

# A Comparative Study Between Chetan Bhagat's Novels and Their Film Adaptation

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## Abstract

A film adaptation is a pre-existing work that has been made into a film. Adaptations are often of literary or theatrical works, but musical theatre, best-selling fiction and non-fiction, comic books, children's toys, and so on have also been regularly adapted for the cinema. Film adaptations are becoming increasingly popular. The Production Code Board estimates that something over 50 percent of the movies examined in 1955 were adapted from novels. Moreover, of the top ten all-time money-making films, five were adaptations. When talking about adaptations, a common thing one might hear is, "That's not how it happened in the book!" But surely there is more to adaptations than simply loyalty between film and book. One must delve deeper to understand the relationship between books and films when an adaptation is made. In order to discuss the relationship between book and film in adaptations and the reasons behind the controversy of that relation, it is important to first look at the history of adaptations in order to understand the background surrounding that industry. By doing so, one can see the way adaptations have evolved throughout the years and the manners in which the opinions regarding adaptations have changed and varied and even adapted to the current era. This study is based on Chetan Bhagat's novels adapted into films. This is a quantitative as well as qualitative survey of five books by Chetan Bhagat and their film adaptations. The results of the said survey imply that out of the two mediums, the book was chosen by the students in the age group of 17 to 23 years at an art college as more preferable than watching the movie because of the duration and quality of entertainment it provides.

## I Introduction

There are two common mediums to present a particular story to the public. One is through a book, and the other is through a movie. By definition, a book is a bound set of printed pages; this may be a literary composition that is factual or fictional (Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1993). On the other hand, a movie is defined as a motion picture that tells a story (Encarta Dictionaries, 2009). Before modern technology allowed people to make movies, it was the book that provided people with great entertainment. In later years, when people discovered the technology to make motion pictures, they started to make movies out of existing stories found in books. *Trilby and Little Billie* (1896) is considered the first movie known to be adapted from a novel. *Trilby and Little Billie* (1896) was a 45-second scene that depicted a part of the novel where Trilby sits at a table, eating cake, and talks to her friend Little Billie. *The Death of Nancy Sykes* (1897) and *Mr. Bumble the Beadle* (1898) are the two movies adapted from *Oliver Twist*, which was published in 1838 and is one of the most popular adapted novels of all time. *The Pillar of Fire* (1899), *The Death of Poor Joe* (1901), *Scrooge, or Marley's Ghost* (1901) are a few other movies considered among the earliest movies adapted from novels. This practise of making films based

on books has been going on until now. Of late, there have even been numerous productions of films based on popular fiction books. This trend was more popular in Hollywood movies, but after the adaptation of *Five Point Someone* into a Bollywood blockbuster, this trend of film adaptation became popular in India also. After that, other books by the writer Chetan Bhagat were also adapted into films. Movies provided another form of entertainment for the masses other than reading, which has been the most popular medium for entertaining the public. But in line with this progress comes the age-old debate about the book versus the movie.

Some people do not like to read books, and some do not like to watch movies, so for them, there is no argument to be had. On the other hand, some people read books and then watch the film adaptations, and vice versa. There are two sides to this argument: one that prefers the book over the movie version and the other that prefers the movie over the book version. But according to Jonathan H. Liu (2010), there is no debate since there is a certain prejudice against movies, with film being the newer art form between the two and it is usually viewed as the inferior one. Choosing between the two mediums is complex due to the fact that there is no certain measurement to test which is better since it is not fair to compare them (Jennings, 2013). But according to an article, there are certain factors that affect people's preferences. These are time investment, hours of entertainment gained, visual effects, price, entertainment value, portability, quotability, and communality (Liu, 2010). Another writer, Marco Lee (1994), also lists the ways in which the books and movies are similar and different.

