



BRANDING SUSPENSE: **The Audiovisual Construction of Alfred Hitchcock as a Media Icon**

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Alfred Hitchcock's pioneering use of visual media to construct a personal brand that transcended the role of film director and showed him as a cultural icon. Drawing on visual methodologies and a qualitative biographical approach, the study argues that Hitchcock exemplifies a form of proto-visual branding, using narrative and aesthetic cohesion across media platforms to support both popular appeal and critical legitimacy. By examining the visual rhetoric embedded in his marketing materials and media appearances, the article reveals how Hitchcock turned himself into an enduring multimedia symbol.

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1. Introduction

Alfred Hitchcock is one of the most famous filmmakers of all time. When typing Google Search, there are 29,600,000 entries with his name. Labelled as expert in suspense, and despite the time it has passed since his death in 1980, Hitchcock is considered the most influential movie director ever (Bose, 2021; Kurten, 2019). In 2012 in a survey by the British Film Institute, his film *Vertigo* was voted as the best film in history by 846 film critics of the entire world (Christie, 2016).

Hitchcock's legacy in the history of cinema is based on different elements. One of them is the MacGuffin, a distinction between the goals of the characters and the concerns of the audience, who did not care about the MacGuffin (Bose, 2021). Another one has to do with innovations in cinematic style that were studied and imitated by other film directors (Truffaut, 1985). Hitchcock was also able to merge two, in theory, antagonist concepts, being an author with a recognizable style and at the same time being an artisan capable of making movies enjoyed by the public. He reconciled being an important popular culture figure and at the same time a respected filmmaker (Montero, 2014). Hitchcock was much more than a movie director. He became a celebrity beyond the world of cinema. He became a TV star, endorsed books and mystery novels.

From his beginnings in England as a film director in the mid-1920s, Hitchcock used publicity to promote himself, his films and emphasize the importance of the director (Deutelbaum & Poague, 1986; Leff, 1987; Ryall, 1986). In 1925, a few months before he would direct his first film, he met with publicists, stars, critics, directors, and others to persuade them it was the director who made the difference. "It was important that the public learn to associate the name of the director with a quality product" (Kapsis, 1990, p. 16). Hitchcock always had in mind taking public relations side about his work. For example, in 1930 he created a small company called Hitchcock-Baker Productions Limited that had as the main purpose to tell the press any news about his career as a producer and director (Spoto, 1983). Hitchcock's frequent interviews and articles in film magazines, along with the publicity campaigns for his films, were done with the purpose of keeping his name continually in the limelight and creating a brand image of the filmmaker as respectable for the most intellectual critics as for the masses (Gottlieb, 1995).

One thing is to be famous, and a different thing is to be a celebrity. Fame is "a long-standing phenomenon largely deriving from mass society, typically urban, in which individuals are glorified for their deeds" (Giles & Rockwell, 2009, p. 179). Hitchcock was famous because his movies were immensely popular and box office successes, especially in his American period. Hitchcock was a superstar not only as a filmmaker but also as a TV character. Hitchcock became a brand name. Indeed, Hitchcock can be considered a pioneer of personal branding (Montero, 2014), because everything he godfather, such as TV shows or mystery fiction, became immediate successes. In this regard, he is comparable to other figures of his century such as Salvador Dalí (García, 2023) and Walt Disney (Gabler, 2007) who, being artist and an entrepreneur, also had a personal brand. Hitchcock, Dalí or Disney were celebrities because they were well-known across fields (Marshall, 1997).

Hitchcock became a film star, directing movies but also through cameos and his visible presence in the marketing campaigns. He did not have any of the physical qualities that are usually attributed to stars but very much the opposite. Nonetheless, he was able to develop a positive brand identity around that.

"Hitchcock's unique physical presence – the iconic large frame, flabby cheeks and bald head – eventually went on to form a stylized silhouette that had by then acquired a powerful branding quality, a logo of sorts, and served as his distinctive signature" (Chakraborty, 2016, para. 3).

But, while Hitchcock used publicity and promotion extensively from the beginning of his career, he knew it had its limitations if there were not deeds involved.

"Stardom is not won easily. I know people whisper about the power of the publicity drum, but no amount of publicity can create something which is not there, and a star who is only a child of publicity will not last" (Hitchcock, 1933, p. 78)

Hitchcock "developed a type of advertising that could serve him in the long term, beyond the premiere of a specific film" (Montero, 2014, p. 53). His self-promotion had as its main purpose the creation of an attractive and recognizable brand in which it was difficult to differentiate who the filmmaker was and who the character was. Hitchcock built a character through a variety of methods:

public appearances, the publicity of his films, cameos in his movies and, finally, the presentations and epilogues of the television series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. He had his own logo (Figure 1) and music: the *Funeral March of a Marionette* by Charles Gounod.

Figure 1. “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” logo.



