

**Adaptation or Independent Movie? - A Study of
Audience Response to Literary Adaptations**

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Background of the Study:

‘Adaptation Studies’ is an emerging field of study in Arts and Humanities. It involves the complex phenomena of ‘intertextuality’ and ‘intermediality’, and popularises ‘hypermedia’ or ‘transmedia storytelling’ across the cultures. Moving away from the Fidelity/Infidelity concept, it has opened up new perspectives to ‘film and literature’ research: fan fiction, cross-media audience, digital media ecology or ethnography, trans-local or trans-cultural developments, etc.

In *Rethinking the Novel / Film Debate* (2003), Kamilla Elliott discussed the hostility between literature and films (words vs. images) with reference to the eighteenth century debates between the advocates of poetry and painting. She revealed the hidden agendas behind such debates and explored ‘intermediality’ in her work.

Thomas Leitch in his *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory* (2003) discussed the common misconceptions in adaptation theory:

1. There is such a thing as contemporary adaptation theory.
2. Differences between literary and cinematic texts are rooted in essential properties of their respective media.
3. Literary texts are verbal, films visual.
4. Novels are better than films.
5. Novels deal in concepts, films in percepts.

6. Novels create more complex characters than movies because they offer more immediate and complete access to characters' psychological states.
7. Cinema's visual specification usurps its audience's imagination.
8. Fidelity is the most appropriate criterion to use in analyzing adaptations.
9. Source texts are more original than adaptations.
10. Adaptations are adapting exactly one text apiece.
11. Adaptations are intertexts, their precursor texts simply texts.
12. Adaptation study is a marginal enterprise (149 - 168).

In Linda Hutcheon's view, the phenomenon of adaptation can be defined from three distinct but interrelated perspectives:

1. As a formal entity or 'product', an adaptation is an 'announced and extensive transposition' of a particular work or works. This 'transcoding' can involve a 'shift of medium' (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a 'change of frame' and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a different interpretation. 'Transposition' can also mean a 'shift in ontology' from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama.
2. As a 'process of creation', the act of adaptation always involves both (re)interpretation and then (re-)creation; this has been called both 'appropriation' and 'salvaging', depending on one's perspective. For every aggressive appropriator outed by a political opponent, there is a patient salvager.
3. From the perspective of 'process of reception', adaptation is a form of 'intertextuality': Adaptations (as adaptations) are experienced as 'palimpsests' through one's memory of other works that 'resonate through repetition with variation' (7-8).

In short, adaptation can be described as the following:

- An acknowledged ‘transposition’ of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative and an interpretive act of ‘appropriation’ or ‘salvaging’
- An extended ‘intertextual engagement’ with the adapted work (8)

According to Hutcheon (2006), there are as many ways to ‘indigenize’ a story as there are ways to tell or show it again. She divides the transformations into three dichotomous types: (1) historicizing/dehistoricizing, (2) racializing/deracializing (3) embodying/disembodying (158).

In *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), Sanders foregrounds theatrical performance as a key but often neglected concern of adaptation studies. She emphasises audience’s pleasure in actively counterpointing the familiar and the new in their experience of adaptation’s palimpsestic nature (3).

Hutcheon (2006) claims that ‘for the reader, spectator, or listener, adaptation as adaptation is unavoidably a kind of intertextuality if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text’ (21). Adaptation as adaptation involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work they know and the work they are experiencing (139). For unknowing audiences, adaptations have a way of upending sacrosanct elements like priority and originality. This study tries to explore if popular movies are viewed as ‘adaptations’ or ‘independent movies’ by the general audience.

Location of the Study:

Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women which is located in Perambur, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India, is the location of the study.

Samples for the Study:

100 students who study undergraduate courses in Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women, Chennai, are chosen as the samples for the study.

