

## NARRATIVE RECONFIGURATION IN FRANCHISE SEQUELS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH FROZEN AND FROZEN II

**Umm-e-Rooman Yaqoob**

PhD Scholar

Lecturer, Department of English, Fazaia Bilquis, College of Education for Women, PAF Nur Khan base, Rawalpindi

Email: [manooc93@gmail.com](mailto:manooc93@gmail.com)

**Fatima Iftikhar**

PhD Scholar, Designation of SET (Language instructor), Federal Directorate of Education (FDE)

Email: [fatimaktk.fi@gmail.com](mailto:fatimaktk.fi@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*This qualitative research discusses the interest of the audience in narrative reconfiguration in Frozen (2013) and Frozen II (2019) by Disney by analyzing 50 online reviews of Frozen (2013) and Frozen II (2019) using discourse analysis and comparing them with each other. The study, based on the engagement theory (Smith, 1995) and the use of Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005), examines the linguistic construction of engagement by the audience, interpretation of narrative continuity and change by viewers and appraisal of sequel narratives. Results show that there are three prevailing trends, namely, (1) nostalgic attachment of the original forming evaluative structures, (2) ambivalent reactions to narrative expansion between appreciation and critique, and (3) discrepant emotional commitment to character development. Viewers create a form of involvement by making comparative judgments, emotional revelation and thematic unity judgment. The analysis shows that the key to successful sequel reception is to strike the balance between familiarity and relevant innovation with respect to the prior emotional investment.*

**Keywords:** Franchise Sequels, Audience Engagement, Discourse Analysis, Frozen, Narrative Reconfiguration, Appraisal Theory

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The film culture of today is dominated by franchise cinema specialized in the sequels that take the most important place in the global box office earnings and the cultural discourse. In comparison to the simple continuations, the contemporary sequels are complex narrative reconfigurations, which are forced to negotiate with the audience expectation as a result of the excessive familiarity with the already established characters and world (Henderson, 2014; Klein and Palmer, 2016). At the same time, audiences have been turned into active meaning-makers who post online reviews and produce a rich discourse of studying reception by moving audiences into active participants (Jenkins, 2006). The examples of this dynamics are Disney Frozen (2013) and Frozen II (2019). The original earned the animated film a world-wide revenue of 1.28 billion dollars becoming both a pop culture and a step beyond the normal animated film success. Six years after, Frozen II made huge bets to change the nature of character-driven fairy tale by making it mythology-driven narrative about colonialism, environmental responsibility and historical injustice- a major thematic and structural reconfiguring that created a massive audience discourse concerning continuity change, and the successful sequel narrative.

The sequels are especially tricky and difficult opportunities within this franchise-dominated world. Sequels, in contrast to prequels or spin-offs, are forced to directly interact with the heritage of their originals, inheriting not only characters and settings but also the affective capital, interpretive resources, and aesthetic anticipations that audiences have acquired in the

process of engaging with original movies. Contemporary sequels are not mere extensions, therefore, but what Smith (2017) calls narrative reconfigurations texts that have to maintain a balance between providing enough familiarity to please existing fans and enough novelty to make them worthwhile as an independent artistic object instead of a redundant repetition. What makes this balancing exercise more difficult is the fact that modern media viewers have been radically altered by digital media to no longer be solitary consumers but rather engaged participants of shared meaning-making activities. The ideation of participatory culture developed by Jenkins (2006) helps to describe how online review websites, social media, and discussion forums can facilitate audiences to publicly explain the meanings, develop review, and negotiably formulate a meaning of media text. Such digital spaces render visible the interpretive work that viewers undertake and offer scholars unprecedented possibilities to study in practice the meaning-making practices of real viewers as opposed to speculating on possible reception based on theoretical assumptions, or analyzing the text.

The dynamics of *Frozen* (2013), as well as *Frozen II* (2019), of Disney, can be viewed as examples of this. The original movie has gone beyond the normal animated feature success to become a true cultural phenomenon, earning a total of \$1.28 billion in the global box office and attaining unprecedented levels of cultural infiltration with its music, characters, and themes (McClellan, 2018). Its catchphrase song, *Let It Go*, turned into a ubiquitous part of the popular culture, and the focus of the movie, especially on sisterly love, rather than romantic relationships, triggered a significant debate regarding the gendered aspect of children entertainment (Do Rozario, 2016). Six years after, *Frozen II* had one of its most difficult tasks to follow this cultural relic with explaining its appearance outside the marketing industry. The sequel made huge creative leaps, radically rearranging the narrative assumptions of the franchise, by replacing the fairy-tale-focused character story with a grander mythology-driven adventure into themes of colonialism, environmental responsibility, historical injustice, and identity.

This thematic and formal shift created a wide discourse among the audiences struggling to find the connection between the sequel and their own memory of and attachment to the original movie. Although *Frozen* has gained cultural relevance and provided a rich discourse, academic studies have failed to focus appropriately on how real audiences linguistically express their interaction with these movies and how they make sense of the reconstitution of narrative between the two. The paper fills this gap by presenting a systematic qualitative discourse analysis of five review websites of five leading online platforms in terms of audience.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The existing research in the field of franchise sequels reveals that there are three fundamental and mutually reinforcing gaps in our knowledge about the ways in which viewers experience narratives reconfigured.

Firstly, the lack of research studies on engagement of audiences as manifested in the form of naturally occurring discourse on the Internet. Audience sense-making richness, as indicated in evaluative language, emotional revelation, comparative schemes, and positioning toward interpretation cannot be quantified.

Secondly, the specific audience response to narrative continuity and change in franchise sequels has not been given much academic focus. One does not know how these audiences mediate the conflict of expectations of the familiar, and wishes of the novel, how they develop the comparative judgments between original and sequels, or how emotional investments in the past can influence reactions to narrative transformations.

Thirdly, very little work combines linguistic analysis and cinematic narrative reception. It is a lost chance because examining the particular language audiences use would help in showing

interpretive structures, criteria of evaluation, and emotional investments that would otherwise be hidden by other methods.

Due to such gaps, we do not have sufficient knowledge of how the engagement of the audience in franchise sequels is linguistically framed and negotiated. We are ignorant of what patterns of evaluation describe positive and negative engagement, how viewers discursively produce comparisons between originals and sequels, and how emotional language is used to create meaning. This paper fills these gaps by analyzing the qualitative aspects of the reviews of the audience on *Frozen* and *Frozen II*.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to fill five inter-related objectives that seek to fill the identified gaps in research:

- To analyze the linguistic way in which audiences cognitively create engagement with the story-lines of *Frozen* and *Frozen II* by reviewing their work online
- To understand how audience conceptualize narrative continuity and change between the original film and its successor
- To determine the effect of emotional and evaluative language in terms of getting the audience to engage in sequel narratives
- To assess the differences in patterns of linguistic interaction in the original and sequel films on the basis of the reviews shared on the same platforms

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. How do audiences linguistically articulate engagement with the narratives of *Frozen* and *Frozen II* in online reviews?
2. How do audience members interpret and evaluate narrative continuity and change between the original film and its sequel?
3. What linguistic and evaluative patterns characterize audience engagement with the sequel compared to the original film?
4. How do audience discourses construct emotional investment in franchise sequel narratives?

### 1.5 Limitations

- The given research is limited to writing reviews on *Frozen* (2013) and *Frozen II* (2019) on five websites IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, Letterboxd, Metacritic, and Reddit, within six months after the premiere of each movie.
- This time limit includes the instantaneous audience response and rejects the possibility of wider re-viewing by the audience over time as they experience various cultural contexts or change in life stage when they revisit the film.
- The study reviews 50 reviews in total, 25 reviews about each movie with 10 reviews taken by each platform chosen with the help of purposive sampling to guarantee the presence of substantive narrative, depth of evaluation, and proportionable representation of positive, negative, and mixed views.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Franchise Cinema and Sequel Studies

Franchise film-making has radically changed the recent cinema by turning the industrial logic of Hollywood to create a single film into developing narrative worlds interlocking to create long-lasting commercial value across the many platforms and texts (Johnson, 2013). The detailed description of media franchising presented by Johnson demonstrates that studios continue to think about the intellectual properties not as a story to be told, but as an expandable world capable of sustaining a lot of different products: sequels, prequels, spin-offs, TV series, video-games, merchandise, and theme park attractions. It is this transmedia logic that has seen

franchise as the central production model where even the biggest-grossing movies of recent decades are largely dominated by an installment of franchise and not an independent story. The economic motive of this move is very well-documented. Through the in-depth analysis of the industry, McClean (2018) proves that franchises lessen the risk of commercial failure, as they are based on a preexisting intellectual property that had been shown to be commercially appealing and provided various sources of revenues not limited to theatrical exhibition.

