

Review Article

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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Shaping Cultural Narratives and Values Education in Eastern Animation: Opportunities, Risks, and Future Directions

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Abstract

Background/purpose. The integration of Artificial Intelligence across creative fields, including Eastern animation, has the potential to contribute significantly to not only the development of production and narratives but also to the achievement of educational objectives. This article examines the impact of AI on culture, symbolism, and values education through animated narratives. This analysis examines the ways in which AI technologies can serve as a means of cultural expression and unofficial channels for the transmission of moral and ethical values within educational settings.

Materials/methods. Over 60 peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and published dissertations between 2002 and 2025 were analyzed through a qualitative systematic review and thematic analysis. The data were accessed from prominent academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, and SpringerLink. Thematic coding methods were employed to identify trends in AI's impact on narrative form, cultural symbolism, educational applications, and value transmission.

Results. The results indicate that AI streamlines the animation workflow, makes production more accessible, and transforms the narrative form. Nonetheless, there are concerns about losing cultural depth and moral character when the use of AI is not culture-informed. Several studies have shown support for the concept of using culture-informed AI applications in animation for values education, integrating moral and symbolic lessons into the story. This makes East Asian animation a highly influential medium, both for preserving culture and promoting moral education.

Conclusion. AI can become an agent of transformation for education when used with culturally sensitive paradigms. With the use of local data, working collaboratively with educators, and the development of ethical frameworks, AI-powered Eastern animation can be beneficial not just to the creative sector but also to educational institutions, promoting values, education, and cultural literacy through inspiring digital stories.



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1. Introduction

The influence of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into artistic fields has created seismic changes in the production, consumption, and construction of media sense alike. The most impacted is animation, where AI-powered software is increasingly used to augment production pipelines, automate functions, and even create original work. From deep learning algorithms that generate photorealistic human movement to neural networks that recreate artistic style, AI has accelerated the prototyping of animated scenes at a rapid speed, consequently shortening the time and labor required in traditional pipelines (Mourot et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2023). These technological advancements reconstruct production machinery and influence aesthetic decisions, narrative elements, and, on a grand scale, cultural meaning in animated works (Bao, 2022; Zhao et al., 2023).

Eastern animation—encompassing Japanese anime and its counterparts in development in China and South Korea—has long served as a powerful means of communicating cultural identity, intergenerational memory, and societal values. While most Western-style animations tend to revolve around commercial tropes and globalized themes, Eastern animation reveals unique storytelling styles based on local mythos, historical symbolism, and philosophical schools such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism (Price, 2001; Wu & Wang, 2020). Using symbolic imagery, complex character development, and moral ambiguity, Eastern animated stories are cultural artifacts in their own right, synthesizing past and present and transmitting national identity to a global discourse (Ye, 2022; Buwadi, 2020). The distinctive aesthetic sensibilities and thematic richness in anime and associated genres are emotionally affecting and convey longstanding cultural philosophies unavailable through other formats.

Nevertheless, as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integral to content production—from auto-writing scripts to generating visual styles—there is growing visibility to the tension between cultural authenticity and automation. Global-scale data used to train AI systems may be unfamiliar with the particularity of local or cultural narratives. Thus, Scholars and artists are increasingly concerned that AI-created animation will inadvertently flatten cultural sophistication or mirror mainstream aesthetic norms at the loss of local representation (Kulesz, 2018; Liu & Song, 2022). This technological development raises philosophical and ethical questions: Can AI be taught to appreciate cultural diversity? Can a machine internalize the generational trauma, folklore, or moral complexity typically inherent in Eastern animation? Or is there a built-in limitation in leaving non-human systems to bear responsibility for storytelling based on communal memory and feeling?

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) across innovative industry sectors has fueled debate around its implications not just on the production process but also on education and culture. Although extensive research has been conducted on the use of AI to automate animation and enhance digital media (Li et al., 2021; Chen & Park, 2022), the potential of AI to influence cultural narratives and values education has not been thoroughly explored in the context of Eastern animation. Based on the rich philosophical and ethical underpinnings of Eastern animation, it provides the rich context through which to explore the ways technology is reconfiguring narrative forms and value-laden narratives. Still, there has been limited research on the implications of AI-generated stories for preserving, distorting, or evolving the symbolic components. This study fills a gap by examining the ways in which AI technologies reconfigure the forms of storytelling and values-laden narratives through Eastern animation, with a specific focus on their implications for education. This contributes to current scholarly debates around culturally responsive AI (Rettberg, 2024; Oztabak, 2025) and places Eastern animation on the map for values education in formal and non-formal settings.

Hopefully, some imagine that when developed with ethical integrity and cultural sensitivity, AI can become a useful collaborator in preserving and enhancing cultural narratives. To demonstrate,

machine learning programs can be instructed to recreate extinct art schools, revive lost animation collections, or make specialized material accessible to a broad global audience without compromising cultural fidelity. AI can even transform new creators with limited means into creating culturally rich stories at a fraction of the traditional production overhead. These perspectives foster a more thoughtful conversation, rather than idealizing or demonizing AI, by seeking a new equilibrium for it within the contexts of creation and culture. Therefore, because Eastern animation frequently draws from traditional folklore, philosophy, and symbolic narratives, it serves as a rich medium for the transmission of cultural and ethical values. In this sense, the intersection of AI and animation also has implications for values education, particularly in shaping how younger generations engage with moral and cultural frameworks through digital media.

This research examines how artificial intelligence influences, reimagines, or even challenges cultural narratives in Eastern animation. Based on a systematic review of existing literature and case studies, this paper examines the double-edged effects of AI as both a driver of innovation in creativity and a potential cause of cultural decay. The aim is to present a holistic view of the opportunities and dangers of AI technologies in this particular cultural-creative sector and to discuss possible strategies for using AI in a manner that is both responsible and effective in maintaining and developing Eastern cultural stories in animation.

