

CHAPTER 1

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1.1 Introduction

Current global economic trends have proved the creative industry to be one of the important sources of economic growth and germination of culture among developed countries. Approximately USD\$3 trillion was contributed by the creative industry to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United States in 2008. Meanwhile in Malaysia, RM9.4 billion was contributed towards GDP (DIKN, 2010:2). The past decade has seen recognition towards the growth and importance of the creative industry by a number of governments around the world through policy development in respective countries including Malaysia (Mukhriz, 2010:4).

Creativity and its importance for Malaysia have made it imperative for any business or non-profit organization to use creativity in a range of ways including multimedia content, advertising and animation. The government has agreed on the magnitude of creative development. The *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (National Creative Industry Policy) or DIKN for short is one physical proof of the government's effort to support creative development.

Upon observation of major creative industries around the world, the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture (KPKK) has defined the context of the Malaysian creative industry as 'harnessing individual and group ability and talent based on creativity, innovation and technology which leads towards economic success and high income for the nation by emphasizing creation and intellectual property rights consistent with culture and pristine values of multiple ethnics in Malaysia' (DIKN, 2010:4).

The sluggishness of the creative industry of the present is due to the unorganized structure of the industry, absence of holistic integration and lack of a clear direction to where the creative industry is heading in addition to the shortage of skilled manpower, small and uncompetitive industry size and the society's perception that the creative industry does not offer a stable income (DIKN, 2010:9). Gaps and lost opportunities in the creative industry require recognition, understanding and remedies in order to make certain that the creative sector retains its importance in transforming the economy into a more service-oriented, knowledge-based and high income financial system (Mukhriz, 2010:4). As such, three main areas have been panned out for the implementation of DIKN, which covers various creative-based sub-industries. These areas are the Multimedia Creative Industry, Cultural Arts Creative Industry and the Cultural Heritage Creative Industry.

In his Budget 2010 speech, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak revealed funds of RM200 million allocated by the government in the form of low-interest loans for the benefit of producing films, dramas, music, animation, advertisements and a wide range of local content development. Animation and Digital Content is listed as one of the sub-industries under the Multimedia Creative Industry scope along with film and television production, advertising and creative arts.

This study takes on animation as a research area, believed to be a suitable topic to examine at a time of strong government support for growth in the creative industry. The government through various programs and schemes introduced to promote animation content development has backed animation development in Malaysia. The support has been, for example, apparent through the country's information and technology arm, Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC). The government, for example, launched MAC3 as a sign of support to take the creative industry to a global stage. MAC3 serves as a technological

service and resource provider and was initiated specifically for the purpose of cultivating the video games, visual effects and animation industry.

Furthermore, realizing the importance of the creative multimedia industry, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) has offered training grants to aspiring practitioners through MDeC in order to further develop the industry by overcoming deficiencies in terms of knowledgeable and skilled manpower.

Additionally, under the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program, the Communications, Content and Infrastructure sector proposed scholarships in order to improve manpower for the development of the content industry. This comes as a result of the industry being extremely concerned with the quality and skills of the current talents even though there are no shortages in numbers meeting industry demands. This is where the Creative Industry Lifelong Learning (CILL) program was introduced and coordinated by MDeC and the Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation.

The CILL program incorporates four categories of scheme, the Up-skilling and Re-skilling Scheme, Attachment Scheme, Internship Scheme and Creative Apprentice Scheme. These schemes offer channels for industry practitioners and future practitioners to improve knowledge and experience in creative content development in terms of manpower.

Mukhriz (2010:17-18) identified four types of key players with regards to the creative industry. These institutions are responsible for overseeing specific aspects of the industry, which are:

- i. Ministries, regulations and authority
- ii. Funders
- iii. Demand side participants
- iv. Supply side participants

These players include two ministries, six authorities and regulating bodies, 13 funders and countless demand and supply side participants. Two of the ministries involved are the Ministry of Communications, Information and Culture (KPKK) and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. For a few institutions, more than one role is taken as part of their task. The National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) for example, not only acts as an authoritative and regulatory figure, they are also responsible in providing funds for the creative industry practitioners and become a demand side participant at the same time. MDeC also oversees the role of authority and regulations and at the same time provide funds to industry players.

Late 2009 saw MDeC announcing funds available for animation and game developers under the MAC3 initiative worth RM80 million (the official launch was organized mid 2010). MAC3 was introduced as a holistic support system comprising hardware and software resources, training and funds. RM80 million have been allocated in the form of funds and financial support through MAC3 with a state-of-the-art rendering facility placed strategically at Malaysia's version of the Silicon Valley, Cyberjaya. The facility offers support for all forms of content developers be it individual, companies or other government organizations.

The launch of MAC3 by MDeC oversees four categories of goals to be achieved which aim to contribute highly towards nation building.

- i. Talent Development

MAC3 aims to develop local talents for video games, visual effects and animation through internships, apprenticeships and masterclasses.

- ii. Funding

With a budget of RM80 million, MAC3 is able to fund high quality projects in animation and video games development which will eventually lead to job opportunities in content creation and production.

iii. Creating Awareness

The task of MAC3 is to also create awareness not only of the existence of MAC3 but also the opportunities available in content development as a feasible and pulsating career.

iv. Shared Facilities

Companies selected to join the MAC3 will receive a range of training modules and mentorship programs in order to fully expand their content production capabilities by utilizing state-of-the-art facilities made available.

The aim of these government initiatives through DIKN and MAC3 are not uniquely towards boosting economic figures and statistics. What is of the same importance as generating revenue to boost GDP is the ability to elevate national culture through integrated and planned development of the creative industry (Mukhriz, 2010; DIKN, 2010).

The development of information and communication technology has allowed for faster delivery of messages and offers the ability to cater a wider range of audiences. This has also lead to a large influx of computer hardware and software technology catering all industries directing towards automation of work replacing more manual procedures. As the technology develops further and evolves, the way people live and work has also undergone significant transformation. Communication has become faster and effective through the merging of technologies, which has led to emails on the mobile phone, electronic commerce, digital signatures etc.

With each ‘big thing’ such as the internet, 3G and 4G mobile technology and computer processing capabilities currently being shared or rivaled platforms, it has come to the ‘little things’ or value added features being the reasons for media and technology selection. For example, all telecommunication providers in Malaysia (Celcom, Maxis, Digi

and U-Mobile) are 3G capable, but whoever provides the most of what consumers want or need are most likely to end up being the main choice. In order to provide the ‘better’ choice, companies have to be as creative as they possibly can. This has led to a new important area that may have existed a long time ago, but has been reborn with an obvious purpose, to persuade. The new important area is Creativity.

Although the MAC3 initiative covers other forms of digital content as well, such as video games and visual effects, animation is the main focus for this research. The versatility of animation has allowed it to be used in various fields which include education, engineering, broadcasting, training, military simulations, medicine, science, law, architecture and archeology. This study however limits the animation scope to animation series as part of media content.

During a period between 1995 and 2008, Malaysian animation industry managed to produce close to 60 animation series and four feature films (Hassan, 2008) which is a relatively small figure when compared to the 35 imported animated titles in 1994 alone through RTM1 and RTM2 (Hassan, 2000). In Malaysia, animation is still in the process of early growth. Animation in Malaysia began with the production of *Hikayat Sang Kancil* by Anandam Xavier back in 1978 (Hassan, 2003). It was followed by a series of short-length animation found in the titles *Sang Kancil & Monyet*, *Sang Kancil & Buaya*, *Gagak Yang Bijak*, *Arnab Yang Sombong* and *Singa Yang Haloba* all produced by Xavier. However, there were a couple of pauses in the development of local animation. After Xavier’s series of animation, the first pause occurred due to several factors that include lack of expertise, shortage of relevant hardware and production costs. A more extensive discussion on Malaysian animation can be found in Chapter 3.

When *Usop Sontorian* first aired in 1996, it started a spore-like reaction with the emergence of other cartoons such as *Keluang Man*, *Badang* and the more recent *Kampung Boy* and *Upin & Ipin*. *Usop Sontorian* was considered a solid start to Malaysian animation for being the first locally produced digital animation (Rozila, 1996). However, as time passed by, the technical deficiencies seen in various local animations has put its development into a short halt (second pause). That was until *Upin & Ipin* came to life.

The strength of *Upin & Ipin* is undeniable. Apart from its local popularity, it has become a product gradually stepping into the acceptance zone outside the country. As of the year 2008, the series has been aired in Indonesia and fully dubbed and aired in Turkey (Ezam, 2008). The series has also won the KL International Film Festival for Best Animation in 2007 and the screening of the silver screen version of *Upin & Ipin* entitled *Geng: Pengembaraan Bermula* produced a whopping RM6.314 million in cinema ticketing collections (Ramlah, 2009). Although short of the producers' RM10 million target, it was still considered as a huge success for a locally produced animation film. Based on these series of events, something has to be going right.

However bright a future it may have, local animation studios still struggle with an influx of foreign animation. The availability and popularity of foreign animation series such as *Doraemon*, *Ben 10*, *Naruto* and *Pokemon* has allowed the global animation industry to flourish in Malaysia but at the same time threatening the existence of local studios. This comes as a result of a number of possible contributing factors.

According to Hassan (2000:7), since the establishment of Walt Disney Animation Studios (originally known as Disney Brothers Animation Studio) in 1923, three animation production philosophies have been implemented:

- i. To create great characters with clear and apparent personalities
- ii. To create wonderful stories for these great characters

- iii. Future films must be superior to the ones of the past.

As seen above, the emphasis is given towards the character and story without mentioning anything in particular with regards to animation, production techniques or technology. If we compare the philosophy adopted by Disney in 1923 with the problems identified by MDeC with regards to animation in Malaysia, we will find a clear difference.

As noted by Kamil (2012), MDeC listed eight outlying problems with the current creative industry.

- i. Over-dependency on funding from the government at the cost of real entrepreneurial development
- ii. Unbalanced profit-sharing between content producers with broadcasters and other parties involved.
- iii. Problems with content producers easily selling rights to their products.
- iv. Difficulty in penetrating world market share due to inferior product quality and poor marketing strategies.
- v. Inability to commence next level economic multipliers
- vi. Ineffective research and development
- vii. Lack of funding from private sector due to low confidence in local content
- viii. Lack of experienced industry players

The findings of Mukhriz (2010) are more extensive. 15 issues, nine generic issues and six industry-specific issues have been highlighted in his report after collecting input from interviews, informal sessions with industry players and consultative forums. Certain issues may be of resemblance to MDeC's findings in their MSC Creative Content Industry Baseline Study 2008. However, it was stated in his report whether the issues found are new or recurring issues found in other formal reports.

One of the issues they find in common is the over-focus on the small domestic market demand which causes intense competition for jobs and clients (Mukhriz, 2010:24). This is further worsened by the limited access to funds whereby the content providers observe difficulties and complications when applying for funds, notably ones offered by institutions or bodies other than MDeC. On a similar note, the industry also perceives a lack of transparency and the existence of 'kickbacks' in order to obtain funds.

Another worthy finding from this report with regards to this research is how the industry perceives a lack of effort by the government and relevant authorities to assist in promoting locally-produced creative content and services (Mukhriz, 2010:30). This particular issue complements MDeC's conclusion that the industry players are overly reliant on the government to boost the market. Regardless of which factor is the more valid one, the differences in perception between the industry and the authorities serve as a proof that the sluggishness does exist and the roots of the problems do need to be studied in order to elevate local content to global acceptance.

Many of the more popular animation titles have derived from only two countries considered the two biggest animation industries of the world; United States and Japan. IGN, an American global entertainment website, produced a list of their top 100 animated series of all time (IGN, 2011). Regardless of the ranking order, the list includes a large number of popular and well known animated series from the United States and Japan. Being the focal point of visual content throughout the history of television and film, there is no doubt that American animation has initially inspired other animation content producers including Japan. However, the inspiration Japan obtained from the Americans have been uniquely blended and innovated to suit the visual taste of the Japanese and eventually attracted audiences from around the globe.

1.2 Animation

Generally, the understanding of animation is put into the same line that flows with the word cartoon or any colorful moving images seen on television or in the cinema. This type of understanding is close enough to the origin of the word animation which is the Latin word *animare* meaning to ‘give breath’. With the advancement of technology which has developed until today, it is necessary to categorize the definition of animation to two separate paradigms; traditional animation (classical animation) and modern animation (computer animation). The working definition for traditional animation includes the important element of working ‘frame-by-frame’ (Stephenson, 1967:13 and Wells, 1998:10) which leads towards the artificial creation and illusion of movement. Hence, any series of hand drawing (excludes series of still photos which would mean film) would be possible methods of creating animation.

Hassan (2000) listed seven types of animation (among many others) which include:

- i. Cut-out animation
- ii. Doll/marionette animation
- iii. Clay animation
- iv. Shadow animation
- v. Pixilation animation
- vi. Cel animation
- vii. Computer animation (2D and 3D)

Many of the more popular and ‘well known’ animation of the past and still a number of animations of the present are based on traditional animation techniques. Traditional animation techniques, for example cel animation, involve the usage of animation cameras, consumes a lot of time and uses up a large number of drawings of different angles, poses and

arrangements. Cel animation is the process of individualizing objects or characters in an animation so that an object is animated individually solely based on need. This would save time and energy since objects are only animated when it is significantly needed. For example, two characters are in a conversation within a background scene of a beach. Character A and character B will be animated individually with also a separate background as a still or an animated image. If character A is speaking (individual cel), character B will be still (another individual cel) and the process is vice versa. Even when the two characters physically come in contact, the effects are still animated individually.

As animation is hand-drawn, the overall process of producing the animation itself consumes a large amount of time just for illustration purposes, let alone the process of animating. Additionally, cel animations have conventionally been in two-dimensional (2D) in nature and have focused on the creation of movement and motion.

Modern animations, on the other hand, are more computer-oriented and make use of digital technology to create the illusion of motion. By nature of definition, modern animation still shares an important trait which is the process of creating motion through ‘frame-by-frame’ albeit with the usage of computers rather than film or hand drawing and animation cameras alone. With the availability of 2D and three-dimensional (3D) animation software available as of today, the process of producing animation has significantly changed. In comparison to traditional animation, modern animation has ‘digitized’ the manual and lengthy process of traditional animation. This led towards a less lengthy process of producing animation, better animation quality and opens up opportunities to be more creative and offers the freedom to expand and to bring imagination to life.

One important shift from traditional to modern animation is the literal aspect of ‘giving life to’ the objects within the animation (Wells, 1998). Motion and movements alone do not make an animation what it is but the expanded idea of giving life to an animation is

about constructing reality towards the objects within. An example would be the expression of happiness. It is enough to portray the happiness of an animation character by drawing or illustrating a smile on the character's face. However, giving life means to portray the 'real' expression, not only by the smile, but also the glaring eyes and raised eyebrows which would be the realistic physical expression of a human being.

Animation caters to a wide and variety of audiences from different genders to different age groups. The availability of notable animation titles such as *Mickey Mouse*, *Doraemon*, and education-oriented animation such as *Handy Manny*, *Word World* and *Animal Mechanicals* (available on Playhouse Disney Asia) are prime examples of animation targeted at young audiences. These animations are made simple, easy to understand, educational and full of values deemed universally positive. The characters are often presented with simple conflicts which are effortlessly resolved within the same episode itself and often carry short plots. Towards the end of the show, the lessons are normally shared for the audience to comprehend.

More complex animation (particularly some Japanese animation titles) such as *Akira*, *Ghost in the Shell* and pornographic animation are intended for adult viewers who are able to value the convoluted plots and storylines. Other adult-oriented animations include *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. Besides, the notable traits of these animations are the complexity of the art, the foul language used and also the blatant extreme of erotica portrayed within the story exhibits who the target and intended audiences are. In a number of countries, such animation are totally banned with regards to laws and acts related to pornography with Malaysia being one of them.

Titles such as *Naruto*, *Dragonball* and *One Piece* on the other hand can cater to people of different ages. The *Dragonball* saga for example has passed through decades without losing much of its popularity and well known by both young and adult audiences

around the world. *Dragonball* was aired through three different but continuous series starting with *Dragonball* in which Son Goku was still a child in a quest to search for seven magical balls called Dragonballs to revive his grandfather Son Gohan. This was followed by *Dragonball Z* indicated by the arrival of Son Goku's brother Raditz and his transformation into a powerful Saiyan warrior call Super Saiyan. His notable battles were against Freeza, Cell and Majin Buu. The final Dragonball series was *Dragonball GT*, which was a continuation of *Dragonball Z* in which Son Goku was magically transformed into a child again by the dragon of the Black Star Dragonball. Action-packed fighting scenes, fictional superpowers and characters are among the attractions which lure children and teenagers to these animations while the complexity of the plots, interesting storyline and value of entertainment are several factors which attract older audiences. However, rating these animation based on age has been somewhat complicated.

An example of how animation have affected children can be seen in the case of Codey Porter, a 10-year old boy from the Everett, Washington, who died on Monday, 9th March 2008 at Children's Hospital in Seattle after being buried head-first in a sandbox by his friends a day earlier (Schoetz, 2008). Porter wanted to imitate his superhero cartoon character from the *anime* (Anime is a term that refers specifically to Japanese animation series or film) *Naruto* and thus requested his playmates to bury him in the sand. At a point, Porter thrashed around for air but his friends thought he was playing. They eventually realized that something was not right and pulled Porter out while some sought adult help. The adults administered CPR until medical assistance arrived for the critically injured Porter but eventually he died the next afternoon.

In three separate cases (Bond, 2013; Lowrey & Lefkowitz, 2013; and Liveleak, 2007), children have either been found dead or faced near-death experiences in their attempt to imitate their favorite superhero, Spiderman. In Anaheim, California, a 3-year old boy cheated

death when he fell from his bedroom window on a third-floor apartment while pretending to be Spiderman. Luckily, he escaped with only minor injury. Similarly, a Turkish boy narrowly escaped death after jumping from the 7th floor of a 13-storey building in Istanbul. Abdullah, 10 years of age, wanted to imitate the actions of action-hero, Spiderman, hence leading him to jump and eventually lead to bone breaks but amazingly stayed alive. The excitement of jumping from buildings to buildings must have been too difficult to resist for Abdullah who caused worry for his family. However, not the same can be said of Kevin Morais, 6, who fell to his death while climbing along the window ledge at his home. While climbing, he lost his grip and fell, causing severe injuries that led to his death.

These are only a few of the many cases indicating the indirect dangers of animation. While most cases have not lead to death, there are disagreements on how animations are rated for suitable viewing of different ages. Hence, the complexity of the ratings as mentioned.

In a related note, animation has not only influenced audiences alone. Some animations also influence other animation and if *manga* is taken into account, manga artists as well. Manga can generally be referred to as graphic novels. They are widely popular in Japan and has strong connections to Anime. Popular manga are likely to be turned into an anime, should it have enough popularity and there are producers who are willing to produce the anime. The first part of the Dragonball trilogy (*Dragonball*) was first aired on Japanese TV station, Fuji Television back in February, 1986. It ran through for three years until April, 1989. The series was followed by the most successful fragment of the trilogy (*Dragonball Z*) which followed two weeks after Dragonball ended until its conclusion of 291 episodes in January 1996. These two portions of Dragonball have taken up 10 years to air. Put that into calculations and it shows how children whom have followed the series when they were 10 years old ended up still watching it by the time they reach 20. To add to this, *Dragonball GT* has not even been included yet. Compare this to *Naruto*.

Kishimoto Masashi, author and creator of *Naruto*, even indicated that Dragonball was one of the many inspirations which influenced various aspects of *Naruto*. Individual battles, character establishment, background surroundings, time frame and plots are a few traits which carried the influence. The manga version of *Naruto* first premiered in Shueisha's Weekly Shōnen Jump magazine in 1999. The anime version was first aired three years later on TV Tokyo in 2002 until its conclusion in 2007.

On a more recent note, *Naruto* is currently being aired as *Naruto Shippuden* (appeared in 2007 as well) indicating a more complex plot compared to the previous installation. And to put things into perspective of how this appeal to adults, people whom have followed the series from the beginning have aged at least by 12 years by now (2002-2014) but the series is still ongoing and the manga is also still work-in-progress. New characters and missions are introduced along the way catering not only to children, but for the satisfaction of adult viewers.

Some titles are exclusively written and animated for female viewers. Titles such as *Cardcaptor Sakura*, *Sailormoon*, *Fruits Basket* and *Angel Sanctuary* serves as worthy entertainment content targeted at females (although there are a number of male viewers as well). These titles normally carry heavy emotional scenes and at times more or less centered towards love and relationships.

One Outs (baseball), *Eyeshield 21* (American football), *Captain Tsubasa* (association football) and *Slam Dunk* (basketball) are among animation targeted at male viewers even though these titles are able to attract female viewers nonetheless. Sports-related animation highlights specific sports and how the characters within the animation develop and devote themselves towards the sport. The way each animation is presented is also unique towards the authors' creativity and esthetic preferences.

It is worth to note that most non-children-oriented animation derives from Japan. As Gillespie (1998) suggests that originally back in the early history of animation in the United States, watching animation is considered 'immature'. Although current trends have shown that the age range of animation viewers have expanded, there is still lack of animation content produced in the United States with adult viewers in mind. The Japanese animation industry, however, is known for its capability of producing animation with complex plots and storylines to satisfy the entertainment needs of the worldwide audience to accommodate an array of age, gender, preferences etc. This has lead towards other opportunities throughout the world for subtitling, dubbing, merchandising and marketing their animation products to non-Japanese speaking countries inclusive of Malaysia.

The availability of various foreign programs (and in the context of this study, animation) in Malaysia is made possible through the growing number of channels offered through satellite television. With each station aimed at gaining the largest number of audience, they have offered a range of choices of television programming to accommodate the needs of a nationwide audience. The trend is a portrayal of globalization in communication in addition to Malaysia's deregulation policies and open up her skies (Noor Bathi, 1997 and Wang, 2004). This allows the continuous effort to cater the needs of audiences ranging from ever popular reality television series to updated news and live events.

Animation, in general, serves the purpose of entertainment and is widely accepted in societies as part of their media content consumption. Animation has become part of people's television content menu with specific channels dedicated to animation or animation-related content. ASTRO for example has Astro Ceria, Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Playhouse Disney, and Animax which have roughly aired numerous animation series and programs.

Most of the animation titles mentioned up till now have either been from the United States or Japan. Physically, one can normally identify the origins of an animation just by looking at it. This comes as a result of established stereotypes towards the physical appearance of an animation. For example, one would know the origins of *The Princess and the Frog* just by watching without even asking. And even though titles such as *Bleach* may come with English or Malay dub, one can tell that it is a Japanese animation just by looking at the physical traits of the characters.

To a certain extent some cultures develop their animation as part of a popular culture and a powerful business potential, most notably Japan. Japan Economic Division released a report in 2005 (Japan Economic Division, 2005) indicating a local market value of Japanese animation to be around ¥207.1 billion which is equivalent to (current currency exchange rate) approximately RM7.613 billion. This value has not included its export sales worth approximately RM591.5 million. Combine that and the value totals up to an estimated RM8.205 billion. Note again that this was back in 2005.

Compare that to a figure of RM4.03 billion revenue for all creative content industry combined in Malaysia (Yang, n.d.). It is obvious that Malaysia is still far off in playing the catch-up game. However, this can also be seen as an opportunity for development.

The establishment of MAC3 points toward available opportunities just waiting to be grabbed by enthusiastic content developers. However (as part of what this research tries to explore), even if the funds are available and ready to be spent, will the money be spent effectively?

1.3 Animation and Malaysian Identity

Race, ethnicity and nationality are forms of identity which refers to shifting and unstable discursive constructions rather than fixed entities (Barker, 1999:84). According to Barker (1999:60-61), early conceptualization of race originates from biological discourses where biological and physical characteristics such as skin pigmentation differentiate the races of human beings. However, the idea of race formation has not been exclusively culturally or biologically-driven but rather as a result of social construction as race are formed based on representation in a process of social and political power struggle.

A further investigation sees an extension on the concept of race into smaller sub-groups referred to as ethnic groups. As Barker (1999:62) explains that while race is a cultural construct masquerading as a biological science, defining ethnicity is viewed through the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices.

Animation can serve a number of other promising purposes due to the fact that the content can be created as imaginative as possible. The freedom of creativity in producing animation has even lead to a different and non-fixed construction of national identity (Napier, 2001:157). With animation, it is possible to create an inspirational character worthy of a cult status, environments impossible to the human logic and fantasize what can become of the future. Anime has illustrated Japanese history in ways other cultures have not done before through their amalgamation of fantasy and science-fiction with Japanese history.

Disney, for example, consciously targets their audience as consumers of American cultural products (Hassan, 2000:7). By introducing heroic characters and icons over the years, Disney managed to promote more than just their animated movies and series. Merchandizing of other related products such as toys, stationery and books have been well planned, structured and organized. As a result, characters such as Mickey Mouse, Peter Pan and Robin Hood have become common to people around the globe.

This brings the researcher to one of the rationales of this study which is the concept of promoting national identity and culture through animation. According to Hassan (2000:8), animation production must be viewed as a business which can be legitimately used to introduce local heroes and stories to the local audience. The local society shall become the consumer of local culture.

Policies such as the National Culture Policy (NCP) and the New Economic Policy (NEP) were enforced with regards to pursue national identity and unity (Chin, 2004:4). However, the effort to encourage national unity and catalyzing the augmentation of Malaysian character through culture has still seen the continuous dominance of Malay culture and Islamic values with tolerance of culture and values of other races and religious beliefs.

There are sensitivities to be taken into consideration when implementing campaigns and programs to promote national identity as studied by Shamsul Amri (2007) and Hng (2004). The issue of race and religion are among the notable ones. Mistakes in these areas are critical for it can lead to religious and racial discomfort. However, if given a proper chance through utilizing the right strategies, animation can be used as a possible non-sensitive tool to promote national identity leading to achieving the concept of 1Malaysia as proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

An accomplishment of nation-building will associate individual citizens with other residents of the country through common national identity (Bloom, 1993:79). The complex process of nation-building is not the main agenda of this exploration. However, the component of national identity can be linked towards the development of Malaysian animation. The concept of a successful animation industry can lead towards shared identity among Malaysians as enjoyed by objects and industries of other countries i.e. film (India), dairy products (New Zealand), electronics (Japan) and cars (Germany).

Shamsul Amri (2007:58) stressed the importance of developing a unique mix of Malaysian identity. He described the concept of Malaysian identity from the pre-colonial era to the time of post-colony. Although his discussion was more focused towards race (Malays, Chinese, Indians, Bugis, Javanese etc.), it can be used as a reference point of developing different aspects of national identity and culture through different means which in the case of this study, animation.

Malaysian animation have demonstrated raw and obvious Malaysian traits in the past. *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin* have heavily portrayed characters from different races. Although most of the characters are Malays, a major appearance of Chinese and Indian characters are common. Less obvious are minority races such as Sikh, Orang Asli, Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputra etc. It is similar towards a number of American animation where the two main races (Caucasian and African Americans) are heavily portrayed while the minority races (Native Americans, Hispanic and Asians) are less portrayed.

Shamsul Amri (2007:100) further discussed the area of the national cultural evolution and how the concept of culture has changed all the way through the years. He noted the government's effort in the implementation of cultural encouragement through different forms of government ministries from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in the 1970s to the more recent structure of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (the structure of the ministry during the time the article was written was still the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism. The ministry is currently known as the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture). The openness of the cultural concept reflects on the economic, political and socio-cultural change in Malaysia which has lead towards existing inter-racial stability.

Bearing in mind the sensitivities in Malaysia, Hng (2004:151) stressed the need for nationalism as a substitute to race and religion. Dues to sensitivity of race and religion, campaigns promoting national unity have to be as open and as general as possible. As described by Hng:

In Malaysia, neither race nor religion can realistically serve as the ultimate rasiond'etre for nation-building. The largest ethnic group, the Malays, make up only half the population, and any extreme emphasis on race or religion will only unite only one half of the country and antagonize the other half. In any case, this is not a proposition the Malays have entertained at any time in their history.

Hng (2004:151)

If other animations in the world are able to portray the culture and identity of their respective nations through animation, it is certainly possible to do the same amount of wonder to Malaysia. There is a need to distinguish Malaysian animation from the rest of the world and answer the big question; what makes Malaysian animation 'Malaysian'? Furthermore, how is the reception of the local audience and what is the future direction towards enhancing the global acceptance of Malaysian animation?

Although locally-produced animation can be back-tracked to the 1970s, locating proper documentation on animation in Malaysia has been somewhat problematic. This is due to a number of possible reasons. Among them being the fact that this particular area of mass media content has hardly been studied although being obviously around for quite some time. The lack of local content has somewhat hindered the progress of studying this field particularly since it is difficult to obtain relevant material in the past. With the help of the internet and more resources are being made available, research on animation has become relevant as a field of study.

On a global note, animation has been studied from different points of views i.e. history of cinematic animation in the world by Stephenson (1967), intercultural communication by Kelts (2006) and characteristics of animation according to culture by Poitras (1999) and Poitras (2005). Furthermore, compared to the rich history of Northern American, European and Japanese animation and the impact it has on society, Malaysian animation is relatively new and swiftly growing in order to accommodate the needs of localized media content.

1.4 Problem Statement

The dilemma identified which has led to this study is placed as follow:

- i. Although animation content has been studied worldwide, there is a lack of study on the local context. Information on animated series and films that have been produced in the country is very limited.
- ii. As of now, there is no specific description (characteristics) of a Malaysian animation per se.
- iii. The impact of which Malaysian animation has on the local scene is too obvious to be left unstudied.
- iv. Animation can be used as a possible non-sensitive tool to promote national identity within the country and to the world. The question is ‘How?’.
- v. What are the challenges in the production of creative Malaysian animation content?

1.5 Research Objectives

With the acceptance and reception of various forms of animation globally stronger than ever, it is strong evidence that supports the need for going glocal. Aiming for worldwide

recognition, the opportunity at hand must be taken and utilized as effectively as possible. Animation has the potential of introducing Malaysian culture and identity to the world in a way the United States and Japan has achieved. This study aims at connecting those dots together and hopefully would lead towards planting a name for Malaysia in the world media content industry.

By and large, this research intends to find out the complete list of Malaysian animation, what the characteristics of Malaysian animation are, what makes Malaysian animation accepted by the audience, and the challenges faced by the animation industry in Malaysia.

The list is meant as a database that provides a general insight on the animated series and films that have been produced in Malaysia. This list would include the title of animation, year of production, producers and number of episodes. The characteristics are the reflection of the signs and symbols found in the sampled animated series that defines what makes these animation Malaysian. The audience reception shall help understand the acceptance of animated series in Malaysia. Finally, analyzing the challenges of Malaysian animation shall help in identifying the areas for improvement in the study and production of animation both by academics and the animation industry. Hopefully this study will also, in due course, be able to identify the areas of improvements for Malaysian animation and to be able to provide an insight into the chronologies and important events which have occurred and affected the development of Malaysian animation. Specifically, this research aims to:

- i. provide a list of Malaysian animation (locally produced whether for local or foreign markets) from 1978 (Although Anandam Xavier produced *Hikayat Sang Kancil* in 1978, it was not aired until 1983) – 2010 which includes

information on the title of animation, year of production, producers and number of episodes.

- ii. Analyze the tangible, intangible, verbal and non-verbal characteristics that define Malaysian animation;
- iii. analyze the reception towards Malaysian animation among local and foreign audience;
- iv. analyze the challenges faced by the animation industry as well as to recognize the future direction planned by relevant bodies to overcome these issues.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the research questions are structured as follow:

- i. What Malaysian animation titles have been produced and aired since the beginning of its local history in 1978 until 2010?
- ii. What are the characteristics that define Malaysian animation as ‘Malaysian’?
- iii. How does the audience perceive and react towards the contents of Malaysian animation?
- iv. What are the challenges faced by the local animation industry and what is being planned and done to overcome these issues?

1.7 Scope and Limitations of Study

The definition of animation as previously stated is still too wide to be covered in this research. Taken into account the different outputs of animation available, this study limits the type of animation to only two forms (1) animation series and (2) animated films. Hence, the capacity will exclude any other forms of animation used for any purpose whatsoever (advertising, corporate videos, animation graphics, television program visualizations etc.).

Geographically (as stated in the title), the main object of this study is limited to Malaysian animation. Hence, animation produced in Malaysia by Malaysians or Malaysian companies for local or foreign markets are taken into consideration. The researcher anticipated certain complexities i.e. animation co-produced with foreign producers, editing conducted overseas, usage of animation experts from outside the country. However, if the core of the animation content is Malaysian, then it will be considered as Malaysian animation.

1.8 Significance of Study

Animation of Malaysia is being widely acknowledged on a local basis for reasons which first lead to this research proposal. Animation seems to be flooding the minds and television sets of Malaysians and influencing people ranging from children to even adults. Animation studies as a media content in Malaysia can be seen as a need where by possibly only a handful of locally produced empirical study or research is conducted on animation content. Hence, this research's best contribution and significance of study would be to get the snowball rolling.

In order to tag Malaysian animation as 'Malaysian', one has to first define its characteristics. This research is needed to decipher those attributes since at the current time this information is not readily available. Once this process is completed, we should have a set of attributes that define Malaysian animation.

The impact local animation has on Malaysians will also be studied to identify the reception. In order to understand the active choices made by the audience in accessing Malaysian animation, this study is needed to look into audience interpretations and utilization of the content. Although this research might not prove to be the ultimate answer, it will provide significant contribution towards understanding the needs towards developing

generically and globally acceptable animation content. This will also help us to understand the challenges faced by the Malaysian animation industry.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Past studies which have or are close to characterizing animation were only on series or films of other countries, mainly the United States and Japan. Malaysian animation, however, being a new and developing industry, have not been a popular topic of research in the past. Not much is known about the state of affairs of Malaysian animation content in the past unless one engages the work within the industry itself. Hence, this research will serve as the preliminary work and as the platform to acquire accustomed knowledge on the area of Malaysian animation content.

The lack of organized and structured information available requires a more qualitative approach in gathering data in order to collect valuable information which can be utilized as the basis of future quantitative studies (in which may also fit to more concepts, theories and models). Information on Malaysian animation studies, as of now, are not widely available through journals, books nor magazines. Some details may be found in newspapers here and there, but most of the information are more news-oriented rather than dissecting the issue of Malaysian animation content itself.

The facts are generally available but to structure and make sense out of them, qualitative content analysis, focus group interviews and in-depth interview are suggested. Locally-produced animation have been around for quite some time. However, being left unstudied or minimally touched in the past, starting points are not available in identifying the characteristics and audience reception. Hence, there are patterns yet to be identified. Once patterns have been identified, it may hopefully lead towards more diverse studies from different views and perspectives.

This research does not in any way mean to be perfect but should serve as a valuable reference point. As demonstrated by Poitras (2005), there were additions to his findings on Japanese characteristics in anime and manga in his previous book (Poitras, 1999). With the foundation already nicely laid-out, Poitras had a reference point to further his study in his sequel in 2005. Being inspired by the work of Poitras, this study hopes to achieve the same role for Malaysian animation in particular.

