

Bechdel Test Analysis

Insights into Gender Representation in Films in 1970-2013

Introduction

The Bechdel Test, coined by cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 1985 in her comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For," serves as a simple yet powerful tool to evaluate gender representation in movies. The test comprises three criteria: a film must feature at least two named female characters, these characters must engage in a conversation with each other, and their conversation should be about something other than a man.

This report aims to analyze a diverse dataset of films from 1970 to 2013, focusing on comparing budget, gross profits (profit/budget), and the progression over time of movies passing vs failing the test .

Methodology

The dataset was generated from two key sources: BechdelTest.com, known for its detailed assessments of films' gender representation, and The-Numbers.com, a leading platform providing financial details for movies. From these datasets a focused sample of 1,615 films released between 1990 and 2013 was compiled. To ensure accuracy, all financial figures were adjusted for inflation to 2013 dollars. This dataset provided a strong balance between thorough evaluations of female character involvement and precise financial information available online.

Source: <https://github.com/fivethirtyeight/data/tree/master/bechdel>

Key Findings

1. Pass/Fail Ratio Over Time

- The proportion of films passing the Bechdel Test has increased since the 1970s, but the rate reached a standstill in the mid 90s
- The ratio of films that undoubtedly passed the test hadn't reached 50% in 2013

2. Budget Analysis (1990-2013)

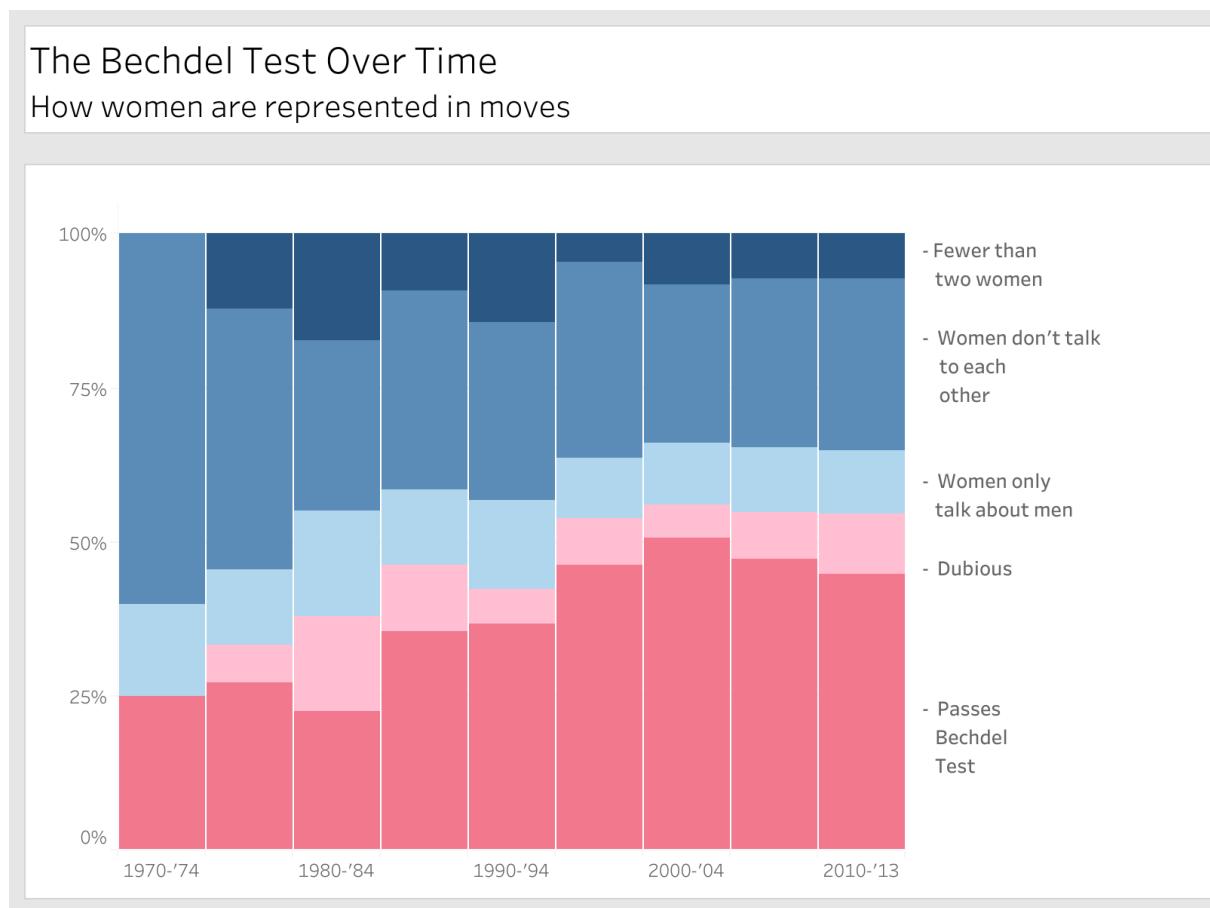
- The median budget of films that passed the test is lower than films that failed.

