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## **Investigate the Effect of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's Rating and Critic Review on Movies Publicity**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the effect of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews on the publicity of a movie. Also, to prove that some spectators change their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rate despite them watching a movie and liking it. The study used a fully quantitative research design using the survey questionnaire as a research instrument to collect the data. The participants of the study are 100 university students who majored in journalism and media communication in Indian universities. The participants were selected randomly. The software SPSS 32.0 was used to analyze the data. The data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the frequencies and percentages. The findings of this study highlighted the significant role that reviewers play in film marketing which, therefore, boosts movies publicity. The finding can also be helpful in encompassing film producers to improve their marketing strategies on social media. The findings of the study contribute significantly to the limited number of researches investigating the current phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Movies, reviews, Rotten tomato, IMDb, rating, India.

### **1. Introduction:**

Most film spectators would pass a quick judgment on a movie by its rate on IMDb or Rotten Tomatoes and decide to not give this movie the time to explore its originality (Nishijima, Rodrigues Jr, & Souza, 2021). Nowadays some people go directly to this website and read critics' reviews of a movie and give it a background check before watching it (Schrage, 2012). However, some prefer to watch the movie, form their own opinion and compare their reviews with the ones on Rotten Tomatoes or IMDb (Pentheny, 2015). Consumers' access to information has been revolutionized through the immense use of social networking sites. Once a movie is considered to be good, you would not just hear about it only from talking to people around you; you can really browse online and read the opinions of all people who have already watched it (Legoux, Larocque, Laporte, Belmati, & Boquet, 2016). In addition, these sites are now tailoring profiles such that you are almost sure to see the reviews of a person who snatched themselves the same products as you and views the same television series as you are watching currently. Reviews given by consumers online are used by over 90% of consumers who browse them to make purchasing choices (Dhar & Weinberg, 2016). According to recent studies, online reviews have power and influence on the movie business, especially when it comes to economic effects. As a result, movie marketers, online dating sites, and individual moviegoers hence would all benefit from a better grasp of how much these evaluations affect revenues (Koh, Hu, & Clemons, 2010). Several studies have looked at the impact of film reviews on viewers. In particular research, critics are examined as a possible source of impact due to the reason of the movies' actors. The rest argue that critics have sway because the public perceives them as experts who can tell excellent choices compared to poor, and as such, they are seen as trusted advisors (Bialecki, O'Leary, & Smith, 2017). This research focuses not only on the professional movie critic but also on the customer as a consumer who directly watches content and how the sort of analysis in the review, favourable, unfavourable, or blended, might affect the consumer's choice.

#### **1.1 Movies' Reviews and Moviegoers:**

The influence of movie reviews was primarily proven to be positive and that movie reviews can actually affect one's decision or attitude towards a movie. In other words, many have an influence over the single individual in terms of movie preference (Zhang, Zhao, Cheung, & Lee, 2014). A self-monitoring scale is one of the methods that was utilized in this study to measure the magnitude of influence of the group over the individual. This scale is based on questionnaires that were distributed to 200 participants of various ages and backgrounds. This study found, post its experiment on the 200 participants, that the target or moviegoers can be cognitively affected by the movie reviews they read and that these reviews can alter their decision on whether to watch a particular movie or not. This does not

support the argument that all reviews have the same magnitude on others; their influence varies from one source of information to another (Reinstein & Snyder, 2005).

Another study found that the individual adopts the influence of fresh opinions on movies more than the existing well-reputed sources whether they were external or domestic. However, this study testifies that the “final judgments” of a movie do not rely on an external base but rather a personal experience and that the reputation of a movie, its popularity, and its reviews have zero competence. Therefore, the relationship between the moviegoers or spectators develops with the movie is not based on precedent opinion or even an incentive. The research design of this study required the involvement of Film Critics and the other five groups of participants. Each group's statement was labelled according to three scales, negative, positive, and neutral (Kerrigan & Yalkin, 2009).

