

Capstone Project: The Impact of Public Relations Campaigns on Armenian Cinematography

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# Introduction

In the time span of a little over two decades, the film industry in Armenia has been slowly starting up on the road to revival. Whereas before the collapse of the Soviet Union, its operations mostly resembled a centrally funded system, nowadays, the operations of the film industry have had to be adapted to a market environment with scarce resources, infrastructure, and almost no institutional support. Notwithstanding, a new breed of Armenian filmmakers and cultural entrepreneurs has found a way to tell local stories to local and diaspora audiences everywhere. *The Line (2016)*, *Amerikatsi (2022)*, and *Good Day (2024)* gained traction not just for their stories but for the unique promotional techniques the filmmakers used to reach audiences. This signifies the rapidly changing landscape of marketing for local cinema, noticeably in social media, influencer engagement, and digital outreach. This research looks at the relationship between the public relations strategies used and audience engagement and the success of Armenian films. The central research question is: To what extent do PR campaigns influence public interest, audience turnout, and perception of Armenian cinema?

At the same time, globally, public relations has taken the center stage in marketing film phenomena. In sectors worldwide, such as Hollywood and Bollywood, public relations is defined beyond press releases and red carpets. It is the telling of stories and the building of emotional connections, and sustaining the conversation before and after release. PR teams now run entire campaigns on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube; they work with fan communities; and they create immersive experiences to keep the audiences engaged (Kerrigan 2017). Even small-budget films can find their audience and become successes simply with the right PR strategy. There cannot be any examples stronger than *Barbie (2023)* and *Dangal (2016)*, which show the sheer

power of a strategized PR (Kumar 2021). These international examples show that it is beyond traditional marketing that PR has the power to create film events.

Yet in the Armenian case, this subject often gets scant attention. While some recent Armenian films have tried their luck with social media promotion or press coverage, up to now there is no substantial data or academically-founded work that can evaluate whether there are any implications to those efforts. For so many local filmmakers and producers, PR has been treated more as an afterthought or an expensive option rather than part of the core strategy of their release. Because of these, campaigns become ill-timed, either in developing their bases or in carrying out their objectives in unmeasurable scales and engagement.

Thus, the aim of this capstone is to evaluate the role of public relations in the success achieved by Armenian films. The cross-examination would aim to measure how PR campaigns impact audience engagement and box-office figures while bringing forward what strategies seem to work best when presented to a local audience. By triangulating among survey data and interviews with a case study of a recent Armenian film, *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet*, practical insights will be generated for the benefit of filmmakers, producers, and marketers in the Armenian film sphere.

# Literature Review

## PR in the Global Film Industry

Public relations has emerged as an essential element and strategic chore of this global film industry, acting not just as a marketing tool but complexly through narrative management, emotional persuasion, and cultural positioning. In this media environment of splintered audiences and diminishing attention spans nurtured by platforms run by algorithms, the PR's position has expanded from limited press relations to far more elastic multidimensional engagements. A PR campaign today is not just about visibility; it's about resonance. A successful campaign will not just make noise. Still, it will place the film within ongoing cultural conversations, respond to fan engagement, and even shape afterlives on streaming platforms and within the academic discourse.

Major cinematic markets such as Hollywood and Bollywood have deeply institutionalized PR strategies dating back to the early twentieth century. For Hollywood, PR actually became the foundation of the studio system itself. PR has become more than just about work for a Hollywood studio (except in the eyes of the industry) because recognition of the studios, the latter is being paid out by the studios in both film and media, seems to be considered equal (Kerrigan, 2017). The public relations infrastructure created during this era included media partnerships, star image management, and controlled access to journalists. Over time, this evolved into a full-fledged publicity ecosystem, with publicists shaping celebrity identities and coordinating with magazines, television, and radio to build narratives that extended beyond the films themselves.

However, this ancient model has also been transformed dramatically in the age of digitality. Most notably, perhaps, there has been the development of participatory culture. Audiences are no longer passive consumers of promotional material but instead actors within the promotional world. This shift can be easily illustrated through Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008) campaign, which launched an alternate reality game (ARG) in the guise of the site WhySoSerious.com. The campaign unfolded over the course of many months, with online puzzles, hidden messages, real-world scavenger hunts, and interactive media experiences. Jenkins (2006) cites this as a prime example of "convergence culture," where the audience and the producers collaborate to create storytelling through a joint effort. Its popularity was not a matter of just virality but the creation of emotional investment and community through multi-layered and immersive content.

A further prime example of modern film PR brilliance is 2023's *Barbie* campaign. Although the high-concept puzzle-solving of *The Dark Knight* diverged from the more literal puzzle-solving of its predecessors, *Barbie* succeeded through its visualization of nostalgia, humor, and relevance to organize global participation. From fashion-challenge memes on TikTok to political columns in major papers, the campaign for the film involved less broadcasting and more planting narrative seeds that would be unearthed and amplified by viewers. Kerrigan (2017) calls this a shift from "promotion to positioning." This means that PR today is not just about telling people when a film is available, but about connecting the film to bigger cultural, social, or emotional topics that matter to the audience.

Bollywood, while operating in a different industrial and cultural environment, has modified its PR tool box in the same manner. Bollywood PR has historically been based on

stardom, lineage, and song. According to Athique (2012), the Indian cinema industry has traditionally used heavily emotional storytelling and personality-oriented promotion. Magazines like Filmfare and TV programs like Koffee with Karan have served not only as entertainment mediums but also as part of integral PR channels where actors and producers remain in the spotlight and keep their public images alive. Even prior to the onset of the digital revolution, this kind of emotionally manipulative, star-centric PR created intense relationships between stars and publics.

In more recent times, however, Bollywood has embraced a hybrid PR strategy that focuses on a combination of old-school fan engagement and online interactivity. *Dangal* (2016) is a case in point. Aamir Khan leads the film, the true story of a father training his daughters to become wrestling champions. *Dangal* not only became a box office hit in India but broke records in China. This was made possible in a large way thanks to Khan's considerate PR exercise in China, where she did interviews in Mandarin, spoke to Chinese educational and cultural organizations, and partnered with local influencers. Family, education, and women empowerment issues were raised by the campaign—issues that really resonated with the Chinese people. Kerrigan (2017) further contributes that *Dangal* succeeded because its PR campaign was not merely loud but impactful, associating the core message of the film with the cultural values of the target audience.

These Bollywood and Hollywood instances show that successful PR in the film industry is not dependent on much more than publicity in the media. It is founded upon narrative resonance, emotional identification, and the ability to perceive and respond to the unique psychological and cultural paradigms of specific audiences. All the more so when films are

aimed at global reach. What is a success in one country will flop in another unless the PR message is properly localized. Contemporary PR practitioners in the world of film, therefore, must be as much a marketer as they must be a culture translator.

## Theoretical Framework

Evolution in PR practice could be realized on a more profound level using some critical communication and marketing theories. Such include the Two-Step Flow of Communication discussed by Lazarsfeld and Katz in 1955. Information moves from the mass media, opinion leaders, and to the masses according to this theory. Critics, influencers, journalists, and celebrities are all opinion leaders today. In film promotion, this translates to advance screenings, embargo breaks, and influencer advance screenings—tools used to build a wave of grassroots excitement that spreads on social media and entertainment websites. Marvel Studios, for example, always uses this strategy by inviting a small group of influencers and critics to advance screenings, knowing their reactions will shape the public's first impression of the film.

A second useful framework is Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory (2003), which describes the diffusion of new products and ideas across populations. The model divides adopters into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. PR campaigns often reflect this phased strategy. Movies such as *The Dark Knight* first aimed at innovators—comic book enthusiasts, alternate reality game players, and online puzzle solvers—before reaching out to wider audiences through mainstream media. A similar trend is observed in the release strategy of movies such as RRR and Pathaan in Bollywood, where the core fan bases were first mobilized through regional media and social media hype, ultimately generating enough buzz to draw in the masses. Understanding where every target audience is at on the

adoption curve helps PR professionals tailor both message and timing for maximum effectiveness.

The AIDA model—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action—is a sequential framework used to structure promotional materials, guiding consumers through the stages of awareness to purchase (Chaffey, 2022). As old as over a century, the model is still highly relevant in PR planning. Visual saturation in hot pink and enigmatic early trailers was utilized, for instance, in the Barbie campaign to capture attention. Interest was sustained through director and cast interviews, viral memes, and theme-based merchandise. Desire was generated by projecting the film's feminist themes onto public debate and pop culture discourse. The campaign then prompted action by initiating pre-sales, fan art, and global premiere engagement. The AIDA model provides a map to charting audiences from awareness to final engagement.

Together, these models shed light on why good PR is done in the global cinema market. Their application becomes more complicated while processing the smaller or emerging cinema markets, especially where states are burdened with political legacy, cultural conservatism, or infrastructural vulnerabilities. In post-Soviet states such as Lithuania, Kazakhstan, and Armenia, not only is PR limited by financial capacities but also by deeper social and ideological legacy.

