Analyzing visual principles and elements in commercial game trailers

Gustav Thelander

Computer Graphic Arts, bachelor's level
2018

Luleå University of Technology
Department of Arts, Communication and Education
Preface

This thesis summarizes my Bachelor’s degree in Computer Graphics at Luleå University of Technology in Skellefteå, Sweden.

I would like to thank my colleagues for feedback and Inspiration. A big thank you to LTU and my instructors Fredrik Tall, Aron Strömgren, Arash Vahdat and Håkan Wallin who made the education possible.

Gustav Thelander
Sammanfattning

Denna forskning syftar till att etablera visuella principer som existerar i moderna medier och jämföra deras användbarhet. De visuella principerna kommer att förklaras och presenteras. Därefter analyseras de inom två speltrailers från kommersiella spel. En korrelation kommer att extrapoleras och presenteras om resultaten skapar det presenterade och förväntade resultatet.

Abstract

This research seeks to establish visual principles present in modern media and compare their usefulness. The visual principles will be explained and presented. Then they will be analyzed within two game trailers of commercial games. A correlation will then be extrapolated and then presented if the results create the presented and expected outcome.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction 4
   1.1 Introduction 4
   1.2 Background 4
   1.3 Problem Description 4
   1.4 Scope 5
   1.5 Limitations 5

2 Theory 6
   2.1 Analysis Theory 6
   2.2 Visual Principles 6
      2.2.1 Rule of thirds 6
      2.2.2 Lines and Shape 7
      2.2.3 Lighting 8
      2.2.4 Color 9
      2.2.5 Rhythm 10
      2.2.6 Contrast and Affinity 11
      2.2.7 Visual principle critique 11

3 Method 12
   3.1 Literature 13
   3.2 Data collection 14
      3.2.1 Battlefield 1 reveal trailer 14
         Battlefield 1 shot for shot breakdown: 14
      3.2.2 Battlefront 2 reveal trailer 17
         Battlefront 2 shot for shot breakdown: 17
   3.4 Observations 22
      3.4.1 Battlefield 1 Observations 22
         3.4.1.1 Rule of thirds 22
         3.4.1.2 Lines and Shape 22
         3.4.1.3 Lighting 22
         3.4.1.4 Color 23
         3.4.1.5 Rhythm 23
      3.4.2 Battlefront 2 shot for shot Observations 24
1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Visual principles are used in all walks of media related imagery. In this research the causation and or correlation of visual principles in produced commercially successful media will be presented, analyzed and discussed. The result of the analysis will then discuss that using proven visual principles enhance in game created media.

1.2 Background

Visual principles are an artform developed since the beginning of sovereign thought, in order to ascertain a way to grab a human’s attention in a visual presentation. As humanity has evolved so has our understanding of visual principles.

In game trailers have existed since the beginning of gaming itself. In the beginning trailers were simply made to show exactly what the game was and what it presents. There were no fancy effects or visual additions to these trailers as the market and the medium was still underdeveloped.

But with a rise of in game ingenuity and increasingly powerful hardware and software, in game trailers have started adopting more visual principles from other older sources of media, such as film or comics. In order to appeal to certain audiences and convince consumers to buy the games from a trailer pitch perspective. But what have the visual direction of today’s trailers come to? That is what this research is planning to find out.

1.3 Problem Description

The problems and questions this research aim to challenge are:

How are visual principles used in modern game trailers?

What does the resulting information tell us about the visual principles?

By interacting with these questions and questioning their validity, this research aims to answer the question of how valued visual principles are to modern game trailers.
1.4 Scope
The goal of this research is to find visual principles in modern game trailers and analyze how they are used. This includes the amount of visual principles the analyzed trailers use, and how well they can be used.

Five visual principles will be researched and presented, Using those principles two selected trailers will be analyzed shot by shot in order to determine a result. Afterwards the result will be discussed and analyzed of whether the results has answered the questions stated in 1.3.

1.5 Limitations
For this research only a set number of visual principles are planned to be used.

And only two game trailers will be compared.
2 Theory

2.1 Analysis Theory

Visual principles is a way of enhancing a visual spectacle. By using queues and colors the producer can direct the attention of onlookers to see and feel what the producers want the consumer to see. It is necessary to know all of these principles in order to fully analyze a produced piece of media.

In order to interact with this theory, the research will analyze the use of visual principles in commercially successful trailers in order to collect enough data to discuss the use of visual principles in in game trailers.

2.2 Visual Principles

The principles that are going to be in focus in this research are the rule of thirds, Lines and shapes, Lighting, Color and Rhythm.

2.2.1 Rule of thirds

The most common way of visual storytelling is by using lines and shapes to divide the frame into smaller shapes using surface divisions. And the most common of these surface divisions is the rule of thirds.

“There are several ways to divide the frame: halves, thirds, grids, square on a rectangle, and the golden section.”

Rule of thirds is the practice of dividing a screen of frame in to three different parts, both horizontally and vertically. This creates a number of so called crosses where humans are most likely to focus their attention on when looking at a screen.