### **1.2 Critic Reviews as Marketing Materials:**

Social network theory was undertaken in this study to validate the fact that the reputation or “word of mouth” whether electronic or non-electronic can be influential and generally affect people's expectations. In terms of movies, the impressions of a movie performance at the Box Office are based on the word of mouth, in other words, others' opinions or articulated experiences, reviews, in this regard. These consulting reviews, which are thought to be professional, are behind the selective criteria that film spectators have and later utilize when deciding on a movie. This is another yet separate form of marketing that makes these reviews marketing or promoting materials that are communicated to people in multiple methods. Movie critic reviews can function as a compass for some moviegoers when determining which movie to go for. This study indicates that specialists or skilled reviewers play a significant role in marketing and promoting a movie which attracts more publicity to it in the light of many demands and ongoing competitions. Resorting to a particular set of critic reviews done by particular experts was explained in this study as the reputation of a critic is constructed through the quality of their reviews. Hence, there is a direct association between the reputation of a critic and their influence (Ma, Kim, & Lee, 2019).

### **1.3 Ratings on IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes:**

Not only do reviews have an influence and can be so promoting, but also ratings were found to be very predominant. IMDb is one of the websites and now an app that allows the users to express their level of satisfaction with a movie on a scale of 1 to 10. This ranking method invited this research to touch upon the choice of films and how films are phased out based on a few stars. Reaching such pivotal results required conducting and analyzing interviews with participants who are common users of IMDb. One of the participants stated that if the score was 8 out of 10, then they would go see the movie. However, if the movie was new and had a lower score, they would not go for it.

Good or positive reviews can be a key success for movies, but what about the bad or negative ones? This question was answered in this study and its answer states that Rotten Tomatoes, which is another popular IMDb-like website for movie rating and reviews, is pointed at when a small-production movie fails to achieve the publicity it was expecting post its production. RT's rating which constructs ranking, whose certain categories are based on parameters, allows some movies to grow popularity while others were left in the shadow. The high-profile movies are the ones of wide release as they were found to have not been affected by Rotten Tomatoes reviews or ratings (Nishijima et al., 2021).

Banerjee and Chua, (2018) traced IMDb reviewers' rating expertise focusing on their growth from the beginner level till the expert level in terms of genuinely reviewing and rating a movie. The top 100 reviewers were selected for this appraisal. One of the signals that indicate the reviewers' growth is the sophistication reflected in their language. This means that reviewers develop skills through different phases making their inputs more influential and impactful. IMDb and such rating websites were found to be attracting such kinds of experts to remain involved in the website and be a part of its function since their insights were remarkably fruitful.

This paper investigates the prediction of movies' ratings through a model implemented on two platforms, Wikipedia and IMDb. The same model was found to be valid for the prediction of rating in Rotten Tomatoes as well. The results showed that the model used has determinates that can either influence movies' success or zero influence. According to these determinates, some movies' budget plays an important role in their ratings regardless of the cast's involvement or even popularity, especially in the Russian Film Industry. However, when it comes to Hollywood's or Bollywood's dataset, the case is different and the model shows a different result (Bristi et al., 2019).

Research done on Rotten Tomatoes reviews discovered that movie critics have more impact on wide-release movies more than they have on the weak releases, therefore, a remarkable influence on the Box Office. However, when it comes to this influence, negative reviews surpassed positive reviews on both, wide releases and weak releases. “Based on our analysis of Rotten Tomatoes scores and the results of similar studies, the weight of the evidence suggests that film critics moderately serve as both influencers and predictors. Moreover, these roles are

more apparent among wide releases than limited releases. This study also confirms the existence of a negativity bias that occurs from critics' reviews in both categories of film."(Eagan, 2018)

#### **1.4 Movies' Taste Diversity:**

Findings of another study pointed out that expert reviewers and their judgments on a film are validated by common movie viewers which later on become recommendations. Concluding with this result, evaluations, and data were separately collected from huge groups of participants. In other words, the findings are not limited to particular individuals but rather collective. Previous studies yet revealed that there is barely a correlation between experts' reviews and the general opinion which acknowledges that "ordinary" movie spectators could have "good taste" (Holbrook and Addis, 2007).

Another investigation was launched on the difference of ranking between two rating websites, IMDb and Douban.com by roughly collecting movie reviews of the top 1000 movies on both websites and later on adding another 100 reviews. The results showed that the top-ranked movies on IMDb might not be on top on Douban.com. "Then, from the top-ranked and bottom-ranked movie list in Douban, we extract the corresponding movies in IMDb and plot the rating distribution for the movies. We find that the results were consistent with what we had previously obtained, and that once again extreme ratings are more prevalent among the online reviews written by US movie raters, regardless of whether the movies are top-ranked or bottom-ranked at either website."(Koh et al., 2010).