Source: The Movie Database (TMDB)

Hitchcock became an icon of popular culture. It was something uncommon for a well-respected artist also being a well-known celebrity in mass media (newspapers, magazines, and television) (Gamson, 1994). This is the case of Hitchcock as well as Dalí, both considered two avant-garde artists, while Walt Disney never enjoyed that avant-garde status. A main difference between Hitchcock and Dalí, that talks about the popular nature of cinema, is that while Dalí was often criticized for using too much public relations and advertising (Meisler, 2005), Hitchcock (or similarly Walt Disney) was not.

It is fair to say that Hitchcock had presented the importance of good publicity for his career, and the synergies that close and related fields such as cinema, television and books could create for him. Hitchcock cared about creating a brand of himself.

During Hitchcock era, the American Marketing Association defined brand as “a name, term, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which identifies the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and distinguishes them from those of competitors (AMA, 1948, p. 205). It is difficult to deny that the name Hitchcock is linked to mastery of suspense, crime, and a powerful cinematic language capable to generate emotions among the public. If we use de Chernatony and McDonald (1994) more modern, classic brand definition, Hitchcock (or his movies) can be considered “an identifiable product, service, person or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs more closely” (p. 18).

Hitchcock also passes the test as a brand. Kapsis (1990) argues that one of the main added values of the Hitchcock brand was its capacity to seduce the masses as well as the critics and exquisite publics. For example, the sequence designed by Dalí in *Spellbound* (1945) or the sequence shot of *The Rope* (1948), were ways for Hitchcock to prove his virtuosity as a movie director. There was a deliberate effort in Hitchcock to build that catch-all brand and he did not hesitate in putting his art on behalf of that purpose. Hitchcock achieved this reputation, which brought together seemingly irreconcilable aims, when in the 1960s French critics, especially the writers of *Cahiers de Cinema*, considered him an auteur with a capital A. The culmination was Francois Truffaut's book of interviews (1985 [1966]). We can argue that an element in common of all these brand artists, such as Hitchcock, Dalí or Walt Disney, was their capacity to meet the expectations of avant-garde and popular audience at the same time. This ability to use communication and publicity on behalf of their art has been followed by other famous artists such as Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons (García, 2013).

The author/s of this public relations approach to the figure of Alfred Hitchcock argue the English film maker should be considered a major figure in the history of the practice as a whole and in the history of cinema specifically. In the world of cinema, Hitchcock recognized the value of using public relations tactics to nourish its reputation and its art. He also carries the merit of being an artist beloved by the public and the critics. In a survey implemented in 2024 to ask people who were the most famous film directors, Alfred Hitchcock (72 percent of popularity) was ranked second only to Steven Spielberg (74 percent of popularity) (YouGov, 2024). Even among the millennial generation, Hitchcock appeared third

in the ranking. One factor to note is the durability of the image built up by Hitchcock, which continues to stand the test of time.

.1. Research Objectives

While earlier scholarships have acknowledged Hitchcock's influence on film aesthetics and authorship, less attention has been given to his systematic use of communication strategies to construct a cross-media personal brand. The present study aims to:

1. Examine how Hitchcock integrated cinematic, televisual, and promotional media to show a unified personal brand.
2. Find the specific public relations techniques and visual strategies employed in that branding process.
3. Evaluate Hitchcock's contribution to the early development of personal branding and its implications for contemporary communication theory.

These goals guide the analytical framework and inform the methodological design of this research.

2. Theoretical Framework

Searching in the main public relations journals, arguably Public Relations Review, Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Inquiry, for articles where there is an intersection between public relations and film, we find a variety of topics. Nonetheless, they have little to do with how geniuses, such as Hitchcock, made use of a public relations approach to enhance their figures. The most popular topic for public relations scholars has been how movies have been used as a propaganda tool for the governments in tough times (particularly in warfare) (Quintana & Xifra, 2016; Ruiz del Olmo & Xifra, 2017; St. John & Arnett, 2014). Public relations scholarship has focused as well on how movies portray the public relations profession (Ames, 2010; Tsetsura et al., 2015), what type of movies can be used in public relations classes (Hutton & Mak, 2014), among other popular topics. Interestingly, there is not much about how film stars used public relations to enhance their reputation.

Indeed, there is a deficit of artists in the history of public relations (García, 2023). Historians of this discipline tend to focus mostly on the corporate world and politics (Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 2006; Myers, 2020). Therefore, the names that are shown in the history sections of public relations textbooks usually include entrepreneurs, such as Henry Ford; publicists such as P. T. Barnum or Ivy Lee; and spin doctors like Edward Bernays (Freberg, 2021; Kelleher, 2021; Seitel, 2019). Not much from the arts, including film, with exceptions (García, 2023; Xifra & Heath, 2018). If anything, those books that refer to the four Grunig's public relations models (1995), talk about Hollywood as a place encapsulated in the 'press agent' model. The use of public relations to promote movies is considered hyperbolic and exaggerated. These approaches go on detriment of other perspectives such as how individuals who were geniuses, such as Hitchcock, making movies integrated the promotional element in their artistic endeavors. This is what makes Hitchcock special, the ability to build a personal brand with a mix of an auteur and at the same time another master in commercialism and promotion. Hitchcock's movies were not only box office successes because of their popular quality but because of his ongoing promotional efforts and public personality.

