

LOST IN ARABIAN NIGHTS: THE MISREPRESENTATION OF MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE IN ALADDIN LIVE-ACTION MOVIE

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INTRODUCTION




Why misrepresentation of Middle Eastern culture?

From animation to blockbusters, various ethnicities, cultures, and religions tend to be depicted inaccurately in Hollywood movies (Nagaraj & Wen, 2020).

Why Walt Disney live-action? Why Aladdin?

The live-action Aladdin (2019) by Guy Ritchie makes the stereotypes of Middle Eastern (the Arabs) even more significant because of its misrepresentation (Nagaraj & Wen, 2020).

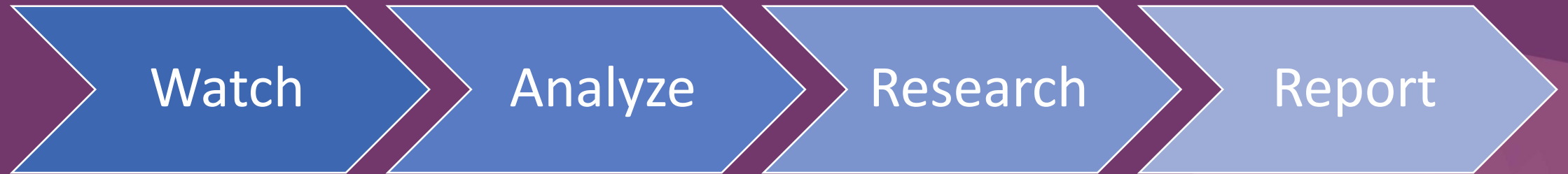
To examine the misinterpretation of Middle Eastern and the impact of media representation on cultural perceptions and stereotypes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Researchers have dived into the Western perception of Middle Eastern in the live-action Aladdin (2019), such as the representation of Middle Eastern race, culture, and gender based on the characters, casts, and attires (Ayuningtiyas & Mustofa, 2021; Elmogahzy, 2018; Jabbar, 2023; Špika, 2020), stereotypes and orientalism (Gayathri, 2021; Lindgren & Finch, 2020), and cultural analysis and deformation (Eshow & Lundsgaard, 2023; Prskalo & Lidija, 2023).
- Representation theory by Stuart Hall
- Orientalism by Edward Said

METHOD

- Primary: Aladdin (2019)
- Secondary: articles, journals, websites



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- Inconsistencies in representing race and culture through the casts.
- Walt Disney claims Aladdin to be "one of the most diverse casts ever put on screen" (Rose, 2019).

"The imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged" (Said, 1976, p. 8).

- Disney may not fully understand the differences between Middle Eastern and South Asian people.



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

“Representation as to the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between culture members through language, signs, and images that stand for or represent things” (Hall, 1989 as cited in Ayuningtiyas & Mustofa, 2021).

- Aladdin and the Sultan wore similar clothing to Middle Eastern’s traditional clothing in almost every scenes.
- Princess Jasmine wore clothing that are similar to India’s traditional clothing in most scenes.



Sources: Encyclopedia of National Dress (Condra, 2013),
peopleareculture.com

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- Jafar and Princess Jasmine marry in front of Dalia and Sultan (Ritchie & August, 2019, 1:45:21).

“The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire” (Said, 1976, p. 202).

- The film trying to portray cultural elements that are constructed to fit Western expectations rather than reflecting authentic traditions.



CONCLUSION

This study finds a complex relationship between cultural representation and misrepresentation in the *Aladdin* (2019) live-action movie by Walt Disney.

- Nurtured Orientalist stereotypes and mixed inaccurately different cultures through casting choices, clothing, and tradition.
- Affected how society views one another's cultures.
- Sentimental fiction story that seem to be apolitical can help constructing the Orient as the 'other' and depicting Eastern cultures stereotypically.

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