

REBUILDING IMAGINATION THROUGH NOSTALGIA: RECYCLING AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN DISNEY LIVE- ACTION FILMS

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ABSTRACT

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This article explores the concepts of intertextuality and the process of story recycling in Disney live-action films, including *Maleficent* (2014), *The Jungle Book* (2016), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), *The Lion King* (2019), and *Aladdin* (2019). It highlights how Disney integrates elements from classic stories to create new narratives that resonate with modern audiences. Through a narrative analysis approach, this study examines Disney's efforts to reconstruct collective imagination through nostalgia, manifested in intertextuality and recycling within visual elements and story development. The findings demonstrate how these strategies effectively preserve the appeal of classic tales while offering a fresh experience for contemporary viewers. Furthermore, this study contributes to media studies and audience reception research by illustrating how nostalgia-driven adaptations influence cultural memory and audience engagement. These results emphasize the evolving role of intertextual storytelling in shaping audience expectations and industry trends in contemporary entertainment.

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1. Introduction

Disney has captivated audiences of all ages with its timeless stories of adventure, love, and courage for nearly a century (Karmakar & Bhadra, 2023). It has produced some of the most memorable and visually stunning films ever made, along with stories that have become an integral part of cultural consciousness (Chapman & Blauvet, 2024). Beyond telling iconic stories, Disney transcends storytelling by bringing dreams to life for people around the world, building franchises that stand the test of time (The Walt Disney Company, 2024).

However, as time progresses, Disney's storytelling strategies have evolved to meet the challenges of the modern era. In recent decades, the company has adopted new approaches to reviving its legacy through three key methods (Rowe, 2022). Disney's legacy films can be categorized into three main types, each designed based on its classic animations. The first type is *legacy re-releases*, where classic animated films are reissued from Disney's "vault," allowing new generations to experience these iconic works. The second type is *legacy remakes*, in which films are faithfully recreated while maintaining the storyline and plot of the original animated versions, offering a similar experience with a more modern aesthetic. The third type is *legacy retellings*, which draw inspiration from classic animations to create fresh narratives. In this category, the story focus often shifts to a different perspective or continues the storyline from the animated version, adding a new dimension to Disney's classic legacy.

Since the successful experiment of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), Disney has remained on the path of live-action remakes and retellings, adapting its classic animations for future generations (Rotten Tomatoes, 2024). The average box office earnings for these films have been impressive, with an opening weekend average of \$72.2 million, an average domestic gross of \$212.1 million, an international average of \$407 million, and a global total averaging \$619.1 million (Colbert, 2023). With spectacular visuals supported by the latest technology, these live-action adaptations offer a fresh dimension to familiar stories.

One of the primary reasons behind Disney's shift to live-action remakes is nostalgia (Miller, 2023). By greenlighting live-action adaptations, Disney capitalizes on the natural human tendency to feel nostalgic about the past—whether among children whose childhoods were shaped by these films, parents who repeatedly watched the same animated classics, or anyone who has come to love these timeless stories (Perelman, 2019). In the context of recycling, remakes involve retelling existing stories with new faces, utilizing the same characters while altering and reworking old storylines, whereas re-releases bring past successes back to audiences unchanged (Shubhangi, 2020).

In this context, the concept of recycling refers to how media repurpose old narratives by updating them with new elements, such as more complex character development, refined plots, or the integration of socially relevant issues that resonate with contemporary audiences. Characterized by an imitative form of filmmaking—including remakes, sequels, and spin-offs—the culture of recycled films has become a significant part of mainstream cinema (de Cock et al., 2023).

Recycling is a process of transforming old material into something new with the goal of minimizing the use of raw materials while creating more valuable products (Dika, 2003). In this context, recycling can be seen as a unique form of creativity, where media creators adapt old stories to align with the values and expectations of today's audiences.

In media studies, recycling refers to the practice of reusing existing elements to create new works, whether in the form of remakes, sequels, prequels, or spin-offs. In popular culture, this strategy not only reintroduces old stories to new audiences but also modifies content to remain relevant to evolving social, cultural, and technological contexts. Recycling has become a defining

characteristic of the modern entertainment industry due to its adaptability to market changes and audience demands.

Moreover, recycling in media is often seen as a way to maintain narrative continuity or expand the universe of a well-known story. Elements such as plot, characters, or themes from popular works are reused with various updates, whether through visual enhancements, technological innovations, or new storytelling contexts. In many cases, recycled works aim to bridge generational gaps, allowing new audiences to experience classic tales through a modernized lens.