Interestingly, the marketing field has taken more care of the relationships between artists and their publics than the public relations field. Hitchcock is an artist as much as Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, Andy Warhol, or Salvador Dalí, usually recognized as artists that gave a significant importance to their personal branding in the development of their careers (García, 2023). Hitchcock, starting with Francois Truffaut and the French's Nouvelle Vague in the 50s, is considered an auteur, ergo an artist, because of his complete control and personal decisions made about his movies (he was producer) (Truffaut, 1966). Being a creative and artsy person is considered a competitive advantage in the entrepreneurial world (Fillis, 2000). And the movie world is an industry after all. Arts marketing has been positioned as a cornerstone within the arts and culture industry and a strategic function (Hayes & Roadhouse, 2010). Therefore, artists should be considered brand managers because they adopt marketing strategies to develop relationships with their stakeholders from the early process of development of their creations (Légathová, 2020).

Personal branding owes its definition to goods and service branding applied to people (Labrecque et al., 2011). Aaker (1996) defines human brand, and similarly personal branding, as a unique association that is intrinsically attached to a branded person and lead branded individuals to occupy a specific

position in the minds of the consumers. The individual reputation, in this case of a movie director, is empowered through personal branding (Gander, 2014). When a personal brand connects with the stakeholders' feelings, positive relationships, and social capital with the targeted audience, good relationships are built (Gandini, 2016). In this case, the targeted audience are movie spectators, critics, and the film industry in general.

There is an abundance of celebrities concerned about their personal brand (Centeno & Wang, 2017; Dressens, 2013). A solid celebrity brand is the outcome of the market creation activities of the celebrity artist (Fillis, 2015a). They look for an accumulation of celebrity capital, the accumulated media visibility through the exposition of the celebrity outside their field of practice via the media (Driessens, 2013). Hitchcock did that creating personal brand content for the press, television, and even in his own movies. His content highlighted his mastery of suspense, a certain eccentricity, a sense of humor and a set up a complicity with the spectator that felt Hitchcock was a provider of quality work (his own work as well as others). Public Relations is a determinant tool to enhance personal brand (Mikacova & Gavlakova, 2013). Rees (2020) argues the role of public relations in the development of brands. Hitchcock used a variety of public relations tactics and use of the media to appear as a star in film and TV in the 1950s and 1960s (Seligmann, 2017).

Alfred Hitchcock functioned as a public relations practitioner and promoter of his own movies and celebrity. This paper uses qualitative biographical analysis to explore his contribution to the public relations field. In his research on entrepreneurial marketers using this research method, Fillis (2015b) argues the validity of a qualitative biographical analysis, although not statistically based, to describe events, organizations, and individuals. This type of analysis unveils aspects of human behavior as well that empirical research methods cannot predict (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009). It takes an approach across disciplines that allows a better understanding of the creative process. Hitchcock was indeed an entrepreneurial marketer. He was not only a movie director, producer, and screenwriter, but also somebody who took care of his self-promotion and the promotion of his films. For many, Hitchcock was also a television star, a cameo person, an advertiser, an active participant in the media world, interviewee, and an eccentric and sordid figure in his relationship with women. He also looked for artistic collaborations, out of the cinema world, in his movies such as Salvador Dalí in *Spellbound* or famous designer Saul Bass in *Vertigo*. It is difficult to talk about Hitchcock's life and art without referring to the promotional and marketing aspect of everything he did.

2.1. Alfred Hitchcock's Life

Alfred Hitchcock was born in London in 1899 and died in Los Angeles in 1980. He is considered a head and pioneer in many of the technique's characteristic of suspense and psychological thriller. Hitchcock began his career still in the silent film era and ended it in the 70s. He is considered responsible for the modernization of the 'seventh art' thanks to his capacity to innovate and expand the boundaries of what was accepted on the big screen. In his biography, McGilligan (2004) noted Hitchcock "was the ultimately magician of the cinema, an illusionist as pleased by his own mastery as he was by his audiences' 'reactions" (p. 3). Evidence of this notoriety is the vast number of publications about his work, re-releases of his films, biopics about his career or even his presence on the Internet and social network sites. There are two phases in his work, the British period, and the American/Hollywood period. Hitchcock moves to Hollywood in 1939. The importance of a publicity approach in his career makes sense because "few directors forged their careers are resolutely, as self-consciously, as Alfred Joseph Hitchcock" (McGilligan, 2004, p. 4). He made 50 movies spanning over 50 years. Despite his popularity, there is a sense of extravagance in Hitchcock, of being on the edge. One of the most controversial aspects of his personality was his relationships with women. There is a fetishism, voyeurism in his look that would not be probably permitted today. In 1996, when the film *Vertigo* (1958) was rerun across the United States Film critic, Roger Ebert, described his view of women with the following words:

"They were blonde. They were icy and remote. They were imprisoned in costumes that subtly combined fashion with fetishism. They mesmerized the men, who often had physical or psychological handicaps. Sooner or later, every Hitchcock woman was humiliated." (Ebert, 1996, para. 3).