2.2 Media Representation and Structuralist-Semiotics

The link between semiotics and content analysis can be seen as suggested by Hijmans (1996) where it was mentioned structuralist-semiotic analysis as one of the five types of qualitative content analysis alongside discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis and interpretative analysis. This study undertakes the structuralist-semiotic analysis with the means of identifying and understanding the characteristics of Malaysian animation and how it is represented by the characters, behaviors, practices and objects. Based on the objectives of this study, it is in no way an attempt to uncover more on the subject of semiotics itself but rather as a tool in order to achieve the research objectives. This investigation merely trots along the lines of semiotics in order to understand the part where characteristics of Malaysian animation are concerned thus the structuralist-semiotic approach to qualitative content analysis. This statement has to be made clear in order to avoid any misdirection or confusion over the purpose of this exploratory research.

Semiotics is generally the study of signs within text that conjure up meanings and makes sense of how the signs represent something else. Early studies of semiotics can be traced back to Hippocrates as a branch of medicine and shortly after by Aristotle who set up a 3-part model of semiotics. However, these were not the idea of semiotics and semiology of what we understand today but relates towards a small part of understanding signs and

symbols. It was not until two different founders, in Charles Sandres Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, introduced the world with the field of ‘Semeiotics’ (the term introduced by Peirce was spelled with the extra ‘e’. However, it can be assumed that the development of language has seen the ‘e’ removed to form the term ‘semiotics’) by Peirce and Semiology by Saussure (Chandler, 2002).

Saussure explained semiology (later known as semiotics) by composing a 3-part combination with the signifier and the signified as the two elements that determine the understanding of a sign.

Signifier + Signified = Sign

According to Saussure (in Chandler, 2002:18) the signifier represents the form of a sign. It is physical in nature in which it can be visible to the human eye. The signified is the mental image or concept of the sign. When the signifier and signified combines, the process is called signification and the results are the signs that people interpret.

An example suitable for this study would be ‘Superman’. Physically, Superman is a DC Comic superhero notable for wearing a blue colored outfit with a red undergarment on the outside, topped up with a large red cape and an ‘S’ logo on the chest (signifier). However, how Superman is portrayed as a mental image would most probably defer from one person to the other (signified) based on many factors. Observe the images following images.

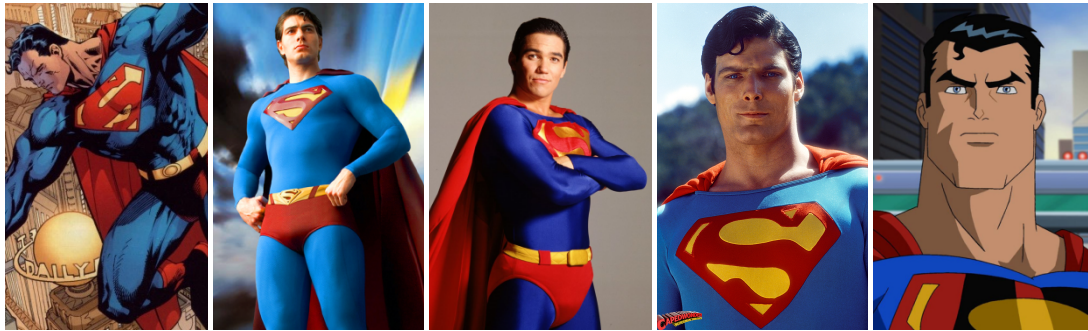


Figure 2.1 Different versions of Superman

Source (From left to right): Superman Flying (2011), Crystal (2013), Littal (2013), Vaeternus (2013) & Kilpatrick (2009)

As one can see, all the images above portray Superman (sign). The blue and red outfit with the cape, 'S' logo and red underwear mentioned relates to the physical attributes to Superman (signifier). However, whichever version that is similar to our mental image may differ from one another due to the fact that each person's mental image of superman depends on his or her past experience with Superman (signified). People who grew up watching Christopher Reeves taking up the role in the late 1970s may have him as the mental image of superman. The most recent Superman movie introduced Brandon Routh (2nd from left) may have affected others. Children may have a mental image of a cartoon version of Superman based on what they might have watched on television.

The concept of semiotics introduced by Peirce sees the classification of a 'sign' into three categories which are indexical, iconic and symbolic. Indexical signs are direct representation of an object or a person with high detail compared to its real counterpart. These signs may include natural signs (such as lightning and rain), medical symptoms (such as pain and bruises), measuring instruments (such as tachometers and speedometers), recordings (such as photos and videos) etc. Iconic signs are relatively realistic description of the real object. A certain amount of similarity must exist in order for an object to qualify as an iconic sign. Although it may not very high in detail, it is enough to convince a viewer what the object represents. Symbolic signs are written or oral words that connect between an object

and what it is called. These signs are normally arbitrary or conventional in nature hence indicating that the relationships must be learned i.e. language, alphabets, traffic lights, gestures etc. (Chandler, 2002:36-37)

Let's take for example the Petronas Twin Towers KLCC. An indexical sign in an animation would consist of photographs or videos, edited or altered photos or high-detailed drawings as seen below (Figure 2.2). The image on the left is a direct photograph of the Petronas Twin Towers. The image on the right is an edited picture of the real Twin Towers with spaceships around and a nearby explosion. Although different in nature, these images are highly accurate in how they represent the Petronas Twin Towers.



Figure 2.2 From left: A photo and an edited picture.

Source (From left to right): Zeme (2014) and Chan (2008)

The next series of images feature iconic signs of the Petronas Twin Towers. In terms of details, they are kept at a minimum. The figure on the left represents outlines of various skyscrapers in the world. Without much effort, a person with a decent level of general knowledge would be able to identify (from left) the Willis Tower, Taipei 101, Petronas Twin Towers and Empire State Building. The image on the right is the logo of a private higher learning institution in Kuala Lumpur by the name of Universiti Kuala Lumpur or known as

UniKL. The Twin Towers are easily identifiable without needing to brainstorm the details that explain what those buildings are.

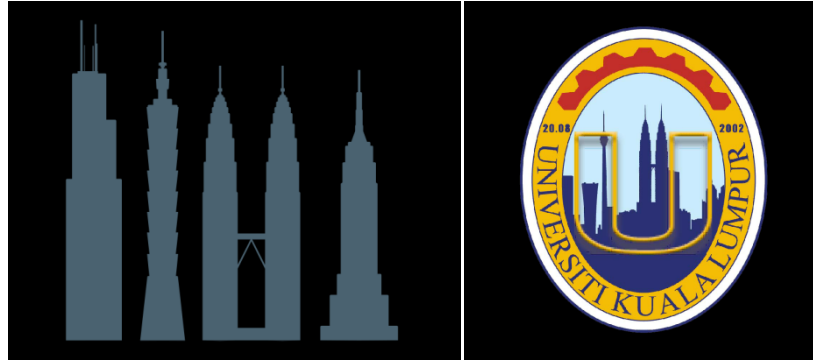


Figure 2.3 Tower comparisons and UniKL logo.

Source (From left to right): Self-manipulated using Adobe Photoshop CS5 and UniKL Logo (2009)

Symbolic signs of the Petronas Twin Towers carry various terms in which people can relate to. The terms ‘Petronas Twin Towers’, ‘Twin Towers’, ‘Petronas Towers’, ‘KLCC’ are among the terms that will reflect on the towers themselves. A mention of any of these terms will direct a person to register and identify a mental image of the Petronas Twin Towers in their minds.

The structuralist-semiotics refers to a semiotic view on human culture within the boundaries of a sign system. As stated by Hawkes (1977:17), structuralism is the process of making sense of the world through perception and description of structures. In a number of cases, signs are interpreted through arbitrary means by a person based on culture and experience. One has to have intentionally or unintentionally learned certain criteria in order to make sense of a sign. Imagine approaching a water dispenser with two separate faucets with one carrying a red tap with the other in blue. The logic mind automatically detects the red labeled faucet being hot water and the blue symbolizing cold water. One might wonder, when on earth did we learn such a mechanism? This mechanism relates heavily on the concept of

structuralist-semiotics and how the human mind interprets the labels with the heat levels of the water. This concept is very much similar of how certain elements in society are identified with certain criteria that characterizes an object, place, time etc.

Chandler (2010) introduced the concept of media representation in visual semiotics. These representations refer to the process of putting together the features of veracity such as people, places, cultural identities, objects and events through any form of medium with high regards to the mass media. This idea is highly similar to the work which was done by Poitras (1999 and 2005) in which Poitras identified the Japanese characteristics within various anime. Chandler however further added that semiotics and ‘quantitative’ content analysis as the main technique in analyzing media representation.

Poitras never did mention the exact approach to obtaining the information he used to conclude his findings. However, it is obvious based on the findings of Poitras that there were no indications of a quantitative approach. This study aims to somehow merge the concept introduced by Chandler and the method similar to the work of Poitras (using Mayring’s (2000) Step Model of Inductive Category Development) in order to obtain valuable data and insight on Malaysian animation. Mayring’s idea will be elaborated further in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

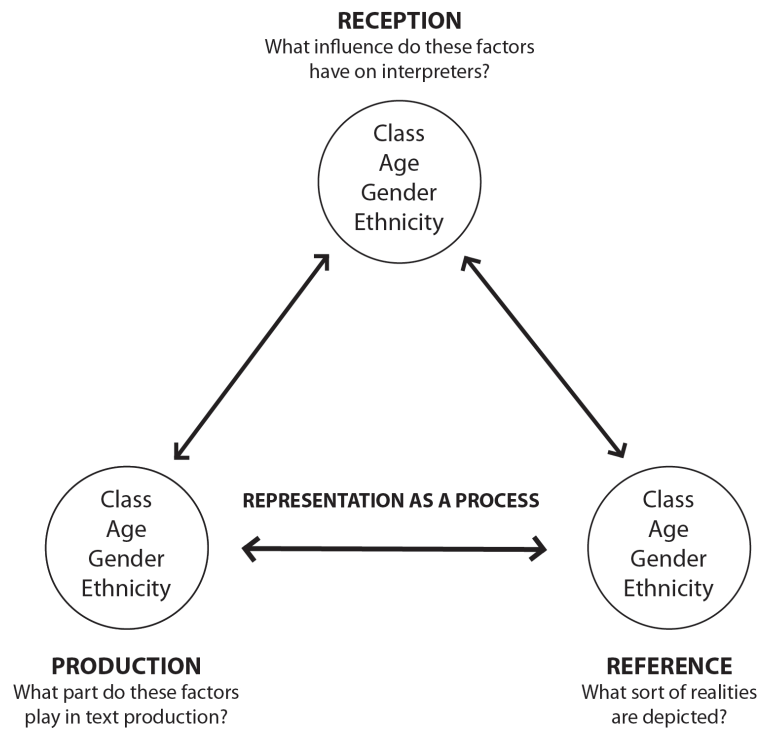


Figure 2.4 Media Representation Model (Chandler, 2001)

The idea of this study is not to question how Malaysian identity is represented through animation which relates to framing, but rather what characteristics are represented. Based on the media representation model in Figure 2.4, media representation is defined through the inter-relationships between reception, reference and production. In his example, Chandler listed four key markers to identity which are class, age, gender and ethnicity. These markers are the components which become the central figure of the model to understand the model as a whole. Reception questions the influence of production and reference of the identity markers on the audience. Production tries to identify the role of reception and reference in determining the planned frame. Finally, reference recognizes the realities which are portrayed.

This research adopts a part of this model, rather than the whole model, to fit research objectives due to several limitations. First, the number of animation series which have been produced to date is significantly small considering the fact that the animation industry is still young and growing. Furthermore, Malaysian animation series available through VCDs and

DVDs are very limited. As of now, only *Upin & Ipin*, *Bola Kampung* and *Boboiboy* are available in the market. Second, this model requires a qualitative approach to content analysis. Since characteristics of Malaysian animation has yet to be identified, determining the realities depicted through quantitative means would only bound the findings to limited items as pre-determined by the researcher. There is a possibility that whatever identity listed might not appear at all and result in a senseless and time-wasting study which will not contribute towards knowledge in any manner. Third, the idea of including framing analysis does not fit the purpose of this study for the time being. Once the industry has further matured and the impact has significantly grown, then there may be a worthy purpose of adapting this model as a whole. Finally, this model does not fit the purpose of a solely exploratory study, rather focusing more on identifying the signs which already exist within the boundaries set by its key identity markers. By limiting the norms of recognizing identity markers, other characteristics are neglected when it should demonstrate a more detailed idea of the signs within Malaysian animation.

Animation, when studied through the scope of semiotics, is very much like a game of chess. Within a specific set of rules and boundaries, a chess player is able to maneuver through different sets of strategies in order to achieve the goal of checkmating the King. Animation produced in Malaysia introduces characteristics within the boundaries of the country through different approaches, be it on purpose or accidental. Malaysian animations are identified through how the characters, objects, background, places etc. are represented and later received by the audience. The items within an animation have the capability to relate the audience with their own self-interest, attitude, and, in the context of this study, culture and geographical location which would eventually lead to the characterization of the animation.

In the case of this research, the signs are the characteristics of Malaysian animation which can be related to the objects that can be seen within the animation (signifier, indexical signs, and iconic signs). The terms representing those signs (symbolic signs) are categorized in groups which each subset carrying similarities in their own terms (clothing, food, geography etc). The explanation for the signs will depend on external references to ensure that the characteristics featured in the animation are indeed Malaysian and fits with the concept and mental image of the sign (signified).

2.3 Audience Reception

The media representation model indicates reception as a component in identifying and understanding representation within media content. Malaysian animation, as the media content and the focal object or 'text' of a textual analysis undertakes the approach of understanding the acceptance and rejection of the values contained within the content. This form of negotiation indicates that the audience plays an active role in determining what messages to accept and what to reject within the text. This cordially implies that rather than focusing on the object or text itself, the communication process is seen from the perspective of the audience and how the messages are received.

The process of encoding and decoding messages involves implied meanings in messages. The fundamentals that form reception analysis are based on structuralism and semiotics which looks into the importance of encoding and decoding of messages (Mohd Zain, 2002:15). The role of language and symbols used in daily communication is set as a priority in determining the effectiveness in interpreting messages by the audience. However, what should also be noted are the cultural backgrounds and also the social structures of the audience which may significantly affect the encoding and decoding process.

Meanings can be suggested by the author, but may not be understood and interpreted according to what was suggested. Hall (in Mohd Zain, 2002:16), further suggested three positions of which a reader would interpret text which are the dominant reading, negotiated reading and oppositional reading. Dominant-hegemonic reading sees that the reader understands, interprets and wholly accept the text as intended by the author. In negotiated reading, the reader would agree on most parts of the text while at the same time reserving a small amount of room for doubts and questions. Finally, in oppositional reading, the reader may possibly fully understand a text and interprets exactly as the author intended. However in this case, the reader chooses to read 'between-the-lines' or not to accept the message based on his or her social positioning.

An example would be like in a political election. Tom, a huge supporter of Candidate A, stumbles upon a magazine article promoting the political ideas of Candidate A. Being a strong follower, Tom would definitely accept everything stated within the article (dominant reading). Tom's friend, Dick, is also a fan of Candidate A. Unlike Tom, Dick has his own small reservations towards politicians. So when he was shown the magazine article by Tom, Dick fully understands the text. However, Dick does disagree in certain areas of the article (negotiated reading). Finally, Tom and Dick's friend Harry is a known skeptic of politicians. Harry does not trust politicians in any way. When Harry read the exact same article, he totally refused to accept any of the political ideas by Candidate A (oppositional reading).

The importance of reception analysis in this study can be seen through how audiences interpret messages within a specific media. The decision to accept or decline messages depends very much on audience reception of which the environment and socio-cultural background of the audience is also of importance (Mohd Zain, 2002). Hence, if one perceives an animation to be worthy of the audiences trust and taste, it will continually be supported and used to satisfy their entertainment and personal desires.

2.4 Challenges in Malaysian Animation

By identifying and understanding both the characteristics and audience reception of Malaysian animation, the researcher is able to partially determine the challenges that lie in the Malaysian animation industry. This was achieved through the comparison of information between the characteristics and audience reception of Malaysian animation, supported along with detailed feedback and response obtained from industry players and the regulators of the industry through in-depth interviews.

Recognizing the direction of Malaysian animation is not an exact science. However, by identifying gaps and patterns, may help in understanding the barriers to success and the course that the industry is heading to. As explained by Orrell (2008), scientists have been deeply interested in making prediction for certain areas i.e. weather forecasting, health and wealth is because the underlying system working behind these area is because the information that lies behind it is quantifiable and computationally easy to control. Identifying the challenges in Malaysian animation is achieved by obtaining information on the current understanding of the current situation by practitioners and regulators alike and the planning of events that have been prepared during the present to overcome the current problems.

2.5 Research Framework

A conceptual framework is a graphical or descriptive explanation of the objects to be researched which also comprise the investigation of the relationships between key factors, constructs or variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994:18). Based on the theories and concepts utilized for this study, the conceptual framework, or rather the theoretical framework which has been drawn out to reflect the main components of this study can be seen as illustrated as follows:

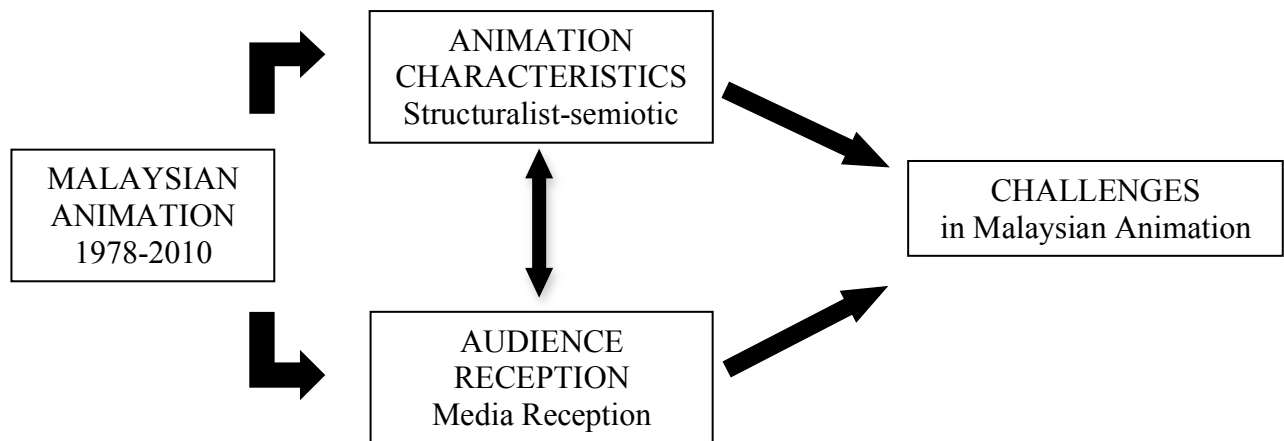


Figure 2.5 Research Theoretical Framework

The goals of this study are to identify the list of local animation produced between 1978 until 2010, examine the characteristics that form Malaysian animation, examine the audience reception for these animations and eventually identify the challenges in Malaysian animation.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Description of theories, concepts and perspectives of animation studies and audience reception will be discussed chronologically and thoroughly in this section of the research. Additionally, past studies and research will be elaborated further to supply the needed information on conducting this study in order to see the shared characteristics and factors of audience acceptance towards Malaysian animation. Furthermore, the information obtained will act as the basis of identifying just what is needed by local animation producers to take their products to the next level, become a more internationally recognized brand and therefore promoting Malaysian identity.

3.2 Characteristics of Animation

Halas and Manvell (1959:29) described that the theme found in animation are mostly rooted from fantasy and folklore of the creators and the styles of animation originated from the conventional graphic art of the particular animation period. It was also elaborated that the history of animated film routes through four major stages (Halas and Manvell, 1959:13).

- i. The initial period of trick-work and magic
- ii. The period of the establishment of the cartoon as a sideline to commercial entertainment (1920s)
- iii. The period of technical experiment and of the development of animation in the form of full-length feature entertainment (1930s and 1940s)

- iv. The contemporary period during which people see considerable expansion of the animated film into every kind of use from the television commercial to the highly specialized instructional film

Since Halas and Manvell's work was done in 1959, two more stages can be possibly added based on recent breakthroughs and improvements in animation technology. Stage 5 can be defined as the period of the digital age and innovation where the practicality, speed and economy of creating 2D animation have significantly improved. The use of computers have significantly assisted animators in developing animation by reducing the physical work needed for cell animation while at the same time leaving the creative process undisturbed.

Finally as for the present, stage 6 can be seen as the era of 3D animation offering a three-dimensional representation of geometric data on the viewing of animation objects. In 1994, Mainframe Entertainment (a production company based in Canada) released the first ever CGI-animated television series *ReBoot* and it was followed by the first 3D film *Toy Story* in 1998.

Animation itself is theoretically a part of film if assumed that film is defined as a set of moving images. However, as the digital age is becoming more matured, animation has recently become easily distinguished from film (but in some cases very difficult) and other fields which have also lead to the emergence of various publications dedicated to animation itself. It has to be noted, however, that the transpiring of animation studies is very much at an early stage.

3.2.1 Animation Studies of the Past

Looking back into the study of animation, the work of Ralph Stephenson (1967) must be noted as a valuable source of information on animation characteristics of various nations. Stephenson described animation based on its origins and locality. Older materials are available on animation history and techniques, but so far no materials are found describing characteristics of animation. Stephenson studied the nature of cinematic animation of numerous countries, among them the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Japan. He discussed the technology, techniques involved and the history of how animation films took place in their respective countries. The approach of Stephenson's study is highly descriptive and historical in which it can be seen as a documented history on major animation industries of the world at the time the book was published. Although Stephenson did not specifically study the characteristics of animation from these countries, he did briefly elaborate their attributes.

The origins of animation can be traced back to the Paleolithic age (Stephenson, 1967:24). Revealed at the 1962 Annecy Festival by Madam Prudhommeau, a French researcher, a sequence of separate cave drawings was re-illustrated on a film strip which exposed a running bison which fell into a pit and captured by a caveman. The caveman artist carefully and accurately sketched the images so that when the pictures are combined, it would form a moving picture and eventually tell the story of what was happening. Do note that this was done thousands of years back.

Animation since then has evolved in many forms and methods. The idea of animation being meant for children was even visible in the near-distant past and may have originated from early animation devices. Although some facts and dates may contradict from one source to another, it is accepted that a number of animation devices have played a part in defining

what animation is today. Among them are the thaumatrope, zoetrope, phenakistoscope, flip book and praxinoscope.

Stephenson's work was not really widely cited. One of the probabilities might be a result of the nature of animation studies being a very recent emerging dedicated area of study. As stated by Linsenmaier (2008:51), although there is a rich history of animation, not many scholars have taken the initiative to empirically explore its historical developments. Most studies on animation development have previously revolved around different perspectives notably Giannalberto Bendazzi's *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*; Michael Barrier's *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in Its Golden Age*; John Halas' *Masters of Animation*; and Sergey Asenin's *Walt Disney: Secrets of a Drawn World*.

3.2.2 Early Development of Moving Images

3.2.2.1 Thaumatrope



Figure 3.1: Thaumatrope: Turning Marvel (Cromar, 2010)

The invention of the Thaumatrope was often credited to astronomer Sir John Herschel. However, Dr. John A. Paris, a popular London psychiatrist, was responsible in producing this

toy (Cavalier, 2011:35). The device illustrated as in Figure 3.1 demonstrates how two separate pictures on the opposite sides of the same disc form a persistence of vision by twirling the strings in a synchronized and parallel movement. The end product when a picture of a cage is combined with a picture of a monkey results in a picture with a monkey trapped in a cage.

3.2.2.2 Phenakistoscope

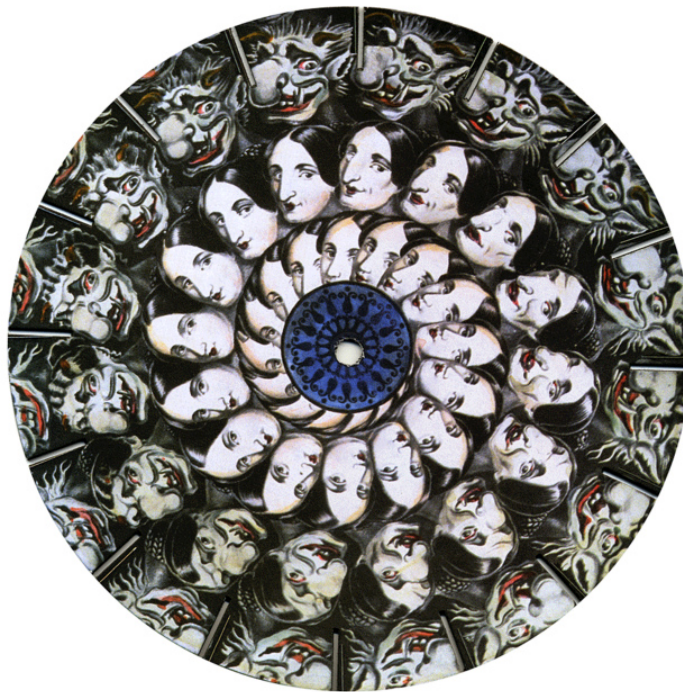


Figure 3.2: Phenakistoscope: Spindle Viewer (Creswell, 2013)

According to Cavalier (2011:35) the phenakistoscope was built by Belgian physicist Joseph Plateau in 1831. The spindle viewer or known as the phenakistoscope consists of two discs (eventually, one disc was enough) spinning on the same directions on the same axis . Note the slots at the edge of the disc in Figure 3.2. The operation of the phenakistoscope utilizes the slots because in order to view the movement, the user has to make use of a mirror by looking through the slots. The phenakistoscope enjoyed a very short-lived era of popularity

because not long after its invention, the zoetrope was born offering more people who can view the movement and at the same time not requiring the use of a mirror.

3.2.2.3 Zoetrope



Figure 3.3: Zoetrope: Wheel of Life (Cromar, 2010)

The zoetrope (originally named as *Daedalum* meaning ‘wheel of the devil’) was invented by William Horner and is constructed out of a large cylinder with viewing slit holes and illustrations on the inside part of the cylinder (Cavalier, 2011:35). This device was later patented in England by M. Bradley and in the United States by William F. Lincoln. Lincoln was responsible for the renaming to Zoetrope meaning ‘Wheel of Life’. When the device is spun, the observer shall look through the holes in order to see the animation of the objects inside. Theoretically, the faster the spin, the smoother the animation is.

Recently in 2009, the zoetrope became the focal object of a television advertisement by Sony in promoting their Bravia Motionflow line of television indicating smoothness of

pictures. In the process, Sony went to build the biggest ever Zoetrope (Figure 3.4) known to mankind to showcase skills of renowned Brazilian footballer, Kaka.



Figure 3.4: Still Frame: Sony's Zoetrope TV Advertisement Featuring Kaka (Sony Bravia, 2008)

3.2.2.4 Flip book



Figure 3.5: Spinning Teacup Flip Book (Paulus, 2010)

As the name suggests, the flip book operates with a series of drawings are compiled into a book form. By flipping the pages fast enough, the illustrations will form a persistence of vision resulting in an animation (Erik, 2011). The flip book was patented by John Barnes Linnett in 1868 under the name kineograph (moving picture). The fundamental concept of flip books is still relevant to modern day animation. With computer technology, the need to physically flip from one page to another is no longer in use. Basic use of the flip book concept on computers can be found in the process of producing animated Graphical Interchange Format (GIF)¹ files.

3.2.2.5 Praxinoscope



Figure 3.6: Praxinoscope (The Film Museum, 2011)

Invented in 1877 by the Frenchman Charles Reynaud, invented the praxinoscope which was considered a highly significant work in the development of animation (Stephenson, 1967; Wells, 1998 and Cavalier, 2011). The praxinoscope was the first device to which was able to solve the problem of picture distortions which was originally caused by

¹ Animated GIF files consists a series of pictures compressed into one single file. Once the file is accessed, it will be presented at a predetermined succession and rate.

viewing through moving slots as seen in the zoetrope. The device functions by utilizing two major components, the inner cylinder which consists of a set of mirrors and the outer cylinder which the pictures are stored. During the rotation of the outer cylinder, the rapid continuity of the reflections provides a scene of moving pictures.

1882 saw Reynaud successfully combined the principle of the praxinoscope with a projector (later called Théâtre Optique) allowing the animation to be presented for a public performance (Stephenson, 1967; Wells, 1998). Right up till the praxinoscope, characteristics of animation were not put into focus yet since the main idea was to first create the motions. Reynaud did however manage to create a bit of spark with his circus film of *A Clown and His Dogs* and love story *Poor Perriot*. The focus was on developing movement techniques, so much so that the type and object of illustration was kept as simple as possible. Limitations on techniques have hindered creativity towards animation content and it was even admitted during that point in time with C.W. Ceram (in Stephenson 1967:27) from *Archeology of the Cinema* described Reynaud as ‘a mediocre draughtsman’ and ‘hardly an artist’.

Although considered to be the invention that originated the animation genre (Stephenson, 1967; Wells, 1998), the praxinoscope signaled a dead end towards the development of ancient animation techniques. The future of animation at that point in time had been reliant of advancement of photography and film methods. Progress on animation has moved away from these pre-cinema techniques and no other relevant improvements were made on the praxinoscope. One exception of a unique animation technique was introduced between the end of the pre-cinema animation techniques and the transfer of animation to the silver screen which was and is still referred to as silhouette animation.

3.2.2.6 Silhouette Animation



Figure 3.7: Yogyakarta, *Wayang Kulit* (Zwegers, 2011)

Based on present animation techniques and practices, it is also important to note the influence of silhouette animation which makes use of black-coloured cardboard cut-outs made to move with bright backlighting on a white-piece of material. Images are captured frame-by-frame in order to create movement and in the case of silhouette animation, the colour is normally monochrome (Stephenson, 1967). Such notable work can be seen in Lotte Reiniger's silhouette films *Das Ornament des verliebten Herzens* (The Ornament of the Enamoured Heart), *Die Geschichte des Prinzen Achmed* (The Adventures of Prince Achmed), *La Belle Helene* and *The Seraglio*. The two latter silhouette films were in colour.

The ease of creating shapes of different patterns and sizes offered the first opportunity for creative content creation. Hence, the objects created often symbolized the story behind it. Shapes of people, animals and background depended on either the origins of the creator of the story or the geography of where the story occurred. For instance, if the story takes place in Texas, USA, the characters would probably be a cowboy riding a horse with a background of

a cactus tree. If the story revolves around China, the character would be portrayed as wearing traditional Chinese attire fighting dragons with a background of the Great Wall of China.

As with every product produced by mankind, silhouette animation has its own limits and it will either reach the end of its cycle or will go through evolution. The development of new and improved animation technology has allowed for more creative and innovative animation techniques and the possibility of a richer content.

The importance of the silhouette animation can be put into a context where it serves as the point where it was made a possible and practical idea that animation can be brought to the silver screen and at the same time being economical. Animation devices before the silhouette were always expensive to build and tedious to operate with the foreground objects always having to be drawn with the background over and over again. Silhouette animation has demonstrated how animation can still work with the background being static and only the foreground objects are on movement. As Halas & Manvell (1959:27) pointed out:

“The silhouette films revealed the economy in drawing which could be affected by using a constant background executed on a separate sheet of paper.”

Halas & Manvell (1959:27)

Having limitations with pre-cinematic animation techniques, silhouette animation provides a glimpse of possibilities where animation can be viewed by a larger audience on a larger screen. Between Emile Reynaud's praxinoscope and pre-cinema, there was a lapse of dead end until present techniques were 're-invented' back from scratch in the early 20th century. Noteworthy mentions during the early 1900s include the work of Emile Cohl, Winsor McCay, Max Fleicher, the Lumiere Brothers and Walt Disney.

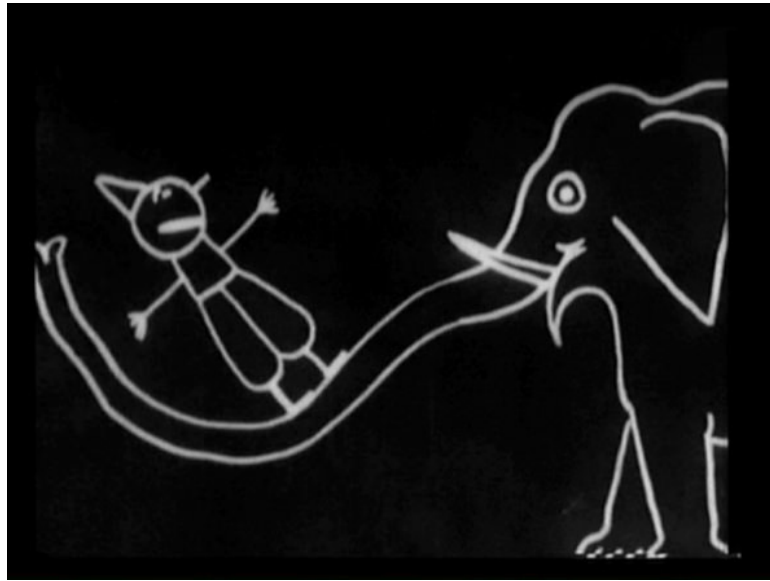


Figure 3.8: Emile Cohl's first cartoon *Fantasmagorie* (Breve Storia del Cinema, 2014)

3.2.1 American Cartoons

Throughout the history of animation, the American animation industry has largely been the driving force for animation development in the world (Cavalier, 2011:13).

Although the continuation of Stephenson's work may not be obvious (except for Wells, 1998 who was found to have cited Stephenson's work), there are studies on animation that describes the scenario of animation based on its geographical origins. Early American cartoons were appeared between 1909 and 1920. The origins of American cartoons can be found in comic strips (Halas & Manvell, 1959) during the First World War. Often, the characters in cartoons and comic strips at that time were brought to fame in parallel. However, it was not until 1927 when the United States were 'cartoon-istically' dominated by Walt Disney when the character Mortimer (eventually named Mickey Mouse) was born.

Wells (1998) elaborated on the nature of American (especially Disney) animation from the styles and approaches to the terms and conditions of experimental animation. This can be viewed as a study on the characteristics of American animation. Among areas argued

by Wells were the issues in representation of the body and logic, unusual trends, spectatorship and female aesthetics.

3.2.2 Anime

The Japanese are notable for their success in various aspects of life. Technology and creativity are among those qualities worth envied by countries all over the world. Nevertheless, the Japanese still maintain a strong sense of culture and identity. Other than to take a direct plane to Narita, one can actually understand Japanese characteristics through watching anime.

An effective attempt was made by Poitras (1999) to understand the community and belongings of the Japanese established in their animation. Poitras' work is the exact work that has inspired this research. He classified his findings in alphabetical order and into categories i.e. buildings, structure, clothing, food, mythologies, weaponry etc. which defines the characteristics of Japanese animation. The effort was made through observations of English-subbed² anime available in the United States. Poitras further distinguished the difference between anime and cartoons and how anime is more complex in terms of its storyline and covers various genres from romance to sports. Eventually, anime became a unique tool in introducing Japan and their culture to the world.