Reading books has always been favoured by humans as the prime form of entertainment, not only because it is one way to acquire information or knowledge. But it is also considered a source of entertainment and enjoyment for the readers. There are two main reasons why the public prefers the book over the movie. One is that the book gives much more details on the story than the movie. Another is that the movie was not how the public pictured it out to be while they were reading the book (Lee, 1994). In basic terms, the movie did not measure up to the reader's imaginations. Given this situation and the further research of the researchers, it has been observed that the majority of a given population greatly prefers the book over its film adaptation.

To reinforce this statement, a survey was conducted among fifty selected 17- to 23-year-old students who had read and watched the movies of the following titles: *Five Point Someone (3 Idiots)*, *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, *Half Girlfriend*, *One Night at the Call Center (Hello)*, and *Kai Po Che (3 Mistakes of My Life)*. Through this study, the researcher aims to reinforce the existing knowledge that books are better than their movie counterparts (Liu, 2010). Another writer, Marco Lee (1994), also lists the ways in which the books and movies are similar and different.

## II. Body

Over the past decade, movies such as 3 Idiots, 2 States: The Story of My Marriage, Hello, Half Girlfriend, and Kai Po Che have been brought to life on the big screen by top Bollywood studios. The popularity of these movies has, in turn, prompted viewers to read these iconic books. Regardless of the name given to the phenomenon, the fact remains that more children and adolescents are reading (Moore, 2014). The allure of the films creates this new excitement for the books; it is this allure that may prompt young people to explore. By using pop culture and media that young people can relate to, we can expand their curiosity

regarding literature and reading in general and help them discover and cultivate a love for reading. According to Moore (2014), students who see the films associated with these novels are more likely to read them, whether out of pure intrigue or out of a desire to join the majority of their peers. Thus, in search of the validity of these claims and to prove whether they hold true or not for most of the 17- to 23-year-old students of an arts college, the researchers sought respondents to answer a survey where they needed to choose between a book and its film adaptation.

## Presentation of data acquired in the survey

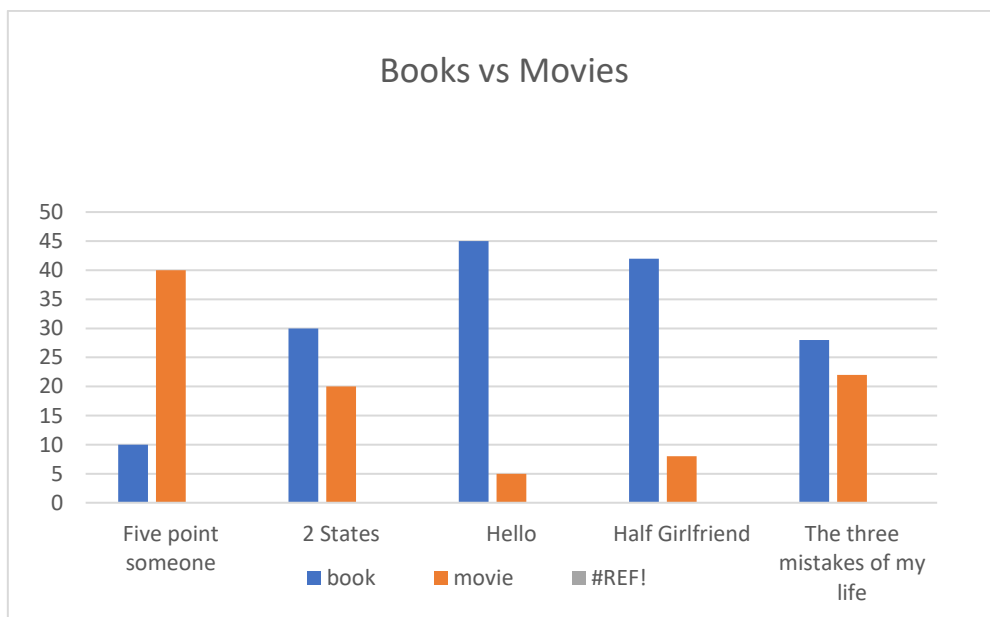
The main objective of the researchers on this study is to find out which is better; the book or the movie and which is greatly preferred by the students of 17 to 23 years age group of an Arts College. In order to find out the researchers conducted a survey among 50 students who had read the book and watched its movie adaptations:

1. Five Point Someone (3 Idiots)
2. 2 States: The Story of My Marriage
3. Half Girlfriend
4. One Night @Call Centre
5. Kai Po Che (3 Mistakes of My Life)

### Results acquired from survey:

	Books	Movies
<b>Five Point Someone (3 Idiots)</b>	10	40
<b>2 States: The Story of My Marriage</b>	30	20
<b>Half Girlfriend</b>	42	8
<b>One Night @Call Centre</b>	45	5
<b>Kai Po Che (3 Mistakes of My Life)</b>	28	22

The results are shown in chart as:



**The result came out as on an average 31 students prefer books whereas only 19 students prefer movies.**

There are many reasons why people prefer one over the other. In *Half Girlfriend*, the students choose the book over the film for the following reasons: First, because of the readers' longer period of preoccupation. According to the respondents, one needs a longer amount of time to finish the book than the film. The second reason is the visual effects. Because of the language used, which is simple English, one can easily imagine what the writer is trying to describe. Another is the portability; it is easier to bring a book anywhere.

In the case of *Three Idiots*, many students chose the film over the book. The film, according to the students, is a complete package of humor, emotions, motivation, in short, everything, in only 2-3 hours. There's not a single minute in the movie where the reader can feel bored. The respondents found a few episodes of stories funnier and more interesting in their visual presentation than in their imagination from a book. Songs that are not in the book but are in the film serve as another reason to attract a larger audience.

In the case of the other, the respondents choose the book over the film adaptation for the same reasons as in *Half Girlfriend*: the time of preoccupation is longer, the visual effect that the mind creates is much more creative than the one provided in the film, and lastly, the book is more portable than any gadgets to play films with. So, it can be concluded that the language used and the visual effects and portability have a big influence on the preferences of the respondents.

A book and a movie are the two types of mediums in which to present a story. These two mediums have their own unique characteristics that differ from one another, but they also share some similarities. In the words of Stephen King, "Books and movies are like apples and oranges." "They both are fruits, but they taste completely different." First, the similarities: the book and movie are similar in that they both tell the same story or have the same structure. For example, in the last episode of the union of lovers in *Half Girlfriend* and *2 States*, readers and the audience can get the same feeling of happiness and the same wave of emotions inside them after reading the book or after watching the movie.

Regardless of this similarity, the book and the movie present the elements of the story in vastly diverse manners. First, the two differ in the type of presentation. The books make use of words written on paper, which allows the readers to have free reign over their imagination and make interpretations of the text written. On the other hand, movies spoon-feed the information to the audience. The elements are presented in the film through visual and auditory means, so the audience gets a complete picture of the story. Therefore, a reader is not limited by the book and can think outside the box, but the audience cannot. Second, there is the matter of giving details. As was stated, the movie may provide a visual picture, but the book gives more refined details. In a book, the author can disclose many things about the characters. The reader can know the things running through the mind of a particular character. Also, there are many minor but important scenes in the book that give clues to the possible ending of the story. However, because movie producers are limited in their ability to keep the audience entertained, such scenes are deleted or cut short. For example, the English-learning episode and basketball matches are cut short and

badly presented in the movie Half girlfriend. So, in effect, the reader can have a deeper understanding of the story rather than the audience.

Third, the time which a person consumes in reading a book and watching a movie. In this aspect the difference is obvious. Even if a person can read fast, he consumes twice as much time in reading the book rather than by watching it in a movie. In average a single movie can take 2-3 hours to finish but on the other hand a person can finish a book within 1-2 weeks in average. So reading is more time consuming than watching the movie.