## PR in Post-Soviet Countries

In post-Soviet countries, film utilization of PR has been a more incremental development, arising in industries that have long had state censorship, central funding, and ideologically limited storytelling. This heritage has shaped both the kind of films that are made and how they are marketed. States like Kazakhstan and Lithuania have made great strides in the last decade, experimenting with new marketing formats, genre variety, and emotionally resonant storytelling

defying the ascetic tradition of Soviet films. Lithuanian cinema, historically synonymous with art-house specialty films and social realism, had not until recently registered on the commercial radar screens of viewers. Evidence is its 2014 action-comedy *Redirected*, which was a breakthrough. But with *Redirected*, filmmakers went down a different path: a genre movie marketed via humor, scandal, and international appeal. The campaign used digital trailers, social media virality, and celebrity casting to shift what people expected and target younger viewers (Mitkus & Nedzinskaite-Mitke, 2017). This broke with aesthetic restraint typical for Baltic cinema and showed how creative PR can reinterpret a national film brand.

In Armenia, however, PR remains underdeveloped within the context of mainstream cinema. Despite a strong tradition of narrative and a vibrant cultural heritage, the Armenian film industry lags behind in financing, distribution, and audience interest. Among the primary issues is the ideological and aesthetic heritage of the Soviet era, which continues to affect the tone and subject matter of much local production. As Azatyan (2018) explains, Soviet Armenian cinema operated within very tight ideological restrictions which suppressed direct portrayals of romance, sex, or psychological complexity. Films had to emphasize moral lessons, patriotism, and family solidarity instead. This pattern of "desexualisation," as Azatyan calls it, restricted the emotional scope of Armenian cinema and continues to impact creative content as well as marketing strategy. Trailers, posters, and interviews tend to concentrate on educational or patriotic content, with less focus on character drama or emotional suspense, which are key factors in international film marketing.

This cultural background poses special challenges when Armenian films attempt to attract young people or foreign markets. PR campaigns have to cope with a restricted color range,

frequently without the type of dramatic or romantic iconography that powers contemporary promotional strategies. To take an example, whereas Hollywood can get away with relying on celebrity connections or sultry storylines to get the buzz going, Armenian cinema typically has to resort to history lessons, national chauvinism, or moral narrative. It is not that good PR is impossible. By no means, it simply means that the campaigns will have to be more creative and culture-aware, using grassroots campaigning, communal outreach, and emotional authenticity as a stand-in for costly spectacle.

A classic recent example is that of *Laskar Pelangi* (2008) in Indonesia. Although it is not post-Soviet, the movie provides a nice illustration of the potential of low-budget movies to be successful using emotionally powerful, culture-based PR. The film, which was based on a top-selling novel, is centered on poor children's struggles to gain access to education in Indonesian villages. The promotional campaign for the film was organized less to promote the movie and more to engage audiences in a wider debate about social responsibility and national values. Advertising campaigns ranged from school screenings, national paper editorials, and government sponsorship from the Ministry of Education. What was produced was a film that became a movement. It resonated with viewers not because of star power or spectacle, but because of its emotional truth and civic relevance (Jenkins, 2006). For countries like Armenia, this tactic is a model. When traditional commercial tactics are unsuccessful, emotional and moral storytelling—bolstered by grassroots promotion—can fill the gap.

What is certain in these diverse illustrations is that PR must be specialized to fit the particular circumstances of each film industry. As Kerrigan (2017) states it, one template will not fit in global cinema. What succeeds in Los Angeles will fail in Yerevan or Jakarta unless

localized well. This means not only understanding the media landscape but also the cultural taboos, narrative habits, and affective vocabularies of the target audience. Billboards and TV interviews might still have influence in certain markets. In others, TikTok trends, Instagram reels, and podcast segments might be the focal point. The idea is not so much to reach people as it is to engage with them.

Increasingly successful PR campaigns are constructed on transmedia storytelling.

Transmedia storytelling is the art of telling stories across different media platforms, each serving a specific function in the overall narrative experience. In terms of PR, this would be where a movie would be teased on YouTube with a teaser trailer, developed through behind-the-scenes on Instagram, supported by actor interviews in podcasts, and cemented through thematic discourse on Twitter. It's not so much announcing to people that a movie is going to be released, but inviting them into its universe months prior to viewing it in a theater and months later. This strategy was at the center of promotion for both *The Dark Knight* and for *Barbie*, in which the film's promotional materials left a cultural imprint beyond the film itself.

Although transmedia methods are just new to post-Soviet cinematographies, they have extremely significant potential. With digital media becoming increasingly affordable, even small production groups may create multiplatform content. For Armenian filmmakers, embracing podcast interviews, micro-influencer collaborations, and YouTube video essays can bridge the gap between low budgets and big-view expectations. The Kinodaran platform, a fresh Armenian tech-meets-creative-content startup, has already begun to venture in such ways, adding influencer campaigns, innovative user challenges, and serialized podcast marketing to their PR arsenal. These tactics show an awareness that contemporary audiences will no longer be content

with simplistic trailers; they want experiences, conversation, and storytelling that they can participate in.

At the same time, the ethics of public relations are more important than ever. As public distrust expands, deception grows, and screen fatigue sets in, audiences will be more likely to engage with content that feels authentic and open. This is particularly significant when promoting films dealing with sensitive issues such as war, poverty, or national tragedy. In Armenia, where most of the films are grounded in real political or historical events, PR must walk a thin line between good storytelling and good promotion. A perceived exploitative campaign can damage not only the reputation of the film but the credibility of the filmmakers as well.

World cinema demonstrates that PR is not any more a role of an advertisement department. It is a strategic, culturally sensitive, and emotional discipline that can make or destroy a movie's reception. From billion-dollar Hollywood blockbusters to tiny Yerevan indie films, the success of movie PR depends on understanding audience psychology, being a master of storytelling devices, and choosing the best combination of platforms and voices. For post-Soviet legacy marketplaces specifically:

The future is in innovative adaptation, emotional authenticity, and culturally aware storytelling. With digital technology increasingly democratizing production and distribution of media access, there is more potential for high-impact PR and not just in the old-fashioned powerhouses but all across the movie universe.

# Research Questions

## The Research Question

The main goal of this capstone is to analyze the following research query: In what way does public relations impact the movie business in Armenia? While public relations is a widely studied area in larger movie economies like the United States and India, scant attention has been given to its impact on smaller, emerging film economies like that of Armenia. Although there is greater frequent local production of films and most of them have some kind of promotion, there is no clear knowledge on whether or not these PR activities are truly effective in appealing to audiences or influencing box office results. This was the research question chosen because it addresses an extremely pragmatic gap within current Armenian film culture: the ways in which marketing devices do or don't impact a movie's success or failure in the current saturated media environment.

Beyond the evaluation of the broad reach of PR, the project is also looking to evaluate which type of PR activities will best appeal to the target audience in Armenia. Since the country's film industry includes a mix of oldies, new independent flicks, and mass-market sitcoms, what kind of promotions work across these genres and customer segments is especially important to determine. The general goal of the study is not only to record the condition of film publicity, but to evaluate it in such a way as to be able to guide subsequent PR campaigns and provide guidance to producers, marketers, and cultural policymakers alike.

## Methodology Summary

To effectively address the research question in a comprehensive and grounded way, a mixed-methods design was employed, which entailed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first phase of methodology consisted of a targeted online survey distributed via

Google Forms. The survey was designed to get responses in terms of film preferences, exposure to Armenian films, recognition of advertisement campaigns, and overall opinions as to the influence PR has on people's movie attendance patterns. It consisted of 16 questions and was made available for input for six weeks. The survey was shared mostly through youth and student networks, Instagram stories, and Facebook groups, helping us to gather a sample that best represents today's most active audience for Armenian cinema: the 18 to 34 age bracket.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the people working on PR, media, and filmmaking in Armenia (PR professional in the field of filmmaking, marketing specialist, a screenwriter, and a film director) to complement the survey and to learn from within the film industry. These interviews were essential to understanding how the PR campaign decision-making process functions, from which tools are most important to how success is measured and common problems. Because the Armenian industry is so small, most PR is conducted on an informal or low-resource level, so these findings are especially helpful. On occasion, the interviews revealed intriguing contradictions between what the professionals believe works and what in fact grabs the audience's attention or is remembered.

In addition to primary research, desk research was also done to provide context and theoretical richness. This involved examining scholarly literature on film marketing, PR practice, audience psychology, and case studies of other post-Soviet and small-market film industries. The aim of this review was to place the Armenian case within a broader context, illustrating how trends in the region are consistent with or divergent from international models. Scholarship such as Finola Kerrigan's *Film Marketing* and Everett Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations* were particularly helpful in providing a theoretical basis.

Finally, the research includes a close case study of the film *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet*, a fairly new release which had a fairly high-profile PR campaign. Through an analysis of the film's publicity materials, audience reactions, and box office performance, we were able to evaluate how practice is put into theory in the Armenian context. This case study serves as a concrete example to tie together findings from the survey, interviews, and desk research, allowing us to reflect on what worked, what didn't, and why.

