

# Film Marketing and Brand Continuity: The Case of “Redirected/Už Lietuvą!”

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**Abstract.** The analysis of the most successful cases in the Lithuanian film marketing, which has also been related with the use of social media and integrated marketing communication, should undoubtedly emphasise an example of *Redirected*: it reveals a consistent need to promote films in an innovative way which attracts the audience’s attention and motivates them to watch a film, especially in smaller film industries. As the Lithuanian film industry belongs to the smaller ones, innovative marketing communication strategy alone cannot suffice to motivate the audience to watch the film. Therefore, the film itself has to be either very significant (e.g., a sequel) or, as in the case of *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*, has to extend the sequel while at the same time be “something new, but still familiar” to the film spectators.

**Keywords:** film marketing; brand continuity; social media; integrated marketing communication; assemblage theory; Redirected

## Kino rinkodara ir prekės ženklo tęstinumas: „Redirected / Už Lietuvą!“ atvejo analizė

**Santrauka.** Analizuojant sėkmingiausias Lietuvos kino rinkodaros atvejus, kurie susiję su socialinių medijų naudojimu ir integruota rinkodaros komunikacija, neabejotinai verta išskirti „Redirected“ pavyzdį. Šio atvejo analizė atskleidžia nuoseklus ir novatoriško požiūrio poreikį siekiant pritraukti žiūrovų dėmesį ir motyvuoti žiūrėti filmą, ypač mažesnėse kino industrijose. Kadangi Lietuvos kino industrija priskiriama mažosioms, vien novatoriškos rinkodaros komunikacijos strategijos nepakanka, todėl pats filmas turi būti arba labai reikšmingas (pavyzdžiui, tęsinys), arba, kaip „Redirected / Už Lietuvą“ atveju, turi pratęsti tęsinį ir tuo pat metu kino žiūrovams būti „kažkas naujo, bet vis tiek pažįstamo“.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** kino rinkodara; prekės ženklo tęstinumas; socialinės medijos; integruota rinkodaros komunikacija; *assemblage* teorija; Redirected

## Introduction

At a basic level, all films are brands and only some films can establish themselves as strong brands (for instance, *Batman*, *Harry Potter*, *James Bond*) by combining various elements such as a name, a logo, a symbol, brand characters, a slogan, a jingle, or signage into a formula that consumers find appealing (Keller, 2008). Currently, almost every consumer

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brand is present on social media, and advertisers and marketers are eagerly integrating social media in their digital strategies (Voorveld, 2019), which proves the significance of social media in consumers' daily lives.

It is only recently that film marketing has become associated with branding and been researched into from the perspective of consumer experience and engagement (Gurdeep et al., 2021; Kerrigan, 2017), even though certain commercial examples were analysed earlier (Young et al., 2008; O'Reilly, Kerrigan, 2013) and some cases focussed on individual issues such as, for instance, the involvement of commercial brands in filmmaking (Gubbins, 2012). Therefore, films as brands and their consumption journey as part of the whole film industry supply chain should now be taken into account and addressed. This need is especially pronounced in smaller media markets such as the Baltic countries where the film budgets, compared to Western standards, are limited (Ibrus, Rohn, 2019) ranging from around 10–15 thousand EUR to 600–800 thousand EUR per film and its production (Lithuanian Film Centre, 2023; Estonian Film Institute, 2023). While Hollywood studio model and its average marketing costs can reach 35–45 million US dollars per film (Vitkauskaitė, 2020),).

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been previously applied in product placement in film industry since it is no longer only a marketing stance for big companies with large budgets, but relatively inexpensive way for small business to promote its brand (Kramolis, 2015) and especially to promote a film as a brand in the market more effectively in cases when film production budgets are low. Such is the case of Lithuanian film industry, where the possible support for film distribution and marketing is ranging from 1.2 to 8 thousand EUR (Lithuanian Film Centre, 2022). The effect of integrated marketing communication on the 21st-century marketplaces was recognised by Don E. Schultz and Heidi F. Schultz (1998), while the relation between market and brand orientation was emphasised by Reid, Luxton and Mavondo (2005)

IMC as a concept is defined by Schultz and Shultz (1998) as a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate, over a period of time, coordinated, measurable, and persuasive brand communication programmes with consumers, customers, prospects and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences. J. Kliatchko (2005) expands the IMC concept by categorising them under at least three approaches: one-voice, integrated, and coordinated; where integration is seen as having a clear and consistent image, position, message and/or theme across all marketing communication disciplines or tools; and coordination is seen as one to produce holistic communications campaigns while strengthening not only the brand image but also influencing consumer behaviour. In social media and its content all the elements appear integrated into the mixture of personal branding, promotion of other commercial brands and private life of the influencers (Dominguez et al., 2023). This brings the attention towards the impact of transmediality, hybridisation and the need to meet the interests of consumers while creating and coordinating communication in the entertainment industry and film industry in particular.