As technology advances, the practice of recycling continues to evolve. For example, cutting-edge visual effects, CGI technology, and new formats such as digital series have added new dimensions to recycled content. This demonstrates that recycling is not merely about retelling old stories but also about how media adapt to changing times, creating new experiences while staying relevant in an increasingly competitive industry.

Closely related to recycling, the concept of intertextuality in media studies refers to the connections between one text and another. The term was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1966. According to her, no text exists in isolation; all texts are products of transformation or references to other texts (Raj, 2015). In this context, a text is not limited to written works but also includes films, music, visual arts, and other forms of media.

Intertextuality is a way of understanding texts as part of a broader network, where meaning is created through relationships with other texts (Allen, 2000). Intertextuality can take various forms, such as quotations, parody, adaptation, or the incorporation of elements from previous works. For example, a film may include explicit references to another film through dialogue, visuals, or specific themes. This not only enriches the audience's experience but also adds layers of meaning.

In popular culture, intertextuality is often used as a tool to connect generations and attract audiences familiar with the references, creating a sense of nostalgia or recognition. Popular texts are frequently designed to be intertextual, building upon existing works to enhance their appeal and expand their potential for interpretation (Fiske, 1989). This practice demonstrates that media are always in dialogue with the past, constructing relationships between old and new works to generate meaning relevant to the present context.

The concepts of recycling and intertextuality in media are closely tied to nostalgia, particularly in popular culture. Nostalgia, often defined as a longing for the past, plays a crucial role in media strategies that repurpose old elements to create familiar experiences for audiences. Recycling, in the form of remakes or spin-offs, and intertextuality, through references or adaptations of other texts, are often designed to evoke collective memories and nostalgic emotions.

Nostalgia serves as a bridge between the past and present, offering a sense of continuity in an ever-changing world (Boym, 2008). In this context, recycling and intertextuality function as tools to engage audiences across generations. Films, for instance, frequently incorporate visual elements, music, or storylines from previous works to create a sense of familiarity and emotional connection.

The use of nostalgia in media is not merely about celebrating the past but also about providing audiences with a way to connect past experiences with the present (Grainge, 2003).

When recognizable elements appear in films or other media, audiences not only recall their past experiences but also have the opportunity to reimagine these stories within their own contexts. By leveraging nostalgia, recycling and intertextuality not only attract long-time fans but also repackage familiar experiences for new audiences.

This creates an interactive experience in which audiences are encouraged to imagine different possibilities—such as how a story might evolve with updates or how familiar characters would act in new situations. In this way, recycling and intertextuality do not merely evoke nostalgia but also foster creativity and encourage audiences to explore new ways of engaging with familiar narratives.

On the other hand, although Disney has captivated audiences of all ages with timeless stories of adventure, love, and courage for nearly a century, some critics argue that the company's focus on remaking classic animated films into live-action adaptations reflects a decline in creativity. Instead of presenting original ideas, Disney seems to rely on remakes as its primary strategy for generating profit by appealing to longtime fans and capitalizing on nostalgia (Zhang, 2023). This approach may come at the expense of innovation and storytelling renewal, as the company chooses to repeat proven formulas rather than take risks with new concepts. The entertainment industry as a whole continues to follow the same pattern, producing sequels, remakes, and reboots without exploring fresh ideas or embracing creative risks. As a result, many fans have grown increasingly frustrated with the lack of originality (Chappell-Beattie, 2024).

Several past studies have also critically examined the impact of Disney's live-action adaptations and the practice of recycling narratives. The live-action adaptation of *Aladdin* (2019) challenges traditional patriarchal narratives by deconstructing the male/female dichotomy present in previous princess films (Jiang et al., 2023). However, while the film offers a new perspective, it also raises questions about balancing respect for the original narrative with the introduction of contemporary values, which could potentially lead to creative stagnation if overly reliant on this approach. Despite their commercial success, the formulaic approach in Disney's remake films often adheres to predetermined patterns, which can limit innovation in storytelling. This suggests that the studio's presence does not significantly transform the film industry in terms of content originality. Instead, it tends to rely more on recycling existing stories or films (Cuelenaere, 2024).

Moreover, although these live-action films often achieve significant box office success, there are concerns that they do not always capture the essence and magic of their original animated versions. Some critics argue that the heavy reliance on advanced visual effects and CGI technology can diminish the emotional appeal and warmth inherent in traditional animation. While visual effects are undoubtedly important, strong performances and originality in storytelling will always resonate with audiences (Murray, 2017). Therefore, while this strategy may be financially rewarding, it is crucial for Disney to strike a balance between leveraging nostalgia and pushing creative boundaries to maintain relevance and vitality in an ever-evolving entertainment industry.