To guide this inquiry, the study is framed around the following research questions:

1. How is artificial intelligence currently integrated into the production of Eastern animation?
2. What are the implications of AI technologies on the authenticity and preservation of cultural narratives in Eastern animation?
3. How can AI be ethically and effectively used to enhance rather than erode cultural identity in animated storytelling?
4. What frameworks or practices can support the glocalization of AI tools in culturally sensitive ways?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Rise of AI in Animation Production

Over the last few years, artificial intelligence has made a significant entry into the animation industry, not just in the form of supporting tools, but as a paradigm-shifting force revolutionizing the way animation is imagined, produced, and disseminated. AI has a significant impact on nearly every step in the creative pipeline, spanning from pre-production to post-production. Animation studios are increasingly testing machine learning models capable of generating visual frames, replicating human movements, and even simulating voices, thereby automating labor while increasing speed and uniformity (Li, 2021; Bao, 2022). This is not merely about efficiency; it is about transforming the very nature of authorship, control over aesthetics, and creative autonomy around animation.

The most well-known among them include generative adversarial networks (GANs), used to generate intricate visual styles and texture; natural language processing (NLP) models that assist in generating scripts and dialogue; and deep learning-based animation systems capable of animating characters with a high degree of fidelity and fluidity (Pardeshi & Mude, 2024; Sharma et al., 2023). The above tools bring about capabilities beyond mere automation—and even replicate human-like creativity to a point previously deemed impossible. For example, AlphaGd, a model tested by Li (2021), illustrates how AI can emulate aesthetic decision-making typically carried out by animators and directors, and shows how algorithmic inputs can be transformed into artistic productions subject to certain constraints.

At a macro level, researchers are starting to explore how AI remakes animation production economics and organizational configurations. Chen et al. (2024), in an empirical study using network data envelopment analysis, encountered considerable production efficiency gains when AI tools were employed at several developmental stages. Evans (2024) also outlines in his thesis how the concentration of AI technologies in production pipelines disrupts studio hierarchies and labor processes, arguing that this process results in a concentration of creative control among a limited number of AI-educated professionals.

However, AI's influence extends beyond studio-level effectiveness. It also reshapes creative dynamics in the industry by opening up participation to a wider range of people. Technologies such as text-to-motion systems, voice cloning, and AI-driven video editors are reducing entry barriers for solo animators and creators to join in without investing in large teams or costly equipment (Izani et al., 2024). Such democratization of production is likely to bring a wider range of content and viewpoints along with it, even if it raises new questions about originality, authorship, and standardization of visual language.

AI has evolved from a pioneering experiment to a core component in contemporary animation production. Early adoption was aimed at speeding up work processes. Today's applications indicate AI is deeply integrated in the very process of storytelling and creativity in animation. The future will be about refining these tools for production and how they intersect with the overall cultural and storytelling purposes of animated content.

2.2. Cultural Storytelling in Eastern Animation

Eastern animation, particularly Japanese anime and newer Chinese and Korean productions, has evolved into a profoundly expressive medium for cultural storytelling. Differing markedly from the largely commercial storytelling characteristic of much Western animation is the tendency in Eastern productions to weave in layered symbolism, folklore, and centuries-old philosophical traditions. These elements are not merely stylistic trappings; they are communicative devices that imbue the visual and narrative structure with socio-cultural values, moral ideologies, and national identity (Zin et al., 2010; Fang et al., 2017). By virtue of precise design elements in character design, color symbolism, and narrative form, Eastern animation invariably stresses collectivism, harmonious coexistence with nature, and respect for ancestry—issues that deeply resonate with its target audiences.

One of the distinguishing features of Eastern animation lies in its incorporation of mythological and philosophical references as part of the overall plot. A plethora of anime shows borrow Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, Confucian morality, or Taoist cosmology to derive moral questions, outline character motivations, or establish magical worlds modeled along the real world's spiritual aspects. These are not used to simply set a context; they form a multi-layered experience of storytelling that provokes introspection and cultural contemplation (Shah et al., 2022). The application of non-linear narratives, poetic imagery, and emotional nuance is more apparent in Eastern animation compared to Western counterparts, characterized by a more goal-driven and conflict-based approach (Asparuhova & Patera, 2020; Price, 2001).

The function of animation in cultural transmission and preservation is particularly vital in a globalized media landscape. As described in a study of Chinese animation by Wu and Wang (2020), cultural confidence rebuilt through animated media is viewed simultaneously in an artistic and national soft-power sense. Along the same line, folk storytelling and traditional symbolism—especially in an edutainment format—have helped promote socio-cultural awareness among young generations by blending learning with emotional resonance (Zin & Nasir, 2007). This is what enables Eastern animation to serve simultaneously as a package for entertainment and a storehouse for the transfer of intangible heritage for generations to come.

Apart from this, the emotional resonance between viewers and characters, as well as worlds that reflect one's own backgrounds, serves to bear witness to animation as a medium of belonging. Asparuhova and Patera (2020) identify the manner in which cultural nostalgia, evoked through familiarity with identifiable landscapes, habits, and values, is capable of creating an enhanced sense of identity and grounding. This is most visibly seen among diaspora communities, particularly those where anime and culturally representative animations have the capacity to bridge geographical distance and cultural continuity.

Last but not least, Eastern animation is a dynamic and evolving cultural vocabulary. The stories themselves are infused with significance representative of worldview, morality, and understanding in cultures where they are imagined. As AI is starting to influence the way such narratives are created, the issue arises whether AI programs can represent and convey such intense cultural codes without compromising their legitimacy.

2.3. Intersections Between AI and Cultural Expression

Human imagination is increasingly running up against artificial intelligence, creating a new field of creative practice replete with thrilling and unsettling implications. On the positive side, AI is presenting artists, animators, and creators with previously inconceivable tools to draw upon the wealth of culture, re-imagine canonical themes, and explore new narratives. From text-to-image synthesis to motion synthesis and culturally adaptive speech models, never have cross-cultural collaboration between creatives been so feasible. These tools are accelerating production and opening historically marginalised voices to engage in global cultural debates with fewer economic and institutional barriers (Santos, 2025; Chen, 2024). For example, projects like Text2Tradition demonstrate how AI can facilitate co-creation between cultural contexts by translating oral history and traditional traditions into a novel visual format through machine learning algorithms (Pataranutaporn et al., 2024).

This intersection also has essential philosophical and ethical consequences. While AI can mimic cultural narratives in form—visual aesthetic, symbolic motifs, even linguistic cadence—it cannot consistently deliver cultural experience in substance. Critics believe machine-driven cultural representation threatens to be simulations without real-world grounding, most drastically so when built without in-depth context or citizen inclusion (Tiwari & Tiwari, 2025; Chatterjee, 2025). The outcome is a state of "cultural flattening," in which multi-generational narratives are reduced to computational motifs in a process that potentially deprives traditions of their historical and affective richness.