In the marketing communication of a film, the identification of the brand meaning can be seen as the starting point of the film consumption journey (Kerrigan, O'Reilly, 2013). Since films are products like any other goods, they have a marketing mix, which includes such elements as actors, genre, release strategy, director, script, a creative team, and age classification (Kerrigan, 2005). According to Demirel et al. (2018), a film marketing mix is based on the traditional marketing mix (4P), which covers product, price, promotion, and place (distribution). Marketing plays an important role in the film's opening weekend, and word-of-mouth (WOM) has been frequently cited as the crucial factor that determines a long-term success of motion pictures and other experience goods (Demirel et al., 2018). Product placement and its growing role in the marketing communication mix is also emphasised by Nappolini and Hackley (2008) as it affects the audience's understanding of the brand and, especially, how the brand acquires meaning in the film.

The aim of the article is to analyse marketing communication and the elements of assemblage of one of the most successful Lithuanian film *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*. Since the film was produced and shown in between the *Zero* sequels, the analysis goes beyond the figures related to the box-office and the audience; in addition to this, micro-assemblage, meso-assemblage, and macro-assemblage multilevel perspectives are applied in the analysis to demonstrate how previous film sequels as brands can affect the box-office and audience attendance figures in small media markets.

Assemblage theory by Preece et al. (2019) as an approach is applied to understand brands and explain the stabilisation and destabilisation of practices (DeLanda, 2016) that can result in the creation of the brand meaning and brand longevity. Assemblage as an agentic system draws attention to the potential contained within the material and expressive capacities of the assemblage while the components of the assemblage are not fixed and new components can be enrolled into the assemblage as it evolves (Preece et al., 2019). In the case of the *Zero* sequel, *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* became such a new component, expanding its local and international target audience by featuring the global context and international issues (whereas previous sequels *Zero* and *Zero II* were predominantly focussed on the local context and targeting the local audience).

The research problem of the article is expressed through an argument that in small media markets such as in the Lithuanian film industry, films based on previous sequels, yet at the same time expanding them as a brand, tend to be more recognisable and more engaging for the audience, and as a consequence, result in a more impressive box-office.

## **The impact of social media on the film consumption journey**

The success of the Internet as a marketing tool lies in its ability to spark an early interest of the audience and attract and maintain their attention from the beginning of the film product development. As shown in Figure 1, script development is among one of the first stages in film production; even though the actual distribution and advertising starts almost in the end of this process, Michael Gubbins (2012) notes that brands have actually driven the entire project and the cases where brand and content relationship become an

important part of the film finance have already been encountered. Moreover, brands are striving to tap into the audience and share a relationship between the content-makers and the viewers (Gubbins, 2012).

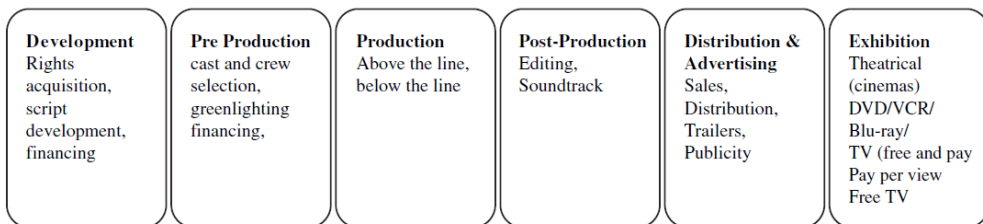


Figure 1. **The film industry supply chain**

Source: Kerrigan, F. (2010)

Gurdeep et al. (2021) emphasise that the film consumption journey can be classified into three stages: before, during, and after viewing. The consumer’s choice to select a film for viewing is dictated by a film’s marketability and playability. According to Hart et al. (2016), marketability indicates how attractive a film is to its intended target audience by comprising key marketable and commercial elements that are taken into consideration when releasing a film to the market; and for consumers, these components might formulate a presentation of clues that may or may not initiate interest when making sense of new and old films. Also, marketability can be influenced by the actor(s), creative team, film’s genre, age rating, release window (Kerrigan, O’Reilly, 2013, Gurdeep et al., 2021, Hart et al., 2016).

Regarding playability – here, the key elements are production value, quality of script, and acting; these have an impact on consumers who evaluate the playability of the product by comparing their pre-expectations of the film to the consumption experience (Hart et al., 2016). As noted by Kerrigan and Yalkin (2009), a pleasurable experience is likely to extend the consumption experience such as initiating positive word-of-mouth.

