

The Role of Animation Technology in Fostering Multicultural Understanding Between Malaysia and China

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary society is globalised and has entered the Information Era. The Alpha Generation is proficient in technology. Over the past few decades, numerous multicultural communication initiatives have occurred in Malaysia and China, with Chinese animation technology playing significant roles. Despite advancements in its animation technologies, China continues to encounter obstacles in intercultural communication initiatives in Malaysia and China. This research is to investigate the commercial potential of Chinese animation for facilitating multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia and to examine ways for developing Chinese animation to capture market share in Malaysia through these activities. This research utilised qualitative methodologies, including interviews, observations, and desk research based on secondary data. Fifteen individuals (seven Chinese and nine Malaysian) were randomly recruited online and completed the online survey. The gathered data underwent content analysis. The interviews with participants from both countries revealed that hand-drawn animation, conventional animation, digital animation technologies (both 2D and 3D), and VR/AR technology were utilised in the post-2010 multicultural events in Malaysia and China. Nevertheless, creative animation approaches encountered obstacles, including the acceptance of local MarketWatch of professional competence, misconceptions arising from multiculturalism, and difficulties stemming from technical proficiency and resource constraints. Initiatives must be undertaken to enhance the training of animation professionals and incorporate emerging technology, including artificial intelligence and deep learning techniques. Globalisation, the new generation, and emerging technologies have influenced innovative animation techniques in multicultural exchange initiatives. This research holds substantial practical importance. This will benefit policymakers, practitioners, and animation designers

Keywords: Multicultural communication activities, globalization innovation, animation technology.

INTRODUCTION

During the 2017 "Belt and Road" (Nanning) Animation and Game Industry Cooperation and Development Forum (CAG+), themed "The Global Future of China's Animation and Game Industry," participants from Malaysia and China collaboratively examined the cooperation and prospective development of China and nations along the "Belt and Road" in the animation and game sector. Subsequently, on April 29, 2018, the China-ASEAN Expo Animation and Game Exhibition enhanced multicultural exchanges in animation between China and ASEAN. Chinese animation methods have advanced significantly in recent years. Chinese animation is progressively improving each and significantly contributes to multicultural interaction initiatives between Malaysia and China. Chinese animation has garnered increasing interest among Malaysians. The quality and production standards of Chinese animation have significantly enhanced, leading to increasing success in the Malaysian market. Digital technology have enabled Chinese animation to

compete on the world arena with Japanese and Western animation. Numerous Chinese individuals advocate for the incorporation of traditional Chinese cultural components into Chinese animation Sun, Q. (2022).

Multiculturalism is described as the acknowledgement of cultural variety, encompassing variations in race and religion, with each phase of this process representing the historical narrative of society, as stated by Arlena & Kurniasari (2013). Multiculturalism in Malaysia is impacting the state's politics and the daily lives of its citizens. Malaysia's official policy advocates for multiculturalism, emphasising the diverse nature of its society and supporting the harmonious coexistence of its three predominant communities: Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Malaysia is striving to rebuild a multicultural society through visual culture, such as animation. Multiculturalism in Malaysian animation embodies the concept that diverse cultures can foster positive relationships via the harmonious coexistence of diversity in unity and simplicity. Conversely, the animation industry in Malaysia encounters obstacles like production difficulties, viewing issues, and competitive problems. Consequently, there are several impediments to the intercultural dissemination of Chinese animation within Malaysian markets. Many Chinese cartoons are primarily adaptations of online books, games, or Japanese anime, demonstrating a deficiency of originality. Chinese animation's involvement in multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia requires novel concepts, as its current skills are inferior to Western standards and must evolve to meet the demands of these exchanges. Secondly, the majority of Chinese animations derive their content from traditional Chinese mythological narratives, which resonate with Chinese audiences. For Malaysian viewers, cultural factors impede a profound comprehension of the stories and concepts. Chinese culture is characterised by high-context communication. Malaysian audiences interpret symbolic meanings differently due to the disparities between Chinese and Malaysian contextual cultures. The comedic aspects of the cartoon are not readily comprehensible to Malaysian audiences, hindering its ability to evoke their cultural identity. The stereotype of Chinese animation among Malaysian viewers is a contributing element that hinders effective cross-cultural communication on Chinese animation. Chinese animation neglects the development of diverse symbolic labels in the context of cross-cultural communication Wang, Y. (2022). This study will examine the subsequent research enquiries. 1) What animation techniques have been utilised in multicultural events in Malaysia and China since 2010? What are the benefits and drawbacks of employing animation methods in ethnic interaction initiatives? 3) What is the significance of innovating the technical aspects of animation in multicultural exchange activities? This research seeks to examine the commercial potential of Chinese animation in facilitating multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia and to analyse ways for innovating Chinese animation to capture market share in Malaysia through these activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview of Animation and Cultural Exchange

