

## From Text to Screen: Analysing Young Audience Perspectives of Literary Adaptations in Television

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### ABSTRACT

Screen adaptations have gained notable popularity among younger audiences, especially within the romance genre. Nevertheless, adaptations of literary classics continue to receive limited attention from this demographic. This study investigates audience acceptance of literary adaptations in television dramas, drawing on Hall's Reception Analysis Theory (1994) as the guiding framework. A quantitative survey design was employed, involving 162 purposively selected respondents who completed online questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS version 32.0. Findings reveal that *Ayahanda* (2021), aired on TV3, was the most watched adaptation, with 61 percent of respondents indicating viewership. Overall audience acceptance of literary adaptations was moderate with 154 respondents recording scores between 29 and 47. Spearman's Rho correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between audience types and viewing habits ( $r = 0.558$ ;  $r = 0.529$ ;  $r = 0.203$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ). A medium-to-high positive correlation ( $r = 0.558$ ) was also identified between dominant audience characteristics and acceptance of screen adaptations. The study offers valuable insights for content creators and broadcasters aiming to increase engagement with literary adaptations among younger viewers.

**Keywords:** *Screen, text, adaptation, young audience, literary.*

### INTRODUCTION

The declining engagement with literary works among younger generations has become a significant cultural concern, coinciding with the pervasive influence of digital technologies and screen-based media consumption (Price, 2019; Baron, 2021). In the Malaysian context, Azlan and Bakar (2019) note that literature is increasingly perceived as less relevant within academic settings, reflecting a broader shift away from traditional reading practices. This diminishing interest not only signals a change in cultural habits but also raises questions regarding the sustainability of literary heritage in a rapidly digitalising society. One strategy adopted to address this challenge is the adaptation of literary works into visual formats, particularly films and television dramas. Creative practitioners and cultural activists have increasingly turned to screen adaptation as a means of revitalising interest in literature and making it accessible to audiences accustomed to audiovisual media (Aleksandrowicz, 2022; Jalaluddin, 2019; Hamid & Yaapar, 2015). These adaptations aim to preserve core cultural themes while integrating contemporary cinematic techniques, thereby bridging the gap between traditional texts and modern viewers.

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Malaysia has a longstanding tradition of literary adaptation, beginning with *Chinta Gadis Rimba* (1958) and continuing through adaptations such as *Rumah Itu Duniaku* (1964), *Langit Petang* (1982), *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (1983), and *Jogho* (1997). Scholarly discussions highlight the complexities inherent in adaptation, particularly the tension between source fidelity and creative reinterpretation needed to ensure relevance to contemporary audiences (Hamid & Yaapar, 2015; Jalaluddin, 2019). Rahman and Deng (2016) further argue that adaptation requires *articulation*, whereby filmmakers selectively reconstruct narrative elements to align with the affordances of visual media. Such studies underscore that the success of an adaptation is not solely dependent on textual fidelity but on its ability to generate new meanings suited to diverse audience contexts.

Despite the growing number of literary works adapted for Malaysian television, little is known about how young audiences engage with these adaptations. Empirical research on audience reception specifically, how viewers interpret, evaluate, and emotionally respond to literary adaptations in television dramas remains limited. Existing scholarship primarily emphasises textual analysis, fidelity debates, or production-related challenges, leaving a notable gap in understanding the *audience side* of adaptation. This gap is particularly significant given that younger audiences increasingly consume narratives through digital platforms, raising questions about whether screen adaptations genuinely succeed in reconnecting them with literary heritage (Salleh, Mahbob & Baharudin, 2017). The lack of empirical evidence on reception creates uncertainty about the cultural and educational functions of adaptations in contemporary Malaysia.

This study, therefore, investigates young audience reception and acceptance of literary works adapted into television dramas within the Malaysian media landscape. It seeks to understand how viewers negotiate meaning through visual storytelling and how these adaptations contribute to renewing appreciation of literature among media-oriented audiences. Anchored in Reception Analysis Theory, this study argues that the effectiveness of literary adaptations is shaped by the dynamic interaction between narrative transmission and audience interpretive frameworks. The success of adaptations thus lies not merely in textual fidelity but in their capacity to align with audience expectations, cultural experiences, and media consumption patterns in the digital age.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Adapting Literature: The Transition from Text to Screen*

The adaptation of literary works into film and television is a complex and multidimensional creative process. The relationship between literature and screen media offers new interpretive possibilities and expands the landscape of contemporary entertainment. A screen adaptation adapted from a literary text has the potential to renew interest in the original work by reintroducing it to wider and more diverse audiences. As noted by Morris Beja in *Film and Literature: An Introduction*, since the establishment of the Academy Awards in 1927–1928, numerous winning films have been adaptations, demonstrating that film adaptation is a recognised and respected art form. Its long-standing prominence in Western creative industries further underscores its status as a major narrative medium throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Teh, 2018).