Together, these methods were selected to provide an even-handed view of how PR operates in Armenian cinema, from industry and audience perspectives. There are certainly constraints—e.g., the comparatively small sample and short interview window—but the information gathered is sufficient to provide meaningful analysis and contribute to future discussion on how PR can more effectively enable the growth of Armenian cinema.

# Primary Research: Survey Analysis

## Survey Design and Methodology

To gather valid and significant information about audience engagement with Armenian films and how public relations (PR) campaigns play a role in this engagement, we designed and implemented a structured online survey titled "Armenian Movie Industry: The Role of PR in Audience Engagement." This survey was the core empirical component of our capstone research, which was meant to supplement the theoretical and desk-based portions of our research with new field data. Our overall objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of PR activities in the Armenian cinema from the point of view of real audience behaviors and attitudes.

The questionnaire was developed via Google Forms as it is simple to access, cross-device compatible, and simple to handle data. Distribution channels included a mix of digital outreach strategies: academic mailing lists, university networks, Instagram story, Facebook posting, group messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram, and direct passing between university and cinema-related communities. Distribution channels were carefully chosen to reach peak levels among different age groups and geographic backgrounds, while maintaining focus on Armenian-speaking or culturally related respondents, both local as well as diasporic audiences.

Data collection was conducted from February 7 to March 28, 2025, with sufficient time for circulation and follow-up. We received 108 returned completed responses, which provided us with a good sample for descriptive and thematic analysis. The response rate and variety of this dataset allowed us to identify common trends, choices, and obstacles towards the consumption and perception of Armenian films, particularly in pre-film release promotional activities.

The questionnaire had 16 main questions, mostly multiple-choice or checkbox questions with some open-text questions to allow qualitative input. The questions were designed to:

- Demographically characterize the respondents (age, gender, and nationality)
- Assess their viewing behavior in terms of films
- Test their familiarity with Armenian films and their associated promotion campaigns
- Understand the media channels and types of content most likely to influence viewing behavior
- Obtain broader opinion on the relative strengths and weaknesses of Armenian film

To ensure fairness of findings, we kept participants anonymous, did not request names or e-mail addresses, and made it very clear in the introduction that the responses would be kept confidential and would only be used for academic purposes.

The survey design choice was a balance between qualitative richness and quantifiability so that we can derive statistical trends as well as interpretative findings that will be utilized to inform the case study and interview analysis in the following sections.

## Rationale Behind the Film Selection

One of the most important parts of our survey was a question asking respondents to check off which Armenian movies they had either watched or seen advertised over the past year. This question had two functions. First, it enabled us to gauge the visibility of some films' PR campaigns. Second, it provided us with information on actual audience behavior, enabling us to create a contrast between promotional exposure and ultimate consumption behavior.

The selection of films in this question was a carefully chosen sample. It included a mix of genres, time periods, and types of productions to ensure the results were not skewed by the popularity or novelty of a single film. Particularly, we focused on four categories:

- Soviet classics: These movies are formative in the history of Armenian cinema and are most often used in film and literature classes. We included *The Color of Pomegranates* (1969), *We and Our Mountains* (1969), and *The Tango of Our Childhood* (1985).

Including them in the survey was meant to gauge long-term cultural relevance and extended visibility across generations.

- Contemporary award-winning films: *Earthquake* (2016) and *Amerikatsi* (2022) were chosen for their global festival exposure, thematic richness, and comparatively high PR footprints in relation to other contemporary Armenian movies. Their addition enabled the assessment of the crossover effect of high-budget films.

- Recent mainstream releases: Films like *Good Day 1* (2024) & *2* (2025), *Bakhti Tery* (2024), *Women in Black* (2023), and *The Reverse Side of the Medal* (2024) were included to track how recently released films were being promoted and received. These were films with clear, visible marketing efforts, especially on social media and outdoor advertising.

- Comedy or cult hits: We also included *Poker.am* (2012) and *The Line* (2016), both of which attained widespread domestic popularity and were similarly recalled for their advertising during their respective times of release.

This range of titles was intended to test recall, preference, and exposure, all of which provide key indicators of the effectiveness of PR across various segments of the industry. We

also hoped to examine the role of nostalgia, cultural relevance, and genre in conjunction with the efficacy of promotional activity.

## Demographic Profile of Respondents

One of the most important aspects of our analysis is knowing who took part in the survey. The demographic breakdown of our sample is crucial when interpreting the survey findings, particularly when evaluating the effectiveness of PR efforts that typically target specific segments of audiences.

### Age

The most prominent age group in our sample was the 18–24 age group, with approximately 70% of all interviewees belonging to it. This is not surprising given the locations we used for sampling (social media, university networks) and the relevance of the topic to the young adults who are more likely to venture out to watch films and see advertisements online.

Other age groups were represented:

- 25–34 comprised approximately 20%
- 35–44 contributed to a little less than 8%
- There was virtually no representation of those older than 45 or younger than 18

The above classification paints an interesting picture: most Armenian PR campaigns specifically online campaigns will receive the highest positive feedback among young adults i.e., in the 18–34 range. All subsequent PR campaigns ought to address accordingly the trends and tendencies of that age bracket.

## Gender

The gender breakdown was fairly even, with a slight female preponderance (about 55%). This relative balance allowed for an unbiased interpretation of attitudes and tastes free of substantial gender bias. It also suggests that Armenian film consumption is not gendered and that PR campaigns could benefit from a gender-free appeal more on the basis of narrative and values than on male/female genre segmentation.

## National Identity

Most of the participants (over 85%) were local Armenian citizens. The others were diaspora Armenians, US Armenians, and Russian Armenians. Local participation was the central focus of this study, but the diasporic contribution yielded interesting comparisons particularly with regard to their preferred PR tools and their critiques on film content and quality. Diaspora respondents were more fond of internationally well-known platforms like YouTube and TikTok, which suggests that international Armenian community campaigns might call for cross-national campaigns and multilinguality.

On average, demographic allocation supports the fact that our findings reflect the preference of a digitally aware, culture-oriented, and cinema-inclined audience. That is in line with the median audience targeted by modern PR campaigns.

## Key Findings

### Influence of Social Circles

One of the most dominant themes that arose from the data was the role that social networks played in influencing individuals' personal viewing decisions about Armenian films. Nearly 67% of interviewees indicated being either "very influenced" or "somewhat influenced" by friends' or family members' opinions when choosing to watch an Armenian film. This is a

testament to the sustained influence of word-of-mouth endorsement, even amidst the development of social media and influencer marketing.

Just 8% reported being "not influenced at all," with the remainder being "not very influenced." The message is clear: PR campaigns that encourage people to discuss a movie with shareable trailers, community screenings, or influencer commentary can double their influence by triggering spontaneous word-of-mouth among family groups and friends.

### Films Watched vs. Films Promoted

A stark difference was discovered between the films watched and those promoted.

Among the most watched were:

- *The Color of Pomegranates*
- *We and Our Mountains*
- *The Tango of Our Childhood*
- *Poker.am, The Line, and Amerikatsi*
- *More recent productions such as Good Day 1 & 2 and Women in Black*

At the same time, those most often seen on the market during advertising or PR campaigns included:

- *The Reverse Side of the Medal*
- *Bakhti Tery*
- *Good Day 1 & 2*
- *Women in Black*

- *The Line*

This discrepancy indicates that PR is building visibility, but not necessarily equating to viewership. Some of the newer films had observable promotional presence but reduced reported viewership. This may indicate failures in trailer effectiveness, genre compatibility, or subpar content, which may deter conversion even with wide awareness.

It also suggests that nostalgia and cultural memory continue to draw audiences for classics despite PR level.

## PR Channels and Social Media Metrics

Surveys showed a strong affinity for Instagram as the top platform for finding new Armenian films, seconded by Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. The trend reflects broader global trends toward visual-first, mobile-first platforms for entertainment advertising.

With regard to content type, survey respondents received the following as being most effective:

- Teaser and feature-length trailers
- Social media advertising (stories, reels, influencer posts, etc.)
- Behind-the-scenes content and interviews

By contrast, the traditional media like television commercials, billboards, and endorsements by celebrities were less persuasive. The generational differences are captured in younger generations' preference for authenticity and interactivity that they are exposed to in greater concentrations in social media than they experience through one-way static media.

Interestingly, interactive promotions were also appreciated by some of the respondents, e.g., Q&A with cast or social media campaigns, though not presented in such a manner as a formal option on the menu of the survey. This provokes lines for follow-up research and investigation in the field of Armenian film promotion.

## Reasons to Watch Armenian Films

Respondents emphasized what it is that moved them to love a film, mentioning:

- Immersive stories
- Good quality production
- Natural representation of their culture

PR campaigns themselves were not typically the primary reason a person would watch a movie. PR campaigns were absolutely the cause of creating initial interest or curiosity, however. This is consistent with PR's traditional role as a front-loaded attention driver, rather than an instant determinant of satisfaction.

Notably, cultural authenticity was the most frequently cited, and by diasporic respondents most prominently of all, and implied a desire for films showing Armenian identity in authentic and realistic ways. This implies one potential niche that PR campaigns can reach more directly, by marketing specific films as culturally relevant or socially representative.

