, this study asks: When an audience is exposed to a movie trailer in a theater, what characteristics of the trailer provoke a desire to see the film? Are audience and movie characteristics important determinants of movie going intentions as well?

This study hopes to add to the literature concerning the impact of film promotion efforts. By understanding what characteristics of a movie, its trailer, and targeted audiences affect movie-going intentions, specific advertising messages can be constructed and strategies can be deployed that could ensure higher theater attendance.

As such this exploratory study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: Are there characteristics of a trailer that enhance movie audience intentions to see a movie?

RQ 2: Because the very nature of the movie under promotion is embedded in the trailers, what movie characteristics exert influence on intention to see the movie?

RQ 3: What audience characteristics are likely to influence theater attendance specific to the movie being promoted?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a nascent field of inquiry, the impact of trailer promotion on intent to watch a movie may suffer from the dearth of research efforts in the past that attempt to understand this phenomenon. As Kernan (2000) puts it, “very little scholarly attention has been paid to the way trailers characterize films” (p. 1). In the absence of an established theoretical framework that will guide this analysis, this chapter proposes one based on available findings concerning the factors that may influence theater attendance. These factors can be grouped into three general categories: trailer characteristics, movie characteristics, and audience characteristics. Each of these three headings of potential independent variables are discussed in turn.

Motion Picture Trailer Characteristics

With the popularity of movie-going as a form of entertainment, several businesses have taken advantage of the readily available theater audience to advertise their product prior to the feature presentation along with film previews.

Discernable movie plot in trailer content. In a study examining the rate of violence and sexuality in film previews on video rentals based on the MPAA rating scale, Oliver and Kalyanaraman (2002) found that audiences could not easily disregard previews in theaters or rental videos. Previews in theaters as well as on rental videos do not necessarily coincide with the feature presentation rating, meaning that if an audience member bought a ticket or rented a PG-13 film, a preview of an R-rated film maybe included in the “pre-show.” This indicates that the trailer material may contain images or messages “inappropriate” for all audiences. The study used the following indicators as a way to measure violent content: aggression, gun scenes, explosions and sexual scenes. The researchers found that there was a

significant amount of violence and sexual content in previews, which make such trailers inappropriate for young audiences. The results of this study indicate that the audiences are influenced by trailer plot and content. For example, if younger audiences prefer violent films, the violent scenes in a trailer may influence theater attendance for that demographic group.

Providing a solid argument that movie trailers do play a vital role in movie attendance, Eastman, Bradbury and Nemes (1985) studied trailer content as it relates to an individual's expectation of the film prior to viewing based solely on the trailer of the film *Thief*. The study looked at several aspects, such as romance, action and violence in which audiences were tested prior to seeing the film and after viewing the film to determine and compare their expectations. Their field experiment found that some trailers reinforce aspects of the film that may be misleading to the audience, causing certain expectations before viewing the film.

James (1991) categorized trailers into four general categories: the trailer that gives away all the funny lines (like the trailer for the film *Pure Luck*), the trailer that gives away the ending, (like the trailer for the film *Regarding Henry*), the trailer that gives away the ending and all the funny lines (using the trailer from the film *The Doctor* as an example), and finally the trailer that does not tell enough (like the trailer for the film *Thelma and Louise*). These categories may indicate that the amount of story within a trailer may impact audiences' desire to see the film.

In a case study that analyzed the marketing of the film *Star Wars*, Earnest (1985) states that "a theatrical movie trailer" typically generates the highest interest because it shows the cast in the characters they will portray on screen, it is able to outline the story and its

elements in greater detail, and, by showing extended scenes from the picture, the trailer gives the potential moviegoer a better idea of the film's production values" (p.8).

Technical qualities. In the trailer test for *Star Wars*, the trailer presented a science fiction story full of aliens that did not coincide with the print advertising efforts which focused on the relationships between the two main characters, Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia. Prior to the film's release, the television trailer campaign focused on the human characters while showcasing the special effects in order to appeal to a broader audience. This study indicates that the way in which a trailer is "cut" or put together directly affects how the movie is perceived by audiences, ultimately determining if they will go see the film.

Motion Picture Characteristics

Genre. Becker, Brewer, Dickerson and Magee (1985) studied the link between human characteristics such as a person's attitude, behavior, and values as they relate to film genre preference. The study showed that personal values, such as how people feel about certain issues, do have an effect upon a person's movie genre preference. The authors define the concept of values as "global beliefs that underlie attitudinal and behavioral processes" (p. 38). The results of this study may influence the reasoning behind why men and women typically like different types of films. Women and men may have conflicting beliefs and attitudes about certain issues, which in turn, may impact movie-going decisions. For example, women may feel strongly about romantic relationships, thus preferring romantic films, whereas men may feel as strongly about romantic relationships and not like that specific genre.

Weinraub (1998) claims that young girls are running to theaters to catch the latest new release starring their favorite actors. The mid-1990s brought films such as *Clueless* and

Romeo and Juliet to screens in order to appeal to teenage girls. However, according to Weinraub, young women are now attracted to different genres of film, thanks to their favorite actor or actress. For example, the film *Scream* introduced teenagers to the horror genre by including popular actors and actresses from teenage-driven television programs that appeal to younger audiences. While this article focused more on young women, the shift in genre preference can be related to teenage boys as they may be more likely to attend a romantic comedy if it stars an attractive female such as Alicia Silverstone in the film *Clueless*.

Actors and Actresses. Utilizing the Gallup organization, *Variety* magazine surveyed 6,000 people between the ages of 12 to 65 (1994, July 25) regarding film actors and actresses and their influence on movie-going decisions. To qualify, those polled had to have seen at least three motion pictures in the last year. In the survey, respondents were asked “how likely were they to attend a movie starring a specific actor, if they were aware of a current film featuring that star and the name of that film” (p. 1). Male and female respondents were given a list of actors and actresses and asked how likely they would go see a movie starring those individuals. The top three actors filmgoers stated they would always see were: Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson and Tom Hanks. This study indicates that actors and actresses do play an important role in the movie selection process.

Audience Characteristics

Gender. The film industry maintains its high theater attendance by making it the only way in which audiences can see the latest films. Six to twelve months after a theater release, films usually will be released on home video or DVD (Basil, 2001). In a study examining what specific audiences attend movies, rent movies or purchase movies, Basil (2001) found that: only 15 percent of those surveyed felt the need to be the first one to see a new film; that

people who tend to attend the theater are more likely to rent and purchase films; that women and younger people attend and rent more films; and that individuals with higher incomes tend to see more films than those who are not as financially secure. Determining what specific audiences are more inclined to attend the theater and rent videos may help identify those individuals who may be more influenced by trailers.

Silva (1998) conducted telephone surveys to examine the determinants of theater attendance. The study found that “age, education, and marital status significantly influence theater attendance habits as the young, single and college educated tend to go to the movies more often” (p. 164). This discovery is consistent with Basil’s (2001) study regarding the youth demographic and film attendance.

Using film clips to measure facial expression and emotional responses, Kring and Gordon (1998) found that women were more expressive than men, that men had greater reactivity to fear and anger films whereas women had more reactivity to sad and disgusting films. This finding may explain why women tend to like more emotional films while men have a propensity to watch action or scary films.

Darley and Smith (1995), using the selectivity model, found that women are comprehensive information processors who consider a product based on its subjective and objective characteristics, while men are more logical and analytical in their processing. This difference in information processing strategy may lead one to hypothesize that there may be differential trailer impact by gender. Women, because they are comprehensive processors, may understand or like certain characteristics of a trailer differently from men.

Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran (1991) further explored the gender differences in processing information in a study about how students recall information. Results indicated

that while females use a detailed processing strategy to recall messages, men tend to use a schema-based strategy (p. 69). That is, men tended to use associative thinking to understand or recall information. For example, a specific kind of car may remind them of a scene from a movie. Such findings provide clues as to how both genders are able to remember details about a trailer.