In Malaysia, the adaptation of literary works has been undertaken by many established writers, spanning genres such as short stories (Azizi Haji Abdullah), poetry (Siti Zaleha M. Hashim), and novels (Abdullah Hussain, Shahnnon Ahmad, Fatimah Saidin). These works have been translated into various visual formats, including television dramas,

telemovies, and mainstream feature films. Jaafar (2022) argues that adaptation serves as one of the most effective approaches to elevating the visibility and cultural significance of these authors' works. Teh (2018) further observes that the achievements of Western filmmakers and novelists have inspired similar creative advancements in Asian countries, including Malaysia, where adaptations of literary works particularly novels, have demonstrated strong artistic potential and received recognition beyond national borders.

The history of cinema in Malaysia, then known as Malaya, began with the screening of the documentary *Diamond Anniversary Celebration of Queen Victoria* in 1898 by British colonial administrators. The establishment of the Alhambra Cinema in Singapore in 1907 and the screening of *The Jazz* in 1929 at the Victoria Concert Hall marked further milestones in the region's cinematic development (Muthalib & Wong, 2002). Within this historical trajectory, the adaptation of literary works to the silver screen became a familiar experience for local audiences. One of the earliest and most significant examples is *Hang Tuah* (1956), adapted from *The Tale of Hang Tuah*, in which P. Ramlee successfully translated the classical text into a compelling screen narrative.

Subsequent decades saw a steady stream of literary adaptations, including *Langit Petang* (1982), *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (1983), *Mira Edora* (1990), and *Jogho* (1997). Adaptations based on myths and folklore were also widely embraced, with films such as *Batu Belah Batu Bertangkup* (1959), *Badang* (1962), *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah* (1959), *Sri Mersing* (1961), and *Singapura Dilanggar Todak* (1961) gaining popularity among audiences. The enduring demand for these stories lies in their strong moral and didactic elements, which filmmakers successfully conveyed through visual storytelling.

While much has been documented on the production and historical value of these adaptations, fewer studies have focused on how younger audiences receive and interpret them in the present media landscape. This literature review, therefore, supports the study's aim to investigate how screen adaptations influence the appreciation of literary works among contemporary younger audiences.

#### *From Shelf to Screen: What Audiences Think of Literary Adaptations*

The decline in the acceptance of literature became increasingly evident when it was no longer offered as an academic option in national educational institutions, particularly at the school level. Historically, students who chose literature were often perceived as academically inferior, and the eventual removal of the subject further accelerated the decline in literary interest among younger audiences. As Anwar (2019) argues, efforts to cultivate literary appreciation are unlikely to succeed if society especially its younger generations fail to acknowledge literature as a foundational pillar for national development and the enrichment of the human spirit. He emphasises that literature nurtures emotional maturity and contributes to the development of human capital, making the cultivation of artistic and literary appreciation essential for sustaining a civilised society. This diminishing engagement with literature is supported by Azlan and Bakar (2019), who observed a steady decline in reading patterns. Salleh et al. (2017) similarly note that Generation Z tends to gravitate more toward science and technology fields, reflecting a shift away from the humanities. According to Huyler and Ciocca (2015), literature is increasingly perceived as an outdated domain, predominantly appreciated by Baby Boomers and Generation X, signalling a generational divide in literary consumption.

Jalaluddin (2019) suggests that an effective way to attract younger audiences while maintaining the quality of media production is by preserving the original storyline and philosophical essence of the text. He argues that adaptations of classical literary works such as *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Puteri Gunung Ledang* have departed too far from their source material, resulting in the loss of important elements of Malay philosophy embedded in these narratives. According to Jalaluddin, scriptwriters must therefore give greater attention to the cultural logic and underlying values of these classical tales. A large number of novels have been adapted into stage plays and films to reach broader audiences. Many of these adaptations are driven by commercial imperatives, aiming to secure widespread acceptance. Consequently, dramas and films that emphasise romance and offer light, entertaining themes have been particularly successful. Examples include *Rindu Awak 200%*, *Cinta Si Wedding Planner*, and *Kimchi untuk Awak*. Similarly, film adaptations such as *Ombak Rindu* and *Lagenda Budak Setan* have captured audience interest, as reflected in their strong box-office performance. Nevertheless, commercial success does not diminish the value of intellectually rich narratives. Osman (2021) maintains that literary works with substantial philosophical depth can also attract and be well-received by audiences if adapted with careful craftsmanship and attention to narrative integrity. This suggests that successful screen adaptations can bridge intellectual and entertainment values when executed with cultural sensitivity and narrative balance.

Traditional Malay literary works such as *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Puteri Gunung Ledang* have received relatively modest audience responses, with screenings of these films reportedly “not gaining profit” (Hamid & Yaapar, 2015). Critics argue that key elements of the original sagas were lost in the adaptation process, leading to disputes concerning the omission of essential narrative components. Hamid and Yaapar (2015) emphasise that the adaptation of *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* should retain the spirit and mood of the literary text to ensure its cultural and thematic integrity on screen. Ali and Deng (2018) note that the development of digital media has broadened the target audience for film and drama adaptations of novels. The emergence of digital literary forms has introduced new directions within the landscape of local literature, prompting transformations that reflect changing media environments. According to Ali and Deng (2018), literary works adapted within digital media frequently foreground themes and issues related to love, illustrating a shift towards narratives that resonate with contemporary audience preferences.