It is imperative to note how studies on animation from different countries have led to a change on how animation is perceived based on the country of their origins. Napier (2001:4) recognized anime as an export of popular culture of Japan and becoming a sub-culture in the United States and has been widely accepted by many other parts of the world as part of their media content consumption. Napier further elaborated on how anime earned its

² It is common for anime to be subbed or dubbed in countries outside Japan. There is a distinct difference between subbing (printed translations through subtitles of a visual foreign to a target market) and dubbing or looping (re-enacting the voices according to the needs of the target market with different persons and language which do not belong to the original actors).

place Japanese pop culture after being overshadowed by Japanese live-action cinema and existed in an insignificant children-oriented option. Anime has developed into a variety of genre and the popularity it has gained lead towards a significant increase of Japanese animation studios.

Taken into account how anime is globally accepted, Ruh (2004), a student of Napier, further examined the work of notable Japanese anime filmmaker, Mamoru Oshii. Among his significant findings include the indication that during the process of producing anime films, Oshii had the Japanese audience in mind and not the whole world. This means that Oshii intended that his films must cater to a local audience first before taking into consideration the acceptance of other people. This also refutes arguments (if brought up) that an animation has to be constructed according to the needs of a global audience rather than focusing on the local audience alone.

From literature findings on animation, it is very much notable that the two current major animation industries in the world hail from the United States and Japan. However, with the development of technology and skillful manpower in animation, a few other countries have grown to become minor competitors of the industry. These countries may not pose a direct industrial threat to both American and Japanese animation, but they do own a piece of cultural animation history of their own.

3.2.3 Rest of the World

In Korean animation for example, Giammarco (2005) pinpointed the influence on Walt Disney and Japanese animation towards Korean animation history. The introduction of **Geaggum** (literally meaning Dog Dreams) sparked the start of Korean animation and the birth of an iconic character linked to Korea. Perceivably inspired by Disney, the lead

character portrays anthropomorphic (human-like) dog is widely portrayed in their short animated films.

Apart from the content itself, more recent studies on animation has seen other aspects being studied i.e. art, technology, authorship, genre, effects etc. Davenport & Gunn (2009) studied the interest of animation art through the collaboration workshops they organized in Estipac, Mexico. The effort was made to foster creativity among rural youth in Mexico through a collaborative attempt in producing animation as a visual art rather than focusing on its historical contents, plot, story etc.

Animation has also been studied as a genre as demonstrated by Ortega-Brena (2009) who took a phenomenological approach to viewing Japanese pornographic anime (or widely known as *hentai*). Ortega-Brena concisely reassessed the Japanese traditions of obscene art and visual presentations.

3.2.4 Malaysia

On a local note, a search on the Malaysian Thesis Online database on 5th March 2010 returned no results when using the keywords ‘Malaysian animation’ and ‘*animasi Malaysia*’. The keyword ‘animation’ did produce results. However, all 11 of the results were specifically were technical research on computer animation rather than its contents. When the keyword ‘animasi’ was used as the search term, it produced only one relevant result (out of 21) in the work of Belli Nasution (1998) who studied children’s perception on violence in Walt Disney cartoons. The rest were either from the field of computer animation or education. The only other finding on the database is the work of Mohd Amir (2005) (using the keyword ‘anime’) who studied Japanese cultural values in *Naruto* and *Dragonball GT*.

Outside of the online database, the only work the researcher managed to find were papers written and presented by Hassan Abdul Mutalib for the various seminars and

conferences within and outside of the country. Hassan studied the influence of anime towards Malaysian animation filmmakers. Based on his findings, Hassan explained the appeal of anime, how anime has broken the domination of American cartoons and has inspired Malaysian animation filmmakers towards finding their roots in producing animation.

The problem here is in identifying the Malaysian characteristics in these animation. Malaysian media content has gone through the process of hybridization, the blend and mixture between imported popular culture with local programs. According to Siti Zanariah (2011:7), hybridization in Malaysian television occurs in two steps. The first one being values and beliefs such as moderate Islam and western modernity incorporated into the produced content as imposed by the government and the second being the censorship and monitoring to eliminate perceived negative values and beliefs.

Characterizing Malaysian animation will require an understanding of what generally makes a product 'Malaysian'. Rajeswary (2008) studied the construction of Bangsa Malaysia through reviewing types of vernacular newspaper articles to rationalize the kinds of issues Malaysians liked to read about. This supposedly should lead to understanding the characteristics of Malaysians through the issues they deem important. Based on the preferences and priorities of the Malaysians, it is strongly believed that these signs are reflected in Malaysian animation and thus defines what makes the animation Malaysian.

As of now, there are not many empirical studies on any aspects of local animation and its content. In order to achieve the first objective of this study, it is necessary to analyze the contents of Malaysian animation and create a set of categories which defines its characteristics.

3.2.5 Structuralist-Semiotics and Characteristics in Malaysian Animation

According to Sojodi (in Ghafari & Falamaki, 2015:50), structuralist-semiotics analysis involves acknowledging the constituent units within a system of signs as well as determining the semantic and logical relationships between these units. In other words, each unit within the system of signs correlates with each other to give meaning and logic to the signs. In the context of identifying what makes an animation Malaysian, all the tangible, non-tangible, verbal and non-verbal signs are analyzed to identify the group of characteristics and categorized to provide a clear picture of how these signs translate into Malaysian characteristics.

A more elaborate explanation is available in the Methodology chapter.

3.3 Audience Reception

The roots of reception theory and audience analysis can be found in literary studies. Studies on audience reception can be traced back to the work of Hans Robert Jauss, a German literary scholar, in the late 1960s (his work was translated from German by Timothy Bahti in 1982 and a separate piece translated by Michael Shaw, also in 1982) where he looked into the literature of text. Jauss (1982:141) identified that an audience is not passive in accepting textual messages but rather understand and interprets its contents and aesthetics based on the audience's cultural background and experience.

Wolfgang Iser (1978), a comrade of Jauss, further explored the reception aesthetics by looking into reader-response towards literary text. Iser suggested that there is a connection between the reader and the text and author where the reader understands and interprets text based on the context of the situation, the reader's background and also experience. Hence, terms and phrases such as 'If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys' will affect people from different cultural backgrounds differently. The metaphor can be well understood and

interpreted by readers with the cultural knowledge and experience of its origins. However, readers with no relevant knowledge may take the idiom literally and assume that a person can pay using peanuts to buy monkeys.

A further exploration of Iser's work was carried out by Terry Eagleton in his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* in 1983 (translated to Malay by Muhammad Hj. Salleh, 1988). Eagleton (1988:86) insisted that for Iser, the most effective literature are those which are able to force readers into believing and putting trust into the text and forms perceptions according to the will of the author. In a way, it is to say that good literature must contain text with 'power' or text which are able to force ideas and thoughts into a reader which in the case of the mass media, would be the mass audience.

The nature of audiences, either conceptual or theoretical, went unquestioned until the mid-1980s when speculation about alternative theories of audience began as part of a critique of the mass media audience. Defining 'media audience' was a problematic and controversial area. The application of the term 'audience' was referred to as anyone using any of the broadcast media, in whatever circumstances made sense (Nightingale, 1996).

Hence, it is intricate to specify where media audiences began and ends. The conditions and boundaries of audiencehood are inherently unstable. Take television for example, we all move in and move out of TV audiencehood constantly and thus, there is no easily determinable reality called audience. For media institutions however, they need to define audience to be a manifest, namable object in order to achieve its purpose of controlling and conquering.

As such, Rom Harre (in Ang, 1991:27) described the audience as being referred to as 'taxonomic collective': an entity of serialized, in principle unrelated individuals who form a group. However, by perceiving the audience as taxonomic collective, it does not elude the existence of the social world of actual audiences that consists of infinite and ever expanding

or dispersed practices and experiences that can never be, and should not be, contained in any one total system of knowledge.

Ang (1985) earlier studied the audience reception of *Dallas*, a popular 1980s television series regarding a rich oil family in Texas. Based on Ang's views (set at his geographical location in Amsterdam), there were two different types of reception by the audience. First, a number of Western-Europeans were largely charmed with the melodramatic approaches to the television series due to the physical attractions of the talents involved and the unique success story it brings to the entertainment table. The other more serious parts of the audience however see *Dallas* as an attempt of American consumer capitalism and cultural imperialism which is against national cultures and identities (Ang, 1985:2).

During the era of mass society, the media was viewed as having power to profoundly shape our perception of the society and to manipulate our actions in subtle but highly effective ways. Hence, audiences were originally considered to be passive consumers of the media. It was however challenged later by the argument that the media did have social effects but they were neither all-powerful, simple nor direct.

As argued by Counihan (in Morley & Brunson, 1999) the emphasis shifted from 'what the media do to people' to 'what people do to the media', for audiences were found to attend and perceive media messages in a selective way, to tend to ignore or subtly interpret those messages hostile to their particular viewpoint. As such, audiences were then assumed to be active and seen to be critical. The problem lies in which when the audience is presumed to be active, it tends to justify neglecting of all questions concerning the economic, political and ideological forces acting on the construction of texts. What seems to matter at the end is the reception.

The idea of reception theory has evolved (although to a certain extent with an unclear connection) to a rather audience-focused analysis, currently referred to as reception analysis

or audience analysis. The ability of audiences to suit meanings to what they want is an emphasis in reception analysis (Williams, 2003:199). The audiences are assumed to be active participants of the media content and choose what to receive and what to reject. Rather than viewing the media as having a certain impact on audience behavior, the audience is seen as having an important and active role based on social positioning in determining how messages are interpreted as suggested by cultural theorist Stuart Hall (in Chandler, 2001 and Mohd Zain, 2002).

Four main changes have affected audience studies as a result of new media developments (McQuail, 1997:9). The availability of cable and satellite television and radio broadcasting has lead to a variety of choices for media consumption. The limited number of channels available through traditional terrestrial transmitters has been replaced by a significant increase resulting to hundreds of channels available through one television set.

The methods of recording, storage and retrieval of sounds and pictures have also seen rapid development. Perceived as the second change, the development of these new options can be found through end-user products as seen in the development of video storage from VCD to DVD to Blu-Ray. These developments have provided an increase to the amount of data storage and quality enhancement that can be found in the physical products.

The third change came with the global expansion of new services, the capability of satellite transmission to cross geographical borders and, increased import and export of television and film content which has resulted an amplification of television transnationalization. Audiences from countries with smaller media industries thus become increasingly exposed to a global range of media content from major industries and are less protected from international cultural persuasion hence the global marketing of media stars and media products.

The fourth change can be seen through the increased use of digital technology which has led to a more interactive media environment. Access to media content has been made easier through multiple networks of data and a new wave of social media has allowed the audience to utilize the media content in various ways with various purposes. However as a result, media usage has become more individualized and the idea of mass audience has become more fragmented.

The ability of audiences to interpret media messages is determined by individual, social and cultural factors (Williams, 2003:190). Audiences are viewed as a multitude of different groups with different backgrounds, habits and community interaction rather than a monotonous group of passive message receivers.

In order to exhibit the interaction between media, culture and society, reception studies on television viewers have become a necessity (Wilson, 2001:1). In this study, the researcher intends to identify how Malaysians understand and interpret the contents of local animation in terms of the values concerning national identity. What should be taken note here is the need to identify how the interpretation of Malaysian animation has affected the attitude and actions of its viewers. There are bound to be social effects of locally produced animation and this approach is meant to be used to identify those effects.

There are not many empirical studies conducted on animation in Malaysia and even if they are published and available, it is difficult to locate (Mohd Amir, 2005). While some might look into the negative or violent effects of animation (see Lee, 2005), the researcher intends to take a rather audience and content-centered approach and glare into developing and promoting animation content to fit current audience preferences.

3.4 Challenges in Malaysian Animation

Any industry would have its own challenge in becoming a well established and high income industry. The animation industry in Malaysia is growing and developing. However, there are barriers that are preventing the industry to mature ever further and faster. This method aims to analyze these challenges in order to provide grounds to identify the areas for improvement, to create the enabling environment for change and enable the changes to be made for further development of the animation industry.

By understanding the characteristics and audience reception towards Malaysian animation, this research further explores and identifies the challenges in Malaysian animation. Identifying the challenges in Malaysian animation involve the willingness in behavioral changes by all parties involved, the audience, industry practitioners and regulators alike. Audiences should be willing to accept or partially accept the realities of Malaysian animation. Industry practitioners should be willing to accept that there is always room for improvements. Regulators should be willing to accept that the animation industry in Malaysia has yet to mature.

Maibach & Cotton (1995) described four stages towards behavioral change. First, the movement from precontemplation to contemplation to change. Second, the movement from contemplation to preparation for change. Third, the movement from preparation to actions of change. Finally, the movement from action to maintenance. Identifying the characteristics of Malaysian animation gauges the current signs and symbols that define Malaysian animation and serve the purpose of creating a better understanding of the industry. Audience reception identifies the level of acceptance or rejection towards how Malaysian animation is presented and through understanding audience reception, this study is able to identify the willingness of the audiences to change. An in-depth interview of practitioners and regulators shall help in identifying their willingness to change.

In order to create enabling environments for change, Carnegie et. al. (2000) indicated six key factors in the environment, namely policy and legislation, education systems, cultural factors, religion, socio-political factors and socio-economic factors that determines the possibilities of change. The combination of information obtained through the focus group interviews and in-depth interviews shall shed light through these factors, albeit in a slightly different way to how Carnegie et. al. (2000) explained it. These factors are the challenges faced by the animation industry, regulators and also the audience that have become barriers to success.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

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METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Several features will be prioritized in the planning process to ensure that the study achieves the stated objectives. As stated by Morley and Brunsdon (1999), the reception model falls within the interpretative paradigm. By being able to understand the characteristics of animation in Malaysia, the researcher will be able to gauge how the audience receives local animation, their likes and dislikes and in the end make sense of the direction Malaysian animation is heading.

Generally, the idea is to first create a characteristic profile of Malaysian animation (the sampling unit) and then move on towards identifying audience reception. The possible qualities to succeed internationally are recognized as an indication of the areas to be improved to thrive in the global market. Hence, qualitative content analysis, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews are suggested with respect to the objectives of the research.

4.2 Structuralist-semiotic Analysis (Qualitative Content Analysis)

In order to first understand the characteristics of Malaysian animation, content analysis on Malaysian animation will be conducted. Content analysis is widely used in communication and media research for various purposes. Content analysis is an attempt to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings through a comprehensive and systematic assessment on a particular part of texts (Berg, 2009:338). The method has been used widely in disciplines such as humanities, social sciences, criminology, psychology and art on various forms of

human communicative tools i.e. written documents, photos, films, videos and audio materials.

Generally, there are five grounds on why content analysis is used (Wimmer & Dominick (2000:136) and all these purposes fit this particular study. Content analysis is used:

- i. to describe communication content.
- ii. to test character message hypotheses.
- iii. to compare media content with reality.
- iv. to understand the image of specific groups within a society.
- v. as a starting point to media effects studies.

Content analysis have generally been perceive as a quantitative research method. Berelson (in Berg, 2009:342) suggested content analysis as being “objective, systematic and, quantitative”. However, a qualitative approach towards content analysis is also possible.

Miles & Huberman (1994:8) identified three major approaches to qualitative data analysis: interpretative, social anthropological and collaborative social research. The interpretative approach allows researchers to view human action as text which communicate meanings through a collection of symbols. Data collected are transcribed into written text and transcribed according to the theoretical direction of the researcher.

Social anthtropolgical approaches involve close proximity with natural settings with emphasis on continuous observation and contact with people and daily events. This approach utilizes multiple resources and information obtained from these settings to understand and conclude research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994:8).

Collaborative social research approach sees the undertaking of collective action within a community to conduct the research along with the researcher to achieve research

objectives which commonly include change of attitudes and behavior (Miles & Huberman, 1994:9).

An additional reason for the qualitative approach is that no data is available to be found on local animation that helps to quantify these characteristics. Unlike studies which have been conducted in or on media content of other countries (see for example Poitras 1999 & 2005, Stephenson 1957), the relatively new animation industry in Malaysia has not matured enough in the past to be studied thoroughly. Hence, it is fully up to the researcher to create a starting point (hopefully for many studies to come).

Malaysian animation is considered the communication content for this study. The animation is then compared to the reality of Malaysian characteristics in order to understand the image of Malaysians (Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups). As an exploratory study, and as the basis for the next research method (focus group interview), content analysis creates a starting point to enable the researcher to explore the possible effects (audience reception of animation) as intended in the research objectives.

By identifying the characteristics of Malaysian animation, the researcher is able to gauge the reception of the audience on the notion of cultural identity and how it is received. The sample audience will provide information on how they accept the characteristics portrayed through a focus group interview (which will be discussed in the second research method).

There are a number of definitions on content analysis which have been utilized for various kinds of research. Some define content analysis as strictly quantitative (see for example Neunendorf, 2002) while others are more open towards a qualitative approach (see Mayring, 2000 and Hijmans, 1996). Krippendorff (in Mayring, 2000) defined content analysis as “the use of replicable and valid method for making specific inferences from text to other states or properties of its source”.

Gunter (2000:82) explained that content analysis have taken other methods besides the quantitative approach as a result of various theoretical and epistemological perspectives. The importance of understanding the structure of text and the forming of meanings based on text have been thoroughly applied in a range of fields including literary critique, film studies and linguistics. In addition, Mayring (2000:1) provided a rationale for a qualitative approach to content analysis which is to conserve the benefits of quantitative content analysis for a more qualitative text deciphering and interpretation.

Sparks (2010:20) indicated that content analysis permits an examiner to portray the disposition of the content of communication in an orderly and meticulous approach. However, in the case of this study, it is not possible to utilize a quantitative approach of content analysis due to very limited data available for the characteristics to be based on. Ontologically speaking, the criterion needs to be identified before making any concluding remarks about what makes Malaysian animation Malaysian. These combination of these criterion will lead to the construction of identity in a systematic manner. Furthermore, it is a reasonable starting point for the investigation of media effects it assists researchers to determine what content is at hand that might be bringing about various consequences. This method is deemed appropriate for creating a profile that defines Malaysian animation.

The epistimology of qualitative content analysis lies in the notion that in order to understand identity or characteristics of an animation, one has to establish grounds based on axiological approaches or studying existing values that defines the country and the people. These values may be tangible, non-tangible, verbal or non-verbal in the form of people, objects, language and others. Additionally, establishing these values are not just based on opinions, but rather on valid information pertaining to identities of Malaysia.

The qualitative approach to content analysis of this study derives from the notion suggested by Hijmans (1996) and further elaborated by Neuendorf (2002) whom described five types of qualitative content analysis which are:

- i. Structuralist-semiotic Analysis
- ii. Discourse Analysis
- iii. Rhetorical Analysis
- iv. Narrative Analysis
- v. Interpretative Analysis

Deep structures, latent meanings and the signification process through signs, codes and binary opposition are focus of the messages that develop meanings when using the method of structuralist-semiotics analysis (Neuendorf, 2002:5). Through this method, assertions on central themes in culture and society and interpretations are theoretically informed. This method assumes that the researcher(s) is a competent member of the culture.

Discourse analysis involves scouring through language and words to see how the contents and terms describe the content in order to understand representations such as motives and ideology (Neuendorf, 2002:5). In this method, the researcher(s) is assumed to be competent in language.

In rhetorical analysis, the method assumes that the researcher(s) are competent rhetoricians (Neuendorf, 2002:5). Thru this method, the researcher(s) attempt to use the message's construction, form, metaphors, argumentation structure and choices in order to reconstruct the manifested characteristics to understand how, rather than what, the message signifies.

Narrative analysis focuses on the characters and their difficulties, choices, conflicts, complications and developments in order to understand how the stories are carried in the narrative rather than the analysis of text as content (Neuendorf, 2002:5). This method assumes that the researcher(s) are competent in reading narratives.

The focus of interpretative analysis is in forming theories based on observations and coding of messages found in the content analyzed (Neuendorf, 2002:5). The process within interpretative analysis involves the researcher(s) being in a constant state of discovery and revision. Towards the end of the analysis, the researcher accumulates the findings to conclude his or her interpretation based on the discoveries and revision.

Hence, the type of qualitative content analysis utilized for this study is the structuralist-semiotic approach. Semiotics serves as a platform to combine the conceptual framework and research procedure for a wide range of signifying routines (Chandler, 2002:214). Structuralist semiotics aims to observe subjective meanings behind messages to uncover the organization of phenomena assuming that the researcher is a competent member of the culture. Characteristics of an animation are very much the signs and symbols of the Malaysian society representing various major and minor ethnic groups. Signs such as food, buildings and clothes may well be too obvious to make meanings beyond surface (see Chapter 2.2).

A number of animations may not readily be available in DVD stores. Consequently, the samples are selected based on the assumption that they will be available through purchase, requests, downloads or are currently shown on television. The samples chosen are specifically trimmed down to Malaysian animation films and series which are meant for the local market. This excludes Malaysian-produced animation for dedicated foreign markets. The animations must have been aired in Malaysia and can be of a series or film for the reason that the quantity of Malaysian animation is yet limited. Hence, in order to achieve the

objectives of this research, the animation of *Usop Sontorian*, *Anak-anak Sidek* and *Upin & Ipin* will be selected as samples.

4.2.1 Unit of Analysis

Culler (in Chandler, 2002) stated the following:

“Semiotics is probably best known as an approach to textual analysis, and in this form is characterized by a concern with structural analysis. Structuralist analysis focuses on the structural relations which are functional in the signifying system at a particular moment in history. It involves identifying the constituent units in a semiotic system (such as text or socio-culture practice) and the structural relationship between them (oppositions, correlations and logical relations). This is not an empty exercise since ‘relations are important for what they can explain: meaningful contrasts and permitted or forbidden combinations’”. (p.79)

The unit of analysis of the animations would be its characteristics, in specific, the items, people, objects, practices, values and other possible characteristics contained within the animation itself. Thus, the study required an inductive category development (Mayring, 2000:3) of its contents i.e. how the characters are physically portrayed, the behaviour of its characters, and cultural objects within the animation which in turn would also lead towards forming the coding agenda.

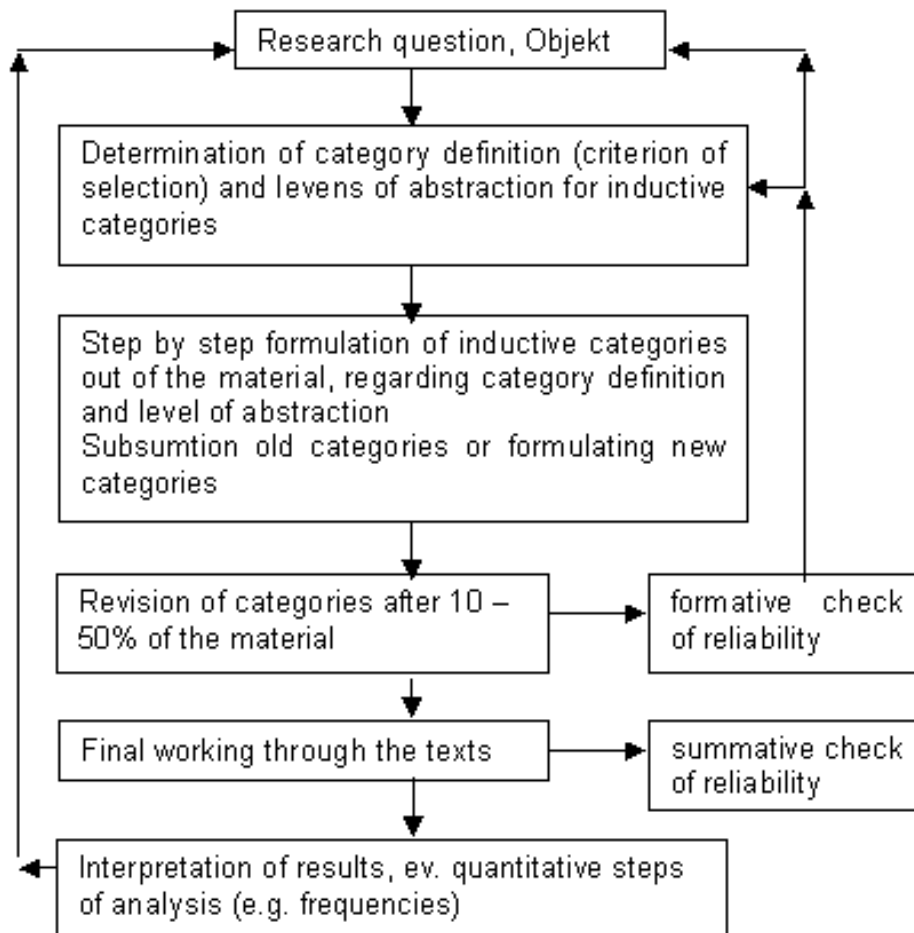


Figure 4.1: Mayring's Step Model of Inductive Category Development

Once these characteristics are identified, they will be categorized into appropriate groups (coding agenda). The researcher will then table the findings and clarify characteristics of Malaysian animation.

Category	Definition	Examples	Coding Rules
C1: high self confidence	High subjective conviction to have successfully coped with the situational demands, which means - to be clear about the demands and their coping possibilities, - to have a positive, hopeful feeling in handling the situation, - to be sure to have coped	"Of course there had been some little problems, but we solved them all, either I myself or the student gave in, depends who made a mistake. Everyone can make mistakes." (17, 23) "Sure there had been problems, but in the end	All three aspects of the definition have to point to "high" self confidence no aspect only "middle" Otherwise C2: middle self confidence

	with the demands on one's own efforts.	we had a fine relationship. We got it all together." (27, 33)	
C2: middle self confidence	Only partly or fluctuating conviction to have successfully coped with the situational demands	"Quite often I found it hard to manoeuvre through the problems, but finally I made it." (13, 45) "Time by time everything got better, but I couldn't tell if it was me or the circumstances." (77, 20)	If not all aspects of definition point to "High" or "low"
C3: low self concept	Conviction to have badly coped with the situational demands, which means - not to know what the situation exactly demands, - to have a negative, pessimistic feeling in handling the situation, - to be sure that one's own efforts had no effect on improving the situation.	"That stroke my self confidence; I thought I'm a nothing – or even less than that." (5, 34)	All three aspects of definition point to low self confidence, no fluctuations recognizable

Figure 4.2: Mayring's example of a coding agenda (Mayring, 2000)

To implement the Mayring's coding agenda to this research requires categories which are relevant in determining characteristics of animation. An example of a complete categorization of animation characteristics can be seen in the work of Poitras (1999) in his book *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation*. Poitras categorized his findings into 14 specific groups as fully listed below:

1. Buildings/Structure/Landmark
2. Clothing
3. Culture
4. Entertainment/Game
5. Food and Drink

6. General
7. Geographical Feature
8. History/Society
9. Home
10. Nature
11. People
12. Religion/Mythology/Belief
13. Sport/Activity
14. Weaponry/War

Each and every category listed by Poitras represents characteristics of the Japanese portrayed through their animation. It ranges from objects such as sliding doors, food and headbands to even locations i.e. cemetery, mountains, towns and cities. Poitras' work is a demonstration of how characterizing animation based on its country of origin can be done.

Based on the assumptions of possible categories, the following is an example of how the coding agenda for this research would possibly look like:

Category	Definition	Example	Title	Coding Rule
C1: Clothing	Any form of attire that is worn on any part of the body.	i. Songkok (Atuk) ii. Kain Pelikat (Lat) iii. Tudung (Kak Ros)	<i>Upin & Ipin</i> Kampung Boy <i>Upin & Ipin</i>	All of the mentioned attire are considered traditional Malaysian clothing.
C2: Food & Drink	Dishes, beverages, cutleries and anything related to the nature of the food.	i. Mee Goreng Halal ii. Nasi Lemak iii. Roti Canai	<i>Usop</i> <i>Sontorian</i> Kampung Boy <i>Upin & Ipin</i>	The concept of halal food applies to the majority of Malaysian citizens being muslims. The other two are

				notable local delicacies.
C3: Buildings & Landmarks	Any form of natural or man-made structure that relates to a specific geographical location.	i. Petronas Twin Towers ii. KL Tower	Anak-Anak Sidek <i>Upin & Ipin</i>	Both buildings are known for their notable shapes and their relations with Kuala Lumpur.

Figure 4.3: Sample Coding Agenda

It is important to remind that the categories mentioned in the sample coding agenda are as they are, samples. During the data collection process itself, the categories will be determined by their appearance within the samples of animation selected for this study.

4.2.2 Coding Sheet

Based on the requirements of the qualitative approach, the coding sheet is designed as an instrument to identify characteristics of the animation based on the coding agenda. The findings within the coding agenda will help establish suitable questions for identifying audience reception towards Malaysian animation. The following is the layout of the Coding Sheet.

CODING SHEET			
Animation Title: Year of Broadcast: Season & Episode Number: Episode Title:			
Category	Definition	Example	Coding Rule

Figure 4.4: Coding Sheet

4.2.3 Samples

Qualitative analysis sampling does not need to comply with the ‘statistically valid formulae’ of quantitative approaches (McNamara, 2005:17). The idea of qualitative content analysis is to study the contents of Malaysian animation to identify and understand its characteristics. Miles & Huberman (1994:34) argued that sampling procedures in qualitative methods need to be motivated more on answering research questions rather than the issue of ‘representativeness’ in quantitative approaches. They suggested three techniques which, when used together, may produce a more thorough set of data within the compounds of qualitative analysis.

- i. Selecting apparently typical/representative examples;
- ii. Selecting negative/disconfirming examples; and
- iii. Selecting exceptional or discrepant examples.

Since the animation industry is relatively new, conforming to the suggestions of Miles & Huberman is not possible. Currently, there are a number of Malaysian animation series being aired on television and a few which have made it to the silver screen. However, the availability of these titles through Video Compact Disc (VCD) and Digital Video Disc (DVD) format on the shelves of video stores are somewhat limited.

Among the titles available for purchase which have been selected as samples for this study are *Upin & Ipin* and *Bola Kampung*. The other animation series which have been selected is *Usop Sontorian* (although not available in DVD stores, the samples are still obtainable). So far, *Upin & Ipin* have been aired through six volumes spanning from 2007 to 2009. For the purpose of this study, the first three volumes or seasons totaling up to 60

episodes will be selected as samples. The high number of episodes for *Upin & Ipin* is a result of the short duration of each episode which ranges from five to seven minutes per episode compared the approximate 20 minutes of *Usop Sontorian* and *Bola Kampung*. For *Bola Kampung*, a total of four seasons totaling up to 52 episodes have been selected as samples and 30 episodes of *Usop Sontorian*.

Upon completion of the data collection, the researcher compiled the data into a series of summarizations similar to what has been done by Poitras' (1999 & 2005) where a an intercoder reliability procedure took place to determine the validity of the findings. If the results show similarities in terms of categorizations, the findings of this study are deemed to be valid.

4.3 Focus Group Interview

In order to obtain information on audience reception, the researcher proposed the usage of a focus group interview. This procedure is an approach to comprehend audience attitude and behavior (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:128). It is important to note that carrying out the focus group discussion is not intended to generalize the reception of the overall population because of the less structured process and lacks probability sampling. The means of this exploratory research, as stated before, was to understand audience reception and obtain a set of information which may be helpful for the benefit of future studies specifically those requiring more quantitative approaches. The number of informants per group for this research is eight with a total of four unique groups. The groups consist of (1) local young adult informants, (2) local parents, (3) foreign informants and (4) children.

The main criterion of an informant is that he or she must have watched local and foreign animation. If a person has only seen short clips, advertisements or promotional videos of an animation which occurred in a distant past, he or she might not be able to provide

accurate and meaningful insights with regards to the content of the animation. Although time-consuming, it is also important to note that the more fresh the animation, the better it will help the informants in cooperating during the interview based on the objectives of this research.

The informants will be encouraged to provide their opinions and insights towards issues regarding their reception towards Malaysian animation. Based on the example coding agenda previously mentioned, the possible issues which can be probed and discussed with the informants are i.e. the acceptance of values within animation (halal food and clothing) and how effective has animation portrayed Malaysia (through architectural landmarks, food and clothing).

It is undeniable that if samples were taken out from different age group, gender, race, geographical location or from many of the different demographical criterion, it would serve as a better method of obtaining a more representative and a variety of data. However, certain limitations are anticipated i.e. obtaining foreign informants, time, cost, manpower, geographical location etc.

A total of 10 questions have been set for the focus group interview with five different categories dividing the type of questions which are Opening (1), Introduction (1), Transition (1), Key Question (5) and Ending (2). These questions are categorized to indicate the flow of the focus group interview and ensure a well organized qualitative data collection. The questions set for the focus group interview has been set as below:

No. and Type	Question
1. Opening	Tell us your name and tell us which Malaysian animation you have viewed.
2. Introduction	How did you learn about the animation titles that you have watched?
3. Transition	What were your first impressions on the animation?

4. Key Question	What did you particularly like about Malaysian animation?
5. Key Question	What did you find frustrating about Malaysian animation?
6. Key Question	How is Malaysian animation different from those in Japan and the United States or in other countries.
7. Key Question	How has Malaysian animation affected your animation viewing patterns?
8. Key Question	How far do you agree or disagree with the portrayal of Malaysia in these animation?
9. Ending	If you had the opportunity to change anything about animation in Malaysia, what would you advise?
10. Ending	Is there anything that we missed or anything you want to add?

Figure 4.5: Focus Group Interview Questions Arrangement

The focus group discussions were digitally audio-recorded to ensure the all the information obtained will not be missed. Informants were briefed on the nature and aim of the study and read their rights to confidentiality. The informants were then handed consent forms (as in Appendix A) in which they signed if they were to participate in the focus group.

All the audio files were transcribed accordingly with respect to their specific groups. Transcriptions grant the researcher a basis for further investigation as well as serve as a permanent record of the whole discussion and may be shared with other interested individuals or groups (Fourie, 2001:310). There were minor edits done to the sentences to reflect the actual meaning of the informants based on the view of the moderator. As further elaborate by Fourie (2001), there is room for transcripts to be edited for the purpose of readability of i.e. non-finished sentences, inaudible voices and nonsensical thoughts.

Two main methods will be used to draw and verify conclusions on the data which have been collected and analyzed. First, the data will be counted. Miles & Huberman (1994:253) suggested three good reasons to route for numbers in qualitative research which

includes (1) identifying what we have, (2) verifying a hypothesis and (3) keeping ourselves analytically honest. The first and third reasons are the once applied for this study.

As quantitative as it may sound, the main goal is to identify potential patterns and consistencies which may occur. These patterns and consistencies may well be indicators of the future direction of Malaysian animation. Counting will also lead to understanding the status quo of Malaysian animation reception and will eventually allow future researchers the base or foundation for further exploration on this topic.

Second, the data and answers collected from the focus group interview will be clustered according to the Dendrogram Method as suggested by Krippendorff (in Miles & Huberman, 1994:251). The dendrogram will be extracted from the Tree Nodes of the NVIVO analysis and will be clustered as a horizontal dendrogram. An example of a clustering illustration can be seen below. The clustering of answers will allow the researcher to organize the data and produce a systematic-analyzed summary.