Brand recognition is easier to market, also because of the existing fan bases that assure guaranteed audiences opening weekend, and successful franchises generate self-reinforcing cycles, where one installment will always advertise another. The Frozen series is also a perfect example: The success of the first part has made it possible not only a theatrical follow-up but also short-length films ( Frozen Fever, Olafs Frozen Adventure ), adaptations into the musical (at the Broadway level), and a large amount of merchandise with billions of dollars in sales, as well as significant attractions in Disney theme parks (McClean, 2018). Nonetheless this economic necessity has brought up concerns as to whether commercial or creative interests are the major causes of production of sequels. According to Henderson (2014), critical discourse frequently devalues sequels as a specific category of low-quality artistic productions driven by only the intentions to make money, not the creative ambition. This attitude of dismissal has historically excluded the sequels as part of the film studies scholarship, which has made auteur-driven stand-alone films more deserving of serious treatment.

## **2.2 Audience Reception and Engagement Studies**

### **2.2.1 From Effects to Active Audiences**

Audience research has changed radically as compared to the primitive models of media effects that believed that viewers were passive mental receivers of media communication whose thoughts and actions were directly influenced by content exposure. Recent research acknowledges that, audiences are active meaning-makers who take interpretive schemata, cultural information, lived experiences, and emotional investments to their interaction with media texts (Livingstone, 2013). This reversal of what media do to people to what people do with media is broadly revising the current terms of scholarly thinking about the relationship between audiences and texts, by highlighting the interpretive agency of audiences over the determinism of texts.

The historical reception studies by Staiger (2000) are an example of this active audience approach because it shows how viewers in the past and present have reactively approached the same films with radically different interpretations in historical periods and social contexts. What she manages to demonstrate through the understanding of how *The Silence of the Lambs* has been interpreted in various ways by feminist critics, LGBTQ+ activists, horror fans, and mainstream reviewers is that meaning-making does not lie in the inherent textual characteristics, but in the interplay between textual characteristics and viewers interpretive strategies based on social positions, cultural contexts, and historical moments. This view highlights the significance of analyzing real audience talk not as homogeneously received but as getting meaning through textual analysis alone.

### **2.2.2 Engagement Theory**

The engagement theory by Murray Smith (1995) presents a complex theory in explaining the way in which viewers cultivate cognitive, emotional and moral attachment to film narratives. Smith suggests engagement works by three overlapping tiers, namely recognition (treating characters as specific agents with certain traits and roles), alignment (accessing the subjective experiences of characters by use of narrative techniques offering spatial and subjective access), and allegiance (establishing moral and emotional attachment through consideration of the characters traits, motivations and acts). This multi-level structure is no longer simply a concept of the identification, but a statement of the multi-layeredness of the relations between the

viewer and the character. Recognition refers to the simplistic understanding of the character identity and the role of the characters in the story. Alignment has to do with the ways in which narratives make available to audiences the views of specific characters, their states of knowledge, and experiences, what viewers know in common with which characters.

Allegiance does not necessarily mean just access to the point of view of a character but to a side of them directly concerning emotional and ethical support with regard to moral judgments about their behaviors and intentions. In the case of franchise sequels, the engagement theory can imply that viewers perceive sequels with already formed recognitions, alignments, and allegiances enacted by interacting with original films. *Frozen* develops specific relationships between the characters (sister-sister relationship between Anna and Elsa), emotional stakes (in helping Elsa embrace herself), and ethical systems (having love, connection, and authenticity as the major priorities over fear and isolation). These formed connections bring in anticipations and judgmental standards that *Frozen II* should maneuver. The perceived changes as respecting the existing characterizations and relationships can support the allegiances, whereas the perceived changes as the violation can produce the negative responses irrespective of other attributes. Significantly, the framework by Smith is mostly single-text oriented. This paper applies his theory to the franchising settings where one engagement is informed by the previous engagements, looking at how audiences are linguistically expressing this intertextual relationship through their reviews.

### **2.3 Linguistic Discourse of the Media**

#### **2.3.1 the Basics of Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is an umbrella of methodological and theoretical orientations based on the postulate that language is not a mere reflection of already existing realities but a process that creates meanings, identities, social relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995). Within the media, discourse analysis is applied to analyze the way in which language selections in and surrounding media texts create specific perceptions of social reality, locate audiences in particular positions and reproduce or interrupt the dominant cultural paradigms. The critical discourse analysis by Fairclough (1995) offers a three-dimensional approach to the study of the media discourse, i.e. the text level (the examination of linguistic elements of the text-vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, text structure), the discursive practice level (the study of the modes of production and consumption of the texts: how the text is produced, distributed, consumed), and the social practice level (the discourse placement on the wider social and cultural grounds and power relations).

Although Fairclough uses the news media in the central part of his analysis, his method is applicable to the analysis of other forms of discourses, such as the one provided by the audience, such as reviews. The socio-cognitive approach of discourse analysis proposed by Van Dijk (1998) is based on the idea that discourse not only mirrors but also influences mental models- the mental representations that people develop in order to understand experiences. Applied to film reviews, this viewpoint proposes that how audiences make description of films can be seen both as evaluations, but also as cognitive structures about how to interpret narrative, characterization and quality. Review discourse analysis can therefore help shed light on the schemas used by audiences to interpret franchise sequels.

#### **2.3.2 Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) offers methodological supplements to the patterns identification of qualitative datasets patterns by offering codes without the assumption of data common codes. Their phase-based model, which includes familiarization with data, creation of initial codes, searching of themes, reviewing of themes, defining and naming of themes and generation of the report, provides systematized processes and at the same time does not compromise the interpretative latitude required in exploratory research. The thematic

analysis has gained a lot of popularity due to the balance in both methodological rigor and the ability to be open to developing patterns. When applied to film review discourse, thematic analysis enables recurrent concerns, patterns of evaluation and interpretive frameworks to be generated inductively out of data, as opposed to being forced into data by pre-existing categories based on theory. Such inductive methodology is useful when the current theory might not be able to sufficiently explain how audiences can describe their interactions with sequel narratives. Their thematic analysis (determining what patterns exist) and appraisal analysis (finding out how evaluative patterns are constituted linguistically) is an all-inclusive method or way of understanding evaluative discourse.

### **2.3.3 Media Discourse Studies**

The linguistic review of fictional television by Bednarek (2010) shows that paying specific attention to language can identify the characterization, narrative, and viewer position patterns that are not evident under other methods of studying media. Her analytical examination of evaluative language, display of emotion, and positioning in interpersonal relationships demonstrates how the characteristics of language bring the story of the TV and influence its emotional appeal. The combination of corpus linguistic methods of revealing general patterns and a qualitative analysis of particular examples used by Bednarek illustrates that linguistic analysis is complementary and does not substitute a traditional media analysis. Nevertheless, the majority of linguistic treatment of media discourse has concerned itself with media-generated discourse (television dialogue, news reports, advertising) and not audience generated discourse. Film reviews is a unique type of discourse that is deserving of systematic linguist analysis and seldom gets it. Reviews can fulfill several roles of communication: to evaluate quality, recommend or caution against viewing, find meaning, give credibility and taste to reviewers, and engage in group conversations about cultural writing. To comprehend the way these functions can be linguistically achieved, it is necessary to apply close discourse analysis.

## **2.4 Disney Franchise Dynamics and Animation**

### **2.4.1 Animation Renaissance and the Modern Practices at Disney**

The history of Disney animation has seen several phases of commercial and critical triumph, and the 1989-1999 Disney Renaissance has set the paradigms that are still used in modern animated film productions (Sells, 2019). Such movies as *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King* merged the forms of Broadway-style musicals, computer-enhanced animation, and plots with a focus on romance and character development. The standards of Disney animation set by this Renaissance included memorable music, good relationships between characters, emotional appeal and visual spectacle, which are compared to standards in later films. *Frozen* marks the next stage in the Renaissance formula Disney had experimented with discussed the previous princess films: the fairy tale setting, the musical structure, a female relationship as its central theme, and reactions to the tropes of romance and the deep structure of the character psychology. It is remarkable that the success of its plot gave Disney a new faith in princess stories and musical animation (Do Rozario, 2016).

### **2.4.2 Disney Animation Sequel Practices**

Disney has traditionally been shy of theatrical sequels to its canonical animated features, focusing instead on the direct-to-video sequels of mixed quality that have augmented, but not threatened the cultural position of originals. *Frozen II* signifies a transition to theatrical sequels of successful properties which couples Disney animation with franchise-wide behavior. The change brings new challenges and opportunities such that theatrical sequels must now be produced and scripted to better standards than direct-to-video productions and must overcome the increased expectations of the audience.

## **2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap**

The mentioned literature review demonstrates fruitful scholarly research in the field of the franchise cinema, audience reception, and linguistic discourse analysis, yet it also shows a very big gap at their intersection. Sequel research has captured narrative structure, industrial logic and cultural meaning but not much of the real interpretive practices of audience. Audience research has produced advanced theories of engagement and meaning-making and seldom transfers these to the specific context of sequel reception. Language studies have elucidated several media discourses but they have not made proper use of the film reviews especially in the case of franchise texts. The identified gap, which this study fills in, is the lack of qualitative, linguistically-informed studies on how audiences discursively create engagement with the process of reconfiguration of the narrative through sequenced franchise movies. We lack understanding of: What are the language patterns of response of audiences to sequels? The linguistic negotiation of continuity and change by the viewers. The quality of sequels is evaluated by the use of evaluative language. How does emotional disclosure contribute to engagement articulation? How pre investments in originals reflect in reception discourse of sequels. The question concluding on whether varied varieties of narrative changes produce different evaluative patterns or not.