These are also amplified by global data sets that validate most AI applications, which are often biased towards mainstream culture and language. As Kulesz (2018) and Liu and Song (2022) cautioned, this bias can erase minority histories or entrench hegemonic cultural norms in the guise of technological neutrality. An instance would be a generative model whose Western animation styles form the majority of its foundations, distorting or disrepresenting Eastern animation aesthetic codes in a form of inauthentic representation or incoherent innovation.

Nonetheless, other scientists are hopeful. Wang and Kerry (2024) point out that when balanced through ethics, AI and culture have the potential to generate useful hybrids that are respectful of local traditions yet open to global connectivity. Here, AI is rather an augmentation of human creativity than a disruptor. That is achieved through a balance with careful attention to authorship, intentionality, and cultural responsibility.

In total, artificial intelligence and cultural expression are very human phenomena rather than purely technological ones. They question what we can mean by authenticity, identity, and even

creativity. The solution to whether AI will be a gateway or a wall to cultural richness is, to a large degree, what we feed into these systems in respect of ethics and what we empower to control them.

2.4. Research Gaps and Theoretical Tensions

While artificial intelligence in animation has widely been researched technically in the majority of animation communities in Eastern countries, little critical analysis is found with respect to its cultural and narrative aspects. Current literature is more inclined to illustrate how AI software results in efficiency gains in production and yields aesthetically appealing results. However, it hardly questions whether such results are culturally authentic, symbolically meaningful, or emotionally complex in traditionally produced works. Moreover, interdisciplinary discussion is lacking. Research in computer science, cultural studies, and media studies, as well as cultural theory, remains departmentalized, presenting a fractured view of how AI redefines storytelling in areas where technology and identity intersect.

Another critical tension relates to authorship, agency, and cultural ownership. While AI programs are trained on culturally complex datasets and produce stories saturated in local symbols or philosophies, it is less obvious who should take responsibility for cultural accuracy or ethical representation. Furthermore, very little empirical work exists on local audience reactions to AI-created narratives—whether they are perceived as real or viewed as disconnected simulations. Ethical principles and regulatory models for preserving cultural integrity in AI-created media are in their early development phases, provoking questions about the commodification or homogenization of local cultural expressions in the pursuit of innovation. Bridging these gaps will require a more culturally sensitive, ethically active, and multi-disciplinary research approach.

To highlight these gaps more clearly, Table 1 outlines major recent studies examining the nexus between AI and cultural expression, and it highlights the current unresolved tensions.

While numerous studies have documented the technical integration of AI in animation pipelines—such as the enhancement of workflow efficiency and automation of visual production (Li, 2021; Chen et al., 2024)—a notable absence remains in research that critically interrogates the cultural implications of these advancements in Eastern contexts. Academic research, such as Liu & Song (2022) and Bao (2022), recognizes the economic potential of AI in the cultural sector but lacks investigation into how narratives created using AI may distort or dilute symbolic stories originating from Eastern practices. Similarly, while Wu and Wang (2020) highlight the significance of animation in strengthening cultural identity in China, they fail to examine the ways in which AI technologies can transform or erode this identity. Conversely, newer critiques (e.g., Rettberg, 2024; Oztalak, 2025) have sounded the alarm at the homogenization potential of generative AI, arguing that the machine reproduction of folklore and culture may erase the affective richness and symbolic nuance.

The warnings are generally speculative and lack empirical basis specific to Eastern animation. The gap between the technological accomplishments of AI and the cultural sensitivity required to tell authentic stories constitutes an important research gap. The subject increasingly requires an interdisciplinary study that bridges AI's artistic capabilities with the preservation of Eastern animation's cultural sensitivity. This study aims to address that void by evaluating not just how AI transforms production, but whether it can—or should—be entrusted with the cultural responsibility of narrating identity-based stories.

Table 1. Summary of Key Studies and Their Contributions to AI and Cultural Expression

Author(s) and Year	Focus Area	Key Insight	Identified Gap or Tension
Chatterjee (2025)	AI, creativity, and politics	AI shapes creativity through political and social filters	Lacks cultural specificity for Eastern contexts
Pataranutaporn et al. (2024)	AI-mediated cultural co-creation	AI enables cross-cultural storytelling with traditional inputs	Does not address long-term cultural ownership and authenticity
Liu & Song (2022)	AI and global value chains in culture	AI can sustain cultural industries economically	Overlooks risks of narrative homogenization
Wu & Wang (2020)	Chinese animation and cultural identity	Animation strengthens cultural confidence	No examination of AI's role in modifying that identity
Tiwari & Tiwari (2025)	Consciousness, philosophy, and AI	Raising philosophical concerns of non-human cultural expression	Lacks empirical application in media production

3. Methodology

This qualitative review study employs a systematic methodology to investigate how artificial intelligence (AI) affects cultural narratives in Eastern animation. The methodology is grounded in a thematic analysis framework, which enables the synthesis, comparison, and extraction of trends and insights from peer-reviewed sources. The study aims to identify the opportunities, threats, and conceptual tensions inherent in AI's interaction with culturally rooted storytelling traditions in animation.

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative design was employed to investigate the intersection of AI technologies with cultural representation in Eastern animation. This suited a study aimed to uncover complex cultural and creative dynamics impossible to measure but full of significance. Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytical technique to identify recurring motifs, theoretical insights, and cultural implications across the selected literature. The methodology is compatible with critical and hermeneutic readings of scholarly sources across fields such as computer science, media studies, digital arts, and cultural theory.

Several strategies were used to ensure methodological rigor. These included triangulation of data sources across disciplines, application of a transparent coding process, and frequent re-evaluation of themes against original texts. Inter-coder reliability was informally checked through peer review of coding decisions. Reflexivity was maintained throughout to minimize bias, particularly in interpreting culturally embedded narratives.

3.2. Data Sources

The data were accessed in this review through four academic databases known to be reliable: Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, and SpringerLink. The platforms were specifically chosen for their suitability to the interdisciplinary nature of the study, cutting across technology, artificial intelligence, cultural theory, and media studies.

