

Promotional websites in the film industry. The case of the Spanish cinema

Las páginas webs promocionales en la industria cinematográfica. El caso del cine español



Sergio Jesús Villén Higuera holds a PhD in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising from the University of Malaga, receiving the European mention. He is a member of various research groups in which he analyses the promotional strategies of the cultural industries on websites and social networks; the ecosystem of Chinese social media and, particularly, the impact of Wechat on young Chinese students; and the cultural and technological transformations that the contemporary Chinese film industry has experimented.

University of Málaga, Spain

sergio.vh@uma.es

ORCID: 0000-0002-6813-3614



Francisco Javier Ruiz del Olmo is a full professor at the University of Malaga. He develops his teaching and research work in the Faculty of Communication Sciences and the Faculty of Fine Arts. He has investigated the communicative models of audio-visual media and the representation of contemporary audio-visual forms, as well as the technical and social uses of them; a second research line is related to communication and new media. Both work lines have in common a significant interest in the qualitative methodologies.

University of Málaga, Spain

fjrui@uma.es

ORCID: 0000-0002-1953-1798

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Abstract:

The development of web languages and the new communicative needs of the film industry have fostered the evolution of official movie websites. In this context, this research is aimed at establishing a classification of the different types of these digital spaces and their promotional strategies, as well as analysing them in the Spanish cinema field. For this purpose, the most representative models are described and, by means of a mixed method, different communicative aspects of the web pages created by Spanish films produced in 2017 are analysed. The results show that the official movie websites have been transformed and diversified, although the Spanish cinema is anchored in unattractive and obsolete models.

Keywords:

Websites; official websites; Spanish cinema; promotional strategies; social networks.

Resumen:

El desarrollo de los lenguajes web y las nuevas necesidades comunicativas de la industria cinematográfica han favorecido la evolución de las webs oficiales de las películas. En este contexto, la presente investigación pretende establecer una clasificación de estos espacios digitales y sus estrategias promocionales y analizarlos en el ámbito del cine español. Para ello se describen los modelos más representativos y, mediante un método mixto, se analizan múltiples aspectos comunicativos de las webs creadas por las películas españolas producidas en 2017. Los resultados obtenidos muestran una transformación y diversificación de las webs oficiales cinematográficas, aunque el cine español está anclado en modelos obsoletos y poco atractivos.

Palabras clave:

Páginas webs; webs oficiales; cine español; estrategias promocionales; redes sociales.

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1. Introduction

The Spanish film industry has been burdened for decades by the difficulties faced in developing and investing in the promotion of its productions. The budgets of contemporary Spanish films, widely nourished by the so-called low-cost cinema, are becoming increasingly smaller (Medina and Fernández, 2014), so many projects reach the end of their shooting and editing short on budget. Due to resource limitations, especially in low-cost cinema that manages budgets usually ranging between 2,000 and 100,000 euros –for instance, *Diamond Flash* (Vermut, 2011) and *Carmina or Blow Up* (León, 2012)– the use of the online world is crucial for creating digital identities of the films on the Internet without a lot of funds or even at no cost.

As Spanish films have tight budgets, the investment in promotional activities is often diminished and supplanted by very unambitious, poorly planned communicative strategies which, in many cases, are materialized by team members of the film who are not specialized in film promotion. Moreover, many Spanish productions do not consider it necessary to include a specific line item for promotion, but they apply the residual budget, i.e., what remains once the film is completed (Iglesias, 2013).

In the last few decades, the promotional strategies of the cinema were mainly focused on the acquisition of spaces in traditional media such as television, the press or radio. Today, although the proliferation of social media and the existence of all kinds of spaces on the network attractive for film promotion have reduced costs due to the extensive existing offers of spaces, these advantages have also led to a saturation of advertising content and a high segmentation of the target audience.

In this context, films are becoming hyper-fragmented in order to generate engaging experiences and contents which can be adapted to diverse digital and public spaces. The most glaring example may be observed in the films' social media profiles (López, 2016) or on many official websites (Villén, 2016) whose ongoing drive to draw public attention is leading them to present the films in a more detailed and participatory way. The new communication strategies being pursued by the current productions are no longer only composed of a few trailers or posters but make use of an amalgam of content and experiences intended to attract the attention of their target audiences from multiple perspectives and to populate their online personal spaces, primarily their profiles on the social networks. The abundance of content also implies adequate strategic planning to avoid saturating the users and generating a story or experience that serves as an extension of the film.

This trend towards the hyper-fragmentation of the film text, largely driven by the Internet, further hinders the relationship between the Spanish cinema and promotional communication. Apart from the economic difficulties that the Spanish film industry has historically experienced, resulting in modest investments in promotion, now it must also be able to develop in the context of an updated generation of movie paratexts, more dynamic and interactive communicative spaces and transmedia strategies which have emerged as the Internet and its users have matured. Thus, this involves adapting the

promotions to the current audio-visual production panorama, which is influenced by the evolution of the technology, the narrative forms and the participation of users (Kurtz and Bourdaa, 2017).

