CultureCase

How weather affects a movie’s box office performance

This research was conducted by **Duncan Sheppard Gilchrist** and **Emily Glassberg Sands**.

Summary

This study looked at the impact of weather on movie going and opening weekend sales. The study used national ticket sales data and nationally aggregated weather measures. Overall, it found that unseasonable weather (too hot or too cold) on a movie’s opening weekend has positive impacts on word-of-mouth buzz about a movie and box office takings in the weeks following the opening weekend. This effect did not depend on critical acclaim, but rather on the fact that people enjoy being able to talk about their shared experiences.

People like talking to each other about shared experiences, such as movies

The paper was built on the assumption that people have a preference for shared experiences in the event of unpredictable weather. The study was wide ranging and included an assessment of critical reviews, movie budgets, and other factors that are known to impact opening weekend sales. The authors used a range of possible variables about movies and movie-going to build a formula that was used to estimate the box office impact of a random weather shock.

High numbers of sales in the first weekend make for bigger audience numbers in subsequent weekends

The researchers found that 'for 100 weather-induced additional viewers opening weekend, we observe almost 50 additional viewers in the second weekend and almost 30 in the third.' The results show that a shock (unexpectedly hot or cold weather) on the opening weekend means that overall viewership is doubled over the following five weekends. The authors conclude that their work will be helpful in understanding herd behaviour (such as voting) and contemporary solitary behaviours (such as gaming, remote work and online learning).

This summary is by **Sheridan Humphreys, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

USA **audience** **weather** **box office** **cinema**

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