

How Critical Are Critical Reviews?

A new study in the *Journal of Marketing* looks at the effect film critics have on the box-office success or failure of a film. The study examined both positive and negative film reviews and found that consumers reacted differently in making a decision to see a film or not depending on the timing of the review. It seems that negative reviews have a sharper initial impact, but less pronounced over time (normally diminishing to zero impact after eight weeks). Conversely, positive reviews are beneficial over a longer period of time.

This explains why studios promote the star power of films they suspect will get bad reviews, while touting the reviews of the acclaimed titles. Hence, big budgets and big stars are a form of insurance for commercial success and work more to eliminate the negative impacts of bad reviews than to elevate the positive potential of an acclaimed film.

The authors suggest that their findings may be applied to other industries that need to assess how critical influences can either help or hurt their product introductions. Examples are publishing, music, and even stocks.



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