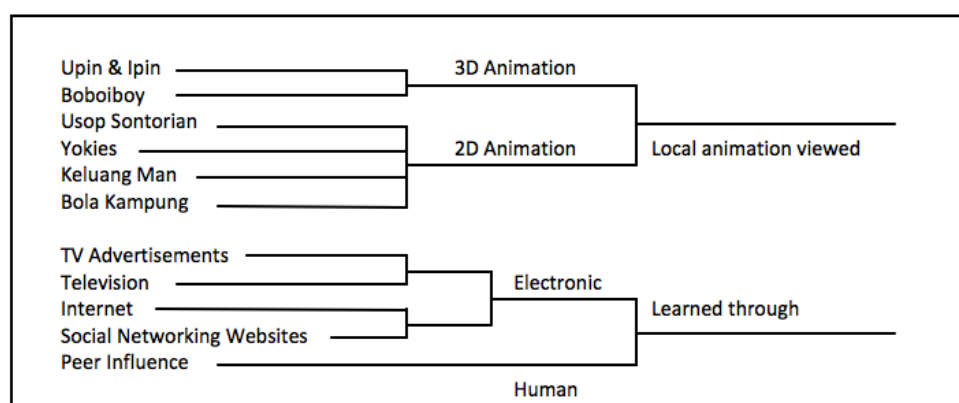


Figure 4.6: Example of a Clustering in a Horizontal Dendrogram

4.4 In-Depth Interview

Understanding the characteristics and audience reception are only the first two parts of this methodological trilogy. Similar to how identifying animation characteristics aid in developing issues for the focus group interview, the focus group interview will do the same

for the in-depth interview. Not only will the in-depth interview validate the findings from the focus group interview, it will also provide an insight on the challenges in Malaysian animation based on what the industry believes as the current status of reception.

Additionally, the interviews will be conducted on prominent figures of Malaysian animation namely Kamn Ismail (Managing Director, Quest Animation Sdn. Bhd. and creator of *Usop Sontorian*), Hassan Abd. Muthalib (Former President, Animation Society of Malaysia and the Producer of *Silat Lagenda*) and Kamil Othman (Vice President, Malaysian Development Corporation - MDEC). This approach is meant to obtain input on the current and future direction of Malaysian animation and the impact and potential it has to better succeed in the local and international market.

Face-to-face interviews can be considered crucial if the information needed requires depth and if the research requires understanding and insight (Gillham, 2000:11). Berger (2000:11) stressed that interviews would allow researchers to obtain information which may not be possible to gain by observation alone. Hence, for the purpose of this research the in-depth interview is selected to obtain more accurate responses.

The in-depth interview is a more qualitative approach towards obtaining information for this study. Information regarding the current and future plans for Malaysian animation is crucial in identifying what animation producers are doing for their part in publicizing Malaysian identity. Answers from this approach may well provide information which is not possible to obtain through quantitative methods.

The type suggested for this in-depth interview is through using a rather semi-structured interview with a written list of questions for the informant and at the same time maintaining a casual environment common with unstructured interview. This will allow key questions to be addressed thoroughly and at the same time provide space and time for detailed and lengthy answers (Morton-Williams, 1985:28).

CHAPTER 5
CHARACTERISTICS OF ANIMATION IN
MALAYSIA

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANIMATION IN MALAYSIA

5.1 Introduction

Following through the previous chapter, this subdivision will discuss the findings pertaining to the research questions. As three specific research methodologies were used, the analysis will indicate the elaboration and connection between the collected data.

The first section of the analysis explores the characteristics of animation in Malaysia or rather the items and objects that make these animation Malaysian. Categories used in content analysis can be decided via inductive approach, deductive approach or to a certain extent, a mixture of both (Berg, 2009 & Mayring, 2000). As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this research undertakes inductive category development in order to divide and categorize the findings to establish characteristics of Malaysian animation.

5.2 List of Malaysian Animation Titles

LIST OF MALAYSIAN ANIMATION SERIES & FILMS

SERIES (Year of Initial Broadcast) (Studio) (Number of Episodes)

- i. Hikayat Sang Kancil (1983) (RTM) (1 episode)
- ii. Sang Kancil & Monyet(1984) (RTM) (1 episode)
- iii. Sang Kancil & Buaya (1987) (RTM) (1 episode)
- iv. Gagak Yang Bijak (1985) (RTM) (1 episode)
- v. Arnab Yang Sombong (1986) (RTM) (1 episode)
- vi. Singa Yang Haloba (1986) (RTM) (1 episode)
- vii. Usop Sontorian (1996) (Kharisma Pictures) (49 episodes)
- viii. Yokies (1996) (Fine Animation) (52 episodes)
- ix. Kampung Boy (1997) (Matinee Entertainment, Philippine Animation Studio Inc., Astro) (26 episodes)
- x. Kartini (1997) (Opy Global Pictures) (1 episode)
- xi. Frooitees (1998) (Fine Animation) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xii. Keluang Man (1998) (UAS Animation Studios) (30 episodes)

- xiii. Sang Wira (1998) (Jutakira World Animation) (182 episodes)
- xiv. Anak-anak Sidek (Pengedaran JAS) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xv. Badang (2000) (Jutakira World Animation) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xvi. Alif (2000) (Fine Animation) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xvii. Kenyalang (2001) (Fine Animation) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xviii. Skyland (2001) (Young Jump Animation) (21 episodes)
- xix. Abang Sidi (2002) (Fine Animation) (Unknown number of episodes)
- xx. Wisemise (2002) (Makmur Megah) (32 episodes)
- xxi. Mergastuah (2003) (Makmur Megah) (39 episodes)
- xxii. Kacang (2004) (Lensa Film) (200+ episodes)
- xxiii. TD 2 (2004) (Makmur Megah) (26 episodes)
- xxiv. Johan the Young Scientist (2004) (Inspedia) (26 episodes)
- xxv. Tok Tam (2004) (Makmur Megah) (52 episodes)
- xxvi. Naughty Dino (2005) (Makmur Megah) (52 episodes)
- xxvii. Sam's Small World (2005) (Makmur Megah) (26 episodes)
- xxviii. Bola Kampung (2006) (Animasia) (52 episodes)
- xxix. Johnny & Lucy (2006) (Makmur Megah) (13 episodes)
- xxx. Yusrie & Friends (2006) (Makmur Megah) (13 episodes)
- xxxi. Mustang Mama – Football Fever (2006) (Inspedia) (26 episodes)
- xxxii. Ranggi (2006) (Lensa Film) (26 episodes)
- xxxiii. Upin & Ipin (2007) (Les Copaque) (97 episodes)
- xxxiv. Captain Hans (2008) (Makmur Megah) (13 episodes)
- xxxv. Mac & Ted (2008) (Makmur Megah) (26 episodes)
- xxxvi. Mustang Mama – Diehard Sports Fan (2008) (Inspedia) (26 episodes)
- xxxvii. Mat Kacau (2009) (Inspedia) (26 episodes)
- xxxviii. Boo & Me (2009) (Inspedia) (13 episodes)
- xxxix. Happy Together (2009) (Inspedia) (52 episodes)
- xl. Mustang Mama – X3 (2009) (Inspedia) (26 episodes)
- xli. Pet Squad (2010) (Inspedia) (52 episodes)
- xlii. Ramadhan Mat Jo (2010) (Elite Animation) (60 episodes)
- xliii. ABC Monsters (Animasia) (26 episodes)
- xliv. Chellup (Elite Animation) (26 episodes)

FILMS

- i. Silat Legenda (1998) (Peninsular Pictures)
- ii. Nien Resurrection (2000) (Young Jump Animation)
- iii. Cheritera (2001) (Matahari Animation & Productions)
- iv. Putih (2001) (Fine Animation)
- v. Budak Lapok (2007) (Matahari Animation & Productions)
- vi. Last But Not Least (2007) (Directed by Jeremiah Ong – Producer unknown)
- vii. Geng: Pengembaraan Bermula (2009) (Les Copaque)
- viii. Alamaya (2010) (Shock3D)
- ix. A Day in the Life of Mr. Teddy (Arshad Noor)

x. Buas (2010) (Charukphong)

5.3 Structuralist-Semiotic Analysis (Qualitative Content Analysis)

The choice of using a qualitative approach for content analysis is deemed a necessity as a result of the lack of local studies to quantify data (as indicated in Chapter 4). Being an exploratory study on local animation, the findings on characteristics of animation related to Malaysia has shown signs that it is possible to differentiate between local animation and foreign ones particularly from the United States and Japan. Unlike some animation in which their origins are more difficult to identify, Malaysian animation has indeed set its own unique tone and flair

Initially, 18 categories were formed in describing the characteristics of *Bola Kampung*, *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*. Each item found were initially categorized based on their possible unique traits. The categories are listed as follow.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Clothing | 10. Government Administration |
| 2. Food | 11. Buildings |
| 3. Agriculture | 12. Entertainment |
| 4. Industrial | 13. Games |
| 5. Institutions | 14. General |
| 6. Habits | 15. Religion |
| 7. Values | 16. Sports |
| 8. People | 17. Language |
| 9. Geography | 18. Custom |

This category was maintained until the 26th episode of *Bola Kampung*, 21st episode of *Usop Sontorian* and 30th episode of *Upin & Ipin* where a formative

reliability check was conducted after the end of those particular episodes (at 50% of the total episodes for each series). Based on further common traits which can be shared among a number of items under different categories, the categories have been revised to better depict the characteristics at hand. In the end, 13 categories were formed to explain the Malaysian characteristics of *Bola Kampung*, *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*. These categories are listed as in the following page.

Category	Category Definition	Coding Rule
1. Clothing	Any form of attire worn on any part of the body which is visible in the animation.	The attires must be of obvious unique origins of Malays, Chinese, Indian or aboriginals.
2. Food and Drinks	Dishes, beverages, cutleries and anything related to the nature of the food and drinks.	Food and drinks must portray characteristics which are unique to Malaysians.
3. Language and Communication	The spoken and textual mode and gestures of communication in the animation.	Languages and dialects that reflects the identities of Malaysians.
4. People	Race and origins of the characters in the animation.	The origins of the people must represent the available races in Malaysia.
5. Buildings, Structures and Landmarks	Anything built or constructed, and conspicuous objects on land that relates to a specific location.	Man-made buildings or natural landmarks must represent a Malaysian identity.

6. Culture and Customs	Physical or spiritual practices and behaviour which have been passed on through generations	Any form of physical and spiritual tradition that represents the local community.
7. Values	Ideas of which the society commonly agrees, shares and highly regards	Social values commonly shared by Malaysians.
8. Geographical Features and Location	The nature of which an area describes the climate and practicality of its location	Cities, states and any other geographical features and locations related to Malaysia.
9. Agriculture	The science, art, or occupation concerned with cultivating land, raising crops, and feeding, breeding, and raising livestock; farming	Agriculture and agricultural activities practiced by Malaysians.
10. Entertainment and Games	Activities carried out for the purpose of competition and fun.	Any form of local or traditional activities practiced by Malaysians for leisure and competition.
11. General	Common traits or practices among the members of a society	Industrial objects, institutions or other traits and practises common to Malaysians.
12. Religion and Mythologies	Practices or representation of a religion or mythology.	For religions, it must be based on the main religions

		practiced in Malaysia. For mythologies, it must be based on official mythical histories of Malaysia.
13. Others	Anything related which does not fall under any categories mentioned here before.	Depending on the characteristics, as long as it represents Malaysia.

Figure 5.1: Categories Defining Malaysian Animation Characteristics

The categories are formed based on the following findings in *Bola Kampung*, *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*:

5.4 Clothing

There are varieties of clothing worn by Malaysians that derive from cultural, racial and regulatory backgrounds. For this analysis, data shows that clothing found in local animation comprises of Songkok, Baju Melayu, Baju Kurung, Baju Kebaya, Sarong, School Uniform, Saree, Patka, Kopiah, Tudung, Anak Tudung, Terompah, Tengkolok, Caping and, in general, decent (non-revealing) clothing.

5.4.1 Songkok

A *Songkok* is a velvet cap worn predominantly by Malays in the Malaysian Peninsula as portrayed through *Bola Kampung* by Ablah or Tok Ayah. There are a few variations on the history of songkok in Malaysia. Some believe the songkok to derive from the Persian headgear referred to as the tarbus. Others claim that the songkok has existed since the Abbasiah era where Abu Bakar Al-Mansur ordered the usage of

songkok among government servants. It is also believed that the songkok has been worn by Malays for centuries but the exact date of its invention cannot be determined.

Current usage of the songkok can be seen for two purposes. The first usage is meant for formal functions or office attire where the songkok is worn with a set of a fully buttoned Baju Melayu and a Sampin³. This complete set of attire is known as the National Attire (Baju Kebangsaan) for males. The second function of songkok is to portray an Islamic Malay identity. Not only is it worn by Malays, but also highly used in Indonesia (known as Peci) and in the Philippines (known as Kopiah).

All three of the animation titles showed the usage of songkok by their characters as demonstrated in Image 5.1, Image 5.2 and Image 5.3.



Image 5.1: Ablah or more known as Tok Ayah wearing the Songkok in *Bola Kampung*

³ The sampin is a half sarong worn around the waist as a part of a complete set of baju Melayu.



Image 5.2: Pak Mat seen donning a Songkok in *Usop Sontorian*



Image 5.3: Upin and Ipin wearing Songkok in *Upin & Ipin*

5.4.2 Baju Melayu

The *Baju Melayu* is part of the traditional Malay costumes. It is worn by men for official functions, attending prayers at mosques or worn at home for prayers (Yahaya, 1989:34). For official functions, the Baju Melayu is worn as a part of a complete set

along with the songkok and sampin. Common types of Baju Melayu include Cekak Musang and Teluk Belanga.

All three of the animation titles showed the usage of baju melayu by their characters as demonstrated in Image 5.4, Image 5.5 and Image 5.6.



Image 5.4 Abang Budin with a Purple Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga in *Usop Sontorian*



Image 5.5: Azizul going in for a tackle while donning his Baju Melayu in *Bola Kampung*



Image 5.6: Ehsan and Fizi wearing Baju Melayu in *Upin & Ipin*

5.4.3 Baju Kurung

The *Baju Kurung* is commonly worn by Malay women and, in certain occasions, women from other races as well. Recent baju kurung designs are influenced by the latest fashion and trends. However, the basic appearance of the baju kurung remains the same with some choosing to don it with the *tudung* (headscarves). In the case that the baju kurung is worn by men, it would logically mean that the male is donning the baju Melayu Teluk Belanga.

All three of the animation titles showed the usage of baju kurung by their characters as demonstrated in Image 5.7, Image 5.8 and Image 5.9.



Image 5.7 Abu's Mother (an unnamed character) wearing a baju kurung in *Usop Sontorian*



Image 5.8: Norimah in a pink baju kurung while Nasha at the background is in green in *Bola Kampung*



Image 5.9 Kak Ros wearing a light purple Baju Kurung in *Upin & Ipin*

5.4.4 Baju Kebaya

According to the Malaysian National Library (2000), the origin of the Baju Kebaya derives from two possible theories. The first theory explains that the word ‘kebaya’ derives from the Arab word of *Habaya*, meaning a piece of loose clothing with a split front. Another theory describes the kebaya as apparel that was brought into Malacca by the Portugese. Hence, the reason why the kebaya has been worn by women in Malacca from Malays and also the Nyonya⁴ since then.

In Image 5.10, Cikgu Maimunah is seen wearing the baju kebaya to work. Most of her appearances in the series have seen her in a kebaya. However, when she temporarily replaced Cikgu Abdul Rahman as the coach of the Selangor football team, she was shown wearing a different outfit. The appearance of baju kebaya was only in *Usop Sontorian* and *Bola Kampung* and did not appear in *Upin & Ipin*.

⁴ The Baba and Nyonya, or also known as Cina Peranakan refers to the Chinese who migrated to the Nusantara during the colonial era of the 1500s and 1600s.



Image 5.10: Cikgu Maimunah in a Baju Kebaya in *Bola Kampung*

5.4.5 Sarong (Kain Pelikat)

Sarong (*sarung* in Malay), a piece of cloth wrapped around the waist, is a common lower body clothing worn by people throughout West, South and Southeast Asia and in some parts of Africa. Kain pelikat is a type of sarong worn by men since the era of the Malacca Sultanate. Currently in Malaysia, it is worn either at home or for the purpose of going to the mosque to perform prayers among Muslims. There are other variations to the kain sarong in the sense of design, material and who is meant to wear it. Kain batik, as seen in Image 5.13, is another type of sarong usually worn by women. It is widely accepted that the origins of the kain batik and kain pelikat worn by people in Malaysia derives from Indonesia. Notable brands such as Gajah Duduk and Atlas are sold widely in various locations in the country.

All three of the animation titles showed the usage of songkok by their characters as demonstrated in Image 5.11, Image 5.12 and Image 5.13.



Image 5.11: An unnamed character (right) wearing kain pelikat in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.12: Azman at home in his kain pelikat in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.13: Opah wearing a kain batik (a type of sarong) in *Upin & Ipin*

5.4.6 Malaysian School Uniform

The implementation of school uniforms started on 1st January 1970 after the Malaysian Education Minister at the time, Mr. Abdul Rahman Yaacob, announced that the introduction for school uniforms are carried out for several key reasons. Those reasons include (1) to support social integration among the multi-racial citizens of the country, (2) to prevent parents from having to purchase new uniform every time their child transfers to another school and (3) to enhance the image of students during assemblies (Hasfiza, 2011).

According to a circular by the Malaysian Ministry of Education dated 6th March 1983 (see Appendix D), uniforms underwent an update described by navy blue pants or shorts (for primary school boys) with short-sleeved white shirts, knee-level navy blue pinafor tunic (for primary school girls) or alternatively white Baju Kurung with navy blue skirts. For secondary school students, male students are to wear dark

olive shorts or pants with either short-sleeve or long-sleeve white shirt while female students are to wear torquoise pinafore tunic or torquoise blouse if chosen to wear Baju Kurung.

The standard uniform shown in Image 5.14 and 5.15 is meant for primary school with a white shirt and navy blue pants for boys and navy blue blouse for girls. While the uniform in Image 5.16 depicts a slight variation where Kak Ros is wearing a white baju kurung with a torquoise blouse which is the uniform for secondary school female students.



Image 5.14 Clockwise from top: Dol, Usop, Abu and Singh wearing primary school uniform in *Usop Sontorian*

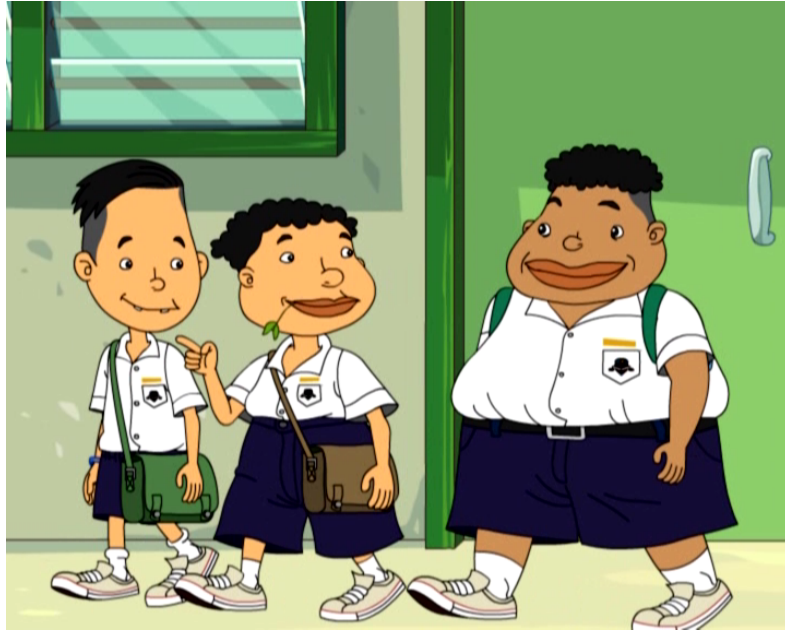


Image 5.15: Iwan, Sabok and Kumar wearing uniforms for primary school.



Image 5.16: Kak Ros from *Upin & Ipin* can be seen wearing a secondary school uniform.

5.4.7 Saree

Contrary to how it looks, the actual *Saree* is a long piece of cloth wrapped in various styles around the body from the waist to the shoulder. It is normally worn with a petticoat or underskirt. The saree is predominantly worn in India and in other parts of the world such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, Myanmar and of course Malaysia.

In Malaysia, Indians make up the third largest population. Image 5.17 shows Kumar's mother wearing a purple saree. In the series, the saree has been her only outfit. The saree did not appear in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.17: Kumar's mother in a Saree.

5.4.8 Patka

Turbans are an article of faith, worn among men in Sikhism, representing honour, self-respect, courage, spirituality and piety. For children, however, it may not yet be possible to put on turbans because the hair length is not yet appropriate to put on turbans. Hence, as a replacement for that particular time being, the *Patka* is worn as a temporary replacement.

All three of the animation titles showed the usage of patka by their characters as demonstrated in Image 5.18, Image 5.19 and Image 5.20. Singh, Santokh and Jarjit are the characters portrayed wearing patkas. In real life, this would mean that were baptized at birth because baptized Sikh children must cover their heads throughout their life.



Image 5.18: Singh with a patka in *Usop Sontorian*



Image 5.19: Santokh (left) with a patka on his head in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.20: Jarjit wearing a red patka in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.4.9 Decent Clothing

It is common knowledge in Malaysia that one must at all times wear decent clothing. Clothing which are more revealing demonstrates lack of respect towards other people (Yahaya, 1989:48). Hence, after observing all the selected samples of *Usop Sontorian*, *Bola Kampung* and *Upin & Ipin*, the researcher found that none of the characters have displayed any form of indecent clothing that can be considered offensive by others.



Image 5.21: Decent clothing observed from all the animation analyzed.

5.4.10 Kopiah

The Kopiah is a headwear used mainly by Muslim men in Malaysia. It is common to see them worn during religious functions or as everyday attire. While most Kopiah have been depicted as white, which it generally is, there are a variety of designs and colors of the Kopiah sold and worn around the country. The Kopiah appeared in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.22: An unnamed character with a kopiah on his head in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.23 Atuk and his kopiah on his head in *Upin & Ipin*

5.4.11 Tudung (Hijab)

The tudung, or commonly known as Hijab in English, is a scarf worn by Muslim women in Malaysia. However, the Tudung depicted in Malaysian animation reflects on the styles of Tudung available in this country, which has its own range of unique styling and designs compared to those from other countries.



Image 5.24: Kak Ros wearing a purple tudung in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.4.12 Anak Tudung

Wearing a Tudung may or may not require an extra layer inside the Tudung itself. Should it require an inner layer, that particular inner layer is called an Anak Tudung. The Anak Tudung is a small piece of head covering that can either be used with a Tudung or, as depicted in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*, be worn on it's own, normally in private vicinity.



Image 5.25: Usop's mother wearing an anak tudung in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.26 Opah with an anak tudung in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.4.13 Terompah

The Terompah, or wooden clogs, used to be the footwear of choice in the older days. Although not as popular today, wooden clogs continue to evolve from just being daily or occasional footwear to products of wooden craftsmanship and sold as souvenirs. Many modern-day Terompah carry the results of traditional, modern and a mixture of other carving skills by craftsmen in Malaysia. The Terompah only appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.27: A character wearing a Terompah in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.4.14 Tengkolok

The Tengkolok may also be known as Stanjak, Destar or other names. It is a traditional piece of headwear worn by men. The Tengkolok used to be worn as daily attire in the past. However, modern times have limited the Tengkolok to be worn mainly during customary events such as royal functions and by the groom during Malay weddings. The Tengkolok appeared in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.28: Usop wearing a Tengkolok in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.29 Tengkolok

5.4.15 Caping

Caping are bamboo-made headwear commonly found in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. In Malaysia, the Caping is normally worn by farmers and fishermen both males and females alike.



Image 5.30: Caping made an appearance in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.5 Food and Drinks

Food and beverages are also symbols of identity. As much as Sushi is known to be Japanese or Kebab as naturally Arab, there is a variety of food that defines Malaysia. These food and drinks can be found in Malaysian animation. Furthermore, there are other items related to food and drinks that also defines Malaysian identity which is explained within this category.

5.5.1 Goreng Pisang

Although some might refer to the *Goreng Pisang*, the translation is not exactly accurate. While banana fritters are made out of mashed bananas, the goreng pisang is simply a portion (whole, half or cut) bananas dipped into a light mixture of flour, sugar, water etc. and fried until cooked and becomes golden-brown in colour. Throughout the animation series of *Bola Kampung*, the goreng pisang has only been shown once which came on the first episode of the first season.



Image 5.31: Goreng Pisang can be seen in the green-colored bowl in *Bola Kampung*.

5.5.2 Rice

Rice is the main ration of Malaysians. Rice is normally served with a combination of other dishes either based on meat (fish, poultry, beef etc.), vegetables or any other type of consumable side dishes and flavourings (sambal belacan⁵, sour sauce, ketchup

⁵ Sambal belacan is a combination of prawn paste, chilies, salt, water and, based on unique recipes, sugar, prawns, orange concentrate or lime juice.

etc.). Rice can also be fried (Nasi Goreng) to form a variety of favourite and common recipes such as the Nasi Goreng Kampung, Nasi Goreng Cina, Nasi Goreng Pattaya and Nasi Goreng USA (but in no way does this refer to American fried rice recipes). Rice appears in all three of the analyzed animated series.



Image 5.32: Usop's family having rice.



Image 5.33: Azman sitting in front of a plate of rice in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.34: Upin and Ipin having rice for breaking fast in *Upin & Ipin*

5.5.3 Eating Using Fingers

It is common in Malay and Indian cultures to consume food using fingers. Although spoons are also available, they are normally used only to obtain a portion of a dish from a dish plate (Yahaya, 1989:48). Consumption still utilizes the fingers, normally from the right hand.

Notice that all three animated series shows characters eating using their fingers of their right hand.



Image 5.35: Characters in *Usop Sontorian* eating using their fingers.



Image 5.36: Iwan dipping his fingers in a plate of rice.



Image 5.37: Upin eating using fingers in *Upin & Ipin*

5.5.4 Drinks in Plastic Packets

There are various containers available for drinks and liquids. In Malaysia, it has become common to pack drinks in plastic packets along with paper or plastic cups such as the one shown in Image 5.38 and 5.39. Although this item has not been listed anywhere else, the researcher believes that because of its widespread use, it has become a part of Malaysian culture, albeit a rather modern one.

Usage of plastic packets as drink containers can be seen in *Usop Sontorian* and *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.38: An unknown character in Usop Sontorian drinking from a plastic packet.



Image 5.39: Beverage in a plastic packet (below the fan, hung at the wall just beside Jani the security guard)

5.5.5 Durians

Widely known as the ‘King of Fruits’, durians are very popular in Malaysia and other countries in Southeast Asia. According to the Peninsula Malaysia Department of Agriculture (1996), there are over 100 durian cultivars available to consumers in Malaysia. Among them are the popular ones are D24 and D101. Durians appeared in *Bola Kampung* and *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.40: Sailing offering the children durians during their visit to Kampung Asli, Gombak in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.41: Durians being opened in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.5.6 Nasi Lemak

The Nasi Lemak is a very popular dish typically consisting rice cooked with coconut milk, fried chilli sambal⁶, boiled eggs, cucumber, fried ground nuts and anchovies. Adding other dishes such as chicken rendang, fried chicken, cuttlefish sambal and prawn sambal is optional to the consumer. Although a popular dish among Malays, Nasi Lemak is also enjoyed by people of other races. In some cases, the Chinese in Malaysia serve Nasi Lemak with pork which is prohibited in Islam (hence, Malays, being Muslims, will not consume it)

Nasi Lemak was initially a popular cuisine for breakfast and it still is. However, recent trends have shown people also enjoy nasi lemak in the afternoon and at night. In the first season of *Bola Kampung*, Azizul brought a packet of nasi lemak to school as his lunchbox (or more precisely, food for recess) while Sabok brought Nasi Lemak wrapped in a banana leaf in the same episode.



Image 5.42: Sabok holding a banana leaf-wrapped Nasi Lemak in *Bola Kampung*.

⁶ Sambal refers to a type of cooking which involves grinded dried chilies or chili powder, with minced shallots, garlic, ginger, and tamarind. Sugar and salt are added to enhance flavours.

5.5.7 Lemang

Lemang is a traditional dish made out of glutinous rice, coconut milk and salt and cooked in hollow bamboos over small and slow fire. The bamboo sticks are lined with banana leaves to prevent the rice from sticking to the bamboo. Lemang is traditionally consumed along with chicken, beef or lamb dishes and is not commonly consumed as a stand-alone dish. Lemang appeared in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.43: Bamboo sticks being prepared for cooking Lemang in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.44: Upin and Ipin celebrating Hari Raya with Lemang on the dining table.

5.5.8 Ketupat

Ketupat is a traditional dish almost similar to Lemang in terms of its basic ingredients although there are more varieties when it comes to Ketupat. Either glutinous rice or normal rice is used in making the Ketupat along with many optional combinations of coconut milk, salt, sugar, nuts and also a variety of wrapping methods. While Lemang is cooked in bamboo sticks, Ketupat is cooked in pre-shaped Ketupat shells made out of either palm leaves or licuala (fan palm) leaves. Ketupat only appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.45: The whole family is preparing Ketupat shells to make Ketupat in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.46: Atuk's own variation of Ketupat which he called 'Ketupat Lembu' (Cow Ketupat) in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.5.9 Sate

Satay is a dish with similar appearances to Japanese Yakitori, French Brochette and certain variations of Kebab in which all these dishes involved skewers of specially marinated meat (chicken, beef, lamb, pork, rabbit etc.) normally flamed-grilled on top of charcoal or at times oven grilled or other modern grilling methods. In Malaysia, Sate is normally eaten along with peanut sauce as the complementing dish. Sate only appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.47: Here, Fizi from *Upin & Ipin* is seen with Sate on his plate.

5.5.10 Rendang

When it comes to complementing Lemang and Ketupat, Rendang would likely to be top of the list. Rendang is a meat dish commonly made using chicken or beef, which is cooked together with a blend of palm oil, shallots, garlic, ginger, galangal, chilli, lemongrass, turmeric leaves, coconut milk and salt to taste. Some may opt to add in other ingredients such as coconut paste, cinnamon, star anise and cumin seed or

powder according to their respective preferences. There are different types of Rendang in Malaysia such as the normal Rendang, Rendang Tok and Rendang Padang. Some Rendang come with thick gravy while others are dry. Although there were no clear depictions of the Rendang, the menu did become one of the topics in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.48: Upin and Ipin bringing rendang to Tok Dalang/Atuk's house for Hari Raya.

5.5.11 Tudung Saji Mengkuang (Screw Pine Food Cover)

Many of the crafts and domestic objects produced by people within the Malay Archipelago are produced using raw materials from two varieties of screw pine, the *pandan* and the *mengkuang* (Sulaiman et. al., 1994:62). Among these crafts are mats (also mentioned later on in this chapter), baskets and in particular with this section, food cover. Food cover made out of screw pine can be found in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.49: A food covering made out of screw pine can be seen on the dining table in *Usop Sontorian*.

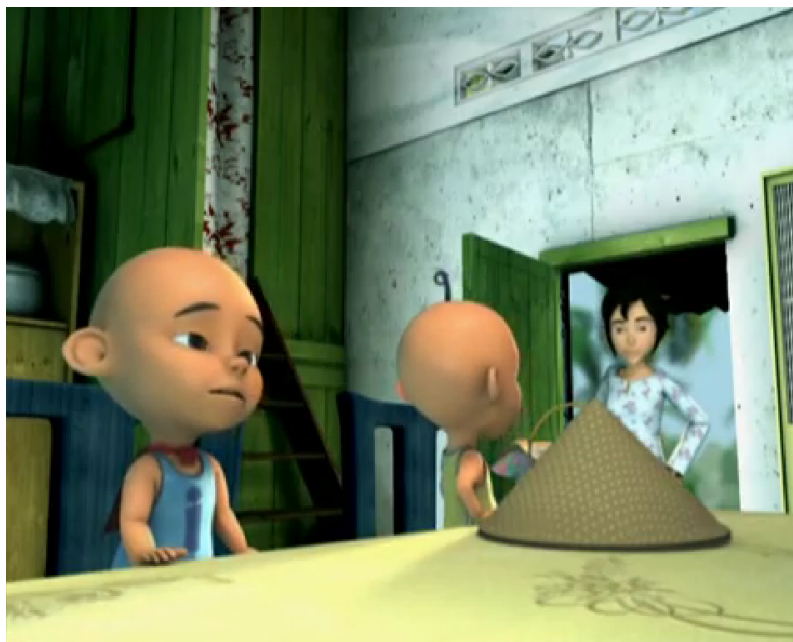


Image 5.50: Tudung Saji Mengkuang made its appearance in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.5.12 Tempayan/Buyung

In Malaysia, clays are composed using raw ingredients for pottery to produce many household craft. There are generally four types of Malay pottery namely the *buyung*, *belanga*, *periuk* and *labu* (Sulaiman et. al., 1994: 30). The one found in Upin & Ipin is the *buyung* or *tempayan*, which is generally large and has a wide body. This pottery is normally used to store water.



Image 5.51: The tempayan or buyung can be seen in the background of this screen capture at the bottom left corner.

5.5.13 Senduk Kayu

Although this type of kitchen utensil is widely used in Asian cooking, the Senduk Kayu (wooden kitchen utensil that falls between a spoon or a ladle) is also a product of traditional wooden craftsmanship in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak and is normally used to scoop rice and other dishes from a bigger container or bowl into a smaller plate or saucer. It can sometimes take the appearance of Japanese rice paddles.

The Senduk Kayu itself may not originate from Malaysia but it has become one of the products that demonstrate wooden craftsmanship in the country. Wooden craft such as the Senduk Kayu Nibong are normally sold as souvenirs or they can be used as actual kitchen utensils. Although in Upin & Ipin a normal Senduk Kayu is shown, it is still an important part of Malaysian craft heritage and forms part of Malaysian identity.



Image 5.52: Upin holding a Senduk Kayu in his hand.

5.5.14 Sudip

Asian cooking is generally different to those from other continents. With heavy usage of woks⁷, it is only sensible to use kitchen utensils that fulfills the needs of an Asian kitchen. The Sudip is a type of spatula with a curved edge that can be used to reach the bottom of woks. Malaysian dishes cooked by Malays, Chinese, Indians and others generally utilize woks and therefore the usage of a Sudip is common in the kitchen. A Sudip appeared in one of the episodes of Upin & Ipin.

⁷ Woks are round-bottomed cookware made of steel or cast iron and is commonly used for stir-frying and deep-frying. Woks can also be used for other methods of cooking i.e. simmer, smoke or braise.



Image 5.53: A Sudip can be seen in the background just right of Kak Ros' shoulder.

5.5.15 Dodol

Dodol is a traditional sweet and chewy snack typically served in Malaysia during Hari Raya festivities. However, modern day cooking methods have enabled the dodol to be prepared throughout the year. Dodol is made out of coconut milk, dark palm sugar, rice flour and salt. Traditional dodol preparation utilizes an extra large wok and cooked on flames from wood. This process can be seen in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.54: Preparation of Dodol in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.55: Preparation of Dodol in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.5.16 Belacan (Shrimp Paste)

Belacan is an important ingredient in many Malaysian dishes. It is used in making *Sambal Belacan*, a chilli paste consisting of different types of chillis, belacan, sugar, salt and other optional ingredients such as tamarind, vinegar, lime, lime zest etc. It is

also used as additional or optional flavoring in the preparation of curries, *sambal tumis* (fried chilli) and other types of wet, gravy-dishes. Belacan is a mixture made out of fermented, sun-dried shrimp and salt and normally sold in rectangular or cylinder blocks. Although Belacan did not make any physical appearance, it was a topic of discussion in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.56: Upin and Ipin were talking about Belacan.