Rahman and Deng (2016) note that readers and viewers construct meaning differently when engaging with novels compared to films. According to their analysis, the adaptation process involves various forms of textual transformation, including the retention, elimination, addition, and modification of narrative elements, characterisation, dialogue, and setting as the story is transferred from page to screen. Saidin and Ahmad (2015) further observe that reading novels can influence teenage audiences by shaping their beliefs, perceptions, behaviours, and language acquisition. They also highlight that the enthusiasm of filmmakers and drama producers for adapting novels has contributed to a new publishing trend, marked by the proliferation of romance and family-oriented novels in the market. From a reception perspective, Ismail, Dawam and Sim (2017) emphasise that audiences play an active role in decoding symbolic elements embedded in artistic works, whether literary texts, films, or visual art. This interpretive process requires viewers to negotiate meaning and discern the messages intended by the creator, demonstrating the centrality of audience agency in meaning-making.

Film adaptations have generated significant excitement among audiences, and in many cases, they have encouraged viewers to revisit the original literary works, creating a cyclical effect between page and screen. This phenomenon enhances the visibility and status of the adapted novels, which often become bestsellers following the release of their film versions. As Abele (2012) notes, audiences generally perceive films based on novels as being of higher quality, and a substantial proportion of viewers tend to purchase the novels after watching the adaptations. Understanding audience preferences therefore presents both opportunities and challenges for filmmakers. From a commercial perspective, Rustono et al. (2020) emphasise that a successful film adaptation must evoke a deep emotional response from its audience. The extent to which an adaptation resonates with viewers ultimately influences not only its box-office success but also its capacity to reconnect audiences especially younger viewers with the literary origins of the narrative

### *Audience Reception Analysis Theory*

In contemporary audience studies, meaning is no longer seen as a linear transmission from producer to receiver. Instead, it emerges through the audience's active engagement in interpreting and reshaping cultural texts. Lu (2022) extends Hall's encoding/decoding framework by arguing that audiences are not confined to dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings, but may also engage in "creative decoding." Through this mode of interpretation, audiences draw on personal experiences, emotions, and social contexts to generate new meanings beyond those intended by the producers, becoming what Lu describes as the "creative other." In this perspective, a text's meaning is only fully realised when audiences actively interact with it, whether through reading, viewing, or producing interpretive responses. This approach emphasises the dynamic relationship between encoded messages and audience agency, highlighting the essential role of reception in contemporary media and cultural analysis.

Contemporary research in the film industry shows that audience decisions to watch a film are influenced not only by the strength of its storyline but also by production value and the use of visual technologies that enhance the viewing experience. Hennig-Thurau and Houston (2019) explain that audiences evaluate film quality through a combination of narrative elements and technical attributes such as visual effects, cinematography, and digital imaging technologies, which serve as early indicators of production standards. They emphasise that there is a strong relationship between production budget, film quality, and audience reception; higher budgets typically result in higher production value, whereas financial constraints often lead to visual and technical weaknesses. Films that fail to meet these quality expectations are at risk of attracting fewer viewers, which may result in financial losses for producers. This discussion reinforces that budget, technology, and storyline are key factors that shape audience preferences when selecting a film.

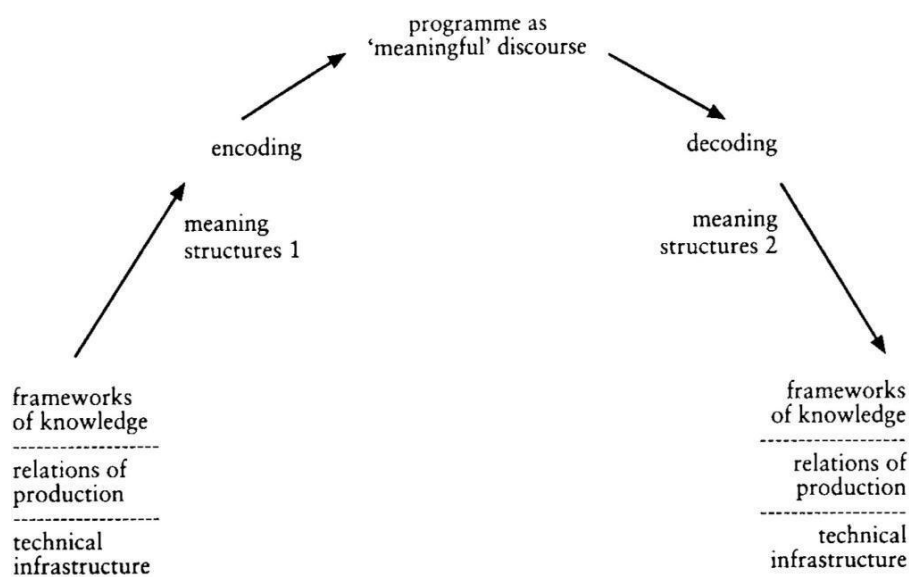


Figure 1: Encoding decoding process  
Source: Hall (1993)