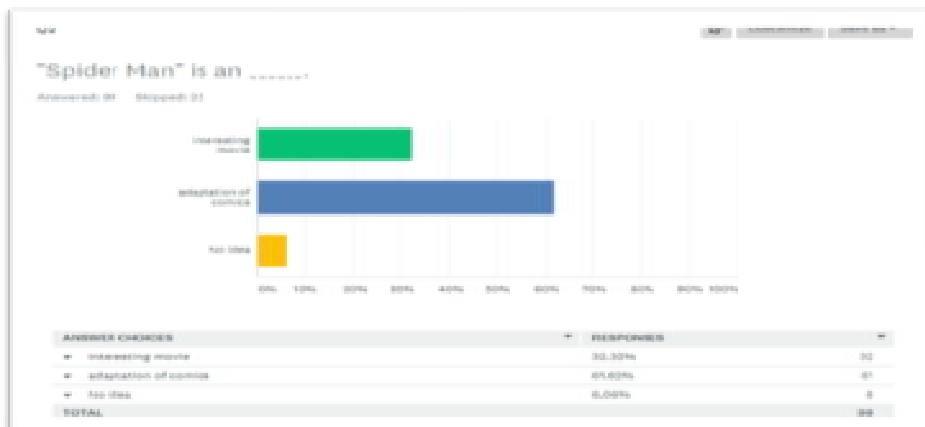
Method used for the study:

10 questions with multiple choice answers are given to the samples through Survey Monkey questionnaire. 100 students have recorded their responses.

Quantitative Findings:



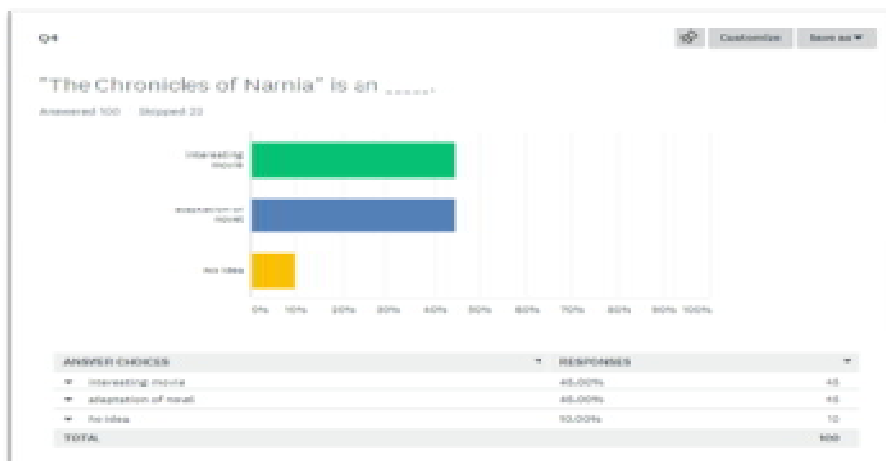
- According to 56% of the samples, *Harry Potter* is an interesting movie.
- 40% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 4% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



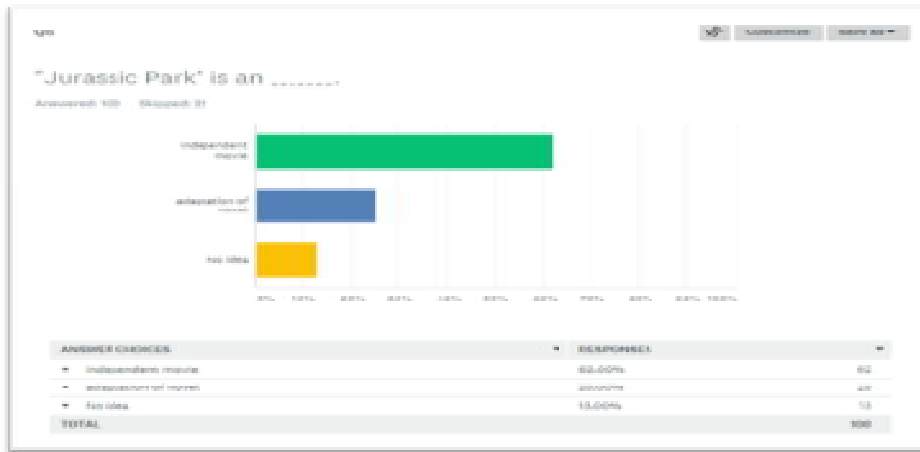
- According to 32% of the samples, *Spider Man* is an interesting movie.
- 62% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 6% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