Scopus provides extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in technology, the social sciences, and the arts, with a solid multidisciplinary core. Web of Science was selected for its coverage of top-ranked journals in cultural studies and communications. IEEE Xplore was used to ensure technological depth through access to specialized studies on AI-enabled applications and tools in digital media. SpringerLink contributed literature from media studies, design, and creative technology, aligning with the review's focus on cultural narratives in Eastern animation.

The search was limited to publications from 2002 to 2025 and restricted to English-language sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, high-quality conference proceedings, and doctoral dissertations.

In total, 62 scholarly sources were included in this review. These consisted of 43 peer-reviewed journal articles, 12 conference proceedings, and 7 doctoral dissertations. These studies were selected based on their relevance to Eastern animation, artificial intelligence applications, and cultural narratives. The final pool was determined after applying both the inclusion and exclusion criteria described below. As summarized in Table 2, each database was selected based on its disciplinary coverage and relevance to the research objectives.

Table 2. Data Sources and Inclusion Criteria Overview

Database	Focus Areas Covered	Reason for Inclusion
Scopus	Technology, social sciences, and arts	Multidisciplinary and peer-reviewed scope
Web of Science	Cultural studies, communication	High-impact journals
IEEE Xplore	Computer science, AI applications	Technical depth in AI tools
SpringerLink	Media studies, design, creativity	Cultural and creative technology research

3.3. Search and Inclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological rigor, a structured keyword-based search strategy was implemented. Keywords included: "AI and animation," "artificial intelligence and cultural identity," "Eastern animation and technology," "machine learning in storytelling," and "AI in anime." Boolean operators and truncations were used for search precision.

As shown in Figure 1, the inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed academic sources published between 2002 and 2025, with a clear emphasis on Eastern animation, AI-driven storytelling, and cultural narratives.

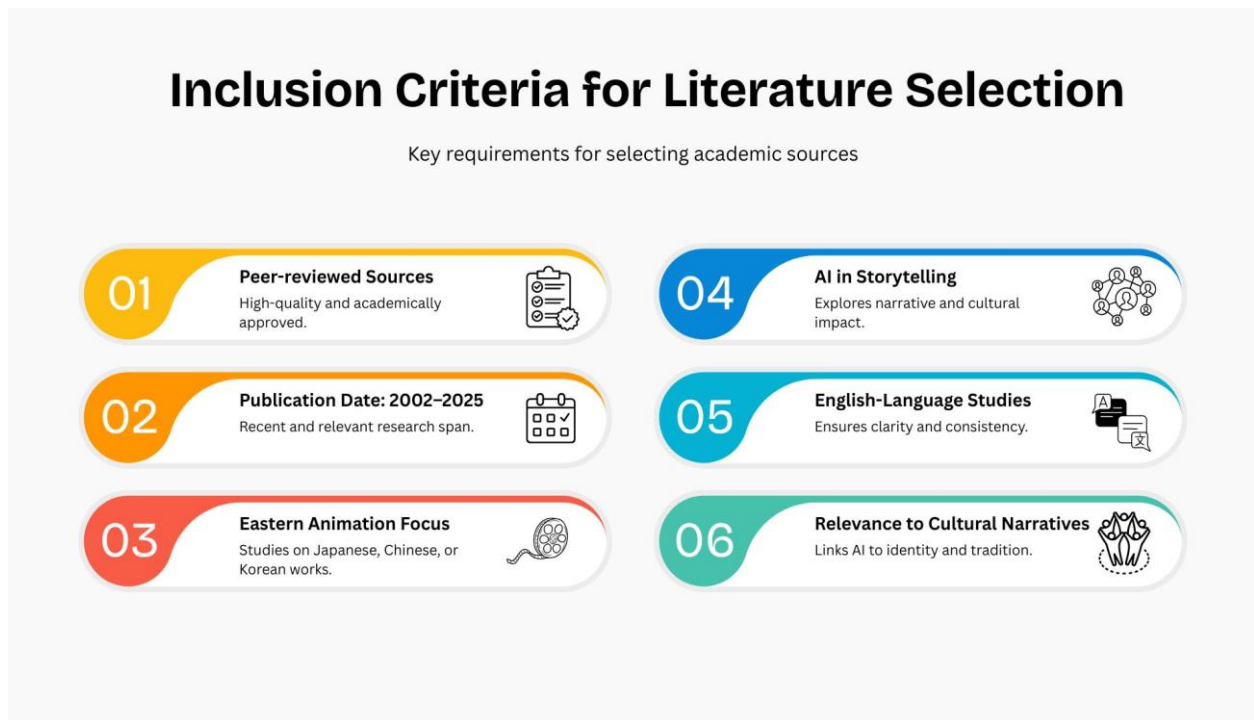


Figure 1. Inclusion Criteria for Literature Selection.

3.4. Exclusion Criteria

During the literature selection process, defined exclusion criteria were applied to ensure clarity, focus, and relevance. These criteria were essential in filtering out studies that did not meet the review's thematic or methodological requirements. Publications were excluded if they focused solely on Western animation, lacked any cultural or narrative dimension, or addressed artificial intelligence in purely technical terms without connecting to storytelling or identity.

Additionally, non-English sources were excluded to maintain consistency in language analysis, and studies with inaccessible full texts were omitted to ensure that all included materials could be thoroughly evaluated.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the exclusion criteria reflect the study's commitment to maintaining a clear analytical scope centered on culturally grounded narratives and the ethical use of AI in Eastern animation contexts.