5.5.17 Ramadhan Bazaars

When it comes to the Holy (Fasting) Month of Ramadhan, the sighting of Ramadhan Bazaars have become quite a norm and has become a Malaysian culture. Muslims and non-Muslims alike can be seen visiting Ramadhan Bazaars for the food and beverages. A variety of food and beverage offerings can be found ranging from main dishes to tid bit snacks. At the moment, a documented evidence of the history of Ramadhan Bazaars still could not be found and the researcher has concluded that this would be a different area of research altogether. However, it would be sufficient to

say that Ramadhan Bazaars have been around for quite some time and has become a significant part of Malaysian culture. A Ramadhan Bazaar appeared in Upin & Ipin.



Image 5.57: A Ramadhan Bazaar in Upin & Ipin.

5.6 Language and Communication

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with a wide array of spoken languages and ways of communication. These include Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, Tamil and English as the official spoken languages and accompanied by many other spoken languages and dialects. In this category, not only languages are found, but other forms of practices with regards to language and communication were also identified during the analysis.

5.6.1 Bahasa Malaysia

Bahasa Malaysia is a standardized form of the Malay language and is the official language of Malaysia. It is widely used by people of all races although with different dialects based on people's backgrounds. In some cases, people do not understand the dialect of others. For instance, a Kelantanese will not be able to communicate

effectively with a Sarawakian unless they use the official Bahasa Malaysia (known as Bahasa Malaysia baku) or take time to understand each other's dialects and accents.

5.6.2 Bahasa Malaysia (Chinese Accent)

There are still people from the Chinese and Indian community who do not have the perfect oral command of Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Malaysia Baku and do not converse as effectively as native Malays do. Hence, for Chinese, pronunciation of words will sound different from the actual word. Words with the letter 'R' will be replaced with the letter 'L'. Words like *mari* (come) and *rasa* (taste) will become 'mali' and 'lasa'.

This is not, in any way, a claim that the Chinese in Malaysia do not have a good command in Malay, it is just that the orally, the Chinese speak in a different way. Although this might not be obvious to foreigners or people who do not understand Bahasa Malaysia, it is clearly depicted in real life and also in the mass media, inclusive of *Bola Kampung* in the way how characters like Ah Hock, Szeto, Chin and Chun communicate.



Image 5.58: Mei Mei speaks in Bahasa Malaysia with a hint of Chinese.



Image 5.59: Another example of Bahasa Malaysia being spoken in a Chinese Accent.

5.6.3 Bahasa Malaysia (Indian Accent)

The case of Indians and Bahasa Malaysia is almost similar to the Chinese in terms of the difference of spoken Bahasa Malaysia. In *Bola Kampung*, Kumar and Muthu

(Kumar's father) have shown the typical sound and stereotypes of an Indian conversing in Bahasa Malaysia. The difference comes from the intonations, rhythm and occasionally a different way of pronouncing words.



Image 5.60: Raju, in *Upin & Ipin*, speaks in Bahasa Malaysia but with an Indian accent.

5.6.4 Self Reference In Conversations

In Bahasa Malaysia, there are a number of ways a person can refer himself as. First, when conversing with other people who are close and within the same range of age line, one may use the word *Aku* (I). When talking to people who are not close or people who are significantly older, people may use *Saya* (I). With family members, people may refer themselves using their own name. In other cases, an elder brother might refer himself as *Abang* to his siblings, an elder sister as *Kakak*, a father as *Ayah*, a mother as *Ibu* and many other self-referencing terms.

5.6.5 Second and Third Party Reference in Conversations

In certain ways, referring to others is just the opposite to self-reference. For instance, a mother refers herself as *Ibu*, the child may refer himself using his own name or his position among his siblings. If he is an elder brother, the mother may call him *Abang* as if it is his name. For direct one to one conversations, one may use the word *Kau* (you) to refer to the other party if they are relatively close enough. If not, the words *awak* (you) and *kamu* (you) may be used.

5.6.6 Pantun

According to Harun (1997:122) pantun is a form of original Malay poetry different to those found in other areas of archipelago. Selection of words in the Pantun generally reflects the minds of the poet in relations to the things the poet experiences in his day-to-day experience. The recital of Pantuns appear often in *Upin & Ipin*, normally by a character named Jarjit.



Image 5.61: Jarjit, from Upin & Ipin, is a character synonym with the usage of Pantuns in his lines.

5.6.7 Syair

Similar but not the same. This best describes Syair when compared to Pantun. Both are forms of poetry. However, Syair generally makes use of four lines recited using rhythmic tunes. Syair only appeared once in *Upin & Ipin* as recited by Atuk or also known as Tok Dalang.



Image 5.62: Atuk reciting a Syair.

5.6.8 Jawi

Highly similar to Arabic language, Jawi writing utilizes almost the same letters with minor differences to accommodate certain sounds not available in the Arabic language. It was previously the official alphabet until it was replaced by the Roman alphabet. Jawi writing only appeared once, which was in *Upin & Ipin*.

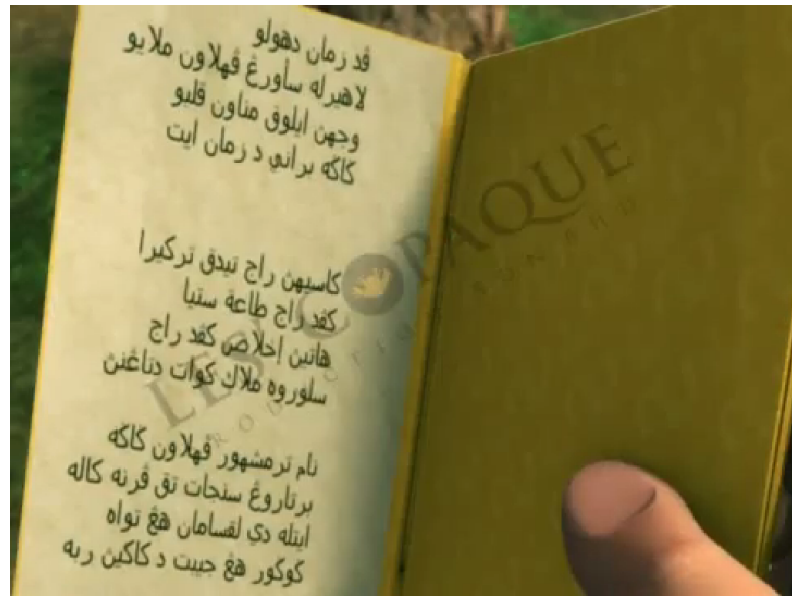


Image 5.63: Jawi writing in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.6.9 Peribahasa (Proverbs)

Proverbs are often short sentences consisting metaphors explaining things deemed important by the author of a proverb. Malay proverbs, in particular, are proverbs in the Malay language. Although it is difficult to identify the actual author of a proverb, if accepted by the society, a proverb itself can be a useful tool in explaining things in a short and effective way. An example would be a proverb appearing in *Upin & Ipin*, which is '*Membaca ambatan ilmu*' (Reading is the bridge to knowledge). This proverb explains that in order to gain knowledge, one has to read. Proverbs have appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.64: A kindergarden teacher explaining about proverbs to her students in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.65: The Malay proverb ‘Membaca jambatan ilmu’ appeared in *Upin & Ipin* on the right side of this screen capture.

5.7 People

The people of the country are also symbols of the nation. One can normally physically and spiritually identify the background of Malaysians based on their names, spoken language, appearance and other factors as well. The major races in Malaysia consist of Malays, Chinese and Indians. However, there are a large number of people from other races as well that were found in the analysis. Additionally, this category also includes historical icons.

5.7.1 Malays

Based on the last available data on racial fractions of the Malaysian population from the Department of Statistics Malaysia in June 2006 (a more recent census was recently carried out but the data is not yet available), Malays make up the dominant portion of the Malaysian population with 54%, which translates, to 13.8 million people.

A number of main and supporting characters in *Bola Kampung* are Malays. Among them are Iwan, Azizul, Amad, Amid, Iskandar, Fauzi, Zaki, Jalil, Cikgu Abdul Rahman, Azman, Umi, Tok Ayah, Pengetua Daud, Jani, Nasha, Norimah, Rizal, Sidek, Cikgu Maimunah and Farouk.



Image 5.66: Iwan is a Malay character in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.67: Upin and Ipin are Malays.

5.7.2 Chinese

Based on the same source of statistics for Malays from the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the total Chinese population in 2006 mounts up to 6.22 million people at 25% of the Malaysian population. This number has increased to 6.437 million people in 2009 but at a lower percentage of the population, which stands at 22.7% (Ng, 2011:8).

The Chinese are the second largest population in Malaysia and have been residing for the past few centuries. It was not until the operation of tin mines began that a large-scale immigration occurred in the 19th century (Ng, 2011:9). These groups of Chinese started off as labours for these mines as well as workers for railway track construction. Eventually, a number of them ventured into businesses.

In *Bola Kampung*, the characters portrayed as Chinese are, Szeto, Ah Hock, Chin, Chun and Szeto's father. Chinese characters have also appeared in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin* as well.



Image 5.68: A Chinese character in *Usop Sontorian* can be seen on the left.



Image 5.69: Szeto, the son of a coconut entrepreneur is a Chinese.



Image 5.70: Mei Mei in *Upin & Ipin* is a Chinese.

5.7.3 Indians

Indians are the third largest population in Malaysia, totalling up to 1.86 million people or 7.5% in 2006. In *Bola Kampung*, Kumar, his mother and his father Muthu are the only main and supporting characters who are given names. Other Indian characters occasionally appear especially during football matches and as extras.



Image 5.71: Kumar is an Indian in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.72: Raju in Upin & Ipin

5.7.4 Punjabi

Although the Punjabis are only a minority in Malaysia, their presence has always been significant. Along the line of the Punjabis lies the practice of Sikhism. There are approximately 100,000 Sikhs residing in Malaysia with a number of them making a name for themselves such as Santokh Singh (Football), Karamjit Singh (Racing), Karam Singh Walia (Media), Karpal Singh (Law and Politics), Shebby Singh (Football and Media), Gobind Singh Deo (Politics), Kavita Kaur Sidhu (Media) and B.S. Rajhans (Media).

In *Bola Kampung*, Santokh is shown wearing a patka which relates to Sikhism. The name resembles legendary Malaysian defender Santokh Singh. However, the position that Santokh plays is as a striker.



Image 5.73: Santokh (In remembrance of legendary Malaysian footballer Santokh Singh?)

5.7.5 Sarawakian Aborigines

It is not specifically mentioned in *Bola Kampung* whether Sabok is an Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau or any particular race, but it has been made known in the series that Sabok is from Sarawak and is not a Malay. In the third season, a number of players were chosen to represent the Selangor Under-12 football team. Iwan, Azizul, Iskandar, Szeto and Santokh received their call-up letter during the period. Sabok's letter came last since it was mistakenly mailed to Nasha's house. From that letter, it is confirmed that Sabok is not a Malay based on usage of the abbreviation 'A/L' (which means 'son of') contrary to Malay males who normally carries a 'Bin' which also means 'son of' in Arabic.



Image 5.74: Sabok, in Bola Kampung, is a Sarawakian aboriginal.

5.7.6 Orang Asli Aborigines

The aboriginals of the Malay Peninsula, or more known as the Orang Asli, can be found in most of the states in West Malaysia notably in Pahang, Perak and Kelantan. The picture above depicts a fictional village named Kampung Asli stated in a real district of Gombak. In real-life however, an Orang Asli village in Gombak does exist by the name of Kampung Orang Asli Batu 12 Gombak.

The worldview of the Orang Asli is influenced by the physical surroundings and the environment where they inhabit (Wan Ramli, 2006:43). A large number of Orang Asli practices animism in which they believe are important in their daily life. The Orang Asli generally value teamwork and togetherness.



Image 5.75: Orang Asli people and their village

5.7.7 Hang Tuah

Hang Tuah is one, if not the, most decorated Malay warrior in Malaysian history. There is a large debate on whether Hang Tuah was a myth or a legend and the debate continues on until today (see Mohd Yusoff Hashim, 2008). Nevertheless, the name Hang Tuah itself signifies a rich historical Malay literature contained within classic literature such as Hikayat Hang Tuah and The Malay Annals in which the former is presented in a more mystical way compared to the factual latter.



Image 5.76: Upin reading a book on Hang Tuah.

5.7.8 Mat kilau

Mat Kilau bin Imam Rasu, or simply known as Mat Kilau, was a legendary Malay warrior from the Malaysian state of Pahang who fought and resisted against the British during the colonial era. He was also very skilled in the martial arts of silat.



Image 5.77: An image of Mat Kilau in a printed material in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.7.9 Tok Gajah

Tok Gajah is a nickname for Imam Rasu bin Shahrum, who is also the father of Mat Kilau. He was the leader of the resistance against the British in Pahang during the colonial era.



Image 5.78: Tok Gajah being depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.7.10 Dato' Bahaman

Abdul Rahman bin Tuanku Imam Nuh or also known as Dato' Bahaman, along with Mat Kilau and Tok Gajah, was a warrior who fought against British colony in Pahang.



Image 5.79: Datuk Bahaman being depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.8 Buildings, Structures and Landmarks

In this category, buildings, structures and landmarks refer to anything built or constructed, and conspicuous objects on land that relates to a specific location. These man-made buildings or natural landmarks represent Malaysian identity.

5.8.1 Merdeka Stadium

The Merdeka Stadium was completed on 21st August 1957. The stadium is situated in Kuala Lumpur and was erected for Malaysia's declaration of independence on 31st August 1957. Perbadanan Stadium Merdeka is in charge of managing the stadium and the stadium has seen numerous historical events such as live concerts of Celine Dion, Mariah Carey and Michael Jackson, the fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Bugner and of course the Merdeka Football Tournaments of the past. Currently, Bukit Jalil National Stadium has taken over the Merdeka Stadium in becoming the home venue of the Malaysian football team. In *Bola Kampung*, the Merdeka Stadium played host to the fictional Under-12 Merdeka Cup.



Image 5.80: Iwan playing at Merdeka Stadium.

5.8.2 Kuala Lumpur Tower

Also known as KL Tower and Menara KL (in Malay), this tall tower is located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur and is the 18th tallest freestanding tower in the world. KL Tower is used for communication purposes and also acts an Islamic falak observatory for Islamic calendar referencing.



Image 5.81: KL Tower in *Bola Kampung*.

5.8.3 Petronas Twin Towers

The Petronas Twin Towers were the previous tallest building in the world from 1998 to 2004 and was surpassed by Taipei 101. Standing at 451.9 meters, it is an integral landmark of Malaysia and a symbol of development. In *Bola Kampung*, the Petronas Twin Towers appeared as a sightseeing attraction when the Selangor Under-12 team came to Kuala Lumpur for the Merdeka Cup tournament.



Image 5.82: Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur City Centre in *Bola Kampung*.

5.8.4 Tugu Negara (National Monument)

The Tugu Negara is a sculpture that honours those who died in Malaysia's great effort for independence and is located in Kuala Lumpur. The monument illustrates a group of soldiers holding up the Jalur Gemilang. In *Bola Kampung*, the Tugu Negara appears alongside other historical landmarks located in Kuala Lumpur during the Merdeka Cup Under-12 tournament.



Image 5.83: Sabok, Azizul and Iwan posing in front of Tugu Negara.

5.8.5 Muzium Negara (National Museum)

Muzium Negara is situated in Kuala Lumpur and similar to basic purposes of other museums, offers an insight to Malaysian history and cultural practices. The design of Muzium Negara is inspired by Minangkabau architecture specifically the Rumah Gadang. In *Bola Kampung*, Muzium Negara appeared alongside KL Tower, Petronas Twin Towers, Tugu Negara and a few other attractions in Kuala Lumpur.



Image 5.84: Muzium Negara in *Bola Kampung*.

5.8.6 Sultan Abdul Samad Building

Before the existence of KL Tower and Petronas Twin Towers, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building was one of, if not the main architectural landmarks of Kuala Lumpur. Currently, it stands alongside other landmarks in defining the city of Kuala Lumpur and the historical Dataran Merdeka. In *Bola Kampung*, the Sultan Abdul Samad Building appeared alongside KL Tower, Petronas Twin Towers, Tugu Negara and a few other attractions in Kuala Lumpur.



Image 5.85: Sultan Abdul Samad Building in *Bola Kampung*.

5.8.7 Batu Caves

Batu Caves is one of the more iconic religious and tourism attractions in Malaysia. It is home to a well-known Hindu shrine consisting of a series of caves dedicated to Lord Murugan. It has a set of 272 concrete steps towards the entrance to the caves. Batu Caves only made a short appearance in *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.86: Iwan and Santokh posing in front of the statue of Lord Murugan and steps up to Batu Caves.

5.8.8 Masjid Putra

Masjid Putra (Putra Mosque) is one of the main mosques in Putrajaya, the administrative capital of Malaysia, alongside Masjid Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin (Masjid Bes). It is located next to Perdana Putra, the office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Besides serving as a religious center, Masjid Putra is also one of the main tourist attractions in Putrajaya.

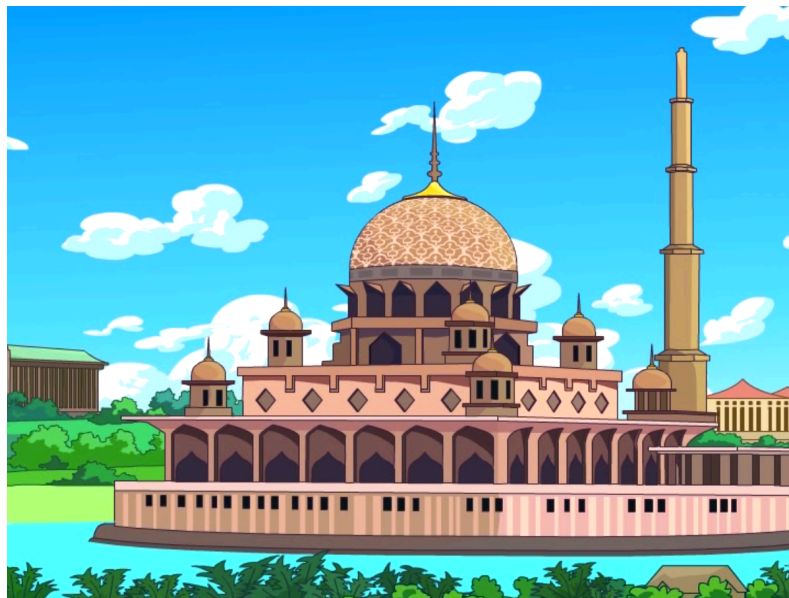


Image 5.87: Masjid Putra in *Bola Kampung*.

5.8.9 Traditional Malay Houses

Usop's, Atuk's and Iwan's house as featured in their respective animation and as shown from Image 12.22 to Image 12.24 is a typical traditional Malay house made of wood, with wooden window planks and heightened floor area. The similarities between their houses and a real life traditional Malay house can be found when directly compared to an image found in Yahaya (1989:12-13).



Image 5.88: Usop's house.



Image 5.89: Iwan's House: A traditional Malay house



Image 5.90: Atuk's House in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.8.10 A Famosa

A Famosa is a fortress located in Malacca, a state south of Negeri Sembilan and north of Johor. The only remains of the Portugese-built fort is the main gate as pictured in *Usop Sontorian*. A Famosa is currently one of the main tourist attractions in Malacca.



Image 5.91: A'Famosa depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.8.11 Penang

Penang is a state located north of the Malaysian Peninsular and is also the name of the Island in the Penang state. The mainland section of Penang is often referred to as Seberang Perai. Penang is a famous tourist attraction for its heritage, culture, food and many others.

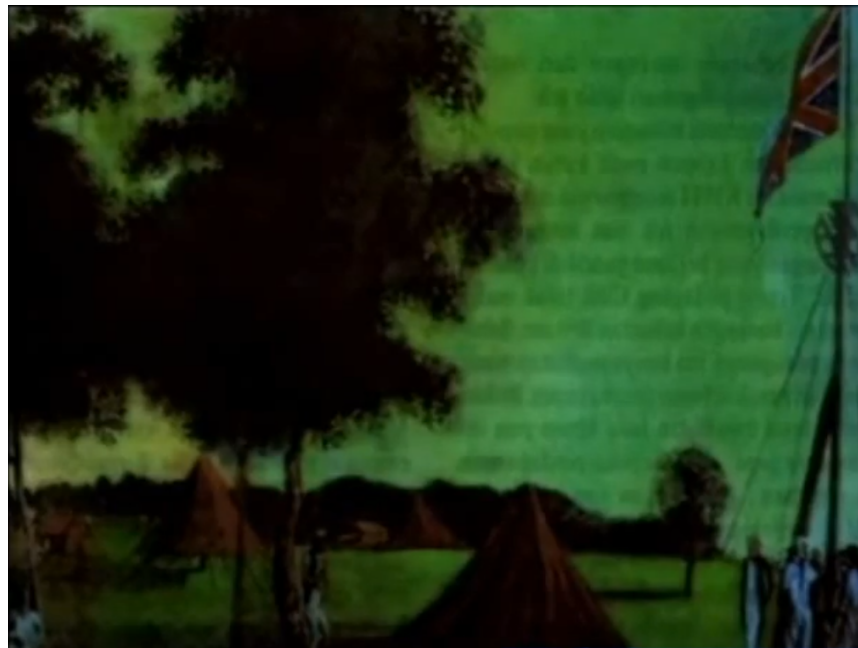


Image 5.92: The arrival of Francis Light in Penang was depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.8.12 Orang Asli Houses

During season four of *Bola Kampung*, Iwan and his friends were brought over to Kampung Asli in Gombak by Tok Ayah to meet up with an old friend of Tok Ayah, Sailing. The scene shown in Image 12.24 shows an Orang Asli settlement and depicts typical Orang Asli houses. These houses are normally made out of bamboo for the walls and floor and palm roof. Houses are built close together signifying their

togetherness. Currently, certain areas have been designated as Orang Asli settlements to cater for the nomadic needs of the indigenous people.



Image 5.93: An Orang Asli village featuring Orang Asli houses in *Bola Kampung*.

5.9 Culture and Custom

This category lists physical or spiritual practices and behavior that have been passed on through generations. Hence any form of physical and spiritual tradition that indicates Malaysian identity is inserted into this category.

5.9.1 Handshakes

Similar to many other parts of the world, handshakes are common as a form of greeting. However, based on the majority of Muslims in Malaysia, the manner of handshakes are slightly different but may not be practiced by non-Muslims. Males are

only to shake the hands of other males and never with the other sex (with the exception of children whom have not reached puberty). The same goes to females.



Image 5.94: Cikgu Abdul Rahman (left) shaking hands with Kadir Buyong.

5.9.2 Shoes Off

It is typical in Malaysia that shoes are to be taken off before entering a house (Yahaya, 1989:47). Socks and stockings however are permitted. This is demonstrated throughout the series each time a scene takes place within a house. It is most obvious during scenes at Iwan's house.

5.9.3 Not Talking Back to Older People

In traditional Malay customs as influenced by Islamic teachings, it is rude and improper for a younger person to talk back to an older person. Age is an important factor in determining power in conversations. In *Bola Kampung*, Iwan has faced this

situation numerous times with his father, Azman and Cikgu Abdul Rahman. Although he is innocent in some incidents, Iwan does not talk back when being scolded by his father or Cikgu Abdul Rahman.

5.9.4 Respect for the Elders

Respect for older people can be shown in many ways. The words used for self and other party reference, communication and action may demonstrate the level of respect. It is noticeable that whenever Iwan communicates with his father, mother and grandfather, he uses a very slow and proper level of voice tone. With his friends, he occasionally uses a higher tone when demonstrating frustration or anger.

5.9.5 Not Interrupting When Older People are Talking

This custom can only be seen once throughout the four seasons of *Bola Kampung*. Available in the very first episode, Iwan was advised by his sister Norzi not to interrupt the conversation between his father Azman and his grandfather Ablah or Tok Ayah.

5.9.6 Burung Cenderawasih (Bird of Paradise)

The bird of paradise is notable in Malaysia for its folklore. It is specifically mentioned in *Bola Kampung* by Sailing that whoever lays eyes on this bird will find happiness in whatever he does. The bird is believed to come from paradise. It may fly low, but if it reaches land, it will die but the remains stay perfectly intact.



Image 5.95: Burung Cenderawasih or known as the Bird of Paradise in *Bola Kampung*.

5.9.7 Bunga Raya

The Bunga Raya (hibiscus), specifically the *hibiscus rosa-sinensis* is the national flower of Malaysia. As the national flower, the Bunga Raya has appeared on many nationalistic items such as currency, stamps and statues.



Image 5.96: Hibiscus can be seen on the right of the background.

5.9.8 Serving food and drinks to guests

It is common practice to serve food and drinks to guests who come and visit a host's house especially during festive periods. It is considered rude for hosts not to serve anything to guests. At least, drinks alone may suffice.



Image 5.97: Atuk serving food to his guests in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.9.9 Fireworks

Festive periods are the times when fireworks and firecrackers are played most often. For Chinese New Year, large firecrackers are often the main choice. During Hari Raya celebrations, it is common for children to be playing with small fireworks. Firecrackers also used to be widely used. However, due to banning of firecrackers and the dangers it brings, usage of firecrackers have reduced and can only be obtained with a license or purchased illegally.



Image 5.98: Upin and Ipin playing with small fireworks.

5.9.10 Pelita (Lamp)

Originally, the usage of Pelita or lamps nearing the end of Ramadhan is signified by *Malam Tujuh Likur*. Malam Tujuh Likur literally means Night of the Twenty Seventh. During the Malam Tujuh Likur, lamps are lit as a decorative purpose and are often used as a symbol for Eid. The Pelita appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.99: The Pelita can be seen at the side of Upin and Ipin's house in the background.

5.9.11 Eid Takbir From House to House

During the eve of Eid, some sections of Muslims in Malaysia would visit from house to house in their respective villages to recite the Eid Takbir. It is more common in villages than in urban areas. As it is not compulsory in Islam to perform the Takbir from house to house, it is more of a culture and thus not listed under the Religions and Mythologies category. The practice of reciting Eid Takbir can be seen in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.100: Eid Takbir being recited at Upin and Ipin's house.

5.9.12 Circumcision

Circumcision is a common practice among Malay boys as part of Islamic requirements and also a sign of shifting from childhood to teenage adulthood. The process of recuperating from circumcision depicted in *Usop Sontorian* reflects the traditional method of circumcision. A circumcized child is given a Kain Pelikat to wear while a portion of the Kain Pelikat is hanged to avoid contact with the circumcized penis. Modern medicine has introduced other methods such as clamping and laser causing scenes like the one shown in **Image 5.101** less apparent nowadays compared to the past.



Image 5.101: Usop is recuperating from circumcision.

5.9.13 Tok Mudim

In traditional circumcizion, the one performing the circumcision is referred to as the Tok Mudim.



Image 5.102: A Tok Mudim (right) depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.9.14 Pelita Panjut Buluh

This is a specific type of Pelita called the Pelita Panjut Buluh. Contrary to the normal Pelita, the Pelita Panjut Buluh consists of a large long bamboo with holes to place wicks and oil for burning. Pelita Panjut Buluh appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.103: Pelita Panjut Buluh in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.9.15 Meriam Buluh

Meriam Buluh, which literally means Bamboo Cannon, is a type of firecracker typically played during festive periods, especially during Eid. The Meriam Buluh varies in size, some can be extremely big and some can be very small. The government has banned firecrackers. Thus there are now less people playing them although one can still find people playing them around.



Image 5.104: The Meriam Buluh is ready to be fired in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.9.16 Angpau

Angpau itself derives from the Chinese and is actually more of a Chinese tradition. These are envelopes that normally contain money and handed out during festive seasons. Contrary to red envelopes in Chinese tradition, green envelopes are used during Eid, which can also be seen in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.105: Angpau being distributed to children in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.10 Values

Textual analysis of this research also managed to detect values in which these are ideas of which the society commonly agreed, shared and highly regarded by Malaysians. Although there may not be any verbal signs, non-verbal signs may indicate certain values. Both verbal and non-verbal signs are taken into consideration when forming this category.

5.10.1 Rasa Malu (Embarrassment)

The feeling of embarrassment can be assumed as a result of self-built social pressure (Wan Abdul Kadir, 2002:47). In traditional Malay customs, the concept of embarrassment comes in two shapes. The first shape comes in the form of being shy. The second shape of embarrassment appears when an individual has done something wrong and it is noticeable by the people around.

In *Bola Kampung*, this characteristic has appeared numerous times. One of the incidents involved Iwan and Kumar in the fourth season. Iwan scolded Kumar for not being able to control the ball in front of a few journalists and photographers. Later on, Iwan regretted what he did and tried to avoid Kumar because he felt embarrassed.

5.10.2 Kerjasama (Teamwork)

Teamwork is a commonly shared value in Malaysia. Traditionally, the Malay society has practiced working as a team for various purposes and is a normality when living in a Malay population (Wan Abdul Kadir, 2002:54). The value is also shared among the Chinese, Indians, Orang Asli and other races in the country. *Bola Kampung* has demonstrated a high priority in teamwork in which when the individuals in the team work together, they are destined for greatness.



Image 5.106: Teamwork is the key in *Bola Kampung*.

5.10.3 Tolak Ansur (Tolerance)

Tolerance have been a very crucial key in the fight for independence in Malaysia. Throughout the years, Malaysians have been living in harmony because tolerance exists in the social system. This value is very obvious in Malay culture. Some claim that being tolerant is a loss to the Malays (Wan Abdul Kadir, 2002:61). These people claim that with tolerance, one is considered not having the guts to face challenges. However, tolerance is an important value based on the context of social harmony especially living in a multi-racial environment where anything may become a sensitive issue and disrupt the peace and prosperity of the society.

In *Bola Kampung*, the characters have numerously demonstrated tolerance. Iwan for example has ignored Santokh's ego and arrogance a number of times citing that it is alright because he understands that it is Santokh's natural characteristic.

5.10.4 Hormat-menghormati (Respect)

A sense of respect is highly visible in *Bola Kampung*. This value normally starts within the family institution and expands to interaction with the surrounding community (Wan Abdul Kadir, 2002:56). Generally, ones who are younger will show respect to ones who are older. The interactions between Iwan and his family, Iskandar and his aunt, Sabok with his mother, Kumar with his parents and all the characters with their teachers have demonstrated that respect is an important value in the society.

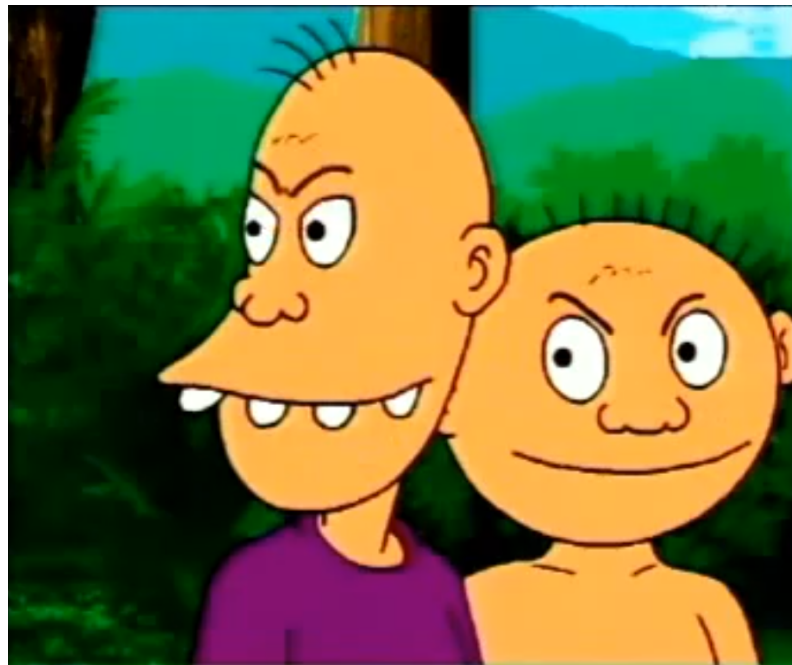


Image 5.107: Respect is the topic spoken during this frame in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.108: Respecting an opponent is a value found in this episode in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.10.5 Maruah (Dignity)

Every individual has a dignity to defend. In Malay society, every individual has to ensure the preservation of their own dignity. Hence, people who act against the norms of the society is considered to have no sense of dignity. A person who makes mistakes or who is at fault with any incident humiliates not only himself, but also the people close to them.

In *Bola Kampung*, characters like Iwan demonstrate this value. An example would be when Iwan displayed a sense of arrogance during training after the Merdeka Cup. Although the manner of how he handled himself was not appropriate, he displayed the need to show to reporters of how skilled he is as a footballer. However, when he did come to his senses, he apologized to everybody involved and preserved his dignity as the captain of the Selangor Under-12 football team.

5.11 Geographical Features and Locations

Geographical features and locations refer to the nature of which an area describes the climate and practicality of its location. These would include cities, states and any other geographical features and locations related to Malaysia.

5.11.1 Warm Climate

Being close to the equator, the weather in Malaysia would be either hot and humid or rainy during the monsoon season. Unlike Japanese or American animation where winter and autumn is sometimes displayed as the background, *Bola Kampung* normally shows a clear and warm weather full of sunshine. At times, the weather gets too hot and unbearable for some people.

5.11.2 Rain

Although rain is common everywhere in the world, it is part of the Malaysian weather system during the two monsoon seasons of the Southwest Monsoon and the Northeast Monsoon. The northeast monsoon from November to March normally brings more rainfall compared to the southwest monsoon. In *Bola Kampung*, there are times when rain is shown, which is typical of the climate in Malaysia.



Image 5.109: A rainy day in *Upin & Ipin*

5.11.3 Selangor

The most developed state in Malaysia, Selangor is situated between Perak and Negeri Sembilan in the west coast of Peninsula Malaysia. A significant number of historical events have happened in this state which used to claim sovereignty over two current federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. In *Bola Kampung*, Selangor has been depicted as the team in which the main characters play for. Under the guidance of Cikgu Abdul Rahman and team captain Iwan, Selangor lifted the Merdeka Cup after defeating Rayong from Thailand.

5.11.4 Negeri Sembilan

The state of Negeri Sembilan lies south of the Selangor border. Unlike other monarchs governing royal states in Peninsula Malaysia, Negeri Sembilan has a Yang Di-Pertuan Besar as the state leader instead of a Sultan and the throne does not automatically fall to the next of kin upon death. The election system for the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar is

carried out with the four Undangs of Sungai Ujong, Jelebu, Johol and Rembau given the hand in selection. In the series, Negeri Sembilan did not really feature in any part of the scenes. However, Negeri Sembilan was mentioned as the other Malaysian team participating in the Merdeka Cup besides Selangor and Perak.