#### **1.5 Previous Studies and Research Gap:**

(Boatwright, Basuroy, & Kamakura, (2007) examined the third element, which is the quality of the movie, that could alter conclusions on the association between reviews and profitability. The research found that a well-received film would both make money and get generally positive reviews. Due to this reason, they devised a model that would analyse the effect of individual reviewers, differentiating between influencers and predictors. Data on weekly box office and theatre attendance for a total of 466 films were gathered. Film expenditure, marketing, performers, MPAA ratings and whether it is a sequel, the frequency of screen times for each week, movie popularity and individual reviews were all taken into account in this analysis. Movie popularity was statistically relevant and had an impact on word-of-mouth for a broad range of movies, according to a few findings. There was no confirmation that any of the critics studied were prominent, although the researchers did uncover a number of critics who may be better than their counterparts.

With the upgraded corpus, which includes the extra sentiment polarity of all sub-phrases, Wu (2012) explored multiple machine learning methods to estimate the sentiment of unseen reviews from the updated corpus. We explored the Rotten Tomatoes movie review corpus, which has been considerably enhanced and annotated with a high emotion index due to the work of Amazon Mechanical Turk. The training set aims to investigate if providing a more profound sentiment annotation for every span of a parsed phrase might aid in enhancing the precision of forecasting the general trend of unseen sentences.

Consumers' judgement of movies that are soon to be released was investigated by Chakravarty, Liu, & Mazumdar, (2010) who looked at the effect of online user feedback and comments by movie critics on their perception. The study concentrates only on data that a customer could get via the internet, which may have an impact on their overall evaluation of the film in question. There are three significant components of persuasion. These three components are as follows: source of messages, message content, and recipient of messages. Consumers will be presented with two evaluations that are diametrically opposed to one another, and the consumer will better prefer one review as compared to the other, according to this hypothesis: An example of online comments and expert evaluations was provided, as well as opinions on the efficacy of the comments and reviews. Secondary data was gathered from Metacritic.com and IMDb.com, known to be among the most popular movie review sites. The researchers make the assumption that users of these platforms are frequent moviegoers and that their views will be more in line with the reviewers' than those who are less frequent. According to a few findings of the study, online comments may have a more significant impact on occasional moviegoers, who are more prone to believe unfavourable consumer opinions than good critical evaluations. Critical reviews have a significantly more significant impact on habitual moviegoers than those internet remarks given by individuals online.

According to an article written by Duan, Gu, & Whinston, (2008), improvements in information technology and the consequent increase of social media platforms have significantly altered the range of word-of-mouth. Online word-of-mouth can be both a boon and a bane for businesses, and this article recognizes this paradox. Authors have chosen to concentrate on the movie industry, which relies heavily on WORD-OF-MOUTH to succeed. Only seventy-one movies distributed between 2003 and 2004 were included in the analysis. WOM valence and WOM volume, gross-to-date revenue and average revenue per theatre, along with the production budget, marketing expenditures and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating of the producer and other extraneous

data, were analysed using data from the individual reviews. The majority of reviews were published during the first few days after publication. However, after that, the number of reviews dropped dramatically. A link was observed between box office revenue and the number of reviews. By drawing the difference between the number of reviews and the quality of the reviews, the study was designed to expand on past research.

Predicting how a movie would do prior to its debut was the purpose of the study by (Eliashberg, Jonker, Sawhney, & Wierenga, 2000). As a result, corporations would be better able to schedule their marketing tactics since they would have a relatively better precise estimate of a film's overall income. Favourable and unfavourable word-of-mouth are included in this model, which varies from past efforts. Uncertain, considerers, disbelievers, favourable peddlers, unfavourable peddlers, and those inactive are all distinct consumer groups in the model. As they proceed from state to state, the customers start their journey in an indecisive state. The model was tested in two different studies. The first was a survey of a hundred and forty students from a university that comprised two videos. Similar methods were employed. Respondents were questioned regarding their knowledge of the movie that has been subjected to the study and how they learned of it. Using this information, the researchers were capable of predicting how well-informed buyers were about the film. One hundred and two respondents visited a consumer centre where they completed a questionnaire and received positive and negative inputs based on their responses. They were then exposed to the film and subsequently completed post-movie assessments after the screening. Following the application of this data to the model, writers made some reasonable modifications to the distributor's marketing strategy. Estimated earnings were within 5% of actual earnings, as predicted by the model. According to the researchers, the approach might be helpful to creative sector management.

