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Successful sequel trick

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Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. (AP)

Management, Calcutta, in 1984.

New Delhi, June 8: How fast a movie sequel follows the original film may influence its performance at the box office, two Calcutta-educated, US-based management specialists have shown.

But that doesn't necessarily mean the die has been cast for *Sarkar Raj*, released yesterday three years after *Sarkar*, or for *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, released last month 19 years after *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

The quicker the sequels follow their parent films, the better their performance, research by Suman Basuroy at Florida Atlantic University and Subimal Chatterjee at Binghamton University in New York state has indicated.

The two researchers, who teamed up to seek the secret of successful movie sequels, have found that sequels tend to perform worse than their parent films, but do better than non-sequels in general.

"But the inter-sequel time is very important," said Chatterjee, professor at Binghamton University and a graduate of the Indian Institute of

Management, Calcutta, in 1984.

"As time passes, the brilliance of the original blockbuster tends to fade from public memory. And the longer the interval, the less the public response," he said over the phone.

The researchers caution that their findings don't mean all delayed sequels are destined to fail. "People were quite willing to wait for over 10 years to see Bruce Willis back in *Die Hard 4* or Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones*," said Chatterjee. "There is something about star power in keeping franchises alive."

Film studios have released several sequels over the past two years — *Mission Impossible 3*, *Dead Man's Chest*, *The Last Stand (X-Men)* emerged in 2006, and sequels to *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Spider-Man* and *Shrek*, and the fourth edition of *Die Hard*, are among films that hit the screens in 2007. Bollywood released *Krrish* in 2006, a sequel to *Koi Mil Gaya*.

The researchers studied the performance and timing of 167 Hollywood films, including 11 sequels. "We're hoping some of these findings will be relevant to Bollywood, too," said Basuroy.

But some factors that could influence the audience response to films, such as quality or cultural settings, weren't captured in this research, said Basuroy, who had gone to school in Calcutta.

The analysis has also shown that a larger number of sequels helps in building the franchise. The anticipation created by the earlier films allows a fresh sequel to succeed.

"When everything else is constant, *James Bond 8* is likely to do better than *Rocky 4*," Chatterjee said. The James Bond franchise has produced over 20 sequels.

But the researchers believe viewers like repetition only up to a point.

"People would rather have the second *Rocky* do pretty much the same things as the parent *Rocky* movie, but by the time *Rocky 4* or 5 comes along, people would like to see a different twist to the story or even a

different face playing Rocky," said Basuroy, who has been studying the motion picture industry for the past five years.