5.11.5 Perak

Perak is the second largest state in Peninsula Malaysia after Pahang. The state is located north of Selangor and the name Perak actually means ‘silver’ in Malay. Iwan, the captain of the Selangor Under-12 team initially wanted to face his rival Zaki and his team Perak in the Final of the Merdeka Cup. Unfortunately, Perak did not make it to the Final after losing out to Rayong, a team from Thailand.

5.11.6 Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur is the capital city of Malaysia and is situated within the State of Selangor. Although the country’s administrative capital has since moved to Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur still plays a vital role in the development of Malaysia’s economy and plays host to a number of mutli-national conglomerates based in Malaysia.

In *Bola Kampung*, the Selangor Under-12 football team played Kuala Lumpur in the final match of the fourth season. Kuala Lumpur has also been mentioned as the place where all the historical landmarks visited by the Selangor Under-12 team during the Merdeka Cup are located.



Image 5.110: Santokh facing the Kuala Lumpur defense.

5.11.7 Gombak

Gombak is a district located in Selangor and is governed by the local municipal council of Selayang (Majlis Perbandaran Selayang). In the animation, Gombak was mentioned and shown as the place and village where Sailing and his Orang Asli people stay.

5.11.8 Parit Sonto

Parit Sonto is an actual place which serves as the main setting of Usop Sontorian. Parit Sonto is located between Kluang and Batu Pahat in the state of Johor in Peninsula Malaysia.

5.11.9 Pahang

Pahang is the largest state in Peninsula Malaysia. It shares borders with Terengganu, Selangor and Johor. Pahang is the state of origin for Malay heroes Mat Kilau, Tok Gajah and Dato' Bahaman, mentioned earlier in this chapter.



Image 5.111: The state of Pahang depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.11.10 Johor

Johor is the most southern state in Peninsula Malaysia and also hosts the most southern tip of the mainland of the Asian continent. Although Johor was not physically depicted in any of the animation analyzed, the flag of Johor appeared in *Usop Sontorian*, which made sense since Parit Sonto, the main setting of the series, is located in Johor.

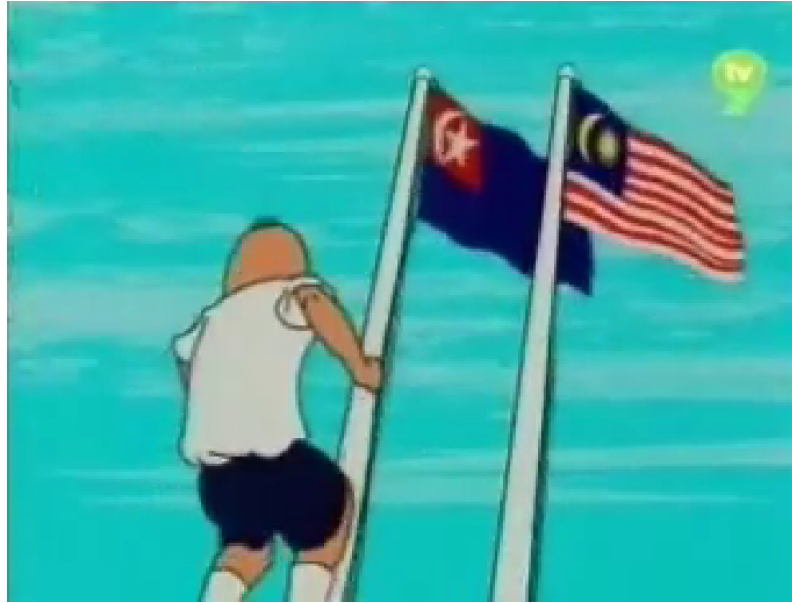


Image 5.112: The Johor flag on a pole next to the Malaysian flag in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.12 Agriculture

In this category, agriculture refers to the science, art, or occupation with cultivating land, raising crops and feeding, breeding and raising livestock. In short, farming. These cover agriculture and also agriculture-related activities practiced by Malaysians.

5.12.1 Paddy Fields

The importance of paddy fields is signified by the main dish of the nation, rice. Two main methods of paddy cultivation techniques are popular in Malaysia namely paddy plots which are farmed in paddy fields and hillside cultivation of paddy. The former is more prominent as shown in Image 5.113 because of the geographical landscapes mainly in Kedah and the northern region of Peninsula Malaysia. Paddy fields can be seen in *Usop Sontorian* and *Bola Kampung*.



Image 5.113: Paddy fields in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.114: Paddy fields in Kampung Gong Lechar.

5.12.2 Bananas

According to Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (2014), over 350,000 tonnes of bananas are produced in the year 2012. There are numerous dishes which makes use of bananas with ultimately Goreng Pisang being the most popular one. Azman, Iwan's father, is a banana cultivator. In the first episode of the first season, as seen in image 12.30, Azman is shown bringing home bananas and later on prepared as goreng pisang by Iwan's mother Umi.



Image 5.115: Azman (left) with his Banana harvest.



Image 5.116: Banana trees can be seen in the background featuring Kak Ros and Opah.

5.12.3 Coconuts

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD) (2014), Malaysia were among the top 10 producers of coconuts in the world. However, based on recent statistics from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (2014), Malaysia has fallen out of the top 10 in 2013. Nevertheless, coconut still remains as a major agricultural product of the country. In *Bola Kampung*, Szeto became a good goalkeeper because he is so used to catching coconuts from Mike, his pig-tailed macaques.



Image 5.117: Szeto's father peeling a coconut.



Image 5.118: Coconut trees on the background of Upin and Ipin's house.

5.12.4 Rubber

Rubber is one of the major export products of Malaysia. Rubber plantations are spread out over the country. Rubber trees only appeared once in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.119: An unnamed character in *Usop Sontorian* tapping rubber.

5.13 Entertainment and Games

This category refers to activities carried out for the purpose of competition, fun, or both. This would include any form of local or traditional activities including sports, games and others practiced by Malaysians for leisure and competition.

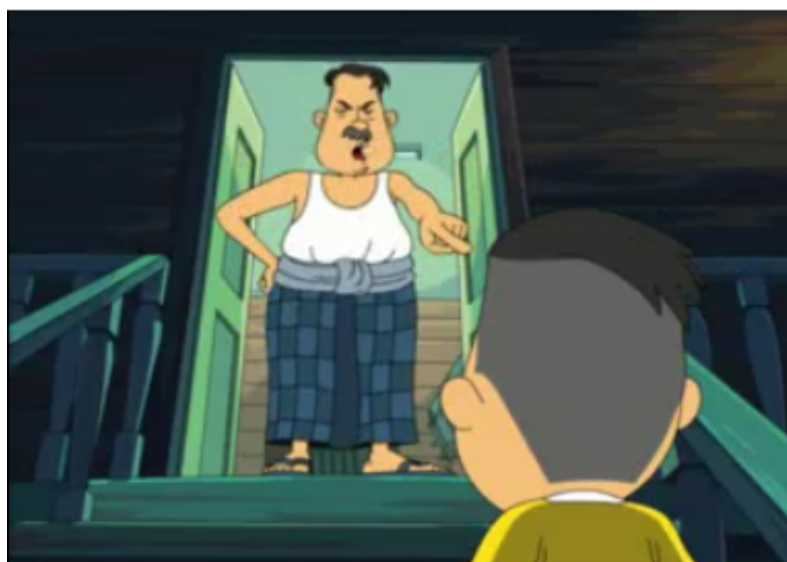


Image 5.120: Azman scolding and preventing Iwan from playing football.

He told Iwan to play sepak takraw, badminton or galah panjang.

5.13.1 Sepak Takraw

Sepak takraw is a game of three against three, played with a rattan ball in a court divided by a net standing at approximately one and a half metres. Players are allowed to use any part of their body except for their arms and shoulders. This is a sport that truly originates from Peninsula Malaysia and has been made popular throughout the world. Sepak takraw is mentioned by Azman as a choice of game Iwan could play instead of football along with badminton and galah panjang.

5.13.2 Badminton

Badminton is a racket sport played based on a singles or doubles basis similar to tennis. But the similarity ends there. Badminton is played on a smaller court divided by a net using a shuttlecock instead of a ball. The aim of the game is to hit the shuttlecock so it drops on the opponent's side of the court. Badminton is very popular in Malaysia and has become a sporting phenomenon in the country. Badminton is

mentioned by Azman as a choice of game Iwan could play instead of football along with sepak takraw and galah panjang.

5.13.3 Galah Panjang

Galah Panjang is a traditional game is played on a court with the lines drawn on a flat ground. The size of the court depends on the number of players involved. The more the players, the bigger the court. The aim of the game is to tag an opposing player out of the game and the movement of players depend on the leader of each team. Galah panjang used to be a popular game among school children but currently losing out its popularity as a leisure time game. Galah panjang is mentioned by Azman as a choice of game Iwan could play instead of football along with badminton and sepak takraw.

5.13.4 Laga Ikan (Fish Fighting)

As demonstrated by Azizul and Sabok in the first episode of the fourth season of *Bola Kampung*, the Ikan Pelaga (Fighther Fish or *betta splendens*) is a fish that naturally fights against other fish including fish of the same species. Hence, once caught, the Pelaga is normally kept in an individual bowl away from other fish unless they are brought in to fight. The fight normally ends in the death or injury of the other fish. Laga Ikan also appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.121: Fighter fishes can be seen here in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.13.5 Tarik Upih

Tarik Upih is a game of which the leaves of an areca palm tree is used as a transport vehicle carrying one person with another person pulling the leaves. Tarik Upih can either be played either on its own or in a race mode with other people. Tarik Upih appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.122: Tarik Upih race in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.13.6 Main Guli

Main Guli is a traditional game that uses marbles in the game. Traditionally, the balls were made out of wood. Modern marbles have replaced these balls while maintaining the same gameplay and rules.

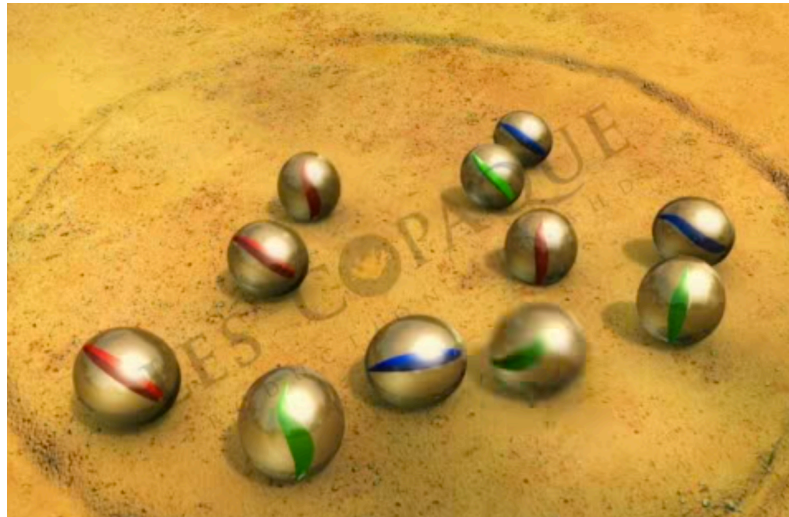


Image 5.123: Marbles being played in Upin & Ipin.

5.13.7 Lat Tali Lat Tali Tam Plom

Lat Tali Lat Tali Tam Plom or Lat Tali Lat for short, is a game similar but not the same to rock-paper-scissors. The objective is not to seek a winner between two people, although with three or more, it is possible. Rather, the aim is to divide people into groups and at times to rank people in groups. However, this game can be played by an unlimited number of people. However, the more people involved, the more complicated this game can be. This is because unlike rock-paper-scissors, the only two options are either palm facing up or palm facing down. Once they have recited Lat Tali Lat Tali Tam Plom, players would either have their palms facing up or facing down.



Image 5.124: Lat Tali Lat being played in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.13.8 Baling Selipar

Baling Selipar (Throwing Slippers) is a team game where three slippers are arranged in a pyramid shape. Each individual from each team (two teams involved in the game) is given three chances to throw a slipper towards the pyramid-arranged slipper. Once the slippers have been hit by a team, the game begins with the opponents trying to throw down the team who hit the slippers by throwing slippers at them while at the same time they have to rebuild the slippers in the earlier shape. Once hit by a slipper, a player is considered out.



Image 5.125: Although exaggerated with the number of slippers involved, this is the game of Baling Selipar depicted in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.13.9 Lawan Batang Aiskrim (Ice Cream Stick Battle)

This game involves two or more players using an ice cream stick each to literally topple the opponent to win the game. An ice cream stick is moved by thumping two palms together on the playing surface to create wind, which in turn lifts and moves the ice cream stick. The aim is to get the ice cream stick to be positioned on top of the opponent's ice cream stick to win. Although not a traditional game by any means, it used to be a popular game played in primary schools in the past few decades.



Image 5.126: A game of Lawan Batang Aiskrim is being played in Upin and Ipin's kindergarden.

5.13.10 Lawan Tudung Botol (Bottle Cap Battle)

Similar to Lawan Batang Aiskrim, Lawan Tudung Botol was a popular game in primary schools. Two players are required to play the game. Each player begins with five bottle caps. After stacking all the bottle caps, they would take turns spinning them and hitting the caps in a certain sequence determined by the opponent. Whoever manages to successfully hit sequences the most would win the game. There are also other variations to this game.



Image 5.127: A game of Lawan Tudung Botol is being played.

5.13.11 Konda Kondi

Konda Kondi is a traditional Malay game involving two teams and a pair of sticks, one long and one short. The offensive team is tasked to dig a small hole where the short stick is placed over. The long stick is used to fling the shorter stick as far as possible. The long stick is then placed over the hole dug earlier. The defensive team shall then attempt to throw the short stick so that it hits the long stick. There are many variations in determining the winner, either by counting successful attempts, using point systems and other means.



Image 5.128: Konda Kondi being played in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.13.12 Lastik

Lastik or slingshots were common toys in villages in the recent past. Among targets of these slingshots are birds and small reptiles. At times, even fruits are used as targets. Besides as recreational toys, Lastik are also sold as products of wooden craftsmanship. Lastik appeared in *Upin & Ipin* and *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.129: Lastik in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.13.13 Wooden Guns and Rifles

Before the ages of plastic guns and rifles toys in Malaysia, an alternative was to design their own weaponry toys made out of wood and rubberbands while the *cenerai* fruit is used as ammunition. It would be equivalent to the modern BB Gun. These wooden guns and rifles appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.130: Usop playing with wooden pistols.

5.13.14 Silat

Silat is the traditional Malay martial arts. There are hundreds of variations of Silat. Among the popular ones include Silat Gayung Pesaka, Silat Gayung Malaysia, Silat Cekak Malaysia and Silat Cekak Hanafi. Although traditionally, Silat is a martial arts involving bare hand to hand close combat, some moves in silat do involve weaponry such as the *Keris* and *Parang*. Silat appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.131: Silat appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.14 General

There are items that do not fall into any specific category. However these items share common traits or are commonly practiced among the members of the society. These include industrial objects, institutions, traits and practices common to Malaysians.

5.14.1 Sekolah Kebangsaan

The education system in Malaysia has designated different types of schools for the purpose of elementary or primary level education. The Sekolah Kebangsaan (National School) or Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan (National Primary School) implements Bahasa Malaysia as the mode of instruction. Along with Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (Mandarin mode of instruction) and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (Tamil mode of instruction), Sekolah Kebangsaan is a fully government-funded school. Private and international schools are uncommon but available for those who can afford it as the fees are normally significantly higher than government schools.

Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Putera Jayapati is a fictional national school situated in a fictional village of Gong Lechar. As the name suggest, it is inspired by the administrative capital of Putrajaya. However, along the story of the animation, the school is normally referred to as Jayapati.

5.14.2 Proton Saga (Iswara)

Proton Saga is the first national car of Malaysia inspired by Japanese carmaker Mitsubishi. The first Saga was launched back in 1985 by the Prime Minister then, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Since its launch, the Proton Saga has undergone various facelifts, among them being the Iswara, Knight, LMST etc. The recent launch of the new Saga is only at its second generation.

In the animation, Kumar's father Muthu is a taxi driver who drives an Iswara as a taxi. It is a very common practice among taxi operators to use the Iswara as a taxi for its cheap price and low maintenance. Taxis in the state of Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya are normally painted in red and white.

5.14.3 Bakul Rotan Gadang

Bakul literally means 'basket'. The Bakul Rotan Gadang is a basket made out of weaved rattan. It is generally used to store dry items but not limited to any specific category of items. The Bakul Rotan Gadang is a product of traditional wooden craftsmanship and now generally sold as handicraft, although still practically used by some section of people in Malaysia. The Bakul Rotan Gadang appeared in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.132: Bakul Rotan Gadang can be seen on the background of this screen capture, on the right side of the image.

5.14.4 Tikar Mengkuang

Tikar Mengkuang is a woven mat made out of pine leaves. Currently, Tikar Mengkuang is mainly sold as crafts and souvenirs along other products based on woven pine leaves such as baskets, bags, boxes and other containers.



Image 5.133: The Tikar Mengkuang in *Upin and Ipin*.

5.14.5 Perodua Kancil

The Perodua Kancil is Malaysian national carmaker Perodua's first manufactured car in Malaysia. *Kancil*, literally meaning 'mouse deer', is an animal consistent with some Malay folklore including the Malaysian animation of Hikayat Sang Kancil. The Perodua Kancil was a rebadge based on the Daihatsu Mira. The Perodua Kancil is a mini city car that seats five people and was very popular since its launch in 1994. Although the Perodua Kancil has ceased production in 2009, the car can still be seen being used today on Malaysian roads.



Image 5.134: Although the car itself did not physically appear, it was a topic of discussion in *Usop Sontorian* when the mouse deer appeared.

5.14.6 Malaysian Ringgit

The Malaysian Ringgit is the official currency of Malaysia. The currency was depicted in *Upin & Ipin* as a token for Eid.



Image 5.135: Malaysian Ringgit in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.14.7 Keris

The Keris is a traditional form of Malay weaponry. Although UNESCO has awarded the origins of Keris to Indonesia in 2005, it does not mean that the Keris is not part of Malaysian heritage. The Keris is a curvy-blade dagger that usually comes with with a sheath. Both the blade and sheath can be seen in *Usop Sontorian* and *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.136: Usop holding a Keris blade in his right hand and the Keris sheath on his left.



Image 5.137: Upin holding a Keris blade in his right hand and the Keris sheath on his left.

5.14.8 Jalur Gemilang

Jalur Gemilang is the name of the Malaysian flag. The flag contains fourteen red and white stripes, a blue rectangle slotted on the top left and a yellow crescent and a 14-spoke star within the blue rectangle. The overall design is similar to the American flag. In *Bola Kampung* and *Usop Sontorian*, the Jalur Gemilang has appeared in several occasions notably during the Merdeka Cup in the third season.

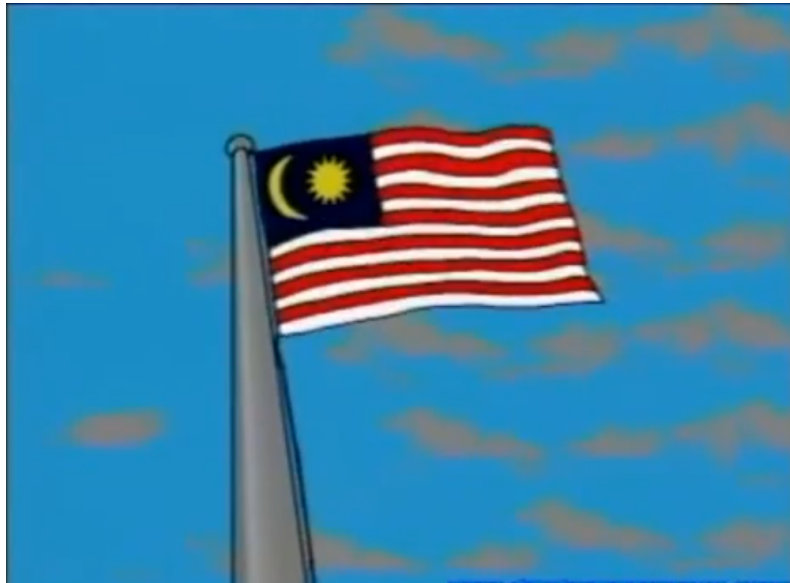


Image 5.138: The Jalur Gemilang in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.15 Religion & Mythology

This category lists characteristics depicting practices or representations of religions or mythologies in Malaysia. For religions, it must be based on the main religions practiced in Malaysia. For mythologies, it must be based on official mythical histories of Malaysia.

5.15.1 Qursi

Qursi is a verse (Verse 255) within the Holy Quran in Surah Al-Baqarah. As Islam is the main and official religion in Malaysia, it is common for Muslims in Malaysia to have Quran verses as both decorative and spiritual items at home.



Image 5.139: The Qursi verse can be seen in the background in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.15.2 Fasting during Ramadhan

In the Holy month of Ramadhan, Muslims around Malaysia (and of course the world) go on a month-long period of fasting and increased religious activities. Fasting during Ramadhan is one of the Five Pillars in Islam. Fasting begins before dawn and ends at sunset every day during this month. The meal before dawn is called *Sahur* while breaking fast is referred to as *Iftar*. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Ramadhan Bazaars would also become apparent with a variety of food and beverages offered for breaking fast. In the state of Johor, Kedah and Malacca, the first day of Ramadhan is declared as a public holiday.



Image 5.140: Usop feeling tired while fasting during Ramadhan.



Image 5.141: Both Upin and Ipin are sleepy during Sahur before fasting begins.

5.15.3 Tasbih

Tasbih is a tool for keeping track of recital counts in Muslim religious activities. The tasbih is made out of beads made from various materials ranging from wood to stones. It can generally be found in Muslim homes or sold by shops selling Muslim religious goods. Tasbih can be seen in *Upin & Ipin*.



Image 5.142: Opah holding a Tasbih in her hands.

5.15.4 Syahadah

Syahadah is the declaration of Muslims admitting that Allah is the one and only God and that Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) is His messenger. The Syahadah can appear in many forms. It is recited in many religious activities or written on various materials including the Holy Quran, books and even decorative crafts.



Image 5.143: The Syahadah in the background of *Upin & Ipin*.

5.15.5 Sejadah

The Sejadah refers to Muslim praying mat. The Sejadah is a commonly found religious object in Muslim homes in Malaysia along with the Kain Pelikat, Kopiah and Songkok. The Sejadah is normally used for daily prayers and does not have any other significant usage.



Image 5.144: A folded red-colored Sejadah can be seen hung behind Upin and Ipin.

5.15.6 Masjid

As Islam is the most widely practiced religion in Malaysia, it is common to find Masjids or mosques in most areas along the country. Mosques serves as places of worship where Muslims gather to perform many religious activities, mainly daily prayers, Friday prayers, religious talks etc.



Image 5.145: Upin and Ipin facing a Masjid.

5.15.7 Surau

The function of Suraus is almost identical to Mosques. A Surau is somewhat a smaller scale version of the Mosque and has limited functions compared to Mosques. Suraus generally fit less people compared to Mosques and does not host Friday prayers, except for special cases. A Surau appeared in *Usop Sontorian*.



Image 5.146: A surau depicted in *Usop Sontorian*.

5.15.8 Muslim Cemetary

Islam forbids cremation and instructs its worshippers to perform proper burial. Muslim cemeteries are a symbol of this process. In Malaysia, the sighting of Muslim cemeteries is normal and these cemeteries are often visited but not limited during special occasions such as Eid and death anniversaries.



Image 5.147: A Muslim cemetery in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.15.9 Quran Verses

Similar to the Qursi, other Quran verses are widely used as decorative and spiritual items in typical Malaysian Muslim houses. These verses include Surah Al-Ikhlâs, Surah Al-Falaq, Surah An-Nas and others.



Image 5.148: A Quran verse on the background in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.15.10 Zakat Fitrah

Zakat is the compulsory charitable giving within Islam and is one of the Five Pillars in Islam. The Zakat Fitrah is specifically paid within and before the end of the Holy month of Ramadhan. During this period, it is a norm for payment counters to be set up in various places such as Mosques, shopping malls and office buildings to help facilitate payments for Muslims around the country.



Image 5.149: A Zakat counter can be seen in *Upin & Ipin* where Zakat Fitrah is being paid.

5.15.11 Solat Terawih

During the Holy month of Ramadhan, other than fasting Muslims are encouraged to do more in terms of charity, recitation of the Quran and nightly prayers or better known in Malaysia as Solat Terawih. It is a common scene in mosques, Suraus and other places of Muslim worship for people to be performing Solat Terawih and night.



Image 5.150: A scene in *Usop Sontorian* depicting an environment during Solat Terawih.

5.15.12 Toyol

A Toyol is a mythical creature in the Malay culture. This creature is often depicted as being small and green. The Toyol is normally associated with petty thefts. It is also believed that a Toyol can be trapped by placing a bunch of green peas so that the Toyol will be confused when counting the peas.



Image 5.151: A Toyol depicted in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.15.13Duyung (Mermaids) and Dugong

Duyung, literally meaning mearmaids, is a mythical creature in many cultures including Malaysia. While a mermaid is believed to have a human upper body and a fish-type lower body, the Duyung in Malaysia is closely tied to the mammal called Dugong or also known as Sea Cow.



Image 5.152: A Dugong, initially thought a Duyung, in *Upin & Ipin*.

5.16 Others

This category list items found that reflects Malaysian identity but does not fall under the other categories found. Although some of the findings here may be questionable, they were included on the basis that these are findings that do reflect the weaknesses of the still-developing Malaysian animation industry and also work ethics that may be prevalent in Malaysian culture.

5.16.1 Bloops

Still at an early age, Animasia has been found to commit mistakes in the production of *Bola Kampung*. At least two clear incidents have been noted throughout four seasons of *Bola Kampung*. Both bloopers have been found during the fourth season. The first incident occurred when supposedly Fauzi has left Selangor to join his parents in migrating to England. After a training session for the Selangor Under-12 team, Fauzi

was depicted leaving the field along with the other characters when the matter of fact is, he should not be there.

The second incident also involves the Selangor Under-12 training session. When the players were doing sprints by pairs, the twins Chin and Chun were supposedly sprinting together. But the bloop came when twins Amad and Amid (who were never selected to the Selangor team) were shown instead.

5.16.2 Inconsistency

Bola Kampung has also seen some inconsistency in its plot. There have been three occasions where the name of the school is different. Three names have been used to refer to Jayapati, (1) Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Putera Jayapati, (2) Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Jayapati and (3) Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Puteri Jayapati. Two of the incidents can be found in the comparative image below (**Image 5.153**).



Image 5.153: Putera Jayapati or Puteri Jayapati?

5.16.3 Voice Overlaps (Fauzi and Sidek's Voice)

It is common to use the same person for different characters in an animation especially when the characters are not significant to the storyline. But unless the characters are twins, there should have been a variation of voices to differentiate two

main characters in Fauzi and Sidek. Sidek was not a prominent character before Fauzi left, but appeared numerous times as a notable Selangor Under-12 player along with Rizal and Raju. Sidek's role became important after Sabok took over Fauzi's place in the centre of the midfield and the left wing position became vacant.

5.17 Conclusion

As found in the structuralist-semiotics analysis in this chapter, there are many tangible, non-tangible, verbal and non-verbal cues that derive from the Malaysian identity. These characteristics appear in the form of signs and symbols which are shared among Malaysians in general and also specific people by either race, religion or geographical location.

These characteristics form a big part of the lives of Malaysian people and their culture. The items found in this analysis helps understand which part of being Malaysian that appears in the locally-produced content. It is important to note, however, that these findings are more Malay-centric due to all of the animated series sampled are Malay-language animation that attracts a dominantly Malay audience. This may indicate that the content produced thus far have been heavily Malay-content and may not reflect the reality of other races in the country. Having said that, it does not refute the validity of the data found through this analysis.

CHAPTER 6
AUDIENCE RECEPTION TOWARDS
MALAYSIAN ANIMATION

CHAPTER 6

AUDIENCE RECEPTION TOWARDS MALAYSIAN ANIMATION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the identification of characteristics that define Malaysian animation has been discussed. These characteristics include clothing, food, language and people and others. As an extension to the structuralist-semiotic analysis, the focus group interviews conducted serve the purpose of identifying the reception of audiences towards Malaysian animation while also observing the informants' thoughts, perception and behavior with regards to local animation. The aim, as stated in the research objectives, is to analyze the reception of Malaysian animation among the local and foreign audiences.

As explained in the Chapter 4, the aim of the focus group discussion is not to 'generalize' the overall reception from Malaysian and foreign audiences but rather to categorize data to understand the details of how the audience reacts towards Malaysian animation. This study looks deeper into how the audience accepts, partially accepts or totally rejects the characteristics and general concepts suggested within Malaysian animation.

As discussed by Morley (in Morley & Brundson, 1999), the audience will either accept the information as sent by the source, partially accept the intended meaning or totally reject the message sent by the source. Based on this premise, the researcher has evaluated the responses from the informants of the focus groups and compare them with the information obtained in the qualitative content analysis.

Also, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the groups formed represent different types of audiences who may foresee animation from different points of views and react in different ways. These five groups consist of (1) parents, (2) children, (3) young adults

and (4) foreign audiences with the final group being set up at a later stage to cater to (5) non-Malay young adults who were not available in the initial focus group for young adults.

As the textual analysis of three animation titles is completed, a focus group interview was conducted to investigate audience reception. As discussed in the Chapter 4, the focus group interview was initially conducted on four separate groups with each group representing a unique cluster (Parents, Young Adults, Children, Foreigners) and a fifth group was added to reflect non-Malay young adults as the initial Young Adults group only consisted of Malays. Issues raised in the interview were centred towards how the audience received local animation.

The issues raised during the interview comprised of variable angles of the audience's viewing patterns, their likes and dislikes towards Malaysian animation, their attitudes and behavior towards Malaysian characteristics in the animation etc. as stated with the questions below:

No. and Type	Question
1. Opening	Tell us your name and tell us which Malaysian animation you have viewed.
2. Introduction	How did you learn about the animation titles that you have watched?
3. Transition	What were your first impressions on the animation?
4. Key Question	What did you particularly like about Malaysian animation?
5. Key Question	What did you find frustrating about Malaysian animation?
6. Key Question	How is Malaysian animation different from those in Japan and the United States or in other countries.
7. Key Question	How has Malaysian animation affected your animation viewing patterns?
8. Key Question	How far do you agree or disagree with the portrayal of Malaysia in these animation?
9. Ending	If you had the opportunity to change anything about animation in Malaysia, what would you advise?
10. Ending	Is there anything that we missed or anything you want to add?

Table 6.1 Questions for the Focus Group Interview

Quite a number of issues were raised during the focus group discussions with some indicating acceptance, another portion indicating partial acceptance and while others would indicate rejection. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher has categorized the focus group findings through NVIVO tree nodes (see Appendix B) as the method of analysis that will be elaborated and discussed further in the following sub-chapters.

The findings from these methods are quite similar to the observations from the structuralist-semiotic analysis. These similarities include clothing, language, people, culture and other general observations. However, there are also a number of issues raised that were fresh and provide unique insights to audience reception towards local animation.

6.2 Animation Viewed

It is imperative to recognize the animations that have been viewed by the audience before gauging their reception towards Malaysian animation. Identifying these animation is an important step as it sets the ground on the boundaries of the focus group discussions. This measure is also taken to ensure that both the researcher and also the informants are within the same mind frame of defining Malaysian animation. The responses obtained from the informants are based on their past experiences in which they are or were directly or indirectly engaged with the animation. The full transcripts for all the focus group interviews are available through Appendix C.

The researcher intended for all the focus group interviews to be conducted in English. However, due to circumstances where 1) the informants did not have a very good command in the English language and 2) the informants are more comfortable conversing in Malay, the researcher decided to accept both Malay and English as the

medium of conversation in three particular groups, Young Adults, Parents and Children. This was done to ensure that language limitations did not become a barrier towards obtaining valuable information important to this research. Hence, in the analysis for focus groups using Malay, the researcher has provided English translations to the feedback in Malay. For the Non-Malay Young Adults and Foreign Audience, English is maintained as the medium.

6.2.1 *Upin & Ipin*

Based on all the focus group discussions, there were a total of 12 animation series and film referred to by the audience. These include both film and animated series with one short animated film making an appearance as well. The most viewed Malaysian animation series is *Upin & Ipin*, followed by Boboiboy.

Upin & Ipin was identified through all five focus group sources with a total of 21 references in NVIVO. These findings can be found in either straight mentions of *Upin & Ipin* or, in a different case, informants state that they have watched similar animation to what their friends or counterparts have mentioned.

Izzat, an informant from the Young Adults group mentioned that he has watched *Upin & Ipin*, Boboiboy and *Usop Sontorian* as recorded in his statement below:

Izzat: *Saya Mohd Izzat. Saya tengok cerita Upin Ipin, Boboiboy dengan Usop Sontorian.*

My name is Mohd Izzat. I've watched Upin Ipin, Boboiboy and *Usop Sontorian*.

Another informant, Naqsya, added this to Izzat's statement:

Naqsyabandi: *Saya Naqsyabandi. Yang semua itu saya tengoklah. Yang paling saya ingat dulu Yokies.*

I'm Naqsyabandi. I've watched all of those. The one I remember most from back then is Yokies.

When referring to *Upin & Ipin*, a number of Malaysian audiences seem to prefer removing the '&' and refer to the animation as simply 'Upin Ipin'. It is also demonstrated by the following informants:

Hafiz: *Nama saya Hafiz. Saya samalah tengok Upin Ipin dengan Boboiboy.*

My name is Hafiz. I, too, have watched Upin Ipin and Boboiboy.

Rasul: *Saya Mohd Rasul. Antara animasi tempatan yang telah saya tonton Keluang Man, Usop Sontorian, Upin Ipin. Boboiboy ni saya tak tengoklah.*

I'm Mohd Rasul. Among local animation I've watched are Keluang Man, *Usop Sontorian*, Upin Ipin. I don't watch Boboiboy.

The popularity of *Upin & Ipin* is not exclusive to the Malay community. The non-Malays are also familiar with the animation. This is demonstrated by informants in the following statements:

Caster: Hi. My name is Caster. Malaysian animation that I have watched is Upin Ipin and *Boboiboy*.

SK: Hello. You can call me SK. I have watched Upin Ipin and Along.

Hemma: Hi. I'm Hemma. I've watched Upin Ipin.

Chan: I'm Chan. I've seen Upin Ipin too.

Kelly: Hello. My name is Kelly. I watched Upin Ipin before, Boboiboy and Anak Sidek.

The popularity of *Upin & Ipin* is further extended outside of the country. *Upin & Ipin* has been viewed in countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam. Local animation has also been viewed by foreign audiences residing in Malaysia. Irfan, from Indonesia had this to say:

Irfan: My name is Irfan. I'm from Indonesia. Malaysian animation that I've been watching is *Bola Kampung* and *Upin Ipin*.

Kevin, from Vietnam, added:

Kevin: My name is Kevin. I'm from Vietnam. I have watched recently *Bola Kampung* and *Upin & Ipin*.

Nadeel, from Pakistan, added:

Nadeel: Good afternoon. My name is Nadeel. I'm from Pakistan. I have watched *Upin & Ipin* and *Bola Kampung* from the Malaysian animations.