As discussed above, a significant amount of research has been done to explore what previous studies have attempted to explain about the influence of film reviews and other areas such as word of mouth and how they affect the consumer as well as product revenue. However, from reviewing the literature, it can be seen that no studies have been conducted on the effect of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews on the publicity of a movie. Therefore, this study is filling the gap of the literature by achieving the following research objectives.

## **2. The current study:**

Based on the review of the literature, the current research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the effect of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews on the publicity of a movie.
2. To prove that some spectators change their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rate despite them watching a movie and liking it.

## **Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Design**

The present study employed a fully quantitative research approach with a descriptive methodology. This research was carried out to analyse the influence of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews on the publicity of a movie, as well as to demonstrate that some spectators modify their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes' and IMDb's score despite seeing a movie. The study took place in India. The study was conducted in India.

### **3.2. Sample and Sampling**

A total number of 100 students were sampled using the random sampling method. The sample of the study is undergraduate and postgraduate students from several Indian universities. The participants are mostly studying journalism and media communication courses. Informed consent for participation was obtained from the participants. E-mails were sent to the participants asking them whether they were willing to participate. The survey method was followed to collect the data from the participants.

### **3.3. Data Collection**

Data collection is known to be considered one of the most important parts of any research, where the results of any analysis are focused on the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A survey questionnaire was designed to gather information pertaining to the objective of the study. In designing a questionnaire, researchers would usually have three main differentiators: integrating questions from existing questionnaires, modifying questions from previous questionnaires, or they come out with questions that they create themselves. A pilot test study was conducted to test the consistency and reliability of the survey. The Cronbach Alpha values were higher than 0.6, which is the accepted level. The criteria suggested that a value of 0.6 to 0.7 is acceptable, while 0.8 or greater is very ideal. The survey included three sections, which were demographic information that include the names, age, university name, department, city, and current year of study. The survey included 16 items. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents for data collection. As it was a web-based survey, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through Google Form. This promotes convenience to researchers and respondents as they could answer the questionnaire through their electronic gadgets no matter where they were.

### 3.4. Data analyses

Pre-screening of the data was performed during primary data collection. By checking that no questions were left incomplete upon collection of each questionnaire answers. In this study, the statistical software version 32.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. Descriptive analyses were used not only for descriptive purposes to calculate the frequency and percentage. Descriptive analysis refers to "the translation of raw data into a process that would provide information to explain a set of factors in a scenario that will promote their comprehension and interpretation" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009).

## 4. Findings and Results

### 4.1 Demographic information

Part A of the questionnaire consisted of nine questions that elicited the demographic and background information about the respondents. The questions collected information about the subjects: (1) gender, (2) age, (3) name of university, (4) department, (5) year of studying, (6) city, (7) course.

#### 4.1.1 University name

The data showed that the majority of the respondents are studying at SRM University (53), that was followed by Galgotias (7), then Osmania university (6), both Jain university (4) and KIIT (4), then Kalinga University and Tezpur University and Jagran (3), United university, SdnbVaishnav university, Ethiraj university, Shrimathi Devkunvar university, Vaishnava university (2), while only one student (1) from the following universities participated in the study which is: Ishwarya university, Rohit university, Anna university, Shreya Kundu university, Saloni Jena Saveetha college (1). Figure 1 illustrated the percentages of the names of participants in universities.