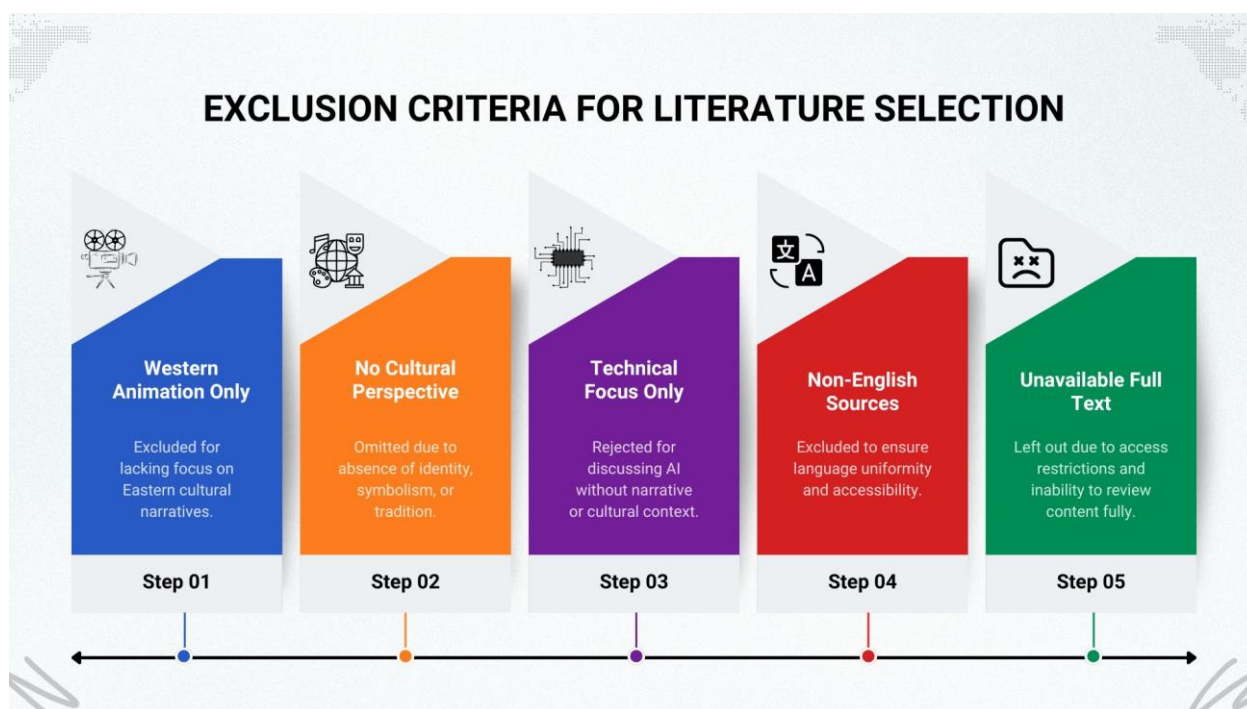


Figure 2. Exclusion Criteria for Literature Selection

3.5. Data Extraction and Thematic Coding

All selected studies were first imported into a reference management system for sorting and duplicate removal. Data extraction focused on gathering relevant details on research context, methodology, AI application, cultural elements, and educational implications. The extracted content was then subjected to a thematic coding process guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) five-phase model.

1. Familiarization with Data: All selected studies were read in full to develop a comprehensive understanding of their narrative frameworks, educational components, and symbolic content.
2. Initial Coding: Recurring concepts, such as "cultural authenticity," "automated storytelling," "narrative homogenization," "values transmission," and "glocalization," were identified and coded.
3. Theme Development: Codes were grouped into thematic categories, including opportunities, risks, educational impact, and ethical challenges.
4. Reviewing Themes: The categories were reviewed to ensure clarity, distinctiveness, and consistency with the study's research objectives.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Finalized themes were labeled to reflect core findings and linked to corresponding research questions.

3.6. Data Analysis and Synthesis

The thematic analysis conducted in this review followed a sequential five-step process to extract meaningful insights from the selected literature.

The process was initiated with data familiarization in the first step. The latter constituted a thorough and detailed read of all studies contained in it to appreciate their overall ideas, background context, and area of study. This helped the researcher to gain a thorough grounding in the matter before codification.

In step two, initial coding, including main patterns, persistent themes, and pertinent keywords, was conducted systematically throughout the dataset. These codes documented significant characteristics of data on AI, cultural representation and narratives.

The third phase involved grouping the generated codes into initial thematic categories that represented similar ideas and recurring themes related to the studies, such as cultural authenticity, automated storytelling, or ethics.

In step four, theme review, previously identified themes were clarified and re-examined to ensure they were unique, consistent, and suitable for the study's goals. This involved the combination of similar themes and elimination of weak or redundant ones.

Lastly, the fifth step in theme definition and naming was to clearly define what each theme meant and assign a proper and suitable label to facilitate organized discussion of the findings. This ensured that each theme was well-grounded in concepts and aligned with the overall purposes of the review.

3.7. Limitations of the Review

This study is a thorough thematic synthesis, but it is limited in its use of only English-language sources and may therefore overlook potentially applicable regional studies. The nature of thematic analysis is also a potential contributor to interpretive bias, despite objective measures. Lastly, the dynamic nature of AI-enabled technologies ensures that developments over the last years might be beyond publication timelines in scholarship and are thus underreported in the reviewed literature.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Risks and Cultural Challenges of AI

Artificial intelligence has also become an influential instrument of the animation sector, transforming traditional production processes drastically using automation, real-time rendering, and smart narrative systems. This technology is not free of profound culture and artistic dangers—on the contrary, even more so given the centrality of narrative traditions and symbolic narration to Eastern animation. The reviewed literature makes it clear that the technologies themselves, which streamline workflow and increase accessibility, can, at the same time, erode artistic legitimacy, narrative, and cultural specificity. Wang and Chung (2024) offer strong evidence on the use of AI-facilitated 3D engines to reduce rendering time and generate detailed, smooth animation scenes. However, such efficiency is accompanied with possible cultural implications. With a focus on speed and complexity, such tools inadvertently sideline traditional hand-drawn animation methods, which are typically at the heart of Eastern visual narration. Adriana and Song (2024) highlight the advantage of using real-time feedback mechanisms and adaptive animation pipeline to support engaging digital narration.

Such mechanisms, however, risk facilitating homogenized narrative structures, shrinking the space for contemplative, culturally sensitive pacing typical of much Eastern narrative forms. Democratization of production is another leading result of AI integration. Izani et al. (2024) explain the ways in which AI-powered tools, such as style transfer and scene composition, lower the threshold of entry for solo creatives as well as small studios. This has the potential to make the animation industry more diversified in terms of participation. Conversely, the decline of human agency in fundamental creative functions has implications of homogenization of artistic voice and the loss of symbolic nuance, which tends to rely on rich cultural understanding and subjective interpretation. Chen et al. (2024) support these findings with evidence from empirical research, indicating that the use of AI significantly enhances production efficiency.

However, such productivity gains may have an unseen cost. The greater use of algorithmic generation has the potential to unintentionally homogenize visual and storytelling forms, trading

localized style and native forms of storytelling for globally recognizable yet culturally superficial patterns. Perhaps most importantly, Yixuan, Harun, and Dongyu (2024) point toward the deeper ethical implications of AI use in animation.