---

Using this principle implies placing important focus points on the crosses of the lines. As well as helping the onlooker by containing the action inside the different squares created by the lines on the screen.

2.2.2 Lines and Shape

Shape theory is very prevalent in story telling purposes. This simple way of blocking in the action with lines, squares, circles and triangles, transfers symbolism into a visual principle. For example, characters forming a triangle with their sightlines usually symbolizes something otherworldly or godly. Square symbolism enhances stale and robotic symbolism. While circles symbolize almost everything that is the opposite of stale and an encompassing purpose.

“Any object, no matter how apparently unique. Can be categorized into one of the three basic shapes.”

Shapes are mostly used in designs pertaining to their respected symbolism such as the shape of different cars or people. But the same theories can also be used in invisible lines between objects and characters on screen connecting them further with the line and shape visual principle to tell a specific narrative.

Lines as a visual principle help direct the attention of the onlooker as it can be used to draw lines or arrows towards focus points on the screen. Lines and shapes can also reinforce the business of a frame or the lack thereof by how many different lines and shapes there are in the frame at any given time. Causing the shot to give off a more stress inducing visual, or a mellow calm visual.

---

2.2.3 Lighting

Lighting is one of the primary ways of directing the eyes of the onlooker. Humans unconsciously direct their eyes towards light areas of the screen. This allows a screenwriter to show what they want the onlooker to see by staging the focus of the scene in light, and the unimportant aspects in darkness.

Figure 2.2.2 A shot displaying how lighting can be used as a visual principle to change the story of the shot.

“A white wall can be shadowed and appear dark. The wall’s brightness is now being controlled by the amount of light falling on the wall, rather than by the actual tone of the wall itself.”

Light can also set the mood and quickly tell the consumer what they are supposed to believe is good and what they should believe is bad in certain shots. While not the most widely used visual principle it is still a very important one, as lighting is the only way for our eyes to see and consume any visual media.

---

2.2.4 Color

Color also directs attention of the onlooker. It can make objects of contention on the screen look further away or closer to the camera. Color also presents heavy symbolism as characters or objects can adorn primary color palettes to show how important they are to the story of the screenplay or the particular scene.

![Image of Schindler's List](image.png)

Figure 2.2.3 Schindler’s List\(^4\) showing how color can be a very powerful storytelling tool.

“The selection and combination of colours evokes mood and emotion that helps delineate personality and place on screen effectively.”\(^5\)

Game trailers are always created to make the consumer want to purchase a game. This means that manipulating color to engage emotional responses is key to the practice of making trailers.

---

\(^5\) Jane Barnwell (2017) “Production Design for Screen” P.151
2.2.5 Rhythm

Rhythm or pace as it also can be called is an almost invisible visual principle, which determines how well visual principles and media can be consumed. If the rhythm of a media is too high with flashing colors and rapid editing then the consumer may not be able to process what the producer wants the consumer to see.

"It’s easier for an audience to sense visual rhythm in sequences with faster cutting tempos."

The same principle is true in the other extreme. Where the rhythm is so slow and there is a nonexistent pace then the consumer will forget or will be unwilling to remember what the producer wants them to know.

Visual rhythm

Framing and complexity can create visual rhythm in both a moving and still frame. This usually dictates how calm or hectic a frame can be in the overall composition. This is manipulated by spacing or centering other visual principles present in a shot to create a rhythm.

![Figure 2.2.4 A shot of a very symmetrical visual rhythm but still very chaotic from all of the diagonal interferences.](image)

Visual pace

Visual pace is how a piece of media paces itself to create a satisfying invisible pace that stimulates when there are complex and intense principles in the frame. Or the opposite with a very calm pace with calming colors and a mellow transition of complexity.

---

2.2.6 Contrast and Affinity

All of the already mentioned visual principles are associated with contrast and affinity. Depending on how much volume of the different principles are used in a shot or frame it affects the shots contrast or affinity.

“The greater the contrast in a visual component, the more the visual intensity or dynamic increases. The greater the affinity in a visual component, the more the visual intensity or dynamic decreases.”

This directly correlates with the overall pace and story of a visual medium as its contrast and affinity in visual principles determine both pace and story on a visual level.

2.2.7 Visual principle critique

These principles were chosen as key points as they are most relevant in the creation of fast paced imagery that focuses on directing the onlookers eye towards important showpieces. The rule of thirds principle is the only outlier principle as it only diverts focus and does not provide multitudes of contrast which every other presented principle does. As such other visual principles like the visual principle of space were not used, as it was deemed too loosely associated with the concept of contrast.

3 Method

This research will analyze two in game trailers that were made by DICE interactive for two of their games. The trailers were chosen based on their commercial success, size of brand and use of in game imagery.

To analyze the trailers by comparing their visual principles was chosen because it is the most old and trusted method of analyzing visual media. Other methods of conducting this method would be to ask a test audience what they think of the trailers and analyze the trailers based on the test audience’s responses. This was not chosen as this research was planned to be completed by only one person.

