

The adaptation books turn to movie. What do you think?

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ABSTRACT

The marriage of literature and cinema has long fascinated audiences, giving rise to the timeless tradition of adapting books into movies. This intricate process involves transmuting the written word into a visual spectacle, capturing the essence of beloved narratives within the confines of a cinematic frame. The allure of witnessing cherished characters and iconic scenes come to life on the silver screen has made adaptations a perennial favourite among audiences. The art of adaptation is a delicate dance between fidelity to the source material and the creative interpretation required for the cinematic medium. Filmmakers navigate the challenge of condensing rich narratives, making pivotal choices that shape the visual storytelling experience. The debate between adhering to the original text and embracing creative liberties adds a layer of complexity to this transformative process. As we delve into the realm of book-to-movie adaptations, we explore how this dynamic interplay influences literature and film alike. Noteworthy successes and occasional missteps serve as a testament to the enduring impact of adapting books into movies, shaping our collective appreciation for storytelling

across different artistic realms. Join us on this cinematic journey as we unravel the magic behind the adaptation of books into the mesmerizing world of motion pictures.

Keywords: adaptation, process, experience, book, movie

INTRODUCTION

Grafton, A. (2020), pointed out that a book is a physical or digital medium composed of sheets of paper or other materials that are bound together along one edge to preserve information. A literary work or a significant part of one can also be referred to as a "book". Books can be used for reference, entertainment, education, and idea transmission, among other things. A book is a recording and communication medium for ideas, information, and tales. Books can be created in a variety of ways to suit a range of looks and technological capabilities.

As Chan, K. (2023) said a book is a doorway to many worlds of knowledge and imagination; it uses words to spark readers' imaginations and take them to new places or expand their perspectives on the world. Readers are invited to go on emotional or intellectual odysseys as its pages weave together characters, settings, and ideas to generate a narrative tapestry. A book creates a strong mental bond between the reader and the author by captivating, educating, and inspiring empathy via the alchemy of language. A book serves as a vessel, whether it be nonfiction or fiction, taking the reader across the information landscapes or the oceans of storytelling, which is why books are such long-lasting and effective forms of human expression.

What about movie? Lu, S., Wang, X. (Shane), & Bendle, N. (2019) said that a "movie" is a visual storytelling technique that uses a succession of moving images and frequently contains audio. Movies, sometimes referred to as turns or motion pictures, are a well-liked and significant kind of art and entertainment. They can be created for several objectives, such as social commentary, cultural expression, education, and entertainment. Movies are a diverse and powerful medium that has the power to generate a wide range of emotions, convey complex stories, and provide audiences with memorable and immersive experiences.

Aitken, I. (2020) pointed out that a film is an artistic fusion of sound, vision, and story that creates a symphony for the senses and attracts viewers on the cinematic canvas. Cinematic works engage viewers in storylines connected with light and shadow, taking them to other realms. Movies create an emotional and sensory experience by manipulating time and place through the lens of a camera and the magic of editing. To stir up a range of emotions, from joy to sorrow, the collaboration of performers, directors, cinematographers, and music combines flawlessly. A movie is a dynamic medium that connects across cultures, presenting a shared canvas for collective human experiences. It may entertain, educate, and inspire thinking.

MOVIES BETTER THAN ORIGINAL BOOK

Dr. Pamukkale (2022) pointed out that in today's world, film has emerged as a powerful medium for storytelling and conveying narratives. Instead of competing, film and literature work together, creating a mutually beneficial relationship in society. Like novels and plays, film has become a significant way of telling stories, prompting professionals to explore film and adaptation studies. The fascination with film adaptations in literature has attracted

scholarly attention. Especially among Malaysians, a noticeable preference for Malaysian film adaptations over their original literary sources was seen through an analysis.

