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Transmedia Cohesion in Motion Picture Advertising

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Transmedia Cohesion in Motion Picture Advertising

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A departmental senior thesis submitted to the Department of
Communication at Trinity University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for graduation with departmental honors.

April 19, 2013

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Transmedia Cohesion in Motion Picture Advertising

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2012-2013 Honors Thesis

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Introduction

Daniel Craig, tuxedo pressed and pistol in hand, stands against an abstracted image of a bullet casing and a desaturated London skyline. The latest entry in the 23 James Bond film posters presented on the series' official website stands out for being, if nothing else, the least distinctive of the group (007.com, 2013). For self-proclaimed "Iconic Film Imagery," the poster feels thoroughly generic. If not for Craig's face, it could be promoting any of the 22 preceding titles. The *Skyfall* campaign's other components—its trailers, websites, and social media efforts—are similarly without character. *Skyfall*, as a film, however, is not so pedestrian. Rather, it marks the highest grossing and one of the best-reviewed James Bond films to-date, having been deemed "refreshingly unlike the [series' previous] installments" (Debruge, 2012). Boasting an auteur director in Sam Mendes and a prestigious crew, *Skyfall* has been lauded as a deeply personal, distinguished work of cinematic art (Debruge, 2012; Ebert, 2012; Schwarzbaum, 2012; Smith 2012).

Yet Sam Mendes's film is just one part of a larger legacy under the *Skyfall* name—a legacy that includes the film's advertisements. One of the film's generic posters now populates the shelves of virtual and physical stores in the form of DVD and Blu-ray cases. Its trailer survives online and in the "Extras" of its home video releases. The film's social media presence—mocked for its banality—will likely remain intact, to be updated at increasingly rare intervals (Vanairsdale, 2011). These advertisements have become part of a larger multimedia product with a seemingly infinite shelf life. Yet, it is a largely generic product at best, and it is inconsistent and disjointed at worst—descriptions unfitting for such a well-regarded film.

Skyfall's campaign represents neither the most egregious example of this lack of cohesion between a film and its advertisements, nor a case in which an advertising campaign prohibited a large box office sum. Yet, it is indicative of an advertising norm that does a disservice to filmmakers and fans while limiting a film's full financial potential. In the current model, film-advertising campaigns have often misrepresented their subjects through incongruous or otherwise dissociated promotional efforts. These campaigns then become indoctrinated into larger film legacies that lack cohesion, alienating creators as well as consumers.

This study posits a two-part solution, termed the Transmedia Cohesion Model, to the problem of poorly executed advertising campaigns for motion pictures: 1) transmedia storytelling should be employed in film advertisements to expand the reach and enhance the legacy of the film, and 2) the author(s) of the film should exert control over the resultant transmedia story, whether through the creation of advertisements or the approval of work created by third party groups such as fan communities. Briefly put, transmedia storytelling is a strategy wherein a multi-faceted narrative bridges multiple media, each of which makes a distinct, independently engaging addition to the whole. By conceiving advertisements as stories in and of themselves that maintain consistency and cohesion with the films they promote under the guidance of the films' author(s), studios can maximize their financial intake while fostering legacies for their films that fans can celebrate.

1. Advertising for Motion Pictures

1.1 History

To understand why the practice of misrepresenting films through incongruous advertisements has become an industry norm, one can look to the origins of the contemporary film-advertising model. While motion picture advertising campaigns have evolved to meet the demands of a shifting media landscape, they have not ventured far from their 19th century roots. Newspaper announcements and posters for movies may be traced to the beginning of film exhibition in the 1890s (Rhodes, 2007). By 1915, with the advent of the feature film, a standardized distribution model allowed advertisers “advance notice of possible selling points such as genre, plot, stars, spectacle, and realism”—elements still featured in film advertisements today (Staiger, 1990). Around this time, film distributors focused their advertising resources on multiple “one-sheets” as well as theatre decorations “prepared along the lines of motifs relating to the films’ plots” (Staiger, 1990). By the late 1910s, early incarnations of the movie trailer—formed with many of the principles to be discussed with regard to modern trailers (see 1.2)—became widespread (Hamel, 2012; Staiger, 1990). As is the practice today, third-party artists and trailer companies created these posters and trailers for the most part, but in-house work was not uncommon (Staiger, 1990). Though many aspects of contemporary film advertising campaigns formed over a century ago, business journalist Robert Marich argues that the “landscape for the modern movie creative advertising business,” truly began to take shape in the 1970s (Marich, 2013). Among the innovations of 1970s were television advertisements for films as well as the widespread use of photography in posters (Marich, 2013). The 1970s also marked the introduction of home video, with

VHS and Betamax entering the market (Cusumano, Mylonadis, & Rosenbloom, 1992). By the 1980s, posters, trailers, television ads, and home video releases comprised the dominant outlets through which films were advertised. This held true for approximately 15 years, until the dawn of the Internet offered advertisers a new world with which to experiment. Among the innovations to arise from the Internet, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become integral to the contemporary film advertising campaign (Dodes, 2012).

1.2 The Anatomy of a Contemporary Film Advertising Campaign

Today, campaigns generally unfold in “three acts” of advertisements in a variety of media (Friend, 2009). The first act, known as the teaser campaign, introduces the film a year or more before its debut with trailers running between 90 and 120 seconds. These teasers may also include Internet “leaks” of promotional content such as early footage, gossip, and film stills (Friend, 2009; Marich, 2013). Teaser campaigns aim to create awareness and provide a sense of genre, piquing interest and positioning the film in the minds of audiences (Marich, 2013). The short trailers released during teaser campaigns are typically cut as montages composed of scenes from early footage of the film (Marich, 2013). Studios release these teaser trailers and leaks “in preparation for the main trailer, which appears four months before the release” (Friend, 2009). This theatrical trailer typically features two minutes of footage, containing clips reassembled from the film, commonly in near-chronological order (Carter, Cox, & Bostock, 2013; Marich, 2013). Five weeks before the film’s release, the second act begins with a “flight” of 30-second television spots, in which marketers typically “draw [content] from a movie’s subplots to entice a secondary audience” (Friend, 2009; Marich, 2013). Once the film is released,

studios aim to maintain audiences' awareness through 15-second television spots, newspaper ads, and billboards (Friend, 2009). Key art, including posters and print-media materials, is used throughout each of these acts, typically highlighting elements of the film's genre, cast, and critical endorsements (Friend, 2009).

Studios usually update their films' official websites to reflect the media available during each phase of a film's campaign (Marich, 2013). These sites may also offer "star biographies, pictures, story descriptions, film-rating information, [release dates], trailers, sweepstakes and contests, games, and downloads of movie themed images and audio" (Marich, 2013).

A film's social media campaign also bridges the three acts, alerting followers to the latest promotional efforts and media coverage of the film (Dodes, 2012). A new phenomenon within the film advertising industry, social media campaigns are currently at the forefront of many studios' marketing strategies, sometimes launched at the time the film is greenlit (Dodes, 2012). These campaigns typically include film-centric accounts on Facebook and Twitter, updated with increasing frequency as the film's release date nears. Posts include alerts to new promotional materials as well as links to media coverage of the upcoming film. Auxiliary accounts on trending, but less popular overall, sites like Instagram and Pinterest are fairly common as well. Additionally, studios will often use their official YouTube accounts to post trailers, clips and television spots for their films, which are then linked to on Facebook and Twitter. On occasion, studios and filmmakers implement additional social media efforts such as Twitter accounts for film characters (@whattedsaid from Seth MacFarlane's *Ted* (2012) offers a particularly successful example) or coordinated hashtag activities like the #Super8Secret campaign

for J.J. Abrams's *Super 8* (2011), through which Twitter users received invitations to early screenings of the film (Dodes, 2012). A film's social media accounts typically remain intact indefinitely, offering timelines of the film's advertisement release schedule and media coverage.