Television commercials include similar qualities that movie trailers embody. This is evident in the study by Perry (2001) who looked at commercial humor and how it may appeal to different genders. In his inquiry, the researcher uses the excitation transfer theory to examine why commercials play such a vital role in program enjoyment for the viewer. The study found that there are differences in what men and women find humorous. For instance, men find aggressive and sexual humor funnier, whereas women find incongruity and nonsense funnier. From this, one can infer that different elements or characteristics of a movie trailer, such as humor, may affect women and men differently.

Based on extensive interviews after watching the movie *Masquerade*, Lassner (1944) found that the interest patterns of moviegoers differ by gender. Conversations with female and male subjects found that females tend to like the actresses in the film and attend movies based on interpersonal recommendations, whereas men tend to rely on film reviews and are interested in the actors in the film to determine their movie attendance (p. 253). The results of this study indicate that there may be different characteristics of a movie trailer that impact women and men differently in terms of their motivations to see a movie.

Media use for movie information. Finn et. al (2000) compared movie Internet marketing strategies in Canada and the United States. The authors examined how the success of *The Blair Witch Project's* Internet campaign proved to be the beginning of studios

marketing films on-line. Today, film websites include special features such as actor biographies, and web users now have the capability to download the film's trailer. American studios budget at least twice as much as Canadian films do for the marketing of new films, which ultimately leads to greater box office successes. This article highlighted how the Internet is just one more way in which audiences can be exposed to motion picture trailers. This suggests that the increased availability of trailers on television, theaters and the Internet considerably enhances their ability to influence movie-going intentions.

Garlin and McGuiggan (2002) examined individual predispositions, moods and personal preference as characteristics that may influence how people choose to spend their leisure time. This study looked at the level of individual involvement entailed in choosing a movie by looking at a movie on television, videotape or at the cinema, deciphering the extent to which people reflect upon the choice of a film for viewing. Results indicated that involvement with movie choice differs at the cinema: there is less involvement in video movie choice and least involvement with television movie choice, indicating that there is less decision-making in choosing a television movie compared to that of choosing a movie to watch in theaters (p. 440). In other words, individuals may be more likely to research and spend some time choosing movies they will see in theaters than movies they will watch on television. This is largely because attending the theater is more costly than watching television or renting a movie. Movie offerings also provide viewers with an array of options deserving of their entertainment funds.

Movie-going behavior and frequency of seeing a movie. Swartz (1986) cited several polls and surveys regarding theater attendance in America in an effort to examine the decline of theater attendance. Based on a national survey administered in 1985 to 1,000

adults, there are four variables affecting movie-going: “the experience of watching a movie, the use of movies as social events, and how income and age affect movie viewing” (p. 60). According to the authors, research conducted in 1946 found that the average American went to feature films 29 times in a given year. By 1986, the viewing rate had dropped to five films per year mainly due to the success of television and the introduction of the VCR. This study indicates that the film industry is competing now more than ever with several other entertainment venues which audiences may find more appealing than seeing a movie. Such a competition among existing entertainment vehicles has negatively affected individual movie attendance behavior.

In a survey taken yearly since 1969, results showed that men and women over the age of 40 bought 71 million more tickets in 1987 than they did in 1986 (Harmetx, 1998). The study proves that young viewers are not the only demographic segment that significantly attends the movies - older adults who prefer more mature movie content than the average teenager are also important movie audiences.

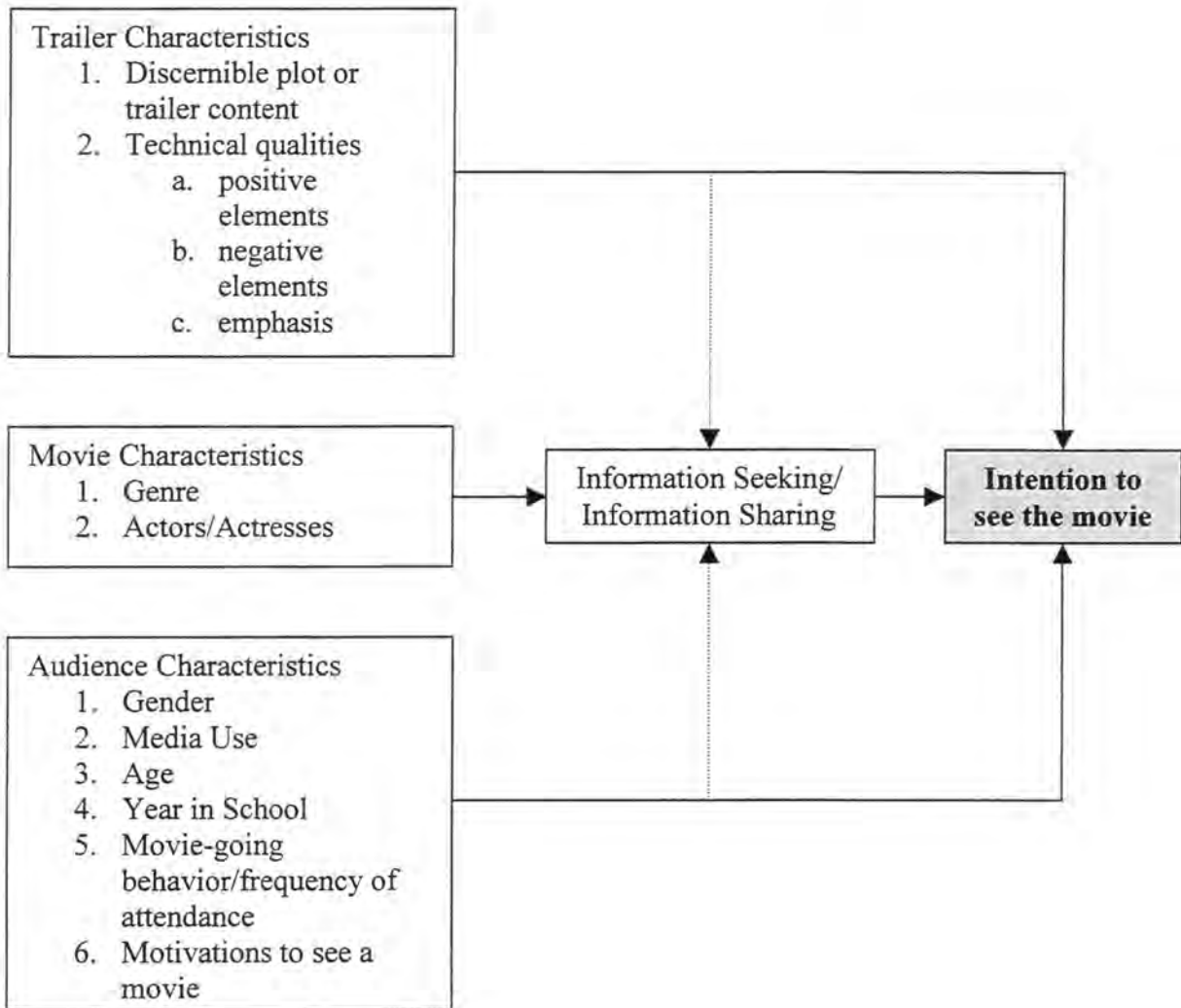
Motivations to see a movie. Austin (1989) described the movie selection process through a structured model, which includes five elements affecting movie attendance. These include: publicity and advertising, reviews, personal influence, story type and production elements (p. 62). The author used the innovation adoption process as a guide in structuring this model. The innovation adoption process involves five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. In the case of movie selection, one seeks to acquire information (knowledge) regarding the film by word of mouth and movie reviews (persuasion), from which an intention is formed (decision) to actually go to a theater (implementation) where the decision made is reinforced or rejected (confirmation). Austin’s

structured model demonstrates that selecting a movie is a process in which publicity and advertising are main factors of influence.