Agil, from Maldives, added:

Agil: My name is Agil. I'm from Maldives. I watched this *Bola Kampung*, *Upin Ipin* and little bit of 1st Met. It's a 3D animation.

6.2.2 Boboiboy

Boboiboy is the second highest watched animation among the informants. This animated series is covered through four out of five focus groups with the foreign audience being the only group who has not watched *Boboiboy*. There were 16 references from those four sources in which only *Boboiboy* and *Upin & Ipin* managed to generate more than 10 references. The rest of the mentioned animations were referred to less than 10 times.

In a number of cases, the mention of *Upin & Ipin* came along with *Boboiboy*, as demonstrated by these informants:

Muamnah: *Nama Muamnah. Animasi tempatan, animasi Upin Ipin dan Boboiboy.*

My name is Muamnah. Local animation I've watched are Upin Ipin and Boboiboy.

Afify: *Afify. Upin Ipin dengan Boboiboy jugalah.*

Afify. Upin Ipin and Boboiboy too.

Izzat: *Saya Mohd Izzat. Saya tengok cerita Upin Ipin, Boboiboy dengan Usop Sontorian.*

I'm Mohd Izzat. I've viewed Upin Ipin, Boboiboy and *Usop Sontorian*.

Caster: Hi. My name is Caster. Malaysian animation that I have watched is Upin Ipin and Boboiboy.

Nor: *Upin Ipin dan Boboiboy. Macam tak ada orang sebut.*

Upin Ipin and Boboiboy. It's like nobody mentioned it.

6.2.3 Other Malaysian Animation

Bola Kampung and *Keluang Man* are the two animations which were referred to by three sources and appearing through eight and nine references respectively. Three of the foreign audiences have only watched *Bola Kampung*. These were what they mentioned:

Aziz: Hi Mr. Amir. My name is Aziz. I'm from Uzbekistan. Recently I've watch Malaysian animation named *Bola Kampung*.

Toghzan: My name is Toghzan. I'm from Khazakstan. And I also have also watched the animation, Malaysian animation called *Bola Kampung*.

Matilda: My name is Matilda. I'm from Tanzania. I recently have been watching *Bola Kampung*, Malaysian animation.

The rest of the foreign audiences have watched more than just one animation.

Irfan: My name is Irfan. I'm from Indonesia. Malaysian animation that I've been watching is *Bola Kampung* and *Upin Ipin*.

Kevin: My name is Kevin. I'm from Vietnam. I have watched recently *Bola Kampung* and *Upin & Ipin*.

Agil: My name is Agil. I'm from Maldives. I watched this *Bola Kampung*, *Upin Ipin* and little bit of 1st Met. It's a 3D animation.

Nadeel: Good afternoon. My name is Nadeel. I'm from Pakistan. I have watched *Upin & Ipin* and *Bola Kampung* from the Malaysian animations.

Informants have also watched other animation as well. Among the titles mentioned were *Anak-anak Sidek*, *Keluang Man* and *Silat Lagenda* (*Kampung Boy* was also mentioned but was omitted due to the researcher's set boundaries on Malaysian animation).

Leonard: My name is Leonard. I've seen most of what these people have seen. *Anak-anak Sidek*, and also *Keluang Man*.

Caster, SK
& Kelly: Yes, *Keluang Man*.

Aima: *Apa ya? Keluang Man.*

What was it? *Keluang Man*.

Nurul: *Panggil Kak Nurul. Yang tahu budak-budak ini, tahulah Kampung Boy, Boboiboy, apa lagi? Keluang Man.*

You can call me Kak Nurul. The ones that I know are the ones that my kids know, *Kampung Boy*, *Boboiboy* and what else? *Keluang Man*.

Mior: *Saya Mior Ahmad. Animasi daripada zaman dulu tu Usop Sontorian, Keluang Man, yang baru-baru ini Upin Ipin, selepas itu Silat Lagenda.*

I'm Mior Ahmad. Animation that I've watched from the past are *Usop Sontorian*, *Keluang Man*, and the latest, *Upin Ipin*, after that, *Silat Legenda*.

Tarmizi: ... dan selain daripada tu *Usop Sontorian*, *Keluang Man* yang nampak senonoh sikit dan *Lat Kampung Boy* tu.

... and other than that *Usop Sontorian*, the better looking one, *Keluang Man*, and *Lat's Kampung Boy*.

6.3 First Introduction to Malaysian Animation

In order to understand the reception of the audience towards Malaysian animation, it would also be beneficial to look into how the audience first encountered the animation that they have watched. This would provide basis and grounds for noting patterns of acceptance, partial acceptance or rejection as early as possible.

The audiences were first introduced to Malaysian animation through various means. The highest referred sources mentioned by the informants are through family and friends. The people around the informants (family and friends) do affect what they watch on television or through the computer. This was followed by computer-related sources, mainly the computer itself and also through internet-related applications. There are also advertising and college or school programs introducing the informants to Malaysian animation. This is followed by reference to animation merchandise.

6.3.1 Television

The most referred-to first contact point of Malaysian animation is through watching television itself. It was quoted by four sources from three references. Nadeel, mentioned that she saw the animation from her niece watching *Upin & Ipin* on television. However, since Nadeel is a Pakistani currently residing in Malaysia, the animation that she viewed was in fact in Malaysia. However, for Kevin and Irfan who

hail from Vietnam and Indonesia, they mentioned that they viewed the animation through Disney Channel from their respective countries.

Nadeel: And then on TV, it's (*Upin & Ipin*) very famous. And I have a four-year old niece. So she likes cartoons and she really enjoys *Upin & Ipin*. Even my 20-year old sister, she enjoys it. So that's how I got to know.

Kevin: Back in my country, I knew about *Upin & Ipin* through Disney Channel.

Moderator: In Vietnam?

Kevin: Yeah, in Vietnam. Through Disney Channel. Yeah, and *Bola Kampung*, I just knew about it just now.

Irfan: I watch Upin Ipin through Disney Channel in Indonesia. The Upin Ipin is quite famous in Indonesia.

Moderator: How famous?

Irfan: Not as famous as in Malaysia but quite a lot of young aged children watch Upin Ipin consistantly.

6.3.2 Advertisements

Through purchasing of space and airtime, advertisements have the capability of reaching a large number of audiences. Among the audience's first contact point with Malaysian animation are through advertisements. Nadeel noticed promotional posters in hypermarkets. She mentioned seeing advertisements in Carrefour and other hypermarkets.

Nadeel: Well, I've seen *Upin & Ipin* adverts, posters in Carrefour and these hypermarkets. So that's how I got to know.

Afify and Rasul also came to know about local animation from advertisements as mentioned below:

Afify: *Iklan.*

Advertisements.

Rasul: Iklan dan juga televisyen.

Advertisements and also television.

6.3.3 Animation Merchandise

Merchandizing is another introductory point to Malaysian animation. Various items such as action figures, clothing, toys, stationery, and other animation-related merchandize are displayed in various types of outlets. These can range from hypermarkets, departmental stores, gas stations, signature toy-stores, sundry shops to even night markets offering both authentic and imitation merchandize. Megat, for example, indicated that he was made aware of Upin & Ipin through products sold at outlets and initially wondered what they were. Eventually he found out. Zuhrah also added toys to Megat's explanation.

Megat: *Tiba-tiba keluar, contoh, Angry Birds. Mana kita tengok Angry Birds atau Upin Ipin kan? Kita tak tahu itu kartun sebenarnya dan Upin Ipin tu apa. Kartun rupanya.*

When we go out, we suddenly see Angry Birds. We don't watch Angry Birds or Upin Ipin, right? So we don't know that they are actually cartoons and we didn't even know what Upin Ipin was. They were cartoons.

Zuhrah: *Produk mainan semua itu kan?*

All those toys, right?

Megat: *Produk mainan, baju dan beg.*

Toys, clothing and bags.

6.3.4 College or School

Formal education is a structure when knowledge is gained. While animation is often discussed in casual conversations, it is also used as topics for formal discussions in the classroom. As Aziz stated, he was introduced to Malaysian animation through one of the classes he attended.

Aziz: I had a lecture titled ‘Media, Culture & Society’. During that lecture, our lecturer put on the animation to teach us how culture affects other societies. Due to that lecture, I’ve known about Bola Kampung animation and watched them.

In a separate group, Chan stated that she was introduced to Upin & Ipin through her Information Technology (IT) subject in high school where Malaysian animation were marketed to the people at her school.

Chan: Upin Ipin from high school. For IT subject, there were people marketing it at our school.

Aima, from another group, mentioned that she was made aware of Malaysian animation through her friends at school.

Aima: *Kawan sekolah. Kan kalau datang ke sekolah sebelum kelas biasanya berborak tengok cerita apa dan bila balik tu rasa nak cari dan tengok juga la.*

Friends at school. Normally we would talk about the shows we’ve watched and when I go back home, I felt like watching them too.

6.3.5 Computer and Internet

In the age of the Internet, finding information in about any topic is a possibility. As such, a number of informants of the focus group managed to indicate the involvements of computers and the internet as to how they first encountered Malaysian animation. For Agil, she used the terms Malaysian animation and found the results immediately.

Agil: I just typed ‘Malaysian animations’ and then those things came aside. I just clicked on those things.

Other informants noted the internet in general and social media being among the point where they were first introduced to some Malaysian animation titles.

Hanis: Internet.

Hafiz: *Laman web sosial.*

Social media.

Nurin: *Dekat TV dan komputer je.*

Only on television and the computer.

6.3.6 Family and Friends

Peer and family influence also contributes towards introduction of Malaysian animation. Daily casual conversation among family and friends lead towards a wide range of topic, anything to be precise. Hence, it is no surprise that audiences learn about animation through the people around them. For Malaysian animation, it is demonstrated by the audiences who participated as informants in this focus group. SK, for example, cited his mother as the influence who encouraged him to watch animation. For Aima, she was introduced to local animation by friends through conversations at school about television shows they watched at home.

Zuhrah shared her thoughts on peer influence. She mentioned that in order to keep up with conversations with their children and to avoid their children from behind left behind from their friends, she conforms to her children’s interest and at the same time, she tags along. This can be seen in the responses the informants gave as follows:

- SK: When I was small, during my free time, my mom would encourage me to watch animation.
- Aima: *Kawan sekolah.*
Schoolmates.
- Moderator: *Kawan sekolah? Dapat tahu daripada kawan? Lepas tu baru tengok?*
Schoolmates? You found out from friends? After that then you watch?
- Aima: *Ha.*
Yes.
- Moderator: *Kawan bagitau macam mana ya kalau boleh ingat?*
How did your friends tell you, if you can remember?
- Aima: *Kan kalau datang ke sekolah sebelum kelas biasanya berborak tengok cerita apa dan bila balik rasa nak cari dan tengok jugalah.*
Well if we come to school, before class starts, we normally talk about the shows we watch and when I go back, I feel like watching as well.
- Zuhrah: *Mungkin sebab anak-anak dekat sekolah ada peer influence, kita pun nak orang kata keep up dengan anak-anak punya apa yang dia orang kata minat jugak kot. Jadi kita tengok jugak, kita layan juga. Macam Upin Ipin tu bila anak-anak balik cerita pasal kawan tgk Upin Ipin begitu begini dan kita tak nak anak kita pun ketinggalan atau kita tak nak dia jadi outlook daripada kawan-kawan dia. Sebab tuh kot kita layan juga minat diorang.*
Maybe because our children at school are influenced by their peers, it means that we have to keep up with what they like as well. So we watch and enjoy along. Like Upin Ipin, when children tell us that their friends watch Upin Ipin, we don't want our children to be left behind compared to their friends. So we conform to their interests.

6.4 First Impressions on Malaysian Animation

The audiences noted their first impressions upon watching Malaysian animation. There were mixed impressions with regards to viewing local animation. Some are positive, some negative and some neutral. The researcher has categorized these impressions into three categories: Liked, Disliked and Neutral. If an informant describes their first impressions in a positive manner, their impressions are labeled and categorized as Liked. If the opposite occurs, the remarks were labeled as Disliked. In any case in which the comments are neither positive nor negative, the remarks were labeled as Neutral.

It is also important to note that an informant may have both good and bad first impressions with regards to Malaysian animation. This did occur; the positives and the negatives were separated and placed in their respective categories rather than being placed as Neutral. This is because the intention of the Focus Group Discussion is to seek reception details rather than indulging in categorization.

6.4.1 Liked

Comments or remarks indicating positive first impressions are placed in this category. The remarks are further categorized into specific details explaining what the audience liked about Malaysian animation.

6.4.1.1 Culture Can Be Shared

The fact that any animation can be seen by different people from different cultural background, it provides a window of opportunity to share culture, values and many other things. Caster and Kelly both believe that there are benefits of Malaysian animation. In their comments, they indirectly indicated the presence of local culture

within the animation by saying that these culture found in Malaysian animation can be shared with people around the world.

Caster: Actually, for local animation there are more benefits. Like culture, we can share our culture with people internationally.

Kelly: Yes, local culture. It is good that people can see how our people are like. But local drawing isn't so good. Look at Upin Ipin. The drawing is kind of ugly.

6.4.1.2 Cute Characters

Among other traits that the audience liked was with regards to how the characters were designed. This can be seen through comments by Kevin who mentioned that the characters are cute before moving to his other opinions.

Kevin: Actually my nephew, he didn't like Upin & Ipin that much. It was kind of boring. Even though the design of the characters is cute. But to be honest, most of the characters look the same.

6.4.1.3 Interesting

A few informants also indicated that they felt that Malaysian animation were interesting. Afify, for example, cited that he was surprised by the delivery of Malaysian animation which he felt made it interesting to watch.

Afify: *Menariklah kot. Dia punya... apa namanya? Cara penyampaian, lepas itu, maksudnya, macam tak sangkalah macam tempatan punya production boleh keluaran cerita-cerita macam itu* which is as good as international *punya* production.

Interesting, I think. The, what is it? The delivery, I mean, I didn't think that local production can produce such stories which is as good as international production.

6.4.1.4 Okay

There is some hesitance by an audience in giving a full thumbs-up for Malaysian animation. Even though the general view Malaysian animation is good, there are certain traits that put off an audience. This was demonstrated by Leonard, who thinks that Malaysian animation is okay in terms of promoting moral values but lacks in quality.

Leonard: Actually Malaysian animation is not that bad. I thought they were okay. Lots of moral values. But quality-wise, very poor.

6.4.1.5 Proud

There is also a sense of being proud of the product of local animation production. Kevin mentioned that he was proud to see a Southeast Asian animation shown on Disney Channel through his following remarks:

Kevin: The first thing I know about *Upin & Ipin*, I was kind of happy because suddenly like this Southeast Asian country have this great cartoon was published in Disney Channel. So that's the only thing I'm proud of Southeast Asian animation in general.

6.4.1.6 Very Good

Nor, an informant, initially gave a very short and positive response to the question. She claimed Malaysian animation to be 'Very good'. Although she did not retract her statement, her views did change along the way due to things she disliked about Malaysian animation.

Nor: *Wah! Bagusnya!*
 Wow! Very good!

6.4.2 Disliked

A few informants did bring up dislikes as first impressions towards Malaysian animation. These dislikes included bad language, boring animation, lack of choices, poor quality and unoriginal ideas.

6.4.2.1 Bad Language

Nor, who initially labelled Malaysian animation as ‘Very good’, later changed her tone to condemning Malaysian animation for usage of improper and impolite language citing first reference and the usage of ‘Kau’ (you) and ‘Aku’ me as being unsuitable for usage in conversations with parents.

Nor: *Dia guna ‘Kau’ ‘Aku’. Dengar macam bahasa biasalah kan tetapi macam dia nak buat benda tu secara general kira cakap pasar kan. Benda tu menarik, tapi bila budak-budak semakin besar ni, dia anggap benda ni macam dia influence kat situ. Dan satu lagi budak-budak ni, sekarang ni, bijak kan dan bila kita hendak betulkan agak susah. Saya cakap terus terang. Saya alami masalah dengan anak saya guna ‘Kau’ ‘Aku’ tapi dia tak tahu. Dengan ibu ayahpun guna ‘Kau’ ‘Aku’. Kita puas juga nak betulkan balik tapi you bayangkan dia dah dengar dari umur lapan bulan benda tu.*

They use ‘Kau’ ‘Aku’. It seems normal but then it sounds like street talk. These things are interesting, but as these kids grow older, they will be influenced by these things. And nowadays, they are clever and when we try to correct them, it’s difficult. They even use ‘Kau’ ‘Aku’ with their parents. We try as much to correct them but then again they have been hearing this since they were eight months old.

6.4.2.2 Boring

One of the first impressions recorded stated that Malaysian animation was kind of boring. Kevin stated that although the characters are cute, most of them look the same, the storyline is kind of simple.

Kevin: It was kind of boring. Even though the design of the characters is cute. But to be honest, most of the characters look the same. There is nothing different. It is just like a slight change of the hair style or the skin color. And for the storyline, it's kind of simple. I know the storyline is different compared to the American stuff. But my nephew still finds it boring.

6.4.2.3 No Other Choice

Tarmizi explained that viewing Malaysian animation demonstrate the lack of choice when it comes to selecting local programs to watch. Since there aren't many local animation out there, whatever has been set is the one people can watch.

Tarmizi: *Kalau kita dulu seolah-olah kalau kita masuk kedai makan, semua ada. Sushi, ada burger tetapi tetiba ada nasi lemak. Padahal nasi lemak tu tak sedap pun. Tetapi oleh kerana kita punya, adat kita, bukan adatlah, background. Kita makan nasi lemak juga, kita ambiklah juga nasi lemak tu. Itula impressionnya. Tak best mana pun kartun Malaysia ni tapi hidangan itu ada jadi kita tengoklah.*

It is as if we went into a restaurant, everything is available. Shishi, burgers and suddenly there is nasi lemak. The nasi lemak isn't even that good. But since it is ours, our tradition, not tradition, background. We still choose nasi lemak. That is the impression. Malaysian cartoons aren't that good but because it is available, we watch it anyway.

6.4.2.4 Poor Quality

Poor quality is one of the first impressions recording during the focus group interview. Leonard stated that although Malaysian animation seems okay, pictures, graphics and other things are of poor quality.

Leonard: Actually Malaysian animation is not that bad. I thought they were okay. Lots of moral values. But quality-wise, very poor.

Moderator: What quality? Can you explain?

Leonard: Picture, graphics and all that.

Kelly added about how the drawings and illustration of the animation is poor and ugly while SK added that during his childhood, his mother refused to purchase Malaysian animation CDs due to the poor quality of these animation.

Kelly: Yes, local culture. It is good that people can see how our people are like. But local drawing isn't so good. Look at Upin Ipin. The drawing is kind of ugly.

SK: When I was small, I remember I asked mom to buy CDs of Along and Kluang Man. But mom said waste of money, just watch on TV.

Moderator: Why was that?

SK: She feels there's no quality. Waste of money if we buy.

6.4.2.5 Unoriginal

Malaysian animation is also seen as unoriginal. Irfan claims that the storylines for Malaysian animation follows their counterparts in the west rather than developing animation based on Malaysian culture.

Irfan: Also the storyline also following like characters from western stories like Pirates of the Carribean and the storyline is not to original, I think. They try to imitate the other western countries and not try to develop more about the Malaysian culture, maybe.

6.4.3 Neutral

A few responses from the informants were neither positive nor negative and thus listed as Neutral. The responses recorded were on how different Malaysian animation is compared to animation from other countries in terms of characters, language, location and storyline. One informant also added that Malaysian animation is an honest reflection of the local society.

6.4.3.1 Different

Informants stated that Malaysian animation is different in terms of 1) character, 2) language, 3) location and 4) storyline. Nadeel views Malaysian animation is different in terms of the characters' faces where the characters are made to look like Malays, Chinese or Indians. She also added that language is also different where the characters speak as how the locals speak. Matilda added that even the storyline is different to the ones she has viewed before.

Nadeel: The characters are really different. The faces of them are obviously really different from the ones we see from Disney, Nickelodeon, from USA. They're obviously trying to make them look like the locals, the Malays, Chinese, or Indians. They want to add all those characters. So, a bit different for us. The accent is slightly different. Not really different. The language is obviously different. They speak how the locals speak. It's very casual, not formal. The places they show is not the city. It's more on the countryside. They tried to show that. So yeah, it's a bit different.

Matilda: I think it's different because the way the appearance of the heading of the animation is different. Even the characters. Mostly they use storyline. The storylines in different from the ones I've seen before.

Rasul also added about language being the only difference between Malaysian animation and animation from other countries.

Rasul: *Malaysia setakat ni saya tak nampak lagi dia punya trademark yang nak menggambarkan kartun Malaysia selain daripada bahasa.*

So far I haven't seen what makes Malaysian animation a trademark of Malaysia other than the usage of language (Malay).

6.4.3.2 Honest Reflection of Society

Local animation is also viewed as an honest reflection on society spanning decades from the past to the present. According to Zuhrah, *Usop Sontorian* is a reflection of her childhood. Even though the language used for *Usop Sontorian* is more harsh compared to current animation, the animation is still honest when depicting life in villages, racial integration and social integrity.

Zuhrah: *Bagi saya, Usop Sontorian itu lebih jujur karyanya. Jujur dan 'down to earth' kerana dia menggambarkan mungkin kita 'reflect' balik zaman kita kecik-kecik. Mungkin bahasanya orang kata apa yang terlalu 'harsh' banding yang ada sekarang. Bila saya tengok Upin Ipin mungkin generasi dah berbeza jadi mula-mula saya rasa dia jujur, dia 'honest' tetapi bila dia dah boom, dia dah naik, dia dah jadi sedikit kaku. Saya pun dah rasa kurang nak tengok.*

To me, *Usop Sontorian* is a more honest piece of work. Honest and down to earth because it reflects our childhood days. Maybe the language used is a bit harsh compared to how it is now. When I watched Upin Ipin, I saw that probably they were from different generations, so I thought it was honest. It actually was honest but when they became more popular, they became a bit stiff. I don't feel as much urge to watch anymore.

Zuhrah: *Usop Sontorian tu kita tengok, kita boleh relate balik. It is very honest. Karya yang honest, not that to say masa tu kita baru nak venture into our first animation. So bila kita tengok tuh ok dia punya pengkarya di sebalik kartun-kartun itu orang yang really actually nak keluarkan kehidupan di kampung, integriri antara kaum, orang kata social integrity berbilang bangsa, lepas tuh value kekeluargaan dan sebagainya. Tetapi upin ipin ni pada peringkat awal, tema lebih kurang.*

When we watch *Usop Sontorian*, we can relate back. It is very honest, not to say that we are just venturing into our first animation. So when we watch it, what the writers attempted was to portray the life in villages, racial integration and social integrity among races, and then family values and so on. But Upin Ipin had a similar theme, early on.

Nor: *Ok mula-mula, Upin Ipinlah, Sang kancil semua dia orang tak tengok kan?*

Ok, firstly about Upin Ipin, because they don't watch Sang Kancil?

Moderator: *Ya.*
Yes.

Nor: *Ok. Kalau Upin Ipin ni, mula-mula mcm ok. Saya perasan anak saya nombor satu tu dari lapan bulan dia dah layan pun dia dah tahu dah seronok dia kan.*

Ok. At the beginning, Upin Ipin seems ok. I noticed my eldest have enjoyed watching it since he was 8 months old.

Shafiee: *Pandangan saya? Animasi Malaysia ni lebih kepada mengetengahkan ciri-ciri budaya kat Malaysia. Macam toleransi antara kaum. Mungkin kalau kita dapat tengok seperti Upin & Ipin, Jaguh Kampung, eh, Bola Kampung, Boboiboy, kita dapat tengok dia punya perbezaan daripada segi kaum, toleransi. Mungkin itu salah satu yang cuba diketengahkan. Mungkin juga ditonjolkan kepada orang luar. Contohnya kita punya kartun ni akan ke Indonesia kan. Mungkin. Upin Ipin pun dah jadi satu fenomena dah dekat sana. Mungkin alih bahasa kan, tapi kita still nampak lagi apa yang dia nak sampaikan tu. Itulah pandangan saya.*

My opinion? Malaysian animation is more towards portraying cultural characteristics in Malaysia. For instance, tolerance among races. Maybe if we watch *Upin & Ipin*, *Jaguh Kampung*, oh sorry, *Bola Kampung*, *Boboiboy*, we will see the difference in terms of race, tolerance. Maybe that is what is tried to be

portrayed. Maybe to expose it to foreigners. For example our cartoons will go to Indonesia. Even Upin Ipin has become a phenomenon there. Maybe dubbed, but we still see what

6.5 Likes on Malaysian Animation

This category records what the informants like about Malaysian animation. These likes are a reflection of audience acceptance towards Malaysian animation. This category consists of cultures and customs, people, values, language and communication, technical features and other things in general.

6.5.1 General

This sub-category lists general factors that made the informants like Malaysian animation. These factors included general statements on the animation itself, storylines, being memorable and others.

6.5.1.1 Fun to watch

Informants mentioned that Malaysian animation is fun to watch. Agil, Aziz and Toghzan stated that Malaysian animation, *Bola Kampung* in particular, was good and comical which made it fun to watch.

Agil: It was quite fun, yeah.

Aziz: The thing is they try to imitate the Indian accent, the Chinese accent of English, in *Bola Kampung*, I mean. That was fun. That was good. Really.

Toghzan: After watching the animation *Bola Kampung*, I like it. It was fun, like a comedy.

6.5.1.2 Good animation

Informants also mentioned that they liked Malaysian animation because these were good animation. A child informant, Amanina, simply described Malaysian animation as ‘best’ (contrary to the English word, ‘best’ would actually mean ‘good’ in a Malay conversation).

Amanina: *Sebab best.*

Because it’s good.

Moderator: *Sebab apa best? Boboiboy dan Upin & Ipin dua-dua best? Best ke?*

What’s good? Boboiboy and Upin & Ipin are both good? Are they good?

Amanina: *Best.*

Good.

6.5.1.3 Good storyline

The storyline of an animation is also a factor in audiences liking an animation. According to informant Rasul, the storyline is the strength of an animation. He cited the example of Usop Sontorian being interesting and close to the hearts of the audience.

Rasul: *Pada saya, kalau kita tengok tarikan animasi Malaysia ni, tarikan utama dia, kekuatan dia lebih kepada jalan cerita animasi tersebut. Kalau kita tengok contohnya Usop Sontorian kita dulu, walaupun teknologi dia tidak secanggih sekarang, oleh disebabkan jalan ceritanya yang menarik sangat dekat dengan masyarakat Malaysia jadi cerita itu menarik untuk ditonton dan sentiasa ditunggu-tunggu. Lagi satu, macam*

sekarang, macam Upin & Ipin, Upin & Ipin pun jalan cerita dia kita tengok kan, kehidupan kanak-kanak di kampung, dan macam mana interaksi dia di kampung dengan bersama dengan rakan-rakan, itu yang menjadikan ia kekuatan animasi tempatan tu sendiri lah, pada pandangan saya.

To me, if we watch Malaysian animation, what is of interest or its strength lies in its storyline. If we watch *Usop Sontorian*, even though the technology is not as good as now, the storyline is very close to the society in Malaysia. Hence, the story becomes interesting and people are always waiting for the animation to be aired. Additionally, how Upin & Ipin portrays the life of children in a village along with their friends. It makes up the strength of local animation. That's my view.

6.5.1.4 Interesting

General statements by informants is that Malaysian animation is just interesting as stated by Shafiee and Cas:

Shafiee: *Bagi saya dia menarik lah.*

To me, it is just interesting.

Cas: Actually Malaysian cartoons are interesting, memorable.

6.5.1.5 Memorable

Malaysian animation is also labelled as memorable due to the fact it has emotional ties to people's roots as stated by Cas:

Cas: Actually Malaysian cartoons are interesting, memorable. We can also recall back what happened in kampung, the kampung life.

6.5.1.6 Logic

Informants also mentioned logic as one of the things they like about Malaysian animation. Physical logic was quoted as an example compared to *Tom & Jerry*.

Moderator: *Ada benda-benda lain tak yang best yang tuan-tuan suka tentang local animation?*

Is there anything else that you like about local animation?

Khir: *Masih logik lagilah.*

They are still logic.

Moderator: *Masih logik? Boleh jelaskan?*

Still logic? Can you explain?

Khir: *Macam cerita Tom & Jerry, cerita bukan-bukan.*

Like in *Tom & Jerry*, the story is nonsense.

Nor: *Jatuh-jatuh hidup lagi.*

They fall yet still live.

6.5.1.7 Simply Like Watching Cartoons

One response from an informant was that he just simply liked watching cartoons. Mior, stated that he does not take cartoons seriously and that he treats it as just entertainment. Nevertheless, Mior did mention that Malaysian animation does require improvements.

Mior: *Suka je. Pada saya, saya suka tengok kartun. Jadi semua kartun saya tengoklah dan bagi saya kartun ni saya tak ambik serius sebab anggap sebagai hiburan. Jadi saya tak adalah nak*

cakap saya tak suka sebab saya memang suka tengok kartun ni, tak ada yang tak suka. Cuma mungkin kalau boleh kena improve sajalah.

I just like it. To me, I like watching cartoons. So I watch all the cartoons and I don't take them seriously because they are just entertainment to me. So I won't say I don't like it because I really do like watching cartoons. I just think that maybe there should be some improvements.

6.5.2 Culture & Customs

This sub-category lists factors related to culture and customs. There were no specifics mentioned by the informants. But culture itself was part of their responses during the focus group interview.

Muamnah and Shafiee described the suitability with Malaysian culture as one of the things they liked about Malaysian animation. Shafiee gave an example of how racial tolerance has been put forward through these animation as a reflection of local culture as recorded in their following statements:

Muamnah: *Sesuai dengan persekitaran.*

It is suitable with the environment.

Shafiee: *Budaya. Budaya.*

Culture. Culture.

Muamnah: *Sesuai dengan masyarakat kita.*

It is suitable with our society.

Shafiee: Animasi Malaysia ni lebih kepada, apa orang kata, mengetengahkan ciri-ciri budaya kat Malaysia. Macam mana toleransi antara kaum. Mungkin kalau kita dapat tengok kat, seperti *Upin & Ipin*, *Bola Kampung*, *Boboiboy*, kita dapat tengok dia punya perbezaan daripada segi kaum, toleransi.

Animation in Malaysia puts forward cultural characteristics in Malaysia. For example, racial tolerance. Maybe if we watch *Upin & Ipin*, *Bola Kampung*, *Boboiboy*, we may be able to see the difference between races and how they tolerate with each other.

Kelly, Leonard and Kelvin also recorded the same response, albeit in a more general way.

Kelly: Yes, it also shows the lifestyle here. People from multi-culture.

Leonard: Yes.

Kelvin: Yes.

Leonard: It shows people from different races can live together happily.

6.5.3 Language & Communication

This sub-category lists responses related to language and communication. These responses include the usage of catch phrases and also the mechanics of proper communication.

6.5.3.1 Catch Phrases

There are certain phrases that are caught by the audience and turns into popular catch phrases. Irfan gave the example of Ipin's (from *Upin & Ipin*) habit of saying 'Betul, betul, betul!' (Right, right, right!).

- Irfan: Like from Upin Ipin especially, they have a catch phrase that makes children or maybe adults also interested in the catch phrase such as ‘Betul, betul, betul!’. Now, every people are doing the same thing. Like if someone’s asking, they will answer ‘Yeah, betul, betul, betul!’.
- Moderator: Yes, interesting. A catch phrase.
- Irfan: Catch phrases are very interesting. So children like it and also the adults like it.

6.5.3.2 Proper Communication

Informants also stated that they liked the usage of language in Malaysian animation, the construction of proper sentences, the way people communicate and interact with each other which is relevant to the informants’ background. Additionally, communication that occurs in these animation demonstrates the strong relationship between races in Malaysia.

- SK: I like the multi-language. How Chinese, English and Malays is used, how proper sentence can be made.
- Moderator: Can you elaborate, SK?
- SK: The way characters talk to each other. They show how to talk to other people properly.
- Chan: Dialogues are used give a more familiar conversation. I think it helps close racial relationship. It shows Malaysia as a multi-cultural country.
- Zuhrah: *Kadang-kadang dari segi dialog jugala. Ada dialog-dialog konteks yang, ada juga bahasa yang kita tidak boleh terima tetapi ada juga yang mengingatkan kita, macam ni lah cara kita interaksi dulu. Ada dialog yang lebih relevan dan more related dengan kita punya background. Itulah yang suka.*
- Sometimes, in terms of dialogues as well. There are dialogues, and tone of language that we cannot accept but there are ones that reminds us that this used to be the way we interact. There are dialogues that are more relevant and related to our background. That’s what I like.

6.5.4 People

The people or characters within Malaysian animation are among the factors that make the audience like watching them. These include the variety of characters, stories of achievements and also strong characters.

6.5.4.1 Variety of Characters

There are various kinds of characters in Malaysian animation. According to Nadeel, she likes the fact there are unique kinds of kids.

Nadeel: They have a variety of characters. Unique kind of kids. One is angry, one is very emotional, is always stressed out, one is always joke of the class.

6.5.4.2 Stories of Achievements

Kelly cited the example of *Anak-anak Sidek* as her preference compared to current animation because *Anak-anak Sidek* offers more than just sharing of culture. It offers stories of achievements of the Sidek brothers in world badminton.

Kelly: If compare to animation now, I prefer older animation like *Anak-anak Sidek*. Now it's just based on culture. Animation should instill more on country achievements like Nicole David, Lee Chong Wei.

6.5.4.3 Strong Characters

Strong characters are also an attraction towards Malaysian animation. In the focus group interview conducted, children were the only ones who mentioned about liking strong characters in Malaysian animation.

Akil: *Dia hebat.*

He's strong.

Irfan (Child): *Suka. Suka sebab dia hebat dan ada kuasa.*

I like. Because he is strong and has superpowers.

Naqib: *Sebab dia ada kuasa.*

Because he has superpowers.

Moderator: *Sebab apa, Nani?*

Why, Nani?

Nani: *Sebab dia ada kuasa lawan dengan Adudu.*

Because he has superpowers to fight Adudu.

Moderator: *Adudu? Uncle kena tengoklah lain kali. Kuasa apa yang dia ada?*

Adudu? I have to watch this next time. What powers does he have?

Nani: *Kuasa kilat, kuaasa angin dan kuasa tali.*

Lightning powers, wind power and rope power.

Moderator: *Betul ya? Semua betul ya? Nurin ada tengok? Sebab apa dia hebat?*

Is this real? Is this all real? Nurin, have you watched this? What makes him strong?

Nurin: *Sebab dia boleh tukar jadi tiga.*

Because he can change into three.

6.5.5 Technical

Although some informants did mention their dislikes on the graphics of Malaysian animation, an informant actually mentioned that they liked the graphics of the current Malaysian animation.

- Aima: Sekarang ni grafik dia cantik.
Now the graphics are better.
- Moderator: Sekarang ni grafik cantik?
Now the graphics are better?
- Aima: Kalau banding dengan, kalau kita tengok macam, ada sebablaa kita nak tengok kartun Malaysia banding dengan kartun luar. At par jugaklah dengan kartun luar.
If we compare to, if we look at them, there is now a reason to watch Malaysian cartoons compared to foreign cartoons. At par with foreign cartoons.
- Moderator: *At par dari segi? Grafik sahajakah atau ada benda-benda lain sama?*

At par in terms of what? Only graphics or is there anything else?
- Aima: *Memang grafiklah.*

It's graphics.