1.3 Film Advertisements as Icons

The components of a film's advertising campaign "have transcended the purposes for which they were originally made and become icons, signifiers that have the potential to convey a greater meaning" than that of mere publicity for a film (Parmelee, 2009). Posters in particular "have become indelibly linked with the movies they advertise, often to the degree that their images act as embodiments of their films" (Rhodes, 2007). They have also come to function as lasting representations of the films they advertise, telling stories and playing an inexorable role in the film's legacy (Rhodes, 2007).

The frequent use of film posters as sources of character development and world-building in other films and television series speaks to this concept (Parmelee, 2009). Directors Quentin Tarantino and Woody Allen have extensively featured posters in the backgrounds of their films (Parmelee, 2009). Some merely function as references to the filmmakers' influences; others reinforce settings or character traits. Regardless, each acts as an icon for the movie it once advertised. A famous scene from Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), for instance, uses various posters as shorthand for establishing a 1950s-themed restaurant (Parmelee, 2009). These posters, like that of *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958), have been "burned into the public consciousness... [their images] spring to mind as soon as you hear the film's name" (Scott, 2013). In a recent example, a 2012 episode of HBO series *Girls* "proudly boasts" a poster for Daisy von Scherler Mayer's

Party Girl (1995) in protagonist Hannah Horvath's childhood bedroom (Bell, 2012).

Reviews of the show noted the poster's inclusion, discussing its role in defining setting and character (Bell, 2012; Sepinwall, 2012).

The trend wherein advertisements act as icons has extended to include most, if not all, parts of the film's campaign. Tom Ford's *A Single Man* (2009) presents a contained example of a contemporary film's legacy, complete with deceptive, incongruous advertisements. Independently produced, *A Single Man* made the rounds at various film festivals before the Weinstein Co. bought the film's distribution rights at the Toronto Film Festival on September 16, 2009 (Fleming & Stewart, 2009). Prior to this, various film stills had been released, along with a trailer cut by Tom Ford's production company (Fischer, 2009; Knecht, 2009). On November 2, 2009, one of the released stills became the subject of the film's first poster, and on November 9, 2009, the Weinstein Co. released a re-cut trailer for the film (Knecht, 2009). *A Single Man*'s final theatrical poster was then released on November 23, 2009. Over three years later, the film's posters—two of the film's earliest promotional efforts—remain the default representations of *A Single Man* on its social media accounts, home video cases, official website, media coverage, and other such outlets. This immortalization largely holds true for the film's trailer and auxiliary promotional efforts, most of which are well documented across the web as well as on Blu-ray and DVD. Such is the case for the vast majority of films large and small. The creatives developed at the dawn of their promotional timeline survive to represent the film for years on end. Looking toward blockbuster fare, for instance, *The Dark Knight*, *Avatar*, and *The Avengers* (to name three of the highest grossing films of all time) each prominently feature imagery unveiled months before their theatrical releases on

social media accounts, official websites, home video cover art, and more. In other words, these films' lasting iconography is composed of recycled pieces of their earliest promotional efforts. Such long-term representation does not necessarily pose an issue until a closer look at these campaigns reveals a distinct lack of cohesion between the films and their advertisements.

1.4 Incongruous Advertisements

That advertisements become icons for the films they promote is hardly unexpected, given studios' three-month effort to forge such connections in the minds of audience members. Yet, the iconography selected to represent a film is often misleading, deceptive, or otherwise removed from its subject (Burkeman, 2005). Veteran Hollywood trailer producer Mike Shapiro claims the practice of "selling" a film as something dramatically divergent from its actual story is a common one, explaining that studios want audiences "to see the movie they want you to see, not the movie that it is" (Burkeman, 2005). Indeed, the root of this inconsistency often lies with studios' hesitance to advertise their films' distinctive content. Historically, the industry has adopted the perspective that "a trailer that reminds moviegoers of hit films from the past is considered effective in selling the new film" (Marich, 2005). That is, marketers often choose a successful film and form advertisements that "reassure moviegoers that the new film is very similar...to another one they liked" (Friend, 2009). This creates a body of promotional materials that appear almost identical to all others in its genre.

The trailer is particularly guilty of this incongruity. As film critic Brian D. Johnson assesses, "whether it's spoiling the movie or betraying it, the trailer has gone beyond its role as mere advertising to become its own bossy little art form, with an inbred

aesthetic” (2011). Such “inbreeding” can be found in trailers for *The Artist* (2011), *The Iron Lady* (2011), *Milk* (2010) and *Munich* (2005), each of which uses the same musical cue from *The Life of David Gale* in an attempt to generate familiar emotional responses in audiences (“It stops being flattering after a while,” Alan Parker, director of *David Gale*, said, “Why can’t they use their own music?”) (Baughman, 2012; Parker, 2013). Likewise, trailers for blockbusters such as *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, and *Iron Man 3*, among others, feature “a certain ear-splitting and maddeningly ubiquitous action-movie-trailer musical cue,” a “low and loud synthesized hum” (Crouch, 2013). Though the tropes have evolved, trailers have long conformed to the fashions of their time: in the 1950s, trailers featured “bold titles promising action and adventure... paired with breathless and earnest new-reel-style narration” (Crouch, 2013). The 1970s featured trailers with a “stripped-down” aesthetic, the 1980s and 1990s “saw the rise of the baritone voice-over stars” (Crouch, 2013). Today, “almost every studio preview follows the same formula of rapid-fire clips paced by ominous blackouts” and paired with a “dreadful low hum” (Johnson, 2011; Crouch, 2013). “Nothing fatigues the eye quite like a fade-to-black,” *Maclean’s* columnist Brian D. Johnson commented, “but this brand of grinding visual torture has become Hollywood’s standard operating procedure” (2011).

Additionally, a variety of articles have been written lamenting the tradition of “deceptive” trailers “pitching witty drama as dumb comedy, or a slow existential thriller as a frantic action movie” (Johnson, 2011). Film professor Wes D. Gehring cites advertisements for Peter Weir’s *Dead Poets Society* (1989) as particularly problematic in their attempts to sell a largely dramatic picture as a “personality comedy” through

emphasis on atypical scenes from the film (Gehring, 2011). More recently, a profile of Robert Zemecki's *Flight* (2012) for *Entertainment Weekly*, described the film's trailers as intentionally deceptive, disguising the fact that the film is an addiction drama. "They really fool you," star Denzel Washington says of the film's marketers (Markovitz, 2012). This bait and switch tactic is not new. Film scholar Lisa Kernan notes that trailers for *The Graduate* (1967) provide historically significant examples of contradictions "between a film's actual appeals and the terms in which it is promoted" (2006). Kernan explains that the film was marketed as a one-dimensional sex comedy, leaving "many other aspects of the film's appeal and ultimate success barely visible on the screen" (2006). This is indicative of studio resistance to the notion that "thematic and stylistic innovation might have audience appeal" (Kernan, 2006). These are hardly the only matters that studios have strayed away from in their marketing efforts. Returning to the example of *A Single Man*, a film about a man grieving the loss of his male partner, the trailer released by the Weinstein Co. not only neglects to include any homosexual aspects of story, but implies multiple heterosexual relationships between the protagonist and the female cast (Vilensky, 2009; Knegt, 2009). Indeed, it would not be unreasonable based on the contents of the trailer to assume that the eponymous bachelor is a predatory heterosexual (Knegt, 2009). Yet, as mentioned, these trailers will continue to survive long past the films' theatrical releases, a record of the studios' deceit inextricably linked to the films' titles. In crafting and releasing these deceptive trailers, studios aim for a large opening weekend gross at the risk of losing sustainable ticket sales to their film's core market and alienating fans for years to come.