If Hitchcock had been born in this era, we can argue that his reputation, despite all the efforts he made in his career, would have been quite different.

3. Methodology

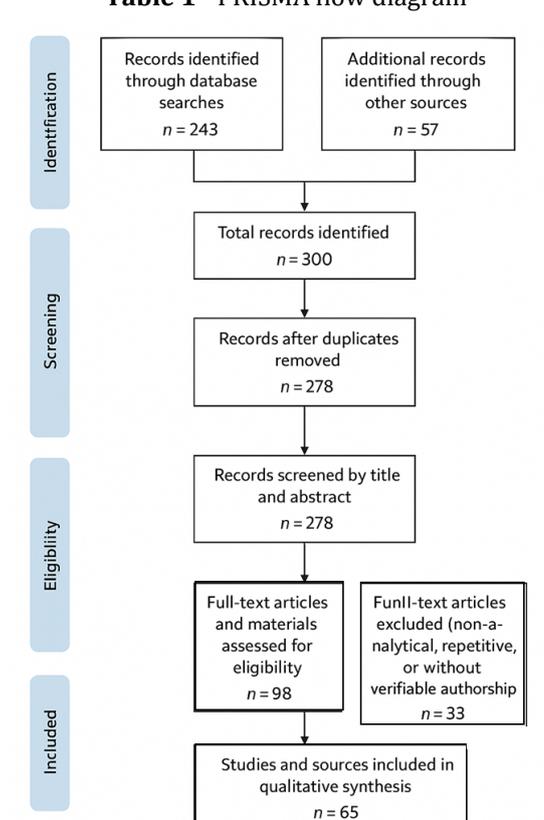
The sources have been selected according to three main criteria designed to ensure analytical relevance and methodological rigor. First, each source had to prove a clear connection to Hitchcock’s public image or his promotional activities, whether through direct involvement or thematic representation. Second, the materials needed to reflect a diversity of media platforms, including film, press, and television, to capture the multifaceted nature of Hitchcock’s self-presentation and branding strategies. Third, only sources with verifiable historical or bibliographic documentation were included, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in reliable and traceable evidence.

A systematic qualitative review was conducted to find, evaluate, and integrate materials relevant to Alfred Hitchcock’s audiovisual self-presentation and brand construction. The process followed a structured adaptation of the PRISMA model (Pollock et al., 2017), adjusted to suit interdisciplinary and qualitative research contexts.

A total of 300 potential records were initially found through academic databases, digital repositories, and film archives (Table 1). After removing duplicates and applying preliminary screening criteria, 278 records were reviewed by title and abstract. Following the exclusion of non-relevant or unverifiable sources, 98 full-text materials were assessed for eligibility. Finally, 65 sources were included in the qualitative synthesis.

The final corpus includes 26 peer-reviewed academic articles, 18 books or chapters, 12 journalistic and digital sources, and 9 audiovisual materials. This combination ensured a balanced and comprehensive analysis of Hitchcock’s role as a filmmaker, self-promoter, and early example of personal branding within the cultural industries.

Table 1 - PRISMA flow diagram



Source: own elaboration, 2025.

Several of the references (e.g., Aaker, 1996; de Chernatony & McDonald, 1994; Rampersad, 2009; Rees, 2020; Seitel, 2019) contribute key theoretical perspectives on branding and identity management, providing the conceptual framework necessary to interpret Alfred Hitchcock as both an artistic and a commercial brand. Complementary works from public relations scholarship (e.g., Cutlip, 1994, 1995; Freberg, 2020; Kelleher, 2021; Hallahan, 2010; Myers, 2020) offer historical and professional insights

into the evolution of image construction and reputation management, reinforcing Hitchcock's relevance as an early practitioner of self-promotion and strategic communication.

From the field of film and media studies, the corpus includes essential monographs and critical essays that examine Hitchcock's creative methods, authorship, and the marketing of his films (e.g., Bellour, 1977; Spoto, 1983; Wood, 2002). These sources contribute to both primary and secondary perspectives that enable a nuanced understanding of his cinematic and promotional style. Added sources (e.g., Bokor y Kerzoncuf, 2005a, 2005b; Karray y Debernitz, 2017) explore visual and paratextual materials such as trailers and posters, supporting the visual analysis dimension of the study. The inclusion of biographical, historical, and journalistic materials (e.g., Bokor y Kerzoncuf, 2005a, 2005b; Karray y Debernitz, 2017) serves to triangulate academic analysis with contemporary beliefs of Hitchcock's persona, ensuring that both scholarly and cultural discourses are represented. This variety of sources satisfies the methodological requirement of multidimensional evidence (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009; Fillis, 2015b), combining written, visual, and audiovisual materials to capture the complexity of Hitchcock's personal brand.