3. Gross Profits Analysis (1990-2013)

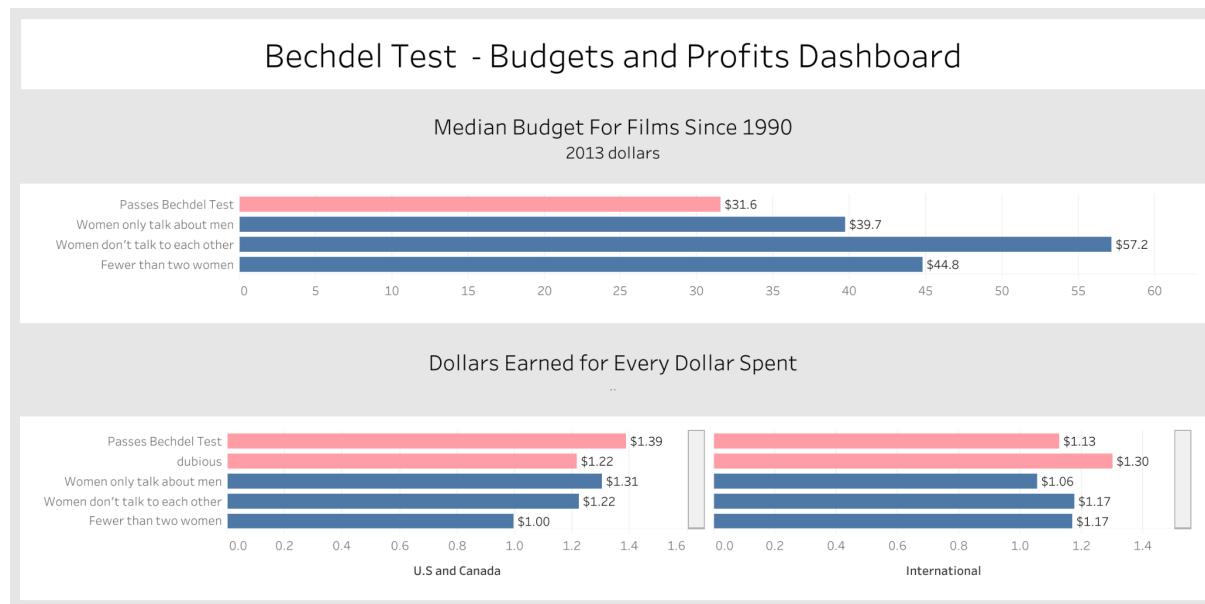
- Movies that passed the Bechdel Test have a higher median gross profit compared to those that failed.

Dashboards

1. The Bechdel Test Over Time



2. Budget and Gross Profits



Conclusion

The Bechdel Test analysis highlights a positive trend in gender representation in cinema, with an increasing number of films passing the test over the years. While there's no clear association between budget and passing the test, movies that do pass often yield higher gross profits. This emphasizes the importance and potential profitability of diverse and inclusive storytelling in filmmaking.

Recommendations

Continued monitoring and analysis of gender representation in films are crucial. Encouraging studios to prioritize diverse narratives and characters can not only improve societal representation but also yield favorable financial outcomes. Further research into audience preferences and behaviors regarding gender representation could provide deeper insights for the film industry.