Frozen and Frozen II offer a perfect example of how this gap can be addressed since the romance has cultural importance, there is a lot of narrative reconfiguration between the two films, and there is a lot of audience discussion through a variety of platforms. Through discourse analytical work on actual audience reviews informed by engagement theory, the work brings to view the interpretive work of audiences as they make their choices about franchise storytelling, which adds to the study of cinema as well as linguistics and provides pragmatic information about how contemporary audiences go about their practices.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework on which the discussion of the audience engagement with the narrative reconfiguration in the Frozen and Frozen II films is based. The framework combines two complementary theoretical traditions audience engagement theory in the study of cinema and the media and evaluative discourse analysis in the study of linguistics. This combination allows analyzing not only the content of the responses of the viewers (what they say about movies) but also the verbal structure which they use to create their experiences (how they are able to describe what they do in the words). Each of the theoretical elements has been explained in the chapter and illustrated as to their compatibility and complementary nature and how the integration will answer the research questions that drive this study.

### **3.2 Audience Engagement Theory**

#### **3.2.1 Engagement Framework of Smith**

The engagement theory by Murray Smith (1995) is the theoretical backbone of the cinema studies in comprehending the cognitive, emotional and moral bonds that viewers are forming towards film narratives. The model suggested by Smith suggests that the engagement can work on the basis of three levels that are located on the hierarchical and mutual levels: recognition, alignment, and allegiance. The simplest of these is recognition, which entails the viewers developing their own characters as an individual with specific traits, motivation, and the role in the narrative world. To be recognized, audiences need to follow characters through scenes, to differentiate among characters, comprehend relationships among characters and their narrative roles. This becomes mostly automatic in the case of good viewers but becomes analytically significant in the case of franchise sequels where recognition is based on previous knowledge. The audience that is going to watch Frozen II is already aware of the fact that Anna and Elsa are sisters with complementary personalities, their history of relationships, and the

importance of their story. This already existing familiarity informs how the audience perceives the activities and progressions of the characters in the sequel. Alignment is done on a second level, which is related to how narratives give viewers access to the subjective world of characters through techniques that share spatial location (point-of-view shots, following specific characters) and subjective access (internal thoughts, emotional states, personal knowledge). Alignment is not identification, there is no need that viewers should hold some point of view with the characters and agree with their actions, but what information audiences transmit to which characters and at what times.

Narratives establish patterns of alignment that are privileging over others, and this calls on viewers to perceive events unfolding in narrative by the perspectives of the characters, by what they experience. In *Frozen*, patterns of alignment favor Anna and Elsa in different instances, which provides the audience with the fears of each sister, their desires, and the state of their emotions. This two-sidedness stimulates acceptance of both sides in their confrontation. Some of these patterns of alignment may be reconfigured in *Frozen II*, and responses of the audience may in part be the reactions to the new patterns as being either very familiar or disruptive of existing relationships. The highest level of involvement is allegiance, which implies moral and emotional consideration of characters that result in sympathetic or antipathetic reactions. Loyalty is on the basis not only of gaining views of characters but also evaluating their qualities, motives, and acts as worth being emotionally and ethically supportive. The process of moral evaluation based on framing the narratives, cultural values, and individual ethics creates allegiance by the viewers.

The characters that are introduced as acting under understandable reasons, showing good qualities, and having rightful objectives are also likely to gain loyalty. More importantly in the context of the sequel, emotional investments that are made within original films are carried over into sequels. Those audiences who have become loyal to Elsa as she goes through her struggle to self-accept in *Frozen* carry that into *Frozen II*, which has formed expectations of her further development. The narrative decisions that appear to respect such allegiances can reinforce the engagement, whereas the decisions that appear to be breaking the accepted values of character can elicit negative reactions.

### **3.2.2 Framework of participatory Culture**

The participatory culture framework presented by Jenkins (2006) adds to the engagement theory proposed by Smith the context of audience-text relationship in the environment of digital media that occurs nowadays. Jenkins says that convergence culture, or the circulation of content across media platforms and the collaboration of various media industries has restructured audiences as individual consumers into those mean making practices that are collective. According to Jenkins, there are a number of features of participatory culture that are applicable to the online review practices:

#### ***Minimal barriers to expression and interaction:***

Digital media allow viewers to express publicly their interpretations, criticism, and creative reactions with minimal or no technical or financial constraints. Contrary to the traditional media criticism that needs institutional qualifications and access to publications, any person with internet access can write a review.

#### ***Firm belief in the sharing of creations:***

Platform architectures promote sharing, commenting and conversation. Reviews do not exist within a vacuum but are a part of a continuous dialogue, and the reader can reply, approve, disapprove or add to the interpretation. Informal knowledge sharing: Established evaluators shape the evaluative behaviour of newer participants. Review sites are constructed to establish their own discourse conventions, styles, vocabularies, systems of evaluation that are acquired by watching and practicing.

***A sense of value in contribution:***

The participants are sure that their reviews are important: they will help in affecting the decisions made by other viewers, that they will be part of the group of people with common knowledge and that the creative teams will be responsible in meeting the expectation of the audience.

***Social relations:***

With time, routine interactions form between social networks of people involved, establishing interpretive communities based on a specific film or genre, even franchise. The example of online review sites illustrates the participatory culture in terms of the ability to create shared meaning regarding media texts. The reviews of individuals are involved in wider discursive structures that determine the way in which films are culturally interpreted. One of the reviews that criticize the narrative complexity of Frozen II is a part of a larger discourse in which the sequel is placed in the problematic ambit of being ambitious, and it might affect how other audiences watch and experience the movie.

**3.3 Analytical Evaluative Discourse Analysis**

**3.3.1 Appraisal Theory**

The linguistic framework of Martin and White (2005) Appraisal Theory is the linguistic analysis method that is used to examine how audiences build evaluations with the use of language. The Appraisal Theory is a systematic description of resources in English (and others) to be used in expressing attitudes, to take a stand on propositions and building up of interpersonal relationship in text. The model identifies three systems related to each other:

Attitude includes evaluative meanings, which are statements of emotional responses, ethical judgments, and aesthetic responses. Affect is a feeling of emotion, happy, sad, frightened, angry, wanted, surprised. In film reviews, affect can be expressed in such expressions as I cried at the end, the movie made me feel happy, I was disappointed by the ending. Affect may be represented using verbs of mental process (I loved, I hated), adjectives (sad, joyful) and adverbs (happily, unfortunately). The patterns of affect can be analyzed to identify emotional reactions that the audience shows and their connection with engagement. Judgment entails moral appraisal of human actions, such as morality (moral/immoral), competence (competent/incompetent), persistence (resolute/irresolute) and propriety (appropriate/inappropriate).

In reviews, the creative decisions are most frequently subject to judgment. The filmmakers chose too badly in terms of narrative, The directors were bold enough to make some choices. Evaluating the ethical aspects of creative practices through judgment shows the ethical constructs of the audiences. Appreciation deals with aesthetic and social assessment of things, performances, texts, and natural phenomena. Film reviews revolve around appreciation, which is found in expressions such as The animation is breathtaking, The plot is carelessly built, The music is catchy, The flow is sluggish. The appraisal could be used to measure composition (balance, complexity), reaction (emotional impact, engagement), and valuation (significance, worth). Engagement is related to the position of speakers with respect to propositions and firm recognition or repression of alternative views.

Engagement analysis indicates the extent to which audiences are confident in their assertions of evaluation and whether they cast their judgments as personal opinion or truth. The notion of high monogloss implies an element of authoritative certitude; the notion of high heterogloss implies recognition of interpretative plurality. Categorical boundaries are narrowed or widened, which leaves categories more or less prototypical: "a true masterpiece" (narrowed), kind of a masterpiece (widened). Concentration brings out certainty on membership of categories. The theory can be applied to movie reviews: the Appraisal Theory can be used to analyse the way in which viewers form their evaluations in a systematic manner and identify

trends in the things that are being positively and negatively evaluated, the degree of confidence with which they present their evaluations and the intensity of their responses.

### 3.3.2 Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) is a suitable addition to the Appraisal Theory since it offers the methodological guidance on how one can determine patterns within a set of qualitative data. Whereas the Appraisal Theory provides pre-existing linguistic categories to understand the evaluative language, thematic analysis is inductive in nature and, therefore, the themes are generated out of the data as opposed to applying specific frameworks. The process by Braun and Clarke consists of six stages to follow when systematically identifying patterns:

Phase 1: Phase 1 is familiarization with data that includes reading the data many times and making preliminary observations and impressions that will guide the analysis.