4. Analysis: the construction of Hitchcock's personal brand through public relations

The importance of building a personal brand for Hitchcock is figured out by his commercial conception of cinema. For him, as he argues in his extensive interview with Truffaut, movies "should be a slice of cake, not life" (Truffaut, 2015 [1985], p. 103). This vision of the seventh art leads him to have a vision of the director as the bearer of a distinctive seal of quality that makes a film more attractive to the public (Spoto, 1983). The best way to do that was to develop a strong personal brand. He was certainly successful doing that. So much is the case that movie director Peter Bogdanovich noted "no other director in history has had such an instant public identity, entered the international vocabulary and become a sought-after product" (Bogdanovich, 2007).

This section includes everything he did to build that brand identity thanks to the use of public relations. For the organizational purposes of this article, Hitchcock's public relations approach can be classified as printed word, television, posters, trailers, and cameos.

4.1. Printed Word

As said above, from his British period (1925-1939), Hitchcock cultivated a publicist and public relations mentality. He forged a public reputation from his beginnings through the dissemination in newspapers and magazines of the recurring elements of his movies. He was active in the press (through the publication of articles and interviews in film magazines). Hitchcock created quality content that showed his ability and unique view of cinema to persuade the critics he was more than an average movie director. Hitchcock, for example, showed his technical and narrative ability as well as his theories on how to create suspense and terror.

Kapsis (1990) argues "one factor important in the historical reception of films is the biographical legend or public reputation of the artist" (p. 11). Public relations play a significant role in the construction of celebrities' reputation and can be considered a cultural mediator (Ciszek, 2020; García, 2023). Reputation influences how viewers derive meaning from a film. That is what happened, for example, with the film *Marnie* (1964), whose reception was deeply shaped by all the work Hitchcock did with Truffaut and other members of the *Nouvelle vague* to be considered an author (Wood, 2002).

One example of something he did in England encapsulates this public relations approach. In the late 1920s, he cultivated relationships with influential members of the British Film Society, a club that exposed their members to alternative forms of cinema. There, he met influential critic Cedric Belfrage who in 1926 authored an article in the film magazine *Picturegoer* titled "Alfred the Great" that praised Hitchcock as a young and disruptive movie director (Kapsis, 1990).

His promotional activities with journalists gained intensity during the 30s, perhaps because Hitchcock envisioned himself moving to the United States. One of the aspects he used was his physique. He used his obesity and girth, exhibited his British extravagance in his own articles, some of them not even written by Hitchcock but by some screenwriter, and when he met journalists as an element to bring media attention to his persona (Gottlieb, 1995; Montero, 2014). In these articles, he challenged authority. For example, he criticized Hollywood stars, to whom he considered "livestock." The outcome

of all this was that in the 40s, Hitchcock's shots achieved a media coverage superior to any other film maker such as Frank Capra or even John Ford, "There was a publicity campaign that separated Hitchcock from the rest of the conventional film makers" (Castro de Paz, 2012, p. 4).

One major hit in his career was the publication of Hitchcock/Truffaut (1985 [1966]), a dialogue between Hitchcock and Francois Truffaut that soon would become a classic film book. Was it publicity the publication of this book? Yes, and not. On one hand, it was a letter request of Truffaut, not a Hitchcock idea, who, then a film critic in Cahiers de Cinema, wanted to vindicate the figure of Hitchcock as an auteur. Hitchcock gave Truffaut the opportunity of talking with him for a week in his office of Universal Studios. They talked about his movies and cinema in general for 50 hours, although only 26 hours are preserved. Obviously, Hitchcock did that because he knew the influence French critics could have on the rest of the world. Giving Truffaut his time for these interviews was the best time investment of Hitchcock in all his efforts as publicist. This book was never out of print (New Wave Film, n.d.) and it is considered a classic of cinema studies. In 2010 Hitchcock/Truffaut is considered second in the prestigious film magazine Sight and Sound 's poll of the greatest books on film (British Film Institute, 2020). The book and Truffaut's interviews are also the inspiration of the documentary Hitchcock/Truffaut (Jones, 2015) in which major film directors such as Peter Bogdanovich, Paul Schrader, Martin Scorsese, and Olivier Assayas talk about the book's influence on them. While Hitchcock did not obviously need to publish a book to be famous or even to have a strong reputation, Hitchcock/Truffaut gave him definitively the status of an auteur and a sort of immortality that printed word has in opposition to other forms of art, such as sculpture, painting or even film, whose items are more vulnerable to the passage of time, "only history, written history, could last" (Kagan, 2010, p. 73).

4.2. Posters

Movie posters were another valuable tool to build Hitchcock's brand image. Indeed, they are still one of the most important marketing tools to market a movie (March, 2013). In his British period, Hitchcock showed in the poster in a secondary role. First, there were the actors and second a brief "directed by Alfred Hitchcock".