Social media, on the other hand, affect consumer behaviour and the interaction between the consumer and the brands (Voorveld, 2019). The 21st century is witnessing an explosion of Internet-based messages transmitted through media: they have become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behaviour including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, and post-purchase communication and evaluation (Mangold, Faulds, 2009).

Social media enable companies to communicate with their customers, and at the same time enable customers to communicate with each other. What has happened in film marketing can be referred to as *intermediality* where narratives move across various media (Nikunen, 2007). Media organisations could develop online activities for consumers; however, the success might be related with the consumer ability to develop their own

word-of-mouth: it is visible how Hollywood film studios and their marketing campaigns have switched from the traditional advertising towards new ways of developing their relationship with customers. An example of this is online and viral marketing. Even though the concept of viral marketing was introduced as early as 1996, it was only with the spread of social media that viral marketing has received more attention (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2011).

From one perspective, viral marketing allows companies to promote their products and services with low budgets and still reach the same levels of awareness that are usually only achievable with high-frequency TV advertising; meanwhile, it is electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) where a certain form of a marketing message related to a company and its brand or product is transmitted in an exponentially growing way, often through the use of social media applications (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2011).

As marketing communications represent the voice of a brand and the means by which companies can establish a dialogue with consumers (Keller, 2001), the creation of brand value has become of crucial importance: in order to overcome the traditional and new media fragmentation, new ways of product positioning through branding, brand orientation and integration of media through marketing mix should be emphasised. One of the recent examples is *Barbenheimer* where two different films such as *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie* were released simultaneously using counterprogramming marketing strategy and targeting very different audiences. The films were presented to the public in a way that fostered WOM and EWOM prior to the release leading to further long-lasting discussions about these films, which might have served as encouragement for the audience to watch both films.

## Film brand distinctiveness and integrated marketing communication

The elements considered by consumers in their selection of films such as the leading actor, script, genre, age classification and release strategy (also referred to as a release window) can be conceptualised as the key signifiers of brand identity. Thus, marketability requires clarity of the message and harmony in relation to various brand elements, which can be communicated to consumers through marketing communication texts such as posters, trailers, advertisements, reviews, and websites (Kerrigan, O'Reilly, 2013; Kerrigan, 2010).

Visually, film posters create a "want-to-see" effect in the mind of the consumer through a selling proposition such as cast, genre, etc. (Kerrigan, 2010). Moreover, the images featured in the film marketing materials compete with other visual representations; therefore, it is possible to identify three processes justifying the design of specific film marketing material used for the target audience (Kerrigan, 2010):

1. resemblance – featuring the key actor and communicating the impression of "a star vehicle";
2. cause and effect – for instance, visual communication depicts heightened emotions and tension, e.g., humour in a comedy;
3. signification – an act or an image can stand for a different act or image; e.g., smiling symbolises happiness, etc.

However, poster design cannot be overcomplicated in order to catch the attention of the consumer, and should target the audience in accordance with the genre, style, film stars, and emotions expressed in the film.

Another type of film marketing materials, related to the film poster in terms of promoting the film to the target audience, is a film trailer. While film posters are displayed, mostly in a physical form, in frequently attended venues and can only depict the characters and not the movement or narrative, film trailers, on the other hand, can convey a narrative structure, are a piece of artwork by themselves, and can be categorised into specific types or forms.

Let us take a closer look at film trailers and their aims. Trailers must at once withhold the fullness of the cinema event while achieving a “sense of heightened presence” (Kernan, 2004). Consequently, a film trailer creates certain tension: giving the consumer enough information to persuade them to choose the film and, on the other hand, avoiding to reveal too much of the story. Therefore, a trailer has an introduction or a conclusion that addresses the audience and provides information about the film. According to Kerrigan (2010), it could be done either through the use of narrative or presented nonverbally in the titles. This is combined with selected scenes from the film presented as a montage of quick-cut action scenes. These scenes provide a sense of the narrative structure and genre as well as introduce the main characters.

Integrated marketing communication and the value of the brand are also connected through brand distinctiveness where communication influences how the consumer sees the brand. Brand orientation, on the other hand, seeks to add value to an existing or new product or service to give it a competitive advantage and a reason for customers to choose it (Reid et al., 2005). Value is increasingly being created outside the physical product by such factors as interactions between the customer and organisation, responsiveness to complaints, and customer needs and expectations (Reid et al., 2005), and the successful added value depends on how effective IMC is.

A more detailed analysis of film marketing and marketing mix shows that it comprises a creative team of actors, directors, producers and other creative staff; however, for consumers, it is frequently the star (lead actor) that becomes a point of reference when choosing a particular film: the established star (actor) system at the Hollywood studios is seen as one of the major elements of the competitive advantage that the Hollywood majors have over other film industries (Kerrigan, 2010). Among other film marketing elements such as script and genre, they can be seen as a collective concept that, in the minds of a filmmaker and a marketer, becomes essential for positioning the film and targeting the appropriate audience (Kerrigan, 2010).