In summary, what motivates audiences to see a film seems to be an uncharted territory. Given the host of potential independent variables that may possibly influence movie-going intentions outlined in the foregoing literature review, this study proposes an integrated model that distinguishes the three general categories of antecedent variables: the attributes of the trailer itself, the characteristics of the movie which is the subject of trailer promotion, and audience characteristics (see Figure 1).

The model proposes that these two major antecedents will cause cognitive reactions that generate greater information seeking regarding the movie and an intention to see a movie. This study asks: In this line-up of potential independent variables, what factors are the most important contributors to the variance in information seeking and intention to see a movie after exposure to the trailer?

Figure 1. A model of factors that may affect intention to see a movie



CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to understand what characteristics of a movie trailer, the audience, and the movie itself enhance a person's desire to see the film it is promoting.

Quantitative and qualitative focus groups were chosen as a method of inquiry. The quantitative aspect of the focus groups was embodied in the responses to a questionnaire administered to focus group participants. The qualitative part of the study refers to the in-depth analysis of responses to a structured open-ended questionnaire used to elicit the judgments participants made of the trailers they viewed.

Krueger (1988) defines a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 18). Wimmer and Dominick (2000), citing the advantages that the technique offers, suggest that "one respondent's remarks in a focus group situation tend to stimulate others to pursue lines of thinking that may not have been elicited in a situation involving just one individual" (p. 120). Austin (1989) states that focus groups are a common practice to test trailers and films to audiences and that "focus groups permit lengthier, more in-depth, qualitative analysis of fewer people's reactions to the trailer" (p. 18).

Aside from these strengths, focus groups as a method is time- and cost-efficient. It also allows for a flexible questioning format, enabling the moderator to structure the questions based on conversations with and among participants.

According to Faber and O'Quinn (1984), 18 to 24 year olds account for 50 percent of movie going audiences; thus female and male undergraduate students (ages 18 to 24) were asked to volunteer as participants in this study.

Two different sampling methods were used in selecting participants for this study: a convenience sample and a volunteer sample. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), a convenience sample is “a collection of readily accessible subjects” while a volunteer sample is made up of subjects who voluntarily participate in the study (p. 83). Recruitment began two weeks prior to each focus group session. Presentations were made in two Journalism classes where students were offered extra credit to participate. Volunteer participants were also recruited from University fraternities and sororities. As an incentive, participants were served pizza and soft drinks during each focus group session.

Four moderated focus groups were conducted in classrooms between November 2002 and January 2003 on the Iowa State University campus. After the date was set and the rooms were reserved, the recruitment process began.

Each session lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. A background questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed to the participants before each focus group, which included specific demographic questions. A consent form approved by the Iowa State University Human Subjects Review Board was also distributed to students before each session in order to gain their permission to be a part of the study (Appendix B).

All focus group sessions were conducted based on a moderator’s guide (Appendix C). The author also served as the moderator for each session. All sessions were video and audio recorded and another graduate student acted as a notetaker at each session to guarantee data collection accuracy.

The focus group discussion began with an ice-breaker question that asked students to state their name and their favorite movie. A series of questions regarding general movie going habits followed. To effectively examine how motion picture trailers influence

audiences and to determine what elements of a trailer are most effective, participants were asked to view a motion picture trailer. After exposure to the trailers, the participants were asked to share their opinions of the trailers and their theater attendance intentions.

The first two focus groups included 17 women and eight men who viewed the trailer from the film *Gangs of New York*, and the last two focus groups, which included 11 women and seven men, viewed the trailer from the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*.

Trailers Viewed

The trailer for the film *Gangs of New York* is a 2 ½ minute action-packed look into a story about revenge, war and love that takes place on the streets of New York in 1846. An Irishman, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, faces off against the man that killed his father, played by Daniel Day Lewis. In the midst of gang fights, poverty and depression, a love story emerges between DiCaprio's character and a young Irish woman, played by Cameron Diaz, who plays the elusive love interest. The trailer begins slowly, flashing from one scene of the movie to the next guided by a narrator throughout the trailer. As the background music intensifies, the flashes begin to rapidly increase, offering the audience a montage of scenes from the movie which contributes to the overall dramatic effect of the trailer.

The trailer from the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* includes highlights of the romantic relationship based on a bet involving a journalist, played by Kate Hudson, and advertising professional, played by Matthew McConaughey. Kate Hudson's character is writing a magazine article entitled "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days." For this assignment she actually has to find a man to date and purposely perform ridiculous stunts designed to drive him away in 10 days. Matthew McConaughey's character is an advertising professional trying to win an account, but in order to do so he must find a woman and get her to fall in

love with him in 10 days. This 2 ½ minute trailer takes the audience through the first week of the so-called “bet,” giving the audience a thorough glimpse into the storyline.

Pre-test

A pre-test of the focus group approach took place in the spring of 2002. Particular attention was paid to the trailer used and the utility of the moderator’s guide. For this, trailers for the films *Blade II* and *Dragonfly* were used. In order to recruit volunteer participants, the group meetings were announced in several meetings of the Iowa State University Greek community. Two focus groups were conducted, which included six undergraduate males ranging in age from 18 to 22, one female graduate student (25 years old) and three undergraduate females ranging in age from 20 to 21 as volunteer participants. The men viewed the trailer for the action-packed movie *Blade II* and the women viewed the same trailer in addition to the trailer from the movie *Dragonfly*, a suspense drama.

The male participants did not care for the *Blade II* trailer but did discuss certain aspects of the trailer that they liked, which included special effects, the speed, and music. After viewing the trailer for *Blade II*, the women were quick to comment that it was an action movie made for men and said they would not see the movie. After the women viewed the trailer to the film, *Dragonfly*, which included more of a story line than the trailer to *Blade II*, the women seemed more interested in the film and liked how the trailer developed the story and character in detail. The majority of the women liked Kevin Costner, who starred in the film, and stated that because of him, they would most likely see the movie.

Due to the results of the pre-test, it was determined that it would be more beneficial to select only one movie trailer to preview in order to achieve equivalence in comparisons. The *Blade II* trailer focused heavily on the action portion of the movie. The findings indicate that

for the actual study, it will be more beneficial to use a trailer that had a wide-range appeal so that it could relate better to both women and men. The open-ended responses hinted that the trailer had to have elements such as drama and suspense. It was also noted that previewing trailers that had not yet been released on television would elicit less biased responses.

As a result of the pre-test, the order of questions asked in the moderator's guide was changed. Noting how the conversation tended to flow, the moderator's guide was altered accordingly to avoid repetition.

Definition of Variables

The independent variables hypothesized to have an impact on intention to see a movie are categorized into trailer characteristics, movie characteristics and audience characteristics.

Trailer characteristics include the following variables: *Discernible plot in trailer content* refers to the story line that could be gleaned in the trailer. It also pertains to the extent to which viewers feel they understand the plot based on the trailer. It was measured by asking: "Based on the trailer, how much do you feel you know the film's story line?" *Technical qualities* include elements such as editing style, music and narration within the trailer. In this study, technical qualities are measured in terms of the general characteristics of the trailer the viewers find to be positive, the attributes of the trailer participants found negative or the factors they disliked, and the emphasis the trailer placed on plot, actors and actresses, or special effects.

Movie characteristics include the following variables: *Genre* pertains to the categorical type of movie preferred and was measured by asking participants "What type of movie do you typically see?" The potential answers include: romantic comedy/comedy, action/adventure, drama/romantic drama, science fiction, suspense thriller, horror films and

musical. *Actors and actresses* who may have attracted viewers were identified by asking the following question: “Were there actors or actresses in the trailer that made you interested in the film? If so who are these?”

Audience characteristics include the demographic variables *gender*, *age*, and *year in school*. This category also includes *media habits* which refer to the modes of information seeking typically practiced to determine what movies to see. *Media use* refers to what media are used and relied on to view trailers. This was measured by asking the question: “Movie trailers are shown on television, in theaters and on the web. Where do you normally find trailers in order to know more about movies?” *Movie-going behavior* refers to how frequently the participant sees a movie and was measured by asking the following question: “How often do you attend the theater in an average month?”