Animation has been an influential medium for promoting cross-cultural understanding, especially in heterogeneous cultures like Malaysia and China. Considering the varied cultural heritages of both countries, animation technology provides a distinctive medium to overcome linguistic and cultural obstacles. The Belt and Road Initiative, which enhances cooperation between China and other countries, has established animation as a medium for advancing common values and storylines internationally. Malaysia's multicultural environment and China's developing animation sector provide a conducive platform for interchange and reciprocal learning via visual culture (Sun, 2022). The "Belt and Road" (Nanning) Animation and Game Industry Cooperation and Development Forum exemplified this by promoting dialogues around the future of animation in Malaysia-China relations (Sun, 2022).

B. Evolution of Chinese Animation Technology

Chinese animation has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven largely by advancements in digital technology. Initially influenced by Japanese and Western techniques, Chinese animation is now making a global impact, bolstered by improved production quality and storytelling (Sun,

2022). The emphasis on incorporating traditional Chinese cultural narratives, such as mythological stories, has been central to China's animation development. However, this reliance on cultural specificity has presented challenges in international markets, including Malaysia, where audiences may not share the same cultural references (Sun, 2022). Nonetheless, China has made strides in enhancing its animation standards, making its productions competitive in global markets, particularly in ASEAN regions (Sun, 2022).

C. Chinese Animation in the Malaysian Context

The rising popularity of Chinese animation in Malaysia is a testament to the strengthening cultural ties between the two nations, especially through the Belt and Road initiative (Zhang & He, 2021). However, challenges remain in terms of cross-cultural interpretation. According to Liu and Yang (2021), the high-context communication style found in many Chinese animations relies heavily on traditional symbolism, which can be difficult for Malaysian audiences to interpret. Many Chinese animations are adaptations of mythological narratives or online content, which may resonate deeply with Chinese viewers but struggle to evoke similar responses from Malaysian audiences due to cultural differences (Chen, 2018). This highlights the need for innovation in Chinese animation to make it more accessible to Malaysian viewers.

D. Multiculturalism in Animation: The Malaysian Perspective

In Malaysia, multiculturalism is a fundamental national strategy that underscores the harmonious coexistence of its three principal ethnic groups—Malays, Chinese, and Indians (Arlena & Kurniasari, 2013). This policy impacts multiple sectors, including the animation industry, where initiatives aim to integrate varied cultural components into animated productions. Nonetheless, despite its multicultural aspirations, the Malaysian animation industry encounters considerable production obstacles, including constrained finances and fierce rivalry from global powerhouses like as Japan and the West (Hassan & Omar, 2020). Although animation in Malaysia strives to depict the nation's cultural diversity, it must surmount these hurdles to fully achieve its potential in promoting cross-cultural understanding (Arlena & Kurniasari, 2013).

E. Key Themes in Multicultural Exchange Through Animation

Animation offers numerous benefits in multicultural communication, providing a visually engaging and universally accessible medium for sharing cultural narratives. However, as seen in the case of Chinese animation's reception in Malaysia, the symbolic meanings embedded in certain animations may not always translate across cultural boundaries (Chen, 2018). The success of animation as a tool for multicultural exchange depends on both the content and the technological innovations employed. In particular, innovations in narrative structure and visual design are needed to ensure that Chinese animation resonates with Malaysian audiences, given the cultural differences in symbolic interpretation (Liu & Yang, 2021). This highlights the critical role of technological advancements in enhancing the cross-cultural appeal of animation (Li & Xu, 2020).