1.1. Promotional web pages: an approach to the Spanish cinema

Since the movie *Stargate* (Emmerich, 1994) launched its web page in 1994, considered as the first official movie website for promotional purposes (Geirland and SoneshKedar, 1999), these spaces have become essential media for introducing any film production into the market. Websites are commonly used as meeting points for the main advertising contents of movies and provide interactive contexts through selectivity and fragmentation (Marín, 2007).

In recent years, the evolution of programming languages has favoured the creation of a new generation of digital pages that, in addition to providing an interactive context, are also able to host interactive, customizable and ludic contents. The most innovative sites are experimenting with contents based on these features, becoming another fragment of the fictional universe that expands the narrative (Villén, 2016) and encouraging the creation of fan communities around the film. Many film productions therefore assign to the web pages the role of creative space, where the original promotional and transmedia contents, together with the classic film paratexts, succeed in generating alternative proposals which may be best suited to the needs and demands of the public today.

In the field of Spanish cinema, websites provide the productions with great communicative advantages, now that they are constituted as configurable spaces based on each production's needs and promotional possibilities. The reduced cost also enables their active maintenance during the entire commercial life of the films, meaning from conception to arrival in domestic formats or exploitation on online content platforms.

Web pages, just like social networks, can constantly update contents, hence stimulating and feeding the expectations of users, and combine with other commercial strategies of the movie. Nonetheless, many national (and international) productions depend on distributors who take charge of the promotion of the movie and launch their websites shortly before the release, which hinders the building of a more lasting bond that encourages future viewers to repeatedly visit these sites. According to Bretones (2013), these spaces can even be created with the sole purpose of providing material for the press.

Taking advantage of website's communicative possibilities, rather than a powerful economic investment, requires good strategic planning and a commitment to content innovation, which benefits low-budget films. As stated by Salvador (2013), the impact on the target audience is not entirely linked to the budget managed by the film producers but also to the existence of an investment strategy.

A clear example of the innovation potential of websites is observed in the Spanish film *Wrath* (Aronak, 2016)¹, where there was a section called "Private area" enabling users, through a code obtained when buying the movie ticket in the cinemas, to access transmedia contents that expand the film story, discuss the film with other users, and, on a given date, speak

¹ Website available at www.iralapelicula.com

directly with members of the film team. This transmedia strategy, despite feeding on basic content, is noteworthy for being considered as part of the film production.

In spite of its relevance and potential to contact web surfers, the research on Spanish movie websites is reduced to the analysis carried out by Linares (2008) on all national production between the years 2004 and 2005. According to the results of this investigation, 40.66% of the productions did not have an official site, and most of the advertising contents used were traditional (posters, trailers and images). These data highlight their limited use and, a fortiori, take into consideration the lack of social networks on the date when this research was performed.

Presently, there are new demands and communicative strategies that enable a renewed use of the promotional pages in the Spanish cinema. It is therefore deemed necessary to have up-to-date research that widely deepens and explores their exploitation in the Spanish film industry.

2. The research

2.1. Objectives

The diversity of communicative strategies employed on the official movie web pages in recent decades has led to the creation of a typology, depending on the content and the party interested in advertising the film. Although each production adapts them to their needs, all of them follow a set of patterns repeated over time, which enable the elaboration of a classification. The main objectives of this research are thus to establish a taxonomy of these web spaces in the cinematographic field and detect what types are currently used in the Spanish productions.

The current sites are already no longer only configured as storage spaces which solely gather traditional contents that present the film, but they also incorporate other strategies based on the creation of synergies between a plethora of promotional texts that establish varied relations with the film production. Therefore, other main objectives of this research are to analyse and classify the different existing promotional strategies based on the diverse types of textual relationships generated in these pages and to examine their uses.

For the analysis of the Spanish movie websites, other secondary objectives will be considered in order to obtain a more detailed view of their configuration.

Apart from storing contents, these sites are capable of generating synergies with social digital spaces. The fact that the users visit an official page could result in an opportunity for them to interact with the social profiles of the film in different ways. They can also incorporate posts published in the social profiles of the film, thus developing more dynamic and social spaces. The objective is to examine the linkage between the official websites and the different social networks' profiles managed by the films.

In relation to their potential to provide the film with an international reach, another goal of this research is to analyse the different languages offered and, given the linguistic diversity existing in Spain, to also examine the presence of other co-official languages, such as Catalan, Galician, Basque and Valencian, as a way to grab a multicultural audience's attention.

The user may also be redirected to some kind of purchase, i.e., tickets, DVD or Blu-ray discs, or to watch the movie on a VOD platform. Websites can serve not only as media capable of encouraging the users to watch the film in the short and long term but also as a direct purchase or display option. Thus, the ultimate objective is to check if these sites are used as commercial catalysts.

2.2. Delimitations and methodology

The investigation is initiated by categorizing the different types of web pages on the basis of the configuration of their strategies and contents. With a view to identifying and establishing a taxonomy, there has been an exploration and description of all those websites regarded as movie official promotional spaces that in the last five years have been most remarkable at national and international levels. The wide range of digital spaces intended to be addressed, in addition to enabling the elaboration of a more exhaustive taxonomy, will subsequently highlight the possible deficiencies or nonexistence of certain types in the Spanish film industry.