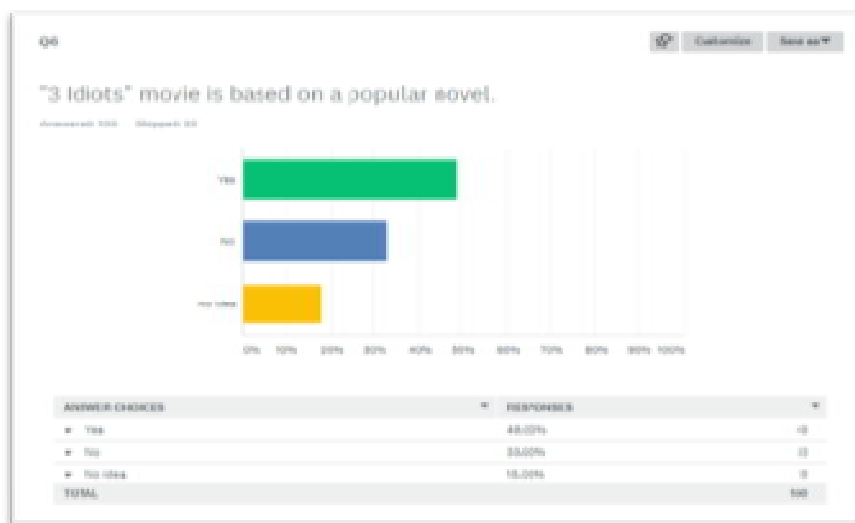
- According to 31% of the samples, *Life of Pi* is an interesting movie.
- 37% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 32% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



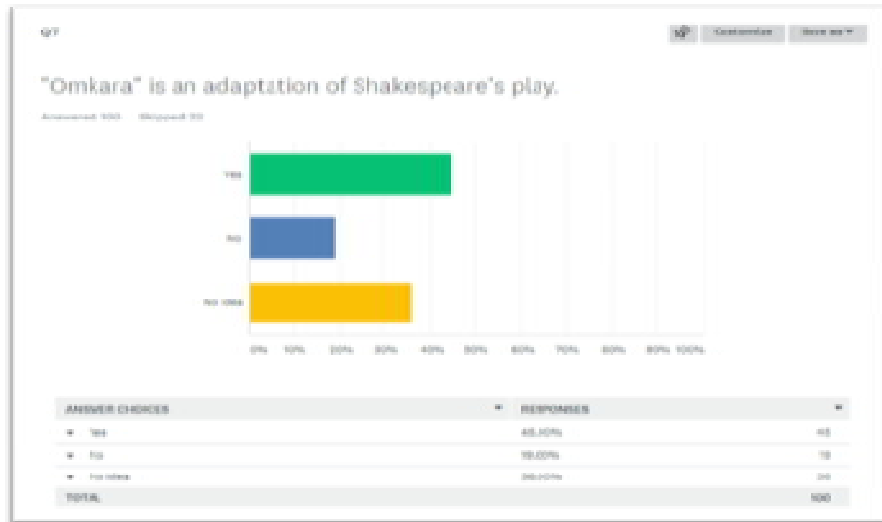
- According to 45% of the samples, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is an interesting movie.
- 45% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 10% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



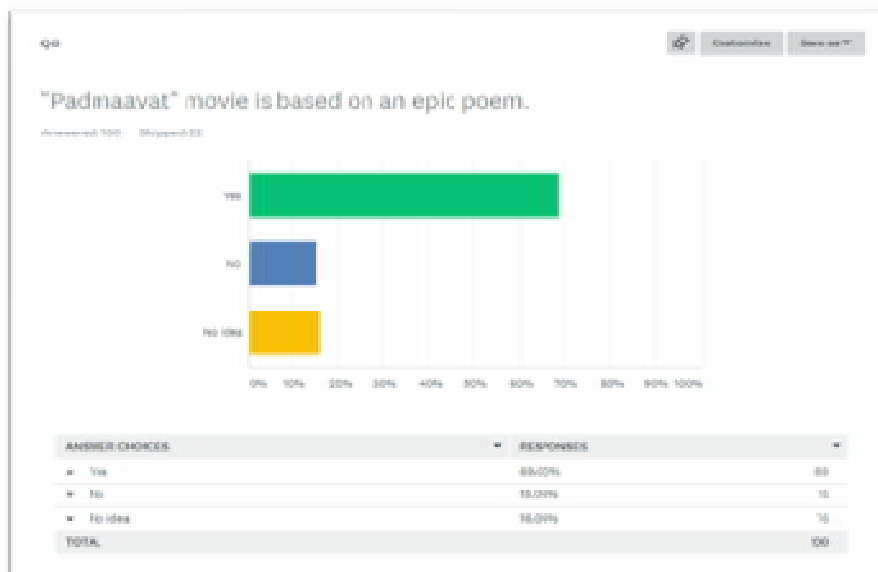
- According to 62% of the samples, *Jurassic Park* is an independent movie.
- 25% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 13% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