F. Key Themes in Multicultural Exchange Through Animation

As animation progresses, inventiveness emerges as a crucial element in transcending cultural borders. The integration of advanced animation techniques, including 3D animation and motion capture, enhances the accessibility of animated works, facilitating the bridging of cultural boundaries (Hassan & Omar, 2020). To enhance its presence in the Malaysian market, Chinese animation must innovate in both content and technology. Chinese animation ought to transcend conventional mythological narratives and integrate more universal themes that appeal to a broader audience (Zhang & He, 2021). Similarly, the Malaysian animation sector must persist in investing in technological innovations to maintain competitiveness while reflecting the nation's multicultural identity (Arlena & Kurniasari, 2013). This will guarantee that animation may effectively function as a medium for promoting enhanced multicultural comprehension between Malaysia and China.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design utilising methods such as interviews, observation, and secondary data analysis. A semi-structured interview was conducted to examine the respondents' perspectives on the utilisation and innovation of animation technology in multicultural exchange activities between China and Malaysia. The recommended ideal sample size for participants ranges from 20 to 30, as indicated by Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). The sample size is dictated by 1) sample specificity, 2) known theories, 3) study aims and objectives, 4) communication tactics, and 5) analysis strategies Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Considering these criteria, the sample size is established at 7-9 participants each group (7 Chinese participants and 9 Malaysian participants), totalling 15 participants. They are randomly selected from the animation instructors. To address ethical considerations, numerical identifiers such as CT01 and MT01 were utilised in place of names. A semi-structured interview question list was created for data collection and analysis, comprising open-ended questions. The questions are developed in accordance with the study enquiries to gather information regarding the benefits and drawbacks, importance, obstacles, trajectory, and strategies associated with the utilisation of creative animation techniques in multicultural exchange initiatives in Malaysia and China. The interview is hosted on the online survey platform for convenience. The selected individuals are requested to provide their responses online. The gathered data will be downloaded for subsequent analysis. Given that the data was textual. Content analysis was utilised for its examination. It encompasses scribing, theming, coding, and summarising.

FINDING

A. The animation techniques utilised in multicultural events in Malaysia and China post-2010.

Since 2010, there have been regular multicultural exchanges between China and Malaysia. Animation technology constitutes a significant element of multicultural exchanges between the two nations. According to four out of seven Chinese participants (namely, CT01, CT03, CT04, and CT07), 2D and 3D animation techniques were utilised in the multicultural events in Malaysia and China post-2010. Furthermore, hand-drawn animation, traditional animation, digital animation technology, and VR/AR technology were employed as animation techniques in the post-2010 multicultural events in Malaysia and China. CT01 indicated this, while CT02 partially concurred with CT01 regarding VR and traditional animation; CT03 partially agreed with CT01 concerning digital animation; CT04 partially aligned with CT01 on hand-drawn and traditional animation; and CT05 partially supported CT01 in relation to hand-drawn animation and digital animation technology. These technologies facilitated diverse modes of expression and creative opportunities, enhancing the presentation of multicultural exchange activities. According to the nine Malaysian participants, animations featuring a multicultural theme illustrate the traits and interactions of various ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, disseminated through channels such as cinemas, television, and online platforms, thereby fostering multicultural exchange between the two countries (as per MT09). The animation techniques utilised at post-2010 intercultural events in Malaysia and China encompass flash animation (MT08), VR animation (MT07), 2D animation (MT02), 3D animation (MT02, MT04, MT05, MT06, MT07), and digital animation (MT02). Furthermore, MT01 contended that animation technology primarily relies on audio and video processing techniques, subsequently incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning methodologies, resulting in a multifaceted experience of animation innovation. China commenced its endeavours in animation technology at a somewhat later stage. The nation had achieved considerable advancements in 3D animation and virtual reality technology. The utilisation of VR technology in the development and design of 3D animation has enhanced the interaction of 3D animation, elevating China's animation technology to a new echelon Chen, H. (2020). The application of deep learning and virtual reality technology in animation can enhance the audience's experience. The interview affirmed that China has advanced in animation technology, promoting multicultural exchanges between Malaysia and China.