Information seeking refers to whether participants indicated whether they will actively seek information about the film via the Internet or movie publications after exposure to the trailer. Finally, *intention to see the movie*, the study’s main dependent variable, was measured by asking whether they will go see the movie after watching the trailer.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis. Each focus group session was transcribed and all notes taken during the sessions were organized. The transcripts of each focus group session were examined using open coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as, “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). A line-by-line analysis approach, which the authors term microanalysis, “is necessary at the beginning of the process in order to generate initial categories and suggest relationships among categories” (p.57). These initial categories were

used to identify codes for each response. Once initial codes were established, categories of factors that influence intention to see the movie began to emerge from the data.

To ensure reliability, two fellow graduate students, one female, one male coded the transcripts separately. Both thoroughly read through all four focus group transcripts. Each time they encountered a statement in the transcript that related to one of the codes in the codebook, the corresponding code letters were placed in the left margin of the transcript next to the statement. Statements that were repeated more than once were coded in the left margin each time they appeared. The same approach was used in coding all four transcripts.

Inter-reliability was calculated using Holsti's (as cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2000) method using the following formula: $2M/N_1+N_2$, where M is the number of coding decisions, and N1 and N2 are the total number of coding decisions by the first, second and third coder (p. 151). Using this formula, the inter-coder reliability was computed at 82 percent. After review and negotiation between coders, the reliability was raised to 85 percent.

Quantitative analysis. The influence of each of the variables within the three headings on information seeking was tested as follows: To test the influence of gender, media use, year in school, motivations to see a movie, genre, actors and actresses and all technical qualities, chi-square tests were applied. To test age, movie going behavior and, discernable plot's influence on information seeking, t-tests were administered.

To test the influence of the independent variables on intention to see a movie, the following tests were applied: A rank correlation test was performed to determine if there is relationship between age and intention to see the movie. A chi-square test was used to ascertain the impact of year in school on intention to see a movie. A one-way analysis of

variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the influence of movie going frequency, and year in school on intention to see the movie.

In order to determine the impact of plot, a chi-square test was applied. ANOVA tests were used to determine the influence of technical trailer characteristics on intention to see the movie.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four focus groups were conducted with a total of 42 participants. Of this, 27 were females and 15 were males, ranging in age from 18 to 24 with the average age being 20. There were two freshman, seven sophomores, 14 juniors, and 19 seniors in the sample.

Hypotheses Testing

The proposed theoretical framework outlined in Chapter two suggests a path of influence from the three general categories of independent variables (trailer, movie and audience characteristics) to information seeking and sharing, and then ultimately to intention to see the movie. This suggests that trailer, movie and audience characteristics can trigger more information seeking and sharing that will then lead to greater intentions to see the advertised movie. As such, this section tests the impact of the independent variables on the two dependent variables of interest: information seeking/sharing and intention to see the movie.

Information seeking/sharing was measured by asking participants how likely would they seek out or share information with peers about the film based on its trailer. Responses included: “No, I will not seek out or share information about the film” and “yes, I will seek out and share information about the film.” Intention to see the film was based on participants’ response to whether they would see the film based on the trailer. Participants’ responses ranged from 1, meaning they were “unlikely to see the movie” to 5, definitely will see the movie.

Trailer Characteristics

The first research question asks: Are there characteristics of a trailer that enhance information seeking/sharing and audience intentions to see a movie? This section is divided

into two groups each composed of four hypotheses. The first set asks the relationship of plot, positive and negative aspects of the trailer, and aspects of the film that are emphasized in the trailer to the dependent variable-audiences' information seeking and sharing habits. The same set of four hypotheses tested the relationship of the same independent variables on intention to see the film.

Discernable plot and information seeking/sharing. Discernable plot refers to the ability to comprehend the film's main plot based on the trailer. To determine if this variable has an influence on information seeking, a t-test was performed. Discernable plot was measured by asking participants to identify how much of the movie plot was evident based on the trailer. Of the 42 subjects who answered this question, 14 said they could easily discern the plot of the movie from the trailer. The mean for this question was 4.1765 (s.d.= .8090). The results of the statistical test ($t = -.758$, $p = .455$) as shown in Table 1, indicate that there is no difference in information seeking/sharing based on perceived plot. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 1

An independent samples t-test testing differences in discernable plot by information seeking/sharing

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	-.758	28	.455	-.2081
Equal variance not assumed	-.781	27.901	.441	-.2081

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Discernable plot and intention to see a movie. To determine if there is a correlation between discernable plot and intention to see a movie, a correlation test was applied. As shown in Table 2, the test produced a correlation coefficient of .084, which was not significant. Therefore, no relationship was found between discernable plot and intention to see a movie. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 2

Correlation between discernable plot on trailer content and intention to see a movie

	Source	Impact	Plot
Impact	Pearson correlation	1.000	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.642
	N	42	33

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

This finding goes against the subjects' responses to the open-ended question that seeks their opinion about the role of the film's plot on their information seeking habits and the likelihood of seeing the promoted films. When participants were asked what they would tell a friend about the film based on the trailer from *Gangs of New York*, several women commented on its violent nature, "It could be pretty violent" and "I would say violent and intense; as if he's on a mission to get back at the guy who killed his Dad." The men gave more specific comments: "It's a big brawl" and "I'd tell them not to go because Leonardo DiCaprio is in it."

When participants were asked what they would share with their friends about the movie based on the trailer from *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, both women and men had a

lot to say. The women said they would talk to friends about the dating aspect of the film, “that it is about a bet that tried to get two people dating and ends up bringing them into a relationship.” “I would tell them that it is a classic chick flick!” The men’s comments were once again more direct and specific: “It’s a chick flick,” “a romantic comedy,” “a valentine’s day date” and “don’t pay seven dollars to see it.” Such comments seem to indicate that the plot, qualitatively, will prompt or discourage people from sharing information about the movie or from actually seeing it.

Positive elements and information seeking/sharing. Positive elements within a trailer refer to the elements which audiences reportedly enjoyed, such as the music in the trailer. The nominal categories into which the responses to this question could be grouped include: “enjoyed the word narration feature at the beginning of the trailer,” “the trailer gave audiences a good idea of what the film was about,” “the music in the trailer was used effectively,” “the trailer showed the film as relating to life happenings, and the trailer was based on a relationship.”

To determine if the positive elements of a trailer influenced audiences to seek out and share information about the film, a chi-square test was administered. The statistical test shows that the χ^2 was 4.000 ($p = .261$) as shown in Table 3. This indicates that information seeking/sharing does not change according to the positive elements detected in the trailer. That is, if someone enjoys a certain element of the trailer, that specific element has no bearing on students’ information seeking/sharing habits surrounding the film. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 3

A cross tabulation of positive trailer elements by information seeking sharing

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig.
Pearson chi-square	4.000	3	.261
Likelihood ratio	5.545	3	.136
Linear-by-linear association	.923	1	.337

*Note: ***p ≤ .001*

Positive elements and intention to see a movie. To find out if positive elements in a trailer have an influence on intention to see the film, an ANOVA test was performed. This produced a non-significant F value ($F=2.357$, $p=.319$) as shown in Table 4. As such, positive elements in a trailer do not influence intentions to see a film. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 4

An analysis of variance testing differences in intention to see a movie based on positive trailer elements

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	9.429	4	2.357	2.357	.319
Within groups	2.000	2	1.000		
Total	11.429	6			

*Note: ***p ≤ .001*

The positive elements in the trailer were readily available from the open-ended responses. When asked about what specific elements of the trailer from the film *Gangs of New York* participants liked or disliked, the women could only find two aspects of the trailer they liked: the phrases narrated in the beginning of the trailer, and the trailer's ability to give a good "gist" of what the film was about. The men found the action portion of this trailer appealing, which was the only positive comment made by them regarding this trailer. One woman stated, "I thought the music went really well with it. It went along with the suspense and the all scenes they were showing. I thought it went really well with what they were trying to portray." Another woman who viewed the trailer from the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* commented on the music as well: "I loved the music, I mean most trailers have good music, but this one really fits the whole thing."