The success of the *Ombak Rindu* movie adaptation showed this preference, with the movie making a total profit of 10.9 million ringgit Malaysia versus the original novel's profit of 219k ringgit Malaysia (New Straits Time, 2016). Moreover, *Ombak Rindu* stands out as one of the highest-grossing films in Malaysia, further solidifying the audience's inclination towards cinematic renditions rather than literary origins. This preference reflects society's inclination towards visual narratives, influencing a distinctive storytelling style within Malaysian culture. Here, several factors elucidate why Malaysian film adaptations often surpass the popularity of original novels.

GENDER PORTRAYAL IN MALAYSIAN NOVELS

The way the original novels have several issues in the way they portray women is quite a concern. In Malaysian novels specifically, the portrayal of women often reflects gender discrimination prevalent in society. Male-centered literature frequently exhibits a 'double-standard' treatment of female characters, depicting them in stereotypical and limited roles. According to Nilufer Narli (1986), societal roles for women are often confined to being mothers, obedient wives, or supporters of men, both within the family and at societal levels. In these narratives, women characters in novels are commonly categorized as either 'good' or 'evil.' They are depicted as either loyal, nurturing figures or as scandalous, cruel individuals, as noted by Zawiyah Yahya (1988). Male writers tend to generalize these portrayals based on 'phallogocentric assumptions,' shaping these characters according to patriarchal ideologies (Henderson and Brown, 1997). This results in stereotypical and biased representations, where women are often mistreated and misunderstood. For example, the concept of women being perceived as objects is rooted in patriarchal societal structures. This notion aligns with Millet's assertion (1981) that societal norms and cultural models, shaped by patriarchy, lead to the objectification of women. Simone de Beauvoir (1972) argues that women, being seen as different from men, often become objects whose existence is defined and interpreted by males within society.

This perception leads to women being objectified, viewed as sexual objects, passive entities, and subjects of discussion, often on inaccurate or false grounds. Moreover, the patriarchal norms prevailing in Malaysian society contribute to a portrayal of women that perpetuates unequal power dynamics between genders. Contrasting the experiences of women in Western and Malay societies, Ooi Eng Lye (2005) highlights how Malay women face a more pronounced form of private patriarchy. Therefore, Malaysian love novels often mirror and perpetuate societal biases and discriminatory practices concerning gender roles. Comparatively, Malaysian adaptation films demonstrate a more conscientious approach when dealing with sensitive subjects on screen.

The Film in Malaysia Incentive (FIMI) guidelines, particularly section 2.9 of project and content guidelines, dictate that film producers must ensure their projects refrain from including content deemed insulting, offensive, or portraying Malaysia negatively. The guidelines laid out by FIMI not only aim to prevent negative portrayals of women but also emphasize the importance of presenting an equal and empowering image of women in films

since portraying women badly in movies can go against the guidelines set by the Film in Malaysia Incentive (FIMI). In summary, the portrayal of women in Malaysian literature and film reflects the unfairness of gender biases rooted in societal norms, with literature often perpetuating stereotypes while Malaysian adaptation films strive to adhere to guidelines promoting fair and empowering representations of women on screen.

LOST INTEREST IN READING

Adapting literary works into different mediums, especially film, is crucial for sustaining the relevance and appeal of literature. By transforming books into movies, there's a significant impact on how literature reaches and engages with audiences. In Malaysia, literature faces challenges in gaining popularity, potentially due to its reliance on reading, an activity that hasn't been widely embraced among the population. Studies consistently show that Malaysians aren't avid readers. The literacy rate in Malaysia is reported to be below 55%, with an average person reading only about 15 to 20 books a year, as noted by the National Library's director (Bernama, 2017).

Consequently, the demand for printed materials, particularly literary content, remains relatively low. Over a period from 2006 to 2018, statistics from the National Library indicate that literature comprises only 16.49% (36,107 books) of the total registered books during that time. This data underscores a declining interest in printed materials, particularly literary works, within the Malaysian population.