The first trailer is the official reveal trailer of Battlefield 1. Battlefield 1 is a multiplayer online first-person shooter set during the first world war. The setting is surmised of several European and African landscapes with accurate locales.

The second trailer is the official reveal trailer of Battlefront 2. Battlefront 2 is a multiplayer online first-person shooter set in the Star Wars universe. It takes place between the sixth and seventh episode with locales and settings appropriated to in universe battlefields.

Before reading the shot for shot breakdown of the trailers I would highly recommend that you watch both of the trailers to get a basic grasp on what I will present.

While the Battlefront 2 trailer is twice as long as the battlefield one trailer it will be taken into account during the result phase. This was chosen as it was the only trailer that was comparable with the Battlefield 1 official reveal trailer due to statistics.

The analysis of both trailers will consist of analyzing the presented visual principles in the trailers in order to validify my original theory. Both trailers will first be presented shot for shot and then be analyzed for the presented visual principles. After the shot breakdowns each visual principle will be presented according to a checklist where they will be cross checked for how the principle was overall presented in the trailer.

---

8 Battlefield 1 official reveal Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7nRTF2SowQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7nRTF2SowQ)

9 Battlefront 2 full length reveal trailer [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kae-JjbLsgA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kae-JjbLsgA)
3.1 Literature

The visual principles used in this analysis were researched from the commercially available books Production Design for Screen by Jane Barnwell\textsuperscript{10} and The Visual Story by Bruce Block\textsuperscript{11}. I chose to use the information provided by these books on the basics on visual principles as the base of my analysis. The books were traversed in order to pin down the five base principles that were necessary to apply to the analysis in order to determine the visual principles from the chosen trailers.

The Visual Story provided the basis of the rule of thirds lighting and rhythm basic visual principles while Production Design for Screen was used to create the base color principle. The Visual principle of lines and shape were created by cross referencing both books.

\textsuperscript{10} Jane Barnwell (2017) “Production Design for Screen”

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Battlefield 1 reveal trailer

The Battlefield 1 reveal trailer tries to display in game scenarios in order to sell their product to what the consumer might want. The trailer consists of showing small parts of the gameplay, displaying all the different locales and gameplay styles battlefield one has to offer while compressing it into a one minute trailer. Data will be collected by breaking down which visual principles that are present on a shot for shot basis. The original shots will be labeled as A and the visual principle breakdown shots will be labeled as B.

Battlefield 1 shot for shot breakdown:

**Figure 3.1** Trailer storyboard

**Figure 3.1.1** Trailer time: 00:06-00:08. In the trenches, soldiers fighting. Visual principles: Middle column and top row of rule of thirds, muted color scheme.

**Figure 3.1.2** Trailer time: 00:09-00:12. Desert, Horse Rider rides from left to right. Visual principles: Bottom left to rule of thirds to right, Line follows the horse.
Figure 3.1.3 Trailer time: 00:13-00:14. A plane flies over the trenches. Visual principles: Wing blocks in the frame to focus on the crossing point, while flames and planes makes the screen busy.

Figure 3.1.4-5 Trailer time: 00:15-00:18. Back in the trenches, blockin following the soldier from the right to the middle. With middle column blockin, Orange explosion in background.

Figure 3.1.6 Trailer time: 00:19-00:20. Planes dogfighting over desert cliffs. Wings block in the action to focus in the center. The trailer shifts to a lighter colorshift but is still very muted.

Figure 3.1.7 Trailer time: 00:21-00:23. Holland battlefront with a plane crashing into a windmill. Diagonal line into windmill, with the windmill blocking in the frame.

Figure 3.1.8 Trailer time: 00:24-00:30. A rapid edit of shots starting with a desert tank. The desert tank blocks in the frame and goes right.

Figure 3.1.9 Cavalry coming from the right forming a line with a plane flying overhead. The sky is being framed by the horses and rocks which makes the onlooker focus their eyes on the plane performing an arcing line into the center.

Figure 3.1.10 A soldier running through a villa with tilted frame. The shot follows a diagonal form to make it seem like there is more action happening. Soldier also runs diagonally towards the center.

Figure 3.1.11-12 Trailer time: 00:31-00:33. A well armored soldier gunning down other soldiers. The soldier is positioned in two crosses of rule of thirds.

Figure 3.1.13 Planes flying in the sky with multiple explosions. A plane flying into the camera creating a diagonal line to the center. With orange explosions

Figure 3.1.14 Trailer time: 00:41-00:44. A train coming from middle going left. The train blocks in the frame while creating both diagonal and straight lines.

Figure 3.1.15 Battleship appearing in two crosses of rule of thirds. And the orange explosions cause color shifts.

Figure 3.1.16 Planes flying towards the battleship. One crashes in a diagonal. With sundown lighting. The planes appear in multiple crosses in the rule of thirds.