Moreover, although an official website is usually connected to a web domain similar to the title of the film, on other occasions, there is the use of other domains or spaces that best meet the needs and advertising possibilities of films. In this research, the term promotional website will be understood, on an official level, as all virtual spaces used as part of a particular film's promotional strategy that is autonomously controlled and managed by any person or entity related to the film.

Once the classification has been established, the official sites of all feature films produced in Spain in the year 2017 will be analysed. The selected websites correspond to the film releases contained in the report of the ICAA (Spanish for Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts) during the year 2017, a total of 187 films. The consultation of the data sheet of each movie in this report has provided the official information about the entities that had participated in various film processes. The analysis is limited to the Spanish area, so all the web pages belonging to foreign entities that had collaborated with a film were discarded.

The research has been designed on the basis of a mixed method, which allows a deeper exploration of the diversity of spaces and promotional strategies while at the same time, through a quantitative perspective, these spaces show which communicative models are the most widespread and broadly used by the Spanish film productions. For the purpose of conducting this analysis, a template covering different strategic communicative aspects has been developed: type of website, promotional strategies based on the different textual relations produced (types of intertextuality), connection to the movie's official profiles on social networks, the available languages and the commercial possibilities offered.

Intertextuality, in this case, is understood as any relationship established between a film and those promotional texts used on their official websites. Any cinematic text is implicitly or explicitly covered and linked by an amalgam of texts which contextualize the film in society and, hence, in markets. Of all the possible textual relations that a film can establish, this

study only considers those that play explicit promotional roles in the above-mentioned digital spaces: paratextuality, metatextuality, intratextuality, hypertextuality and hypotextuality.

Furthermore, the hybridisation of the social network profiles and the official sites provides a variety of ways to create communicative synergies. The analysis is conducted bearing in mind which digital social spaces converge on such websites and the communicative uses proposed: sharing of the page on the user's profile, transforming it into a promotional space; the mere redirection of users to the movie profile on the networks; and, finally, incorporation on the website of the most notable posts from the film's social profiles in order to increase the flow of contents and users.

After analysing the available languages, the last point addresses the existing commercialisation options. In many cases, these virtual spaces are used as commercial catalysts that lead users to consume the film or film-related products. The research accordingly analyses whether those websites induce users to purchase tickets, DVD or Blu-ray discs, watch the movie on VOD platforms or buy merchandise or other film-related products.

The exploration of all these variables enables the visualization of the communicative fabric present on the Spanish productions' promotional sites. The template of the analysis may also serve as a guide for the configuration of future digital spaces in this industry.

3. Typology of promotional websites in the film industry

Although there is no defined prototype, a website model has been reproduced based on similar structures and contents. The standardization of an affordable and easy-to-emulate model has favoured its implementation in any movie promotional strategy, but it has also become an obstacle to its development. The absence of studies in this area has hindered the detection of other formats that, despite their existence, are often unknown and therefore dismissed when designing a digital space that incorporates all the communicative needs of a film.

Some movie databases such as IMDb and FilmAffinity, or official catalogues such as the ICAA, which usually include the official websites on the movie sheets, are a reflection of the variety of sites that are commonly considered to be official. On these platforms, the official sites are interpreted as those pages configured for the promotion of a film and managed by members or entities directly related to its business interests. Such a consideration shows a broader view of websites, allowing the exploration of alternative spaces that are understood as equally official. Hence, a classification of these websites elaborated according to their communicative and promotional configuration is proposed:

- Official website of the movie (OW): it is the standard par excellence in the film industry, since it offers an exclusive space adapted to the promotional needs of each film. These emerged as spaces aimed at the accumulation of the majority of paratexts used in other media. Currently, the recent programming languages and the vast competition for attracting public attention in a market with an increasing supply of content has favoured these spaces incorporating new film contents and strategies delving into:

- a) The creative and artistic process, which covers the period from the beginning of the project until its commercial exploitation after the theatrical release².
- b) The human capital, primarily focused on the director and main actors or, in certain cases, also on outstanding members of the technical team. For instance, the website of *At Your Doorstep* (Cortés, 2016)³ gives room to the figures of the director and producer; it also extensively explores the artistic and technical team.
- c) The stimulation of a heterogeneous audience by generating all kinds of paratexts and interactive experiences that constitute a meticulous and omniscopic view of the film. Franchises including *Star Wars* or *The Hunger Games*⁴ allow the exploration of the fictional worlds through a wide variety of contents and formats that, in many cases, are interactive.
- d) The communicative potential of the fictional worlds, incorporating transmedia contents that propose new experiences to develop audience loyalty and consolidate a brand community (Laurichesse, 2013). That is why numerous productions include comics, videogames, short films, videos, virtual tours, interactive contents, texts, images, etc. as part of their transmedia strategies.
- e) User interaction through the provision of social spaces within the web itself. Although this strategy is usually connected to the social networks, some websites, for instance, *Star Wars* provide social spaces so that users are able to comment on the contents published. Such spaces meet the needs of the so-called “creative spectators” who take part in the debate by expressing and sharing their opinions about films (Deltell and García, 2013: 212) and film-related contents.
- f) Content customization, which is aimed at originating individual experiences and changing users into promotional vehicles. By configuring an interactive space, “the receiver, at the same time, becomes a generator of contents and, therefore, a transmitter” (Lozano and Hermida, 2010).
- g) Fusion of the web with contents published on the networks; in particular, tweets are very attractive. For example, *Kiki, Love to Love* (León, 2016)⁵ contains a section that incorporates tweets on the film as they are published.
- h) Commercial exploitation of the film and search for synergies through crosspromotion with other brands. An illustrative example of this type of strategy is observed in *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (Watts, 2017)⁶, which proposes