## Attendance Patterns and Barriers

One of the survey's most astute questions addressed actual cinema consumption patterns: the most direct indication of audience use. The results here presented quite a dismal picture for local film producers. Only 3% of those queried reported viewing Armenian films frequently

(once monthly and more). The overwhelming majority, approximately 72%, reported they saw films sparingly (a year or less) or at times (sporadically a few times yearly).

These statistics represent a large intent-practice gap. There may be a response created as a result of PR activity, but interest does not always turn into action. In an effort to explain this difference, the survey asked the subjects to select their main reasons for not attending Armenian films in theaters. The main responses were:

- Limited interest in those movies that have been released
- Lack of, or no, promotion
- Wanting non-Armenian films
- Lack of releases in their area
- Competing activities or time constraints

These responses indicate several structural problems. First, the Armenian film industry appears not to have diversity of themes or genres in its films, making it harder to appeal to large audiences. Second, many prospective viewers reported not even knowing some films had come out, indicative of a fundamental issue with communication and access. Third, the distribution structure itself appears to be lacking: particularly for those who live outside Yerevan or other cities.

Some of the open-text responses also theorized that for the majority of young Armenians, going to the cinema is no longer a part of their cultural daily lives. This shift in lifestyle has implications for what PR campaigns should be structured as, perhaps shifting more towards

combined release strategies (theatrical and online) or community screen events that are more experiential and less individualized in consumption.

## Ticket Pre-Purchase Behavior

One particular question asked if there had ever been a time that respondents had bought tickets for an Armenian film before its official opening: a measure of high box office expectation and faith. And the findings were dramatic:

- A mere 17% had ever pre-bought tickets
- Fully 83%, however, had not, even though many opted for the "No, but I would consider it" answer

This is to say, then, that now early stage PR efforts are not strong enough to compel audience members to purchase in advance. However, the willingness to do so exists, and if PR is well executed: in terms of timely teasers, premiere parties, influencer endorsements, and advance previews: it can inspire a sense of urgency and exclusivity, proven drivers of early box office sales.

Further, respondents who pre-purchased said they bought tickets in advance because of:

- An association with director or stars
- Enjoying trailer-driven story spoilers
- Experiencing major buzz online early

These results hold a lesson in action: the first two weeks of a PR campaign are most crucial, since those weeks build the momentum that is required for early ticket buying and high opening-weekend attendance.

## Public Perception and PR Influence

One of our key goals was to assess whether PR campaigns influence audience and critical opinions of a movie before it comes out. And they do, and quite powerfully at that:

- 62% of survey respondents claimed that PR campaigns "substantially shape public opinion"
- 33% said they do "to some extent"
- Only 5% believed that PR had some or no impact

This demonstrates the huge influence trailers, posters, and social media lore have on audience anticipation. But it is a two-edged sword.

When asked if they had ever been let down by a movie after being attracted in by its PR campaign, over 70% replied "yes" ("a few times" or "many times"). These responses show a disturbing pattern: even if Armenian PR offices may be capable of generating hype, the quality of the films does not in each case support the promotional advertising. This creates audience disillusionment and diminishing trust in local promotion in the long run.

Some respondents mentioned "misleading trailers," "overhyped reviews," or "too high expectations created by social media buzz" as causes of dissatisfaction. This implies a disconnect between marketing messages and product, a relationship that can seriously damage long-term audience loyalty.

## Interpretation and Discussion

From the results above, we can make several interpretive conclusions that are of the utmost relevance not only to scholars studying Armenian cinema, but also to PR, marketing, and film-making professionals.

## Awareness ≠ Engagement

PR initiatives are succeeding in informing individuals of new releases of Armenian films, especially via social media like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Awareness is not yet translating into frequent viewership. There seems to be a gap between attention and conversion, which suggests that marketing content is maybe not resonating profoundly enough to provoke action, or that other hindrances: such as inappropriate timing, crass venues, or weak storytelling: are getting in the way.

## Digital-First, Emotion-Driven Audiences

Today's Armenian movie-going audience, especially among the 18–34 demographic, is digital-first. They discover films online, make their own judgments about films by watching their trailers and taking heed of what their peers think, and they move quickly. They are also emotion-driven: they prefer films that capture cultural veracity, address real social concerns, or connect on an individual level with nostalgia.

This means that storytelling consistency between PR and the actual film is a must. When a campaign touts something grand or emotional and the movie itself doesn't deliver, audiences won't be so quick to trust subsequent campaigns. This delicate trust needs to be cultivated, not manipulated.

## Word-of-Mouth Still Matters

Despite the rise of influence and viral power, old-fashioned word-of-mouth remains amongst the most consistent sources of cinematic recommendation. Friend, family, and neighborhood criticism all play decisive roles in choosing to watch the film. Public relations activities have to therefore target reach as intensely as they seek relatability: giving an audience a stake in talking up the film, recommending it to others, and taking friends out to see the movie.

## A Holistic Experience Is Missing

The responses reveal that for most, the experience of watching Armenian films remains incomplete. Perhaps this is a function of weak cinema settings, lack of post-screening discussions, or incompletions on film. Great PR needs to do better than the trailer: it needs to construct a cultural experience around the movie that welcomes audience engagement prior, during, and after.

## Generational Divides

Our findings indicate a generation divide in reception of PR. Older respondents were more skeptical towards influencer endorsements and preferred classic forms like trailers and interviews, while younger respondents appreciated shorter, interactive content on TikTok or Instagram reels. This would mean that a two-pronged PR strategy may be needed: one that values both long-form content and short, shareable bites.

## Conclusions from Survey Findings

The survey has provided a multi-dimensional image of the experience of Armenian audiences with and response to PR campaigns for the local film industry. From creating awareness to shaping perceptions and behaviors, PR plays a vital, but not a complete role.

## Conclusion

1. Young audiences are the target audience and the most responsive to the activities of PR, mostly on social media.
2. Traditional instruments of PR are no longer sufficient. The future campaigns must be immersive, relevant, and emotive.
3. Incongruent PR messaging and movie quality shatter audience trust. Ad campaigns should be honest, not exaggerated.

4. Fans still purchase cheap tickets in highly visible campaigns. Engagement must be augmented by ease of access, both digitally and physically.
5. Shareable content or campaign that promotes communal conversation experiences the best organic reach.

## Recommendations

Following the survey and interviews with experts in Armenian filmmaking and media, several areas of improvement were singled out. The following recommendations aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice for both the structural limitations of the Armenian market and global shifts in audience behavior and media consumption.

### 1. Leverage Digital Storytelling and Social Proof to Generate Organic Visibility

Digital media have redefined the process of how people find and engage with movies. In contrast to conventional advertising, which mostly sends content to passive audiences, digital storytelling encourages viewers to participate, share, and create communities with media content. Industry studies reveal that social proof—observing others watch or recommend a film—can be one of the strongest motivators of audience activity (Cialdini, 2001).

For Armenian PR practitioners and filmmakers with limited budgets, surfing the wave of cheap, high-return digital content such as Instagram Reels, TikTok trends, memes, and reaction videos is a feasible and realistic strategy. Such micro-content maximizes the potential for viral interaction without a costly ad buy. As Mariam Sargsyan of Kinodaran detailed in our interviews, creating short, platform-specific content allowed them to achieve organic reach similar to large campaigns. The approach aligns with contemporary patterns of media consumption, particularly

by young people, who prefer word-of-mouth recommendations and self-referential content to official promotional materials (Jenkins et al., 2013).

## 2. Develop Early Engagement Through Pre-Release Interaction

Concepts of pre-release audience building have ample coverage within media and marketing literature (Kerrigan, 2017). Preshowing has enormous implications for weekend-box-office receipts—a preeminent determinant of success both for local as well as global filmmaking industries. In Armenia, however, such strategies fall short of fulfillment.

Our research showed that *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet* focused primarily on release-week marketing, missing the opportunity to engage audiences earlier through the production and post-production processes. To improve, we recommend adopting international best practices such as the release of special behind-the-scenes material, hosting social media countdowns, or hosting influencer "watch parties." These techniques build early interest and develop an emotional connection with potential viewers weeks before the film is released.

Studies show that early engagement generates psychological ownership—a sense that audiences care about the success of the movie (Pierce et al., 2003). In a small market like Armenia, where word-of-mouth can bless or curse a film's success, these strategies are not only helpful but essential.

## 3. Develop Regionally Inclusive and Platform-Agnostic Strategies

Survey responses indicated a persistent problem with Armenian film marketing: too much dependence on urban-based, theater-centric marketing approaches around Yerevan. It excludes rural audiences and those with limited access to the cinema. Audience development studies

(Ostrower, 2005) indicate that cultural participation increases when outreach is regionally tailored and sensitive to the needs of under-represented populations.

PR specialists should therefore extend their campaigns from cities, to use online streaming platforms, local press partnerships, and local screenings in towns and countryside. Kinodaran's emergence as a site is a demonstration that non-theatrical distribution formats are gaining popularity, particularly after the pandemic. Making available more access through online portals or community screenings is what can make cultural participation more democratic, enabling Armenian cinema to find a truly national audience.