Posters are susceptible to advertisers' predilection for deception and recycled aesthetics as well. The image of Anne Bancroft's stocking-adorned leg dangling in front of an awkward Dustin Hoffman (figure 1.4.1) is incontrovertibly iconic, immediately recognizable as a symbol for *The Graduate*. Yet, this image tells the story of a tawdry affair, not a young adult adrift. The first (figure 1.4.2) and second

1.4.1



posters released for *A Single Man* tell the story of a lighthearted heterosexual romance and a dissolving heterosexual relationship, respectively, not a grieving gay man. "Talk about a missed opportunity," film critic and blogger Guy Lodge wrote of *A Single Man*'s first poster, "The film boasts one of the year's most unique visual

1.4.2



sensibilities and the best they can do is slap Tom Ford's trademark lettering over an already-ubiquitous still? And call me cynical but are they trying to hide the fact that it's about a gay man?" (2009). Other writers echoed Lodge's sentiments ("it's difficult not to wonder if [the distributors] are purposely downplaying its gay elements," the Advocate.com editors wrote) (Advocate.com, 2009; Cox, 2010; Knegt, 2009). An interview with Ford revealed the director's similar feelings on the matter: "I wasn't comfortable with it at all... The first trailer is the one that I cut... and I wish I could have left it intact" (Pond, 2009). Even when posters do not outright mislead, they often stifle films' distinctive elements. Returning to the example of *Skyfall*, the

image of Daniel Craig with a gun could hardly be called deceptive, yet it fails to capture what makes *Skyfall* distinct from any other Bond film.

In terms of “inbred” poster elements, multiple articles and blog posts across the Internet feature groups of aesthetically similar posters under headlines including some variation of “all movie posters look the same” (Barackman, 2013; Diaz, 2011; Doty, 2012). *The Wrap* writer Nola Barackman, analyzed the oft-repeated color choices across contemporary movie posters, like blue and orange for action films and white for romantic comedies (2013). Likewise, blogger Christophe Courtois compiled montages of virtually identical posters for each genre: lone heroes turn their backs to the viewer in dark-hued posters for science fiction films; a man and a woman stand back-to-back in front of a white background for romantic comedy film posters; protagonists of action films brood in black and white with orange flames flying across the page—each of these borrowed and re-borrowed compositions can be found on a wide array of posters (2011). Among 2013 releases alone, *Into Darkness*, *After Earth*, and *Oblivion* each feature a man’s silhouette in front of a dim post-apocalyptic scene, cashing in on a trend already employed by *Battle:LA*, *Inception*, and *Battleship* (see figure 1.4.3 below), among others, in 2011 and 2012 (Doty, 2012). The consensus among bloggers and columnists regarding this route: “it’s there, it’s easy, but at the end of the day it’s unsatisfying” (Barackman, 2013).

1.4.3



In a feature for *Advertising Age*, Jeff Gomez and Simon Pulman of Starlight Runner Entertainment, a company specializing in the development of transmedia franchises, discuss how this lack of cohesion between a film and its accompanying advertising extends, in particular, to attempts at viral marketing (2012). Viral marketing, a phrase whose definition has become somewhat murky, refers most generally to promotional efforts wherein a primary goal is consumer-driven proliferation, but is often used to describe the propagation of unconventional marketing materials (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). The majority of viral marketing efforts, they claim, “have failed because they have been created in isolation from the core creative team” (Gomez & Pulman,

2012). In other words, innovation on its face is not enough to make for a successful campaign when the aforementioned inconsistency persists. In some cases, “additional content that is not planned in concert with the core creative team ends up explicitly contradictory to the movie—a major frustration for fans and stakeholders alike” (Gomez & Pulman, 2012). A well-known non-film example of this phenomenon can be found in the marketing for ABC television series *Lost* (2004-2010). *Lost* boasted a number of transmedia marketing efforts, including a tie-in novel entitled *Bad Twin* (Zeitchik, 2006). Laurence Shames, the author of *Bad Twin*, ignored suggestions provided by *Lost*’s writers as source material for the novel, instead following his own vision (Zeitchik, 2006). The result “did not meet the bar” of the show’s primary authors, Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse, frustrated the show’s staff, and, consequently, lacked value within the *Lost* fandom (Gough, 2007; Zeitchik, 2006).

Some of the most prevalent examples of failed viral marketing for films involve studio efforts wherein a clear connection to the film is not made. An attempt at viral marketing for Neil Burger’s *Limitless* (2011), for instance, fell prey to this mistake (Vega, 2011; Lee, 2011). Marketing firm ThinkModo, enlisted by Relativity Media and Rogue Pictures, posted a YouTube video entitled “how to hack video screens on times square” (Billington, 2011). The video garnered over 1.4 million views prior to the film’s release, yet most commenters were unaware of its relation to *Limitless* (Billington, 2011; Szalai, 2011). Three days after posting this video, ThinkModo uploaded a second video, designed to clarify this tie, yet the view count for the follow-up stands at approximately 472,000—a small fraction of the original’s 3.7 million views (YouTube.com, 2013). Thus, the *Limitless* campaign succeeded in creating buzz and garnering media coverage,

but to what end (McHugh, 2011)? One frustrated blogger summarized, “After watching this video numerous times... I never once thought about *Limitless* at all... If you’re going to promote a product, don’t forget to actually promote that product” (Billington, 2011). In the context of the *Limitless* promotions, this oft-repeated charge speaks to the risks associated with a campaign that while modern and innovative feels too far removed from its subject.

1.4.1 Economics

The thought process behind misleading and inconsistent advertisements is rather straightforward and driven largely by economic concerns. Every film represents an investment for studios and distributors; the film’s marketing is their chance to obtain a satisfactory return. To safely ensure box office success, studios look to past hits as a “playbook” of sorts (Friend, 2009). Yet, looking to examples such as *The Graduate*, it becomes clear that this formula limits a film’s ability to reach, at least initially, a larger audience that includes its core fan base—likely a more sustainable source of ticket sales (Kernan, 2004). Furthermore, the DVD and Blu-ray market has grown to the point that home video releases—cover art, extras, and all—are considered of a piece with the film itself (Gray, 2010). That is, the “text” has been redefined to include the contents of these media (Klinger, 2006). As the potential for a film’s home video afterlife to “dwarf” its original release period increases, these contents must be crafted with greater care in order for studios to maximize the “valuable additional income” of these sales (Gray, 2010).

1.5 Authorship

The lack of cohesion between a film and its advertisements may be traced to the industry’s practices with regard to the authorship of advertisements. Studios usually work

with third party trailer houses to develop a film's trailers, accepting proposals from multiple trailer houses and choosing between them (Marich, 2013; Friend, 2009; Totten, 2012). In some cases, studios will splice together the work of multiple trailer houses into one trailer, further blurring the authorship of a film's advertisements (Marich, 2013; Baughman, 2012). Similar practices hold true for print ads—studios hire third party creative boutiques to develop key art pieces then “studio brass... review and approve the work” (Friend, 2009; Marich, 2013). Only sometimes is a film's creative talent allowed input regarding the direction taken by advertising boutiques (Marich, 2013; Friend, 2009).