Reception Analysis Theory underscores the audience's exposure to the process of encoding and decoding, the process of interpretation and their understanding of the media content (Figure 1). The Reception Analysis Theory discussed by Hall (1993) underlines the diversity of audience types in making assumptions about adapting the form of media content they receive. Reception Analysis also looks at the experience and impact of the media on the audience. According to Lee (2016), the codes used to send (encoding) the message to the recipient (decoding) need to be symmetrical, and there are differences in altering the meaning of the message in the communication process. Each audience interprets the importance of the message differently, which is often influenced by differences in experience, culture and social background. Hall (1993) divided the audience into three categories during the communication process:

- i. Dominant hegemonic reading – The audience that understands the code and agrees with the message conveyed by the media.
- ii. Negotiated reading – The audience that understands the message conveyed by the media may interpret it differently.
- iii. Oppositional reading – The audience make a deliberate choice to resist the message conveyed, refusing to be receptive to the dominant meaning encoded by the media.

Recent studies in audience reception demonstrate that the interpretation of media texts is significantly shaped by social factors such as gender, educational background, life experience, and social position. Wardani et al. (2025) found that audiences construct different meanings regarding the representation of women in the film *Damsel*, depending on their knowledge and lived experiences. Viewers with an educational background in feminism tended to offer more critical readings and positioned themselves within oppositional or negotiated decoding, whereas those without such exposure were more inclined to accept the hegemonic meanings embedded in the narrative. These variations in interpretation indicate

that meaning-making in media consumption is a socially situated process influenced by individuals' backgrounds, values, and experiences. In line with this, Badru, Hashim and Adisa (2022) assert that audience perception plays an important role in shaping culturally acceptable representations in films. Audiences act as active agents who interpret, negotiate, or reject the messages conveyed through media texts, and through reception analysis, they determine their stance on whether to accept or resist the meanings presented. Together, these studies demonstrate that media interpretation is not a passive act but a dynamic interaction between the text and the social contexts that audiences bring to their viewing experiences.

#### METHODOLOGY

This research employed a survey design, a quantitative research method particularly effective for gathering extensive information from a specific target population. As Darussalam and Hussin (2018) suggest, survey methods are instrumental in obtaining data that can provide generalizable insights, especially when exploring audience behaviour and preferences in the context of media and literary adaptations. A total of 162 respondents were selected through purposive sampling, which allows researchers to focus on participants who fulfil criteria relevant to the study's objective. The criteria for sampling includes respondents who had viewed at least one from 12 screen adaptations selected for the study. Screen adaptations selected for this study were only literary works published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP). Although purposive sampling ensures that data is collected from relevant respondents, it does limit the generalisability of findings beyond the study sample. The sample size of 162 was guided by similar prior studies and considered adequate for the correlational analysis employed in this research. The sample was designed to encompass various generational cohorts, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives, capturing the nuances in audience reception across different age groups. Data collection was conducted using online questionnaires, a method that provides several advantages, including wide reach, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to gather data efficiently from respondents across different locations.

Data collection was conducted using online questionnaires, a method that provides several advantages, including wide reach, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to gather data efficiently from respondents across different locations. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and scaled questions, including Likert-scale items designed to measure key constructs such as audience acceptance, engagement, and interpretive responses. Prior to distribution, the instrument was pre-tested with a small group of participants (n=10) to check for clarity and reliability. Minor revisions were made based on feedback to improve item wording and flow.

The data obtained was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was used to explore the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age, gender, and educational background, as well as to assess their levels of engagement with the literary adaptations. These demographic characteristics, together with the audience's engagement and responses toward the adaptations, formed the key variables of the study. The demographic variables (age, gender, educational background) were examined in relation to the audience reception variables, which included the audience's acceptance, preferences, and interpretive responses to the DBP literary screen adaptations.

Inferential statistics were also employed to determine the relationships between these key variables. Specifically, the Spearman Correlation test was used to identify the strength and direction of the associations between demographic factors and audience reception patterns. This approach allowed the study to detect significant trends, offering insights into how different demographic attributes may influence audience perceptions and acceptance of literary adaptations. The analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 32.0, ensuring rigorous data processing and the reliability of the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose and assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The combination of descriptive and inferential techniques provided a comprehensive overview of the audience's reception of literary adaptations and enabled the study to draw meaningful conclusions about the sociocultural factors influencing audience interpretation and engagement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Demographic Background*

A total of 162 respondents participated in the study, comprising 69 males (42.6%) and 93 females (57.4%). The age composition consists of 4 Baby Boomers (2.5%), 35 Generation X (21.6%), 33 Generation Y (20.4%), and 90 Generation Z (55.6%). The sample is predominantly Malay (93.8%), followed by Chinese and Indian respondents (0.6% each), with 4.9% from other ethnicities. The majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (56.8%), followed by those with postgraduate qualifications at the Master's or Ph.D. level (15.4%). A smaller proportion completed pre-university, such as STPM or Diploma (9.9%), while 14.2% reported upper secondary qualifications, specifically SPM/SPVM. Marital status shows that 58% are single, 38.3% married, and the remainder comprise divorced, widowed, or engaged individuals. In terms of employment status, 39.8% work in the public sector, 24.7% in the private sector, 18.5% are students, 7.4% self-employed, and 8% unemployed, with 2.5% in other categories. The dominance of Generation Z and the high proportion of tertiary-educated respondents indicate a sample with a strong academic background, which may influence patterns of media interpretation and reception observed in this study.