One limitation of this study is the lack of in-depth exploration regarding how technology influences the perception of nostalgia. The use of modern technology, particularly CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery), has become a crucial element in creating the visual appeal of Disney's live-

action films. This technology allows for the creation of realistic and stunning visuals, such as the lifelike animals in *The Lion King* (2019) or the magical effects in *Aladdin* (2019). However, this aspect also presents challenges in rekindling the nostalgia of viewers for the original animated versions. While technology creates a new experience, some viewers may feel a loss of the warmth and magic associated with classic animation. This suggests that advanced visuals do not always guarantee success in evoking childhood imagination.

Future research could explore in greater detail how technological elements affect the emotional and cognitive aspects of the audience. For example, by incorporating data from surveys or interviews, researchers could gain insight into the extent to which modern visuals influence emotional connections with the original versions. Additionally, cross-cultural exploration of nostalgia perceptions in relation to these live-action films could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of technology in shaping global imagination.

Another additional methodological limitation of this study lies in the potential biases inherent in narrative analysis. As an interpretive method, narrative analysis relies on subjective judgment in identifying intertextual references and thematic patterns, which may influence the findings. The selection of films and specific narrative elements for analysis could also shape the results based on researcher perspectives. To mitigate these biases, incorporating multiple coders or using triangulation with other methodologies could enhance the reliability of the study.

Furthermore, audience reception studies could provide complementary insights by examining how different viewers perceive and emotionally engage with Disney's live-action remakes. Understanding audience reactions through surveys, focus groups, or social media analysis could reveal whether nostalgia is effectively evoked or if certain elements disrupt the emotional connection to the original films. By integrating reception studies, future research could offer a more holistic understanding of how intertextuality, technology, and nostalgia interact in shaping audience experiences.

2. Method

This study employs narrative analysis to explore how the concepts of recycling, intertextuality, and nostalgia are utilized in Disney remake films. Narrative analysis is an approach that focuses on how stories are structured and how their elements contribute to meaning-making. Through this analysis, researchers can understand how classic narrative elements are adapted and reconnected with modern audiences.

As the unit of analysis, data is drawn from Disney's highest-grossing remake films, namely *The Lion King* (2019), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), *The Jungle Book* (2016), *Aladdin* (2019), and *Maleficent* (2014) (Box Office Mojo, n.d.).

Intertextuality Theory serves as a crucial foundation for analyzing how Disney remake films establish connections with their previous versions and other relevant works. In the concept developed by Julia Kristeva (1980) and further expanded by Gérard Genette (1997), intertextuality refers to an approach to text analysis that emphasizes how texts reference, adopt, and modify words and concepts from other texts (Zengin, 2016). In the context of Disney remakes, this study

identifies recycled narrative elements, such as plotlines, characters, dialogues, and music, which are taken from classic animated films and adapted into live-action format, while also examining how new elements are introduced to provide a fresh context.

These elements not only reintroduce familiar stories to audiences but also provide a new experience through changes in visual aspects, storyline, and character representation. This approach allows remake films to maintain relevance for older generations who have an emotional attachment to the original versions while simultaneously attracting new audiences through narrative updates that align with contemporary social contexts. These elements are then analyzed to determine how they evoke nostalgia while simultaneously shaping the imagination of new audiences.

The relevance of intertextuality theory in this study lies in analyzing how Disney remakes reintroduce old stories with a modern approach while preserving distinctive elements that evoke nostalgia. Through intertextuality, these films do not merely rely on repetition but also offer reinterpretations that enrich audience perception. Intertextuality is not merely imitation but involves transforming and connecting one text with another, creating new meaning through their inherent relationships (Buzhala et al., 2023). Therefore, it serves as an analytical tool to assess the extent to which Disney remakes innovate upon their original narratives. Therefore, this study will explore how remake films employ intertextual strategies in structuring their narratives, by repeating classic elements.

To ensure a systematic approach, predefined coding categories were established to examine intertextuality and recycling. These categories include direct visual or narrative references to past Disney films, modifications in character arcs, thematic shifts, and the interplay between old and new compositions. By employing this structured framework, the study enhances transparency and allows for reproducibility in analyzing how these elements contribute to meaning-making.