2 The most significant example found in the Spanish cinema is the case of Cinebasura: la película (Rodríguez and Viruete, 2017), whose official website emerges as a funding space from the project itself.

3 Available at www.cercadeticasa.org/la-pelicula/

4 Available at www.starwars.com/ y www.thehungergames.movie

5 Available at kikielamorsehace.es/

6 Available at www.spidermanhomecoming.com/discanddigital/

different ways to consume the film and offers a wide catalogue of this superhero's products and information about brands associated with the film.

All these strategies have enabled the use of movie official sites as polymorphic spaces with the ability to adapt to the needs and possibilities of each film production. Nonetheless, films opting to integrate most of the described strategies and contents into their official websites are still uncommon.

- Director's Website (DirW): in numerous film productions, especially from independent cinema, the figure of the director is a communication key. Since the auteur theory was introduced to the European cinema in the 1950s, which was initially driven by Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut through *Cahiers du Cinéma* and later by Andrew Sarris in Hollywood with the work *Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962*, the director came to be considered an author. From then on, many film directors became important in the advertising strategies of films, and those who were most successful were even considered as superstars (Schatz, 1993).

The influence of these theories in the communication field has resulted in the creation of brands around many directors/ authors. This marketing use of the director's figure has fostered the construction of personal pages, often referred to as the director's website, where, in addition to containing biographical information, there are exclusive spaces dedicated to each production. Thus, a strategic space is established which increases the popularity of a director on the Internet (Linares and Fernández, 2009) and reactivates all of his or her works each time the page is updated with new productions.

Some directors as Michael Bay, Errol Morris, Mika Kaurismäki and Michael Moore, among many others, manage this type of website⁷ with the purpose of building professional profiles, publicizing their works (films, books, advertising videos, etc.) and, in some cases, selling their productions directly to users. The director/author hallmark strengthens all the paratexts surrounding their productions and, conversely, these paratexts feed the director's personal brand.

On the negative side, these directors' websites can be confused with other pages launched by the followers of certain directors/authors, since they usually use similar content and structures, as well as domains that include the director's name. The followers of authors such as Gus Van Sant, Pedro Almodóvar or Quentin Tarantino manage websites dedicated to these authors⁸ that could be mistakenly regarded as official. As is the case in other commercial and cultural sectors, the importance of acquiring various domains related to the name of an author (or brand) and highlighting the officiality of the site are the bases for any subsequent marketing action on the Internet.

- Production company and distributor website (PW-DW): in the film industry, these two entities are generally in charge of promoting the film and, consequently, the elaboration of an official site. Depending on the strategy pursued, these

7 In order of appearance, the authors' official websites can be visited at www.michaelbay.com, errolmorris.com, www.mikakaurismaki.com y michaelmoore.com respectively.

8 The websites managed by the followers of Gus Van Sant and Pedro Almodóvar can be visited at gusvansant.com and pedroalmodovar.weebly.com. The wide popularity of Quentin Tarantino, however, has led to the creation of several websites by his followers, which are available at www.tarantino.info, www.everythingtarantino.com and www.quentintarantinofanclub.com.

entities can either design a specific site for the film concentrating all the communicative effort in the same space or integrate the promotion of the film into their websites. In the latter case, each film production is provided with a specific space, thus accumulating an extensive range of movies.

The objective of this layout is to generate advertising synergies between cinematographic productions which may in certain cases have some kind of relationship. For instance, the website of Marvel⁹ promotes all its films (and also the rest of the contents in other media) with a view to building a fictional universe allowing their productions to continuously reinforce each other. Although *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Avengers* or *Spiderman* are fictional worlds with different configurations, all of them share the same parallel universe: Marvel's.

Within this category, another alternative model is represented by those production companies or distributors that generate promotional spaces for their productions, even though they do not share the same fictional universe. One of the most representative examples is observed on the site of Fox Movies¹⁰ where there is an independent space for each film that, in turn, is interconnected with other productions' spaces, thus generating communicative synergies that constantly feed the catalogue on this major film studio.

- Tie-in website (TiW): While it is common for websites to be used mainly as paratextfilled spaces, some productions also devise them as creative areas that complement the film stories. In many cases, its purpose is the *defictionalization* of certain cinematographic elements, including characters, companies, brands and places through their appearance in real media: the web pages. It is for this reason that the tie-in websites are also known as *fictional websites*, *fake websites* or *in-universe websites* and are usually part of the transmedia strategies of certain film productions.

