

Analysis of exit poll rating and weekend fall-off of specialised films

Every Monday, film distributors and cinema programmer negotiate which films will start, continue and stop playing in cinemas. These negotiations are largely based on the performance of the films over the weekend and the cinema programmer's perception of the film's ongoing commercial prospects.

One of the commonly used tools in making this would be the evaluation of fall-off rates of gross box offices from one weekend to the next. Typically films that experienced large fall-offs are more likely to be taken off screen and visa-versa.

Exit polls carried out over the film's opening weekend provide data on the audience's enjoyment of the film and there has been anecdotal evidence to suggest that films that receive particularly good enjoyment ratings (a high percentage of 'highly favourable' responses) are likely to perform better in terms of lesser fall-offs. This is perceived to be due to audiences providing positive word of mouth on the film. Should such a relationship exist, exit poll enjoyment rating could potentially be a useful addition to the box of tools in deciding cinema programming as the exit poll rating of the film's opening could provide an indicator of its ongoing commercial performance.

In this research we attempt to ascertain the presence of such a relationship for a specific group of films – 'specialised' films. Specialised films are typically foreign-language films or films with challenging subject matter, as well as classic and documentary films.

We examined the relationship between fall-off rates and exit poll ratings of a group of ten specialised films released during 2006 and 2007. The results show that there is evidence of a positive relationship between fall-off rates and exit poll ratings for specialised films. In that, films that received higher level of 'highly favourable' exit poll ratings resulted in less fall-off from their first weekend to the next than otherwise.