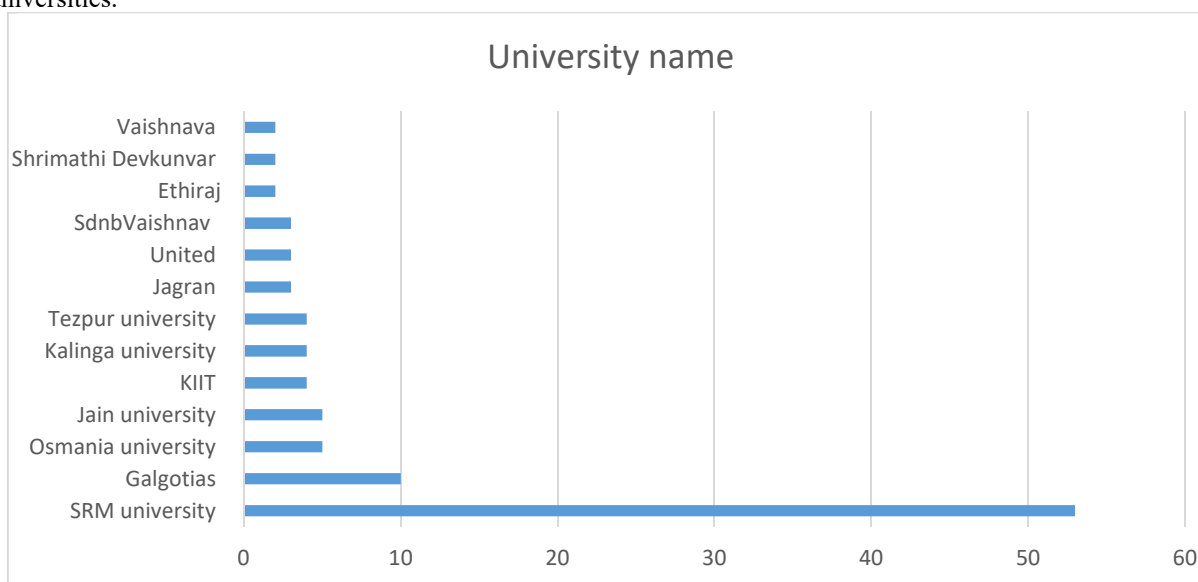


Figure 1. Students' university name

#### 4.1.2 Department and Students area of study

The findings showed that, regarding the department or the faculty where the student coming from, most of journal and media communication (57), Journalism (13), Mass Media (8), Mass Communication (8), Science and Humanities (7), Visual communication (7). Figure 2 illustrated the percentages of students' fields of study.

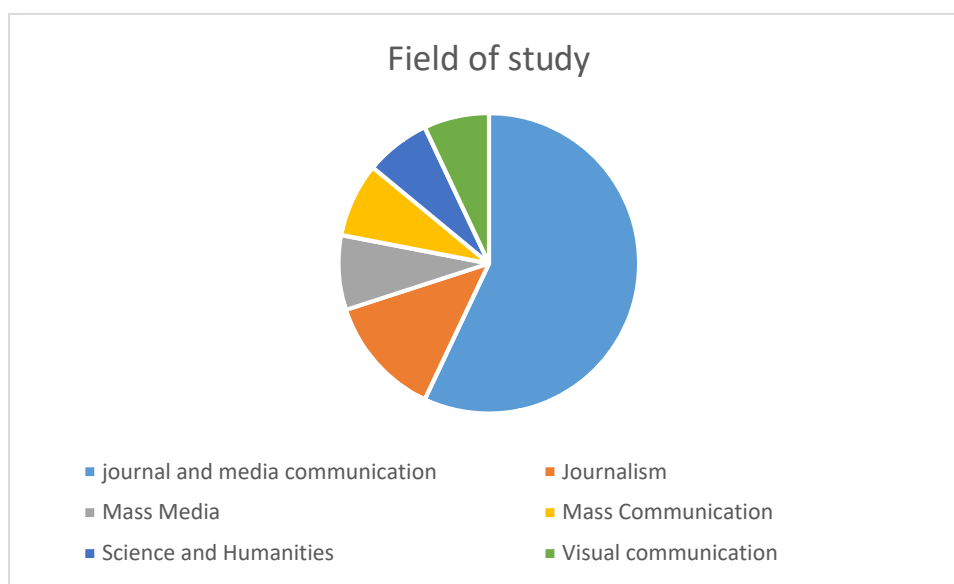


Figure 2. Students' area of research

#### 4.1.3 City

The data collected from the participants showed that the majority of the study are living in Tamilnadu city (62), Noida (7), Bhubaneswar (6), Kerala (5), Hyderabad (4), Bangalore (3), Telangana (3), Durgapur (3), Assam (3), Navi Mumbai (2), Trichy (1).