Tie-in websites break with the classic prototype assigned to official websites, meaning a transition that goes beyond the communicative strategy based on exhibition and repetition into a transmedia strategy that opts for the expansion and exploration of a fictional world. This type of page does not usually replace a movie's official site but is generated as a parallel space that may not even establish a hyperlink (the usual strategy to surprise users). A tie-in website can be considered as an entry point to the fictional world that, in the current context of redefinition that the cultural industries are undergoing through the transmedia strategies, can be one way of overcoming audience fragmentation and business diversification (Arnau, 2016).

With regard to their conception, these sites can be created as integral or partial transmedia experiences. In the first case, the tie-in website is conceived as a complete and autonomous text that complements a particular film production or fictional world. Films like *Elysium* (Blomkamp, 2013) and *Monster University* (Scanlon, 2013)¹¹ launched a tie-in website as

9 Website available at marvel.com/movies

10 Website available at www.foxmovies.com/movies

11 The tie-in websites that were created are www.itsbetteruphere.com and www.monstersuniversity.com respectively. Currently not available but can be consulted at www.archive.org

part of their promotional strategy; *Prometheus* (Scott, 2012) and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* (Singer, 2014)¹² drove several complementary tie-in websites; and the franchises *Planet of the Apes* (2011–2017) and *Jurassic World* (2015–present)¹³ developed tie-in websites that have evolved in conjunction with the premieres of successive movies of these franchises.

In the second case, these websites can be part of a more complex transmedia strategy: an ARG (Alternate Reality Game). The ARG, configured as a transmedia narrative in itself, has the following features: a collage story that the participants must recombine; development through all kinds of media and platforms, using and alternating physical and digital reality; proposing an experience that requires collaborative participation among the players, originating one or several ephemeral communities (duration of the ARG); and, in some cases, the participation of the players influences the evolution of the story (Kim et al., 2009).

When it comes to composing an ARG, it is common to use one or several tie-in websites since its low cost and the possibilities offered by this media enable the elaboration of a piece of the ARG that includes all kinds of contents and evolves according to the context. Some examples that have become paradigmatic cases of how to integrate and use ARGs as a transmedia strategy in film promotion and have used various tie-in websites are *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008) and *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008)¹⁴.

This type of page can generally be considered as an evolution and adaptation of this media to the new communicative paradigms. While some of these websites offer simple contents lacking in innovation, others are deep and explore the story of a particular film through interactive or videoludic content.

- Franchise website (FW): the film industry is increasingly choosing to create brands mainly around those fictional worlds with the ability to spread through all types of media. The consideration of film franchises as powerful brands is also altering the configuration of their sites. Although some franchises opt for the creation of an individual website for each production (see the cases of *Transformers*, *Underworld* or *Pacific Rim*), which is usually subsequently replaced by the most recent ones, other sites accumulate all the promotional profiles of the different parts of a franchise. The movie's official site ceases to be an ephemeral space that disappears after the commercial life of the film and remains operational as long as the franchise is active.

Concentrating the advertising profiles of each production in the same space, the franchises generate a global vision of the fictional world, favouring its transformation into a brand. Since these commercial structures are drawn out over time, each film is an entry point to the fictional world and thus an ongoing opportunity to attract the public's attention, if its

12 For *Prometheus* (2012) the tie-in websites were set in motion www.weylaindustries.com and www.projectprometheus.com (currently unavailable) and for *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* (2014) www.thebentbullet.com (currently unavailable) and www.trask-industries.com

13 Tie-in websites available at www.simianflu.com and islanublar.jurassicworld.com respectively.

14 The tie-in websites and the various resources used in these ARGs can be found at batman.wikibruce.com/Home and cloverfield.wikia.com/wiki/Cloverfield_Alternate_Reality_game respectively.

profile remains available on the site. Some examples of franchises keeping active all the film profiles on the same web page are *Star Wars*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Divergent Series*, *Fifty Shades* and *Fast and Furious*¹⁵.

When dealing with a whole film franchise, these websites usually incorporate strategies focused on the fictional worlds, setting up encyclopaedic spaces that delve into a wide range of aspects; stimulating the gathering of a follower community, which facilitates the exploration of their tastes and preferences during the commercial life of a franchise; developing transmedia content aimed at expanding and enhancing the fictional worlds and maintaining users' attention between one premiere and another; and consolidating a culture around it that prolongs its existence and amplifies its impact on society.