Figure 3.1.17 A Plane crashing. The plane creates diagonals in both fall trajectory and with its wings. Soldier to the right also appears in the crosses of rule of thirds.
Figure 3.1.18 Trailer time: 00:45-00:48. Artillery cannons are fired from the left to right. Explosions ensue. The Diagonal cannons framed by the environment.

Figure 3.1.19 Trailer time: 00:48-00:51. Color change to orange and red. Pilot in middle of rule of thirds, to plane being shot down. Plane crashing path creating a diagonal line.

Figure 3.1.20 Trailer time: 00:52-00:60. Soldier looking up at blimp, back to muted color scheme. A blimp moves forward above a soldier. The blimp is centered in rule of thirds, trees create several lines in the shot, perspective enhances depth in the scene. Blimp lines frames the soldier and the center of the frame with the god rays coming from the right.

With this breakdown a few key factors of the trailer can be distinguished. Firstly, a lot of visual principles are used throughout the trailer, only a few select shots seem to be missing visual cues. Shots missing visual cues seem to stem from wanting to display actual in-game gameplay, or a quick shot of a different environment.
3.2.2 Battlefront 2 reveal trailer

The Battlefront 2 reveal trailer tries to display in-game scenarios in order to sell their product to what the consumer might want. The trailer consists of showing small parts of the gameplay, displaying all the different locales and gameplay styles battlefield one has to offer while compressing it into a two-minute trailer.

Battlefront 2 shot for shot breakdown:

**Figure 3.2** Battlefront 2 storyboard, part 1
Figure 3.2.1 Trailer time: 00:08-00:10. Tie-fighters fly from right to left. Many diagonals are used in the background mountains. Tie fighters form diagonal lines with their flight paths.

Figure 3.2.2 Trailer time: 00:10-00:15. Centered shots of troopers walking from left to right.

Figure 3.2.3 Tie-fighters fly into the camera. The Tie fighters start from a rule of thirds cross and split up in lines to cover the entire screen.

Figure 3.2.4 Trailer time: 00:16-00:19. Centered shot of main character, with wormhole in the upper right part of the frame. Main character takes up the biggest part of the frame. The wormhole is positioned in a rule of third cross.

Figure 3.2.5-6 Trailer time: 00:20-00:27. Spaceship travels centered from bottom left to top right, while a star destroyer appears in the bottom left part of the frame. The spaceship creates a diagonal line while the star destroyer is positioned in rule of third crosses.

Figure 3.2.7 Trailer time: 00:28-00:30. The Death Star in the left of the frame, edge of planet gives a diagonal arch from bottom left to top right. The Death star is positioned in the rule of third crosses while the planet frames the scene with a diagonal. And the death star blocks in the left side of the frame.

Figure 3.2.8 Trailer time: 00:31-00:40. Special soldiers fight on Endor, with special soldiers framed in the center. Objects of focus centered in middle row of rule of thirds with a multitude of trees creating square shapes in the background.

Figure 3.2.9 Soldiers separated by framing rules. To rebel soldiers getting shot in the center of the frame for focus.

Figure 3.2.10 Characters of focus positioned in rule of third crosses.

Figure 3.2.11 Trailer time: 00:41-00:52. The Death Star blows up on the top part of the frame. The tree line is creating an arch shape to show where to look.

Figure 3.2.12 Centered face of dread to focus shift to one of the soldiers in the framing. Face of the soldier frames the shot.

Figure 3.2.13 Trailer time: 00:53-1:00. A Tie fighter flying through debris. The Tie fighter moves in an arching diagonal line in the middle column of rule of thirds while being framed by the arc of the planet and the floating debris.
Figure 3.2.14 Trailer time: 1:01-1:03. Spaceships warping to top right, light coming from top right with the planet framing the entire shot. All ships are moving diagonally.

Figure 3.2.15 Trailer time: 1:04-1:05 Soldier to the left, watches centered warp that turns into a ship warping through lightspeed. Shot precisely divided into columns of rules of third. Character window and window frame placed in thirds.

Figure 3.2.16 Ship flying in a diagonal line while staying in the center of rule of thirds. In a blue color shift of the trailer.

Figure 3.2.17 Trailer time: 1:06-1:08. The Millennium Falcon evading tie fighters over water. The Millennium Falcon making an arcing line motion from bottom left to center top.

Figure 3.2.18 Trailer time: 1:09-1:14. A space battle with laser cannons. An X-Wing blows up. The Laser cannons frames the shot with diagonals crossing. With space being framed by the planet and the ships.

Figure 3.2.19 X-Wing blowing up in crosses of rule of thirds. The explosion creates a splash of orange, with the planet and the moon blocking it in.
Figure 3.2 Battlefront 2 storyboard, part 2

Figure 3.2.20-21 Trailer time: 1:15-1:16. Conversation shot between soldier and red coated man. Using rule of thirds middle row to basic rule of thirds crosses framing.

Figure 3.2.22 Trailer time: 1:17-1:18 Soldier points laser blaster at Luke Skywalker. The rule of thirds vertical lines brings a focus to the soldier and Luke Skywalker’s face.