Moreover, marketability is not a single element having an impact on the consumer because the identification of the brand meaning from a marketing communication of the film can be seen as the starting point of the journey followed by the decision whether to watch the film or not, where viewing constitutes the main element of the journey (Kerrigan, O'Reilly, 2013). Following the viewing, evaluations are made based on the pre-journey perceptions of the film through the cultural codes available and the consumption experience

itself may alter the perception of these codes (Kerrigan, O'Reilly, 2013). In this sense, continuity and change of film brands should be emphasised since consumers consider abstract global features of the film referring to the entire product rather than the specific aspects (Cooper-Martin, 1991).

## Continuity and change of film brands

To assess the significance of the continuity and change for the film brands in regard to the audience's attention and interest, we have to analyse consumer engagement and brand longevity. Firstly, consumer involvement, consumer participation and brand expressiveness drive consumer-brand engagement (Gurdeep et al., 2021). According to film-brand engagement conceptual framework (Gurdeep et al., 2021), film-brand engagement depends on film identity coherence which leads towards film-brand identification. There are at least four important factors such as popularity, fan-based community, sequels, and emotional bonding that need to be achieved through marketing efforts (Gurdeep et al., 2021) for the film to be identified as a brand.

In the earlier mentioned conceptual framework, popularity is connected with franchise and merchandise and sequels with iconic status. Approximately, only one in ten films recoups its production costs at the box-office in Hollywood; therefore, sequels and developing film franchises have become a formula for box-office success (Gong et al., 2011). This is one of the ways film studios manage the risk and, on a large scale, sequels have lower demand uncertainty because the film-going public is familiar with the plot, characters and overall appeal of the original film (Gong et al., 2011).

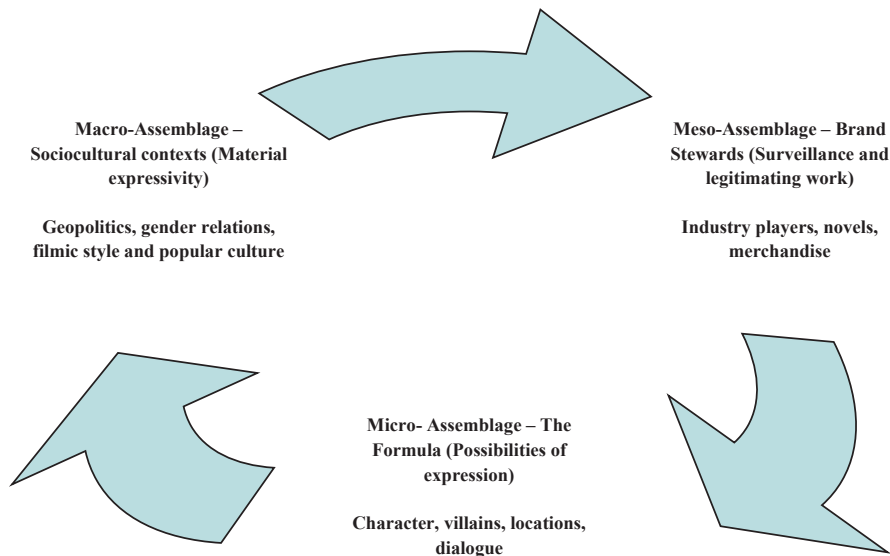


Figure 2. **Brand assemblage as a set**

Source: Preece et al. (2019)



Sequels could be analysed from the perspective of serial brands since all brands are serial brands as long as they need to perform continually over time to secure the return on capital required by their owners (Preece et al., 2019). Also, sequels as serial brands can be easier to manage in terms of financial risk; nevertheless, they can face a challenge of providing something new and yet familiar, which affects the audience's attention and interest. Therefore, brand longevity refers to the period a brand has endured, and a brand has attained longevity when it is able to deploy strategies to prolong its life in the face of entropy (Preece et al., 2019). Thanks to Preece, Kerrigan and O'Reilly (2019) and their application of assemblage theory to the James Bond franchise, we can notice how macro-assemblage, meso-assemblage, and micro-assemblage function as a set within wider macro-sociocultural contexts and how they are analysed through the multilevel perspective. For instance, the brand stewards – the cast and the crew – are part of meso-assemblage influenced by macro-assemblage, i.e. the sociocultural contexts.