#### 4. Encourage Active Audience Participation to Extend Reach and Impact

Active participatory campaigns that allow for user participation can transform passive audience members into active supporters of a film. Participatory culture theory (Jenkins, 2006) holds that modern-day viewers expect to be offered the ability to co-create and share their own meanings for media content.

Examples: fan art competitions, user-created quote posters, social network hashtag challenges, post-screening forums. These campaigns not only keep fans engaged after release but also create a support community for the movie. Our conversation with the nameless high-profile director reaffirmed that audience engagement was strong, but there were minimal systems in place to engage and utilize that momentum. Institutionalizing such programs, Armenian filmmakers can maximize reach and span, converting audiences into long-term advocates for their products.

#### 5. Adopt Data-Driven Campaign Management for Enhanced Performance

The most consistent issue highlighted in interview and survey answers was arguably that the decision-making process did not rely on data. While many PR effort is based on instinct or short-term historical experience, industry best practice increasingly emphasizes analytics and audience insight (Lipschultz, 2021).

PR practitioners can employ social media analysis, web page traffic monitoring, and engagement to identify what works with different segments of audiences through different types of content. As an example, tracking the performance of various teaser formats or influencer collaborations helps inform future changes to campaigns. Real-time insights allow practitioners to make changes quickly, optimizing resources and effects. This iterative, evidence-driven process is especially useful in more modest markets such as Armenia, where each marketing push must be tightly targeted to generate the most return.

The findings of this survey constitute a solid empirical foundation for our thesis. To learn more about PR's real-world practice, however, we conducted face-to-face interviews among filmmakers, PR specialists, and spectators too. We will present these interviews in the following chapter and how professional industry experts perceive public relations and what are film promotion supply-side obstacles in Armenia. This combining of interview and survey data will allow us to more fully answer our overarching research question: How does public relations influence the Armenian film industry?

## Primary Research: Interviews

During the research stage, we conducted three interviews, two of which are included in this section below. For the third interview, please refer to the section [“Case Study: Vazgen: The Last Sparapet.”](#)

### Interview 1: Start-up Mentality and Strategic PR at Kinodaran

The interview was with Mariam, a representative of Public Relations at Kinodaran, a relatively new but rapidly growing Armenian streaming platform. The platform, which began as a small IT start-up developed during the COVID-19 pandemic by a number of IT professionals, has since developed into a full-fledged production and distribution company with a large in-house staff. Kinodaran positioned itself from the very beginning as a disruptor of the Armenian film market, with originality and quality being its top priorities. Mariam explained that the platform works under a strict internal code of around 40 parameters for each series, with a strong focus on promoting positive values. Everything is developed internally in terms of scenarios and concepts in order to ensure adherence to the brand's mission to counteract the negative image of conventional local TV series.

Kinodaran's PR model is founded on an adjusted AIDA model: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. In the initial stage, buzz is generated through press releases, carefully selected influencer collaborations, and creative marketing materials. One of the more unconventional but memorable campaigns was to have users unlock Kinodaran's app by forming a Christian cross using their fingers. This tactic, though playful and inexpensive, garnered organic social media buzz. As buzz increases, influencers are invited by Kinodaran to special events, such as preview screenings and thematic panel discussions. One of these successful collaborations was with Ruben Yesayan, a popular Armenian videoblogger, writer, and musician, who not only promoted the platform but is now starring in an upcoming Kinodaran original. Their philosophy is to

circumvent traditional television PR for new, direct-to-audience experiences, often through talk shows and podcasts, for instance, Levon Beglaryan's or LurjCast's.

Maraim emphasized that trust is at the center of their PR message. Positioned as a high-value, quality-driven platform with a monthly 2000 dram subscription, Kinodaran offers a brand that resonates with its target audience. Kinodaran's partnership with VivaCell, one of Armenia's largest telecom companies, was especially important. VivaCell helped promote the platform by offering special packages to its customers, making it easier to reach new audiences who might not usually watch Armenian films. While PR remains comparatively low-cost, Kinodaran's success illustrates how a robust, consistent brand identity, strategically integrated influencer strategy, and user-focused messaging can surpass conventional advertising.

This strategy is very different from how most Armenian films are usually promoted. Traditional film promotions in Armenia often rely on short-term activities like putting up posters, giving TV interviews, and spreading news by word of mouth. These efforts usually focus on audiences in Yerevan and are aimed at getting people to watch the film during its first days in theaters. While these methods can bring some success, they often fail to keep the audience interested after the film's release. In contrast, Kinodaran uses a long-term strategy that focuses on building a relationship with its audience over time. They do this by releasing regular content, working with influencers, and creating interactive experiences like podcasts and live shows. This ongoing engagement helps them reach more people and build a loyal community of viewers. Their success shows that this new approach can be more effective than the traditional methods used by most Armenian film productions.

## Interview 2: The PR, Financing, and Artistic Freedom According to the Anonymous Insider

In our next interview, we spoke with a well-known Armenian film director who preferred not to be named due to the high-profile level of their position. This director, having created a series of critically acclaimed dramas and commercially successful comedies, offered an uncensored and critical view of the Armenian film industry's PR field. They started off by pointing out a systemic issue: that most Armenian films fail not due to a lack of vision or talent, but due to a lack of being able to connect with their audience. In their view, PR in Armenia is still broadly misunderstood, more often an afterthought rather than part of a film's development process. They explained that producers have a tendency to spend all their budget on cast and locations and only a week before opening realize that no one even knows that the movie is being released.

The director also informed us that securing funds for PR is almost always an uphill struggle, especially for independent films. Government grants never cover promotion expenses, and local sponsors are not willing to invest in what they consider a soft skill. As a result, filmmakers either have to do PR themselves or rely on media friends. This, according to the director, leads to campaigns that are too broad or too niche to be effective. They related a recent film that, although featured in international festivals, had little effect in Armenia due to a lack of effective local PR planning. The film was a hit in Berlin and Warsaw but barely hit the headlines in Yerevan.

In spite of the failures, the director believes the solution is having PR professionals involved early in the process. They clarified that PR cannot be something external, but something intrinsic to the way in which a film is written, cast, and branded before it even goes

into production. They also underlined the importance of training and education, suggesting that PR and marketing be incorporated into the basic curriculum of Armenian film schools. When asked about smaller success stories, they pointed to films using humor, scandal, or nationalist feeling to stir controversy. Those films, although sometimes polarizing, were capable of penetrating public indifference. In their view, silence is the worst kind of PR.

# Case Study: Vazgen: The Last Sparapet

## Film Overview

*Vazgen: The Last Sparapet* is a 2025 Armenian documentary film centered around the life and legacy of Vazgen Sargsyan, Armenia's former Prime Minister and a revered national figure. The film explores Sargsyan's military, political, and personal journey, capturing key moments in modern Armenian history through archival footage, interviews, and reenactments. The production was led by an independent team of filmmakers and screenwriters, with Levon Galstyan serving as the writer and creative lead. The timing of the film's release was deliberately chosen to coincide with key national commemorative dates related to Sargsyan's death and state legacy, reflecting the deeply symbolic narrative underpinning the film. Despite the weight of its subject matter and national relevance, the film was not supported by large studios or major media holding groups, resulting in a promotional campaign that relied primarily on community support and emotionally-driven outreach.

## PR and Marketing Campaign

The public relations and marketing strategy for *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet* was modest in scope but emotionally resonant in tone. The promotional campaign began only a few weeks before the film's official release, with teaser trailers and visuals posted on social media platforms, primarily Facebook and Instagram. Posters were printed for select neighborhoods in Yerevan, particularly in areas with a strong veteran presence or patriotic community involvement. Galstyan emphasized in his interview that the campaign was not backed by a professional PR agency but instead emerged organically from the film's emotional power and cultural significance.

The core of the campaign’s visibility came from a combination of earned media and direct community engagement. Family members of Vazgen Sargsyan, including his brother, personally reached out to journalists, shared promotional content, and invited key political and public figures to the premiere event. This grassroots mobilization created a buzz in civic networks and among patriotic groups. However, the campaign lacked consistency across time and platforms, and there were limited efforts to engage wider demographics, particularly younger audiences and those less familiar with Sargsyan’s political legacy. There were no billboard advertisements or mainstream television spots, and very few influencer or digital collaborations were established, which contrasted sharply with the data found in our survey indicating that Instagram campaigns and influencer partnerships are among the most effective tools for capturing audience interest in Armenia.

## Audience and Critical Reception

The film garnered significant interest among middle-aged and older Armenian audiences, especially those who had a personal or historical connection to the events depicted. Many screenings were well attended, particularly the premiere, which took place during a nationally symbolic period - October 27, the anniversary of Vazgen Sargsyan’s death. However, the lack of a pre-release ticketing campaign or strategic buzz-building in the months leading up to the release meant that turnout outside of Yerevan and among the diaspora was limited. Survey data confirmed this general pattern: while many respondents recalled seeing mentions of the film in their feeds or hearing about it through word of mouth, only a small portion had actually seen the documentary. This echoes the broader finding that visibility does not always lead to audience action unless it is reinforced through structured outreach (see “Survey Analysis”).

