

Watch Read Movies: An Analytical Exploration of Viewership, Readership, and the Changing Nature of Narrative Consumption

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Abstract

In recent years, we have witnessed a significant paradigm shift from reading to watching as the primary mode of consuming information and entertainment. This transformation is largely driven by the rapid advancement of technology and our evolving preferences for engagement. With platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services gaining immense popularity, visual content has taken centre stage in our daily lives. The shift from text-based content to video formats reflects not only a change in consumption habits but also an adaptation to how we process information. Videos can convey complex ideas more succinctly and engagingly, allowing viewers to absorb information quickly while enjoying a dynamic experience. This research paper examines the evolving paradigms of reading and viewing in contemporary society, particularly focusing on the intersection between written texts and cinematic narratives. This research paper also explores the paradigm shift from reading to watching by analyzing the adaptation of two literary works into films: *Black Friday* by S. Hussain Zaidi and *Man, Woman and Child* by Erich Segal. Through a comparative study of these texts and their cinematic counterparts Anurag Kashyap's *Black Friday* and Shekhar Kapur's *Masoom* the paper examines how narrative structures, character development, and thematic focuses are transformed when moving from the written word to visual storytelling. The analysis highlights how films reinterpret the core truths of literary works through techniques such as visual symbolism, sound design, and cultural contextualization, offering audiences a different, often more visceral, engagement with the same story.

Key Words: Reading, Watching, Mode of Consumption, Text, Cinema

Introduction

The act of reading has long been considered a solitary and introspective engagement with text, traditionally involving deep cognitive processing. In contrast, viewership is often perceived as a more passive experience. However, as digital media proliferates, these definitions blur. This paper seeks to redefine reading not merely as a textual interaction but as an active engagement with narrative across various formats, including film. Through this exploration, we will investigate how different demographics interact with texts and films, shaping their understanding of stories.

The shift from text-based content to video formats reflects not only a change in consumption habits but also an adaptation to how we process information. Videos can convey complex ideas more succinctly and engagingly, allowing viewers to absorb information quickly while

enjoying a dynamic experience. This trend raises important questions about literacy in the digital age how do we define reading when much of our engagement is now visual? As we navigate this landscape, it's essential to consider the implications for communication, education, and creativity. While watching may offer immediate gratification and accessibility, it also challenges us to maintain critical thinking skills that traditional reading fosters. Balancing these two forms of content consumption will be crucial as we move forward into an era where screens dominate our attention.

While redefining the process of reading explores the intricate relationship between text and understanding, particularly through a dual approach of analysis: analytical and empirical in nature. This thoughtful examination encourages readers to engage with texts not merely as passive consumers but as active participants in the creation of meaning. The analytical approach emphasizes critical thinking, urging readers to dissect arguments, identify themes, and evaluate the effectiveness of different rhetorical strategies. By questioning the motivations behind a text and considering its broader implications, we cultivate a deeper appreciation for the author's intent and the contextual factors that shape their work. On the other hand, an empirical perspective grounds our reading experience in real-world applications. It encourages us to connect textual insights with lived experiences, drawing parallels between theoretical concepts and practical realities. This method allows readers to test hypotheses derived from texts against observable phenomena, fostering a richer understanding that transcends mere interpretation.

Together, these approaches redefine reading as an interactive process that merges thoughtfulness with inquiry. By embracing both analytical rigor and empirical relevance, we can transform our reading habits into meaningful explorations that enhance our comprehension and engagement with diverse narratives.

Review of Literature

Existing literature reveals a dichotomy in how reading and viewing are perceived. Scholars such as Wolfgang Iser have emphasized the reader's role in creating meaning through interaction with texts, while others like David Bordwell focus on viewer engagement with film narratives (Iser, 1978; Bordwell, 1985). Recent studies have shown that digital platforms have transformed both readership and viewership by facilitating diverse modes of engagement (Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, the concept of "transmedia storytelling" illustrates how narratives can unfold across multiple platforms (Scolari, 2009). This body of work sets the foundation for our investigation into how these interactions have evolved over time.

Literary Foundations: Reading as an Experience

Reading is an active engagement that allows individuals to interpret text through their imagination. According to Wolf (2008), reading fosters cognitive development, enhances empathy, and encourages critical thinking. Each reader brings personal experiences and perspectives that shape their understanding of a narrative. For instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* presents themes of ambition, love, and disillusionment. Readers interpret Gatsby's tragic pursuit of the American Dream through their unique lenses, creating a personal connection with the text. However, reading requires time and mental investment. The depth of character development and thematic exploration found in novels often necessitates patience and reflection qualities that may be compromised in cinematic adaptations.