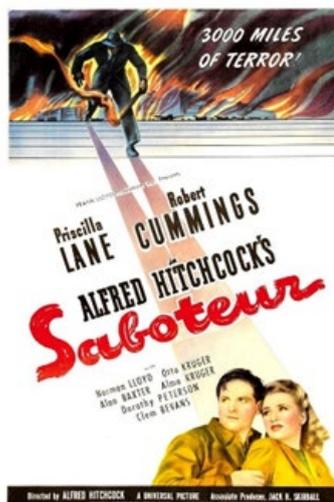
Figure 2. Movie poster of 39 steps (1935).



Source: <http://www.impawards.com/>

The main reason is that Hitchcock did not have a niche or genre as a director. He directed adaptations from theatre, romantic movies and even musicals, which was in detriment of his brand (Montero, 2014). Kapsis (1990) argues his reputation as the head of suspense evolved slower than his reputation as the best director of England. It was not until Saboteur (1942), his fifth American movies, when Hitchcock shows as Alfred Hitchcock's Saboteur with the same font size than the main actors. It was the first time that he appeared on the poster as a main holder of the film's quality, assuming the role of author.

Figure 3. Movie poster of Saboteur (1942)



Source: <https://www.allposters.com/>

With the increase of his reputation as a public figure, Hitchcock’s degree of exposure on the posters increased. *The Rope* (1948) would be the first film in which Hitchcock himself appeared on the poster, a trend he would keep in several of his next films and for different markets. The location and size of his name, even more prominent than James Stewart, is already telling the public he is the real star of the movies. This is something that has not happened again at a publicity level with the director of that caliber.

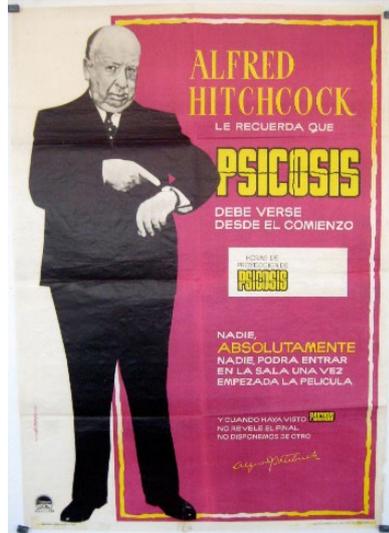
Figure 4. French poster of *The Rope* (1948)



Source: <https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/>

In sum, the movie posters of Hitchcock’s movies played a significant role in his strategy to build a personal brand as a star director, and the head of suspense. This strategy only can work when movies achieve big commercial and popular successes, and the star director has reached formidable credibility.

Figure 5. Spanish poster of Psycho (1961).



Source: <https://movieposters.ha.com/>

4.3. Trailers

Movie trailers influence the popularity and monetary success of a film. The influence of violent, sexual, or humorous scenes influence the movie's returns (Karray & Debernitz, 2015).

Figure 6. First scene of the Frenzy (1972) trailer.



Source: (Universal Pictures)

Hitchcock movies' trailers usually contained all these elements: Violence in the case of Psycho (1960) or The birds (1963), sexual tension in the case of the Rear Window (1954) or Vertigo (1958), and humor on the case of The trouble with Harry (1955) or Frenzy (1972) that starts with the body of Hitchcock floating as a dead body in the Thames river and at the same time announcing all the horrors the movie includes.

Hitchcock was aware of that. There is at least one trailer for every movie after the first version of The man who knew too much (1934) in which there is a mention of terms such as "intrigue" or "terror" (Bokor & Kerzoncuf, 2005a, 2005b; Montero, 2014). In the following movies, there is an in crescendo of Hitchcock's presence. In The Secret Agent (1936), Hitchcock is introduced as "The master of mystery melodrama...weaves his magic story-telling art." In The lady vanishes (1938), Hitchcock is found twice with the thriller genre, "The Lady Vanishes, the greatest of Hitchcock's thrillers", "Hitchcock stands

unrivalled as the incomparable master of thrills." In his last British movie, *Jamaica Inn* (1939), Hitchcock, already a star director in his country, shows up.

Once in Hollywood, his presence in trailers is reduced. In the trailer of *Rebecca* (1940), for example, David O. Selznick is named four times and Hitchcock only twice. It is *Saboteur* (1942) his first Hollywood movie in which Hitchcock becomes one of the first attractions of the film, "the screen's master of the unexpected." After that, *Shadow of a doubt* (1943), *Lifeboat* (1944), *Spellbound* (1945), Hitchcock begins to have a greater presence in his trailers. His trademark features will be associated with words like thrillers, suspense, horror, and drama. In *Notorious* (1946), his definitive slogan will take shape: Alfred Hitchcock, the expert in suspense.

From *Psycho* (1960) onwards, Hitchcock begins to appear in the trailers of his movies and to introduce commentaries. In *Psycho* (1960) or *The birds* (1963) two trailers are developed, a short version and a long version in which Hitchcock is the protagonist, few images of the films appear, and the director guides the audience through the scenarios in which the film has been filmed. In any case, the appearance of the director in these trailers shows an elevated level of complicity with the viewer who feels an elevated level of complicity with an author and an expert.