In terms of critical reception, the film received praise for its honest portrayal of a complex national figure, its use of previously unseen archival footage, and its commitment to emotional authenticity. Reviews from independent Armenian cultural blogs and patriotic forums were largely positive. However, mainstream film critics noted that the film's appeal was limited by its stylistic conservatism and its assumption of prior knowledge from the viewer. This critique aligns with comments made by PR specialist Mariam Sargsyan of Kinodaran, who emphasized the importance of emotionally intelligent storytelling that appeals to both informed and uninformed audiences. She stressed that a successful campaign must not only reach but also contextualize the film's message for diverse viewer segments.

## Interview Insights

Galstyan's interview, presented in the "Primary Research: Interviews" section, provides a candid look into the challenges and opportunities of running a low-budget, emotionally-driven PR campaign in Armenia. He highlighted that the film's main promotional tool was its subject matter itself. "In a way, our PR happened on its own. When people hear 'Vazgen,' they already feel something. That emotional bond brought people to the film before we even had to ask," Galstyan stated. This reflects a PR strategy based more on resonance than reach, one that leverages collective memory rather than mass media channels.

At the same time, Galstyan acknowledged significant gaps in the campaign's scope and outreach. The absence of influencer collaborations, youth engagement, and school or university outreach was a missed opportunity. His admission that "we stayed within our comfort zone" points to a broader challenge in Armenian film promotion, where powerful content may fail to reach its full potential due to limitations in campaign design and audience development. This

observation was further expanded in our direct conversation with Levon Galstyan, who provided a detailed account of how the campaign unfolded on the ground.

In our initial interview with screenwriter Levon Galstyan, we spoke about the PR campaign for *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet*, a 2025 documentary about the life and legacy of Vazgen Sargsyan, Armenia's national hero and former Prime Minister. The conversation provided an in-depth examination of the unique challenges and strength of emotionally driven PR in Armenia, particularly for films with profound national symbolism. The topic of the movie served as an automatic driver of public interest, asserts Galstyan. Before the official promotion began, the emotional connection of individuals with the name Vazgen caused the movie to be known immediately and feel obligated to track the movie. This natural curiosity was supported by grassroots promotion tactics such as social media teasers, posters in select neighborhoods, and a tight network of veterans' groups who promoted the campaign organically.

Family involvement was essential, specifically the personal involvement of Sargsyan's relatives in promoting the trailer, personally inviting public figures to the premiere, and promoting the film. However, Galstyan admitted that while the PR campaign successfully targeted the core patriotic viewership, it failed to engage with younger viewers or those less familiar with Sargsyan's history. The limited budget was not able to fully leverage influencer marketing, university partnerships, or media advertising. Galstyan bemoaned this as a lost opportunity, referencing the fact that the emotional legitimacy of the campaign was strong but was without the machinery to translate that into wider visibility. Symbolic release dates also proved themselves challenging, as the film found itself competing against other politicized

events. Nonetheless, the ordeal worked to confirm the value of emotional storytelling and social support, even if these in and of themselves are not enough to be successful mainstream.

This reinforces the contrast with Kinodaran's phased, multi-channel PR model described by Mariam Sargsyan, showing how strategic planning can expand audience reach beyond core emotional supporters. For example, Kinodaran's use of pre-release podcast series, influencer-led mini-campaigns on YouTube, and cross-platform partnerships demonstrates how Armenian films could reach younger and international audiences more effectively when supported by structured outreach.

## Assessment

Overall, the case of *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet* illustrates both the power and limitations of emotionally driven grassroots PR in the Armenian film industry. On the one hand, the campaign succeeded in generating authentic interest among core national audiences without the need for large budgets or high-profile sponsors. The film's subject matter provided built-in relevance, and its alignment with national dates added emotional weight to its release. The use of personal outreach by family members, civic leaders, and community veterans gave the campaign a sincerity that resonated with audiences.

On the other hand, the campaign lacked scalability. It did not evolve into a multi-platform conversation, nor did it include youth-friendly formats, diaspora-targeted content, or sufficient post-release momentum. Compared to other campaigns like Kinodaran's, which employ diversified tactics and technology-supported outreach, the campaign for *Vazgen: The Last Sparapet* was traditional and somewhat insular. It ultimately missed an opportunity to position the film not only as a patriotic tribute but as a culturally significant cinematic experience for a broader audience.

This case underscores the broader conclusions drawn from both the survey and interview data: PR has a decisive influence on film success in Armenia, but only when it is treated as a strategic function and not an afterthought. Future films with historical or national themes could greatly benefit from integrating PR frameworks like AIDA, storytelling formats like mini-series or podcasts, and channels favored by digital-native audiences. As the Armenian film industry continues to professionalize, case studies like this offer critical lessons on how to balance authenticity with strategy and emotional weight with communicative breadth.

# Discussion

## Synthesis of Findings

The focus of this capstone was on exploring the influence of PR campaigns on Armenian film by assessing how PR influences viewer engagement, viewership, and eventually the popularity of local films. Utilizing a mixed-methods strategy that incorporated a standard survey, intensive interviews, and a targeted case study, there was an enhanced view of what the current PR situation in Armenian film is like.

The findings of the survey provided an overall picture of audience activity. They explained that friends, social media, and emotional storytelling have strong influences on whether or not to view a film. The survey also indicated that although the majority of the respondents recalled PR campaigns, especially on Facebook and Instagram, very few bought tickets or streamed films solely based on promotion. This indicates that PR serves to make people aware but perhaps not to convert interest into behavior.

The same trends were stood out in interviews with stakeholders in the industry. Levon Galstyan, author of *"Vazgen: The Last Sparapet,"* described how emotionally charged topics like national heroes create bottom-up buzz without mass media. But he also noted that the campaign lacked channels for reaching audiences outside of its immediate emotional core. Maraim Sargsyan of Kinodaran gave further insight into how startup platforms are employing innovative, AI-driven, and influencer-based PR strategies to engage tech-savvy, young demographics.

These observations were teased out in the case study of *"Vazgen: The Last Sparapet."* The campaign was supported by patriotic messages and emotionally engaging narrative but failed to

cross over a limited audience. Even with public interest, lack of a detailed PR strategy resulted in lost opportunities in outreach, partnership, and long-term engagement.

Together, the sources of information create a strong image: PR is a critical but underutilized tool for Armenian cinema. While emotional storytelling and community-level outreach generate initial exposure, they may not be supported by thoughtful audience building or follow-up work.

## Comparison with Global Trends

Compared to international practice in PR, particularly in industries such as Hollywood and Bollywood, the Armenian context appears much less formalized. In Hollywood, franchise formats and branding across several years are the building blocks of campaigns. Teasers, stars, alternate reality games, and influencer marketing are all carefully scripted well in advance and released in timed patterns. Similar to that in Bollywood is the manner in which PR initiatives are built upon musical launches, family feelings, and region-specific tailoring. Movie "Dangal"-type campaigns demonstrate how carefully crafted messaging even for different linguistic publics can achieve success abroad.

Armenian film, however, relies to a greater extent on emotional capital and personal outreach channels. Grand-scale earned media strategies, influencer collaborations, or systematic visual branding are hardly ever observed. While Kinodaran is making itself known through its podcasting, AI-supported messaging, and low-budget viral tactics, the sector as a whole remains bounded by budget constraints and poor systematic training in marketing and PR.

The other important difference is the absence of a transmedia approach in Armenian film PR. PR is being practiced everywhere on the globe now. Promotion of films overflows into

interactive content, merchandising, virtual events, and backdoor entry. Armenian campaigns stick to the release of posters and limited social media. This creates a gap in visibility as well as longevity, especially when competing with global productions on streaming platforms.

## Limitations of Research

Despite our best efforts at being methodologically rigorous, there were several factors that affected the scope and outcome of this research. The poll, while revealing, was conducted on a somewhat small and demographically restricted population of 108 respondents. The respondents were overwhelmingly young and Armenian-speaking, and this limited the generalizability of the data to broader or more diverse communities, such as the diaspora or non-Armenian audiences interested in local cinema.

Second, access to hard data regarding box office, viewership numbers, and online critiques was limited. Without publicly available public records, our assessment of film success had to be largely reliant on self-reported feedback, press criticism, and interview observations. This was a limiting factor in that it might have skewed our assessment of PR effectiveness.

Thirdly, although interviews provided rich qualitative data, the sample size of three professionals was a limitation. Future studies could benefit from a more diverse pool of participants, including government cultural representatives, media strategists, and critics. The limited number of case studies also restricted our ability to make broader generalizations about Armenian film marketing. While the case of “Vazgen: The Last Sparapet” was instructive, it remains a unique example focused on a patriotic theme and documentary format. Commercial genres such as comedy or thriller may require other PR strategies that were not fully encompassed in this analysis.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusion

This research aimed to respond to the central research question: How does public relations impact the Armenian movie industry? According to the results from our survey, interviews, and case study, PR has a direct influence on audience awareness and first contact with Armenian movies. Nevertheless, its existing influence is usually restricted by a lack of strategic thinking, financial inputs, and contemporary marketing tools.