Men that viewed the trailer from the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* discussed the comedic and real life aspects of the trailer: "The stuff it showed actually relates to life, which makes it funny" and "the story is about relationships; I guess everyone can relate to it."

Negative elements and information seeking/sharing. Negative elements refer to aspects of the trailer participants stated they did not care for. Four negative elements were identified: the amount of violence in the film was not appealing, the trailer showed too much of the story line, the trailer did not explain the details of the story line well, and the trailer favored several other romantic comedies. Examples of these are comments such as "too much violence" and "the trailer showed too much of the storyline." To determine if negative elements in a trailer have an influence on information seeking/sharing, a chi-square test was performed. The statistical test shows a χ^2 value of 3.033 ($p = .387$) that was not significant

(Table 5). This means that the negative elements in the trailer had no influence on individuals seeking out or sharing more information about the film. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 5

Cross tabulation of negative trailer elements by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	3.033	3	.387
Likelihood ratio	3.843	3	.279
Linear-by-linear association	.159	1	.690
N of valid cases	19		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Negative elements and intention to see a movie. To determine if negative elements found in a trailer influence intention to see the movie, an ANOVA test was applied.

Here again the F value ($F=.844$) as shown on Table 6 was not significant ($p=.486$), indicating that the presence of elements in a trailer that subjects did not like had no bearing on intention to see the movie.

Table 6

An analysis of variance testing variations in intention to see a movie by negative elements

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	5.692	3	1.897	.844	.486
Within groups	44.933	20	2.247		
Total	50.625	23			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

In the focus groups, both women and men participants were keen on what they did not like or appreciate in the trailers. Many said they do not like it when all the funny jokes in the movie were placed in the trailer. One male participant points out, “Usually the funniest jokes are in the previews. When you get to the movie, you’re upset that there’s not much else to see.”

Women tended to deem *Gangs of New York* a “guy movie,” instead of something they might see. The trailer includes several shots of fighting between gangs, often focusing on knives and axes used during the fights. Women were “turned off” by these, saying “I really don’t go to movies that are about fighting or war and violence so I’m turned off by it.”

When asked about how much they felt they knew about the movie based on the trailer from the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, both women and men had similar comments. The women thought that the trailer, “just about told the whole story,” “I feel like I already know the first hour of the movie” After seeing the trailer, someone asked: “What’s the point

of seeing it? I mean they already told you that they ended up falling in love.” The men also believed that the trailer was very forthcoming about the entire movie, with comments like:

I know everything about it and for sure it’s a “chick flick.” The plot looked really predictable. She’s going to snag him, and then they’re going to fall in love. Then he’ll find out he was an assignment. There will be turmoil and you don’t know if they’ll end up together now that he’s found out. Then it will all work out in the end. They’ll get married and have lots of kids.

One woman vented her frustration by saying, “I wish they wouldn’t have told you that they ended up together, so we could figure that out when we went.” One man in particular was very passionate about how trailers of today have a tendency to give away most of the movie:

It gave away everything; most trailers do that now—start to finish and practically through the end. It’s obvious at the end when he’s on a bike that he’s going to get her after she’s run away. When they showed her running toward him, that’s obviously the end of the movie. All trailers do that now because they feel like they can’t sell movies without it. Old trailers never did that; they just introduced the characters.

Emphasis. Emphasis refers to a certain aspect of the movie stressed in the trailer, such as action or violent scenes. Other aspects that may have been emphasized include relationships, and individual characters. To determine if elements emphasized have something to do with information seeking, a chi-square test was applied. As displayed in Table 7, the statistical test produced a χ^2 of 2.014 which is not significant ($p=.570$). This

suggests that elements in a trailer that are emphasized do not influence information seeking/sharing habits. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 7

A cross tabulation of trailer emphasis by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	2.014	3	.570
Likelihood ratio	2.370	3	.499
Linear-by-linear association	.008	1	.927
N of valid cases	10		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

What about this independent variable's impact on intention to see a movie? To determine this, an ANOVA test was performed. As shown in Table 8, the F value (1.909) was not significant ($p=.217$), indicating that elements emphasized in the trailers do not influence intention to see the movie. Again, this finding did not provide support for the hypothesis.

Table 8

An analysis of variance testing the influence of trailer emphasis on intention to see a movie

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	4.336	3	1.445	1.909	.217
Within groups	5.300	7	.757		
Total	9.636	10			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

The aspects of the trailer that were emphasized in the trailer are evident in student's qualitative responses. One woman in the focus group observed that much of the trailer for the film *Gangs of New York* over-emphasized men preparing for war. The men, on the other hand thought that the love story was overindulged.

Comments surrounding the trailer for the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* focused more on the individual characters in the film. Women tended to think that Kate Hudson's character was the main focus of the trailer: "They really focused on her being deceitful and not really him, when in fact, they both were involved in the bet." The men had similar responses in that they believed the trailer used comedic relief through Kate Hudson's character to emphasize her plan to push him away as part of an assignment. The men seemed to struggle with finding specific elements of the film to talk about. Finally one man addressed the issue:

That's the problem—you can't pick out anything in that trailer and say 'that's sweet!', I am going to see that movie because of that. This trailer had an

above average level of ‘funniness.’ It’s not like an action movie, where you say, ‘I can’t wait to see that driving scene’ or something like that. I can’t wait to see that...movie [laugh] or Kate Hudson.

Movie Characteristics

The second research question asks: Because the very nature of the movie under promotion is embedded in the trailers, what movie characteristics exert influence on information seeking/sharing and intention to see the movie? Two groups of hypotheses will be posed here. The first two ask if the genre of the film and the actors and actresses appearing in the film each has an influence on audiences’ information seeking/sharing habits. The next group of two hypotheses meant to test the relationship between genre and actors/actresses on intention to see a movie.

Genre and information seeking/sharing. The different genres identified were: romantic comedy/comedy, action/adventure, drama, drama/romantic, horror, and musical. To determine if there is a difference in information seeking/sharing based on movie genre, a chi-square test was applied. As shown in Table 9, the statistical test shows a χ^2 of 3.600, ($p = .463$), indicating no significance in information seeking/sharing by film genre. This means that audiences tend not to seek out or share information simply based on the genre of the film. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 9

Cross tabulation of film genre by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	3.600	4	.463
Likelihood ratio	5.046	4	.283
Linear-by-linear association	3.381	1	.066
N of valid cases	36		

*Note: ***p ≤ .001*

Genre and intention to see a movie. To determine if there is a relationship between film genre and intention to see a movie, an ANOVA test was administered. As displayed in Table 10, the F value produced ($F=.715$) was not significant ($p=.587$), indicating that intention to see a movie does not vary by film genre. Again, this suggests that audience members tend not to base their theater attendance decisions solely on the genre of the film. The hypothesis was not supported.

Table 10

Cross tabulation of film genre by information seeking

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.638	4	1.410	.715	.587
Within Groups	72.933	37	1.971		
Total	78.571	32			

*Note: ***p ≤ .001*

Again, this finding was inconsistent with students open-ended responses. Fifty-two percent of the participants stated that their preferred film genre was either comedy or romantic comedy, and 23% stated they preferred drama or romantic drama films. In the second focus group, women unanimously voted for romantic comedies as their genre of choice. Due to this overwhelming response, the question was then posed to the group: “Why is this type of film your favorite?” One woman eloquently stated that “it gives you hope that there are actually good guys out there and that it could happen to you,” referring to a great romantic relationship like the one presented in *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. This response indicates that women tend to prefer romantic comedies as a way to dream or fantasize about the impossible and escape from their frustrations.