Their research shows an increasing tension between the artistic autonomy of humans and the algorithmic strictures of machine outputs. Although AI enables quicker prototyping and greater accessibility, it also threatens to centralize artistic control at the level of the program itself—to the point where it raises concerns about authorship, the preservation of cultural integrity, and the role of human judgment in narrative. Overdependence on AI may reduce the role of humans to the level of post-processing, undermining the signifying plenitude characteristic of East Asian animation traditions. Together, the papers demonstrate a duality: while AI offers potent animation enhancement capabilities, it also poses significant challenges to maintaining cultural authenticity, narrative richness, and creative independence. Overcoming them requires not only technical ingenuity but also ethical guidance and sensitivity to culture, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Findings – Risks and Cultural Challenges of AI in Animation Production

Key Theme	Description	Supporting References
Workflow Optimization	AI reduces time and cost in scene rendering and animation tasks.	Chen et al. (2024); Izani et al. (2024)
Creative Flexibility	Real-time feedback and adaptive workflows may standardize storytelling formats and pacing.	Adriana & Song (2024); Wang & Chung (2024)
Democratization of Production	AI platforms empower small studios but may reduce personal expression and cultural symbolism.	Izani et al. (2024).
Efficiency Gains	Productivity increases may overshadow the importance of cultural nuance and localized aesthetics.	Chen et al. (2024).
Ethical and Creative Concerns	Raises questions about authenticity, narrative control, and the diminishing role of human authorship.	Yixuan et al. (2024)

4.2. Opportunities of AI in Eastern Animation

Not only is AI reshaping the technical side of animation, but it is also offering great possibilities for cross-cultural storytelling in the Eastern context. With careful use, AI can become a cultural amplifier, magnifying localized stories, safeguarding the intangible, and presenting traditional symbols to diverse audiences through innovative means. Various experts note that the future of AI is promising, particularly when it is applied through ethical and culturally sensitive practices. Although Rettberg (2024) has legitimate complaints about the homogenization of narratives, her criticism indirectly identifies an opportunity: the utilization of AI to increase access to stories across national lines through its use as a disseminator to generate, translate, and spread localized stories more effectively—a boon to underrepresented regional tellers.

With proper guidance, this can lead to the conservation and commemoration of diverse cultures, rather than their erasure. Oztabak (2025) emphasizes the adaptation of folklore and myth in AI-produced content. There is risk involved but the promise is to develop AI systems educated on culturally specific sets of data that maintain symbolic significance. These kinds of systems can digitally safeguard at-risk oral traditions and mythologies that would otherwise disappear from public

recollection. Intentional curation and culture-specific monitoring can transform AI into a preservation technology, rather than an agent of cultural destruction. Singh, Sethu, and Chaudhary (2024) highlight the critical interaction with the narrative potential of AI.

They emphasize the point that algorithmic influence should be controlled; yet, AI can increase emotional impact and symbolic complexity when it is developed with consideration for narrative wisdom. Where the subtlety of feelings and the inner workings of characters are critical, AI may become an enhancement of, not substitute for, the art of narration. Kwon (2024) begins to discuss "narrative intelligence" and the potential for AI to model and organize stories in new forms, while still being compatible with the ways humans construct meaning. Instead of replacing traditional cultural narratives, this provides possibilities to reinterpret those stories through updated visual languages, engaging and bringing them to new audiences who are digitally native and younger. Walia and Jain (2023) describe the role of AI as "algorithmic alchemy"—an apt metaphorical term to characterize the capability of AI technologies, when properly trained, to merge conventional and modern features to form hybrid modes of narration. These hybrids may facilitate cultural development while preserving their fundamental identity, presenting novel ways to represent familiar themes. Wang (2023) further articulates the ascension of synthetic worlds, citing that AI supports culture at scale. Risk is provided by scale, but so too is reach, with culturally dense stories attaining visibility in global entertainment platforms.

AI, through thoughtful construction, therefore has the potential to become an instrument for exporting rather than just importing culture. Additionally, research indicates that values education can be facilitated through culturally situated AI narratives in animation, especially when connected to traditional symbols and moral lessons derived from folklore. Oztabak (2025) emphasizes the importance of preserving symbolic meanings through algorithmic storytelling, incorporating cultural care, and Kwon (2024) explores the impact of narrative intelligence systems on human meaning construction. These findings highlight the potential of AI-derived content to convey ethical values, intergenerational lessons, and culturally distinctive moral frameworks when informed by culturally embedded guidelines.

Thus, Eastern animation, enhanced through the use of AI, may become an active medium for values education, integrating conventional narration with contemporary educational technology. Collectively, these perspectives position AI not as a cultural foe but rather a collaborative partner—one whose capacity to augment Eastern animation through increased narrative capability, audience connectivity, and preservation of culture is evident from Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Findings – Opportunities of AI in Eastern Animation

Key Theme	Description	Supporting References
Narrative Homogenization	Can be countered by using AI to amplify diverse cultural stories globally.	Rettberg (2024); Singh et al. (2024); Wang (2023)
Myth and Folklore Adaptation	AI can help preserve symbolic meaning if folklore is curated and encoded into training datasets.	Oztabak (2025); Kwon (2024)
Algorithmic Narration	AI supports innovative storytelling structures and hybrid narrative forms.	Singh et al. (2024); Walia & Jain (2023)
Identity and Meaning-Making	AI can deepen narrative resonance when designed around human meaning and cultural identity.	Kwon (2024); Walia & Jain (2023)
Cultural Preservation	AI enables large-scale preservation and transmission of endangered narrative forms.	Oztabak (2025); Wang (2023)

4.3. Future Directions for Ethical and Cultural Integration

With increasingly integrated AI technologies, the key problem becomes: balancing the globalizing inclinations of AI with the preservation of local context and cultural authenticity. The readings consulted unequivocally establish that the future of AI in Eastern animation will hinge not just on the development of technology, but on the establishment of ethical, culture-aware frameworks that safeguard symbolic meanings without compromising global outreach. Marwala (2024) describes the ways in which AI-facilitated globalization provides new opportunities for cultural content to transcend geographical and linguistic boundaries.