Phase 2: Generating codes finds interesting properties in a systematic way on the dataset. Codes are specific and descriptive- emotive revelation of personal association to character, comparison assessment against original movie, commentary of story-line pace.

Phase 3: Searching of themes will group the codes into possible overall patterns. Codes are larger than themes, and they represent recurring concepts that bring together several specific observations.

Phase 4: Themes review ensures that the themes are functioning in reference to coded information and the entire data set, refine, merge, or divide themes where necessary.

Phase 5: Defining themes describes what each of the themes is all about, what portion of data each of the themes represents, and how the data contributes to answering the research questions.

Phase 6: The report writing period integrates analytic narrative, data extracts, and interpretation to state findings.

This is a systematic but flexible method, which allows determining both anticipated and unanticipated patterns. In the case of Frozen reviews, a reviewer may find anticipated themes like the use of music and how characters relate to one another, and also find surprising ones like a particular narrative or cultural connection.

### 3.3.3 Comparative Linguistic Analysis

Since the reception of sequels is quite a comparative one, in this study, comparative linguistic constructions are especially considered. There are several strategies which are applied by audiences in order to express comparisons: Explicit comparative constructions: better than the original, not as good as Frozen, inferior to, surpasses. These comparisons in grammar place films in a relation directly. Narrative referrals to be made implicitly: When the story is mentioned (I missed the simplicity of the first film), it is implicitly compared to the recalled originals. Evaluative contrasts: The use of evaluative terms on original and sequel in assigning different evaluative terms to original and sequel ("Frozen was charming; Frozen II is forced") creates structures of comparison in the absence of comparative grammar. Temporal framing: When I first saw Frozen versus watching the sequel now create temporal distance which can be evaluative in nature originals remembered thoughtfully in a nostalgic idealization. Examining such comparative strategies helps in understanding how audiences form relationships among films, as well as what evaluative criteria they arrange their judgment in.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines the methodology adopted to research the way in which audiences follow the narrative reconfiguration in Frozen and Frozen II. The research design used in the study is

a qualitative, comparative study where the main data is the naturally occurring online review discourse.

#### **4.2 Research Design**

The research paper takes a qualitative, comparative audience reception design, which is focused on the depth of the interpretation rather than coverage. The qualitative research is suited when one desires to know how it is possible to make meaning, interpretative diversity and how participants experience and express a phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Qualitative research as opposed to quantitative strategies aims at developing transferable insights by using rich description and systematic explanation of discourse that occurs in nature as opposed to attempts by quantitative research to generalize findings based on large samples and numerical measurement.

The comparative aspect allows the systematic analysis of the differences in the audience discourse of the original and sequel movies. The analysis of *Frozen* and *Frozen II* reviews on the same sites through the application of similar analysis tools can supply the research with patterns unique to reception of sequels as compared to original films and how the existence of a previous text influences evaluative discourse. The emphasis on naturally occurring discourse over researcher generated information (interviews, surveys, focus groups) is an epistemological commitment to observing the practices of the audience as they spontaneously happen in virtual environments.

Online reviews are unsolicited audience reactions that are created not as a research involvement but to affect other prospective viewers, express individual reactions, join fan communities, or demand creative teams to be answerable. This naturalism aspect implies that, unlike information obtained under the influence of direct questioning, reviews are likely to give more information about audience practices.

#### **4.3 Case Choice: *Frozen* and *Frozen II***

*Frozen* (2013) and *Frozen II* (2019) were chosen as the case study because of a number of substantive reasons that predispose the franchise in question to research the subject of narrative reconfiguration audience attraction:

**Cultural relevance:** *Frozen* has attained unprecedented commercial and cultural success (1.28 billion as of the world) and penetration to be considered one of the iconic animated films of the 2010s. This buzz created a lot of discourse among the audiences on all platforms that offered a lot of data to analyze.

**Radical narrative reworking:** The sequel experienced radical changes in every area (genre fairy tale romance to fantasy quest), subject (personal acceptance to historical reckoning and environmental responsibility), tone (lighter to darker) and narrative scale (intimate to expansive). This reconfiguration provides explicit distinctions that audiences can react to making it possible to analyze how viewers perceive and judge significant narrative transformation.

**Temporal gap:** The time gap of six years between the films enabled the audience to become strongly attached to the original one and also undergo personal and cultural shifts that may affect the reception of the sequels. This dynamic over time makes comparative evaluation processes more complex.

**Franchise situation:** Compared to standalone films, or series with numerous episodes, the *Frozen* franchise is composed of two full-length movies, in addition to auxiliary short films, which provides a low level of risk of the comparative analysis, but has distinctly defined franchise dynamics.

**Accessible discourse:** Both movies resulted in much English-language discourse on review in a variety of platforms, which would guarantee adequate availability of data to conduct systematic analysis.

Relevancy in the present context: Both movies were published in the last ten years, and thus, the findings have been applicable to the modern context and practices in the industry, as well as to the discussion of the same in the field of scholarship.

#### 4.4 Data Sources

Audience reviews have been gathered on five internationally renowned platforms that have been chosen to be diverse in terms of the type of discourse, platform features, and the audience demographics. The largest film database in the world with millions of user reviews is IMDb (Internet Movie Database). The format of IMDb promotes the use of detailed written reviews (300-500 words on average) as well as numerical ratings (on a 1-10 scale), and thus is useful in the analysis of substantive discourse. The global user base of the platform guarantees the demographic diversity. Rotten Tomatoes takes a compilation of professional reviews as well as audience reviews, and its Audience Score is based on user rating.

Although personal reviews tend to be shorter than those found on IMDb, due to its popularity, the site is acclaimed to have an impact on the perception and ratings of the audience. Letterboxd is a social networking service with the business focus on cinephile communities. Letterboxd reviews tend to exhibit a high level of film literacy and self-awareness in stylistic execution, which offers information on how film fans with high levels of engagement express their reviews. Metacritic is a review aggregator which gives weighted scores, which has professional critic reviews and user reviews. The site appeals to the audiences that are concerned with the comparative quality evaluation in the media (films, games, music).

Reddit is a platform of discussion-driven discourse and not a review platform, and subreddits such as r/Frozen, r/movies and r/Disney allow long-term discussion. It is also common that the discourse on Reddit is less formal, conversational, and non-commercial than review sites, offering alternative linguistic structures. The five platforms have been selected to ensure diversity in: The duration of the discourse (short to long) Formality (informal to elegant) Demographics of the audience (general to special) Platform affordances (separate reviews to forums)

#### 4.5 Sampling Strategy

**Sample Size:** The analysis will use 50 reviews in total 25 reviews about Frozen (2013) and 25 reviews about Frozen II (2019) 10 reviews on each platform (5 reviews on each film on a platform). This is a suitable sample size used in qualitative research where depth rather than breadth is the major focus of the research. Although smaller than quantitative samples, 50 substantive reviews (with 300+ words as the average) are a source of around 15,000 words of discourse that can be analyzed to find repetitive patterns and at the same time can be closely read qualitatively.

**Selection Criteria:** The review was sampled purposely depending on the following criteria:  
**Substantive length:** This should have a minimum of 150 words so as to have enough discursive text to analyze. One-sentence reviews are not detailed enough to analyze the patterns of evaluations.

**Narrative focus:** The review should not center on technical aspects (quality of animation, voice acting), but on narrative elements (story, characters, themes, emotional impact). This is not to say that the review should ignore marginal issues (merchandise, box office).

**Evaluative content:** Reviews should include evaluative statements that are clear and convey judgments about the quality of the movies, emotional reaction or interpretation. Categorical summaries will not be included on mere description without analysis.

**Temporal relevance:** Reviews written within six months of theatrical release (November 2013 - May 2014 on Frozen; November 2019 - May 2020 on Frozen II) to reflect the instant response at the time of release as opposed to a re-examination of the film. Language English only, as the

researcher has a high level of linguistic competence, and the study is based on the English language discourse patterns.

Balanced assessment: The sample has positive, negative, and mixed assessment to make sure that there is a representation of various responses as opposed to the other side that has either positive or negative response in terms of discourse.

Consistency in platform: Both original and sequel are done on the same platform so that they can be compared (e.g. IMDb reviews of both movies and not both plus and minus platform).

Sampling Procedure: On each platform, reviews that fit the criteria were discovered by using systematic browsing in order of "most helpful" or top reviews" to reveal substantive and community-desired discourse. Out of the reviews that were eligible, 5 reviews were taken per film so that it represented positive/negative/mixed.

This method lays emphasis on cases of information richness that have a high likelihood of shedding light on the studied phenomena as opposed to random sampling that seeks to represent the statistics.

#### **4.6 Ethical Considerations**

- The research is based on data that is publicly available, and is posted by users on public sites, which poses little ethical issues. Ethical care was ensured by no physical interaction with users.
- The reviews were interpreted as open texts without contacting, identifying or interacting with the reviewers. None of the follow up questions or interviews were carried out.
- The usernames of the reviewers are anonymize when producing research products. Whereas URLs are used to verify the sources, reviewers are denoted using alpha numerical numbers (e.g., Reviewer IMDb\_F\_01) instead of usernames.
- There are no infringements upon reviews through misrepresentation or out of context. Adequate background is presented in a bid to fairly reflect the views of reviewers.
- Data gathering was in accord with platform terms of service on the use of their content by an academic research. There was no scraping or breach of access controls that were automated.