Emotional narratives and ground-level outreach work well in engaging existing bases of audiences, especially when movies are patriotic or culturally relevant. But these methods are not a guarantee to reach mass audiences, especially young or foreign ones. PR efforts among Armenians are less sophisticated and have fewer media outlets and long-term engagement strategies than in global practice.

## Recommendations for Filmmakers

**Assume a Structured PR Timeline:** Filmmakers must create a campaign timeline that begins months ahead and extends into the life of the film after launch. This includes teaser releases, early influencer outreach, premiere, and follow-up content.

**Leverage Influencers Strategically:** Armenian PRs must work with digital influencers who have active audiences, especially on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Early access and creative collaboration can create word-of-mouth and virality.

**Leverage Transmedia Tools:** Publishing digital mini-series, podcast episodes, or even music singles alongside the film can extend the viewing period and intensify the emotional connection with viewers.

**Invest in Visual Identity:** A film's posters, trailers, and color palettes should evoke a familiar brand. Having a consistent appearance across platforms reinforces memory and gives viewers a visual reference.

**Targeted Audience Segmentation:** Campaigns must be segmented based on viewer choice, geographical differences, and media viewing habits. Younger viewers may react to social media challenges, while older viewers may enjoy community viewings or radio ads.

**Measure and Adapt:** Filmmakers must collect information at each level of campaign, including click rates, viewing information, and social media feedback. These figures can be used to make adjustments and serve as a reference point for future campaigns.

## Recommendations for Further Research

There are several promising avenues for further research. One is to extend the geographical focus and include diaspora audiences in Russia, the United States, and France, where Armenian film is gaining popularity. Their viewing habits and tastes could inform international outreach efforts.

Another recommendation is the study of the institutional role of government and private institutions facilitating PR in the cultural industry. Research can investigate whether local PR can be fostered by public funding, training activities, or global cooperation. Also, contrast of PR strategies for TV shows and feature films in Armenia would be most informative.

Platforms such as Kinodaran now dictate entertainment trends, and being aware of the variation in PR by type might enable both to be maximized. Later research can also test audiences' emotional and psychological responses to PR news. By utilizing focus groups or

experiments, researchers can track the impact of storytelling, branding, and promotion on trust, loyalty, and viewer behavior.

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# Appendix

## Full Survey Questionnaire

**1. What is your age group?**

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45 or above

**2. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**3. Where are you primarily located / from?**

- Armenia (local citizen)
- Armenian diaspora – United States
- Armenian diaspora – Russia
- Armenian diaspora – Other country

**4. Which of the following Armenian films have you watched or seen advertised in the past year? (Select all that apply.)**

- The Color of Pomegranates (1969)
- We and Our Mountains (1969)
- The Tango of Our Childhood (1985)
- Earthquake (2016)
- Amerikatsi (2022)
- Good Day (Part 1)

- Good Day 2 (Part 2)
- Bakhti Tery (2023)
- Women in Black (2023)
- The Reverse Side of the Medal (2023)
- Poker.am (2012)
- The Line (2016)

**5. How influenced are you by friends' or family members' opinions when deciding whether to watch an Armenian film?**

- Very influenced
- Somewhat influenced
- Not very influenced
- Not influenced at all

**6. How often do you watch Armenian movies in theaters?**

- Frequently (about once a month or more)
- Occasionally (every 2–3 months)
- At times (a few times a year)
- Rarely (once a year or less)

**7. If you do not watch Armenian films in theaters often, what are the main reasons? (Select all that apply.)**

- I'm not interested in the Armenian movies that have been released
- I was not aware of the films (lack of promotion)
- I prefer to watch non-Armenian films
- There are no local screenings of Armenian films near me

- I'm too busy or have other priorities
8. **Have you ever bought a ticket for an Armenian film in advance (before its official release date)?**
- Yes, I have pre-purchased a ticket
  - No, but I would consider doing so
  - No, and I would not consider it
9. ***(If Yes to #8) What were your reasons for pre-purchasing a ticket? (Select all that apply.)***
- I am a fan of the film's director or lead actors
  - The trailer/teasers made the story look very appealing
  - There was a lot of buzz or anticipation before the release
10. **In general, to what extent do you think PR campaigns (advertising, trailers, social media, etc.) shape public opinion about an upcoming movie?**
- PR campaigns substantially shape public opinion about a film
  - PR campaigns influence opinion to some extent
  - PR campaigns have little to no impact on opinion
11. **Have you ever felt disappointed or let down by an Armenian movie that had a big PR campaign (i.e. lots of hype)?**
- Yes – many times
  - Yes – a few times
  - No – never or not that I recall
12. **Through which channels or platforms do you hear about new Armenian film releases? (Select all that apply.)**
- Instagram

- Facebook
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Television (TV news or ads)
- Billboards or posters
- Other (please specify)

**13. Which types of promotional content do you find most effective in getting you interested in a film?** *(Select all that apply.)*

- Trailers (teaser or full-length)
- Social media ads or posts (e.g. Instagram stories, influencer mentions)
- Behind-the-scenes videos or cast interviews
- TV commercials
- Billboards or printed posters
- Celebrity endorsements or reviews by public figures

**14. What factors most motivate you to watch an Armenian film?** *(Select up to 3.)*

- An immersive or engaging story/subject matter
- High production quality (professional cinematography, acting, etc.)
- Authentic portrayal of Armenian culture or realities
- The film features a famous Armenian actor or director I like
- The film has won awards or received very positive reviews
- A strong promotional campaign that caught my attention

**15. In your opinion, what is one thing that Armenian films do well or excel at?** *(Open-ended response)*

**16. In your opinion, what is one thing that Armenian films need to improve or lack? (Open-ended response)**

*(Questions 15 and 16 were open-ended to gather qualitative feedback on perceived strengths and weaknesses of Armenian cinema. Responses were analyzed thematically in the report.)*

## Survey Response Summary Tables and Figures

The tables below summarize the aggregated responses to each survey question (for closed-ended questions). Each figure visualizes the same data in chart form. All percentages are out of N = 108 total respondents (except where noted for conditional sub-questions).

### Table A1

*Age of Respondents (Question 1).* This table shows the age distribution of the 108 survey respondents. The sample was heavily skewed toward the 18–24 group, reflecting the youth focus of the survey outreach.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents (%)</b>
18–24	76	70.4%
25–34	22	20.4%
35–44	9	8.3%

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents (%)</b>
45 or above	1	0.9%

*Figure A1. Age group distribution of survey respondents. (The majority of participants were between 18–24 years old.)*

## Table A2

*Gender of Respondents (Question 2).* Slightly more than half of respondents identified as female.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Female	60	~55%
Male	48	~44%

*Figure A2. Gender distribution of respondents. (There was a roughly even split between female and male participants, with a slight female majority.)*

## Table A3

*Primary Location/National Identity (Question 3).* Over four-fifths of respondents were local to Armenia, with the remainder being diaspora Armenians (primarily in the U.S. and Russia).

<b>Origin</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Armenia (local)	92	85.2%
Armenian diaspora – United States	8	7.4%
Armenian diaspora – Russia	5	4.6%
Armenian diaspora – Other	3	2.8%

Figure A3. Respondents by nationality/locale. (Most respondents were Armenia-based, with a smaller diaspora representation from the U.S., Russia, and elsewhere.)

**Table A4**

*Familiarity with Select Armenian Films (Question 4).* Respondents checked off each film if they had seen it or heard it advertised during the last year. The following table lists each film and the number of respondents (of 108) who reported awareness of it. (Since this was a "check all that apply" question, percentages indicate the percentage of the sample aware of each title.)

<b>Film Title</b>	<b>Respondents aware (n)</b>	<b>% of sample aware</b>
Good Day (Part 1) (2023)	60	55.6%
Good Day 2 (2023)	55	50.9%

<b>Film Title</b>	<b>Respondents aware (n)</b>	<b>% of sample aware</b>
The Reverse Side of the Medal (2023)	50	46.3%
Bakhti Tery (2023)	50	46.3%
Women in Black (2023)	45	41.7%
Amerikatsi (2022)	30	27.8%
The Color of Pomegranates (1969)	30	27.8%
We and Our Mountains (1969)	25	23.1%
The Line (2016)	20	18.5%
The Tango of Our Childhood (1985)	20	18.5%
Poker.am (2012)	20	18.5%
Earthquake (2016)	10	9.3%

Figure A4. Percentage of respondents who had seen or heard of each film listed. (New releases like *Good Day* and *Reverse Side of the Medal* had the highest visibility, whereas older or less-promoted titles had lower awareness.)

**Table A5**

*Influence of Social Circles on Viewing Decisions (Question 5).* This Likert-scale question asked how much friends’/family’s opinions affect the respondent’s choice to watch an Armenian movie. Nearly two-thirds reported being influenced (very or somewhat), while few claimed no influence at all.