On the one hand, this international legibility enables Eastern animation to reach even greater audiences. On the other hand, it threatens to dilute regional aesthetics and contents. Here, AI is both a double-edged sword, empowering distribution and pushing content towards global-standard forms. Forstner's sentiment is echoed in her 2020 work on the subject of translation and cultural transfer. She reiterates the difficulty of maintaining cultural sensitivity when using AI technologies to translate local media for international platforms. This leads us to the critical need for AI technologies to have the capability to incorporate cultural filters and localization controls, ensuring the symbolic significance of stories is maintained when they are read or listened to outside their home culture. Taylor (2020) also substantiates this need through his discourse on data localization. His contention is that global AI processes, if left without appropriate policy and regulatory controls, have the potential to unwittingly supplant national media controls, yielding contents more reflective of algorithmic desires rather than local reality. His work posits the need for national cultural autonomy in the age of AI through regulations that anchor datasets to local practices, languages, and beauty traditions. Arkhipov and Yeletsky (2021) propose the idea of glocalization, rather, as an ethical integration strategy. Developers and creators of culture may blend global AI platforms with local cultures to develop hybrid forms of storytelling, maintaining both technological complexity and cultural particularity. Nonetheless, they caution, this is an easily destabilizable equilibrium, and without intentional stewardship of culture, global platforms would soon overrun the fields of creation.

Economically, Korinek and Stiglitz (2021) opine that AI can exacerbate global inequality unless local creative economies are provided with direct support through interventions in the form of policies. Korinek and Stiglitz propose localizing AI as a source of economic and cultural empowerment to empower smaller animation economies to create autonomous production regimes resilient to the commodification of culture. This lends support to the use of AI-facilitated Eastern animation as a tool for values education, further developing ethical and cultural literacy across formal and informal educational settings. Forstner's (2020) and Arkhipov and Yeletsky's (2021) contention is that to maintain the narrative outputs of AI and keep them meaningful to the pedagogy and symbols it employs, it is necessary to place AI systems within the context of local culture.

With AI tools intentionally designed to incorporate regional belief systems and moral traditions, artists can create animations that not only entertain but also educate. Culturally responsible AI development can contribute to the development of the next generation of learners who are sensitive to their own culture and possess the moral comprehension required to interact effectively with globalized digital spaces. In conclusion, the future integration of AI technology into Eastern animation needs to transcend technical efficiency to ethical design, localized training, regulatory mechanisms, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Only through such intentional moves can AI be directed to become a tool of narrative empowerment and cultural preservation, rather than homogenization and erosion of symbols, as indicated in the case of Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Future Directions Findings – AI and the Globalization vs. Localization Dynamic

Key Theme	Description	Supporting References
Global Reach of AI	AI expands access and circulation of cultural narratives across borders.	Marwala (2024); Forstner (2020)
Risks of Cultural Homogenization	Global AI platforms may erase local specificity and produce uniform media outputs.	Taylor (2020); Arkhipov & Yeletsky (2021)
Glocalization Strategies	Blending global AI systems with local storytelling and policy adaptation.	Arkhipov & Yeletsky (2021); Forstner (2020)
Data Localization and Control	AI's dependence on global data can undermine national cultural control without regulations.	Taylor (2020)
Economic Sovereignty	Localized AI development supports creative independence and cultural resilience.	Korinek & Stiglitz (2021)

5. Discussion

The findings of this review illuminate the dual role of artificial intelligence as both an enabler of innovation and a source of disruption in the realm of Eastern animation. As shown across the reviewed literature, AI contributes meaningfully to workflow optimization by reducing rendering times, automating animation sequences, and offering real-time creative feedback (Chen et al., 2024; Adriana & Song, 2024). These advancements reduce the barriers to entry, especially for individual creators and small studios that may not have had the technological and financial resources previously needed to create high-quality animations (Izani et al., 2024).

The dematerialization of production made possible through the use of AI is part of a larger movement of media industries toward decentralized ways of producing culture. But this greater accessibility is paired with increasing anxiety about the authenticity of creation and ownership. Yixuan, Harun, and Dongyu (2024) warn that although AI accelerates creative labor, it also has the potential to transfer artistic agency from human artists to machines, thereby undermining the fundamental position of authorship in narrative media. These are especially pressing concerns for the case of Eastern animation, where narrative is deeply grounded in traditional philosophies, aesthetic codes, and symbolic meanings. If AI technologies produce content without being culturally calibrated, they risk flattening complex expressions of cultures into algorithmically convenient forms. Singh, Sethu, and Chaudhary (2024) further operationalize this tension by observing that algorithmic narration tends to replicate prevailing global patterns, resulting in narrative homogenization.

The theme of narrative homogenization is returned to repeatedly throughout this discussion. Rettberg (2024) believes that unguided generative AI tends to adhere to broadly accepted norms of style and story structure, such as the inputs to the Transformers model, which can crowd out the individuality of local and indigenous stories. This risk is precisely the case with AI-recreated folklore and mythology. Oztapak (2025) emphasizes that machine learning systems relaying culturally traditional stories inevitably lose their intergenerational complexity, spiritual significance, and symbolic richness—things that lie at the heart of the transmission of Eastern societies' intangible heritage. Conversely, the literature also describes strategic solutions for avoiding such risks through culturally grounded AI development. Kwon (2024) suggests that narrative intelligence systems should be trained on localized information—such as local oral histories, regional aesthetics, and indigenous languages—to generate instruments that represent the symbolic wealth of individual cultures without erasing them. Wang (2023) extends this line of thought to propose that, when developed

with ethical and cultural sensitivity, AI has the potential to serve as a medium for the preservation of heritage.

These ideas resonate with practices of cultural computing, where digital technologies are deliberately designed to preserve and propagate traditional knowledge. Additionally, numerous experts see education and cultural transmission as areas where AI would have a positive application. Local AI platforms, for example, can be utilized to educate people on mythology, history, and literature using engaging narrative forms, such as immersive stories, to make the content more appealing to younger audiences. These programs would link the conventional practice of telling stories with modern-day viewing habits, ensuring culture is not only kept alive but actually rekindled. A key theme is the global-local dynamic of AI media. Marwala (2024) and Forstner (2020) highlight how the global connectivity of AI enables Eastern animation to open up to new audiences and new markets previously untouchable. The same global flow, however, places pressure to comply with global content standards, according to Taylor (2020) and Arkhipov and Yeletsky (2021). For them, without the provision for adaptation, AI-created media can become conduits of erasure rather than inclusion.