Table 1: Frequency distribution and percentage demographic background

Item	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	69	42.6
	Female	93	57.4
Age		4	2.5
	58-76 years (Baby boomers)	35	21.6
	42-57 years (Gen X)	33	20.4
	28-41 years (Gen Y)	90	55.6
	12-27 years (Gen Z)		
Race	Malay	152	93.8
	Chinese	1	0.6
	India	1	0.6
	Others	8	4.9
	Education	Upper Secondary (SPM/SPVM)	23
Pre-University (STPM/Diploma)		16	9.9
Undergraduate (Bachelor's Degree)		92	56.8
Postgraduate (Master/PhD)		25	15.4
Others		6	3.7

Mariage Status	Single	127	47
	Married	26	9.6
	Divorced Woman	83	30.7
	Widow	15	5.6
	Divorced Man	14	5.2
	Others	5	1.9
Job	Government	63	39.8
	Private Sector	40	24.7
	Student	30	18.5
	Self-employed	12	7.4
	Unemployed	13	8.0
	Others	4	2.5

### *Viewership Trends in Literary Screen Adaptations*

The data indicate that, on average, the 12 listed dramas and telefilms garnered limited audience attention. Notably, only two adaptations achieved viewership exceeding 50 percent rate: *Ayahanda* (61.1%) and *Korban Kasih* (50%) (refer Table 2). Among the 12 Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) literary works adapted for the screen, the dramas *Ayahanda* (2021) and *Korban Kasih* (2020) were particularly prominent among respondents. A notable trend in the data is the relatively strong reception of adaptations that emphasise traditional and familial themes rooted in Malaysian socio-cultural contexts. Both *Ayahanda* and *Korban Kasih* resonate with themes of family, sacrifice, and moral values, which seem to appeal across generational lines. This suggests that, despite increasing exposure to globalised digital content, a significant portion of the audience still values narratives that reflect local cultural heritage and societal values.

However, DBP literary adaptations generally receive less attention than commercially driven or internationally popular content, highlighting the need for strategies to boost audience engagement. Innovative marketing approaches, including leveraging digital platforms and social media, are essential to connect traditional literary works with the media habits of younger audiences. *Ayahanda*, authored by SEA Write Award recipient Azizi Haji Abdullah, exemplifies this potential. First published in 1997 and republished in 2016, the novel reflects the author's background as a religious teacher, emphasizing themes of education and Islam. Its successful screen adaptation highlights its enduring relevance and appeal to audiences seeking content with moral and educational depth.

Similarly, the telefilm *Korban Kasih*, adapted from Fatimah Saidin's novel (1995), achieved high viewership, focusing on themes of familial love, favouritism, and sacrifice. Its sequel, *Korban Kasih 2*, garnered a lower response, with 63 respondents (38.9%) viewing it compared to 81 respondents (50%) for the original. This decline highlights the challenge of sustaining audience interest across sequels, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches and alignment with evolving preferences. The success of *Ayahanda* and *Korban Kasih* demonstrates the potential of culturally significant, thematically rich literary works as screen adaptations. To retain audience engagement, future adaptations must address changing viewing habits and maintain strong connections with contemporary cultural interests, ensuring continued relevance in a competitive media landscape.

Table 2: Analysis of literary screen adaptation viewership among respondents

No.	Title	Respondent	
		Yes	No
1.	Jabat Erat-erat (2022, TV1)	9.3% (15)	90.7% (147)
2.	Ayahanda (2021, TV3)	61.1% (99)	38.9% (63)
3.	Capa Rengat Gulai Rawa (2021, TV1)	16.7% (27)	83.3% (135)
4.	Korban Kasih (2020, TV1)	50.0% (81)	50.0% (81)
5.	Korban Kasih 2 (2020, TV1)	38.9% (63)	61.1% (99)
6.	Sesekali (2019, TV2)	20.9% (34)	79.0% (128)
7.	Pendoa yang Ikhlas (2019, TV1)	17.3% (28)	82.7% (134)
8.	Srengenge (2017, TV1)	14.8% (24)	85.2% (138)
9.	Kemboja di Hati (2016, TV Al-Hijrah)	24.7% (40)	75.3% (122)
10.	<i>Bening Cahaya Maulid</i> (2016, TV3)	20.3% (33)	79.6% (129)
11.	<i>Hari-Hari Terakhir Seorang Seniman</i> (2013, Astro)	36.4% (59)	63.6% (103)
12.	Platun Harimau (2011, TV1)	19.7% (32)	80.2% (132)