People are more keen on visual appeals and modern production methods. Research conducted by Farah Nadia Azman, Syamsul Bahrin Zaibon, and Norshuhada Shiratuddin in 2016 sheds light on this trend by exploring the reading habits of individuals, particularly with comics. Their study revealed interesting insights regarding the preferences of respondents when it comes to visual content consumption. According to their findings, nearly 60% of the surveyed students engaged with printed comics at least once a week, indicating a substantial interest in traditional visual storytelling. However, what stands out is the prevalence of digital consumption habits. Around 70% of the respondents admitted to using social media platforms for reading online comics, showcasing a significant shift towards digital mediums. Moreover, in the realm of digital content, approximately half of the participants opted to download comics from mobile app stores, underlining a considerable inclination towards accessing visual content through technology. Despite this, a portion of the respondents did not engage in this digital practice, showcasing a balanced preference between printed and digital visual production.

TIME-CONSTRAINT

The growing popularity of Malaysian film adaptations over their original novel counterparts can be attributed to the changing preferences in media consumption and contemporary societal trends. In 1995, Lawrence Baines and Micah Dial observed that audiences, especially students, increasingly preferred visual mediums over traditional text-based formats. The inclination towards visual mediums is driven by the convenience and instant gratification offered by films, compared to the time-consuming nature of novels. This shift in preferences suggests that modern audiences, including readers and viewers, opt for the accessibility and immediacy of movies over the traditional text-based format.

To support this, findings from an interview conducted in 2023 by Azizi, Khonamri, Stranovska, Akimjakova, Kholov, & Dolzhikova shed light on a noticeable shift in students' preferences regarding reading and viewing habits. The data highlighted that while 39.7% of students still favored books over movies, a larger percentage, 50.3%, leaned towards the latter. The preference for movies stemmed from various factors identified by the students, including the demanding nature of university schedules and a growing lack of patience when dealing with lengthy narratives found in books. Students expressed a growing lack of patience when engaging with lengthy written narratives and found them less engaging compared to the more immediate and visually stimulating experience provided by movies. One student, in particular, succinctly encapsulated this sentiment, emphasizing time constraints by stating: "Movies are better due to time constraints; we don't have the time for 200 pages. If I seek information, I prefer a summary or a video."

LANGUAGE BARRIER

The data gathered by Politzer-Ahles, Girolamo, & Ghali (2020) suggest that non-native speakers of English, including those in Malaysia who speak *Bahasa Melayu*, may face greater challenges when it comes to publishing and promoting their work. This is because English is the dominating language of literature and most literature books are published in English. Unfortunately, Malaysia is ranked the 26th country to not use English as their main language. This can create a language barrier for non-native speakers, reducing their likelihood of being published, as well as their likelihood of being read by a global audience.

In addition to the language barrier, the popularity of digital platforms such as movies and subtitles, which can reduce the language barrier and make the story more accessible to a wider audience, has also emerged as a possible solution to this issue. This is highlighted by an interview conducted in 2023 by Azizi, Khonamri, Stranovska, Akimjakova, Kholov, & Dolzhikova in which one of the participants mentioned preferring to watch movies instead of reading books with long and tedious stories, as they can enjoy the movie more with the help of subtitles. This suggests that the provision of subtitles can help enhance the accessibility of content, making it more appealing and accessible to readers who may otherwise be discouraged by the language barrier.

IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL

(a) The Prologue

In the realm of cinematic storytelling, the tale of "Raya and the Last Dragon" unfolds as an ambitious journey into the heart of Southeast Asian culture. As a storyteller from the lands of Malaysia and the greater Southeast Asian region, I embark on a critical exploration, traversing the landscapes of representation, cultural appropriation, and the delicate dance between specificity and generality.

(b) The House of Mouse and the Promise of Representation

The story begins with the House of Mouse setting its sights on Southeast Asia, stirring excitement and skepticism alike. With a committee called the "Southeast Asia Story Trust," Disney promises to consult cultural experts and navigate the intricate tapestry of Southeast

Asian traditions. However, as the reviewer, I find myself torn between the anticipation of respectful representation and the pragmatism that the House of Mouse is driven by commercial success.