According to Preece et al. (2019), successful serial brands operate at various levels, enforced and legitimised by an authority structure that looks inward, i.e., toward the micro-level assemblage of possibility (developed from the prior iterations of the brand), while also drawing upon an externally focused macro-level assemblage (sociocultural contexts). Therefore, continuity and change of brand are components of brand longevity and will be later analysed within the case of *Redirected/Už Lietuvq!*. This film is not a part of the Lithuanian sequel *Zero*, *Zero II* and *Zero III*; however, the attendance and box-office figures have showed that it is still the leading film in Lithuania and its success was impacted by the prior establishment of the brand within a significant period of time (from 2006 to 2014). Another aspect of the analysis addresses the difference in the context and the targeted audiences: while the first two films were based on the local context and mainly targeted the local audience, *Redirected/Už Lietuvq!* represents the global context and has appealed to the international audience.

## Methodology

**The aim of the research** is to examine the rationale behind the success, i.e. significant attendance and impressive box-office figures, of the film *Redirected/Už Lietuvq!*. To achieve this aim, two objectives were set. Firstly, to identify exact integrated marketing communication tools that were used to promote the film and compare the findings. Secondly, to analyse the film from the perspectives of micro-assemblage, meso-assemblage, and macro-assemblage in order to explain the multiple levels and various elements enrolled in different combinations enabling the continuation and change of the film brand. The first objective is defined to explain the significance of IMC tools used in the film marketing campaign targeted at the audience, which also increased the motivation and engagement of the audience. The second objective reflects the content of the film, the impact of the previous *Zero* sequels and its iterations in *Redirected/Už Lietuvq!*, and the level of its contribution to the considerable figures of the viewers and box-office .



## Research type and methods

The previous research of film marketing and branding followed either the socio-cultural perspective and the account of symbolic nature, the combination of consumption practices in the film industry with theoretical perspectives from marketing, and branding (Kerrigan, O'Reilly, 2013) or the film theory of mise-en-scene accompanied by subjective personal introspection (auto-ethnography) while developing an understanding of brand representation within a film (Nappolini, Hackley, 2008). The latter approach is common in consumer research and has also been employed to illustrate how consumers respond to marketing materials and how these materials influence the choice and decisions whether to watch the film (Hart et al., 2016). Another example of the socio-cultural perspective is related to the application of assemblage theory. Preece et al. (2019) apply the theory to explain how serial brands attain longevity within evolving socio-cultural contexts. In their approach, films are seen as structured sets of signifiers that communicate meanings decoded by the viewers, but as the research object is a serial brand that has survived for more than 55 years, the analysis predominantly focussed on archival materials.

Demirel et al. (2018) applied only quantitative methodology to explain the effects of marketing mix in terms of its forms, relationship with audiences, and the audience's purchase intentions. Kohli et al. (2021) are also worth mentioning at this point: they used a mixed-method approach combining semistructured interviews, purposive sampling, and surveys to answer why and how consumers engage just with certain films, and not with all films as brands. This approach was selected in the case of *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* combined with the application of different methods to address the context of contemporary small media markets and analyse how the films in these markets can achieve impressive attendance and box-office results.

The mixed-method approach allows to capitalise on the strengths of each method while offsetting their respective weaknesses and is an advantage in terms of data evaluation and triangulation, which can be useful when studying different aspects of a phenomenon, and when investigating into the relationship between macro- and micro-levels (Bryman & Bell, 2007). At first, descriptive statistics and its critical analysis were used, which in the context of communication research enables to summarise and describe the data (Vaughan, 2001). A social media channel (YouTube) and secondary statistical data from the *Facts and Figures* reports were selected for the comparison and analysis. Also, an interview with the film producer Daiva Jovaišienė served as a reliable source to obtain information that could not be gained by observation alone (Berger, 2014) and interpret the statistical data.

The quantitative findings alone cannot illustrate how other film sequels by the same film director Emilis Vėlyvis have influenced the attendance of *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*; therefore, content analysis (Bryman, 2004) was used in accordance with assemblage theory by Preece et al. (2019) where aspects of micro-, meso- and macro-assemblages were analysed while identifying how such elements as character, villains, location, industry

players, merchandise, geopolitics, gender relations, filmic style and popular culture were portrayed in the film.

## Results

The film *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* was produced in 2013 and officially released in the Lithuanian cinema theatres in 2014. It became the most watched film in Lithuania in 2014 generating EUR 1,344,000 of income and reaching around 292,000 viewers.

### The analysis of the box-office and IMC channels

While *Zero*, which was produced in 2005 and released in 2006, failed to get into the top 10 most watched films in Lithuania that year (Facts and Figures, 2007), *Zero II* showed more impressive results by reaching 71,743 admissions and EUR 270,690 income in 2010 (Facts and Figures, 2010). *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*, in 2014, became the most visited film generating the highest earnings in Lithuania (Table 1). *Zero III* was produced after *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* in 2016 and in 2017 reached fewer viewers – 194,486, while earning the income of EUR 1,008,470 (Facts and Figures, 2018).