### *Factors Influencing Audience Viewing Preferences*

The three principal factors examined in this study were social support, media exposure, and work-related factors. As presented in Table 3, a total of 13 statement items were used to assess the extent to which respondents watched screen adaptations based on these factors. The findings show that the statement “*I watched the adaptation because of the interesting storyline*” recorded the highest mean score of 4.16, indicating strong agreement among respondents. This result affirms that work-related factors particularly the storyline serve as the most influential determinant shaping audience choice. The prominence of the storyline as a motivational factor underscores its central role in attracting viewers and guiding their selection of screen adaptations. An engaging storyline consistently emerges as a primary determinant of audience attraction and sustained engagement. Wessels (2023) contends that audiences develop dynamic relationships with films, in which a strong narrative becomes the central element that shapes viewers’ expectations and interpretive processes. In alignment with this view, Grácio et al. (2025) provides empirical evidence that audiences of comedy films prioritise coherent plot structure and well-developed characters, thereby reinforcing the argument that narrative completeness and craftsmanship are fundamental to audience acceptance.

Meanwhile, the statement “*I watched the adaptation because of the good reviews*” showed a mean value of 4.05. This suggests that many respondents decided to watch the adaptation after reading positive reviews about the drama/telefilm/poetry from previous viewers. In this digital age, viewers frequently write reviews on social media, and literary works that go viral tend to attract larger audiences. The statement with the third highest mean value for audience acceptance factors is “*I watched the adaptation because it preserves local culture,*” with a mean value of 4.04. This finding underscores the importance of highlighting the culture and customs of the Malay community, which sets these adaptations apart from those of other light-themed novels. Although considered more rigid literary works than popular novels, DBP’s literature still has its followers. According to Low and Mahmud (2018), audiences have their own reasons for watching movies, including social activities, personal interests, and other factors. Therefore, the audience’s acceptance of literary adaptations that preserve local culture validates these works as meaningful and valuable contributions to society.

Table 3: Percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation of viewing factors among audiences

No.	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Fairly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	MIN	SD
1.	Interesting storyline	32.5%	53.7%	6.8%	0.6%	3.7%	4.16	0.870
2.	Good review	31.5%	51.2%	11.7%	1.9%	3.7%	4.05	0.918
3.	Maintain local culture	36.4%	42.0%	14.2%	3.7%	3.7%	4.04	0.996
4.	Quality of adaptation	27.8%	56.2%	9.9%	2.5%	3.7%	4.02	0.902
5.	Popular novels/short stories/poems	26.5%	54.3%	12.3%	3.7%	3.1%	3.98	0.905
6.	Famous literary works	24.1%	58.6%	10.5%	3.1%	3.7%	3.96	0.898
7.	Promotion on television	27.8%	50.6%	13.0%	4.3%	4.3%	3.93	0.985
8.	Promotion on social media	30.2%	45.7%	15.4%	4.3%	4.3%	3.93	1.010
9.	Favourite actor/actress	23.5%	46.3%	19.1%	6.2%	4.9%	3.77	1.035
10.	Famous author	17.9%	48.8%	22.8%	3.7%	6.8%	3.67	1.033
11.	Shared family interests	14.2%	47.5%	20.4%	7.4%	10.5%	3.48	1.149
12.	Share parents' interests	13.0%	41.4%	28.4%	8.6%	8.6%	3.41	1.096
13.	Peers influence	13.0%	40.1%	27.8%	10.5%	8.6%	3.38	1.110

The study highlights the importance of a compelling storyline as the top factor attracting viewers to screen adaptations, emphasizing narrative quality and emotional resonance. Good reviews rank second, underscoring the influence of word-of-mouth and social media in audience decisions. Additionally, the preference for adaptations preserving local culture reflects a strong interest in content that reinforces cultural identity. These findings stress the need for high-quality storytelling, strategic audience engagement, and cultural relevance to create impactful media content.

#### *Levels of Audience Engagement with Literary Works Adapted to Screen*

Table 4 revealed that audience engagement with literary works adapted for the screen was at a moderate level. Specifically, 154 respondents (95.1%) fell into this category, indicating that although they watched DBP's adapted literary works, they also consumed other dramas and programs on television and new media platforms. The average score for this group ranged from 29 to 47, reflecting a moderate degree of engagement. The rise of new media has significantly influenced audience behaviour, with a wide variety of content available on Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming platforms and social media.

The advent of digital technology has provided viewers, particularly younger generations, with alternatives to traditional television. Twenge et al. (2022) suggest that younger audiences are increasingly inclined to prefer digital content over conventional television and mass media. As a result, the television viewing landscape has undergone substantial changes due to the competition from digital technology. Consequently, literary adaptations to the screen face significant challenges in attracting and retaining audience engagement.