Figure 7. First scene of the second trailer of *The family plot* (1976).



Source: (Universal Pictures)

This trend will continue in the rest of his feature films. In the trailer for *Frenzy* (1972), Hitchcock is almost part of the plot. He is seen touring various locations and making jokes about gruesome elements of the scene: a woman's leg sticking out of a sack of potatoes in the market or retrieving a pen from a corpse lying on the road. In the two trailers of his last movie, *Family plot* (1976), Hitchcock shows up, introduces the characters, and makes comments about scenes. In the second trailer, he is in a cemetery while Gounod's *Funeral march of a marionette* plays.

Hitchcock is a pioneer in the promotion of his films because of his personal involvement both physically and artistically. He also opens a new paradigm within the positioning in the golden age of Hollywood, the search for a broad niche of viewers interested in thrillers or horror films, at a time when it was rarely nuanced ingenerate to seek an audience as general as possible (Altman, 1999).

4.4. Cameos

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, cameo can be defined as "a small theatrical role usually performed by a well-known actor and often limited to a single scene" (n.d.). Some scholars consider cameos as product placement (Baños & Rodríguez, 2005; Montero, 2014), while others talk about "cameos of products" to describe when brand products are placed on the screen of a fiction product with an intentionality (Newell et al., 2010). In all cases, although product placement is usually used to talk

about physical products that appear in TV programs, shows or movies, it is handy and appropriate to talk about product placement of the brand Alfred Hitchcock, his brief presence in most of his films.

From the very beginning of his trajectory, cameos are a Hitchcock's sign of identity. We can find his first cameo as early in his career as in *The Lodger*, a history of London fog (1926). While in his long interview with Truffaut, Hitchcock argues his intention was utilitarian, to complete the casting, the truth is he never abandoned this practice and, as said before, his publicity approach to movies was already present in those years.

Figure 8. First cameo in *The Lodger* (1926)



Source: (Gainsborough Pictures)

Indeed, in *Rebecca* (1941), his first movie in Hollywood, he already appears in a scene just behind George Sanders with a hat and raincoat. Hitchcock had a big budget to make that movie and no need to put himself on the stage. The British director was conscious being present briefly in his movies was another element of differentiation.

It was sort of humoristic as well as an expression of his power as an auteur that was able to afford those self-publicity extravagances. In today's world, it could be considered an exercise of gamification since, for the viewers, an incentive of Hitchcock movies was to guess where and when he was doing a cameo. Most of his cameos were obvious and not part of the action.

Figure 9. Cameo in *Rebecca* (1941)



Source: (Selznick International Pictures)

This is the case, for example, of his appearance in *North by Northwest* (1959) where Hitchcock appears during the opening title sequence, which shows New Yorkers rushing home from work, just missing his bus. Likewise, in *Vertigo* (1960), Hitchcock makes his cameo appearance about 11 minutes into the movie. He plays a man wearing a grey suit, walking down the sidewalk past Gavin Elster's shipbuilding company.

Figure 10. Cameo in *North by Northwest* (1959)



Source: (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

It has been pointed out that cameos start to be popular in a period where the idea of classic cinema starts to perish. In the post-classic cinema period, which starts in the 60s, showing the story is not considered enough and the storyteller-film maker starts to gain prominence in the narration (McElhaney, 2006). One of the best examples that we can find of that in Hitchcock's movies is his cameo in *Marnie* (1964). In that scene, Tippi Hedren walks down the hallway of a hotel, and the camera waits for Hitchcock to make his appearance: he steps out of one of the rooms and looks fleetingly into the camera lens. Spectators are expelled from the film's diegesis as if it were an advertising interruption (Bellour, 1977).

It is indisputable that Hitchcock gathers the spirit of a cinematographic time that wants to challenge the conventions of classic cinema, however the cameos increase the commerciality of his films, the popularity of his personal brand and even his trademark as an author who allows himself certain extravagances that others cannot.

4.5. Television

In the 50s, studios started to consider television as a competitor (Campbell et al., 2020). The cinema has lost part of its public. Instead of seeing a threat on the rise of TV, Hitchcock saw an ally to continue solidifying and forging his personal brand.

The origin of this idea is in Richard E. Decker, a Florida businessperson, who decided to publish a mystery and suspense magazine called Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine. Hitchcock did not have to do much of anything, just give his name to the magazine as a guarantee of the quality of the stories. In exchange, he made good money and, for the purpose of this paper, enhanced his personal brand and created synergies with his career as a movie director.

This collaboration planted the seed for Alfred Hitchcock Presents (1955-1962), which was extended to the one-hour Alfred Hitchcock Hour (1962-1965). This show included a weekly mystery or suspense episode of half hour filmed fast and with a low budget. Hitchcock functioned as host, providing his image and name, and recording his presentations grouped in four shot sessions per year (Montero, 2014). Hitchcock was offered a lucrative contract, earning \$129,000 per episode plus the rights for each show, which were returned to him after the first broadcast (Seligmann, 2017). James B. Allardice wrote the show's lead-ins and lead-outs presented by Hitchcock, but he was not mentioned in the credits at all.