Lastly, they differ in the production of the book and movie. In the case of the series the researchers choose, where one of the common themes is fantasy, the book has the advantage. In books, the author can create bizarre scenes that are difficult to recreate in real life. Modern technology may be able to compensate in this aspect, but sometimes it cannot keep to par. The book and movie may be quite similar, but their differences are also vast, not only in their components but also in their effects on the readers and audience (Lee, 1994). It can be established that although there is a similarity between the book and its film adaptations, the theme and flow of the storyline both vastly differ from each other in terms of the type of presentation and its manner of giving information and descriptions, the time consumed, and their production. It can also be concluded that there is a certain difference in the interpretation of the reader and of the director, who interprets for the film.

Also, according to Jonathan H. Liu, in general, the books can win over the movies at anytime. He stated that there are eight factors by which to test which is better. First is the time investment aspect; in this area, the movie wins. Since a person can finish a movie faster than a book, even if you factor in the time spent going to the theatre. The second is in the hours of entertainment gained; here, the books win. since books provide multiple hours or even weeks of entertainment. Third is the visual effect; on this aspect, the books still win. Even if the advancement of technology allowed the creation of realistic special effects, the scenes projected on the screens still came from someone's imagination. The bottom line is that the visual effects provided in the movies pale in comparison to the effects provided by the brain, which are not limited by budgets and rendering times. Fourth is the price; in this area, the book and movie are tied since a good movie can have the same price as a good book. Fifth is the entertainment value; in this facet, the books win. Since the reader can have an unlimited interpretation of the book and movies provide only one scenario, readers have more fun. Sixth is the portability aspect, and here the book still wins. A paperback can fit in a large pocket or a small bag and is easy to handle, but there are also gadgets that are always for watching movies and are even smaller than books. But in the case of the book, it does not need charging, and it does not need to be shut off if you're riding an aeroplane. There is also the matter of the impact; when it comes to movies, the size of the gadgets is a factor in the impact. If the screen of the gadget where you watch the movie is small, then the impact diminishes, whereas for the book it does not matter. The seventh is quotability; here the movies win. Certain lines have impacts on the public, but the interesting lines in movies are much shorter, while in books they are much longer. The seventh and last is communality, and the movies still win. One of the best things about books and movies is sharing them with other people. When readers read books, they are transported to faraway lands, but they don't want somebody talking about events that take place a couple pages from now. But movies, because of the short time it takes to watch them, can be shared almost immediately (Liu, 2010).



Nowadays, when many good novels are turned into good films, it can be tricky to decide which to enjoy first, the book or the film based on it. For example: - "3 Idiots" is the movie that was brilliantly produced by Rajkumar Hirani. The film received critical acclaim and huge commercial success upon its release on December 25, 2009, and is considered to be among the greatest Bollywood movies ever made; it was also the highest-grossing film in its opening weekend in India, had the highest opening day collections for an Indian film up until that point, and also held the record for the highest net collections in the first week for a Hindi film. Reading the book is an intimate experience that can challenge your mind and tickle your heart. But watching the film is often more convenient, especially if you don't have much time. (Mars, 2014)

It is baffling how people rave about a book they love, then ridicule the movie interpretation after watching it. The movie trailer often features a great cast and musical score, as well as the familiar literary title. Sometimes one just can't tell how well the film version will be or if one should have read the book first. When a movie is due for general release and it sounds like it ought to be an interesting one to watch, some rush out, buy the book, and read it so that they are familiar with the storyline when going to see the film adaptation in the cinemas. There are some movies where reading the book first is a necessity; otherwise, the viewer will probably never fully appreciate what is being depicted during certain scenes in the movie. Then we come to another category of movies, where so much of the storyline has been changed from that in the book on which the movie was based. Anyone who has read and loved the book ends up sadly disappointed in the movie, not because it is a bad movie, but because it is not true to the book.

In keeping with the words of Pete (2012), there are seven reasons to read the book before watching the movie. First, the book serves as the reader's inner guide. There is nothing like having the inside track on a movie plot. If one does not mind spoilers, then reading the book will enhance the movie-watching experience. Reading the book before watching the movie gives a good sense of what one is about to see.

Second, the plot in the book is richer. A movie is typically about two hours long, while it takes a generous amount of time to finish a really good book. Fitting a book's story into a movie timeframe inevitably leaves out a lot of important content and context. Reading the book before watching the film can help fill in the blanks of a reductive movie interpretation.