This reliance on third party companies has been said to foster a negative dynamic between marketers and filmmakers (Friend, 2009; Newman, 2010). Former marketing head at Dreamworks SKG, Terry Press, said, “the most common comment you hear from filmmakers after we've done our work is ‘This is not [advertising] my movie.’” (Friend, 2009). Along these lines, acclaimed director Paul Thomas Anderson fought New Line Cinema over the marketing efforts for *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia* (Foundas, 2012). The studio's ideal campaign for *Magnolia* played up Tom Cruise's role—despite his limited screen time amongst a large ensemble—and instead dwelled on design clichés including a voiceover stating, “You can spend your whole life waiting for the truth. Today, for nine people, the wait is over” (Hirschberg, 1999). Anderson remade the trailer. His revision featured “less Cruise, better music, no pretentious narration” (Hirschberg, 1999). In cases such as these, the filmmaker's “ultimate goal of artistic vision” clashes with the marketer's goals in selling the film (Newman, 2010).

Recently, however, there has been a shift in the traditional mold for authorship of film advertisements. In 2012 alone, the advertising campaigns for *Prometheus*, *Moonrise Kingdom*, and *The Master* were largely designed by their creators (Gomez & Pulman, 2012; Cunningham, 2012; Foundas, 2012). Director Ridley Scott and screenwriter Damon Lindelof took part in developing the marketing for their film *Prometheus* (2012), creating a fictional TED talk video from the year 2023 featuring actor Guy Pearce as a younger version of his character in the film (Gomez & Pulman, 2012). Writer-director Wes Anderson developed animated adaptations of fictional storybooks mentioned in *Moonrise Kingdom* and designed interactive posters for the film that expanded on the characters' backstories (Vary, 2012; Cunningham, 2012). Paul Thomas Anderson cut and released trailers for *The Master* as well as designed posters for the film, which allowed creative consistency between the film and its marketing efforts (Foundas, 2012). Not coincidentally, each of these advertisements was praised for its cohesion with the corresponding film and for offering insights into the story not gleaned from the film itself (Gomez & Pulman, 2012; Jagernauth, 2012; Rich, 2012). Having a single author (e.g., a film's director) guiding and curating a film's advertisements "guarantees the story's coherence" across multiple media (Varassin, 2012). This model of authorship, wherein a storyteller oversees and co-creates content with artists specializing in various media, also fosters a general competence and craftsmanship across a campaign's components (Jenkins, 2006).

2. Transmedia Storytelling

2.1 Definition

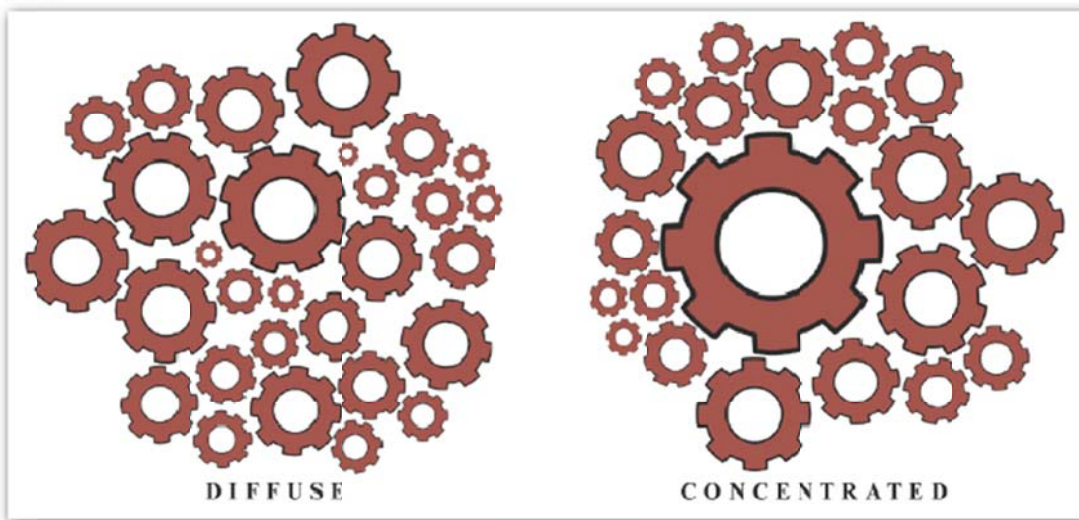
Transmedia storytelling refers most broadly to “the development of content across multiple channels” (Jenkins, 2001). Each text within one transmedia story ideally makes “a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” while each medium employed similarly serves a unique purpose determined by its inherent features (Jenkins, 2010; Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, each aspect of a transmedia story should operate such that consumers may find value without “missing anything or being left outside of a larger conversation” (Fahle, 2011). That is, each medium’s contribution must stand on its own as a complete piece while forming a “unified experience” with the other entries (Scolari, 2009; Varassin, 2012). This is meant to sustain “a depth of experience that motivates more consumption... A good transmedia franchise works to attract multiple constituencies by pitching the content somewhat differently in the different media” (Jenkins, 2006).

Analyses of a number of notable transmedia stories have demonstrated the format’s success, financially and critically. *The Matrix*, for instance, offers a definitive example of a successful transmedia story. *The Matrix* integrates “multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium” (Jenkins, 2006). The story of *The Matrix* has taken form in films, web comics, anime, video games, and a massively multiplayer online game. Each medium has “built on what has come before, while offering new points of entry” (Jenkins, 2006). Other examples continue to emerge as transmedia storytelling becomes increasingly prevalent in the media landscape (Varassin, 2012). The aforementioned advertisements for *Prometheus*, for instance,

constitute transmedia stories. In addition to the faux TED Talk, advertisements for *Prometheus* included an expansive in-universe website for Weyland Industries (a corporation central to the film’s plot) as well as commercials for David, the android played by Michael Fassbender in the film (Overbye, 2012).

These examples highlight a spectrum of sorts within transmedia storytelling. Stories like *The Matrix*, with multiple self-contained entry points and countless interconnections, constitute what one could call a *diffuse model* of transmedia storytelling. That is, each of its parts functions as a fully engaging story, with no clear emphasis on one media product. The advertisements for *Prometheus*, on the other hand, form smaller parts of a *concentrated model*. They are entertaining and fully developed, but the bulk of the story is concentrated within what communication scholar Henrik Örnebring would call the “dominant text” (2007).

2.1.1



A transmedia story’s place on this spectrum is not fixed nor does it necessarily align in execution with the intentionality of its creators. *Prometheus*, for example, may spawn countless additional media products in the coming years, potentially distributing

the weight of the story such that Ridley Scott's 2012 film is just one small piece.

Regarding intentionality, the now-famous example of Steven Spielberg's 2001 film *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* offers an instance in which a "secondary text" (*The Beast*, an alternate reality game) arguably superseded its "primary text" in significance (Askwith, 2006). That is, as a transmedia story, *A.I.* fell closer to the diffuse end of the spectrum than its creators had originally planned.

A variety of options with regard to the categories of pieces can be used within both the diffuse and concentrated models of transmedia storytelling. Some components of a transmedia story exist to expand the narrative laterally, exploring avenues of the story universe that exist tangentially to one another. *TED2023*, for example, accomplishes this by shedding light on a point in the story's timeline that *Prometheus* leaves unexplored. An equally viable route for storytellers to take, however, is the realization of texts found within the film. The aforementioned animations created by Anderson to promote *Moonrise Kingdom* employ this approach. That is, Anderson deepened his film's narrative by bringing to life elements that previously acted as props.