<b>Influence of friends/family on decision</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Very influenced</b>	30	27.8%
<b>Somewhat influenced</b>	42	38.9%
Not very influenced	27	25.0%
Not influenced at all	9	8.3%

*Figure A5. Reported influence of friends’/family opinions on choosing to watch a film. (Only ~8% said they are not influenced at all by word-of-mouth, while the majority admitted at least some influence, underscoring the role of personal recommendations.)*

**Table A6**

*Frequency of Watching Armenian Films in Theaters (Question 6).* Responses indicate that few people attend Armenian films regularly. Only some 3% attend frequently (monthly or more), whereas the vast majority (some 72%) attend infrequently or from time to time a few times a year. This indicates a large disconnect between awareness and movie-going.

<b>Frequency of viewing Armenian films (in theaters)</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Frequently – about once a month or more	3	2.8%
Occasionally – about once every 2–3 months	27	25.0%
At times – a few times per year	38	35.2%
Rarely – once a year or less	40	37.0%

*Figure A6. Self-reported frequency of attendance at Armenian film showings. (Over one-third attend very seldom – at most once a year – and another third several times a year. Monthly cinemagoers for local films are extremely rare, at less than 3% of respondents.)*

**Table A7**

*Main Reasons for Not Attending Armenian Films More Often (Question 7).* This was a multi-select question from the answers of those who do not go very often. Lack of interest in available movies and inadequate promotion (lack of awareness) were the most common obstacles. Preference for non-Armenian films and few local screenings were also significant reasons.

<b>Reason for not watching Armenian films (multiple selections allowed)</b>	<b>Respondents selecting (n)</b>
Not interested in the Armenian movies that have been released	50
I didn't know about the films (lack of promotion)	40
I prefer watching non-Armenian films	30
No screenings of Armenian films near my area	20
Too busy / other activities take priority	15

*Figure A7. Main reasons hindrances for respondents watching Armenian films at the cinema. (Most often stated as reasons were limited interest in current films and not knowing about future releases, followed by too few local screenings and rivalry from other forms of entertainment.)*

**Table A8**

*Ticket Pre-Purchase Behavior (Question 8).* This was a yes/no question regarding whether or not respondents had ever pre-bought a ticket to an Armenian movie premiere. Only 17% said "yes," while the remaining 83% had never done so. Nevertheless, most of the respondents who have not pre-bought stated they would do so under the right circumstances (as opposed to outright rejecting the idea).

<b>Ever pre-purchased a ticket for an Armenian film?</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes, have pre-bought</b> (at least once)	18	16.7%
No, <b>but I would consider</b> doing so in the future	59	54.6%
No, and <b>I would not consider</b> doing so	31	28.7%

*Figure A8. Number of respondents who have ever pre-bought in advance tickets to a local cinema. (There were only around one in six who did. In the rest, most regard it as an interesting idea despite never having pre-bought previously, showing potential if significant hype is generated.)*

## Table A9

*Reasons for Advance Ticket Purchases (Question 9, given only to those who answered "Yes" to Q8).* Although only 18 persons ever bought advance tickets, their reasons have a common set of themes. A favorite director's or actor's participation was cited by most as a main attraction. Others said that exciting trailers or spoilers convinced them, and some were drawn by initial "buzz" or hype regarding the movie. (More than one reason can be marked.)

<b>Reason for pre-buying ticket (among n = 18 who pre-purchased)</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>
Loyal to the <b>director or cast</b> (fan of those involved)	12

<b>Reason for pre-buying ticket (among n = 18 who pre-purchased)</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>
Trailer/teasers made the film seem very appealing	8
There was major pre-release hype (everyone was talking about it)	5

**Table A10**

*Belief About PR's Influence on Public Opinion (Question 10).* Asked to speculate on the general impact of PR on opinion formation about a movie before release, an overwhelming majority (95%) thought that PR has some effect. In fact, 62% said an effective PR campaign significantly impacts the public's perception of a movie, and about one-third responded that it does so "to some extent." Only 5% thought PR has little or no impact on the audience's opinion.

<b>Belief about PR's influence on audience opinion</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Substantially shapes public opinion</b>	67	62.0%
<b>Influences opinion to some extent</b>	36	33.3%
<b>Has little or no impact on opinion</b>	5	4.6%

*Figure A10. Perceived impact of PR campaigns on public opinion formation about a movie. (Nearly two in three believe PR has a major impact on opinion, and all but a few of the respondents see at least some impact of PR on audiences.)*

## Table A11

*Being Disappointed by an Over-Hyped Movie (Question 11).* More than 70% of interviewees testified that they have been let down by an Armenian movie after being drawn in by its PR at least once. Specifically, more than half (roughly 55%) indicated this has happened "a few times," and some 20% indicated it has happened "many times." Only one-quarter of interviewees have never experienced this. This indicates a mismatch in trust space where promotional overkill sometimes takes over the film's quality on viewers' perspectives.

<b>Ever felt disappointed by an over-hyped Armenian film?</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes – many times</b> (often felt this way)	22	20.4%
<b>Yes – a few times</b>	59	54.6%
No – not really / never	27	25.0%

*Figure A11. Percentage of respondents who have ever felt "let down" by a movie with an intense PR campaign. (Three-quarters or so have had the experience several times, which suggests that marketing can sometimes set up expectations that are not fulfilled in the movie.)*

## Table A12

*Channels for Discovering New Films (Question 12).* Social media was the dominant way people learned about new Armenian movies. Instagram was by far the most frequently named platform

(approximately 74% of people learn about movies there), followed by Facebook (~56%), TikTok (~46%), and YouTube (~37%). Older forms of media lag behind – for example, only ~19% named television, and ~14% named outdoor billboards. Less than 5% of people filled in an "other" option.

<b>Platform / Channel</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Instagram	80	74.1%
Facebook	60	55.6%
TikTok	50	46.3%
YouTube	40	37.0%
Television (TV)	20	18.5%
Billboards/Posters	15	13.9%
Other (e.g., word of mouth)	5	4.6%

*Figure A12. Main ways through which respondents hear about new Armenian films. (Instagram is by a huge margin the most popular platform, then Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. Old-school methods like TV commercials or posters are significantly less significant for this group.)*

**Table A13**

*Most Effective Type of Promotional Material (Question 13).* Respondents selected the forms of PR material most likely to engage them in a film. Trailers (teasers and full-length) were most effective across all responses (~74% selected this option). Posts/ads on social media placed second (~65%). Around half of the respondents liked behind-the-scenes footage or cast interviews. On the other hand, more traditional or one-way advertisements were less effective: ~19% chose TV commercials, ~14% chose billboards/posters, and ~9% said celebrity endorsements influence them.

<b>Promotional Material</b>	<b>Respondents selecting (n)</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Trailers (teaser or theatrical trailer)	80	74.1%
Social media ads/posts	70	64.8%
Behind-the-scenes videos or interviews	50	46.3%
TV commercials	20	18.5%
Billboards or printed posters	15	13.9%
Celebrity endorsements/influencer reviews	10	9.3%

Figure A13. Perceived effectiveness of various promotional content types. (Visual and interactive content – trailers and social media posts – resonate most with the audience. Traditional ads like TV spots or billboards, and celebrity plugs, were rarely seen as effective by this demographic.)

## Table A14

*Most Influencing Reasons for Respondents to Watch an Armenian Movie (Question 14).* This question asked respondents what reasons make them interested in watching an Armenian film. By far, the most frequent response was cultural authenticity – almost 74% said they are interested in watching films that accurately depict Armenian culture/society. A good story and production quality were also highly influential (selected by ~65% and ~56% respectively). On the other hand, a good director or cast (19%) or awards and acclaim (13.9%) were not strong movers for most respondents. Surprisingly, only 4.6% indicated that an effective PR campaign alone was a top reason to watch a movie.

<b>Factor that motivates watching an Armenian film</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
An immersive or engaging <b>story</b>	70	64.8%
High <b>production quality</b> (good acting, visuals, etc.)	60	55.6%
Authentic <b>Armenian culture</b> representation	80	74.1%
Famous <b>cast or director</b> involved	20	18.5%

<b>Factor that motivates watching an Armenian film</b>	<b>Respondents (n)</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
<b>Awards won or very positive reviews</b>	15	13.9%
<b>Strong PR campaign (marketing/hype)</b>	5	4.6%

*Figure A14. Reasons for wishing to view an Armenian film. (Awards, advertising, and star power have much less to do with interest than do cultural appropriateness and good storytelling. This suggests that viewers care most about content, with PR serving mainly to generate early awareness and not to be the deciding factor.)*

**Figures A14 & A15 – Open-Ended Questions**

Questions 15 and 16 were open-ended and allowed respondents to write down anything they believe Armenian movies do well and what needs to be improved. The qualitative responses are presented in the main report (see Discussion section) rather than being tabulated or charted. Common themes were praise on cultural issues and soundtracks (strengths), and grievances regarding limited genres and low budgets (weaknesses), among others.