(c) A Tapestry of Voices

The ensemble cast, adorned with names like Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Gemma Chan, and Sandra Oh, paints a mosaic of talent. However, the brush strokes seem to favour East Asian descent, raising questions about the line between cultural appropriation and representation. The review explores the complexities of voice casting and the challenges of distinguishing Southeast Asia from its East Asian counterparts.

(d) The Pitfalls of Generality

Drawing inspiration from the success of Pixar's "Coco," the narrative shifts towards the intricate balance between cultural specificity and generality. "Raya and the Last Dragon" is accused of creating a generic fantasy world that amalgamates Southeast Asian cultures without providing distinct cultural identities. The concept of a "rojak" fantasy world and its implications on authentic representation are scrutinized.

(e) The Diverse Tapestry of Southeast Asia

To encapsulate the entirety of Southeast Asia within the film's narrative, Disney faces the monumental challenge of representing a region as culturally diverse as Europe. The reviewer reflects on the unrealistic expectations placed on the film and questions whether Disney truly grasped the complexity of Southeast Asian identities.

(f) Erasure of Diversity

As the narrative unfolds, the tension between achieving visual unity and celebrating cultural diversity comes to the forefront. The film's eagerness to present a cohesive visual language is criticized for muting the distinct voices of Southeast Asian cultures. The reviewer raises poignant questions about the cost of erasing diversity in the pursuit of aesthetic harmony.

(g) The Storytelling Tapestry

Shifting focus to the narrative choices of "Raya and the Last Dragon," the review delves into the decision to forego specific Southeast Asian myths or legends in favor of a generic dragon character. The parallels drawn with Nickelodeon's "Avatar: The Last Airbender" expose thematic similarities and prompt contemplation on the essence of original storytelling.

(h) The Climax

In the final act, the reviewer acknowledges the film's visual splendor and its capacity for entertainment. However, a lamentation arises over the missed opportunity to incorporate specific myths or fairy tales from Southeast Asia. The review serves as a cautionary tale for Southeast Asian viewers, urging them to manage expectations and view the film as a visually striking but potentially hollow portrayal of their diverse cultures.

(i) Reflections on the Cinematic Voyage

As the cinematic voyage through "Raya and the Last Dragon" concludes, the reviewer reflects on the film's strengths and shortcomings. The narrative arc, much like the film itself, emerges as a journey filled with visual marvels, missed opportunities, and a yearning for a more authentic representation of Southeast Asian cultures in the realms of cinematic storytelling.

As we delve into the intricate world of "Raya and the Last Dragon," a parallel exploration emerges - the realm of transcultural film adaptation. Acknowledging that this branch of adaptation studies has long dwelled in the shadows, our narrative intersects with the ongoing and growing adaptation activities. The study of transcultural film adaptation, much like the film itself, seeks to bridge cultural boundaries and provide fresh insights into the broader adaptation landscape.

Our cinematic journey aligns with theoretical research, exploring the historical context and theoretical foundations of transcultural film adaptation. Recognizing the inconsistency and limited nature of existing theoretical frameworks, the study endeavours to shed light on the adaptation area. By alluding to related studies in cross-cultural communication and international communication, we aim to contextualize the transcultural film adaptation within broader academic conversations.

Just as "Raya and the Last Dragon" grapples with the challenge of representation, our study seeks to define transcultural film adaptation-related terms. Navigating through the terminology, we aim to articulate the nuanced intricacies of adapting narratives across diverse cultural landscapes. The terminological exploration sets the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between fidelity and creativity in the adaptation process. In our exploration of transcultural film adaptation, we embark on a comparative case study method and fidelity studies. Drawing inspiration from the film's attempt to amalgamate Southeast Asian cultures, we scrutinize the research methodology and adaptation strategies employed in transcultural narratives. This chapter responds to foundational questions surrounding adaptation, particularly the value of case study and the notion of fidelity raised by scholars like Leitch.