Gangs of New York surprisingly did not interest the women or the men. This assessment is very different from that of *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. The women could not say enough about how much they liked it, which was fairly predictable based on their responses concerning preferred movie genre. The men found it funny and entertaining, but basically stated that it was a typical “chick flick” which they did not intend to see.

Actors and actresses and information seeking/sharing. To examine if actors and actresses influence information seeking habits, a chi-squared test was employed. The statistical test shows a χ^2 of 6.959, which was significant ($p=.009$) as shown in Table 11. This means that college students seek out and share information about the film based on the actors/actresses appearing in the film. The hypothesis, therefore, was supported.

Table 11

Cross tabulation of actors and actresses by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	6.959	1	.008	.009***
Continuity correction	4.888	1	.027	
Likelihood ratio	9.566	1	.002	
Fisher's exact test			.011	
Linear-by-linear association	3.381	1	.009	
N of valid cases	34			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Actors and actresses and intention to see a movie. To determine the influence of actors and actresses on intention to see the movie, an ANOVA test was administered. The test showed an F value ($F=14.089$), which was significant (Table 12), indicating that the main actors/actresses in the film affects intention to see the promoted movie.

Table 12

An analysis of variance testing whether actors and actresses influence intention to see a movie

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	20.008	1	20.008	14.089	.001***
Within groups	53.967	38	1.420		
Total	73.975	39			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

The students' open-ended responses support the findings of the hypotheses testing. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of actors and actresses starring in a film: "Definitely who's in it plays a big part, especially in comedies. If, for example, Adam Sandler's in it, even if somebody tells me the film is horrible, I'll go see it." After viewing the trailer for the film *Gangs of New York*, the majority of the women said they were Cameron Diaz fans. The conversation, however, took a different course when asked about Leonardo DiCaprio being in the film.

He doesn't look very attractive in the previews. I am not a huge fan of his so I probably wouldn't jump out and go see the movie. But I don't know. He's playing a part like the one in *Titanic* wherein he's like an underclass type of person. He's brought up to be this gorgeous guy that's going to save the day.

For *Gangs of New York*, one male summarized it for the group: "I thought...Leonardo DiCaprio and Cameron Diaz... makes me want to see the movie less."

The 11 women who viewed the trailer for *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* laughed from the beginning to the end of the trailer. When the trailer was over, the women began to talk among themselves about the film with comments such as, "that looks so cute" and "I love Matthew McConaughey." As the women became more involved in conversation about Matthew McConaughey, the question was then posed: "About how much of who is in the film influences your decision to see the film?" One woman laughed and stated, "Huge! If you don't like the actor, why would you go see it?"

Audience Characteristics

The third research question asks: What audience characteristics are likely to influence theater attendance? This question could be broken down into a first set of six hypotheses that

individually tests the relationship between gender, media use, age, year in school, movie going frequency, and motivation on an individual's information seeking habits. The second set of six hypotheses explores the relationship between the same independent variables on intention to see the advertised film.

Gender and information seeking/sharing. To determine if information seeking varies by gender, a chi-square test was performed. The test produced a χ^2 (1.350), that was not significant enough ($p=.295$) to show any difference between men and women in terms of information seeking/sharing (Table 13). This hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 13

Cross tabulation of gender by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Assump. sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	1.350	1	.245	.295
Continuity correction	.632	1	.427	
Likelihood ratio	1.394	1	.238	
Fisher's exact test				
Linear-by-linear assoc.	1.313	1	.252	
N of valid cases	36	1		

*Note: *** $p \leq .001$*

Gender and intention to see a movie. To determine if intention to see a movie varies by gender, a chi-square test was performed. The test produced a χ^2 (1.278), that was not significant enough ($p=.465$) to show any difference between men and women in terms of intentions to see a movie (Table 14). This hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 14

Cross tabulation of gender and intention to see a movie

Source	Value	df	Assump. sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	1.278	1	.234	4.65
Continuity correction	.547	1		
Likelihood ratio	1.396	1		
Linear-by-linear assoc.	1.326	1		
N of valid cases	36			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Media use and information seeking/sharing. Media use refers to the media outlet (television, theater or on-line) audience members are more likely to use in order to view trailers. Media use was measured by asking participants where they typically viewed trailers: on television, in theaters or on-line. Some 54% of the college students stated that they generally view them on television, while 40% stated that they generally viewed them in theaters. One male participant stressed the advantages of viewing trailers online. On the web, he says,

You can see all kinds of trailers. In theaters, the trailers are limited to the kind of movie you're seeing. You actually will have to go see a drama film to see drama trailers and comedies to see comedy trailers. The trailers on-line are much better than the action/drama chewed crap they have in theaters.

To determine if the medium used to watch trailers makes a difference in information seeking, a chi-square test was administered. Again the test showed a non-significant

relationship ($x^2=.899$), ($p=.638$) as seen in Table 15, which indicates that what medium college students use to see trailers does not have a bearing on information seeking/sharing habits. This hypothesis, therefore, was not supported.

Table 15

Cross tabulation of media use by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Assump. sig
Pearson chi-square	.899	2	.638
Likelihood ratio	1.262	2	.532
Linear-by-linear assoc.	.581	1	.446
N of valid cases	36		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Media use and intention to see a movie. To determine if the medium used to watch trailers makes a difference on intention to see a movie, a chi-square test was administered. Again the test showed a non-significant relationship ($x^2=.846$), ($p=.659$) as seen in Table 16, which indicates that what medium college students use to see trailers does not have a bearing on intention to see a movie. This hypothesis, therefore, was not supported.

Table 16

Cross tabulation of media use by intention to see a movie

Source	Value	df	Assump. sig
Pearson chi-square	.846	2	.659
Likelihood ratio	1.438	2	.432
Linear-by-linear assoc.	.473	1	.544
N of valid cases	36		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Age and information seeking/sharing. To test the relationship between age and information seeking, a t-test was preformed. As displayed in Table 17, the statistical test ($t=.144$, $p=.886$) shows that age does not have anything to do with a person's information seeking habits, providing no support for this hypothesis.

Table 17

Independent samples t-test testing the influence of age on information seeking

	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	.144	34	.886	5.714E-02
Equal variance not assumed	.146	31.576	.885	5.714E-02

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Age and intention to see the movie. In order to determine if there is an association between age and intention to see the promoted movie, a correlation test was necessary. The Pearson correlation coefficient in this case ($r = -.191$) is negative (Table 18), indicating that as individuals get older, they are less likely to see a movie. It can be assumed from this finding that as students get older, their movie going behavior may change as their preferred film genre or type also changes. The relationship, however, was not significant ($p = .225$). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Table 18

Correlation of age by intention to see a movie

	Source	Age	Intention to see a movie
Age	Pearson correlation	1.000	-.191
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.225
	N	42	42

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Year in school and information seeking/sharing. In order to determine if year in school influences individuals' information seeking and sharing habits, a chi-square test was applied. The statistical test shows a χ^2 of 1.476 ($p = .688$) as shown in Table 19. This indicates that information seeking/sharing habits do not vary by year in school. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 19

Cross tabulation of year in school by information seeking

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	1.476	3	.688
Likelihood ratio	1.828	3	.609
Linear-by-linear association	.360	1	.549
N of valid cases	36		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Year in school and intention to see a movie. An ANOVA test was applied to examine whether year in school affects intentions to see a movie. The results show that the achieved statistic ($F=.398$) was not significant ($p=.755$), indicating that intention to see a movie does not differ by year in school (Table 20). The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 20

Analysis of variance testing the influence of year in school on intention to see a movie

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2.395	3	.798	3.98	.755
Within groups	76.177	38	2.005		
Total	78.571	41			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Movie going frequency and information seeking/sharing. Of the 42 participants, 47% stated that they attend the movie theater at least once a month. Another 38% stated that they attend the movie theater at least twice a month. To identify if information seeking differs according to movie going frequency, a t-test was performed. The resulting statistic ($t=1.096$, $p=.281$) as shown in Table 21 was not significant, suggesting that there is no significant difference in information seeking/sharing habits based on movie-going frequency. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 21