Table 4: Levels of Audience Engagement with Literary Works Adapted to Screen

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-28 (Low)	8	4.9
29-47 (Moderate)	154	95.1
48-55 (High)	0	0.0
Total	162	100.0

The moderate engagement levels with literary adaptations suggest a shifting media consumption pattern, particularly among younger audiences who favour digital platforms over traditional television. This shift underscores the need for literary adaptations to innovate and adapt to the digital era's demands. To remain relevant, content creators must consider integrating elements that appeal to digital-savvy viewers, such as interactive content or cross-platform promotions. The challenge lies in balancing the preservation of literary integrity with the need to attract a broader, more digitally oriented audience. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for the sustained success of literary adaptations in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

*Audience Types for Screen Adaptations of Literary Works*

Table 5 presents the statement items used to assess the types of audience reception of literary works adapted to the screen, determining whether these align with the characteristics of dominant hegemonic reading, negotiated reading, or oppositional reading as outlined in Hall's Reception Theory (1993). The item with the highest mean value, "After I watched the adaptation, I learned that it carries a positive message," recorded a mean of 4.41. This suggests that respondents perceived the adaptation as delivering a favourable and constructive message, indicating a strong alignment with the dominant hegemonic reading position. The second highest mean value was associated with the statement, "After I watched the adaptation, I found that it strengthens community unity," with a mean of 4.40. This reflects the respondents' belief that the adaptation promotes a sense of communal solidarity, further supporting the notion that they interpret the content through a dominant hegemonic lens. The third highest mean value, 4.39, corresponded to the statement, "After I watched the adaptation, I found that it highlights the value of patriotism in society."

The audience's acceptance of patriotic themes aligns with dominant hegemonic reading characteristics, as described by Woodstock (2016). Such audiences are loyal, invest time in their favourite shows, and fully understand the embedded meanings, making them a key target for content aligned with social norms. In contrast, the lowest-rated statement, "After I watched the adaptation, I found that it was just for entertainment," with a mean of 3.72, reflects a negotiated reading. These viewers approach content primarily as entertainment, with minimal influence on their beliefs or values.

Table 5: Percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation of types of audience acceptance of literary adapted to the screen

No.	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Fairly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	MIN	SD
1.	Deliver a positive message	51.2%	43.2%	3.1%	0.6%	1.9%	4.41	0.753
2.	Strengthens community unity	48.8%	46.3%	3.1%	0%	1.9%	4.40	0.726
3.	Highlights the value of patriotism in society	48.1%	46.3%	3.7%	0%	1.9%	4.39	0.733
4.	Provides new knowledge	45.1%	46.3%	6.8%	0%	1.9%	4.33	0.763
5.	Easy to understand concept/philosophy	45.1%	45.7%	7.4%	0.6%	1.2%	4.33	0.746
6.	Adheres to local culture	40.7%	52.5%	4.3%	0.6%	1.9%	4.30	0.747
7.	Conveys the content well	41.4%	50.6%	5.6%	0.6%	1.9%	4.29	0.762
8.	Appropriate to the current context	32.1%	56.2%	9.9%	0%	1.9%	4.17	0.750
9.	Changes the principles of life	25.3%	46.9%	21.6%	2.5%	3.7%	3.88	0.944
10.	Just for spare time	22.8%	45.1%	25.9%	3.7%	2.5%	3.82	0.912
11.	Just for entertainment	17.9%	45.1%	30.2%	4.9%	1.9%	3.72	0.879

This study's findings align with Hall's Reception Theory, which categorizes audience responses into dominant hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional readings. The majority of respondents demonstrated dominant readings, accepting the adaptations' intended messages, such as promoting positive values, unity, and patriotism, reflecting their cultural and social alignment with the content. However, the lower mean value for viewing adaptations as mere entertainment indicates a segment of negotiated readers who interpret content through personal perspectives. Understanding these audience types is crucial. Reinforcing dominant messages can strengthen loyalty, while addressing negotiated readings offers opportunities to engage critical viewers. This underscores the importance of accommodating interpretive diversity when creating and promoting literary adaptations.

*Influence of Audience Factors on Modes of Reception: Dominant, Negotiated, and Oppositional Readings*

H1: There is a significant relationship between audience factors and audience acceptance of literary screen adaptations based on dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings.

Based on the results in Table 6, Spearman's Rho correlation analysis indicates a positive correlation with a medium-high relationship between the type of audience acceptance and the factor of audience viewing of literary works adapted to the screen from the dominant perspective ( $r = 0.558, 0.00$ ). The correlation between audience viewing factors and audience acceptance from the negotiated perspective was also moderately high ( $r = 0.529, 0.00$ ). In contrast, the correlation between audience factors and audience acceptance from the oppositional perspective was low ( $r = 0.203, 0.00$ ).