Table 1. Top-5 national films in the Lithuanian film industry by admissions and box-office in 2014-2019

Year	Title	Admissions	Box-office (EUR)
2014	<i>Redirected</i>	292,654	1,344,041
2018	<i>Tarp pilkų debesų/Ashes in the Snow</i>	240,880	1,295,396
2017	<i>Trys milijonai eurų/Three Million Euros</i>	235,667	1,304,887
2019	<i>Pats sau milionierius/Fake millionaire</i>	204,860	1,259,262
2016	<i>Tarp mūsų berniukų/Between Our Boys</i>	202,951	1,007,464

Source: compiled by the author using *Facts and Figures* (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

According to the film producer Daiva Jovaišienė, earlier, film distribution opportunities were more favourable because then the Lithuanian audience demonstrated a keen interest to see the Lithuanian films and the competition in terms of marketing was barely visible. During that period, the role of television was of crucial importance and in order to be advertised, the film had to convey certain potential and be sensational. Therefore, the film marketing team made a decision to partner with major marketings agents of the time: *TV3*, a television company, that in 2015 had the most visited video platform *tv3play*. *It* (Gemius Baltic) and obtained the right to show the film several times per year; *15min.lt*, the second most visited news portal in Lithuania in 2014–2015 (Gemius Baltic), and *M-1*, a popular radio station.

Quite interestingly, that period happened to coincide with the rise of the “on-demand culture” forms in Lithuania: in 2014, the use of mobile devices and tablets rose by 31.5 % and 11.4 % respectively (Gemius Baltic). Table 3 shows that the admissions of *Redirected* made 43.26 % of all domestic film admissions in the Lithuanian cinema during 2014. Moreover, the revenue of the film accounted for at least one-third of the total box-office by domestic films.

**Table 2. Films screened in Lithuania in 2014**

Films screened (premieres)	Number of films	Admissions	Box-office (EUR)	Market share
Domestic films	14	676,521	3,033,882	21.97 %
Total films	187	3,079,827	13,715,423	-

Source: compiled by the author using *Facts and Figures* (2015)

Facebook and other nonstandard communication were used (for instance, film posters had specific notes saying just three words “one last dinner” for the audience to decrypt the meaning) including a wide variety of video teasers and trailers (depending on the media channel and country) targeted at a specific audience, viral video communication in YouTube featuring a single-sex school under the title of Eastern European Lady School, media releases of multiple interviews with the actors and the director (an interview with D. Jovaišienė).

**Table 3. Different versions of *Redirected* trailers and their results**

Name	Views on Youtube (as of 4 March 2023)
<i>Redirected</i> world version: wedding	~ 77,000
<i>Redirected</i> TV teaser	~ 28,000
<i>Redirected</i> Official Red Band trailer 1	~ 62,000
<i>Redirected</i> Official trailer	~ 147,000

Source: compiled by the author using information from YouTube.

Nevertheless, it is vital to highlight other aspects that have contributed to the success of the film – the role of the main actor Vinnie Jones and his appeal to the international audience as the film was released in both the Lithuanian and English languages and distributed in Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, Turkey, India, Italy, United Kingdom, Russia, and Finland.<sup>1</sup> Also, the communication of the *Redirected* brand was managed employing different forms of advertising through viral video communication (in particular, videos *Eastern European Men School* and *Eastern European Lady School*),

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2275946/companycredits?ref\\_=tt\\_dt\\_co](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2275946/companycredits?ref_=tt_dt_co)

posters, and merchandising of T-shirts and bottles of *Vytautas* mineral water featuring the film title *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*.

Table 4. Results of viral marketing of *Redirected* on social media

	Views on YouTube (as of 4 March 2023)
<i>Eastern European Men School</i>	~ 3,100,000
<i>Eastern European Lady School</i>	~ 874,000

Source: compiled by the author using information from YouTube.

All the above-mentioned communication via different media channels was planned and conducted during different stages of the film production, distribution, and exhibition. The mix of innovative, standard, and nonstandard communication contributed to the further spread of the word-of-mouth and created big explosion on the Internet. The synergy effect was achieved by the increasing demand of information use through digital media, since a rapidly growing number of mobile devices, tablets, and laptop computers were used to access information; therefore, the outcomes of the film marketing campaign would have not been achieved without a) reaching the audience that were frequent users of digital media, and b) the amplifying the word-of-mouth that required nonstandard forms of advertising.

### Micro-, Meso- and Macro-Assemblages in *Redirected*

Following micro-assemblage (possibilities of expression), where such factors as the lead actor and his character, villains, female characters, and locations are taken into consideration, it is necessary to start with the portrayal of Vinnie Jones and his character. Being the main actor and the star in *Redirected*, the protagonist played by Vinnie Jones is depicted as a villain who seeks to reclaim his money and, most importantly, his ring after being robbed by men from his surroundings. In his pursuit, Vinnie Jones is presented as constantly demonstrating aggressive attitude. Those few situations where he looks more interested than aggressive include his encounter with the name of Lithuania (as the robbers' flight to Malaysia is redirected to Lithuania) and a Lithuanian wedding (when the film's location has already changed from the United Kingdom to Lithuania).