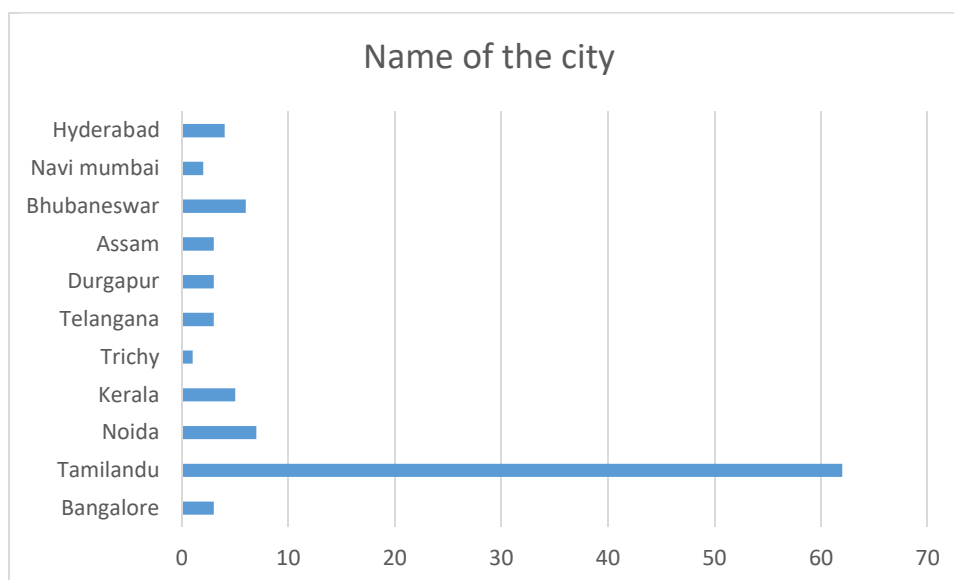


Figure 3. Name of participants' cities

#### 4.1.4 Year of Study

The findings showed that the majority of the students are junior students in their first year at university or college (56), that was followed by the second year (25). Finally, the third-year students (19).

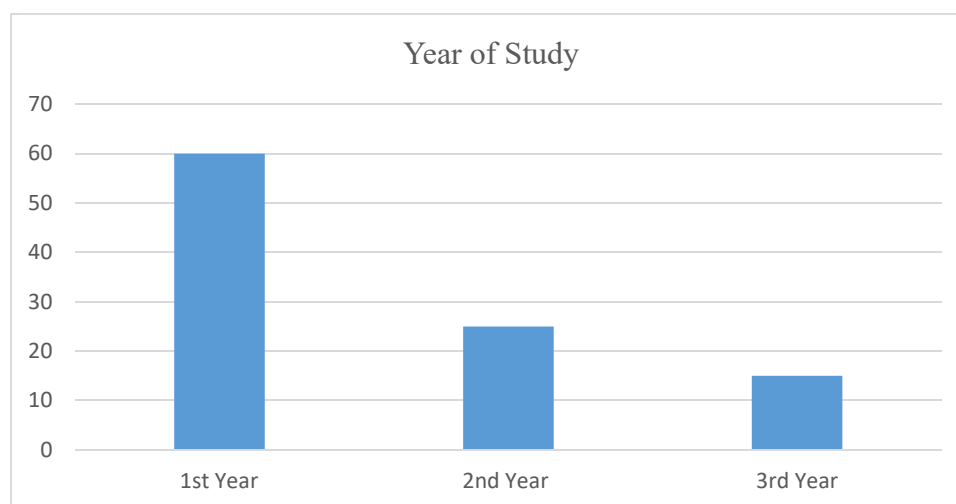


Figure 4. Year of study at university

## 4.2 The Analysis of The Questionnaire Items

### 4.2.1 Section A

Based on the collected data from 100 students. The students were asked first if they rate a movie after watching it, half of the students (47%) of the students answered with sometimes, also, the students were divided into two groups as they responded never (41%) and sometimes (41%) when they were asked if they watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's recommendations. In a similar situation, the students were asked if they watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's trailers, (47%) of the students never did that while (40%) agreed that they sometimes do. Next, the students were asked if they watch movies based on their Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating, (40%) agreed with sometimes while (39%) responded with "never".

Next, the students were asked if they watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's critic reviews, the students answered with never (45%) and often (36%). After that, the students were asked if Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's recommendations affect their watchlist, majority of the students rejected the hypothesis as the majority of them answered with "never" (60%). Next, the students were asked if Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb trailers affect their watchlist, half of the students answered with "never" (51%). In a similar answer, the students responded with never (54%) to Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb ratings affect their watchlist. Next, the students were asked if Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's recommendations affect their watchlist, the majority of the students replied with never (60%). Next, the students were asked if Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb trailers affect their watchlist, half of the students answered with "never" (51%).

