

Do We Watch What Matches our Personality? Movie Preferences and Personality

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ABSTRACT

Movies are an important part of our life a primary source of entertainment and knowledge. Everyone enjoys a good movie on a weekend. Get a holiday and people plan of watching movies or catching up with the latest releases. Making friends is sometimes also influenced by movie preferences. But are these movie preferences influenced by our personality? Very little research has been done on this topic. The purpose of the present study was to find out whether there is a relationship between movie preferences and the personality of an individual. The study also assesses the gender differences in movie preferences. A sample of 80 participants was taken aged between 18-25 years old. To assess the personality Ten Item Personality Inventory was used. And to check movie preferences a simple questionnaire was used. The results of the study showed that there is a significant correlation between movie preferences and personality. And there are significant gender differences.

Keywords: *Movie Preferences, Personality, Gender Differences*

There are different mediums of entertainment in our life, sometimes we like to read a book whereas sometimes we watch a movie. Movies are one of the best and never-ending fun for most of us. Most of us love to watch and are crazy about movies. There are people out there who won't even miss a single release. It is one of the best sources of entertainment and we prefer watching movies on weekends. Somehow it affects our life as well as society in many ways. In 2013, global box offices grossed over 35 billion dollars, up 4% from 2012, and 22% from 2009 (Boxoffice, 2014). Those numbers still fail to take into account the number of movies rented, purchased, or streamed online.

It is very clear that humans are pretty much addicted to movies and prefer these as the primary source of entertainment but what is less evident is the personality characteristics of people who have a preference for a specific movie genre. When meeting people for the first time most of us ask about their favorite movies. And based on their answers we do unknowingly assign some characteristics to the individual based on their answers. Is your assumption about their personality correct? Students, when move to a new school or students, it is also seen that people become friends solely based on the fact that they share love for the same movie genre. Is it because of the fact that movie preferences by individuals are indirectly affected by their personalities?

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However, when people are watching movies, they are not just passive receivers of information (Rentfrow et al., 2011) but they play an active role in selecting what to watch (Katz et al., 1974). Studies also show that the movie preferences of an individual remain consistent and that these preferences express specific personality traits of the individual (Bowes et al., 2018).

There are a small number of studies that attempt to discover the nature of the connection between psychology and film or media preferences. In the study: *Who Watches What? : Assessing The Impact Of Gender And Personality On Film Preferences*, researchers aimed to delve deeper into the combined effects of gender and personality traits as they relate to movie preferences. They made use of what is known as the Big Five Framework. A potentially useful framework through which to approach this connection is the Big Five, or the five-factor personality model (Digman, 1990; Goldman, 1993). This is a framework that many contemporary psychologists advocate and that many researchers use to determine personality types based on movie preferences.

Studies show that individuals who chose the comedy genre were more open (more creative and adventurous) and slightly less conscientious (less attention to detail and disorganized). And females who showed a preference towards this genre (when both sexes did) were more open than males. According to Kraaykamp et al (2005), this can be explained by the fact that comedy movies are often more original, they contain humor, their plot lines are unpredictable, and they challenge conventional ways of thinking.

People who like action movies are more conscientious (hard-working), less neurotic (less emotionally stable), and more open (creative and adventurous). And females who showed a preference towards this genre (when both sexes did) were more open than males, as with the comedy genre. Being less neurotic is supported by Conway and Rubin (1991) who state that people who are more neurotic will gravitate toward movies that are lighter (such as comedy) that free them from their neuroticism.

Understanding personality through preferences in popular mass media: An archetypal approach paper by Faber (2009) examines individual preferences in popular or mass culture media and what they say about people's psychological processes. Faber hypothesized that the reason why movie preferences and personality correlate is because art-like movies use archetypal characters and themes and stories which the viewers can relate to and sometimes these archetypes may resonate with their own personality. The results of the study supported the idea of archetypal life themes, which was hypothesized by Faber that people's movie preferences are related to their everyday behaviors, goals, social interests, and self-concept. In the future, pop culture-based indicators of personality such as media preferences may be used more often as assessment tools; more pragmatically, they may serve to guide individuals' overall personal development.

Another study indicated the relationship between Eysenck's traits of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism personality traits and media preferences, with individuals high in neuroticism enjoying "downbeat" music and informative media like news, and individuals high in psychoticism enjoying violent or horror films (Eysenck, 1947; Weaver, 1991).

In a study conducted by Batista (2011), it was found that people who say they like scary movies, a lot tend to be high in thrill-seeking, and thus enjoy intense experiences. They

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tend to be low in agreeableness, with no particular expectation or desire for social harmony. A more recent study examined media preferences (television shows) and cultural participation as they relate to the Big Five personality factors, and found that personality serves as a predictor for a wide range of tastes and cultural practices (Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005).

Research Question

1. Is there a relationship between movie preferences and personality?
2. Does gender have a role in the movie preferences of an individual?

Objectives

1. To determine the correlation between movie preferences and personality.
2. To determine whether gender plays a role in movie preference.

Hypothesis

H01: There is a significant relationship between movie preferences and personality.

H02: There are significant gender differences in movie preferences.

Sample

There were a total of 80 participants in the study, 41 (51.2%) of them were female and 39 (48.7%) were male. Participants were typically between 18 and 25, as self-reported in the survey, with a mean age of 24.5 years old. The exclusion criteria were people below 18 and above 25.