Cinematic Interpretations: Watching as an Experience

Film offers a different mode of storytelling, one that is immediate and sensory. The visual nature of cinema can convey emotions more viscerally than words alone. For example, Baz Luhrmann's 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* utilizes vibrant visuals and a modern soundtrack to create an energetic interpretation of the Jazz Age (Murray, 2014). While this approach provides a fresh perspective, it also raises questions about fidelity to Fitzgerald's original themes. Moreover, adaptations often emphasize plot over character development due to time constraints. The *Harry Potter* series serves as a prime example; while the films were commercially successful (Rowling, 2007), they faced criticism for omitting essential subplots and character arcs present in J.K. Rowling's novels (Harris, 2016). This leads to discussions about whether fidelity to source material or creative reinterpretation serves audiences better.

For instance, *The Great Gatsby* (2013), Luhrmann's film adaptation has been both praised for its visual splendour and criticized for its departure from the novel's subtleties. While the film captures the opulence of the Roaring Twenties, it simplifies complex characters like Daisy Buchanan into archetypes rather than fully realized individuals (Murray, 2014). Next if we see, *Harry Potter Series* (2001-2011), the transition from book to screen was met with immense anticipation. While fans celebrated the magical world brought to life through impressive special effects, many lamented the loss of nuanced character relationships and critical plot points found in Rowling's books (Harris, 2016). This dichotomy exemplifies how adaptations can both enhance and detract from original narratives. Further, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), this adaptation remains one of the most revered examples of literary translation into film. Directed by Robert Mulligan, it captures Harper Lee's profound themes of racial injustice and moral growth while maintaining fidelity to key plot elements (Blackford, 2017). The film's powerful performances highlight its emotional depth an achievement that resonates with both readers and viewers alike. In Indian Cinema this shift can be observed in the works of directors like Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal, whose storytelling techniques invite viewers to engage deeply with character arcs and thematic content.

The transition from book to film often represents a significant paradigm shift, particularly evident in the adaptation of S. Hussain Zaidi's *Black Friday* into Anurag Kashyap's film of the same name. This shift not only alters the medium of storytelling but also transforms the narrative structure, character development, and thematic emphasis.

Zaidi's *Black Friday* is a non-fiction account that delves into the 1993 Bombay bombings, exploring the intricate web of events leading up to the tragedy and its aftermath. The book is rich in detail, presenting a plethora of perspectives from law enforcement officials to criminals creating a multifaceted view of the societal impact of violence and terrorism. Zaidi's journalistic background infuses the narrative with authenticity, making it a compelling read for those interested in true crime and social commentary. In contrast, Anurag Kashyap's *Black Friday* adapts this intricate narrative into a cinematic experience that emphasizes visual storytelling. While maintaining the essence of Zaidi's work, Kashyap's film focuses on dramatization, using powerful imagery and editing techniques to convey the urgency and chaos surrounding the events. The film employs a nonlinear narrative structure, allowing viewers to piece together the story as it unfolds, which is a departure from the chronological flow typically found in written works.

One significant aspect of this adaptation is the portrayal of characters. In Zaidi's book, characters are often presented in their complexity, with extensive backstories that provide insight into their motivations. However, in Kashyap's film, some characters are more archetypal, serving to heighten dramatic tension rather than offering an exhaustive exploration of their psyches. This is a common challenge in adaptations, the need to condense characters' depth for time constraints while still delivering an engaging story. Moreover, the thematic focus shifts subtly from Zaidi's journalistic analysis to Kashyap's artistic interpretation. While Zaidi emphasizes social issues such as communal violence and systemic corruption, Kashyap's film leans towards exploring the human psyche under duress and moral ambiguity. This transformation can resonate differently with audiences; readers may find Zaidi's thorough examination more intellectually satisfying, while viewers may appreciate Kashyap's visceral portrayal of chaos and its emotional repercussions. Furthermore, the film's sound design and cinematography serve as tools that convey emotions and atmospheres that words alone cannot fully capture. The score complements pivotal moments in ways that enhance viewer engagement, reshaping their understanding of events portrayed.

The adaptation of *Black Friday* from S. Hussain Zaidi's book to Anurag Kashyap's film exemplifies a significant paradigm shift from written narrative to visual storytelling. While both mediums aim to illuminate the tragic events surrounding the Bombay bombings, they do so through different lenses one through detailed exposition and insight, and the other through dramatic interpretation and sensory engagement. This highlights not only the strengths of each format but also serves as a reminder of how stories can evolve while retaining their core truths.