B. Advantages and disadvantages of using animation techniques in multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia and China.

According to CT06, the animation techniques employed in multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia and China exhibited significant life and cohesiveness. Animation technology has the potential to generate intricate and varied virtual environments that showcase the distinctive attributes of diverse cultures, thereby enhancing the creativity and imagination of the audience. Additionally, it can visually convey abstract concepts and narratives, facilitating the comprehension and acceptance of multicultural content. Virtual reality and augmented reality animation techniques facilitate interactivity and immersion, allowing the audience to engage more profoundly in multicultural activities with an enriched feeling of involvement and experience. Furthermore, it has the potential to dismantle linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering comprehension and interchange among diverse cultures (as per CT01). It might convey intricate multicultural content vividly, facilitating audience comprehension and appreciation of diverse cultures while fostering respect and tolerance for them (according to CT02). CT04 and CT05 contended that the merit of these technologies lay in their innovation and potential to provide a novel visual experience for the audience, while CT07 asserted that they aligned with the cultural traditions of their respective countries and may stimulate interest among cross-cultural audiences. The use of animation technology necessitates sophisticated technical equipment and skilled individuals, potentially elevating the cost and technological barriers, thereby restricting participation from regions or organisations with little resources (CT01, CT03, and CT04). Furthermore, when animation technology conveys multiculturalism, cultural misinterpretation may arise. Nuanced distinctions and delicate matters across various cultures may not be adequately conveyed, leading to the audience's prejudices in comprehending and interpreting cross-cultural interactions (CT01 and CT02). Furthermore, excessive reliance on animation may lead individuals to disengage from authentic multicultural experiences, so diminishing their excitement for participating in multicultural activities. Malaysian participants observed that the utilisation of animation technology introduced unparalleled originality and creativity to multicultural events, enhancing audience engagement and facilitating cultural interchange (MT02). The integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques has facilitated the advancement of multidimensional animation (MT01). Animation technology has the potential to offer extensive creative expression and enhance opportunities for multicultural activities through visual, kinetic, auditory, and other components (MT04). According to MT09, animation technology provided producers with greater opportunities for inventiveness, enabling them to employ numerous special effects, perspectives, and lines to produce rich and diverse animated works, hence enhancing the potential for multicultural events. Furthermore, the animation technology offered an interactive method, enabling the audience to comprehend and engage with the multicultural experience more profoundly (MT03). It could transcend geographical and temporal limitations and include diverse intercultural aspects (MT08). The benefits of employing animation techniques in multicultural exchange activities in Malaysia and China, as perceived by Malaysian participants, were similar to those perceived by their Chinese counterparts. The disadvantages were similarly consistent. Multiple Malaysian participants (MT02, MT04) acknowledged the drawbacks of elevated costs and reliance on skilled professionals.

C. Significance of innovative animation technologies in multicultural exchange activities.

The ideals of diverse cultures can be conveyed, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers, while also enriching the portrayal of narratives and principles through visual effects, motion capture, and virtual reality, rendering them more alive. Moreover, it may assist designers in developing distinctive visual styles that embody the aesthetic traits of other cultures, so garnering increased audience engagement and fostering multicultural dialogue (CT01). Likewise, as per CT03 and CT04, pioneering animation technology transcended linguistic and cultural barriers, effectively communicating information and cultural nuances visually, so allowing audiences to experience the allure and distinctiveness of many cultures more intuitively. Cutting-edge animation technology designed for the youth who prefer digital mediums, facilitating enhanced interaction and the dissemination of multicultural knowledge (CT02). CT06 contended that the multicultural attributes of creative animation technology may mitigate misconceptions during

communication and collaboration. Malaysian participants articulated comparable viewpoints regarding the importance of innovative animation technology, which has the potential to transcend temporal and spatial constraints, facilitating the dissemination of multicultural activities across various locations and times, thereby allowing audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds to appreciate them (MT03). Advanced animation technology may convey the attributes and principles of multiculturalism, enhancing the audience's comprehension and appreciation through visual effects, motion, and sound elements (MT04). MT06 contended that creative animation technology fulfils the demands of the globalised and digital age, which necessitates the dissemination of multicultural attributes and the articulation of multicultural ideas. MT08 contended that revolutionary animation technology increased the sense of immersion, engagement, and experience. MT02 and MT09 indicated that innovative animation technology has the potential to transcend language and cultural barriers, effectively conveying multicultural narratives in a more vivid manner. This advancement allows cross-cultural audiences to engage without the constraints of linguistic and cultural differences, enhancing comprehension and providing an immersive experience.