Table 6: Correlation between viewing factors and audience reception of screen adapted literary works

Variable	Acceptance Factor		Interpretation
	sig.	R	
Acceptance ( <i>dominant</i> )	0.00	.558	Relatively Strong
Acceptance ( <i>negotiated</i> )	0.00	.529	Relatively Strong
Acceptance ( <i>oppositional</i> )	0.01	.203	Weak
Overall Acceptance	0.00	.570	Moderately Strong

A positive relationship at a moderately strong level was observed between the viewing factors and the types of audience acceptance of literary works adapted to the screen. The three types of audience reception - dominant, negotiated, and oppositional - demonstrate distinct characteristics that content providers must carefully consider when producing a variety of drama adaptation genres. The study's findings indicated that the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) showed a moderately strong relationship with dominant and negotiated audiences, while the correlation with oppositional audiences was significantly weaker. This suggests that dominant and negotiated audiences are more receptive to the content, whereas oppositional audiences tend to maintain a more critical and independent stance. The weak association with oppositional audiences underscores their propensity to form independent opinions, even when engaging with adaptations. According to Wu and Bergman (2019), audiences with oppositional reading characteristics can become valuable target groups through the strategic manipulation of perception and ideological frameworks, which enhances their critical and proactive engagement. This decoding and encoding strategy can be effectively utilized by content providers and producers as a marketing tool to better understand and connect with their audience (Wu & Bergman, 2019).

Descriptive analysis showed that respondents with dominant reading tendencies recorded the highest mean values, indicating that they form the most receptive and supportive segment of the audience for literary adaptations. This suggests that individuals in this group are more likely to accept the intended meanings encoded by producers, demonstrating strong alignment with the narrative, themes, and representational choices presented on screen. The predominance of dominant readings signals that the adaptations successfully resonate with a substantial portion of viewers, reflecting an effective translation of the literary source into screen form and a clear alignment between production elements such as storyline, character development, and visual presentation; and audience expectations.

This pattern can be further explained through Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory, which highlights that audiences accept meanings that correspond with their social experiences and interpretive frameworks. The higher mean scores for dominant readers indicate that the preferred meanings were effectively communicated and widely accepted. In contrast, the lower mean values among negotiated and oppositional readers reveal varying degrees of reinterpretation or resistance, illustrating that audience reception is not uniform and is shaped by diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Recognising this interpretive diversity is essential for producers and cultural institutions, as it underscores the importance of understanding audience heterogeneity when developing and promoting literary screen adaptations.

Spearman's Rho correlation indicates that dominant readers were more likely to internalise the preferred meanings encoded by the producers, whereas negotiated readers drew upon personal experiences and contextual cues when interpreting the adaptations. Audience acceptance was generally moderate, with 95.1% (154 respondents) showing only middling engagement. This suggests that although the adaptations were understood, they did not generate strong or sustained attachment, particularly among younger audiences who increasingly prefer digital and interactive media formats (Twenge et al., 2022).

A comparison between *Ayahanda* (2021, TV3) and *Korban Kasih* (2020, TV1) helps explain this moderate acceptance. *Ayahanda* adopts a semi-faithful adaptation approach, retaining the core storyline and emotional depth of Abdullah Hussain's novel. However, narrative condensation for television may have reduced the richness typically valued by literary readers, limiting its impact. In contrast, *Korban Kasih* employs a more interpretive and transformative strategy, restructuring plot elements and incorporating contemporary themes. These changes resulted in a wider range of negotiated and oppositional readings, particularly among viewers who perceived significant deviations from the original text.

Overall, the comparison shows that both fidelity-based and transformative adaptations face challenges in achieving high audience acceptance. While *Ayahanda* appeals to those who prioritise literary authenticity, its condensed narrative reduces depth; conversely, *Korban Kasih* broadens accessibility but compromises literary coherence. These findings highlight the need for adaptation strategies that balance textual fidelity with creative innovation, especially for digitally savvy audiences who expect more dynamic and interactive modes of media engagement.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that literary adaptations continue to hold cultural relevance, particularly when they exhibit strong thematic depth, cultural authenticity, and narrative coherence. These intrinsic qualities significantly influence younger audiences'

acceptance and can be strategically leveraged in promotional efforts to enhance visibility and generate positive viewer anticipation. The results also highlight a critical contemporary issue: the limited dissemination of literary materials through appropriate media channels, which has contributed to the weakening public connection with literature.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces Hall's Reception Analysis Theory by showing that dominant readers constitute the most receptive group, while negotiated and oppositional readers engage in varied interpretive processes shaped by social and cultural contexts. The preference for adaptations that foreground local socio-cultural themes underscores the importance of culturally grounded storytelling within contemporary media production.

Several recommendations for future research emerge from these findings. First, comparative analyses across different generational cohorts could provide deeper insights into how specific adaptation strategies shape dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. Second, the growing dominance of digital platforms suggests the need for studies exploring how cross-platform dissemination, interactive media, and social engagement tools may revitalise interest in literary heritage. Finally, comparative investigations between high-fidelity and transformative adaptations across genres could further illuminate evolving audience behaviours and expectations. As the media landscape continues to shift toward digital consumption, adapting literary works in ways that remain culturally meaningful while resonating with digitally savvy audiences will be essential for sustaining both cultural significance and commercial viability.

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