As "Raya and the Last Dragon" unfolds its visual spectacle, our narrative contends with the reconciliation of fidelity and creativity in transcultural film adaptation. Unlike approaches that attack fidelity or overemphasize the value of creativity, our study suggests the existence of a reconciling relationship between the two. Drawing parallels with the film's creative transformation of Southeast Asian culture, we explore the intricate dance between fidelity and creativity.

As we approach the climax of our narrative, the cinematic voyage through "Raya and the Last Dragon" converges with the theoretical reflections on transcultural film adaptation. The study positions itself as a reconciling force, encouraging a nuanced understanding of the adaptation process that navigates cultural complexities while embracing creative transformations. We reflect on the potential synergies between cinematic storytelling and theoretical frameworks, leaving readers with a deeper appreciation for the evolving landscape of adaptation studies.

IMPACT ON SOCIETY

In the dynamic realm of cinema, the age-old tradition of adapting novels into movies has been a constant source of artistic inspiration. Beyond the confines of original stories, filmmakers often draw from the narrative depth found within novels to create cinematic masterpieces. This information engagement delves into the societal perspective on book adaptations to movies, with a specific focus on the vibrant context of Malaysian cinema. Exploring the historical landscape of novel adaptations in Malaysian cinema, films such as "Tombiruo" and "Ombak Rindu" have demonstrated varying degrees of success in bringing literary narratives to the big screen. Despite these achievements, there remains untapped potential in fully leveraging novels as a wellspring of inspiration for Malaysian filmmakers. The rich tapestry of Malaysian literature unfolds as a testament to the nation's unique experiences and stories. A cadre of talented novelists in Malaysia has contributed significantly to the global cultural conversation, earning recognition comparable to that of their cinematic counterparts.

Adapting novels to the cinematic medium poses a set of challenges, demanding a delicate balance in translating written narratives into captivating visual experiences. Recent successes like "The Garden of Evening Mists" and the Netflix adaptation of "Ghost Bride" exemplify the untapped potential of Malaysian novels, hinting at a promising future for literary works on the silver screen. Despite the wealth of talented novelists, a perceived gap exists in propelling Malaysian novels to the forefront of cinematic storytelling. Malaysian novels, with their unique perspectives, hold the potential to captivate audiences both locally and internationally, offering a refreshing take on storytelling.

Highlighting specific novels with adaptation potential, this engagement encourages studio executives to explore these literary treasures for potential cinematic marvels. By bridging the worlds of literature and cinema, there is an opportunity to enrich the cultural fabric of Malaysian storytelling, creating a bridge between the timeless tradition of Malaysian novels and the visual spectacle of cinema. In conclusion, the prospect of Malaysian novels gracing the screen, whether big or small, holds immense promise. The adaptation of these literary gems has the power to contribute significantly to the cultural richness of Malaysian cinema. As filmmakers and audiences alike embark on this exciting journey, there is a collective hope for an increase in adaptations, providing a platform to showcase the diverse and captivating narratives that define Malaysia to the world.

In reflecting on the golden era of Malay films from the 1950s to the mid-60s, characterized by a sense of optimism and fluidity in identity portrayal, a central theme emerges - the predominant focus on the Malay social imaginary. These cinematic treasures, often celebrated for addressing socio-cultural issues in postcolonial Malaysia, tended to center around the authentic Malay experience, leaving cross-cultural engagement largely unexplored. While films directed by icons like P. Ramlee, Hussein Haniff, and M. Amin were acclaimed for navigating the challenges of the budding postcolonial nation, their narratives remained primarily rooted in Malay socio-cultural realities. However, a closer examination reveals a nuanced exploration of inter-ethnic relationships in select films, notably "Sesudah Suboh" (After the Dawn, 1967) and "Gerimis" (Light Rain, 1968). These rare cinematic gems explicitly addressed the complexities of inter-ethnic relationships, bridging the gap between ethnicities in postcolonial Malaysia. As Malaysians nostalgically cherish the golden era, this exploration