D. Challenges of innovative animation in multicultural exchange activities.

Divergences and misconceptions among many cultures necessitated that inventive animation identify suitable modes of expression, grounded in respect and comprehension of diverse cultures, to prevent cultural conflicts or misunderstandings. The creation of creative animation necessitated substantial investment in financial resources, labour, and technical equipment. The constraints in funding and resources may adversely impact innovation in animation production. Animation technologies are ever advancing, necessitating that animation creators or producers continually acquire knowledge and adapt to new techniques and tools to maintain their competitiveness. The primary hurdles encountered by inventive animation in multicultural communication activities were identified as the complexities of technology research and development, communication constraints stemming from cultural differences, and market acceptance (CT01, CT03, CT04). CT06 contended that the absence of professional skill and a deficiency in innovative thinking or consciousness posed barriers to inventive animation in intercultural exchange initiatives. According to the Malaysian participants, the challenges stem from technological innovation and enhancement (MT01), technical proficiency and resource constraints (MT02), cultural disparities (MT02, MT04), marketing issues (MT03, MT05), acceptance within the local market (MT02, MT09), a shortage of skilled professionals (MT07), insufficient feedback or development (MT08), and the preservation of traditional culture (MT06).

E. Directions for Innovative Animation in Multicultural Exchange Initiatives

The trajectories of innovative animation in ethnic exchange initiatives encompassed technology advancements, including virtual reality and augmented reality. Style innovation, exemplified by the cross-cultural amalgamation of artistic expression; Content innovation, characterised by the incorporation of diverse cultural components into animated works; Localisation and cross-cultural collaboration, including the integration of local cultural aspects and diverse cultures (CT01, CT02, CT03, CT04, CT05). Innovative animation can showcase multicultural material by developing distinctive storylines and narratives, delving into the classic tales of other cultures, myths, and legends, or crafting fresh stories infused with multicultural aspects. Multicultural content can be delivered through emerging technologies and media, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), offering a more immersive experience and heightened engagement, thereby enriching viewers' comprehension and interaction with diverse cultures, as well as examining the artistic styles, patterns, colours, and other elements of various cultures, or amalgamating multiple cultural elements to produce distinctive artistic effects. Multicultural content may be developed through cross-cultural collaboration and exchange to collectively investigate and articulate multicultural themes and values (CT01), presented in a contemporary manner, reinterpreting traditional narratives and legends, while incorporating innovative elements to enhance cultural vibrancy and facilitate comprehension and acceptance among the younger generation (CT02, CT06). Malaysian participants share analogous views regarding the directions of inventive animation in multicultural exchange events. They suggested innovating narratives and characters across cultural barriers, adeptly merging traditional culture with contemporary aspects to develop

original and engaging scenarios (MT02, MT03, MT04). Innovative animation has the potential to construct diverse multicultural realms through distinctive artistic styles and visual effects, employing varied colour palettes, line work, and lighting techniques, or amalgamating contemporary art with traditional cultural elements to forge a singular visual experience, thereby facilitating viewer immersion in a multicultural environment (MT09). Utilising traditional cultural resources to innovatively develop animation scripts represents a pragmatic approach for the sustainable advancement of the animation industry (MT01), whereas the global outsourcing of animation production has emerged as the predominant trend in the industrialisation era (MT05).