The analytical framework follows a three-step process. First, a comparative narrative analysis is conducted by mapping key elements from the remake films against their original counterparts. This includes identifying instances of direct replication, reinterpretation, or subversion of existing narratives. Second, thematic coding is applied to classify recurring motifs and intertextual references, ensuring a structured assessment of how nostalgia and recycling function within the films. Lastly, the remakes are systematically compared to their original versions to evaluate how modifications in plotlines, characters, themes, and visual styles contribute to narrative transformation.

Narrative analysis is well-suited for exploring how stories construct meaning and audience experiences (Cumming, 2007). This approach allows researchers to investigate the relationship between old and new elements within a film's narrative. Adaptations often retain familiar narrative components while incorporating creative additions that generate new meanings (Hutcheon, 2013).

The analysis process in this study involves thoroughly watching the films, documenting emerging narrative elements, and comparing them to the original versions or their sources of inspiration. The collected data is then categorized based on key themes, such as recycling, intertextuality, and nostalgia.

This method helps reveal how remake films not only reintroduce classic stories with modern technology but also create a space for audiences to connect the past with contemporary cinematic experiences. Consequently, narrative analysis provides deeper insights into the relationship between media, storytelling, and audience engagement.

3. Results and Discussion



Figure 1. The Lion King-Circle of Life Scene (Minkoff & Allers, 1994)



Figure 2. The Lion King-Circle of Life Scene (Favreau, 2019)

The *Lion King* (2019) serves as a powerful example of how recycling and intertextuality reconstruct a classic narrative by blending old and new elements. As a remake of the 1994 animated film, this version recycles many iconic aspects familiar to audiences while updating its visuals through realistic Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI). The opening scene, "*Circle of Life*," where Simba is introduced to the world from Pride Rock, and the "*Stampede*" sequence leading to Mufasa's death, are among the most iconic moments that have been recycled. These scenes, with visuals, music, and storytelling that remain faithful to the original, provide a more immersive and emotionally engaging experience for modern audiences.

The main narrative, following Simba's journey from exile to reclaiming his throne, also retains the structure of the 1994 version. This storyline not only recycles elements from the original film but also strongly reflects intertextuality with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, enriching the

narrative with universal themes of betrayal, responsibility, and power struggles. The story is presented in a way that remains relevant and accessible to audiences across generations.

Music and dialogue play a crucial role in establishing a connection with viewers. Songs such as "*Hakuna Matata*," "*Circle of Life*," "*I Just Can't Wait to Be King*," and "*Can You Feel the Love Tonight*" are preserved almost unchanged, evoking a deep sense of nostalgia. Likewise, iconic dialogues, such as Mufasa's advice to Simba, "*Remember who you are*," are brought back to life, creating an emotional bond with audiences familiar with the original version.

By leveraging recycling and intertextuality, *The Lion King* (2019) not only delivers nostalgia but also builds new imagination through visual updates with CGI technology, character enhancements, and thematic depth. Through these elements, *The Lion King* (2019) offers a reimagined experience of a classic story, conveying important moral messages to contemporary audiences while honoring its predecessor.



Figure 3. Beauty and the Beast-Ballroom Scene (Trousdale & Wise, 1991)



Figure 4. Beauty and the Beast-Ballroom Scene (Condon, 2017)

The Beauty and the Beast (2017) is another example of how recycling and intertextuality are used to revive a classic story for a new generation. As a remake of Disney's 1991 animated film, it

retains many original elements, such as the storyline, characters, and iconic music, while incorporating visual updates and additional narrative details to enrich the audience's experience.

The recycling process is evident in the central plot, which remains focused on Belle, a courageous and intelligent young woman, who falls in love with a prince cursed to become a fearsome creature. While the core story remains unchanged, the film introduces new details about Belle's past and the origins of the Prince's curse, adding depth to its characters. In doing so, *Beauty and the Beast* not only evokes nostalgia but also offers a fresh perspective for audiences.

Intertextuality is also apparent in the use of songs from the animated version, such as "*Be Our Guest*" and "*Beauty and the Beast*," which are revived with modern arrangements. These songs not only trigger nostalgia for longtime fans but also introduce classic melodies to new viewers. Additionally, visual elements such as the castle's design, Belle's signature yellow gown, and the grand ballroom with its magnificent chandelier serve as direct references to the animated film, reinforcing a strong sense of familiarity.

The film also incorporates new elements that reflect modern values, such as enhancing Belle's character as an independent woman and promoting diversity within the cast. These additions demonstrate how classic stories can be updated to remain relevant to contemporary audiences without losing their original charm.