Moreover, despite Vinnie Jones being the lead actor, the film storyline is divided into three stories of robbers played by Scot Williams (Michael), Gil Darnell (Johny), and Oliver Jackson (Tim) with Anthony Strachan (Ben). They are struggling in Lithuania after the robbery and their actions lead to persisting adversities and violence; meanwhile, they are being chased by Vinnie Jones's character and his bodyguards.

As far as other villains are concerned, it is important to emphasise that the film director Emilis Vėlyvis portrays the Lithuanian police as corrupted in all his sequels – *Zero* (2006), *Zero II* (2010) and *Zero III* (2017). For example, actor Donatas Šimukauskas plays the role of a bad cop in *Zero*, *Zero II*; whereas in *Redirected*, he takes a more neutral role of

a police officer. Actor Kęstutis Jakštas plays a good cop in both *Zero II* and *Redirected* (Dabrovolkskas, 2014).

In *Redirected*, corruption has pervaded the police, taxi services, and even the medical facilities. It can be also traced in the portrayal of female characters. The film features most females as party girls trying to seduce foreigners, even though the girls show disgust towards them in the nightclub while wearing Lithuanian police uniforms (another example of discreditation of the Lithuanian police). One of such female characters by Monika Vaičiulytė (Simona) seduces Johny in the nightclub with an intention to rob him; in the morning, he wakes up alone handcuffed to the radiator. Saulė (played by Vita Šiaučiūnaitė) happens to be the only one character who is different; she is represented as "having dreams and one of them is to become a film critic" (*Redirected*, 2014) before her wedding in a Lithuanian village; yet, she is made fun of by her husband-to-be.

Let us have a look at the locations. The story of the film predominantly takes place in abandoned warehouses, police stations (especially, in Lithuania), streets of Vilnius, a nightclub, and the countryside. All previous sequels of the film *Zero* had similar locations and they were also advertised in the film trailers and posters, but in *Redirected* there are also short excerpts of panoramas of London and Vilnius. While the story opens in London, the action later moves to Vilnius and, eventually, all the characters are brought to the wild nature of the Lithuanian village and woods. If the audience was already familiar with the locations in Vilnius, London, on the other hand, was presented as something new and created a contrast, which was also advertised through marketing communication to build the interest of the audience to see the film.

Another important image, which was used in film's marketing communication was the main actor itself. Vinnie Jones is a prominent Hollywood actor whose role in *Redirected* was similar to his roles in other films *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) and *Snatch* (2000). Consequently, the film director Emilis Vėlyvis continued portraying Vinnie Jones' character as a gangster to build on the audience's awareness of his previous characters and create similar expectations. Moreover, the protagonist, the tandem of the lead actor Jones with other distinguished actors, the portrayal of women, the police and selected locations worked as elements of assemblage. According to DeLanda (2016), each of these elements taken separately is an assemblage.

As for meso-assemblage (surveillance and legitimating work), it is worth mentioning the fact that the actors and the team had worked together since the first film *Zero* (2006), later in the second film *Zero II* (2010) and, finally, in *Redirected* (2014). There are at least four actors that can be either recognised as the main ones or played episodic roles in all the three films: Andrius Paulavičius, Mindaugas Papinigis, Donatas Šimukauskas (played the role of a police officer in all the three films), and Andrius Žiurauskas. Some of the actors such as Vytautas Šapranauskas, Sakalas Uždavinys, Gabija Siurbytė, Donatas Ivanauskas, Kęstutis Jakštas (a police officer in two of the three films), Saulius Siparis, Sonata Visockaitė appeared in two of the above-mentioned films.

Another set of crew members that started to work from the beginning with director Emilis Vėlyvis were producers Asta Liukaitytė (in all the three films) and Donatas Žval-

ionis (in two films), and writer Jonas Banys (*Zero II* and *Redirected*). Since merchandise has an important part in meso-assemblage, it is relevant to revisit the concept of the film consumption journey – before, during and after viewing the film. In *Redirected*, we can notice the idea that Kapferer (2008) was referring to: film brands cannot exist without a supporting product/service that embodies the brand. The most visible brand before, during (brand was used as a product placement in the film as well), and after the film screening was *Vytautas*, a mineral water brand. It was also used in the viral marketing campaign: the video teasers that were later uploaded on YouTube.