Figure 3.2.23-24 Trailer time: 1:19-1:28 Soldier in cross of rule of thirds. Stormtroopers walking from right to left. The Stormtroopers create a line to the left, while the shot is being diagonally framed by the AT-AT walkers.
Figure 3.2.25 A color shift to orange lighting and color. With a ship flying through the battle. Ship flies from top left to center of frame, with other ships pointing towards the center creating arrows. Sun also frames the ship as a main focus point.

Figure 3.2.26-27 To two X-Wings falling out of a loading bay. X-Wings falling diagonally to falling centered, with many straight and diagonal lines to make the shot busy. The shot is also framed by bigger ships to center the focus.

Figure 3.2.28-29 Trailer time: 1:33-1:34 The trailer color shifts to blue. While a tie fighter falls. A tie fighter falls diagonally creating a line to the center of the frame. While the buildings jaggedly and diagonally frame in the action.

Figure 3.2.30 Trailer time: 1:35-1:36 A centered land speeder disappears at the bottom of the frame. The speeder creates a diagonal line, while the sky is framed by the city skyline in an arc.

Figure 3.2.31-32 Trailer time: 1:37-1:39 The trailers color theme shifts to black with a centered Darth Maul. To Yoda and Darth Maul. Yoda and Darth Maul are positioned in the vertical lines of rule of thirds.

Figure 3.2.33 Trailer time: 1:40-1:42 The color shifts to green, with orange explosions while Rey is running from left to right. A Diagonal line forms from her running direction. While the green and orange create color contrast.

Figure 3.2.34 Trailer time: 1:43-1:45 color shift to white and orange while animal riders ride from right to left. Creating an arcing line while the action is being framed by the middleground.

Figure 3.2.35 Trailer time: 1:46-1:48 The color shifts to blue while X-Wings fly towards top right framed command bridge of a star destroyer. The X-Wings flight pattern creating an arcing line while the shot is framed by the planets arc and the satellite disc on the left.

Figure 3.2.36 Trailer time: 1:49-1:58 Kylo Ren throws rebel from left to right, slashes diagonally top right to bottom left. The hand is blocked into the lower two rows of rule of thirds.

Figure 3.2.37 A red lightsaber centered on left. The lightsaber follows middle row of rule of thirds diagonally crossing the screen.

Figure 3.2.38 Kylo Ren’s head blocking in right side of the frame. Kylo Ren’s head positioned in right columns of rule of thirds while creating a diagonal in the middle.
With this breakdown a few key factors can be distinguished. Firstly a lot of visual principles are used throughout the trailer, only a few select shots seem to be missing visual queues. This mostly seem to stem from wanting to display actual in game gameplay or a quick shot of a different environment.

3.4 Observations

3.4.1 Battlefield 1 Observations

3.4.1.1 Rule of thirds

From the trailer footage many rule of third queues can be found as it visualizes as a major focus the producers were willing to take. Many shots follow the rule of thirds by telling the consumer where to look and divert their attention to what the producer wanted to show. Such as in the blimp shot (Figure 3.1.20) or the train and battleship shots (Figure 3.1.14-15)

3.4.1.2 Lines and Shape

The trailer uses the flightpath of planes to create directional visuals that guides the onlooker’s eyes to focus on the center.

”Direction refers to the angle of lines or tracks created by moving objects.”\(^\text{12}\)

This can be seen in (Figure 3.1.7, Figure 3.1.9, Figure 3.1.13) The producer uses this to guide the consumers focus during the trailer as they made the trailer very hectic and full of details they needed a very planned way of using line and shape to display what they wanted the consumer to see.

The trailer uses many angular objects and diagonals in order to make the pace of the trailer appear very hectic.

3.4.1.3 Lighting

Natural lighting is the only thing used to light the Battlefield 1 trailer. As most of the shown footage happens on the outside given the only changes of lighting occur in the shots comprised of a dusk or dawn sequence. This type of lighting presents a very realistic look and helps enhance the authenticity of Battlefield 1 having real historical merit and photorealistic graphics. The trailer does not use the lighting visual principle to try to use light as a visual principle in any major way.

3.4.1.4 Color

The Battlefield 1 trailer uses a very muted color scheme with monotone colors and hues, most likely implemented as such to further the grittiness of world war one. The colors are mostly comprised of dark greens black’s dark blues and various desert browns. This monotone color scheme is only offset by the trailers use of explosions and gunfire, which is colored in very bright yellows, oranges and reds.

A few color shifts are present in the trailer to add more complexity to the narrative which can be seen in shots (Figure 3.1.6, Figure 3.1.16 and Figure 3.1.19).