Third, the characters are richer. Characters from the book often appear in film as thinned-out versions of their richer, more complex selves. Fourth, you can be the group's inside informant. For some, it is difficult for them to spoil a movie. Perhaps that's why most people like to read the book before watching the movie. Being able to relate to the book when watching the film adaptation and sharing it with others might be one of the most rewarding feelings for others, which is why they read the book first. Fifth, the book presents the real ending. While the movie was mildly entertaining, the ending gave the viewers cause for a double take. Oftentimes, the ending of the film adaptation is completely different from the book. The ending of a story is changed to fit a timeframe, the writer's vision, or to anticipate a sequel. Knowledge of the real ending can provide an alternate conclusion.

Sixth, the book provides profound details about the scenes. Another of the best things about reading a well-written book is the wonderfully descriptive detail. 2 States describes places, people, and clothing in

such rich detail that you feel as if you are there. You can see the cultures of both states very deeply in the book, whereas the movie provides only a surface view. Watching the story on screen after reading the books makes the viewers aware of the environment and metal work, which they would have likely missed without reading first. Seventh, the book is more suspenseful. Sometimes the story moves so fast that it ends without warning. Abbreviating the storyline often lessens the intended suspense. Reading the book can be intensely suspenseful as you follow the author over a longer period of time, restricted only by their creativity. This freedom allows the story to flesh out and build suspense in areas that the movie misses. There are some circumstances, however, in which some films based on books are so good that if one gets to see them first, somehow one might feel that there is no need to read the book after, and in some cases, films can act as concise summaries of stories we don't have time to read. (Mars, 2014)

According to Mars (2014), in the end, films can enrich the novels they are based on. Not all movies, but those that are well-made and stick to the original story.

### III. Conclusion

This study was created to compare and contrast reading a book with watching a movie. The researchers concluded that the book and movie are similar in structure but different when it comes to the presentation of the story, the manner of giving details, the time consumed in reading and watching, and the matter of producing scenes. Not only are there differences in the components, but there are also differences in the effects of reading the book first before watching the film adaptation and vice versa for the readers and the audience. When the respondents read the book first, it is more likely that they will become disappointed when they finally see the film adaptation. However, when the respondents opted to watch the movie first before reading the book, they felt like it was more convenient in cases where the movie was more understandable since they didn't have to read the book anymore since it already had the same plot. There are also other factors that greatly affected the respondent's preference. One is because of the language. It was observed that if the language used in the book is complex, then the respondents will choose the film adaptation. Another is because of the visual effects. If the language used is simple English, then, according to the respondents, it is easier for them to be creative in their imaginations. Finally, because of the book's portability. The director also has a hand in the preferences of the respondents. It is because it is the role of the director to understand and interpret the whole book and integrate it in a way that the viewers can easily understand. In effect, if the interpretation of the director is more understandable than that of the reader, then the viewers are more likely to prefer the movie. Last but not least, there is the availability or reach of both sources in a particular area. There are many areas in India where movies have a greater reach than books. As book reading is preferred more in urban areas, people from rural areas prefer watching movies. When it comes to reading books, it's not a hobby that everyone has; in fact, there are a lot of people who simply cannot read, but they sure do enjoy watching films. Books sometimes also have a language barrier; a great story could have been written in a language we don't understand. For instance, there could be a great Spanish novel with a limited reach, but when someone plans to adapt it into an English film, the story automatically reaches out to more people.

Thus, a survey was conducted by the researchers among fifty selected 17- to 23-year-old students who had read and watched the movies of the following titles. *Five Point Someone (3 Idiots)*, *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, *Half Girlfriend*, *One Night at the Call Center (Hello)*, and *Kai Po Che (3 Mistakes of My*

*Life*). The results of the said survey imply that out of the two mediums, the book was chosen by the students of Arts College as more preferable than watching the movie because of the language used, the visual effects, and portability, which had a big influence on the respondents' preferences.

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