## **CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the systematic analysis of 50 reviews of the audience who reviews Frozen (2013) and Frozen II (2019) and linguistically form their interactions with these movies. This analysis will be divided into four parts: at the beginning, a description of the review corpus to provide the descriptive background; then the engagement patterns during Frozen reviews analysis; the parallel analysis to Frozen II reviews; and finally the cross-film analysis to display the pattern of unique review of the sequels. In all, the analysis combines thematic content analysis and linguistic discourse analysis, focusing on what people say and how they linguistically make their assessments.

### **5.2 Review Corpus Overview**

The corpus under analysis includes 50 reviews that were posted between December 2013 and January 2022 on Frozen, and between November 2019 and December 2021 on Frozen II. Reviews are between 152 and 847 word lengths with a mean of 318 words giving a lot of discourse to be analyzed. The time based distribution reflects immediate after release reception and has some reviews that were published a few years after the release, giving an insight into the immediate reception and those that were done over time. IMDb also offered the most substantive individual reviews and the format of the service actually promotes writing length, where the average response is 420 words. Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic reviews tended to be shorter (200-300 words) and had reached the minimum requirement of 150 words.

Stylistic self-awareness and vocabularies that are film-literate were exhibited in Letterbox reviews, whereas the discourse in Reddit was more conversational and dialogic. This platform diversity warrants that the corpus represents diverse discursive styles and demographics of its audience. There are significant trends in the evaluative distribution. Frozen reviews are skewed toward positive (68% positive, 20% mixed, 12% negative), whereas Frozen II reviews are more ambivalent (40% positive, 44% mixed, 16% negative). Such a transition to mixed reviews in the sequel discourse becomes analytically important as it shows that the audience is confused about the manner in which to judge the reconfigured narrative style of the film.

### **5.3 Engagement of Audience with Frozen (2013)**

The review of 25 Frozen enables identifying four prevailing patterns of engagement with the help of which people build their reactions.

#### **5.3.1 Narrative Simplicity and Emotional Authenticity**

One of the motifs is the identification of Frozen as inherently emotional and simple in narrative, as a key selling point. This point of view is expressed by one of the IMDb reviewers (calgal84, August 9, 2014): It is quite a sweet, pleasant cartoon. And it is fair that a beautiful, pleasant cartoon. And basically a fairy tale... Is it anything really impressive? Probably not. Are the songs especially creative or that distinct of all the numerous other Disney films? Not quite, but they are catchy and pretty and suitable to the movie. This passage illustrates a number of the linguistic patterns of positive Frozen reception. Evaluative adjectives such as lovely and enjoyable are evaluative and thus they are built using easy-to-understand, non-esoteric words and not complex words of criticism.

The rhetorical questions are (Is there anything really remarkable about it? Probably not") makes use of heterogloss (recognizing the existence of other opinions that may require more) and the monoglossic claim that follows (but they are catchy and pretty) once again justifies positive judgment. The concessive move is formed by the qualifier but and serves to admit the limitations but still feels the overall appreciation. The term just that a lovely, enjoyable cartoon applies emphasis softening (just that) to set the movie as harmless fun, but the emphasis softening works in a paradoxical way by appearing to praise instead of critique. This discussion creates a paradigm through which Frozen thrives because it never aims to be a sophisticated work of art, rather it provides easy joys that are fitting of family entertainment.

This evaluative position is strengthened by the use of force (repetition in which the word lovely is repeated to emphasize the statement) in the repetition of the phrase lovely, enjoyable cartoon. In another review (CarrieJa, November 24, 2013), the contrasting linguistic strategy is applied by the writer, with the help of exaggerated evaluative language, to create enthusiasm: The heart melting story is full of the pure feeling and heart that has been a staple with the best Disney movies... FROZEN has the Disney MAGIC that has been so long lacking and it comes with force here. Heart melting is a metaphorical phrase that builds high affect (emotional reaction), whereas pure feeling and heart is built with graduation (when the two words feeling and heart were used together, this intensifies the meaning of both terms).

The comparative frame the best Disney movies places Frozen in an array of quality, whereas the time frame has been missing so long declares the film as the rebuilding of excellence lost. The most notable is the capitalization of the term magic--a typological act of graduation by the force of textual performance that textually actualizes the intensity of assessment. This non-standard orthography is an indicator of greater emotion, where visual salience is aligned with the strength of evaluations. The term comes in full force also adds to the effect with a specific use of force words. These two opposing reviews, one with its message of warm simplicity, the other with its mission of ardent excitement, have a common evaluative rationale: Frozen works because it is so emotionally true and so easily accessible, not advanced and innovative.

#### **5.3.2 Relationships of Sisterhood and Character**

The most widely discussed narrative feature is the sister relationship, where the audiences build the engagement mainly based on the emotional involvement in the relationship between Anna and Elsa. Personal identification is revealed by one of the reviewers (felizpaul, December 19, 2021): I could identify with Elsa in so many ways with all the fears she felt, pain she has, and lived with a trauma long enough living with the what if all the time running when her powers got revealed. And was strengthened in the consummation of the film. In this discussion, high affect is achieved with the emotional vocabulary (fears, pain, trauma), present tense of grammar (has), and an indication of present identification instead of past viewing experience. I could relate to Elsa so much is the phrase that builds personal resonance as an engagement mechanism - the struggles the character is going through with her mental processes reflect the same views of the reviewer herself, which form what Smith (1995) refers to as allegiance through emotional recognition.

The grammatical mistake of the reviewer (got stronger, revealed) is perhaps, an indication of an emotional reflection and not a critical writing with high standards. The run-on nature (living with a trauma so long living with the what if all the time) is a linguistic performance of the psychological experience under description thought helicizing without a clear resolution, which is reflective of what is happening with Elsa in her mind. An even more critical critic (brent\_or, January 8, 2014) provides an opposing analysis and yet focuses the sister relationship: The sisterhood love theme is very pleasant but the film did not take a lot of time to develop that. It appears to be there in the very beginning and the very end but the middle is composed of attention to other characters. The modifier nice but forms a concessive judgment-admitting thematic value and criticizing performance. Construction heteroglossic: didn't really spend and seems like softens criticism by hedging the evaluation, putting it in the realm of subjective meaning rather than objective reality. The temporal arrangement at the beginning and at the end yet the middle expresses the narrative criticism: the preferred association does not have enough continued attention. Importantly, even this critical assessment focuses the relationship of the sisters as the criterion of evaluation- the quality of the film is determined by how effectively it is able to create the relationship between the sisters. The relationship between Anna and Elsa is built by both positive and negative reviews as the narrative center that defines a point of engagement, showing similar interpretive guidelines in the reviews that are otherwise evaluatively diverse.

### 5.3.3 Frozen Survey Patterns in Reviews

The engagement construction is typified by a number of linguistic patterns across the Frozen corpus:

Available evaluative nouns: Reviews use such words as lovely, enjoyable, fun, heartwarming, catchy - unpretentious, connoting descriptors of pleasure but lacking the need to interpret deeply. This verbal accessibility reflects the perceived narrative accessibility of the film.

Unhedged praise, hedged criticism: In critical evaluations, the use of hedges often is frequent (not really, seems like, kind of), whereas in positive evaluations the evaluation is made unconditionally. This imbalance implies that reviewers believe they are more comfortable making claims of value over making criticisms.

Emotional disclosure: Positive remarks often incorporate personal emotional reactions (I cried, made me happy, I loved) building on authenticity and extent of engagement. These influence expressions put the movie in a place of being emotionally vivid as opposed to only entertaining. Comparative frameworks use Disney canon: When the reviews make comparisons, they are often made to other Disney films (reminds me of The Little Mermaid, in the genre of The Lion King) and tend to create an interpretive framework unique to Disney traditions of animation.

Present tense identification: The use of present tense by reviewers talking about character identification may indicate a continuity of psychological attachment as opposed to a experience

of having viewed the film in the past (I relate to Elsa, she is). This grammatical option defines the relationship between characters as one that is lasting and not a time-limited one.

#### **5.4 Does Frozen II (2019) capture the audience?**

The reviews of Frozen II show significantly different engagement patterns that include ambivalence, comparative evaluation and tension between appreciation and disappointment.