The last type of assemblage is macro-assemblage (material expressivity) where geopolitical changes, gender relations, filmic style, and popular culture need to be addressed. The geopolitical aspect in the film is prominent, as since the 1990s, Lithuania has been experiencing rapid political, economic and social reforms and gradual geopolitical “re-directions” from the East towards the West, particularly, the European Union (Šukaitytė, 2015). In addition, the geopolitical and geocultural changes have been accompanied by the emergence of new phenomena, such as migration and transnational networking and intercultural work experiences (Šukaitytė, 2015), and the film depicts these phenomena with a certain contrast: London is portrayed as touristic and bustling while Vilnius can be seen as still developing; the Lithuanian periphery still keeps asking questions like “What the world will think about us? They are from the West” and referring to homosexuality as a Western concept (*Redirected*, 2014).

What makes the film completely different from the sequel of James Bond that was initially grounded in Fleming’s books (Preece et al., 2019) is the historical experience and geographical location. In the film, it is possible to see how Lithuania is slowly moving towards the West; yet, socioculturally, it is surrounded by a variety of social groups at the Lithuanian periphery and the Polish minority. Moreover, in terms of geography, Lithuania is surrounded by Belarus and Kaliningrad (Russia), which as location is shown in the end of the film with the main characters struggling to continue their journey while escaping from a Lithuanian wedding (chased by Lithuanians from one side) and Vinnie Jones and his bodyguards chasing them from the other side.

Gender relations is another difference: in *Redirected*, it is represented to depict the fact of certain inequality between men and women. Mainly, it is verbalised through the dialogues between the priest (actor Vytautas Šapranauskas) and a party girl where she is being humiliated because of her physical appearance; as well as between the bride and her husband-to-be where he neglects her wishes and dreams.

The filmic style is heavily influenced by the Hollywood way of storytelling and, according to T. Elsaesser (2005), European film directors did not repress the Hollywood influence, but played with it, quoted it, used it, imitated it as their second nature alongside all kinds of other references and styles since “the image and identity are a slippery pair, traversing and criss-crossing in rather complex ways geographical territory, linguistic boundaries, history, subjectivity.” To an extent, this also makes popular culture since it can also attract foreign audiences while keeping artistic value (Mitkus, Nezinskaitė-Mitkė, 2017).

## Limitations of the research and further discussion

Since the statistical information on the film *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* was rather limited, the analysis of this case showed the necessity to use qualitative methods while articulating the brand's operation on multiple levels. Therefore, assemblage theory by Preece et al. (2019) and its micro-, meso- and macrolevels were applied alongside the quantitative analysis to research into the attendance and box-office success of *Redirected*, released in 2014. It is paramount to stress that in such small film industries as in Lithuania, it is uncommon for a film to achieve such distinguished sales; yet, the thorough analysis of such cases is complicated. Recent research into films as brands and user engagement during film the consumption journey has opened new perspectives to analyse such phenomena. Consequently, more attention could be dedicated to research brand longevity, continuity, and change in sequels, which as a Hollywood studio model made an enormous impact on small European film industries and their film production and marketing.

## Conclusions

From the beginning of his career, film director Vėlyvis has been persistently developing his film sequel *Zero* which, at first, did not receive much attention from the audience. The first and second sequels were predominantly oriented towards the local audience and the commercial success of *Zero II* enabled Vėlyvis to continue the work and produce *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!*

Consequently, the film *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* involved an innovative communication strategy based on integrated marketing communication principles and tools and, from the beginning of its production, was highly oriented towards the target audience not only locally, but internationally. *Redirected/Už Lietuvą!* also used a) product placement of other well-known Lithuanian brands (for instance, mineral water *Vytautas*) before, during and after viewing the film, and b) viral marketing which fostered the film's distinctiveness and, later, the audience engagement. The integration of media channels and work towards the coherence of the film identity led the film to reach 43.26 % of total domestic film attendance and at least one-third of total income generated by domestic films in the Lithuanian film market in 2014.

Also, the outstanding box-office and attendance results were heavily influenced by the marketability and playability of the film as well as its orientation towards the international audience, starring such a distinguished actor as Vinnie Jones, and its close links to the previous sequels by Vėlyvis. The analysis of micro-, meso-, and macro-assemblages of the film showed that the previous establishment of the film brand *Zero* alongside the genre, leading actors and crew while introducing new locations (the United Kingdom, Lithuanian periphery) and expanding the sociocultural context provided a certain change for the viewers from the content perspective. This is especially relevant in the context of smaller film industries and their exhibition markets such as Lithuania where it is important not only to communicate with the target audience and emphasise the distinctiveness of



the film through social media and viral marketing, but also take into consideration brand longevity, i.e. a need for continuity and change of the brand. Since the components of assemblages are not necessarily fixed, new ones can be enrolled and extend the existing film sequel as a brand.

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