By blending familiar elements with fresh additions, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) exemplifies how recycling and intertextuality can successfully reintroduce a classic tale in a captivating way. The film not only takes audiences on a nostalgic journey but also invites them to reimagine and engage with the story in a deeper and more relevant context for the modern world.



Figure 5. The Jungle Book-The Bare Necessities Scene (Reitherman, 1967)



Figure 6. The Jungle Book-The Bare Necessities Scene (Favreau, 2016)

Similarly, *The Jungle Book* (2016) demonstrates how recycling and intertextuality are utilized to reintroduce a classic story with a fresh approach. As a live-action adaptation of Disney's 1967 animated film, it revives the tale of Mowgli, a human child raised in the jungle, while leveraging CGI technology to create realistic and immersive visuals.

The recycling process is evident in the main storyline, which continues to center on Mowgli's journey as he learns about his place in the world—both among the jungle animals and within human society. Many iconic scenes from the animated version are faithfully recreated, such as Mowgli's relaxed encounter with Baloo in the river during "*The Bare Necessities*" and his battle with Shere Khan, evoking a strong sense of familiarity for longtime audiences.

In terms of intertextuality, the film remains true to its musical roots by incorporating classic songs like "*The Bare Necessities*" and "*I Wan'na Be Like You.*" These songs are presented in a fresh style while retaining their original essence, evoking deep nostalgia for older fans while introducing these beloved melodies to a new generation.

Beyond nostalgia, the film successfully stimulates audience imagination through its breathtaking visuals. The realistic design of animal characters and the lush jungle landscapes create an immersive experience, making viewers feel as though they are truly stepping into Mowgli's world. By blending old and new elements, *The Jungle Book* (2016) not only honors its past but also invites audiences to relive the magic of this timeless adventure.



Figure 7. Aladdin-Magic Carpet Ride Scene (Musker & Clements, 1992)



Figure 8. Aladdin-Magic Carpet Ride Scene (Ritchie, 2019)

In addition to the three films mentioned above, *Aladdin* (2019) serves as another compelling example of how recycling and intertextuality are used to revive a classic Disney tale while incorporating fresh new elements. As a live-action adaptation of the 1992 animated film, it remains faithful to many aspects of the original story while introducing updates to captivate modern audiences.

The recycling process is evident in the main storyline. The core narrative of Aladdin—a poor young man who discovers a magic lamp, falls in love with Princess Jasmine, and confronts the villainous Jafar—remains intact. Several iconic scenes from the animated version are recreated, such as Aladdin's first encounter with the Genie, his magical carpet ride, and the climactic battle with Jafar. However, the film also introduces new elements, such as strengthening Princess Jasmine's character as a more independent figure with personal ambitions, highlighted by the addition of a new song, "*Speechless*," which emphasizes her empowerment.

In terms of intertextuality, the film references key elements from the animated version, including music, costumes, and dialogue. Songs like "*A Whole New World*" and "*Friend Like Me*" are rearranged to offer a modern feel while retaining their original charm. Princess Jasmine's signature blue outfit and the iconic design of the magic lamp further establish a sense of familiarity for audiences already acquainted with the animated classic.

At the same time, the film expands its narrative by utilizing advanced visual technology. The vibrant and lively depiction of Agrabah immerses viewers in a world filled with wonder and magic. Will Smith's portrayal of the Genie also brings a fresh comedic approach, offering a different yet engaging take on the beloved character.

Ultimately, *Aladdin* (2019) not only takes audiences on a nostalgic journey through familiar and cherished elements but also sparks new imagination by enhancing the narrative, visuals, and music. The film acts as a bridge between past memories and a richer, more relevant modern cinematic experience.



Figure 9. Sleeping Beauty-Curse Scene (Clark et al., 1959)



Figure 10. Maleficent-Curse Scene (Stromberg, 2014)

Lastly, *Maleficent* (2014) also demonstrates how recycling and intertextuality are used to retell the classic *Sleeping Beauty* story from a new perspective. The film draws inspiration from Disney's 1959 animated version but shifts its narrative focus, making it more complex and relevant for modern audiences.

The recycling process is evident in the retention of the core storyline, particularly Maleficent's curse on Princess Aurora. However, the film adds new layers by portraying Maleficent as a more nuanced character rather than a mere antagonist. The relationship between Maleficent and Aurora is explored in greater depth, revealing an emotional dimension that was absent in the animated version. This transformation gives new meaning to the classic tale, inviting audiences to see it from a different perspective.