4. Promotional strategies on film websites

The integration of movies into society, as well as other cultural productions, is carried out by linking and reinforcing a new production with a vast number of unreleased and preexisting texts that are intended to boost its reception in markets. Each one of these texts establishes diverse relations with the film, using promotional strategies that generate a wide range of synergies. The liaison between each promotional text and the movie thus makes up the communication strategy. Considering the content appearing on the web pages, this research distinguishes the strategies based on the following types of textual relationships:

- Paratextuality: it is the connection established between the movie and all the promotional contents, so-called paratexts, that exist around its periphery with the objective of presenting and spreading it in society. On the movie websites, paratexts are usually the basis of the communicative strategy and can be classified into three categories: natural, which are extracted from the cinematic text without undergoing any change; synthetic, generated and reconfigured on the drawing of the most attractive and aesthetic parts of the film; and fan-created, which can be induced by the web page itself, provided that it has content generators that require the users' participation, or recycled, if they are entirely produced by users. This last paratext category represents a reconfiguration of the relationships established between production and reception (Bourdaa, 2016), now that the creativity of users is considered as a promotional possibility.

15 Websites available at www.starwars.com, www.thehungergames.movie/#/?lang=es-es, www.thedivergentseries.movie, www.cincientasombrasoscuras.es/# and www.fastandfurious.com respectively.

Table 1: Paratexts classification in a movie promotional website

Natural paratexts	Synthetic paratexts	Fan-created paratexts
Title of the film	Taglines	Contents generated by users generally by means of the webcam or a personal image that is integrated with the film content
Movie visual identity (logos, isotypes, isologos and imagotypes)	Trailers and GIFs	
Visual identity of the production companies and distributors	Virtual reality and augmented reality contents	
Synopsis	Posters, wallpapers and postcards	Content by users which, normally after a selection process, are exhibited on the movie web page
Director, actors and technical team	Contests, promotions and sweepstakes	
Soundtrack	Video games	
	Media kit	

Source: Author-created

As shown in the above table, paratexts are the contents employed in the promotion of a film. This present study considers this type of textual relationship as a promotional strategy when at least three different paratexts are used, taking as a reference this table.

- **Metatextuality:** the liaison between a text A (film) and another B in the form of a commentary drafted from a critical point of view. By adapting it to film promotion, metatexts may be regarded as all the films' awards, nominations, reviews and socioeconomic accomplishments. Many websites include these metatexts to enhance the socio-cultural impact of the movie, or as a quality label which makes it different from other productions. Thus, the purpose is to transform the film into an outstanding work, whether due to its artistic value or its excellent reception by society.
- **Intratextuality:** it is considered as the connection established by a text, in this case a film production, and other works by the same author. Its promotional equivalent is the commercial use of directors' filmography to generate expectations based on their cinematographic style, the quality of their works, and the achievements they have previously obtained. The objective is to connect the film with the most remarkable aspects of the professional past of each director.
- **Hypertextuality:** it is any type of connection between a text B, called the hypertext, and text A, called the hypotext. In this sense, this is the connection established by a new film with previous productions sharing the same fictional world. This type of bond is mainly observed on the websites of prequels, sequels or franchises, given that they tend to establish links with the previous film productions, the matrix text –in case it is an adaptation (book, comic, or video game)– or, generally, with a range of pre-existing texts bound to the same fictional world.
- **Hypotextuality:** unlike hypertextuality, it is the tie between a text A (hypotext) to a subsequent text B (hypertext). In the context of this research, hypotextuality can be regarded as the linkage established with a forthcoming film set in the same fictional world. This type of textual relationship is frequently used to boost the future releases of a film franchise.

A large majority of film franchises condition the expansion of their fictional worlds on the results obtained in each production, so these are usually regarded as individual projects. Consequently, the promotional strategies used are often defined by each new production, which prevents them from being exploited as hypotexts on the official sites. Only limited exceptions such as the extensive Marvel universe or *The Hobbit* trilogy were planned as a single project, affecting the design of their communication plans.

On the website of Marvel, many of its new releases, including *Thor*, *Captain America* and *Iron Man*, work as hypotexts, functioning as the text/bridge between other productions, such as *The Avengers* or the subsequent sequels of each of the former superheroes who are also announced on the page itself. Otherwise, on the official website of *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (2013), the second part of this franchise, through the experiment *A Journey Through Middle-Earth*¹⁶, one may see how, through content specifically developed for this media, a hypertext (second part of *The Hobbit*) receives promotional synergies from different hypotexts (first part of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy), while working as a hypotext to generate these synergies with a future hypertext (last part of *The Hobbit*).

All these types of relationships underscore the diversity of promotional strategies used on the official websites and the whole spectrum of texts that can be extended in these spaces. Likewise, films, especially those belonging to the franchises, evolve and change over time the orientation of the synergies generated by the different textual relationships in order to promote the new releases developed within the same fictional universe.

5. Analysis of the promotional web pages in the Spanish film industry

The analysis shows an extended use of websites as part of the action plans designed for the films to promote their consumption. It has been noted that during the year 2017, 78.61% of the Spanish movies ran some type of promotional site. Since some productions manage several types, the total amount of pages analysed was 245, obtaining that 21.92% of the productions used two types, 12.29% three and 1.59% four or more.

The most widespread model is the producer's site, used by 43.85% of Spanish productions, now that the space designed to promote the film also serves as a portfolio presenting the creative and technical potential of the producers.