F. strategies for Innovating Animation Techniques in Multicultural Exchange Activities.

Concerning strategies for inventing animation techniques in multicultural exchange activities, Chinese participants possess distinct perspectives. CT01 stipulates that before to producing a multicultural animation, it is essential to conduct comprehensive research and comprehend the pertinent cultural context, values, and customs to prevent misunderstandings and disputes. Furthermore, multicultural animation designers or producers ought to collaborate with designers, developers, and artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to make multicultural animation. Collaboration and exchange can amalgamate creativity and perspectives from diverse cultures, so enhancing the content and expression of animation. Furthermore, it was essential to investigate traditional narratives, myths, and legends from diverse cultures, or to craft original stories incorporating multicultural elements; examine the artistic styles, patterns, colours, and other attributes of various cultures, and amalgamate these cultural elements to produce distinctive artistic effects. Moreover, it was essential to employ emerging technologies and mediums such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and interactive animation to provide more immersive experiences and enhance engagement (CT01). CT06 condensed it into three phases: exploration, exploration, and innovation. The initial step involves examining the traditional cultures of various societies to identify themes and elements for animation scripts; the subsequent step entails investigating and acquiring knowledge of contemporary technologies, particularly advanced animation techniques in Western nations; the final step is to audaciously innovate animation styles and modes of expression. CT02 prioritised cultural authenticity, correctness, and audience approval. It required consultation with a cultural expert to guarantee the content's authenticity and accuracy, devoid of biases and misconceptions. Furthermore, it is essential to perform pertinent research to comprehend the diverse needs of audiences, considering their varying ages, ethnicities, and cultures. CT07 recommended the implementation of novel technologies, including artificial intelligence and deep learning techniques. Malaysian individuals employed methods that were largely similar to those of Chinese participants. They proposed enhancing the training of animation professionals and advancing technology research and development to elevate creative standards and competitiveness. Simultaneously, emphasise cross-cultural collaboration and acquire insights from the animation practices of many nations. Governments and cultural institutions can offer training, incentives, and exhibition opportunities to enhance the creativity of youth (MT03). Honour and examine the target culture while comprehending and valuing its principles, traditions, and expressions (MT04, MT09). Diverse modes of expression tailored to market and audience demands (MT05) enhance the creativity and originality of animation scripts, promote uniqueness (MT06, MT07), engage market participants, social groups, and professional entities in animation production, and facilitate cross-border collaboration and intercultural exchange (MT08, MT09).

DISCUSSION

A. Globalisation, Emerging Generations, and Innovative Technologies.

Currently, globalisation is an inexorable trend. Animation serves as a significant tool for disseminating culture and enhancing global influence. Chinese animation is being integrated into a global context. Chinese animation is striving to incorporate diverse cultural elements and focus on regional markets, including the Malaysian market Yoon, H. (2015). Chinese animation significantly contributes to the multicultural interaction initiatives between Malaysia and China. Malaysia is a multicultural nation characterised by

diverse ethnicities, faiths, and traditions. Globalisation has influenced it by augmenting its multiculturalism Pawil,A.; Nasir, N. Affendi, N.; Toyo, H. & Arifi, M.(2020). When producing animation, meticulous attention must be paid to cultural symbols and material to prevent upsetting any community. It must honour the culture of each group to ensure that inventive animation effectively represents the values and traits of many cultures, considering diversity.

Furthermore, the tech-savvy Alpha Generation influences the innovation of animation techniques in ethnic exchange initiatives. The alpha generation denotes those born from 2010 to 2025. They require digital competencies as they reside in the digital age. They will adopt innovation, progressiveness, and progression. For audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds, such as Malaysian and Chinese cultures, the animation may require moderate customisation. The cultural practices and aesthetic perspectives of various countries and groups change, necessitating adjustments, adaptations, and localisation to enhance the ability of animation to effectively communicate cultural information in multicultural contexts. Moreover, animation technologies are perpetually advancing, necessitating that animation creators or producers continuously acquire knowledge and adapt to new techniques and tools to maintain their competitiveness. Contemporary animation makers must thoroughly evaluate the originality of their work alongside market demand to achieve equilibrium; they are expected to possess unique creativity and expression while adapting old animations with multicultural elements.

B. Limitation

This study had several constraints. This research was qualitative in nature. Consequently, it possessed the limitations typically associated with qualitative research. Secondly, the interview was conducted by self-reporting through an online survey platform rather than through a face-to-face interview. Numerous participants may not fully get the researcher's goal, resulting in unhelpful responses to some questions. Thirdly, the data analysis was influenced by subjective biases.

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