In terms of intertextuality, the film remains faithful to several visual and narrative elements from the animated classic. Aurora's blonde hair and graceful appearance, as well as iconic moments such as the "long sleep" curse and the spinning wheel scene, are reimagined with a modern touch. Additionally, the enchanted forest setting, filled with fantastical creatures, maintains the essence of a classic fairy tale while introducing visually stunning updates.

Music and production design also play a significant role in evoking nostalgia. The song "*Once Upon a Dream*," a classic theme from *Sleeping Beauty*, is reintroduced in a darker rendition, creating a mysterious atmosphere that aligns with the film's tone. This connection to the original soundtrack bridges childhood memories with a new, more dramatic, and emotionally engaging experience.

Beyond nostalgia, *Maleficent* expands audience imagination by presenting an alternative view of a well-known story. Rather than simply visualizing the classic tale, the film encourages viewers to reconsider traditional notions of "good" and "evil." By crafting a more intricate narrative, *Maleficent* not only revives familiar elements but also broadens the imaginative space, allowing audiences to experience the fairy tale from a fresh, empathetic perspective.

Disney's live-action films employ recycling and intertextuality strategies to reintroduce classic stories in a new way. By leveraging familiar elements such as plotlines, characters, visuals, and music, Disney evokes audience nostalgia while simultaneously providing a fresh experience that stimulates the imagination of a new generation. This approach not only revitalizes old narratives but also makes them relevant to contemporary social and cultural values (Griszbacher et al., 2022).

Nostalgia plays a crucial role in shaping audience imagination through stories embedded in their collective memory. By reintroducing well-known elements, such as iconic songs and classic characters, Disney fosters a deep emotional connection. This sense of familiarity rekindles childhood memories, bridging past experiences with new expectations for beloved tales. In this process, nostalgia not only revives old stories but also enhances imaginative engagement, where nostalgia becomes a new way of understanding familiar narratives, allowing the past and fresh perspectives to coexist (van Tilburg et al., 2015).

Through recycling, iconic elements such as popular songs, character designs, and main storylines are retained to provide a sense of familiarity for audiences. This approach enables Disney to maintain an emotional bond with long-time fans who are already acquainted with and fond of the original stories. However, these elements are not merely replicated without innovation. The addition of new details, such as deeper character development or more modern visuals, ensures that these stories feel both fresh and distinct. For instance, in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), the

character of Belle is given a stronger background as an intelligent and independent woman. This approach not only aligns the narrative with contemporary social and cultural values but also serves as a means of breathing new life into a classic story (Wheeler, 2017).

For an adaptation to succeed, it must be distinct enough from the original work while still preserving its core essence. As Hutcheon (2013) explains, the success of an adaptation lies in its ability to bridge familiar elements with innovative aspects. In Disney's case, this means blending recognizable features with new creative elements that appeal to modern audiences, striking a balance between nostalgia and reinvention. Research in adaptation theory also emphasizes that "the key to a successful adaptation lies in its ability to transform the original text without losing its essence" (Hutcheon, 2006).

Intertextuality helps establish a connection between the primary text (hypertext) and its original source (hypotext), enabling a comprehensive understanding of the changes that occur within the adaptation (Smith, 2007). In this context, intertextuality serves as a crucial tool for Disney in enriching the meaning of classic stories. This approach allows for more complex relationships between older texts and new contexts. Intertextuality encompasses the ways in which Disney links classic narratives to contemporary issues, introduces new perspectives, or even embeds humor and references that can only be understood by specific audiences. For instance, in *Aladdin* (2019), Genie, played by Will Smith, brings a more modern and relevant comedic style compared to the original animated version.

Additionally, intertextuality is often used to add new dimensions to classic stories. Disney does not merely retain elements from older narratives but also shifts perspectives or introduces different plotlines to create a richer experience. For example, *Maleficent* (2014) reconstructs *Sleeping Beauty* from the antagonist's perspective, adding a new layer to a widely familiar story. This approach demonstrates how classic tales can continue to evolve and reflect human experiences across different contexts. The incorporation of references from classical and religious texts, along with the integration of local and cultural values, further enhances the depth of modern narratives (Octafiona, 2024).

Combining recycling strategies with intertextuality not only revitalizes classic tales but also strengthens the emotional bond with audiences. Iconic elements that evoke nostalgia trigger old memories, while updates in storytelling and visuals stimulate new imaginations. This allows viewers to relive the magic of familiar stories but in a form that aligns with contemporary tastes and expectations. It becomes evident that intertextuality engages audiences in a dynamic process of emotional and cognitive interaction (Feng & Wignell, 2011).