3.4.1.5 Rhythm

The trailers Rhythm is very hectic as it was made to show as much of the game as it can in only one minute. The Battlefield 1 trailer bases its visual rhythm on the music that was incorporated with it. The music accompanied to this trailer it “Seven Nation Army” by the White Stripes. By following the rhythm of the song, the trailer accomplishes a pace of showing its visuals and blending the music together, creating a highly entertaining and visually accomplished product, as all of the visual principles aid the visual rhythm to create a satisfying viewing experience.
3.4.2 Battlefront 2 shot for shot Observations

3.4.2.1 Rule of thirds
Almost every shot of the Battlefront 2 trailer follows the rule of thirds by blocking in the purposeful visuals and guiding the eye towards the product. The most prominent uses of the rule of thirds are the ending shot with Kylo Ren’s head and the Death Star (Figure 3.2.36-38 and 3.2.7).

3.4.2.2 Lines and Shape
The trailer uses many diagonal lines in the trailer from laser blasters, missiles and flight paths in order to convey more action than there would be without the diagonals. This emphasizes in visual form that battlefront two is an action packed and fast game.

This can be seen in shots (Figure 3.2.27-26, 3.2.17, 3.2.3 and 3.2.1).

3.4.2.3 Lighting
The Battlefront 2 trailer refrains from using special lighting to influence its shots as the game focuses more on a realistic look. Lighting in the trailer comes from normal sunlight on planet scenes, and in space scenes everything is well lit from orbital sunlight. The only tonal shift in lighting comes from the scenes taking place during dusk, shifting to a more orange light, and the indoor scene with Darth Maul and Yoda, where there is black and white lighting indicating the light and dark of the force.

As can be seen in shots (Figure 3.2.31 and 3.2.32).

3.4.2.4 Color
The Battlefront 2 trailer has many color shifts to emphasize the different locales and gameplay styles they want to present and the story they want to tell through the game.

Battlefront also tries to convey hard contrasts in tone between the two factions with empire using many hard-contrasting colors like black, red or white. While the rebels use green, blue or grey color schemes.

It also uses explosions to create flashes of bright color to add to the fast pace of the trailer.
3.4.2.5 Rhythm

The Battlefront 2 trailers rhythm tries to follow its soundtrack to a degree. But the trailer is more intent on showing the different story beats of the games campaign together with the multitudes of locales which do not mesh fully with the orchestral Star Wars soundtrack. This makes the pace of the trailer feel woefully adequate, but not truly exceptional.

In visual rhythm the trailer follows many diagonal lines and quick movements to create a fast pace. But it is not against slowing the pace down on certain parts such as in shots (Figure 3.2.20-22 and 3.2.23).

3.5 Method critique

The method used for this analysis does not analyze the entirety of the artistry of these trailers. As art can be viewed differently from person to person this would need a group of people to provide several perspectives in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the trailers.

All possible visual principles were also not used as visual principles change between books and cultures and as such it would require an entire extra research paper to fully establish all the necessary visual principles needed in order to present a near flawless analysis of the subject.
4 Results

4.1 Visual Principles

4.1.1 Rule of thirds
The trailers follow many rule of thirds as it is their primary way of leading the consumers eye. Both trailers use this principle equally.

4.1.2 Lines and Shape
The Battlefront 2 trailer uses more lines and shapes with its number of space battles and flying vehicles. While Battlefield 1 uses more rigid lines and shapes but also tries to use diagonal lines to imply more action.

Both trailers use many lines and shapes in almost every shot to block in and direct attention.

4.1.3 Lighting
None of the trailers use lightning as a visual principle, as they both try to use real life lighting in order to look more realistic. The only outlier scene is in the Battlefront 2 trailer with Darth Maul running towards Yoda.

4.1.4 Color
The Battlefield 1 trailer uses a more overall contrasting color scheme with most scenes being fully monotone with the contrast of orange explosions.

The Battlefront 2 trailer uses different colors to differentiate between the two factions and the tonal shifts within the trailer. It also uses orange explosions to create contrast in the space battles.

4.1.5 Rhythm
The Battlefront 2 trailer follows the rhythm of its soundtrack in the trailer but tries to show other things disrupting the rhythm of the trailer. It also uses a very chaotic visual rhythm in most shots except for a few gaps where it slows down before ramping up again.

The Battlefield 1 trailer fully integrates with its soundtrack to create a woefully complete visual spectacle. It also keeps a chaotic fast visual rhythm throughout the entire trailer only changing during black screens and winding down by the final shot.
4.2 Trailer Visual Principles Statistics

By calculating the percentage of visual principles used per trailer it is possible to confirm which principle was prioritized the highest by the trailers creators.