The theory of "glocalization"—global platforms glocalized to suit local areas—arises as such an option. This implies the creation of culture-specific work while leveraging the global system that AI offers. In addition to cultural and technological aspects, this conversation also overlaps with economic and policy perspectives. Korinek and Stiglitz (2021) highlight the economic implications of uncontrolled AI integration, noting that without support for local creative economies, the advantages of AI will disproportionately benefit larger, already dominant markets. This perspective raises the concept of creative sovereignty, where governments and communities actively work toward ensuring their cultural sectors have agency over the creation, distribution, and monetization of their narratives.

Public policy is then the central intermediary—via financing, regulation, and support for digital infrastructural development—to ensure AI benefits rather than exacerbates concentration. Apart from preserving culture, the literature reviewed indicates that Eastern animation, if energized with ethically enabled AI engines, would assist in teaching values. For example, Kwon (2024) addresses the narrative capacity of AI to recreate meaning and identity, which, where the values are congruent with culture and tradition, can transfer lessons grounded in regional ethics and philosophy. Oztabak (2025) also focuses on the symbolic richness maintained through folklore and myth, which, when suitably represented through AI, could provide an avenue for moral reasoning and transmission from one generation to the next.

These arguments align with educational principles, viewing storytelling as the primary means of passing on culture and values to the next generation. AI-constructed stories in Eastern animation thus have the potential to preserve not just culture identity but also to develop respect, concord, and collective obligation in the learning setting. Based on such findings, it is clear that integrating AI into Eastern animation is not merely an engineering problem, but rather an interdisciplinary issue that requires collaboration between computer scientists, theorists, artists, educators, and policymakers. The literature also suggests the need for a mindset shift: from viewing AI as simply an autonomous creator of material to perceiving it as a tool that can be ethically guided and culturally localized. Ultimately, the viability of AI in Eastern animation will lie in our ability to harmonize innovation and preservation, to blend automation and artistic conscience, and to create platforms where technology supports—not supplants—cultural identity. This review highlights the need for intentionality when designing AI, calling for systems not only to streamline animation techniques but to enhance the narratives, values, and voices invested in culture traditions.

6. Conclusion

This research has examined the changing dynamic between artificial intelligence and the culture of narration in Eastern animation, highlighting its artistic potential and ethical challenges. The research indicates that although AI hugely improves the efficiency of production and increases the availability of animation technologies, it also undermines the genuineness, diversity, and culturally specific character of stories. Generative AI technologies, when exposed to large-scale biased global databases, threaten to generate homogenized outputs that repress local voices and weaken symbolic cultures—especially in Eastern societies where narration is significantly connected to values and identity. However, the same technology can have great potential if it is developed with sensitivity to culture and educational intent.

Culturally informed, ethically guided AI systems educating on context-specific data can enhance traditional tales, maintain regional identities, and facilitate values education. As seen through the literature, such systems can provide richly symbolic stories of respect, concord, collectivism, and moral reasoning—pillars of many Eastern pedagogies. This way, Eastern animation infused with AI is no longer merely entertainment; it has become an agent of informal culture, teaching and moral formation. The tension between globalisation and localisation further heightens the need for strategic glocalization. By combining global technological availability with local cultures, AI can be leveraged to support both narrative diversity and digital equity.

This requires the cooperation of technologists, policymakers, educators, and culture stakeholders. There needs to be structures implemented to provide ethical development, narrative autonomy, and access to AI technology in culturally inspired creative industries. In the end, the destiny of AI and Eastern animation is not premised only on the technology itself, but on the moral and educational decisions behind its application. By integrating values education, cultural identity, and ethical narration at the core of AI development, this technology has the potential to redefine the global narratives while respecting the cultural diversity of Eastern traditions.

7. Recommendations

As the study examines the impact of artificial intelligence on the construction of cultural narratives through Eastern animation, various context-specific recommendations emerge from the research findings. The study uncovered both promise and peril where AI technologies intersect with culturally grounded narratives, highlighting areas where careful design, regulation, and artistic guidance are necessary. First, culture-embedded data should be given high priority for use when developing narrative models by AI specialists and animation technology professionals who work in or reside in Eastern settings.

As the review has shown, culture-sensitive AI can maintain symbolic richness and narrative fidelity if grounded in local languages, folklore, visual imagery, and narrative practices. Preserving this is crucial to mitigate the narrative homogenization observed in the findings. Second, there should be targeted support for local studios and individual creators across the Eastern regions through funding, technical capacity building, and incentives through policies that promote the adoption of AI technologies sensitive to narrative sovereignty. The research indicates that AI empowers smaller studios, yet they still need the support of institutions to maintain their artistic autonomy intact. Thirdly, national governments and culture ministries throughout Eastern societies need to establish clear rules and ethical guidelines for AI use when it comes to animated content. The policies must address the primary threats identified in the study—specifically, aesthetic homogenization, algorithmic bias, and the erosion of authorship—and ensure that the use of AI is aligned with cultural values and ethical considerations. Fourth, higher education programs need to integrate AI and cultural technology into animation programs to educate the next generation of animators who possess the ability to balance technical facility with cultural sensitivity.

The findings suggest that integrating education will play an important part in future-proofing culturally relevant animation in an AI-led media context. Fifth, producers need to employ glocalization strategies to integrate the global potential of AI with local storytelling traditions. The findings support the contention that such strategies enable Eastern animation to maintain its cultural uniqueness and gain global reach. Cooperation with cultural specialists can also ensure the authenticity and symbolic value of content created using AI. Ultimately, future research would further develop the themes seen throughout this review through empirical examinations of the impact of AI on narrative form, audience response, and cultural symbolism in Eastern animation. These examinations would offer tangible insights into the long-term impact of AI on storytelling worlds and refine development methodologies. Combined, these suggestions represent the central themes and questions of the study, providing tangible actions for integrating AI innovation with the preservation and adaptation of Eastern culture's stories through animation.

Declarations

Author Contributions. The authors contributed equally to all stages of the research process, including the conceptualization, design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. Both authors were actively involved in conducting literature synthesis, thematic analysis, and structuring the theoretical framework. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement. All data used in this review are publicly accessible and derived from published academic sources. No new datasets were generated for this study.

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