2.2 Transmedia Advertising

All forms of transmedia storytelling have the capacity to further blur the distinction between a media product and its advertisements. A shift to transmedia would allow and encourage marketers to become storytellers, generating content "compatible with the themes, tone, and messaging" of the story they advertise (Perryman 2008; Gomez & Pulman 2012). This concept—of advertisements functioning as stories—heavily relates to the brand storytelling theory. Brand storytelling aims to capture "shared values and ideals that [explain] why the brand exists and who benefits from its existence"

(Dawson, 2012). The concept is often discussed in the context of corporations like Apple, Coca Cola, and Disney—brands that work to convey a cross-product narrative through their advertisements (Manternach, 2012). Apple boasts their “think different” slogan—the story of a rebel; Coca-Cola has made their story one of acceptance and international unity; Disney’s story emphasizes the company’s role in consumers’ childhoods (Manternach, 2012). In the context of film, “the brand is expressed by the characters, topics, and aesthetic style of the fictional world” (Scolari, 2009). With these as guiding principles, a marketing campaign can truly be integrated with the film it promotes. *TED2023*, for example, stays true to *Prometheus*’s science-oriented roots, grounds the film in a recognizable near-future, and expands upon the story by using characters from the film. When each of a film’s advertisements functions as its own story, the risk of brand fatigue decreases—the same images and clips are not propagated to the point that they become tiresome (as is the norm today) (Gomez & Pulman, 2012; Jenkins, 2006). Rather, the film’s name and contents are spread in a manner that has the potential to keep audiences engaged, entertained, and intrigued. The *A.I.* alternate reality game illustrates just how engaged consumers can be with an “advertisement” when it is thoroughly crafted and well executed. *The Beast*, created by Microsoft to high critical praise, ran for 120 days, during which more than 7,000 participants formed an online collective and an estimated three million players participated (Askwith, 2006).

2.2.1 Economic Benefits of Transmedia Advertising

Keeping in mind the studios’ primary economic motives, transmedia storytelling boasts a number of economic incentives. Many of these fall in line with the principles that have made franchising such a ubiquitous practice. That is, the same financial

incentives for Disney and Pixar to create toys, storybooks, sequels, and prequels under the *Cars* brand apply here: transmedia storytelling creates multiple “points of sale for any given story, and when it’s done well, each piece can effectively become a promotional tool pointing toward every other piece of the whole” (Phillips, 2012). As Henry Jenkins puts it, “a media conglomerate has an incentive to spread its brand or expand its franchises across as many different media platforms as possible” (2007). The financial incentive to venture into true transmedia storytelling (rather than basic franchising) relates to the aforementioned notion that transmedia storytelling can combat brand fatigue (Gomez & Pulman, 2012). In other words, generating new and interesting stories with purposes beyond mere promotion allows studios increased access to audiences by breaking through the clutter. Furthermore, audiences, as Jenkins observes, desire “new work to offer new insights and new experiences” (2006). If studios reward this desire by diversifying their offerings, “viewers will feel greater mastery and investment;” if not, they will be driven away (Jenkins, 2006). As the primary media producers have investments in film, television, gaming, and other media, transmedia storytelling makes sound economic sense, expanding the “potential gross within any individual medium” (Scolari, 2009; Jenkins, 2003). Consumers not usually prone to engage certain media will have incentive to expand their horizons in order to deepen their engagement with the film’s story.

2.3 Fan Involvement

Under the guidance and control of the film’s author(s), the involvement of fans in the creation of transmedia advertisements expands the format’s potential to provide films with a thriving legacy. The increased access to fan communities in the digital age allows

studios to “leverage the combined expertise” of consumers online and task them with crafting elements of the transmedia story. Recruiting fans to take part in the story development and marketing processes is said to “foster a sense of passionate affiliation or brand loyalty” (Jenkins, 2006b; Varassin, 2012).

Fan contributions can also expand a brand’s reach, spreading advertising messages to a wider audience than that available to marketers (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, 2007). To do so, studios and filmmakers should leverage the collective skills and passions of consumers for contributions to film marketing campaigns (Brabham, 2008). Referred to as crowdsourcing, this practice has been used to market movies as recently as November 2012 when writer-director Wes Anderson called for fan-designed advertisements to promote *Moonrise Kingdom* (Hanna, 2012). The *Moonrise Kingdom* submissions were praised for their artistry as well as their consistency with the film’s world (Billington, 2012). With regard to transmedia storytelling more specifically, the participation of fans in the story development process is said to be “absolutely crucial” (Varassin, 2012). The only way, communication scholar Mark Deuze claims, to adapt to the current media landscape, “is to include the former ‘audience’ as fellow narrators” (Deuze, 2005).

This is not to diminish the role of authors who should remain, as media scholar Grant McCracken puts it, benevolent dictators “guaranteeing the story’s coherence” (Varassin, 2012). Thus film authors need not go as far as Paul Thomas Anderson in cutting his own trailers and designing posters. Rather, they can channel the expertise of passionate followers into creating a transmedia story that is well crafted while remaining true to their work. As Suzanne Scott states, transmedia storytelling requires “a unified

author figure to serve as a creative and textual coordinator” (Scott, 2012). Indeed, this increased emphasis on consumers as producers actually reinforces the importance of the author’s role (Varassin, 2012; Scott, 2012). Due to the emphasis fans place on the author’s definition of canon, “it is economically useful to have a figure who stitches together” the disparate elements of a transmedia franchise (Varassin, 2012; Scott, 2012; Jenkins, 2012). That is, fans are more likely to consume (and pay for) “official” elements of a transmedia story (Scott, 2012; Jenkins 2012), those created or approved by the author of the original text rather than the fans.

By involving fans in the film marketing process, studios can both track engagement and increase the likelihood of a loyal, committed audience by the time of the film’s release (Davis, 2012; Jenkins, 2006b; Scolari, 2008; Varassin, 2012). Recruiting fans to aid in the development of a transmedia story increases the likelihood that the marketing campaign will appeal to fans’ sensibilities (Davis, 2012; Jenkins, 2006b; Varassin, 2012). Studios should make this practice a priority because, in general, fans are worth more than the average audience member “in terms of product spending, loyalty, propensity to recommend, brand affinity, media value, and acquisition cost” (Davis, 2012). The investment and passion fans feel toward a media product are amplified when they play a role in the story development process (Jenkins, 2006b). As such, their studio-friendly spending (paid downloads, special collection, subsidiary merchandising) potential is correspondingly increased (Jenkins, 2006b; Davis, 2012).

3. *Skyfall*

The 23rd film in the James Bond franchise, *Skyfall* opened in the fall of 2012 to high critical praise. It eventually amassed more than \$1.1 billion in ticket sales

worldwide, breaking a variety of box office records for movies within the franchise and the international film industry. On the popular film review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes, *Skyfall* currently holds a score of 92% (that is, 92% of critics gave the film a positive review) and an average review score of 8.2/10 (RottenTomatoes.com, 2013). Taken as an accurate measure of the film's critical reception, this places *Skyfall* among the best-reviewed Bond films of all time. Only four Bond films hold a higher percentage rating than *Skyfall*, three of which have significantly fewer reviews factored into their ratings (approximately 50, compared to *Skyfall*'s 291) (RottenTomatoes.com, 2013). *Skyfall*'s immediate predecessor, *Quantum of Solace* (2008) holds a 64% rating (RottenTomatoes.com, 2013). Commonly cited as the source of *Skyfall*'s increased quality is the film's distinct tone and highly personal story (Debruge, 2012; Ebert, 2012; Schwarzbaum, 2012; Smith 2012). Proponents and detractors alike noted that *Skyfall* felt different than other Bond films (McCarthy, 2012; Smith, 2012; Denby, 2012). "It all adds up to the 007 adventure we've been waiting for," Neil Smith of *Total Film* summarizes, "a flawlessly assembled thrill ride with a cast to die for and a nakedly emotional undertow" (2012). *Skyfall* "feels more seriously connected to real-world concerns than any previous entry," film critic Todd McCarthy of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "many of the dramatic scenes would do justice to a nongenre film, and the same can be said of the quality of the acting" (2012).