4.2.1 Battlefield 1 trailer:

![Graph showing visual principles in the Battlefield 1 Trailer](meta-chart.com)

**Figure 4.2.1**

Rule of thirds in 10/13 shots

As can be seen in: *(Figure 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.7, 3.1.11, 3.1.12, 3.1.15, 3.1.16 and 3.1.20)*

Lines and shape 12/13 shots

All shots except: *(Figure 3.1.11)*

Lighting in 0/13 shots

Color in 8/13 shots

As can be seen in: *(Figure 3.1.1, 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.13, 3.1.15, 3.1.18 and 3.1.19)*

Rhythm in 13/13 shots
4.2.2 Battlefront 2 trailer:

![Bar chart showing visual principles in the Battlefront 2 Trailer]

**Figure 4.2.2**

Rule of thirds in 19/23 shots
As can be seen in: (Figure 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 3.2.8, 3.2.10, 3.2.13, 3.2.15, 3.2.19, 3.2.20, 3.2.21, 3.2.22, 3.2.23, 3.2.25, 3.2.27, 3.2.32, 3.2.36, 3.2.37 and 3.2.38)

Lines and shape 22/23 shots
All shots except: (Figure 3.2.22)

Lighting in 3/23 shots
As can be seen in: (Figure 3.2.31 and 3.2.32)

Color in 15/23 shots
As can be seen in: (Figure 3.2.1, 3.2.7, 3.2.8, 3.2.10, 3.2.13, 3.2.17, 3.2.18, 3.2.19, 3.2.25, 3.2.26, 3.2.27, 3.2.28, 3.2.29, 3.2.33 and 3.2.35)

Rhythm in 11/23 shots
5 Discussion

From the result I will now extrapolate if visual principles enhance an in-game trailers viability to prove my theory.

In my result the trailer with the most visual principles used is the Battlefield 1 trailer. It mixes all of the presented principles into a well-rounded presentable product. The Battlefront 2 trailer tries to do the same but with a lesser aim of visual principles as can be seen in its integration of the visual rhythm.

My opening thought of these trailers was that they would be very similar as they were both made by the same company but as I analyzed the trailers the Battlefield 1 trailer kept surprising me by using the presented visual principles in the most efficient and applicable manner. The overall most important discovery I think I made during this research is how much the visual rhythm of a trailer affects the overall product.

The trailers use a very chaotic style of presenting the game. This of course stems from the trailer having to show as much of the game as possible while still retaining a short trailer runtime. This causes a lot of visual principles to be compressed into every single shot as every shot needs to clearly tell its message as quickly as possible since it only has one to two seconds to do so.

This leads me to correlate this to the stats that tell us that rule of thirds and line and shape are the most used visual principles in the trailers. My view of this is that the trailer creators deemed these visual principles to be the highest priority as they direct the eyes of the consumers to be able to consume the shot that the producers want to show. Thus, effectively streamlining and compressing the viewing experience in a positive way.

The methods used to analyze the selected trailers showed a clear correlation between the results. As the trailers used all of the visual principles to a lesser or greater extent. This will be noted as that the chosen method to analyze the material was successful.

I found the limitations of the research were valid to limit the size of the research and to not have the research spiral into a path of never ending data. The downside to the limitations become clear if the research is look upon from a bigger scale. As the analysis only includes two trailers means that the sample size is small and only indicates that projects of the same size and type will yield the same result.

Though this dilutes the overall impact of the analysis it does not detract from the fact that the theory and method worked to its full potential, and the same method of collecting data from visual media could be extrapolated to most other means of analyzing trailers.
5.1 Visual Principles

5.1.1 Rule of thirds

The largest visual principle that the trailers focus on is the framing as it is almost visible in every shot. This would most likely be deemed as the most important visual principle as it guides the onlookers eye toward what the trailer wants to display the most.

It is also the easiest principle to implement on a storyboard phase.

5.1.2 Line and Shape

Both trailers contain shape principles in their overall design and visual flow. The Line principle in both trailers are used on vehicles including mostly flying vehicles. This is used to guide a path for the consumer to follow in order to direct focus in the chaotic nature of the trailers.

Line and Shape is also used to adjust the visual rhythm of the trailers as they need to create as much of a visual clutter from a multitude of lines shapes and contrasts in order to keep the pacing very chaotic for both trailers. This was achieved very well in the Battlefront 2 trailer via the use of triangles and diagonal missile smoke lines.

5.1.3 Lighting

The lighting of both trailers is based on their realism factor. As both games want to portray graphics to their utmost realism. The lighting is almost exclusively sunlight and the trailer creators did not choose to use the visual principle that lighting can portray in a trailer.

The only outlying shot of both trailers is the Darth Maul versus Yoda shot which uses lighting to emphasize the different sides of the factions. But as this is only present in two seconds of both trailers it makes the lighting principle very underused and rendered mostly irrelevant in this analysis.

5.1.4 Color

Color is not highly used as a visual principle in both trailers. It is mostly used to change the visual impact between scenes when the shots are changing location. It also tries to add more to the visual rhythm by contrasting orange explosions to the regular color of the battlefields.
5.1.5 Rhythm

The visual rhythm of the trailers is the outlier of the trailers, as the Battlefront 2 trailer follows a normal hectic trailer rhythm while following some of the notes of the accompanied musical score. The Battlefield 1 trailer on the other hand builds its entire trailer based upon the rhythm of its accompanied music score. This demonstrates that the battlefield one trailer has a more natural and organic pace to its visuals. While the battlefront two trailer is very lacking in the matching of its visual rhythm regard.

5.1.6 Contrast and Affinity

All of the presented visual principles except the rule of thirds adhere to the overarching contrast and affinity principle. Which involves the overuse or lack of use of visual principles in order to create contrast or affinity.