An independent samples t-test testing the difference in information seeking based on movie going frequency

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	1.096	34	.281	.4095
Equal variance not assumed	1.138	33.445	.263	.4095

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Movie going frequency and intention to see a movie. To test if movie going frequency has an influence on intention to see a movie, an ANOVA test was administered. The F value produced ($F=1.263$) was not significant ($p=.268$), indicating no significant difference in intention to see a movie according to movie going frequency (Table 22). This suggests that how often individuals attend the theater has no bearing on intention to see a movie. The hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 22

An analysis of variance testing the influence of movie going frequency on intention to see a movie

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2.405	1	2.405	1.263	.268
Within groups	76.166	40	1.904		
Total	78.571	41			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Motivations to see a movie and information seeking/sharing. Motivations refer to the many ways in which an individual can be encouraged to see a film. These include factors, such as the film's trailer or critiques and reviews about the film. An overwhelming 66% of the participants stated that they enjoyed viewing trailers in theaters, and identified trailers as the vehicle providing the main driving motivation to see a film. Still, there are some who mentioned that they did not care for trailers prior to watching feature films in theaters. Motivations to see a movie were measured by asking participants if they liked trailers as a source to gain information about new films.

In the focus group conversations, men said they were motivated to see a film based on the knowledge of who directed it, information they gathered through word-of-mouth, surprise endings seen on previews, the trailers, movie publications and on-line information about films. Women said they would be motivated to see a movie based on the film's trailer. Several women said they make it a point to get to the theater early so that they do not miss

any trailers shown or previewed before a movie. The men, however, had a completely different response. One male pointed out “we get there late if we can, to avoid trailers.”

To determine if motivation influences information seeking and sharing, a chi-square test was administered. The χ^2 statistic ($\chi^2=5.193$) was not significant ($p=.075$) as outlined in Table 23. This means that seeking and sharing information about films does not vary by the factors that motivate students to see the advertised film. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 23

Cross tabulation of motivation to see a film by information seeking/sharing

Source	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	5.193	2	.075
Likelihood ratio	6.177	2	.046
Linear-by-linear association	4.233	1	.040
N of valid cases	28		

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Motivations and intention to see the movie. To determine if motivation influences intention to see a movie, an ANOVA test was applied. As table 24 shows, again, the test produced an F value ($F=1.010$) that was not high enough to detect a significant relationship ($p=.419$). Thus, motivations have no relationship whatsoever with information seeking and sharing. The hypothesis was thus not supported.

Table 24

An analysis of variance testing intention to see a movie across motivations

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	7.226	4	1.807	1.010	.419
Within groups	50.1-7	28	1.790		
Total	57.333	32			

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

Summary

This chapter presented the results of hypotheses tested to determine what trailer, movie and audience characteristics have a bearing on information seeking/sharing and intention to see the promoted film. The majority of the hypotheses posed were not supported based on the statistical tests applied. The only factor showing a relationship to the two dependent variables were actors/actresses starring in the films. This finding places actors/actresses as the main reason why audiences may decide to see or avoid a film.

Each hypothesis, the statistical test used to test it, the value of the relevant statistic, and their probabilities are summarized in Table 25.

Table 25

Table summarizing the results of the hypotheses testing

Independent Variables	Information seeking/sharing			Intention to see a movie		
<u>Trailer characteristics</u>	Test	Stat.value	Prob (2-tailed)	Test	Stat.value	Prob. (2tailed)
Discernable plot	T-test	$t=-.758$	.455	Correlation	$r=.084$	.642
Positive elements	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=4.000$	.261	ANOVA	$F=2.357$	.319
Negative elements	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=3.033$	.387	ANOVA	$F=.844$	.486
Emphasis	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=2.014$	.570	ANOVA	$F=1.909$	.217
<u>Movie characteristics</u>						
Genre	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=3.600$	4.63	ANOVA	$F=.715$	.587
Actors/Actresses	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=6.959$	.009***	ANOVA	$F=14.089$	.001***
<u>Audience characteristics</u>						
Gender	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=1.350$	.295	Crosstabs	$F=1.278$	4.65
Media use	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=.899$	.638	Crosstabs	$F=1.846$	.659
Age	T-test	$t=.114$	.886	Correlation	$R=-1.91$	.225
Year in school	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=1.476$	.688	ANOVA	$F=.398$	.755
Movie going frequency	T-Test	$t=1.096$	.281	ANOVA	$F=1.263$	.268
Motivations to see a movie	Crosstabs	$\chi^2=5.193$	.075	ANOVA	$F=1.010$	.419

Note: *** $p \leq .001$

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on motion picture trailers shown exclusively in theaters (as opposed to television, the Internet or those broadcast over the radio) as a technique used to promote new films and favorably enhance movie-going intentions. This exploratory study attempted to answer the following research questions: Are there characteristics of a trailer that enhance movie audience intentions to see a movie? What movie characteristics exert influence on intentions to see a movie? And what audience characteristics are likely to influence theater attendance specific to the movie being promoted?

An array of potential independent variables were therefore hypothesized to lead to greater information seeking and sharing as well as more favorable intentions to see the movie being advertised. The paths of influence were specified in an integrated theoretical framework illustrated in Figure 1. This integrated model distinguished among the three general categories of antecedent variables: the attributes of the trailer itself, the characteristics of the movie which is the subject of trailer promotion, and audience characteristics. The model proposed that the independent variables subsumed under these three general categories form the major antecedents to greater information seeking/sharing regarding the movie and the intention to see the movie.

Quantitative and qualitative focus groups were chosen as a method of inquiry. The quantitative aspect of the focus groups was embodied in the responses to a questionnaire administered to focus group participants. The qualitative part of the study refers to the in-depth analysis of responses to a structured open-ended questionnaire used to elicit the judgments participants made of the trailers viewed.

Results

Only two hypotheses presented in this study were supported by statistical tests. Based on conversations among focus group participants and the statistical test applied, actors/actresses influenced not only information seeking and sharing habits, but audience's intention to see a movie as well. This finding suggests that individuals are highly influenced by who stars in the film and that factor is the main driving force in their movie-going decisions.

In the qualitative responses, the women in this study stated that they rely on several elements to make decisions about the film's trailer. This includes actors and actresses in the film, and word-of-mouth information gathered about the film. Lassner (1944) also found that women tend to like the actresses in the film and rely on interpersonal recommendations to determine their movie attendance. The men, on the other hand, were motivated by: the director of the film, word-of-mouth, reviews they gathered, the trailers, and movie publication information. Although the qualitative responses point to more aspects of the film and more factors (including trailers) that will encourage them to see the promoted movie, they support the conclusion that both men and women tend to look at actors and actresses featured in a film as an important aspect in determining film choice.

The results of the hypotheses testing did not support Faber and O'Quinn's (1984) findings that "theater previews were rated as the most useful source, and were considered to be significantly more useful than mass media advertising sources, critic's reviews or interpersonal communication" (p.376). Although the hypothesis testing did not support gender differences they are, however, evident in the open-ended responses. Women enjoyed and tended to take more notice of trailers than men. The men, however, tended to be at the

opposite end of the spectrum. They admitted to a general goal of avoiding trailers before feature films in theaters.

There are also several instances in which the qualitative and quantitative results are patently contradictory. For example, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* proved to be a hit with women participants; however, men were not as amused by it and had little feedback regarding the trailer. This should indicate that film genre should have an impact on the two dependent variables. These two hypotheses, however, were not supported by the statistical tests.

All four focus groups had lengthy discussions regarding trailer quality, lamenting for example, that the trailer for the film *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* just about “told it all.” This should suggest that discernable plot should have a bearing on information seeking/sharing and intention to see the film. With all four focus groups discussing this issue, the insignificant statistical finding was therefore surprising.

Limitations of Current Study

The failure to detect significant relationships might have resulted from the use of both convenience and volunteer sampling techniques that produced a sample that was also not representative of the population studied. The small sample size might have also affected the statistical tests used.