Another compelling example of this shift can be observed in Erich Segal's novel *Man, Woman and Child* and its cinematic adaptation, *Masoom*, directed by Shekhar Kapur.

Erich Segal's *Man, Woman and Child*, published in 1973, intricately explores themes of love, betrayal, and the complexities of familial relationships. The narrative revolves around a married couple, Adam and Claudia, whose lives are disrupted when Adam's past infidelity comes to light through the revelation of a child he fathered with another woman. Segal delves deep into the psychological complications of this revelation, allowing readers to engage intimately with the characters' inner thoughts and emotions. The detailed prose captures the nuances of human relationships, making it a rich literary experience.

In contrast, Shekhar Kapur's *Masoom*, released in 1983, takes these themes and reinterprets them within an Indian cultural context. While the essence of the story remains intact focusing on a man's struggle with his past and its consequences on his present family life; the film employs visual storytelling techniques that enhance emotional engagement. The use of music, cinematography, and performance adds layers to the narrative that text alone cannot convey.

The notable difference is how both mediums handle character development. In *Man, Woman and Child*, readers gain insight into Adam's emotional turmoil through internal monologues and detailed backstories. Conversely, *Masoom* relies on visual cues and dialogue to portray these emotions. The film's poignant scenes enhanced by A.R. Rahman's reminiscent music allow audience to feel the weight of Adam's choices without needing extensive exposition. Another significant aspect is the cultural lens through which both works are viewed. Segal's novel reflects Western societal norms surrounding infidelity and family dynamics, while *Masoom* adapts these ideas to resonate with Indian audiences, incorporating cultural elements such as family honour and societal expectations. This shift not only makes the story more relatable to its audience but also highlights distinct cultural values that influence character

motivations. Moreover, the film adaptation often necessitates condensing or altering plot points for pacing and runtime considerations. While Segal's book offers a slow-burn exploration of relationships, *Masoom* opts for a more streamlined narrative that focuses on key emotional beats. This can lead to a different audience perception; viewers may come away from the film with a sense of resolution that contrasts with the more ambiguous ending found in Segal's work.

The transformation from Erich Segal's *Man, Woman and Child* to Shekhar Kapur's *Masoom* exemplifies how adaptations can shift paradigms by reinterpreting themes through different cultural lenses and narrative techniques. Both works stand as powerful commentaries on love and responsibility but do so in ways that highlight the strengths of their respective mediums. This shift not only broadens storytelling horizons but also deepens our understanding of universal themes through diverse perspectives.

Implications for Literature and Film

The interplay between literature and film raises several critical questions about narrative interpretation. When audiences engage with adaptations, they might view them as standalone works rather than mere translations of books. This phenomenon can lead to discussions about artistic integrity versus commercial viability where filmmakers must balance staying true to source material while appealing to broader audiences. Furthermore, adaptations can reignite interest in original texts; popular films often lead viewers back to their literary counterparts. For instance, after watching *The Hunger Games* series, many fans turned to Suzanne Collins' novels for deeper context (Smith & Johnson, 2020). This cyclical relationship fosters cultural dialogue between literature and film. It can also be considered that texts that resist adaptation into film due to their complex narrative structures or thematic depth. Conversely, certain films can be "read" for their literary qualities highlighting their narrative richness beyond mere entertainment.

Limitations of Research

While the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the shifting dynamics between reading and viewing, limitations exist due to the subjective nature of audience interpretation. Additionally, access to data on viewership patterns may vary regionally, potentially skewing our analysis. The rapid evolution of digital media may also pose challenges in maintaining relevancy within the findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the necessity to rethink traditional definitions of reading and viewing within our increasingly interconnected media landscape. By analysing select films alongside demographic data on readership and viewership trends, we can draw meaningful connections between different forms of narrative consumption. As we continue to navigate this paradigm shift, understanding these dynamics will be crucial for creators aiming to bridge literature and cinema effectively while preserving narrative depth amidst changing audience expectations. The experience of watching movies versus reading books presents unique advantages and challenges for audiences. Adaptations serve as gateways that can either enhance or detract from original narratives depending on execution and intent. While film allows for immediate visual engagement with stories, reading offers depth that invites personal interpretation. As both mediums continue to evolve independently yet interdependently, understanding their dynamics enriches one's appreciation for storytelling in all its forms.

Future research could explore audience perceptions in greater detail or analyse lesser-known adaptations that may challenge conventional views on fidelity in storytelling.

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