The film's plot surrounds Bond's "resurrection" from a presumed death and the revenge of former MI6 agent Silva (Javier Bardem) against M (Judi Dench), Bond's boss and (at least subtextually) mother figure. Among the film's most prominent themes are obsolescence, tension between the traditional and the modern, Bond's damaged psyche

and compromised physical state, and Freudian anxiety between M, Bond, and antagonist Silva. *Skyfall* boasts thematic cohesion and an intimate plot uncharacteristic of the series.

Perhaps the root of its distinction from the 22 preceding Bond films is *Skyfall*'s more stereotypically "prestigious" production crew, including director Sam Mendes. "Longtime Bond producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli," McCarthy writes, "never have gone so far as to hire a full control-demanding auteur to direct one of their films" until now (McCarthy, 2012). *Skyfall* also boasts an esteemed director of photography, Roger Deakins, whose cinematography is described as "dense, colorful and impactful, noticeably a notch or two above the series' norm," "high end" production values, and a multilayered score from Thomas Newman (McCarthy, 2012). The so-deemed "auteur" behind the film, Sam Mendes said he did not approach *Skyfall* as a Bond film, rather he conceived of the movie in the same manner that he developed his previous non-franchise work like *Revolutionary Road* (2008) and *American Beauty* (1999). In other words, the elements standard of the series took an ancillary role to the principal story that Mendes wanted to tell. "For me the job was: find a story for Bond, and then find a way to marry that with the necessities of the franchise," he explained (Calhoun, 2012). In crafting Bond's story for *Skyfall*, Mendes drew heavily from Ian Fleming's final trilogy of the series: *You Only Live Twice*, *The Man with the Golden Gun*, and *Octopussy* (Calhoun, 2012). This increased focus on Fleming's writing promoted the development of a darker, more existential hero in Bond than that present in the film series' previous installments (Calhoun, 2012).

4. The Model

4.1 Transmedia Storytelling

In a society inundated with advertisements, a transmedia story can break through the clutter and engage consumers while accomplishing the goals of traditional marketing efforts. To do this, the campaign's producers should mine the film's universe for dynamic content to be explored in self-contained, multimedia stories. The source material could be anything: a secondary character's life story, a fictional text within the film, or a corporation mentioned or seen in the background—to name a few common examples. Whether it is concentrated or diffuse, a transmedia story offers consumers—readers, viewers, or players—multiple points of entry to the film's universe while promoting the film in a dynamic way that is likely to combat brand fatigue. A successful transmedia story offers content that consumers seek out in an effort to fully engage with a universe they enjoy. Blurring the line between content and marketing, each piece of a transmedia story promotes the other, directing consumers across media and coming together to form one story composed of smaller narratives.

A shift to transmedia storytelling within the film advertising industry does not necessitate a departure from the three-act standard for modern campaigns. Rather, the release schedule of each piece of the transmedia story can and—given the model's proven success—should follow this three-phase trajectory. As the film's release date nears, the size and significance of the media released should increase. That is, smaller pieces of the story are to be unveiled at the time normally designated for teaser ads and film stills. By the film's opening date, however, larger, more revealing pieces can be released, perhaps illuminating aspects of the film previously kept under wraps.

4.2 Transmedia Cohesion

A primary goal in developing this transmedia story is cohesion across all media. That is, the story must fit together without contradicting itself in terms of canon and tone. As explored in section 1.3, each piece will come to serve as a lasting icon for the story's overarching legacy and consistency is key. Diversity within the story is inevitable and encouraged—each piece should offer a distinct contribution and take on its own identity, but it must also stay true to the original narrative universe. A story's universe contains a distinct set of rules and norms that should be respected across all media. In a concentrated transmedia story, the film around which the other pieces are centered would likely serve as the primary source for these governing principles. In a diffuse transmedia story, the responsibility of universe definition can be more evenly dispersed as long as no piece contradicts the other. For example, a character cannot die in one piece but remain alive at a later date in a different piece. Regardless, care and attention must be paid to ensure that each cog fits smoothly in the larger transmedia machine.

4.3 The Author as Guide

In order to attain this cohesion, a film's author(s) should play some role in the development of the transmedia story. Whether as a storytelling guide, an advisor, or a producer of content, the author knows what is and is not true to his or her vision and can thus provide stability and consistency to a transmedia story. Though many filmmakers, as discussed in sections 1.4 and 1.5, desire such control over their films' promotional activities, others may not be as interested in adopting this role. In such cases, the film content available to marketers should stand in for the author in guiding the production of promotional materials. This differs from the current practice of modeling a film's

advertisements on past films' campaigns. The film's script and early footage, for example, can set a tone and offer narrative avenues for marketers to pursue as they plan a creative campaign. Though not optimal, this solution maintains an emphasis on consistency with the film. Elements already present in the film, such as fictional posters or artifacts, offer viable promotional materials with little risk of contradicting the film's canon. That is, marketers can flesh-out or re-appropriate existing props and canonical information to create a transmedia story by delving into the pre-existing universe rather than wholly fabricating auxiliary stories. Although this alternative strays from the author-centered core of the model, the principle of a singular guide can and should remain intact in the form of the film content selected by the marketers as material to mine for a transmedia campaign. In other words, although the author's involvement is indirect, the transmedia story remains faithful to a unified source of control—one that represents the author's vision.

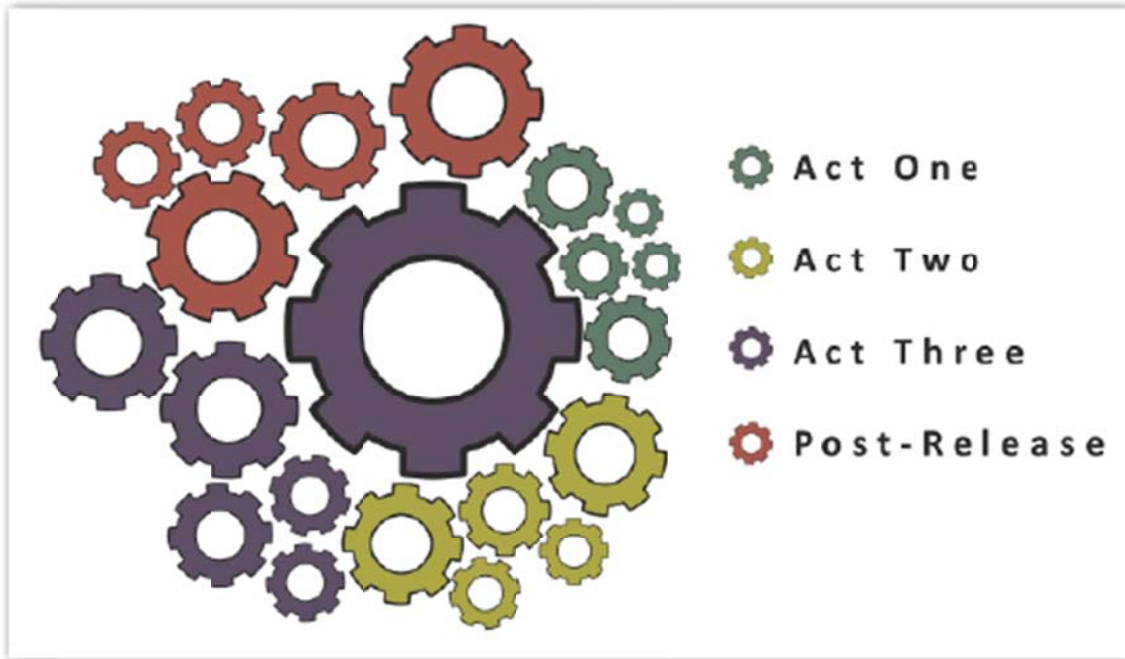
4.4 Recruiting Fans

In a film's fans, studios have a group of potential marketers with a passion and investment in creating media that conform to the principles discussed above. Crowdsourcing a film's marketing campaign allows studios a broader reach and a cost-beneficial means of enlisting talented designers, coders, and storytellers with a desire to create. Under the author's guidance and discretion, fans can pool together their diverse talents and create a dynamic, compelling transmedia story. This element of the model may seem at odds with the emphasis on the auteur, yet the two principles need not be mutually exclusive. Rather, under the advisement of the film's author, consumers can be

tasked with specific creative missions—the resultant submissions should be accepted into canon and spread by the studio as an official promotional effort at the author’s discretion.