Tools used

Ten-Item Personality Inventory: The 10-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) is a self-reported general scale designed to assess the Big Five personality traits including extraversion (E), agreeableness(A), conscientiousness (C), emotional stability (ES), and openness (O). Each of the 10 items consists of two descriptors, and each Big Five personality trait is measured by two items. The items in the TIPI are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly), and the total personality score (10-70) is obtained by summing the subscale scores. The TIPI takes approximately 1 minute to complete. The reliability of the scales is at an appropriate level. In order to assess individual film preferences, a simple questionnaire was designed. The measure asks participants to indicate the degree to which they enjoy various film genres on a Likert scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing a genre they do not enjoy, and 7 representing a genre they enjoy very much. The following questions examined individual favorite films and the aspects of those films that are enjoyable.

Procedure

A Google form was distributed online among the participants. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was taken. The study was prefaced with a consent form detailing the study's purpose, risks involved, and contact information for the researchers. Responses were collected via Google form and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 22.

RESULTS

To analyze the correlations between film preferences and personality I first calculated the personality scores for each individual. I created a new variable for each participant's score

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on each of the five factors (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism or emotional stability, and openness to experience).

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	n	M	SD
Extraversion	80	4.17	.844
Agreeableness	80	4.52	1.153
Conscientiousness	80	4.68	1.383
Neuroticism	80	3.91	1.190
Openness	80	4.99	1.149

As can be seen in the table below, positive correlations were found between the personality trait of extraversion and the film genre of drama ($r = .230$, $p = .043$). The agreeableness factor correlated positively with the romance genre ($r = .334$, $p = .003$). The factor of openness to experience positively correlated with the genres of the documentary ($r = .233$, $p = .039$), action ($r = .274$, $p = .014$), drama ($r = .241$, $p = .032$), and science fiction ($r = .216$, $p = .004$). Finally, the factor of neuroticism correlated negatively with drama ($r = -.243$, $p = .031$).

H01: There is a significant relationship between Movie Preferences and Personality

Table 1 Pearson correlation between movie genre preferences and personality factors

	Action	Comedy	Documentary	Drama	Horror	Romance	Sci-Fi
Extraversion	.014	-.089	.205	.230*	.021	.125	-.0550
Agreeableness	.062	.107	-.028	-.125	.011	.334**	-.051
Conscientiousness	.016	-.050	.168	-.106	.053	.218	.130
Neuroticism	.203	.060	.108	-.243*	.115	-.065	.082
Openness	.274*	.092	.233*	.241	.197	.084	.251*

* Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Men and women also differed in film preference, with significant differences in mean scores for action, comedy, documentary, romance, and science fiction. Men rated action and science fiction higher than women, and drama and romance lower.

H02: There are significant gender differences in movie preferences

Table 2

	Male		Female		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Action	5.17	1.391	4.85	1.732	2.026
Comedy	4.93	1.907	5.81	1.393	2.312
Documentary	3.83	1.910	4.26	1.787	1.987
Drama	4.52	1.724	4.81	1.409	.803
Horror	5.34	1.653	5.15	1.899	-.458
Romance	4.93	1.771	5.30	1.545	1.991
Sci-fi	5.03	1.700	4.62	1.917	1.962

DISCUSSION

The results support both the hypothesis of the study that there is a correlation between movie preferences and personality and that there are gender differences in movie preferences.

A surprising result was that all of the significant correlations found were positive, with the exception of neuroticism, which was negative.

The findings show a significant positive correlation between agreeableness and romance, which could be explained by the compassion and cooperation often employed in the scripts of romances. Another interesting correlation was that of openness and documentaries and science fiction. This makes sense because individuals high in openness are often intellectual, which the informational style of documentary caters to. Their openness to adventure and a variety of experiences makes sense with the correlation to science fiction, which is characterized by these traits. There was a positive correlation between openness and action which contradicts other research. This can be explained by the fact that the plot of these movies when combined with original content appeals to people who are open to new experiences. The findings also show a negative correlation between neuroticism and drama. All these findings show that there is a correlation between movie preferences and personality.

In consistence with the above findings, a study conducted by Monteria., et.al. (2023) showed that the process of choosing a movie reflects specific personality traits and reinforces the role that the role it plays in the movie preferences of an individual.

In contrast to some findings of the research, a study conducted by Kallias (2012, shows that there is a positive correlation between neuroticism and drama as people who score high in neuroticism watch drama to experience more negative emotions via dramatic scenes.

Men and women also differed in film genre preferences, with women rating comedy, documentary, and romance genres higher than men, and men rating action, horror, and science fiction higher, which conforms to the societal stereotypes on movie preferences by different genders. At the same time, the findings could be affected by specific content factors such as the number of female characters, expressions of sadness, and the amount of violence, which vary between films considered under the same genre (Hutchinson, 1998).

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are drawn based on the research question raised

1. There is a significant correlation between movie preferences and personality.
2. There are significant gender differences in movie preferences.

Implications and Limitations

The present study has important implications from a clinical point of view. Movies can be used psycho-educate individuals about their problems and if their movie preferences are known, it can be an essential variable in understanding an individual's personality and emotions.

The limitation of the study was the sample, where the convenience sampling method was used to recruit the participants. Most of the participants were students from Kristu Jayanti

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College, Bangalore. This is not a representative sample, and future research should attempt to widen the reach of its sample.

Another limitation of the research is the broad way genres were presented. Films within genres vary significantly, and a representative sample of films from each genre might prove to be a more useful descriptive tool to explore these connections. And some of these participants won't be able to differentiate rightly between these genres.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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