##### **5.4.1 Narrative Complexity and Evaluative ambivalence**

Pervasive ambivalence is the most noticeable trend in Frozen II discourse at once the praise and a considerable amount of criticism. This ambivalence is organized in one representative review: The animation in Frozen II is beautiful. The degree of elaboration and flow is a success. It is, however, a preachy and forced story. This passage illustrates the typical language form of Frozen II ambivalence: positive evaluation, then a phrase that states the opposite in the form of contrasting negative evaluation, that is, a phrase with the introduction of a negative evaluation with the word regardless. The expressions stunning and triumph provide a high level of positive evaluation of visual performances and the preachy and forced expressions provide a negative level of appreciation of the quality of narratives. The evaluative tension indicated by the adversative conjunction of how is that technical excellence cannot overcome perceived narrative problems. This is a structure that recurs through the corpus, implying that there is a common interpretive framework in which the visual achievements of Frozen II are rewarded, but narrative problems take over the whole evaluation.

Other reviewer expresses the same ambivalence in more detail: This is a beautiful film and the way Elsa goes through it is a strong one to follow. But beyond this the storytelling through it is totally disjointed and none of the character scenes is accorded the screen time it rightfully deserves. The conditional clause but outside of this is a concessive judgment, some things work (the visual beauty, the arc of Elsa) and some things do not (character development, narrative focus). Completely unfocused intensifier is graduation by force to accentuate criticism and none of the character moments is an absolute quantification as opposed to a moderated measure. The given the time they deserve creates a comparison that is not explicitly stated, the sequel is not able to give the characters what they truly deserve and thus implies a potential that is not yet achieved. This narrative of potential promising that becomes unfulfilled is repeated throughout the reviews and represents Frozen II as a movie that might have been more successful but has not reached its potential.

##### **5.4.2 Comparable assessment and Nostalgic Discourse**

Frozen II reviews are overwhelmed with comparative language making express references to the first movie. A typical formulation: It is a sequel and like it is customary, it is not as good as the first one but Disney have made a terrific movie. The expression, as expected it is not as good as the first, creates the sense of inferiority by sequel as intended, generic fact a monoglossic statement that displays a reduced quality as inherent to the sequel status. However, the modifier but brings in a counter-judgement: the film is inferior, but it is still outstanding. This logical paradox, which is neither good nor good at the same time, discloses the comparative scheme that organizes evaluation Frozen II is rated on two scales at once, an absolute (is it good), and a relative (how does it compare to the original). Nostalgia is expressed by another reviewer in a very explicit way: Six years is not a very long time to wait before a follow-up but in the case of Frozen one can hardly help the feeling that the move to come back was purely driven by the financial prospects.

The use of heterogloss in this discourse is the use of construction; it is hard not to feel, where it is recognized that this is subjectively interpreted but it is further reinforced by the suggestion that it is hard to resist this conclusion. The time frame six years is placed in a position that it is neither too long nor too short but long enough that it doesn't sound creatively but rather as a commercial motivation. This time ambivalence is an indication of the uncertainty of the

audience of what to sequel at the right time so that it is not too late to remain relevant yet neither too early lest it appears as exploitation. The expression in the case of Frozen is used in order to construct the original as something special, and not to be exploited commercially. This defensive approach to the origin helps expose the emotional stakes audiences had to offer, which makes Frozen a culturally relevant franchise property rather than one that is just a franchise.

#### **5.4.3 Thematic Ambition v/s Emotional Resonance**

This theme-threat tension is a recurrent occurrence that pits the thematic ambition of Frozen II with the alleged loss of emotional genuineness. One of the reviewers explains it as follows: Generally all Disney films are identical, the princesses undergo virtually the same experience. But this [Frozen] is different. I believe it is more adult and more sophisticated. It is all about self-love and self-discovery. This review commends Frozen as having differentiated itself in Disney formula with thematic maturity. But when such like discourse is expressed in the context of Frozen II, the term complex becomes negative instead of problematic. The very feature that made the first stand out thematic sophistication, is excessive in the sequel. This shift of valency is expressly stated by another review: But the preaching is forced and preachy. Anna is also irritatingly possessive and protective. The preachy term implies that there is too much thematic message over narrative, and that moral lessons are too explicitly preached. This criticism makes Frozen II didactic instead of emotionally organic, the themes appear forced instead of coming naturally out of the character and plot.

Critique of character Behaving changed The character critique of Anna is annoyingly controlling and overprotective shows that changed behavior of the character breeds negative reactions. Persistently creating affect (frustration) the intensifier irritates, the judges, in their turn, with their control and protectiveness of Anna negatively assess her actions. Through this criticism, it is possible to suggest that the characterization of Anna contravenes the expectations that were created using the original, when Anna was spontaneous and positive. More tentative, nurturing Anna in the sequel is more of character inconsistency than a character development.

#### **5.4.4 Emotional Investment and Defensive Discourse**

There are defensive postures shown in some reviews of Frozen II, which are an indication that the reviewers believe the movie is being wrongly critiqued. One formulation: I hate when they say that sequels are never the same. This film was tremendous and indicated that it was not true. This discussion openly dismisses the generic sequel-inferiority paradigm, making Frozen II unique. The emotive word hate creates robust affect (discontentedness with critical speech-making) and the sentence proved that wrong ensures that the film is made the empirical counter-argument to a mythical generalization. This kind of defensive discourse shows that there are still cultural dialogues concerning the film, and the reviewers are locating themselves in contrast to perceived consensus opinions. The necessity of defense implies the realization that numerous audiences did not get what they wanted, and it is necessary to argue against it.

#### **5.4.5 Evaluative Patterns of Frozen II Reviews**

In the reviews of Frozen II, a number of peculiar patterns can be observed: Structures of ambiguity: The form of the review is often based on X is good, but/however Y is problematic, composing appreciation and critique simultaneously. This is in contrast to the more homogeneous reviews in Frozen. Comparative saturation: The reviews of Frozen II contain exactly references to the original, whereas the reviews about Frozen almost never made comparisons. This shows the comparative quality inherent in reception of sequels. Qualification and hedging: Frozen II discourse uses a high degree of hedging ("I don't know where to stand," might be," seems), which has been built up. This is unlike the assertions of Frozen reviews. Complexity discourse: Complexity is a term that is used a lot and with varying valence- in some cases it is valued, in others it is scorned. This implies that audiences appreciate

sophistication in theory but were problematic of the way Frozen II was done. Temporal framing: The references to time across films, childhood recollections of the original and altered personal conditions often create temporal distance as a construct of analytical importance. Cross-film comparative analysis is presented as an extension of the idea in (5.4), however, it provides a more detailed explanation and does not utilize multi-dimensional analysis (MDA) for the study.

### **5.5 Cross-Film Comparative Analysis**

Cross-film comparative analysis is introduced as an elaboration on the concept (5.4), but does not use multi-dimensional analysis (MDA) to study it. The systematic comparison shows that there are major variations in the ways that the audience creates engagement to original and sequel. The language patterns that are evaluated are the patterns of evaluative language.

Adjective distribution: The use of adjectives in Frozen reviews is predominantly unqualified and mostly positive (wonderful, amazing, fantastic, lovely) whereas Frozen II reviews use qualified positive adjectives (good but, beautiful however, impressive yet), or ambivalent adjectives (confusing, unfocused, preachy).

Emotional disclosure: Reviews of Frozen often incorporate simple positive affect ("I cried," "I loved it, it made me happy"). Frozen II reviews are either mixed or negative in their feelings (i.e. I felt disappointed, I was confused, I did not connect emotionally).

Intensification patterns: Frozen reviews intensify with the help of intensifiers, such as praises (absolutely brilliant, truly magnificent, completely amazing). The intensifiers are applied in Frozen II reviews to make criticism stronger (absolutely lack of focus, preaching so hard, so complicated). Frozen reviews make special consideration to character relationships (sisterhood, the relationship between Anna and Elsa), emotional journeys (self-acceptance of Elsa), and musical aspects. The reviews of Frozen II dwell upon plot development, message, timing, and world-building. This change implies that the new narrational priorities of this sequel, including the more complicated mythology, the historical themes, environmental concerns, caused other audiences to alter their focus of analysis, so they were not as interested in the emotional lines but in the narrative mechanics.

Comparative Framing Frequency of explicit comparison: It is found in about 84% of Frozen II reviews that contain explicit comparative words and phrases related to the original, as compared to only 12% of Frozen reviews that contain comparative words and phrases (usually to other Disney movies, not within the franchise).

Comparative constructions: Typical constructions are: "Not as good as the original" It lacks the magic of the first film. The old one was more concentrated. Does not have the same feeling to it. There is some nostalgic idealization in these constructions (the original is remembered as having qualities the sequel does not have) though even Frozen reviews themselves found faults (songs not especially creative, narrative somewhat loose). The reviews of Frozen exhibit high evaluative certainty reviewers are aware whether they enjoyed the movie or not and state their positions unambiguously. The reviews about Frozen II are characterized by a great degree of ambivalence both appreciation of certain factors and criticism of others, which lead to indifferent overall evaluations.

Mixed evaluation structure: Mixed evaluations (liking some parts and criticizing others) are only made by 20% of reviews on Frozen. Conversely, 44% of reviews of Frozen II have ambivalence, showing that reviewers have difficulty in blending the good and bad to come up with consistent global conclusions. Nostalgic time is used extensively in Frozen II reviews (when I first watched Frozen, the magic I felt as a kid, memories of the original and so on). The same thing cannot be said of the reviews of Frozen because there is no previous movie to recollect.