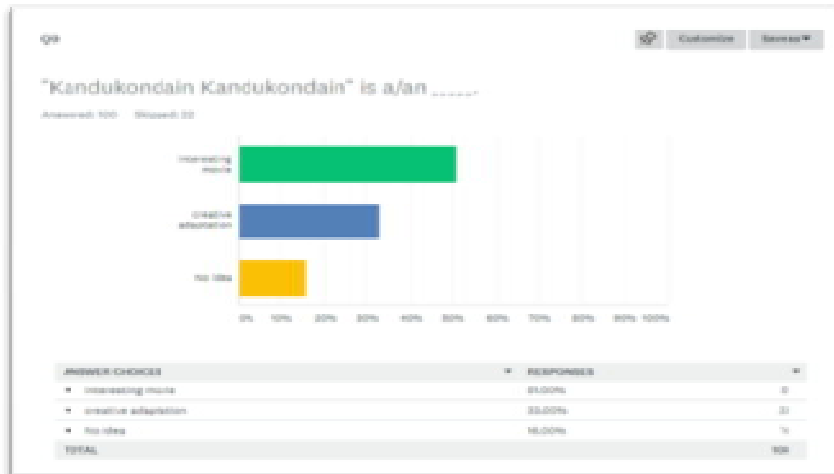
- According to 49% of the samples, *3 Idiots* is an adaptation of a popular novel.
- 33% of them state that it is not an adaptation.
- 18% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



- According to 45% of the samples, *Omikara* is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play.
- 19% of them state that it is not an adaptation.
- 36% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



- According to 69% of the samples, *Padmaavat* is an adaptation.
- 15% of them state that it is not an adaptation.
- 16% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



- According to 51% of the samples, *Kandukondain Kandukondain* is an interesting movie.
- 33% of them know that it is an adaptation of novel.
- 16% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.



- According to 67% of the samples, *Visaaranai* is an adaptation.
- 13% of them state that it is not an adaptation.
- 20% of them are not sure if it is an independent movie or adaptation.

Quantitative Findings:

- According to 56% of the samples, *Harry Potter* is an interesting movie.
- 32% of them consider *Spider Man* an interesting movie.
- 31% of them consider *Life of Pi* an interesting movie.
- 45% of them consider *The Chronicles of Narnia* an interesting movie.
- 62% of them consider *Jurassic Park* an independent movie.
- 33% of them consider *3 Idiots* an interesting movie, not an adaptation.
- 19% of them consider *Omkara* an independent movie, not an adaptation.
- 51% of them consider *Kandukondain Kandukondain* an interesting movie.
- 13% of them consider *Visaaranai* an independent movie, not an adaptation.

Qualitative Findings:

Popular movies like *Harry Potter*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Kandukondain Kandukondain* are considered as ‘independent movies’ rather than literary or creative adaptations by the general audience.

Limitations of the Study:

Samples of the study belong to only one location i.e., Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India. They are undergraduate students who study arts or science as their major subjects, and their exposure or knowledge to world cinema is not evaluated before the study.

Scope for Further Research:

Print or online movie reviews of critics and audience can be studied, in detail, to find out if adaptations are received as ‘independent films’, and if adaptations could survive as ‘autonomous works’ in the future.

Works Cited

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- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Annexure

Survey Monkey Questionnaire

1. "Harry Potter" is an _____.
 - interesting movie
 - adaptation of novel
 - No idea

2. "Spider Man" is an _____.
 - interesting movie
 - adaptation of comics
 - No idea

3. "Life of Pi" is a/an _____ by AngLee.
 - interesting movie
 - novel adaptation
 - No idea

4. "The Chronicles of Narnia" is an _____.
 - interesting movie
 - adaptation of novel
 - No idea

5. "Jurassic Park" is an _____.
 - independent movie
 - adaptation of novel
 - No idea

6. "3 Idiots" movie is based on a popular novel.
 - Yes
 - No
 - No idea

7. "Omkaara" is an adaptation of Shakespeare's play.
 - Yes
 - No
 - No idea

8. "Padmaavat" movie is based on an epic poem.
 - Yes
 - No
 - No idea

9. "Kandukondain Kandukondain" is a/an _____.
 - interesting movie
 - creative adaptation

➤ No idea

10. "Visaranai" movie is based on the novel "Lock-Up".

➤ Yes

➤ No

➤ No idea