5. Applying the Model

5.0.1



In order to illustrate how this model can be implemented and to further explain its core principles, I have developed a transmedia advertising campaign for *Skyfall*. By strictly adhering to the model’s principles, the resultant concentrated transmedia story directly addresses and corrects issues present in the film’s real advertising campaign. The cited interviews with Sam Mendes and *Skyfall* itself served as tonal, aesthetic, and canonical guides in the development of this campaign. Below I will explain how each piece of the story adheres to Mendes’s vision as well as the model laid out in this paper. Just as with the original *Skyfall* campaign, my transmedia story would follow the three-act model standard of contemporary advertising campaigns.

5.1 Act One



The pieces pictured above comprise the primary components of the original *Skyfall* campaign's first act: "filtered" photographs of a clapperboard obscuring various set pieces from the film (5.1.1), traditional film stills (5.1.2), videoblogs featuring various crew members working on set (5.1.3), a teaser poster with Daniel Craig standing in front of an enlarged, abstracted bullet casing (5.1.4), a conventional teaser trailer (5.1.5), and a longer theatrical trailer (5.1.6). There exists no discernible narrative or aesthetic current across these pieces. Rather, each component falls prey—with varying severity—to the incongruity, banality, and lack of originality discussed in section 1.4. As a result, these advertisements fail to speak to the qualities that make *Skyfall* a unique film.

Under the Transmedia Cohesion Model, I propose the first act of *Skyfall*'s campaign retains the approximate scale of the original first-act advertisements and would optimally follow a similar release schedule, but the content and style of its pieces differ

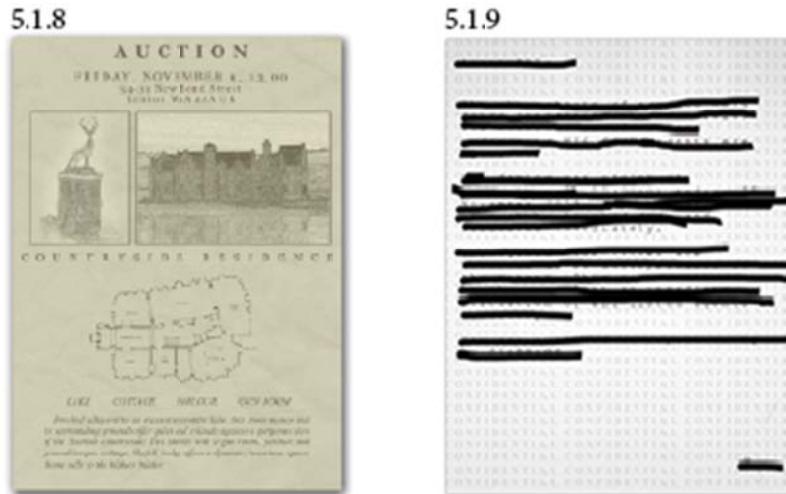
significantly. In terms of distribution, the following advertisements would be released to many of the same outlets as the real campaign pieces, with the addition of a new outlet that constitutes a piece of the transmedia story in and of itself.

5.1.7



Figure 5.1.7, above, features two confidential scans of Bond’s and Silva’s IDs. These images accomplish many of the same goals as those of onset photos, film stills, and teaser posters—they give consumers a taste of what to expect from the film (casting and minor plot details) without stating anything outright. (The images of Bardem and Craig speak to the fact that they are two of the film’s main players; the “DISCHARGED” and “DECEASED” stamps on the IDs raise questions regarding the film’s plot without truly “spoiling” the narrative.) On top of that, the pieces offer the *Skyfall* legacy canonical documents that are of a piece with both the film’s narrative and its aesthetic. The use of grainy black and white coloring corresponds with the film’s themes of obsolescence and antiquity while the more modern IDs and stylish photographs suggest the film’s contemporary setting and emphasis on polish. Furthermore, these images and those that follow do not conform to any immediately recognizable advertisement tropes, combatting consumer fatigue and potentially attracting higher levels of engagement from audiences. Established Bond fans would look to these for clues about the upcoming film while

general audiences would be less inclined to ignore the images because of their relatively novel appearance among the contemporary advertising landscape.



Figures 5.1.8 and 5.1.9 boast qualities similar to those of the ID scans while making new contributions to the larger transmedia story. Image 5.1.8 is a vintage advertisement for Skyfall Lodge, Bond's childhood home. Because the manor's name is not listed, nor is there any direct mention of the Bond family, this advertisement works as a teaser indicating only that a large, countryside residence will play some role in the film. Skyfall Lodge plays a central role in the film and, as such, this piece of the transmedia story would have significant value both before and after *Skyfall*'s release. That is, it would serve to pique consumer interest and tease the film's plot in order to drive audiences to the theater, while also providing information about Skyfall Lodge not included in the film that fans can investigate after finding out the location's significance to the *Skyfall* narrative.

In a similar vein, figure 5.1.9 is a print ad containing the confidential scan of a redacted letter to Bond from M. The letter contains information regarding the MI6 field

be one of the top websites to appear when searching for *Skyfall*-related materials and its existence could also be made known on the film's social media accounts and in press releases sent to media outlets.

5.1.11



5.1.12



Figures 5.1.11 and 5.1.12 are stills from videos that would take the place of standard trailers in this transmedia campaign. One of *Skyfall*'s primary plotlines involves Silva's (Javier Bardem) desire for revenge against M, for whom he used to work as an agent. Already alluded to in figure 5.1.7, this narrative thread would be further explored through surveillance footage (5.1.11) of Silva's missions during his time as a Bond-like agent. As such, the video would produce an air of mystery surrounding Bardem's role in the film prior to *Skyfall*'s release then deepen the character for viewers of the film. The surveillance footage would also underscore the implicit equation made in *Skyfall* between Silva and Bond as well as further develop the concept of M as a mother figure for the two characters. In doing so, the video maintains thematic consistency with Mendes's film while expanding *Skyfall*'s narrative by partially illuminating the past of a primary character.

The video shown in 5.1.12 would employ a similar approach, but with a longer running time and a less central character at its core. It would explore the missions of one

of the agents whose undercover identity is eventually compromised by Silva in *Skyfall*. The video would take on a tone similar to that of the action scenes in *Skyfall*, thus preserving cohesion with the film while appealing to the audience segment drawn to Bond films' action components. This would expand the world of the film through an exciting, stand-alone story that deepens the viewing experience of *Skyfall* by acquainting audiences with a victim of Silva's revenge plot, thus enhancing their emotional connection to this portion of the film.

5.2 Act Two



The original campaign's second act saw the introduction of various television spots and posters. The television spots (5.2.1, 5.2.4) primarily consist of quickly paced clips from *Skyfall*'s action scenes, coupled with the film's catchier lines of dialogue. They indulge in many of the most widely criticized trailer tropes—repeated cuts to black, rapid-fire clips, pulsating music—albeit in an abbreviated form. Taken as a whole, they sensationalize *Skyfall* and boil it down to a mindless collection of action scenes.