This strategy also highlights that retelling old stories is not merely about repeating past narratives but rather about creating a dynamic dialogue between past memories and future imaginations. In this process, Disney acts not only as a guardian of cultural heritage but also as an innovator, continuously pushing the boundaries of creativity. The success of Disney's live-action films demonstrates its ability to adapt to shifting audience preferences while preserving the essence of classic stories. Here, Disney does not simply recount past events but fosters an ongoing conversation between past experiences and future possibilities (Palmer, 2014).

Disney also introduces new elements that allow audiences to discover different meanings in stories they already know. In *The Lion King* (2019), for instance, the use of more realistic CGI animation alters the way viewers perceive the film's world. While the 1994 animated version presented characters with exaggerated, cartoonish expressions, the live-action adaptation employs a visual style that closely resembles natural realism. This illustrates how technological innovation plays a significant role in Disney's recycling strategy (Leal et al., 2024).

The use of intertextuality in Disney's live-action films often reflects social and cultural changes. Some films feature protagonists who are more independent compared to their classic animated counterparts, reflecting the evolving views on the role of women in society. Similarly, other films delve deeper into characters once known only as antagonists, offering a new, more complex, and humanized perspective. By consciously incorporating intertextual references, filmmakers can engage with older works, honor traditions, question outdated views, and introduce fresh perspectives, all while maintaining a balance between legacy and change (Rouabhia, 2024).

Through this strategy, Disney demonstrates that old stories can remain relevant in a constantly changing world. With cleverness, Disney creates a bridge between generations. Older audiences experience nostalgia through familiar elements, while younger generations enjoy fresh and innovative updates to the stories. This ensures that classic tales not only endure but also evolve into a part of popular culture that continues to inspire. By adapting classic stories, Disney builds a bridge across generations, connecting audiences across time. Disney animated films have been a part of culture for years, and the way they portray intergenerational relationships continues to evolve, adapting to shifts in societal norms and values (Zurcher et al., 2018). This proves that adapting well-known stories gives various generations the opportunity to explore iconic characters and the roles they play in society (Anjirbag, 2018).

The recycling and intertextuality strategies employed by Disney also have broader implications for the film and entertainment industry. The success of these films shows there is a substantial market for classic story adaptations with a fresh approach. Other film studios have begun to adopt similar strategies by creating remakes, reboots, and spin-offs of existing films. This reflects how the entertainment industry continually adapts to market needs and cultural trends, where the rise of the digital age has brought significant changes, challenging old methods and transforming how content is made, distributed, and enjoyed by audiences (Dhiman, 2023).

Ultimately, Disney has successfully rebuilt imagination through nostalgia and intertextuality in its live-action films. By utilizing familiar elements from classic animated films, such as plotlines, characters, visuals, and music, Disney creates a strong emotional bond with audiences already familiar with these stories. Nostalgia plays a pivotal role in evoking past memories, bridging previous experiences with new expectations for well-known tales, and enhancing the imaginative engagement of viewers, particularly the new generation who enjoy the updated versions. By reintroducing familiar elements, nostalgia not only connects past experiences with new expectations but also creates a more profound experience for younger generations enjoying the updated versions (Santini et al., 2023).

Disney's recycling approach does not merely retell old stories but also provides updates in crucial elements such as character development and more modern visuals. Characters with deeper backstories and stronger foundations make the stories more relevant to current social and cultural values. These updates strike a balance between preserving classic elements and presenting fresh perspectives, ensuring that old tales remain vibrant and appealing to modern audiences. Disney's live-action remakes aim to update character portrayals and modernize visual elements, reflecting a deliberate effort to refresh and enhance key aspects of the original narratives (Kunze, 2023).

Moreover, intertextuality serves as a primary strategy Disney uses to enrich the meaning of classic stories by connecting original narratives to contemporary contexts, thus deepening their significance and reflecting social and cultural changes (Rahayu et al., 2015). By linking old texts to new contexts, Disney not only preserves the essential elements of the original stories but also introduces new dimensions that mirror social and cultural transformations. The updated characters, infused with more modern humor, replace the previous iconic characters, offering a more complex and nuanced view of these figures.

