PROJECT TITLE: ANALYSING FACTORS INFLUENCING MOVIE SUCCESS

GROUP 3 PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

GROUP MEMBERS:

JEMIMAH KURIA

GEORGE NYANG'AYA

DERRICK KIPTOO

FAITH GITHAIGA

Introduction

The movie industry is a high-risk, high-reward business. A single hit can generate hundreds of millions in profit, while a misstep can lead to a costly box office failure. With so much on the line, understanding what truly influences a film's financial success is crucial. This analysis dives deep into data from 1,244 major film releases to explore the key drivers of profitability—from genre trends and production budgets to star power, release timing, and marketing strategies.

Rather than relying on guesswork or gut feelings, this study uses real-world data to uncover patterns and insights that can inform smarter decision-making. Whether you're a studio executive deciding which scripts to greenlight, an independent producer budgeting your next project, or an investor looking to back a promising title, these findings offer valuable guidance. By identifying what sets successful films apart from flops, we aim to provide a clearer roadmap to box office success.

Project Overview

Creating a profitable movie is no easy feat. With so many variables at play—genre, budget, release date, and more—it's often hard to know what decisions will lead to a strong return on investment (ROI). This project sets out to demystify that process by identifying the key factors that consistently lead to higher profits in the film industry.

Goal:

> To uncover the most important elements that maximize ROI for feature films, using data-driven analysis.

Key Questions We Explored:

- Which genres tend to deliver the highest returns?
- Are audiences more drawn to action-packed blockbusters, heartfelt dramas, or family-friendly animations?
- Is there a budget range that works best?
- Do bigger budgets always mean bigger returns—or is there a tipping point where spending more stops paying off?
- When is the best time to release a film?
- Does timing really matter? Are holiday releases more successful, or do certain seasons perform better for specific genres?
- How does a film's runtime affect profitability?
- Is there an ideal length that keeps audiences engaged while maximizing theater showings and ticket sales?

Why This Matters:

The film industry is famous for its unpredictability—what works for one movie might flop for another. But by analyzing patterns in past releases, we can begin to see which factors tend to align with success. These insights can help filmmakers and investors make more confident, informed decisions and reduce the guesswork that often leads to financial risk.

DATA COLLECTION & CLEANING

For this analysis, we used data from four different sources to get a complete picture of what makes movies profitable:

- Box office performance data – including budgets and both domestic and international earnings.
- TMDB movie metadata – with details like genres, ratings, and popularity scores.
- IMDb – which provided ratings, genres, and runtime information.
- The Numbers – which gave us the production budget for each film.

We started with a total of 1,930 films, but after cleaning up the data, we ended up with 1,244 high-quality entries that were consistent and reliable for analysis.

Here's what we cleaned up:

- Removed 686 duplicates – These were often different versions of the same movie, like special editions or re-releases.
- Fixed missing release dates – For films missing the exact month and day, we used the year as a substitute to keep them in the dataset.
- Standardized genre labels – We grouped similar genres together (e.g., "Sci-Fi" and "Science Fiction").

We focused on these key features:

- Financial metrics – Such as production budget, worldwide gross, and return on investment (ROI).
- Creative elements – Including genre and runtime of the movie.
- Market factors – Like the month of release and popularity scores.

DATA UNDERSTANDING & ANALYSIS

To get the full picture of what drives movie success, we pulled together data from the following sources:

- IMDb – For movie ratings, genres, and runtime.
- Box Office Mojo – For domestic and international revenue.
- The Numbers – For the production budget of each film.
- TMDB – For popularity scores and release dates.

Challenges we faced:

- Missing budget data – Not all films had budget information available, which limited our ability to analyze those films fully.
- No universal movie ID – Each source used a different way to identify films, which made it tricky to match data across platforms.

- Despite these challenges, we managed to pull the relevant columns from each dataset to get a complete view of what factors influence profitability.

