Planning Phase

Audience

I created a survey to find out what my target audience wanted to see in a horror trailer.

* My two main characters will remain girls, as my results suggest people want more female protagonists
* 38% of people wanted the film to be set in a forest, but 15% wanted it to be set in an abandoned school or cabin. Because of this I won’t need to change my setting, which is in a forested area, but I will take into account that many people find abandoned areas scary or important in horror films
* I will make sure that a suspenseful soundtrack is used in my trailer, and that a creepy/foreboding atmosphere is kept throughout. I will also keep information about the plot to a minimum, as from my survey I found that people like mystery in horror trailers. I won’t include any jump scares as only 7% favoured them.
* 70% of people wanted a medium level of violence in a horror film, so I will include some violence, but when needed and to serve a purpose. I have done this by adding in scenes where my main character is dragged away and being chased by the antagonist in order to heighten tension. This way, I am able to imply that there will be violence in the film without having to raise the certification of my trailer, thus still being able to reach as wide an audience as possible.
* 53% of people wanted a 15 certification, 38% of people wanted a 12 certification. This means I will be able to include violence without watering it down in order to keep it to a low certification. However, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible, I have decided to keep it at a 12a certification. To do this, I have avoided showing any graphic or gory violence which would be featured in the film. Graphic violence is only implied and is off-camera.
* 60% of people wanted the horror trailer to last 60 seconds, so I will make sure that it doesn’t extend over a minute and a half.

Internal Factors

* Because I have no budget, I am restricted to using equipment available to me and locations near my house/school.
* I have chosen to film my trailer using my iPhone, as it’s the best camera I have available, it has a higher camera quality than the iPads available at school and it’s portable, which is useful as I will be filming in the woods.
* In order to create a realistic setting, I will need to take camping equipment to the film location. This will include a tent, a camping stove, a sleeping bag (if filmed inside tent) and a small axe. I have all of this equipment at my disposal, so I will not have to increase my budget to obtain them.
* I have chosen to film in a forested area as to emulate the tone in films such as “The Blair Witch Project”. The location must be secluded, away from any buildings to make it seem like the film is set in the wilderness, but easy to access. Because of this, I have chosen a forested area which is a 10 minute walk from my house.
* Because I am filming outside, I am restricted to film before sundown (5:00pm), because of this, I will have to organise and film quickly, otherwise my phone won’t be able to capture any footage. This can be done by filming at the weekend, when I have a full day free.
* I will also have to warn any surrounding houses that we will be filming so they don’t panic at the sound of screaming. I will do this by speaking to the house owners directly.

External Factors

* We will have to wear appropriate clothing for the weather as we will be walking to the filming location. This could include boots, warm clothing and waterproofs.
* Because of copyright laws, the music I use in my trailer will have to fall under a creative commons license. I want to use quiet, background music that doesn’t distract from the scene, but adds to the creepy atmosphere. I will use websites such as purpleplanet.com and creativecommons.org
* Under health and safety laws, I am responsible for the health and safety for my crew. Because I am filming outside, I will have to check my film location for any potential hazards such as drops, rivers etc. If there are too many, I will have to change my location
* Because there will be several scenes with characters running in the woods, we will have to plan out and rehearse routes for the running scenes to make sure that the actor wont trip and fall. If necessary, we can move branches out of the way to make a path.
* I am able to film in any location that isn’t private land as I have freedom to roam in Scotland
* According to the BBFC guidelines, because the film is a 15 I can include strong language and violence/gore. However, in order to reach a wide audience this trailer will be a 12a. Because of this I cannot dwell on violence or use frequent swearing. I can do this easily by adjusting my trailer to include acceptable scenes.

Content Research- Narrative

* The Todorovian structure was used to some extent in all the horror trailers I researched. In “Cabin in the Woods”, the equilibrium is made clear by the uplifting, happy music and the happy attitudes of the characters. In “Prom Night” the equilibrium is also shown though happy music and bright lighting.
* In order to make my film stand out against other horror films, I have chosen my film not to have generic happy music score in the equilibrium. Instead, there will be no music as to contribute to the unsettling atmosphere. The lack of music will also help the opening scene look more realistic.
* The disruption in “Cabin in the Woods” is signified through the abrupt halt of music, shaky camera and dark lighting. In “Prom Night”, the disruption is shown in a similar way, with dark lighting, a halt to the music and dramatic sound effects.
* In my film, I will signify the disruption using sound, such as “ear ringing” to make the viewer uncomfortable and music to make the trailer creepier.
* During the recognition in “Cabin in the Woods”, dramatic music is played to increase the tension to emphasise what the characters are saying. In “Prom Night” music is played over a dramatic voice over to heighten tension.
* In order to emphasise the recognition in my trailer, I will try to increase the tension by adding in small clips of a shaky-cam chase scene in-between scene transitions. I will include a POV camera shot to make sure that the identity of the antagonist is kept hidden, while clueing in what happened to the girl.
* During the attempt to repair in “Cabin in the Woods” the tension continues to rise as the music increases in intensity and more fast paced shots with action are used.
* During the attempt to repair in my trailer, a voiceover will deliver exposition explaining how they want to fix the situation.

Content Research – Representation

* “Cabin in the Woods” uses representation of setting to convey tone and atmosphere. The use of an abandoned cabin setting was deliberately chosen to parody the overuse of this setting in the genre. This is to clue the audience into the comedic nature of the film.
* The decrepit cabin and isolated location makes it obvious that this is a horror film, albeit a parody of one, and adds to the creepy and unnerving atmosphere.
* The first few scenes of the trailer are of the main characters driving to the cabin in a camper truck. This shows the audience that the cabin is cut off from the outside world and would be difficult for the characters to escape. This is the first sign in the trailer that something could go wrong.
* To show that my film takes place in an isolated area, I won’t include any footage of buildings/cars etc. I will restrict the footage to forested areas to make the forest seem expansive and enforce the setting as isolated.
* Because the film is set in the dark/at nighttime, it gives the sense that there could be something lurking in the shadows, which makes the viewer nervous and uncomfortable.
* I will not be able to set my film in the nighttime because I am restricted by my camera, which is difficult to use when dark. Instead, I won’t include any shots of open land/sky to make the location seems claustrophobic. This is to emulate the uncomfortable atmosphere of CITW
* The use of aggressive animal head trophies adds to the dangerous atmosphere and also contributes to the idea that the characters are in an isolated location far away from any cities or populated areas.
* I will use props in my film (tent and camping equipment) to show that the setting is deserted and the characters are far from any possible help.