The second most common type is the film's official website, which is set in motion by 30.48% of the films analysed. This is striking as between 2004 and 2005, 53.34% of the films had an official site (Linares, 2008), but the present-day use of this type of site has decreased by 22.86% (even more notable considering that the current production is almost double that in 2004-2005).

The third type, present in 29.41% of the productions analysed, is the distributors' sites, which usually include films, with basic content intended to feed their catalogue of films. It has also been detected that 12.83% of productions are promoted

¹⁶ The official website is available at www.warnerbros.co.uk/thehobbitdesolationofsmaug/ and the experiment at middle-earth.thehobbit.com.

on websites of production companies which, in turn, act as distributors. This hybrid website format also usually adopts the basic data sheet model that, at the same time, nurtures the company's portfolio and catalogue.

The next format that has been detected is the director's website, used as a promotional space by 5.34% of films. Moreover, during the research process, it was found that only 10.69% of the Spanish directors who made films during 2017 have their own websites, and only half of them are updated. These data show the little interest of Spanish directors in the management of personal digital spaces to project their artistic identities and promote their works.

As for the use of tie-in websites, only 1.6% of the productions opted for this format. The percentage, an indicator of the lack of promotional transmedia strategies in the Spanish cinema, corresponds to tie-in websites that offer integral transmedia experiences based on: the extraordinary powers of a character in the film *El arca de Noe* (Aliaga and Valero, 2017); the project *Oresponsables* linked to the documentary *La estrategia del silencio* (Peris, 2017); and *La línea de la sombra*, an exploration of the photographic universe that complements the documentary *Alberto García-Alix: The Shadow Line* (Combarro, 2017). The last two tie-in websites have respectively been used as a social platform and an interactive experiment; thus, in the cases found, their versatility in renewing communication contents and proposals, as well as socializing and interacting with users, is emphasized.

Furthermore, given the scarcity of film franchises or serial productions in Spain, only one case of a website configured to promote several correlating productions has been located. This is the case of the documentary composed of *The 1001 Girlfriends* trilogy by Merinero, entirely launched during 2017, which has kept the same space, accumulating and correlating a large number of paratexts to promote the three parts.

The existence of a new type of promotional page has also been detected: the crowdfunding website. On the platforms of this collective micro-funding method, the projects design extensive advertising campaigns with all kind of paratexts aimed at obtaining funds, so the profile of the film generated on these platforms may subsequently become the official site of the film. In the case of the Spanish cinema, the profile of *Cinebasura: la película* (Rodríguez and Viruete, 2017) has been extended on the crowdfunding platform Verkami in order to reuse it as an official space, recycling the previously prepared contents.

The results of the second point examined, which is related to the promotional strategies used on the websites, show that 97.14% of the websites analysed establish relationships based on the paratextuality with the film text; hence, the most frequently displayed paratexts are posters, trailers, synopses and datasheets. Metatextuality (46.12%) mainly uses the nominations and awards in festivals and reviews published in the media. Intratextuality (15.51%) highlights the director's filmography to connect the film with his work. Finally, hypertextuality (3.26%) is equivalent to the exploitation of contents related to the fictional world of the films. The use of hypotextuality in this analysis is reduced to redirecting the communicative synergies that the promotional content has created with the emergence of the second and third parts of *The 1001 Girlfriends* trilogy.

These results demonstrate the existence of a website model dominated mainly by two classic promotional strategies: showing the film through formats that do not exploit the interactive properties of these sites and highlighting its impact

on society through metatexts. Web pages, therefore, are still considered as spaces/containers filled with contents that are not expressly created for this media, wasting their potential for exploring alternative strategies and formats.

Regarding the social digital spaces, 82.05% of the analysed pages are linked to social networks, out of which Facebook and Twitter have greater presence. From a quantitative viewpoint, these two networks constantly appear in all the types of websites analysed, while YouTube, Instagram, Vimeo and Google+, among others, are far less frequently used.

Table 2: Presence of social networks in the different types of promotional websites used in the Spanish cinema

Social Network	OW	DirW	PW	DW	P-DW	TiW
Facebook	78.94%	65%	76.82%	83.63%	75%	66.66%
Twitter	71.92%	55%	78.04%	81.81%	70.8%	66.66%
Youtube	22.80%	20%	21.95%	21.81%	37.5%	
Instagram	31.57%	10%	18.29%	7.27%	8.33%	
Vimeo	14.03%	30%	12.19%	12.72%	20.83%	
Google+	8.77%	15%	17.07%	14.54%	8.33%	33.33 %
Linkedin	3.5%		20.73%	5.45%	4.16%	
Pinterest	1.75%		12.19%	14.54%		
Others	3.5%			1.81%		

Source: Author-created

The results obtained show how in Spanish cinema the aforementioned strategies are mainly piloted by generic social networks, which are often complemented by other social spaces frequented by a more specific audience. This is why, for the purpose of attracting the attention of different types of viewers, as well as the film industry itself, many web pages are connected to more than two networks.¹⁷

¹⁷ The websites of production companies, distributors or even directors are also connected to professionally oriented networks such as LinkedIn to promote films and, at the same time, as opportunities to attract new projects.