Discovering What Contributes to a Movie's Profitability

1. Genre Analysis: Understanding Profitability Across Genres

We found that the genres generating the highest returns may not always be the most obvious choices. Here are the genres that delivered the best returns on investment (ROI):

Top 3 Highest ROI Genres:

Horror: Horror films generally have low production costs but a loyal audience, which makes them a strong option for profitability.

Mystery: Mystery movies appeal to a specific group of viewers, which makes them a reliable choice for producers looking to minimize risk.

Thriller: Thrillers are consistently successful, drawing in a broad audience without requiring high budgets.

Genres That Are Popular but Less Profitable:

Action: While action films can earn significant revenue, they often require large budgets, which reduces the return on investment.

Adventure: Similar to action films, adventure movies often involve high production costs due to special effects, reducing overall profitability.

Why This Matters:

Horror films stand out as being consistently profitable because they are relatively inexpensive to produce, typically costing between $10M-$20M, and they come with an established audience. In contrast, action and adventure films tend to have larger budgets, and while they can generate more total earnings, their ROI is usually lower.

2. The Ideal Production Budget

We categorized movies into different budget ranges to determine which budget produces the best balance of risk and return. Here's a summary of our findings:

Budget Range	Average ROI
Under $20M	Low
$20M - $50M	Medium
$50M - $100M	Best Balance
$100M - $200M	Moderate
Over $200M	Varies High

Key Insight:

Films with budgets between $50M and $100M offer the best balance between potential return and financial risk. These films are large enough to attract big-name talent and marketing support but are not so expensive that they must perform exceptionally well to be profitable.

3. The Best Time to Release a Movie

We analyzed the months when movies were released and how it affected their box office performance. Some months showed stronger results than others:

Best Months for Movie Releases:

May: Marks the beginning of the summer season when families start planning vacations and are more likely to attend the cinema.

July: The peak of the summer season when school is out, and teens are free to watch movies.

November and December: The beginning of the holiday season, which is also when the buzz for award season films starts building.

Worst Month to Release:

January: After the holidays, people are less likely to go to the movies, especially with bad weather and post-holiday fatigue.

Pro Tip:

Horror films perform particularly well in October, capitalizing on the Halloween season. Family-friendly films also tend to do better in June and July when kids are off school and families are more likely to attend the theatre together.

4. Runtime: How Long Should Your Movie Be?

We discovered that the length of a film plays an important role in its profitability.

90-120 minutes: While this is the most common length for films, it had the lowest median ROI. The market is saturated with films of this length, which makes it more difficult for them to stand out.

120-180 minutes: This range tends to have the highest ROI. These movies are perceived as "special events," and audiences are more willing to invest their time in them.

Under 90 minutes: Films in this category had moderate ROI. While they're cheaper to produce, they often have a limited appeal due to their shorter runtime.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY:

If you're making drama or action films, aim for a runtime between 110-140 minutes. For horror films, a runtime of 90 minutes is effective, while epic films (those longer than 150 minutes) should be reserved for high-profile projects with significant talent and marketing backing.

By analysing these factors—genre, budget, release timing, and film length—we can better understand what influences a movie's profitability. This information can help filmmakers, producers, and investors make more informed decisions to maximize returns while minimizing financial risk.

Actionable Recommendations

Based on our findings, here's the optimal strategy:

1. Film Type:

      Produce a horror-thriller hybrid (maximizes ROI)

      Alternatively: Mid-budget ($50-100M) action film with known stars

2. Production Details:

      Budget: $60-90 million

      Runtime: 110-130 minutes

3. Release Strategy:

      Ideal Date: First weekend of May or July

      Alternative: October for horror, November for awards contenders

4. Risk Management:

      Avoid January-April releases

      Limit budgets over $150M unless franchise film

Conclusion

To optimize movie production and ROI, a combination of strategic genre selection, budget control, and careful release timing is essential. By focusing on profitable genres, monitoring budget efficiency, and understanding audience behaviour based on release timing, film production companies can maximize their return on investment and reduce the risk associated with high-budget films.