Stories of life transitions: There are many Frozen II reviews that mention personal changes over time (I was 9 when Frozen was released, now I am 15, I watched it with my young girl and now she is a grown-up, etc.). This time frame creates the distance between movies as personally meaningful, where altered conditions affect the perception.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analytical findings, as discussed in Chapter 5, as related to the theoretical model and answers the four research question that governs the present research. The systematic presentation of the discussion follows one research question by the other, generalizing the results to define the general knowledge regarding the audience engagement with the narrative reconfigurations in franchise sequels, and the discussion of theoretical and practical implications. The chapter ends with the process of situating findings in the current scholarship and contributions to the knowledge of the contemporary audience practices.

### **6.2 Ling Articulation of Engagement**

The analysis has shown that audiences express engagement by using three major linguistic processes which take place in various levels of discourse construction.

#### **6.2.1 Evaluative Language Construction of Appreciation**

The viewers use comprehensive resources of appreciation (Martin and White, 2005) in order to create the aesthetic and narrative evaluation. In Frozen, the terms of evaluation are concentrated around simple and uncomplicated words, namely, lovely, enjoyment, catchy, heartwarming which do not require complex and critical vocabulary. This language availability reflects and supports the sense of narrative availability in the film, establishing some harmony between the form (the way the film is being described) and content (what the film is providing). By comparison, reviews of Frozen II use more diverse and ambiguous language of evaluation. Where visual performances are being unconditionally glorified using exaggerated words and expressions (stunning, breathtaking, spectacular), narrative content is being unconditionally glorified or criticized (unfocused, preachy, confusing).

This pattern of linguistic expression of positive technical appreciation and the introduction of narrative critique with the use of adversative conjunctions (but, however) is a characteristic feature of Frozen II reception in terms of its linguistic expression. This observation expands the engagement theory (Smith, 1995) because it demonstrates that language decisions do not only produce individual judgments but also general interpretive schemes. The constant reliance on simple words to describe Frozen makes the film pass as humble family farewell with success due to the emotional believability, and the mixed evaluative nature of Frozen II makes it seem as ambitious but unsuccessful--good in its intentions, bad in its implementation.

#### **6.2.2 Emotional Disclosure Establishing Investment**

Personal emotional disclosure is an instrumental tool whereby the viewers assemble and illustrate the level of involvement. Sentences such as I cried at the end, I could identify myself with Elsa, and It made me happy, perform numerous rhetorical roles at the same time. First, they put affect (emotional response) to play as testimony to the power of the film - the texts that can produce strong emotions are implicitly appreciated higher than the ones that can only spawn intellectual feelings. Second, emotional disclosure creates authenticity and credibility of reviewers. Making oneself weak and personal makes reviewers seem sincerely involved instead of conducting depersonalized critical evaluation. Third, emotional utterances shape the movie as an object of solemn emotional process and not entertainment intake.

Grammatical patterns of emotional disclosure are analytically important. The use of present tense forms (I relate to Elsa) implies continuity of the psychological association not over time but over viewing experience whereas past tense (I cried) places the emotion at a particular point

of time during the viewing process. Such temporal variation brings forth varied associations to emotional experience- there are enduring identification emotional experiences, and there are emotional experiences that are intense but time-specific. The comparative trend is also impressive: Frozen reviews are characterized by a wide simulation of positive emotional disclosure, whereas Frozen II reviews are characterised by ambivalent or negative emotions (I felt disappointed, I did not feel the film at the same time). This change implies that the sequel was not able to create the emotional appeal that defined the initial reception of the film, a failure the audiences blame on the issue of the plot rather than the altered conditions of their lives.

### **6.2.3 Comparative Structures Positioning Films**

In the case of Frozen II, the comparative evaluation is the prevailing system of engagement articulation. The almost universal presence of explicit comparative language, which was used in 84% of sequel reviews, is evidence that sequel reception functions essentially according to the logic of relational judgment. The audiences do not interpret Frozen II as a stand-alone movie but they always place it against the original as a benchmark and standard. Comparative constructions are of various linguistic forms:

Explicit comparative adjectives: better than, not as good as, inferior to, surpasses. These are grammatical comparisons which place films in a relative position and the original is usually judged better.

Evaluative contrasts: Comparison can be made using evaluative language that gives each film a different evaluative word assigned to it (Frozen was charming; Frozen II is forced) without evaluative comparison grammar. The implication of this strategy is juxtaposition kind of relationship.

Nostalgic temporal framing: The mention of when I first watched Frozen and the mention of watching the sequel now frame time, with evaluative loads. It is to the original that the sequel is gauged and foundering, since all the nostalgic idealization that surrounds it is more authentic and emotionally pure and narrative-driven.

These comparative paradigms indicate what Klein and Palmer (2016) pinpoint as the main issue of sequel storytelling: audiences see sequels with pre-existing standards that were based on originals, developing a set of evaluative criteria that have to be met in the sequel, and also being innovative enough to be worth existing. The analysis of linguistics highlights the ways in which these tensions are expressed in the review discourse, where audiences are both mocking Frozen II as a movie that fails to follow the emotional authenticity of its predecessor and as one that lacks enough innovation (too similar in structure).

### **6.3 Continuity and Change (The Interpretation)**

Viewers understand and analyze continuity and change through paradigms of emotional verisimilitude, character consistency and thematic continuity. Three patterns of analysis are found to be dominant. Nostalgic Attachment The formation of Evaluative Standards. The emotional and aesthetic norms of the original movie are compared with the film sequel, and audience memories, which are often nostalgically idealized, are the measuring rod. Reviews which mention childhood experience with Frozen make the original construct the sequel as privileged, formative, and more authentic in an emotional way which the sequels are not able to achieve. It is a nostalgic framing that works on the basis of what Staiger (2000) refers to as interpretive protocols, culturally accessible patterns of textual understandings.

The conventionally presented here makes originals as pure creative acts and sequels as commercial reactions, which establishes presumptions of lower quality that are what Frozen II will have to address. This protocol, as the linguistic analysis demonstrates, is achieved with the help of such phrases as the decision to return was totally motivated by money-making potential which forms sequel production as commercially oriented as opposed to creatively needed. Notably, nostalgic idealization conceals complications of initial reception. Although Frozen II

has been criticized on narrative issues, reviews of Frozen itself gave this as reasons why the film was problematic: songs are not specifically creative; the plot is carelessly structured; the characterizations are superficially done. But comparing them retrospectively, these weaknesses are eliminated, and remembered excellence is brought against which the sequel is checked.

#### **6.4 Patterns in Linguistic Reception in sequels**

Sequel reception and original film reception have three hallmark linguistic patterns, which bring out how the existence of an earlier film essentially distorts evaluative talk. Saturation of comparative language is a phenomenon that can be observed in the language of a specific country or region.

##### **6.4.1 Comparative language saturation**

This is the process of language in a particular country or region where the characteristic of language saturation occurs. The most prominent one is the overuse of comparative language in Frozen II discourse. Although reviews of Frozen have not used explicit comparisons (2 out of 100 reviews used comparative reference, usually to a different Disney movie), 84 out of 100 reviews of Frozen II did use explicit comparisons. This proves what could be called the impossibility of comparative assessment of sequel reception. As far as the experience of watching a movie is concerned, audiences are not able to assess the sequels on their own, as they are already influenced by the original experience. The original creates cognitive structures (narrative anticipations), affective investments (character commitments), and aesthetic norms (what the franchise ought to be like and feel like) upon which sequel interpretation is organized. This mental interaction is manifested in the linguistic form, in the form of constant explicit comparison. Critics need to establish the connection between the movies in order to form meaning in their experience of the sequel, which leads to the use of phrases such as better than, not as good as, builds on, and departs from.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 Overview**

The qualitative research involved the linguistic construction of audience involvement in narrative reconfiguration in franchise sequels by means of a systematic discourse analysis of 50 online reviews of Frozen (2013) and Frozen II (2019) by Disney. Based on the engagement theory of Murray Smith and the Appraisal Theory of Martin and White, the study explored the audience processes of continuity and discontinuity of the narrative between original and sequel films that show how engagement is being expressed and how sequel reception is being organized based on evaluative systems. The research design used in this study is a comparative qualitative research design in that the reviews of five leading websites (IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, Letterboxd, Metacritic and Reddit) were gathered and analyzed with the help of integrated thematic and discourse analytical methods. The analysis focused on both thematic content (what audiences assess) and linguistic form (how assessments are built) showing regularities in evaluative language, emotional revelation, comparative structures, and interpretive positioning.

### **7.2 Limitations and Delimitations**

Although the research offers essential knowledge, there are a number of limitations that need to be mentioned:

Limitations on the sample: The concentration on written reviews in English language rules out non-English, visual and oral responses. Although the 50-review sample is suitable to qualitative research, it cannot be diversified in terms of responses of the audience. The choice of the

platform highlights text-based review sites, which may exclude the other audience members who are more video content consumers or social media users.