serves as a valuable lens through which to understand the multi-ethnic realities of the time, providing insights into the potential for cross-cultural dialogues in the evolving cinematic landscape. Moreover, it prompts a consideration of the significance of visualizing inter-ethnic relationships in the context of border crossings and the negotiation of differences in the diverse tapestry of Malaysian society. In linking this historical exploration with the present, there arises an intriguing possibility of adapting contemporary Malaysian novels for the screen, thereby enriching the cinematic narrative with the diversity of stories that define the nation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Systematic literature reviews (SRs) are a method for synthesising scientific data to address a specific research issue in a transparent and repeatable manner while attempting to incorporate all available data on the subject and evaluating the quality of this data. The technique has been supported by some as being appropriate for design study. There isn't much advice offered, though. In order to establish an SRs approach for design research, it is suggested that anticipated obstacles to its advancement be outlined. It is concluded that SRs have the potential for design research and could assist us in addressing some important issues; however, more work is required to define what review methods are appropriate for each type of research question in design research, as well as to adapt guidance to our own needs and specificities (Xiao & Watson, 2019). SRs are a technique for synthesising scientific data to respond to a specific research question in a way that, while attempting to incorporate all published data on the subject and evaluating the calibre of this evidence, is transparent and replicable.

The primary goals of the SR approach are to decrease the risk of bias and increase transparency at every stage of the review process by relying on explicit, systematic techniques to minimise bias in the selection and inclusion of studies, to evaluate the quality of the included studies, and to objectively summarise them. (Liberati et al., 2009, Petticrew, 2001). Literature reviews come in two different varieties: (1) reviews that provide background information for empirical studies, and (2) reviews that stand alone. (Templier and Paré 2015).

Background analyses are frequently used to support decisions made in research design, to give theoretical context, or to highlight a gap in the literature that the study wants to address. (Templier and Paré 2015; Levy and Ellis 2006). Contrarily, stand-alone reviews make an effort to interpret, explain, or integrate prior research in order to make sense of a body of current literature (Rousseau, Manning, and Denyer 2008). The following aspects of the research process can be aided by systematic literature review: establishing a context and delimiting a research problem; seeking theoretical support; rationalising a problem and new lines of inquiry; separating what has been done from what needs to be done; identifying the primary outcomes of (and methodologies used in prior studies); and avoiding fruitless research. What is known (and what is unknown) about the subject or problem being investigated, and what are promising directions for additional research? becomes a crucial question if the researcher is contributing to previous research. Such reviews may concentrate on identifying the main research strands and potential future research directions (e.g. Linnenluecke et al., 2017). Overall, our conceptual paper uses the SR method that is linked to 15 articles that we have studied from past research.

CONCLUSION

In the dynamic realm of storytelling, book-to-film adaptations have evolved into an engaging, if often bitter, interaction between two very different artistic mediums. This advantageous collaboration could bring cherished literary worlds to life on film, captivating viewers with imaginative visual adaptations of great stories. Filmmakers must strike a careful balance between remaining faithful to the source material and making creative choices that enhance the cinematic impact, so the process is not without its challenges.

The fact that books have been adapted into films provides proof of the storytelling's enduring power across media. Some adaptations succeed in capturing the spirit of the original work and creating a visual masterpiece, but others receive criticism for straying from the original plan or leaving out important details. Though there will always be debates about how faithful to the original work to adapt, well-received adaptations frequently introduce literature to new audiences and promote wider cultural debate.

Filmmakers has to, in essence, transform a story's essence into a visual language while respecting the unique characteristics of each media. This is why adapting books into movies is such a difficult process. This enduring dynamic of storytelling evolving and technology progressing shapes the entertainment environment, allowing audiences to explore the limitless domains of imagination through the dual lenses of film and literature.

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