The posters released in August of the original campaign's second act are character-centric. Multiple one-sheets were released, each featuring a major cast member posing in front of a black 007 logo. In various combinations, the individual poses were then juxtaposed in front of a larger black 007 logo for horizontal images. These character posters are thoroughly generic, offering no insight into the film or its characters.

Likewise, the poster displayed in 5.2.3, released in September, borrows many of the design elements of these character-centric posters, but features Daniel Craig mid-action, apparently shooting a pistol as he slides through debris. Again lacking anything particularly distinctive or relevant to Mendes's work, this image populated movie theatres and, eventually, stores as it became the film's primary poster as well as the cover of *Skyfall*'s home video releases.

5.2.5



5.2.6



Under the transmedia cohesion model, act two of *Skyfall*'s campaign would offer advertisements slightly larger in scale and more revealing with regard to the plot elements of Mendes's film. Seen above in figures 5.2.5 and 5.2.6 is the virus-like video Silva transmits to M in *Skyfall*. As part of the transmedia story, Silva will have hacked the website for *The Globe* (see 5.2.5), making this video—which is seen in part in Mendes's film—appear as users attempt to click certain links. This video would also, as seen in 5.2.6 stand alone as its own teaser trailer. Because technology—hacked network infrastructures in particular—plays a large role in *Skyfall*, this viral hack would stay true to the film and allude to the villain's motives without spoiling any specific plot surprises. The appearance of Judi Dench in the video makes its ties to *Skyfall* clearer and speaks to the film's increased attention to M's character, relative to other films in the series. The

video is also intriguing and entertaining in its own right, enticing consumers prior to the film's release by way of its distinctive, sinister tone and general originality compared to standard film trailers. Furthermore, seeing the video in full before attending the film would enhance moviegoers' experience, as they would have a more complete familiarity with the video when it appears onscreen during Mendes's film. After having seen the film, fans can appreciate the video as a standalone canonical artifact that fits naturally within the larger transmedia story.



Other items to be released during act two include a second redacted letter to Bond from M (5.2.7) and an archived television news report detailing the death of Bond's parents (5.2.8). The former would follow the same design principles as 5.1.9, but the visible content of the letter would depict a more personal side of Bond and M's relationship. This would serve to further illuminate the much-emphasized notion in *Skyfall* that the two characters have a connection that runs deeper than that of an employee and his boss. The television report would tap into the old-fashioned themes and aesthetic of Mendes's film while shedding new light on Bond's backstory. Bond's troubled childhood and Freudian psychological issues offer a thematic backdrop to much

of *Skyfall*'s story. Including the news report in the larger transmedia story allows for concrete insight into Bond's psyche while allowing it to remain appropriately muted in the film.

5.3 Act Three

5.3.1



5.3.2



5.3.3



As the standard model for contemporary film advertising prescribes, the original *Skyfall* campaign's third act (which begins once the film is released) featured additional television spots as well as repurposed imagery (5.3.1) from previously released posters and new film stills (5.3.2, 5.3.3). The television spots were again generic, fast-paced, and action-oriented. The largely banal stills released during act three seem arbitrarily selected, featuring scenes from all points in the movie's chronology. Mere extensions of the campaign strategies employed during acts one and two, the advertisements released in act three failed to foster an appropriate legacy for *Skyfall*.

5.3.4



5.3.5

MI6 Agent Evaluation

Name: James Bond Date: 10 Nov 2012

Personality Pen: Pen
 NOTES: Thick-skinned, aggressive, calm

Medical Evaluation Pen: Pen
 NOTES: Alcohol and substance consumption indicated

Physical Evaluation Pen: Pen
 NOTES: Substantial heavy musculature upon inspection, excellent reaction, distinguished by a great physique

Psychological Evaluation Pen: Pen
 NOTES: Excellent opinion of himself based on previous military service

Recommendation
Subject is an approved for field duty.
Immediate admission for service advised.

Act three of the transmedia cohesion campaign would incorporate more potential spoilers into the pieces released, taking advantage of the fact that many people will have already seen the film. Bond's obituary (5.3.1), for instance, would remind those who have seen the film of an interesting plot point and offer them more insight into Bond's life that could enhance a repeat viewing. It would also serve to entice those who had yet to see the film by calling Bond's survival into question. Figure 5.3.1 displays a completed version of the obituary briefly shown and referenced in *Skyfall* following Bond's alleged "death." Using information from the film, combined with details from Ian Fleming's *You Only Live Twice* (which, as mentioned, served as source material for Mendes), the obituary print ad serves as a stark, detailed teaser for a particularly intriguing plot element that the original campaign also emphasized.

Another slightly more revealing piece of the campaign that could be unveiled during act three is Bond's agent evaluation sheet (5.3.2). While no physical evaluation paper is seen or mentioned in the film, enough information is provided regarding Bond's results to create a complete document that could serve as an intriguing promotion. That

is, Bond's failure to pass the evaluation in the film would likely draw the curiosity of those who have not seen the film while piquing the interest of fans who would like to explore this aspect of the film in greater depth. Furthermore, this subject matter captures the theme of Bond (and MI6) confronting obsolescence. The advertisement, as with the film, poses the question: is Bond still fit for the hero's role?

5.4 Post-Release Materials

As the trend goes, the promotional materials "released" following *Skyfall*'s theatrical run are largely composed of recycled materials from the campaign's three acts. That being said, a few new, spoiler-heavy stills and television spots were released in conjunction with the film's home video debut. In addition to this, MGM and 20th Century Fox launched SkyfallLodge.com, a promotional site that purportedly allows users to explore Bond's childhood home, though plentiful dead ends with regard to the site's interactivity are quickly exposed.

In the Transmedia Cohesion Model, promotional efforts could similarly follow the trajectory towards spoiler-heavy material, expanding the advertisements from the previous three acts and exploring avenues that would have previously alienated spoiler-averse fans. Furthermore, the re-appropriation and recycling of materials from the previous acts is not, in and of itself, inadvisable. For example, the print pieces of the transmedia story developed for the first three acts of this campaign could be used as home video covers. Regardless, the principles that guided the previous advertisements should remain in place for any post-release materials that carry the *Skyfall* name. By adhering to Mendes's vision and the upholding the universe established in his film, these

materials can combine to form a cohesive legacy wherein each piece of the transmedia story stands on its own while enhancing the whole.

Conclusion

In today's media landscape, the role of a film's advertising campaign extends beyond promotion. Each piece of the campaign becomes a lasting representation of the film, indoctrinated into a larger legacy that includes both the film and its promotional materials. Yet, the contemporary motion picture advertising model calls for the propagation of trite, purposefully misleading advertisements created in isolation from a film's authors. As such, the legacies created by campaigns following this mold lack cohesion—a noted frustration for filmmakers and fans. This practice also decreases the likelihood of attracting a film's faithful core audience due to the advertisers' purposeful exclusion of the film's distinctive qualities. The Transmedia Cohesion Model offers a two-part solution to the problem of poorly executed film advertising campaigns: 1) transmedia storytelling should be employed in film advertisements to expand the reach and enhance the legacy of the film, and 2) the author(s) of the film should exert control over the resultant transmedia story, whether through the creation of advertisements or the approval of work created by third party groups such as fan communities. While individual aspects of this model have been practiced separately from one another, in the combination of these principles lies the key to a successful, cohesive campaign. By implementing this strategy, studios can maximize profits while fostering cohesive legacies for their films that fans and filmmakers can appreciate.

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