The strategy that combines nostalgia and intertextuality also plays a major role in building intergenerational relationships. Older viewers can relive the magic of familiar stories, while younger generations gain a fresh perspective aligned with current norms and values. By leveraging relevant classic elements and adapting stories for modern audiences, Disney successfully creates a bridge between generations, ensuring that classic tales remain vibrant and continue to evolve in popular culture. Disney films consistently depict cross-generational families, influencing children's perceptions of the world and the concept of family (Zurcher et al., 2018).

While Disney's recycling and intertextuality strategies have proven effective in reintroducing classic narratives to modern audiences, they also raise important questions about the balance between nostalgia and innovation. The heavy reliance on familiar elements—whether in storyline, dialogue, music, or visual design—ensures an emotional connection with audiences, but does it come at the cost of genuine creative storytelling?

Films like *The Lion King* (2019), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), *Aladdin* (2019), *The Jungle Book* (2016), and *Maleficent* (2014) successfully leverage audience nostalgia, yet their adherence to existing templates sparks debate on whether they offer meaningful reinterpretations or merely function as commercial ventures. While CGI advancements and minor narrative expansions bring some novelty, the overarching structures of these films remain largely unchanged. Does this repetition reinforce Disney's position as a cultural gatekeeper, or does it hinder the evolution of cinematic storytelling by prioritizing brand familiarity over artistic risk-taking?

Moreover, the reception of these films varies across audience demographics. Longtime fans often expect a faithful adaptation, while younger viewers may be more receptive to innovation. The mixed reactions to these remakes indicate that nostalgia alone may not always be enough to sustain engagement. Do these films foster long-term audience attachment, or are they primarily capitalizing on momentary excitement?

Additionally, intertextuality in these remakes raises the question of whether Disney is expanding the depth of its narratives or simply repackaging existing cultural texts for

contemporary consumption. By incorporating modern themes—such as female empowerment in *Aladdin* and *Beauty and the Beast* or a villain's redemption arc in *Maleficent*—Disney attempts to update these stories, but to what extent do these modifications genuinely challenge dominant narratives rather than merely reinforcing them within a commercial framework?

Ultimately, these films highlight a tension between artistic reinterpretation and commercial strategy. While they succeed in reigniting nostalgia and offering visual spectacle, their reliance on existing formulas raises questions about creative stagnation. Do these adaptations serve as cultural milestones that redefine storytelling, or are they primarily products of a media industry that prioritizes financial security over artistic evolution? As Disney continues to produce live-action remakes, this tension remains central to discussions on the impact of recycled storytelling in contemporary cinema.

4. Conclusion

The recycling and intertextuality strategies employed by Disney in their live-action films demonstrate an extraordinary ability to reignite the imagination and nostalgia of audiences. Through the recycling strategy, Disney successfully retains iconic elements such as songs, character designs, and storylines from the classic animated versions, allowing long-time fans to reconnect with the wonder and familiarity of stories they already know. However, by adding innovations such as deeper character development and spectacular visuals, Disney refreshes these old stories, making them relevant to contemporary issues while stimulating the imagination of a new generation. This approach strikes an effective balance between preserving nostalgic familiarity and introducing novelty that sparks curiosity and imagination.

Intertextuality enriches this process by providing a new dimension to the story through connections with different contexts, more complex perspectives, or deeper relationships with the original narratives. Disney carefully integrates modern, relevant elements, bridging the gap between the past and the present, ensuring that the classic stories not only endure but also evolve with the changing times. The success of this strategy not only creates a profound emotional experience for the audience but also reinforces Disney's position as both a guardian and an innovator of popular culture. The combination of recycling and intertextuality transforms these classic tales into a bridge across generations, preserving cultural heritage while adapting it for the future.

While this approach has proven highly effective, future research could explore the varying impacts of nostalgia-driven adaptations on different audience demographics. For instance, how do audiences of different age groups respond to these live-action remakes? Are older audiences more resistant to changes in familiar narratives, while younger viewers embrace the innovations more readily? Additionally, cultural background may play a significant role in shaping audience reception—are there measurable differences in how diverse cultural groups engage with these adaptations, particularly in regions where Disney's original animations hold different levels of significance?

Further studies could also examine how the interplay between nostalgia and novelty influences long-term audience engagement. Do these adaptations encourage repeated viewings, and how do they compare in cultural impact to their animated predecessors? Moreover, as Disney continues to experiment with intertextuality and recycling strategies, research could investigate whether this approach enhances or diminishes creative storytelling in the broader entertainment industry. By addressing these questions, scholars can deepen our understanding of how reimagined narratives function as both cultural artifacts and commercial entertainment, shaping the evolving landscape of media consumption.

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