Table 3: Number of links on promotional film websites leading to social networks

With no links to social networks	17.95%
Link to a social network	4.08%
Link to two social networks	30.61%
Link to three social networks	22.85%
Link to four social networks	14.69%
Link to five or more social networks	9.79%

Source: Author-created

Despite the large presence of social networks on these web pages, the promotional applications are very limited. Of the sites analysed, 24.48% use networks for users to share them in their profiles; 2.85% use networks to share content in the users' profiles; 19.59% just employ them as hyperlinks leading to the official film profiles on social networks; and only 1.63% utilise posts, mainly from Twitter, to boost the pages. These data show a deprogrammed use in relation to the communicative synergies with social networks. This situation is mainly due to the fact that many websites draw on the networks to establish connections with the production companies and distributors' profiles, thus absorbing the profiles that are exclusively activated for the promotion of the film.

Moreover, the international reach of the analysed digital spaces is constrained by the limited language offerings: 91.42% of them are in Spanish, 21.22% provide an alternative version in English and only 0.81% are available in other languages. As a remarkable fact, 5.71% is available only in English, seeking a more international perspective. With respect to the presence of other national languages, it was found that 4.89% of these sites have versions in Basque or Catalan, 1.63% in Galician and 0.81% in Valencian. These percentages correspond in full to the productions developed in each of these territories, which highlights the local use of these languages.

Finally, a huge lack of commercial strategies has been detected in these spaces: 8.97% have links to VOD platforms, 6.93% lead to online stores to buy the DVD or Blu-ray discs and only 1.63% offer ticket purchases through other specialized sites. These data show the difficulties that the Spanish film industry face when it comes to channel and hybridise the promotional strategies with the commercial possibilities offered by the Internet.

6. Conclusions

The official web page concept in the scope of film has evolved and is taking on additional meanings as a result of the configuration of other promotional spaces that also meet the communicative needs of films. The creation of specific sites for the promotion of Spanish productions is becoming less frequent, using, by contrast, the production companies and distributors' websites. This transformation may be understood as a convergence and economization process for

these entities; a lack of interest in an obsolete, unattractive and filled-with-classic-contents model of digital space; and communicative strategies basically meant to present the film without proposing additional experiences for the users.

The scarcity of tie-in websites, a type of page that does not necessarily entail a huge economic investment but requires a great imagination to conceive original ideas, reveals the difficulties experienced by the Spanish cinema in developing transmedia strategies. The fact that the websites are changed into attractive and innovative spaces, however, as shown by the examples found, represents an opportunity to modernize the strategies of the Spanish movies through the exploration of renewed promotional forms and complementary narratives that propose additional experiences.

The low percentage of existing Spanish directors' websites and their utilization as advertising spaces may also be perceived as a symptom of the limitations of the Spanish cinema when using the figure of the director and his or her work to present a new film to society and increase its visibility in the markets. The virtual absence of this type of digital space reduces the possible interactions that can be established between the various productions of the same author, wasting the opportunity to use their filmography to build an author label/brand and strengthen the media attention to recent productions.

Furthermore, the shortage of film projects or franchises which address a number of instalments not only limits the construction of websites that accumulate diverse productions but also the existence of strategies based on the hypertextuality and hypotextuality that generate synergies towards the past and future of a fictional world. Against this background, the Spanish productions are presented to society at large by means of passive paratexts that offer a classic approach to the film and metatexts that increase their reception in society. This reception is sometimes reinforced by the intratextuality, that is to say, through the director's work presented as a guarantee supporting the new production.

Social networks, which are one of the media with more potential to interact with the contemporary public, are present in the different types of web pages, but they are used with little strategic planning with respect to the film. Less than half of the analysed sites are used to reinforce the social profiles of the films and, conversely, the posts published on the networks barely appear on these websites. In the strategies designed, a lack of coordination between both spaces or a possible film deficiency of social profiles is noticeable.

The difficulty of exporting the Spanish cinema to other markets is likewise visible through the limited availability of languages offered in the examined pages, since only 21.22% have a version in English. Moreover, the use of the Spanish coofficial languages is reduced to some websites of productions by entities established in territories with a second official language. The advertising aspirations of the Spanish cinema in these digital spaces are therefore essentially linked to the Spanish-speaking market.

Finally, while on-demand content platforms do not stop growing and online shopping is becoming an increasingly common form of consumption, the websites managed by Spanish productions, on the contrary, barely include commercial strategies that use them as commercial catalysts, namely as a bridge to channel the user visits to other specialized virtual spaces which commercially exploit the film in multiple ways.

The Spanish cinematographic productions, in general, tend to make use of most of the different types of described web pages, but the strategies designed are progressively distanced from the new communicative paradigms that incorporate experiences in parallel to the film, develop interactive and transmedia contents, encourage social interaction of users, and hybridise the promotional and commercial strategies. Despite the budgets managed by many Spanish productions limiting the transition to an updated and attractive model, the websites offer many creative possibilities that can be adapted to multiple budgets, which would also allow greater possibilities for the current promotional strategies of the Spanish cinema.

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