Table 1. Students' answers to section A

No	Item	Never	Often	Sometimes	Always
1	You rate a movie after watching it	25	12	47	21
2	You watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's recommendations:	41	11	41	7
3	You watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's trailers	47	9	40	4
4	You watch movies based on their Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating	39	10	40	11
5	You watch movies based on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's critic reviews	45	13	36	6
6	Do Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's recommendations affect your watchlist:	60	12	17	11
7	Do Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb trailers affect your watchlist	51	15	26	13
8	Do Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb ratings affect your watchlist	54	11	25	10



9	Do Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's critic reviews affect your watchlist:	52	3	33	8
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#### 4.2.2 Section B

In this section, the questionnaire items asked questions regarding the participants' behaviours in rating movies. The findings show that the students have different Behaviours when they were asked that "Your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie is based on your personal opinion", (28%) of the students answered choosing always, and (26%) answered with sometimes while (24%) said they often do that while only (22%) of the respondents answered with never. In the second question of this section, the students were asked their Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie is influenced by the trending and existing ratings, half of the respondents (49%) answered with never while (35%) of the students responded with sometime. Last, the students were asked if their Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie changes after reading the critic reviews, the majority of the students answered with never.

Table 2. Students' answers to section B

Part B					
10	Your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie is based on your personal opinion:	22	24	26	28
11	Your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie is influenced by the trending and existing ratings	49	6	35	9
12	Your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating of a movie changes after reading the critic reviews:	45	15	36	4

#### 4.2.3 Section C

In this section, the questionnaire items asked the questions regarding the second research question which is to prove that some spectators change their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rate despite them watching a movie and liking it. First, the students were asked if their impression can change after running the movie on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb, the students responded with sometimes (36%) and never (32%). Second questions asked the students if their taste in movies is shaped by Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb, the majority of the students answered with never (64%), Next, the students were asked if their recommendation of a movie is based on your personal impression, majority of the students agreed by answering selecting always (54%). While the students answered using never (47%) when they were asked Your recommendation of a movie is based on your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's inputs:

Part C					
13	Your impression can change after running the movie on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb	32	17	36	5
14	Your taste in movies is shaped by Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb:	64	13	21	4
15	Your recommendation of a movie is based on your personal impression:	9	14	23	54
16	Your recommendation of a movie is based on your Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's inputs:	47	14	35	4

### 5. Discussion

The outcomes of this study may help film producers and corporations to develop social media marketing tactics and strategies. Due to the reason that this research validates the economic benefit of both critic and user evaluations, film producers should explore boosting their expenditure in social media marketing to improve revenue. In addition, filmmaking firms can effectively predict if a film will generate profits. The study's findings on the various sales benefits of critics and user reviews might help in better distribution by planning better and wise expenditure. They may choose to offer benefits to their two critical categories of online word-of-mouth contributors — critics and users — is designed to motivate them to concentrate on various types of ratings and reviews. When advertising a film, for instance, studios and distributors may give particular attention to what reviewers remark instead of how they rank the movies.

Trailer development and production is one example of an influence that movie production businesses might use. This is through the results generated through the study conducted. Movie teasers and trailers sometimes include quotations and star ratings from notable reviewers. It may be argued that the corporations creating these trailers should incorporate user ratings on IMDB, Rotten Tomatoes, and other sites, as well as statements from reviewers when advertising their films. The results will assist review platform management increase the participation of their

reviewers and the reliability of the reviews published by both sides of the users and critics. These platforms must also take into account giving distinct statistics from critic evaluations and user reviews to assist their audiences in taking them more seriously. Many review sites currently provide consolidated numerical scores based on customer reviews. Simultaneously, they may explore mining keywords, general sentiment, and sentiment related to distinct characteristics of movies from critic evaluations to minimize information seekers' information-processing work and enhance their efficient system.

## **6. Conclusion**

The current research explored the effect of Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews on the publicity of a movie. Also, to prove that some spectators change their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rate despite them watching a movie and liking it. 100 university students from Indian universities participated in the study. The findings showed that Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rating and critic reviews did not affect the publicity of the movies. Moreover, the respondents do not change their taste to match Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb's rate despite them watching a movie and liking it as they stated that their recommendation and rating are based on their opinions about the movie. The findings of the study contribute significantly to the limited number of researches investigating the current phenomenon. Although the results of this study could offer fascinating insights into our understanding of how the rating of movies affects individuals' perspectives, the study still has some limitations in terms of the number of participants as the study included only 100 students, a higher number of participants would provide more in-depth findings. This study implicates that the spectators are aware of the importance of rating movies based on their own opinion. However, there will be a further study on why ratings and critic reviews do not affect movies publicity or influence people's taste.

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