The clear takeaway from this analysis is that both trailers focus immensely on creating contrast. Every shot and visual principle inside the shots creates as much contrast as visually possible to create a very fast pace. This can be seen in the overuse of lines and shapes cluttering the frame, Colors shifting rapidly between scenes, rapid camera and movement of everything that is contained on the screen and the visual rhythm of every shot being fully cluttered.

This lack of affinity and overabundance of contrast I think clearly displays the intent of the trailers creators, as they wanted to create a product with as high visual contrast they could produce while not detracting from the trailers marketability to customers.

5.1.7 The Story Structure Graph

The trailers do not follow a conventional story structure graph, as the trailer creators wanted to focus on displaying climaxes every moment of the trailer in order to make everything adrenaline filled and interesting. The graph follows the conventional movie and game trailer method of displaying a story structure graph as it wants to climax at the precise moment when the trailer is showing something adrenaline filled or a set piece, something that comes every other two seconds during each trailer. This leaves the story structure graph very jagged as it climaxes every two seconds.

Both trailers story curves are very alike. Though the biggest difference between the two trailers can be seen in the length of the trailers. The Battlefield 1 trailer is shorter than the Battlefront 2 trailer which makes it squeeze in more climaxes in a more rapid pace during its runtime for nonstop contrasts. While the Battlefront 2 trailer must fill its length and incorporates a few more valleys in the story structure graph than the Battlefield 1 trailer. Though the Battlefront 2 trailer tries to use as many climaxes in its story structure graph as well to convey its commercial motives.
5.2 Statistics

5.2.1 Visual Statistics

The stats in 4.2 show that percentage wise both trailers are quite equal in the presented visual principles. Lighting and color are more of a focus in the battlefront two trailer. Rule of thirds and line and shape are the most common visual principles.

But the most interesting of the visual principles stats is the rhythm comparison. As can be seen in 5.2 the battlefield one trailer uses twice as many rhythm shots compared to the battlefront two trailer. This shows a distinct will to focus on the rhythm visual principle for the Battlefield 1 trailer.

The statistics of the analysis simply confirm the use of visual principles in the commercial game trailers which proves my theory of the visual principles used in these in game trailers.

5.3 External factors

While the stats and analysis can tell the state of a product or media it does not display the entire picture of the environment the product was released or marketed within. So, I would like to appeal to a few counter statistics that might have influenced the environment that the trailers were released in.

5.3.1 Music

Music is the first external factor, as this research has been about visual principles and not auditory principles. Music is a relevant factor when processing consumer enjoyment and can lead to different enjoyment of a product depending on the theme.

Another factor in music is also the popularity of it. The Battlefield 1 trailer were accompanied by the song “Seven Nation Army” by the White Stripes. The popularity of the band and the popularity of their music are capable of influencing the use of the visual principles in the trailers.

The Battlefront 2 trailer is accompanied by orchestral Star Wars music. Which by its nature as being not created by a single band or a band brand name causes a difference in statistics. It also furthers the Star Wars brand of the trailer and product, as it is accompanied by thematic music.

5.3.2 Marketing

Big budget games in modern times are always associated with marketing campaigns. These campaigns are meant to bring attention to a game and spread the word in order to increase sales. This can affect the statistics by catering the trailer to the large amount of people that are planned to be marketed to watch the trailers by a particularly effective marketing strategy.
6 Conclusions

After presenting the principles, analyzing the trailers comparing statistics and discussing the results I have come to the conclusion that visual principles does indeed enhance the commercial and visual viability of in game trailers.

This was most notably evident in the use of rule of thirds, line and shape and visual rhythm of the trailers.

Visual principles are used most notably to direct focus and create contrast in the chosen game trailers, and the information gathered from this analysis tells us that the use of visual principles in modern game trailers is very important as they are valued on a commercial level.
7 References


4: Steven Spielberg’s; Schindler’s List 1993

5: Jane Barnwell (2017) “Production Design for Screen”


10: Jane Barnwell (2017) “Production Design for Screen”


8 Appendices

Figure 2.2.1 By John Harris - Who Wrote the Rule of Thirds?,
https://www.bhphotovideo.com/explora/photography/tips-and-solutions/who-wrote-rule-thirds%3F

Figure 2.2.2 By Henrik Mårtensson - Film Noir: Lighting Eyes with a Pizza Box Gobo,

Figure 2.2.3 A image from Steven Spielberg’s; Schindlers List 1993

Figure 2.2.4 By Yin and Yang - Visual Rhythm, https://yin-and-yang.deviantart.com/art/visual-rhythm-109533982

Figures 3.1.1-20: Pictures taken directly from the Battlefield 1 official reveal Trailer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7nRTF2SowQ

Figures 3.2 part1- part2, 3.2.1-38: Pictures taken directly from the Battlefront 2 full length reveal trailer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kae-JjbLsgA

Figures 4.2.1-2: was created using the website Meta-chart.com
https://www.meta-chart.com/