The data also suffered from rather low levels of measure. That is, most of the independent variables were ordinal, interval and nominal measures. More quantitative variables could have allowed for more stringent and powerful tests.

Suggestions for Future Research

In order to substantially contribute to theory, future studies must deal with a more representative sample. Using a triangulation approach, including qualitative and quantitative measures derived from focus groups and surveys, would allow researchers the opportunity to explore the aspects of a trailer audiences really care about. Having audiences rank specific elements of a trailer by preference may also be a better way to measure trailer characteristics. As mentioned above, future studies should benefit from more refined quantitative operationlizations of variables.

Another approach that would be appropriate for this course of research would be the use of experimental designs. This would allow the researcher to have more control over the independent and dependent variables that will be the subjects of statistical tests. For example, manipulating the trailer to enhance certain qualities could offer more distinguishable results.

APPENDIX A

Focus Group: Background Questionnaire

Please circle the answer(s) to the following questions or fill in the spaces provided where needed. You do not need to write your name on the questionnaire.

1. Gender Male Female
2. Age at last birthday _____
3. What year are you in school? Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate
Other _____
4. How often do you go to the movies?
Twice a week Once a week Twice a month Once a month Other _____
5. Favorite movie genre?
Romantic Comedy Action Drama Adventure
Science Fiction Horror

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: **The Impact of Motion Picture Trailers on Movie Going Intentions**
Investigators: **Mary Elizabeth Brantley**

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to research what characteristics of a movie trailer captures the attention of men and women between the ages of 18 to 24. The goal of the study will be to determine if there are differences between men and women in how they are influenced by movie trailers. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a male/female between 18 to 24 years of age.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will include the completion of a brief background questionnaire and a one-hour focus group session. You will be asked to answer general movie going habits and preferences. Then you will be asked to view a movie trailer and discuss its contents.

Your responses will be recorded via cassette player and video camera.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there **may be no** direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit the motion picture industry by providing qualities in trailers that men and women find appealing.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You **will not** have any costs from participating in this study. You **will not** be financially compensated for participating in this study. As an incentive, you will be served complimentary refreshments.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: visual and audio cassette tapes will be destroyed upon the completion of data analysis. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Mary Elizabeth Brantley at 296-0224. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-4566; meldrem@iastate.edu or the Research Compliance Officer, Office of Research Compliance, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-3115; dament@iastate.edu

SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject's Name (printed) _____

 (Subject's Signature)

 (Date)

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant

understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Mary Elizabeth Brantley

Date

APPENDIX C

The Impact of Motion Picture Trailers on Movie Going Intentions

Focus Group: Moderator's Guide

Date

Location

Iowa State University

Thank you all for coming. Please help yourself to some pizza and soft drinks.

An Overview of the Study

Your comments about motion picture trailers will be analyzed for my thesis. First, we will look at a trailer then questions concerning it will be asked. Please feel free to respond as there are no right or wrong answers in this study. To ensure the accuracy of responses, it will be necessary to record this conversation. Does anyone object? This is based on voluntary participation and at anytime you feel uncomfortable and you think you want to terminate your participation, please feel free to leave the room. The comments disclosed in this session are confidential and your identities will remain anonymous.

Ice Breaker Question:

Let's go around the room and state your name and your favorite movie.

- 1) What type of movies do you typically like?
- 2) How often would you say you go see a movie in a month?
- 3) What motivates you to see a movie?
- 4) Movie trailers are shown on tv channels, in theaters and on the web. Where do you normally find out about movies through trailers?

Show Trailer

- 5) Based on the trailer you just saw, what are your feelings about the movie?
- 6) How much do you think you know about the movie?
- 7) What elements did you like about the trailer?
- 8) What elements did you dislike about the trailer?
- 9) Were there aspects of the trailer that you thought were given too much attention?
- 10) Is there any aspect of the trailer that peaked your interest?
- 11) Were there actors in the trailer that made you interested in the film? Who?
- 12) Who did not appeal to you?
- 13) If you had to describe this movie to a friend based on the trailer, what would you say about it?

Final Questions:

- 15) Based on the trailer, will you seek out more information about the film?
- 16) Will you go see the movie? If so, when?

Note taker will then read the key points made from the discussion.

- 17) Are there any other comments or questions you would like to add?

Thank you again for coming.

APPENDIX D

Codebook

Please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the categories and codes in the following codebook. Then, using the codebook, thoroughly read through the first of four focus group transcripts. Each time you encounter a statement in the transcript that relates to one of the codes in the codebook, simply write the corresponding code letters in the left margin of the transcript next to the statement.

For open-ended responses, the wording can vary slightly between statements, but the basic meaning of the statement should be the same for you to assign a code. Although the codebook is organized in the same order as the focus group questions, be alert to the fact that some statements may be out of sequence.

Question #	Variable Name		Values
1	Gender		
		1	Female
		2	Male
		9	Missing value
2	Age		
			Two decimal places
		99	Missing value
3	School		
		1	Freshman
		2	Sophomore
		3	Junior
		4	Senior
		99	Missing value
4	Frequency		
			This will be a quantitative variable and will be coded in terms of number of times a month a person attends a theater. Potential response is 1-5
		9	Missing value
5	Genre		
		1	Romantic Comedy/Comedy
		2	Action/Adventure
		3	Drama/Romantic Drama
		4	Suspense Thriller
		5	Science Fiction
		6	Horror
		7	Musical
		99	Missing value

6	Motivate		
		1	Enjoys viewing trailers before a feature presentation in a theater.
		2	Does not enjoy viewing trailers before a feature presentation in a theater.
		3	Entertainment value of trailers makes the theater experience worthwhile.
		4	Reviews published critiques regarding the film
		5	Surprise endings or a "hook" to the story line
		6	Movie industry publications with movie information
		7	Movie information made available on the world wide web
		99	Missing value
7	MediaUse		
		1	Viewed trailers on television
		2	Viewed trailers at the theater
		3	Views trailers online (Internet)
8	TrlPlot		
			(Interval variable) 1=Can barely determine plot based on the trailer 5=Plot is evident in the trailer
		9	Missing value
9	Positive		
		1	The trailer was funny.
		2	Enjoyed the word narration feature at the beginning of the trailer.
		3	The action sequences looked enticing.
		4	The trailer gave audiences a good idea of what the film was about.
		5	The music in the trailer was used effectively.
		6	It looks to be a great "Date Movie."
		7	The trailer showed that the film relates to life happenings.
		8	Trailer was based on a relationship, which was relatable.
		9	Missing value
10	Negative		
		1	The amount of violence in the film was not appealing.
		2	The trailer showed too much of the story line (left little to the imagination).
		3	The trailer was too long in length.
		4	Trailer did not explain the details of the storyline well enough.

		5	The trailer favored several other Romantic Comedy movies.
		9	Missing value
11	Emphasis		
		1	The trailer focused on human relationships in the film.
		2	The trailer concentrated too much on violent scenes.
		3	The trailer spent a lot of time on the love story with in the movie.
		4	The trailer focused more on the individual characters in the film
		5	Within the trailer, no particular element stood out to make it memorable.
		9	Missing value
12&13	Actors		
		1	An actor or actress appearing in the trailer influenced the likeability of the film promoted in the trailer.
		2	The actors and actresses appearing in the trailer did not improve the likeability of the film promoted in the trailer.
		9	Missing value
14	TelFrnds		
		1	Would talk to friends and others about the film.
		2	Would not talk to friends or others about the film.
		99	Missing value
15	InfoSeek		
			1=Will not seek out more information regarding the film. 2=Will seek out more information regarding the film.
		9	Missing value
16	Impact		
			(Interval variable) 1=Will not go see the movie based on the trailer 5=Will go see the movie based on the trailer
		9	Missing value
17	Length		
		1	Prefers shorter trailers
		2	Prefers longer trailers
		9	Missing value

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