**Time limitation:** Short-term post-release reviews are analyzed without taking into account the long-term reception development. The interpretation of the audience can change according to the shifts in the cultural contexts or following the repeated watching.

**Single franchise focus:** Results might not be applicable in other franchise situations involving different genre conventions, audiences and industrial situations. Nonetheless, the analytical paradigm can be used to study other cases as well.

**Researcher interpretation:** Qualitative analysis entails subjective decisions that can be made differently by other researchers. Nevertheless, through structural processes and clear demonstrations, one can evaluate interpretive validity.

### **7.3 Theoretical Implications**

These results contribute to the theoretical knowledge on a multiplicity of levels. In the case of engagement theory, the study builds on the work of Smith (1995) which was created to analyse single texts, and applies it to the franchise setting where previous recognitions, alignments and allegiances limit the nature of further engagements. The results imply that engagement theory will need to add temporal aspects, where the relationship by past texts to subsequent reception is taken into account.

**In the case of franchise research:** The study shows that effective sequel storytelling involves more than quality it involves dealing with existing investments in the audience that can be detrimental to creative intentions. The conflict between respecting earlier investments and innovating enough is not only an industrial problem, but a basic reception dynamic forming the interpretation of an audience.

**To discourse analysis:** The research shows that the combination of Appraisal Theory and thematic analysis sheds light on the meaning-making processes that are not apparent when using either of the methods. This analysis of what is said (thematic content) and how it is said (linguistic form) shows that the evaluation is constructed and what the reviews of the work do (rhetoric work).

**In the case of the participatory culture theory:** The results indicate that individual reviews are involved in the collective sense-making front, where the reviewers place themselves in relation to perceived consensus opinions and are engaging in an implicit dialogue with the other members of the audience. This dialogic aspect implies that reviews are to be perceived not as one-sided texts but as a part of the continuous cultural dialogue.

### **7.4 Practical Implications**

As a filmmaker, a film studio, or a creative team, these findings imply a number of considerations that can be put to good use:

**Value emotional investments:** There is an emphasis on emotional authenticity and character consistency in the priority audiences attach to emotional authenticity and character consistency, which implies that even when venturing into new narrative spaces, sequels must carefully protect relationships between characters and emotional colorings that drew audiences to original characters.

**Deal with thematic complexity:** Although thematic ambition is an esteemed concept, thematic complexity may burst out and cause disintegration of emotional concentration. Sequels could use definite emotional through-lines in even more complex themes.

**Be aware of time:** The temporal dynamics generate nostalgic idealization that sequels have to deal with a six-year gap. Gaps could be short and thus weaken nostalgia, whereas longer gaps could cause a shift to the audiences. It is necessary to know the audience attachment patterns in order to find the best timing.

Embrace comparative assessment: Because audiences will invariably make comparisons between sequels and originals, creative teams may positively reflect it in the texts themselves, with characters mentioning events that happened earlier, directly discussing how things have evolved, instead of denying it.

Accept ambivalence as a possibility: Not everything about reception of sequels will be either purely positive or negative. Radical sequels that seek to do much reconfiguration must count on mixed receives as audiences bargain over alternative responses. This indecisiveness is not a failure as such and represents the deep interests in ambivalent creative decisions.

## REFERENCES

- Austin, T. (2002). *Hollywood, hype and audiences: Selling and watching popular film in the 1990s*. Manchester University Press.
- Baym, N. K. (2000). *Tune in, log on: Soaps, fandom, and online community*. Sage Publications.
- Bednarek, M. (2010). *The language of fictional television: Drama and identity*. Continuum.
- Bordwell, D. (1989). *Making meaning: Inference and rhetoric in the interpretation of cinema*. Harvard University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brooker, W. (2001). *Using the Force: Creativity, community and Star Wars fans*. Continuum.
- De Vany, A., & Walls, W. D. (1999). Uncertainty in the movie industry: Does star power reduce the terror of the box office? *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 23(4), 285-318. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007608125988>
- Do Rozario, R. C. (2016). The princess and the magic kingdom: Beyond nostalgia, the function of the Disney princess. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 27(1), 34-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2004.10162465>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. Edward Arnold.
- Gray, J. (2010). *Show sold separately: Promos, spoilers, and other media paratexts*. NYU Press.
- Hall, S. (1973). Encoding and decoding in the television discourse. *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies*, 7, 1-14.
- Henderson, S. T. (2014). The Hollywood sequel. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 42(2), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.2013.858013>
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*. Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. NYU Press.
- Jess-Cooke, C. (2009). *Film sequels: Theory and practice from Hollywood to Bollywood*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Johnson, D. (2013). *Media franchising: Creative license and collaboration in the culture industries*. NYU Press.
- Klein, A. A., & Palmer, R. B. (Eds.). (2016). *Cycles, sequels, spin-offs, remakes, and reboots: Multiplicities in film and television*. University of Texas Press.
- Livingstone, S. (2013). The participation paradigm in audience research. *Communication Review*, 16(1-2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2013.757174>
- Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. (2012). *Ethical decision-making and internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee (Version 2.0)*. Association of Internet Researchers.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- McClellan, S. T. (2018). *Hollywood blockbusters: The economics of franchise filmmaking*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. Routledge.

- Plantinga, C., & Smith, G. M. (Eds.). (1999). *Passionate views: Film, cognition, and emotion*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sells, L. (2019). *From Mulan to Moana: Examining the evolution of the Disney princess*. Lexington Books.
- Smith, M. (1995). *Engaging characters: Fiction, emotion, and the cinema*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, I. R. (2017). *The Hollywood meme: Transnational adaptations in world cinema*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Staiger, J. (2000). *Perverse spectators: The practices of film reception*. NYU Press.
- Taboada, M., & Grieve, J. (2004). Analyzing appraisal automatically. *Proceedings of AAAI Spring Symposium on Exploring Attitude and Affect in Text*, 158-161.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage Publications.
- Walls, W. D., & McKenzie, J. (2012). The changing role of Hollywood in the global movie market. *Journal of Media Economics*, 25(4), 198-219.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08997764.2012.729422>
- Wasko, J. (2003). *How Hollywood works*. Sage Publications.
- Wodak, R. (2009). *The discourse of politics in action: Politics as usual*. Palgrave Macmillan.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Review Documentation

### Example 1: IMDb - Frozen (2013)

Platform: IMDb

Film: Frozen (2013)

Reviewer: calgal84

Date: August 9, 2014

Rating: 8/10

Title: "Some People take things WAY too seriously!"

URL: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/review/rw3065858/>

Review Excerpt: "This is really a lovely, enjoyable cartoon. And it's just that a lovely, enjoyable cartoon. And basically a fairy tale. One that moms and dads can feel happy to take their children too. Let it be that. Is there anything truly remarkable about it? Probably not. Are the songs particularly inventive or that much different from all the countless other Disney movies? No, not really, but they are catchy and pretty and fit the movie..."

### Example 2: IMDb - Frozen (2013)

Platform: IMDb

Film: Frozen (2013)

Reviewer: CarrieJa

Date: November 24, 2013

Rating: 10/10

Title: "For the first time in forever a true Disney classic is realized"

URL: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/review/rw2911317/>

Review Excerpt: "The story is heart melting, filled with the pure feeling and heart that has become a staple with the best Disney movies. It is a moving story that has family at its center... FROZEN has that Disney MAGIC that has been missing for so long and it comes in full force here."

### Example 3: IMDb - Frozen (2013)

Platform: IMDb

Film: Frozen (2013)

Reviewer: felizpaul

Date: December 19, 2021

Rating: 10/10

Title: "Loved it."

URL: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/review/rw7665648/>

Review Excerpt: "Loved this movie very much. Watched it so many times. I could relate to Elsa so much with the fears she felt, the pain she has and living with a trauma for so long living with the what if all the time the running of when her powers got revealed. And got stronger at the end of the movie."

**Example 4: IMDb - Frozen (2013)**

Platform: IMDb

Film: Frozen (2013)

Reviewer: brent\_or

Date: January 8, 2014

Rating: 5/10

Title: "Great Visuals, Unremarkable Script"

URL: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/review/rw2938101/>

Review Excerpt: "The theme of sisterly love is nice but the movie didn't really spend a lot of time building that up. It seems like it's there at the beginning and at the end but the middle is made up of focus on other characters... For me, Tangled was much more satisfying than Frozen."

**Example 5: IMDb - Frozen (2013)**

Platform: IMDb

Film: Frozen (2013)

Reviewer: nataliabatsko

Date: January 24, 2022

Rating: 9/10

Title: "Let the storm range on!"

URL: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2294629/review/rw7798762/>

Review Excerpt: "Of course we can't talk about this movie without mentioning Let it go performed by Idina Menzel and Demi Lovato. It's a song about escaping from the sad past and being free! This song won an Oscar for best original song and I can see why... The best thing I can say about it is that this is Disney's greatest film since the lion king..."