The outcome in terms of reputation could not be more rewarding for Hitchcock, who showed a personal relationship with his viewers by directly addressing them and thereby building an audience loyalty.

Figure 11: Hitchcock's silhouette in the credits of Alfred Hitchcock presents and The Alfred Hitchcock Hour



Source: 20 minutos (2016)

His commitment, more formal than real, to television in the mid-1950s made him play a leading role in the promotion of his own films, which included trailers, printed matter, such as posters and advertisements, voice recordings, and various merchandising articles. The Hitchcock touch became a signature (his esprit and his sense of dark humor). Therefore, merchandising items were released under his name, such as the LP Alfred Hitchcock Music to Be Murdered by (1958), Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine (from 1956), or the board game Alfred Hitchcock Presents WHY (1958) (Seligmann, 2017).

Of all these various media formats promoting Hitchcock and his work, the TV program turned out to be the most valuable one. It was the perfect tool to introduce the director to a wider audience on a regular basis, and it lasted 10 years with a total of 361 episodes (Hitchcock only directed eighteen of them). No movie was ever to give him that level of ongoing visibility and mental awareness.

Hitchcock was a pioneer in multichannel or intertextual public relations. Dyer noted, "star images are always extensive, multimedia, intertextual" (1986, p. 3). Dyer classifies the media content that form a star image in four categories: promotion, publicity, films, and commentaries/criticisms (1986, pp. 68-72). Silvia and Anzur (2011) argue as well that good public relations must be conducted storytelling through multiple platforms. We live in an era in which with the rise of new media and the increased content creation, the ability of content creators to manage and guide their brand has become more important than ever (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016). That was a major contribution of Alfred Hitchcock, and his TV collaborations played a significant role.

5. Conclusions

This paper sets up connections between film, personal branding, and public relations. It contributes to the field of public relations in diverse ways. First, it suggests the need to trace back the history of public relations by paying attention to what happens in other industries and sectors beyond the corporate world and politics. Public relations history books and manuals, tend to pay attention mostly to American corporate men, politicians, and press agents from the first part of the 20th century. The usual suspects are Henry Ford, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Edward Bernays, and Ivy Lee (Freberg, 2020; Kelleher, 2020; Seitel, 2019). But there are others, some of them from the artistic world, such as Walt Disney, Dalí, Picasso or Hitchcock that receive extraordinarily little or no attention. It is still surprising the absence of non-American figures and corporate centrism of the public relations history books (Cutlip, 1994, 1995). The analysis of figures such as Hitchcock's public relations legacy suggests new ways to explain the history of public relations to students that may be more attractive.

Second, Hitchcock's ability to use communication resources and build synergies to build his personal brand highlights how artistic creativity provides not only a competitive advantage in the entrepreneurial world (Fillis, 2000), but also in terms of publicity and public relations. What was

remarkable about Hitchcock was not only his superior technique in filming (Fillis, 2015a), but the intrinsic capacity of his products to communicate and project his personal brand.

Third, Hitchcock is a good example of integration between art, publicity, and use of personal (even body) characteristics to build a high-end but also a popular reputation. Few artists have this capacity to reach the masses, and even fewer popular stars are highly regarded by the cultural elites. Hitchcock knew how to do that thanks to a balanced symbiosis between his edgy filmmaking and his creative and out-of-the-script publicity efforts in multiple channels. A public relations professor should see the potential of Hitchcock's work to talk about very contemporary subjects such as the construction of personal branding and building content synergies through multichannel communication.

It would make perfect sense to include a sidebar or case study about Hitchcock in a textbook on public relations, discussing his ability to communicate with the public through his films, corporate logo, music associated to his persona (Gounod's piece) and TV presence. While sticking to current affairs is important, it is also important to learn from past, multidisciplinary, and creative experiences. Future scholarship should take these names into consideration.

Fourth, Hitchcock's public relations efforts also talk about the importance of merging filmmaking, deeds, and public relations to move from fame, being well-known in your field of ability, to celebrity status. Hitchcock is a good example of somebody who started as a famous, talented, and edgy movie director in England to become a global brand. The English director is a pioneer in the importance of displaying a multichannel strategy to release content to build and merge a reputation. He underlines the importance of content creation, and how to make use of synergies between film, TV, music, press, advertising, and books,

Fifth, the British director's approach to publicity highlights how good multichannel communication and content creation is usually a collective work. Hitchcock's collaborators may often go unmentioned, yet the successful buildup of the 'Hitchcock brand' is not only the merit of Alfred Hitchcock. "It must be credited to the vast publicity machinery promoting the director's various activities" (Seligmann, 2017, p. 130). The collective work dimension of public relations is a topic that should be discussed.

To conclude, the importance of concepts such as personal brand, multichannel, synergies and high value content creation position Alfred Hitchcock as a referent in the history of communication and public relations.

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