6.5.6 Values

There are also good lessons to be learned in Malaysian animation that makes these animation likeable. The promotion of positive values is a plus point in Malaysian animation. This is stated by Afify, Hanis and SK.

- Afify: *Banyak pengajaran untuk budak-budak. Banyak mesej yang boleh disampaikan.*

There are many lessons for children. A lot of messages can be relayed.
- Hanis: *Banyak moral of the story.*

There are a lot of morals of the story.
- SK: I see a lot of moral values in the animation. Like if people do good, they will be blessed with good.

6.6 Dislikes on Malaysian Animation

This category lists the things that the informants disliked about Malaysian animation. These include general statements, culture and customs, language and communication, people and also technical aspects.

6.6.1 General

General statements were recorded with regards to what the informants did not particularly like about Malaysian animation. These were negative responses related to many aspects within the animation itself.

6.6.1.1 Too Many Ads

One of the things mentioned by an informant is that there are too many ads. While this may not be necessarily the case, the perception forms the reality from the audience's point of view.

Zuhrah: Iklan banyak

6.6.1.2 Too Short

Among the disliked things informants mentioned is that some Malaysian animation is a bit too short. This is apparent especially with Upin & Ipin with running times at less than 10 minutes per episode.

Megat: *Singkat sangat kot.*

It's a bit too short.

Moderator: *Singkat?*

Short?

Nor: *Lima minit, lima minit.*

Five minutes each.

6.6.1.3 Unoriginal

According to Rasul, Malaysian animation is also viewed as being unoriginal in the sense that it doesn't really have its own identity and tends to copy from foreign animation and that is what he doesn't like about Malaysian animation. Hafiz agrees with Rasul's views and states that Malaysian animation should form its own identity. In a separate focus group interview, Megat and Zuhrah brought up the same concern.

Rasul: *Perkara itu pada saya adalah subjektif. Setiap individu ada pandangan, persepsi yang berbeza lah. Kalau pada saya, saya tak suka kepada perkara yang ditiru ah. Maksud saya, tak de identiti sendiri. Macam, katakan, orang kata kalau ada kartun Transformers dekat barat kan, kat Malaysia cuba nak buat satu apa, cerita animasi yang berbentuk robot jugak. Ada, mungkin kurang menarik pada pandangan saya lah, orang lain saya tak pasti. Itu pandangan saya.*

To me, it is subjective. Every individual has their own views and perception. To me, I don't like things which are copied. I mean without their own identity. Let's say, for example, if the West have *Transformers*, Malaysians would produce robot-based animation as well. I think it makes it less interesting. But I don't know about others. That's my view.

Hafiz: *Saya bersetuju dengan pendapat Encik Rasul tentang meniru tu lah. Kalau boleh, animasi Malaysia buat identity sendiri lah supaya menunjukkan animasi tu daripada Malaysia lah. Seperti apa, Dragonball lah, kita nampaklah identiti tu daripada apa, Jepun. Kat Malaysia, kalau boleh, tonjolkan ciri-ciri Malaysia lah.*

I agree with Mr. Rasul's opinion about copying. If possible, Malaysian animation must shape their own identity to show that it is from Malaysia. If we look at *Dragonball*, we can see where it is from, Japan. In Malaysia, try and highlight Malaysian characteristics.

Zuhrah: *Cumanya kartun Malaysia ni dia cuba nak tonjolkan sifat futuristik. Tapi futuristik itu lebih kepada copy, cut and paste. Tak ada satu identity dan jati diri Malaysia sendiri. Macam kalau kartun macam di US, Jepun, ada jati diri dia, jati diri bangsa tu. Jadi bila dia buat satu animasi tu kalau dia cakap pasal futuristik. Macam En. Mior kata tadilah, dia ada dia punya kajiannya, plotnya, convincing storyline. Tapi macam kartun Malaysia dia macam futuristik spaceship, rasa agak superficial.*

It is just that cartoons in Malaysia try to portray futuristic characteristics. But this futuristic element is more towards copying, cutting and pasting. There isn't any single Malaysian identity. Like cartoons in US, Japan, they have their identity and identity of race. So when they talk about being futuristic, like what En. Mior said earlier, they studied the background, plot and come up with a convincing storyline. But for Malaysian animation, it is like having a futuristic spaceship but very superficial.

Zuhrah: *Tak original.*

Not original.

Megat: *Tak original.*

Not original.

Zuhrah: *Macam Boboiboy tu pun dia buat alien. Itu sebenarnya macam kita dah macam terikut ikut macam American-centric pulak. American lawan dengan alien, kita pun nak lawan dengan alien so dekat situ a bit American-centriclah.*

Like Boboiboy having aliens. That is actually like being American-centric. Americans fight with aliens, we also want to fight aliens. So there it's a bit American-centric.

6.6.1.4 Unrealistic

Some Malaysian animation are deemed unrealistic and foolish as writers did not do enough background research before including elements within the story of the animation itself.

Aima: *Dia dah merapu sikit. Ada yang pirate.*

It's a bit foolish. There are even pirated ones.

Mior: *Dia tak macam Boboiboy dan semua tu. Dia punya kartun tu, gambar, grafik gambar ok tapi cerita tak realistic. Kalau tengok Ben10, kalau dia sebut teknologi, kira rasa teknologi itu betul-betul ada walaupun padahal dia kelentong je pun. Itulah kajian mengenai benda-benda tu, dia main hentam sajalah kan.*

They are not like Boboiboy and the rest. The cartoons, images, picture graphics are okay but the stories are unrealistic. If we watch *Ben10*, if they mention about technology, we feel the technology really exists even though it was just made up. That's because they researched those things, they just do it blindly.

6.6.1.5 Influence on Children to Buy Merchandize

A number of informants brought up the specific issue of how local animation attempts to influence children to purchase merchandize related to the animation that they watch.

Izzat: *Ada. Macam budak-budak ni kan, diorang kalau nampak macam baju Upin & Ipin, diorang nak beli. Kasut diorang nak beli.*

Yes. Like these kids, if they see Upin & Ipin shirts, they would want to buy it. They want to buy shoes as well.

Shafiee: *Pengaruh tu.*

That's influence.

Rasul: *Pengaruh tu.*

That's influence.

Moderator: *Kenapa tak baik pulak tu? Bukan ke tu bagus untuk ekonomi ke?*

Why isn't that good? Isn't it good for the economy?

Shafiee: *Menghabiskan gaji mak bapak je.*

They'll just use up their parents' pay.

Izzat: Yang sakitnya ibu bapa.

The parents are the ones who suffer.

Zuhrah: *Matlamat lebih kurang sama tetapi lama-lama ianya lebih kepada komersial value.*

The aim is almost the same, but then it becomes more of commercial value.

6.6.1.6 Lack of Choice

There is obviously a lack of choice when it comes to watching Malaysian animation since the production of animation in Malaysia is not as rapid and there is not a considerable amount of Malaysian animation available due to various reasons. According to Naqsyabandi, there isn't much to look forward to compared to foreign animation. Foreign animation even have stories on cooking, comic artists and practically almost anything.

Naqsyabandi: *Bagi saya, yang paling macam kurang minat lah, sebab variety. Variety kat Malaysia ni, kalau tengok kan, cerita animasi, kalau macam kartun, dia ada macam cerita pasal kampung, cerita pasal macam Keluang Man tu, itu je yang ada. Tapi kalau kita tengok dekat oversea punya, sampai ke makanan pun diorang boleh buat cerita. Ada kartun pasal kuih, ada kartun pasal orang lukis komik, semua ada lah. Tapi Malaysia belum lagi. Itu je.*

To me, the thing that turns me off the most is the lack of variety. Variety in Malaysia, if we watch animation, is just about villages, about Keluang Man, that's it. But if we watch overseas animation, they can even produce stories on food. There are cartoons on snacks, there are cartoons on comic artists, basically everything. But Malaysia has yet to follow. That's it.

6.6.1.7 Poor Storyline

Poor storylines are also among the things audiences dislike about Malaysian animation. Storylines are not as interesting as in other countries and lacks the pulling factor to influence the audience to watch these animation.

- Kelvin: I think the storyline is not as interesting as other countries. It's very boring. Difficult to feel like wanting to watch local animation.
- Leonard: Yes. I think the storyline should be better. It can be more interesting, then people will watch it.

6.6.2 Culture & Customs

Not all the audiences prefer watching traditional and village culture in Malaysian animation. Some viewers would prefer a more modern and developed touch as demonstrated by Kevin.

- Kevin: Actually the animation, they focus too much on the *kampung* cultures. Yeah, so it looks like it's so bore and not developed that much. That's the thing that I don't like about the Malaysian animation.

6.6.3 Language & Communication

Some elements with regards to language and communication have become points of dislikes for audiences. These include two elements that are annoying conversations and the usage of bad language.

6.6.3.1 Annoying Conversations

Informants brought up elements of Manglish as annoying to viewers as stated by Agil through her example of conversations in *Upin & Ipin*. These conversations include the adding of the suffix ‘lah’ and ‘ma’.

- Agil: Yeah, in Upin Ipin they stretch out like, I don’t know how to say it. Stretch like ‘ma’, ‘lah’. Those words. It’s kind of annoying.
- Moderator: You mean they stretch the words that they say?
- Agil: Yes. Like ‘boleh la’.
- Aziz: But that is accent. But some people like it, right.
- Agil: Yes, but for some people, it’s kind of annoying.

6.6.3.2 Usage of Bad Language

Informants also believed that good values and usage of proper language and communication is sacrificed in exchange for good money. Zuhrah stated that animation producers spend time thinking about how to market their product without considering personal value and moral education for kids. She made a comparison with *Sesame Street* where positive values are disseminated and commercialized but when it reaches countries such as Malaysia, it would not carry local values.

- Moderator: But let me play Devil’s avocate. *Industri animasi di Malaysia ni dia tak besar dan susah nak survive. Dan satu cara untuk dia survive dan buat keuntungan adalah menghasilkan produk yang marketable lah, yang mengandungi apa yang puan-puan sebut tadi. So kalau diaorang nak menceburi animasi ini dengan membuat keuntungan, apa lagi cara yang diaorang boleh buat?*

But let me play Devi’s advocate. The Malaysian animation industry isn’t that big and it’s a challenge to even survive. One way to survive is to produce marketable products containing

the things you guys mentioned just now. So if they want to profit from this animation business, what else can they do?

Nor: *Ok. Bagi saya dia boleh betul tetapi jangan sampai mengorbankan kita punya value-value yang sepatutnya baik yang kita nak bina dalam anak-anak sebab bila benda tuh dah diterapkan dan nak tune balik susah. Sebab macam contoh, umur 14 tahun ker 15 tahun ker kalau dia yang bermasalah ker kita ajar mungkin dia boleh kot dari segi dia dah matangpun dan semua. Tapi you nak expect 4 hingga 5 tahun nak betulkan susah sebab value yang dah diterapkan daripada awal dah salah. Dan bagi saya kalau nak marketable pun boleh bagi perkataan-perkataan macam. Bolehlah tapi dia kena buat kajian lah dari segi bahasa yang elok dan baik sebab bagi bagi saya, karakter, color dan apa semua tu dah menarik dah. Oleh yang demikian, syarikat kena buat kajian dari segi kecantikan bahasa. Cuma kecantikan bahasa tu.*

Ok. To me they can but not to the extent that they sacrifice our positive values that we have built into our children because once our children have adopted it, it is difficult to tune back. As an example, 14 or 15 year-olds, if we educate them, they can still understand because they are matured enough. But if you expecting 4 to 5 year-olds to be easily educated, then you will find it difficult because the values they have learned from the beginning is wrong. And to me, even if they want their products to be marketable, they have to use proper language. They have to study what makes good language and to me, characters, colors and the rest are already interesting. So companies must conduct studies on proper language. Just proper language.

6.6.4 People

Hemma stated that Malaysian animation drawing styles should reflect all races rather than just Malay characters. She believes that Chinese, Indians and other races should have more representation in Malaysian animation.

Hemma: The characters. Animation here often portray Malay characters more than Chinese, Indian, other races. They should approach it differently. Reflect all the races.

Mior, Megat, Nurul and Zuhrah added that people are also often stereotyped to include certain features. As an example, Indians are portrayed as cowherds. However, any form of portrayal only reflects a small part of the truth while the rest have been formed based on stereotypes. Zuhrah stated that although the country may look like one, Malaysia is not really a melting pot since Malays, Chinese and Indians are all different in many aspects compared to each other. She added that Malaysian animation have not succeeded to reflect the oneness of Malaysians.

Mior: *Dia cuba nak potray tapi sebenarnya apa yang dia potray tu tak sepenuhnya, terlalu sikit. Contoh kalau orang India jaga lembu, memang ada kebenarannya tapi kebenarannya terlalu sedikit. Kita masyarakat menggambarkan masyarakat tu secara keseluruhan. Ianya lebih kepada Melayu.*

They try to portray but what they are actually portraying is not the whole picture, much less. For example, if Indians are cowherds, there is truth in it but the truth is too small. Our society depicts them as a whole. It's more towards Malay.

Megat: *Race-centric. Kalau you tengoklah dalam Upin & Ipin, Silat Lagenda, Keluang Man I tak tau la, Boboiboy.*

Race-centric. If you watch *Upin & Ipin, Silat Lagenda*, but *Keluang Man*, I don't know, *Boboiboy*.

Mior: *Ada lebih Melayu, ada yang lebih pada Cina pulak. Nak kata satu animasi yang semua equal tak de.*

More Malays, some more Chinese. To say there is one animation which is equal, I can't find one.

Megat: The right statement, animation in Malaysia is race-centric. That's my statement.

Zuhrah: *Sebab kita sebenarnya Malaysia ni bukan melting pot. Dia still ada Chinese, Indian, Malay. Dia tak de melting pot. Macam America tuh dah jadi macam no culture anymore. More this is American tapi kalau Malaysia ni orang kata stereotaip, typical portrayal. Indian macam ni, melayu macam ni. Kadang-kadang dia macam touch the cultural sensitivity lah pulak. Itu yang berlakulah. Kita tak berjaya lagi nak really show.*

Actually, in Malaysia, we are not a melting pot. We still have Chinese, Indians and Malay. No melting pot. Like the Americans, it seems as if there is no culture anymore. This is American but if in Malaysia, people will call it stereotype, typical portrayal. Indians are like this. Malays are like that. Sometimes it touches cultural sensitivities. That's what happens. We haven't really succeeded in showing.

Mior: *Kita cuba masukkan elemen–elemen bahasa lain tapi tu lah, cubaan itu tak berapa berjaya lah.*

We tried inserting other language elements, but to no avail.

Nurul: *Macam Upin Ipin lah kan, dia ada tunjukkan watak budak Cina tu nama Mei Mei tapi tak banyak lah. Banyak tentang Upin Ipin sahaja. Dia tak ada satu Mei Mei dan satu budak India tu dan Upin Ipin just kawan. Dia tak ada menggambarkan Mei Mei tu kat rumah, Budak India tu kat rumah. Tak ada. Dia hanya tunjukkan Upin Ipin punya rumah sahaja.*

Like *Upin & Ipin*, they do show that Chinese character, Mei Mei, but not much. There is a lot on Upin and Ipin. There is no Mei Mei episode and no Indian boy episode. Only them being friends to Upin and Ipin. They don't show how Mei Mei is at home, how that Indian boy is at home. None. They only show Upin and Ipin at home.

Mior: *Macam dia tak ada satu episod. Mungkin ada satu episode Mei Mei sahaja, budak India sahaja. Barula kita boleh kata dia satu.*

Like there is no one episode. Maybe there should be one episode only on Mei Mei, only on Indian boy. The we can say we are one.

6.6.5 Technical

This category includes technical elements that audiences dislike about Malaysian animation. These elements include character design, drawing, graphics and animation techniques.

6.6.5.1 Poor Character Design

Character designs are one of the elements disliked by the audience. Facial elements and figures have been deemed as not pleasing to the eyes as iterated by Kevin, Aziz and Toghzan.

- Kevin: I just don't like about the design of the characters.
- Moderator: The design of the characters? In particular?
- Kevin: Upin Ipin, Bola Kampung. Like you see the characters have the same small eyes. Looks kind of ugly. Just a different hairstyle, all the small details. I know that, it represents Malaysians. But actually they look ugly.
- Moderator: (Jokingly) So you're saying Malaysians are ugly?
- Kevin: No, sir. Just the design.
- Aziz: Counting today, with technology they could have made the more better design.
- Toghzan: I think the design. Because USA for example, they use figures which are different from Malaysia.
- Moderator: You mean the figure of the characters?
- Toghzan: Yes, the figures of the characters.

6.6.5.2 Poor Drawing Style

Poor drawing styles were also listed as an element the informants disliked about Malaysian animation compared to anime as stated by Chan.

- Chan: Graphics. The drawing style is not nice. If compare drawing styles for Japanese anime with Malaysia, anime is better.

6.6.5.3 Poor graphics

Graphics (although mentioned by the informants as ‘design’) is another element disliked by the informants. Since the informants brought up 2D and 3D animation, this suits graphics more than it suits design.

- Cas: I think Malaysia need to improve many things.
- Moderator: Such as?
- Cas: The design. Other countries got so many 3D. Malaysia got only 2D.
- Leonard: But Upin Ipin is 3D.
- Cas: Oh yes, but other countries got more. And the design is not so good.

6.6.5.4 Stiff Animation

Informants also mentioned that Malaysian animation is quite stiff compared to western animation. Irfan, however, made a comparison to 1983 series Japanese animation *Captain Tsubasa* when explaining that the stiffness of *Bola Kampung* is similar to *Captain Tsubasa*.

- Irfan: The animation are quite stiff compared to the western animation. For instance like Bola Kampung, maybe Southeast Asians know Captain Tsubasa?
- Moderator: I guess so.
- Irfan: Captain Tsubasa from a few past years. The animation is quite similar with Bola Kampung. That’s why I said the animation is not quite well done. It’s still stiff.
- Moderator: Why do you think that happens? Why is the animation stiff?
- Irfan: I don’t know. When I see the children playing football in Bola Kampung, it’s like the repetition of the same scene. For

example, like if the boy is dribbling the ball, it will look the same in the next episode when the boy is dribbling again. So it's slight like a repetition of the same animation.

6.6.6 Values

Informants also dislike what they believe as values being sacrificed for the sake of profit. Zuhrah made a comparison with Sesame Street as an example where values are incorporated into the program compared to Malaysian animation.

Zuhrah:

Maksudnya macam yang mengeluarkan program animasi macam ni fikir lebih kepada nak market dia orang punya program nih tetapi tidak memikirkan aspek nilai peribadi dan pendidikan sahlah budak. Tak de la. Kalau kita bandingkan dengan Sesame Street for example. Dia bukan animasilah tetapi ada menerapkan macam mana budak berbahasa, kesantunan bahasa dan benda tu bila dah di-'comercialize' di Malaysia ni kita dah hilang dia punya nilai-nilai masyarakat tempatan. Kita lebih kepada 'what sells' lebih kepada menjadikan audien kanak-kanak ni satu benda yang berbentuk ada value pada penjualan keuntungan sahajalah. Asaikan budak tengok, run, laku ok dah. Tetapi aspek pendidikan tu dah tidak ada macam Puan Nor cakap tadi. Bila kita nak latih anak kita berbahasa dengan baik tetapi tak jalan because praktikalnya bahan yang dia tengok tu tak membantu untuk nampak praktikal. Jadi letihlah juga kita nak betul.

Meaning like the ones producing these animation are thinking more on marketing their products but not about personal values moral values for children. Nope. If we compare to Sesame Street, for example. It is not an animation but it does present on how to be polite, the concept of politeness, but when it is commercialized in Malaysia, we lose on local social values. We're concentrating on what sells more than the well being of the child audiences. As long as children watch, run the program and it sells, it's okay. But the aspect of education is gone, like what Puan Nor said earlier. When we train our children to speak politely, it wouldn't work because the content that they watch doesn't help and is not practical. So it's tiring for us to rectify.

Nor: *Susah kita nak betul balik.*

It's difficult for us to correct.

6.7 Comparisons to Foreign Animation

Informants were also asked about their views and reception on comparing Malaysian animation to foreign animation. Responses touched on various elements deemed different from respective industries where some positive responses and quite a large number of negative ones as well.

6.7.1 General

Informants provided their general views on how Malaysian animation fared against foreign animation. Malaysian animation were labeled as boring, lacking variety and comes with simple storylines and plots compared to their overseas counterparts.

6.7.1.1 Malaysian Animation is Boring

Kevin and SK pointed out that Malaysian animation is boring. SK added that this is due to the slow storyline added with the airing of these animation at one episode per week.

Kelvin: I prefer to watch Japanese, Korean drama. Malaysia animation is quite boring.

Kevin: But in some points, it's kind of boring as well.

SK: Yes. Malaysian animation is only one episode per week, too long to follow.

Moderator: But isn't it the same with other animation, from other countries?

SK: Yes, but the storyline is slow. Then it becomes boring to follow.

6.7.1.2 Simple Storyline or Plot

Informants from different groups compared local animation with animation from other countries based on the storylines or plots. Kevin made a comparison with Naruto which carries a more complex storyline, similar to other anime, while Malaysian animation focuses a lot on emotions as the backbone for a plot.

Kevin: Naruto is kind of bloody. It's very complicated. A kid can't understand the storyline if he didn't watch the first few episodes. For the Malaysian animation, the storyline, everything is kind of pure emotions. It's very suitable for the children.

Kelvin: The storyline. If Malaysian animation wants to improve, they have to change the storyline to more advance. Not just a simple story.

Aima added that foreign animation have the capability to bring the audience in to the story and connects the story to the experiences of the audience.

Aima: *Plot cerita.*

Story plot.

Zuhrah: *Plot penceritaan.*

Storytelling plot.

Aima: *Animation luar dia macam tak tau dia buat macam mana tapi dia ada cara yang buat kita mcm benda tu jadi real dan part of. Bila orang yang tengok tuh, dia rasa benda tu macam part of diaorang punya life juga.*

Foreign animation, I don't know how they do it, but they have a way of making it seems real and us part of it. When people watch it, they feel like it is part of their life too.

6.7.1.3 Lack of Variety

Informants also mentioned that Malaysian animation lacked variety. This lack of variety comes in the form of audiences, plots and genres of animation. Chan compared Malaysian animation to anime in which the latter offers content that suits the taste of a variety of audience from children to adults and matured people. Type of plots and stories are lacking variety in Malaysia as well such as war, friendship and others. Leonard added that Malaysian animation also lacks educational animation compared to foreign content.

Chan: Malaysian animation lack audience variety. Like Japanese animation can capture children, adults, matured people. People can also watch online. Malaysia should plot storylines in different ways like war, friendship, others.

Leonard: Malaysian animation doesn't do much on education. Like if we see other countries, they have Dora the Explorer, Sesame Street and others. Some Spanish cartoons as well.

6.7.2 Clothing

Clothing is another difference identified by the informants. Initially identified as 'lifestyle' by Zuhrah and Aima, they eventually described it as fashion. Malaysian animation was compared to Japanese and American animation. Aima described fashion in Japanese animation as being more beautiful than in Malaysian animation. Nurul added that Malaysian animation show depict the kebaya, female Muslim clothing to attract children to watch these animation due to her comparison between clothing in Malaysian animation to the ones in Barbie.

- Zuhrah: *Dia bawa lifestyle.*
They carry lifestyle.
- Aima: *Dia bawa lifestyle macam tu lah.*
They carry lifestyle like that.
- Zuhrah: *Dia bawa fesyen.*
They carry fashion.
- Aima: *Jepun, obviouly, cantik lagilah.*
Japan, obviously, is more beautiful.
- Zuhrah: *Lukisan dia tu, anime dia tu, karakter dia tu.*
The drawings, the anime, the characters.
- Aima: *Jepun, karakter dia tunjukkan pakaian dia.*
In Japan, their characters show their clothes.
- Nurul: *Macam Amerika, pakaian dia juga. Macam Barbie.*
Like America, their clothes to. Like Barbie.
- Zuhrah: *Kalau Jepun mata besar-besar.*
If Japan, their eyes are big.
- Nurul: Pakaian cantik. Cuba Malaysia tunjuk dia pakai Kebaya, menggambarkan seorang Muslimah, mesti budak-budak ni nak jadi nak tengok. Sebab anak selalu sebut Barbie. Macam Barbie cantik macam ni.

Beautiful clothing. Malaysia should try showing the Kebaya, show female Muslim clothing, the children would want to see it. Because my daughters always mention Barbie. Like how Barbie is beautiful.

Mior added that anime are like movies. The location of where the animation is produced will portray the background, clothing, cars props and other things related to that country. Zuhrah added similar remarks by saying that just by looking at certain animation, we would be able to identify its origins.

Mior: *Anime ni sama macam movie. Kalau movie, kita buat di KL, scenario di KL, anime pun sepatutnya macam tu la. Last scenario dia KL lah. Orang kata bentuk different form lah kan. Tapi sebenarnya kita tengok kartun, ini yang kita tengok dari segi suara-suara, grafik grafik dan popular sebagainya. Dia dah sama bentuk dengan movie, form dia tu je yang lain. Contoh, kita tengok cerita Melayu kan, kalau tutup suara, kita tetap tahu itu cerita Melayu. Sama juga dengan anime. Dari segi background dia, dari segi pakaian dia, kereta dia, props dan sebagainya. Itu semua kena menggambarkan Malaysia. Janganlah bubuh gambar Humvee, bubuhlah Ixora ker kan. Sama je dengan movie kan. Itu pendapat sayala kan.*

Anime is just like movies. If in movies, if we produce it in KL, anime is just like that. The scenario will show KL. People say that it's a different form. But actually when we watch these cartoons, what we see are in terms of voices, graphics and popular things. It's the same as movies but in a different form. For example, if we watch Malay stories, if we put it on mute, we would still know it's a Malay story. Similar to anime. In terms of its background, clothing, cars, props and others. All of that should portray Malaysia. Don't put in a Humvee, put in an Ixora. Similar to movies. That's my opinion.

Zuhrah: *Kalau macam Ben10 tu nampakla dia American sebab punya style pakaian, pembawakan kereta yang dia bawa. Orang kata props yang ada dalam part of kartun macam orang kata, Detective Conan tu kita nampak Jepun pun walaupun setting dia kat Perancis ke apa ke tapi kita nampak orang Jepun punya lukisan dia tu just standard jer.*

If like in Ben10 we can see that it's American due to clothing style, the cars that they drive. People say props within the cartoon. Detective Conant, we can see it's Japanese even though the setting is in France because of the illustration that depicts its Japanese.

6.7.3 Values

Informants also compared Malaysian animation to foreign ones in terms of values. Afify stated that there are similarities in the concepts applied in both animation. However, the implementations of these concepts are different. For example, there are fighting scenes in both Malaysian and Japanese animation. However, he believes that local production inserts values as messages in Malaysian animation.

Afify: *Perbezaan ketaranya kalau macam anime Jepun banyak lawan-lawan, which is banyak member pengaruh buruk kepada budak-budak kot rasanya. Tu pun, nanti karang cerita banyak macam Sailormoon, Dragonball semua tu kan macam lawan-lawan. Then, macam Upin Ipin, Boboiboy tu ada jugak lawan-lawan. Cumanya ada mesej yang ingin disampaikan di sebalik cerita animation yang dibuat untuk local production.*

The obvious difference as in Japanese anime is that there are many fighting scenes which brings negative influence to children, I think. Even that, there are so many fighting scenes in *Sailormoon*, *Dragonball* and all that. Then, like *Upin & Ipin*, *Boboiboy* they also have fighting scenes. But there are messages to be delivered behind local production animation.

SK adds that Malaysians have their own culture and that Malaysian animation portrays the values, buildings, structures and other elements.

SK: I disagree. We should have our own culture. We should show what we have like normally in graphics, buildings, structures and also other values.

Moderator: Why is that so?

SK: We must show we are Malaysia. Not like any other countries. We have our own way.

Zuhrah mentions of how Malaysian animation initially reflected the esthetic values of Malaysian society. However, with commercialization, the values that have earlier been promoted became somewhat lost and have become more Euro-centric or American-centric. In contrast, Japanese animation have already embedded their values i.e. culture, *kaizen*, fighting spirit in their animation and it is apparent in their content. Similarly to American animation, the way their content is presented is already a reflection of their identity.

Zuhrah: *Kalau Jepun saya lihat memang pun, bila dia buat animasi, saya lihat jati diri dia kuat. Jati diri bangsa dia memang kuat. Dari segi budaya, dari segi kaizen, dari segi juang dan sifat dalaman memang dikeluarkan. Jadi situ kita nampak. Contoh seperti kita tengok budaya Jepun kartun seperti Detective Conan for example. Dia punya determination, kesungguhan, investigative skills memang kita nampak. Jepun punya perangailah. Kalau Kartun Amerika, dia punya expectation dari segi teknologi, dia punya plot dia punya nak lawan dengan alien dia tu. That's their identity. Bila masuk kartun Malaysia, itu yang saya kata Usop Sontorian, Keluang Man pada peringkat awal sangat jujur. Nak mengangkat kita punya nilai estetika. Tapi lama-kelamaan bila dia nampak the commercial value, dia nampak, oh sekarang nih, dia terarah kepada orang kata euro-centrism. Dia kearah American-centrism. So saya rasa kita dah mula hilang kita punya nilai.*

When I see the Japanese producing animation, I see that their identity is strong. Their racial identity is very strong. In terms of culture, *kaizen*, fighting spirit and inner character, all come out. From there we can see. For example if we watch Japanese culture in *Detective Conan*. His determination, investigative skills, we can see Japanese behavior. For American cartoons, their expectations with technology, their plots and battles against aliens. That's their identity. When it comes to Malaysian cartoons, that is why I said that *Usop Sontorian*, *Keluang Man* were initially honest. Tried to bring up esthetic values. Soon enough when they saw the commercial value, they see that now they have become more Euro-centric. More American-centric. I feel we have lost our values.

6.7.4 Language & Communication

In terms of language and communication, informants also compared Malaysian animation to their foreign counterparts. There are differences in terms of the language spoken and also the style used in communicating with each other.

6.7.4.1 Bahasa Malaysia

Bahasa Malaysia is one of the obvious differences stated by Rasul. He further elaborated that he does not see any unique trademark for Malaysian animation except for Bahasa Malaysia being used in these animation.

Rasul: *Malaysia setakat ni saya tak nampak lagi lah apa benda dia punya trademark, orang kata, yang nak menggambarkan kartun Malaysia selain daripada bahasa.*

Malaysia, so far, I don't see what their trademark is that depicts that they are Malaysian cartoons except for the language.

6.7.4.2 General Language

Agil stated that the way characters speak to each other is also different in Malaysian animation compared to animation from other countries.

Agil: The way they speak, the language and the characters.

6.7.5 People

Informants also compared the people or characters involved in Malaysian animation with animation from other countries. Among the elements mentioned were about the race of the characters, attractiveness of the characters and also the identity of the characters.

6.7.5.1 Multi-racial Characters

Informants mentioned how there are differences in terms of the race of the characters in Malaysian animation that were not apparent in animation from other countries that symbolizes Malaysian identity.

Agil: The way they speak, the language and the characters.

Shafiee: *Mungkin boleh, sebab apa yang saya katakan awal-awal tadi lah. Kalau Malaysia ni orang kata, kalau kita tengok mula-mula dekat kaum lah. Tu lah. Mungkin kita boleh bezakan yang ni India, yang ni Cina, ni Melayu. Sebab memang boleh beza lah. Kalau kita tengok kartun Malaysia ni, contoh memang Upin Ipin tu, Bola Kampung tu memang kita dapat tengok interaksi antara, orang kata, tiga kaum utama ni memang kita boleh nampak ni kartun Malaysia. Gitulah, bagi saya lah. Tak tau la pendapat orang lain kan.*

Maybe we can, because like what I said earlier. If in Malaysia, we can see the races involve. That's it. Maybe we can differentiate that these are Indians, these are Chinese and these are Malaysia. Because they can be differentiated. If we watch Malaysian cartoons, such as *Upin & Ipin*, *Bola Kampung*, we can see the interaction among the three main races and we can see that they are Malaysian cartoons. That's how it is for me. I don't know about others.

Naqsyabandi: *Identiti jugak tu.*

That's identity as well.

Shafiee: *Identiti kan? Salah satu lah.*

Identity, right? One of them.

Naqsyabandi: *Sepanjang daripada dulu lagi, semua cerita ada kaum.*

Since back then, all stories have races.

6.7.5.2 Unattractive Characters

Informants also believed that characters in Malaysian animation are less attractive compared to foreign animation. According to Nadeel, Malaysian animation characters are not able to attract memory, thus making them easily forgettable compared to foreign animation.

Nadeel: That is why they're not able to make an image or reputation of animation like *Spongebob*. Every kid knows it. It's yellow and it's square. Everyone knows it. But Upin & Ipin, it's very famous, but still you can't. It's not in your head all the time. When you see a bald guy or two twins, it should come in your head automatically but it doesn't. Although the way they're marketed, maybe they should have included that, not just the animation itself. So that might help.

6.7.5.3 Unique Identity

The identity of Malaysian animation characters are not only different in terms of physical appearance. According to Nani, she feels that Malaysian animation portrays the background of the people as well through her observation that characters are from the rural villages.

Nani: *Sebab dia orang kampung.*
Because they are villagers.

6.7.6 Technical

Informants also noted differences in terms of technical aspects such as the quality of graphics, use of technology, soundtracks, and voice acting.

6.7.6.1 Quality of Graphics

Informants have stated that the quality of graphics in local animation is deemed inferior to foreign animation. Moving objects or animating objects and characters within the animation have seen improvements over the years. However, according to Hanis, the quality have yet to reach international quality.

Toghzan: The moving things.

Moderator: You mean the movements?

Toghzan: Yes.

Hanis: *Dari segi kualiti gambar.*

In terms of picture quality.

Moderator: *Kualiti gambar yang mana lagi elok?*

Which picture quality is better?

Hanis: *Itupun setakat ni kita punya local animation tak boleh capai lagi, pada saya, kualiti yang setaraf international punya la. Mesti ada sangkut-sangkut, ada yang nampak cacat-celanya lagi. Tapi, its good sekarang ni kalau ikutkan Upin Ipin nak dibandingkan dengan Usop Sontorian yang awal-awal dulu kan macam kaku kan? Keluang Man apa semua tu. Tapi kalau tengok Upin Ipin, Boboiboy macam dah cantik sikit la sekarang ni.*

Up till now, our local animation is yet to reach the level of international quality. There are still hiccups, some lacking here and there. But it's good seeing Upin & Ipin compared to the earlier days of Usop Sontorian which is more stiff, right? Keluang Man as well. But if we look at Upin & Ipin, Boboiboy, they look prettier now.

Leonard: Well, the graphics in Malaysia is a bit poor. Not so interesting. The characters not so attractive like compared to Japanese.

6.7.6.2 Technology

In terms of technology, comparisons against foreign animation sees a difference. Physical appearance of an animation is the first trait that differentiates local animation from foreign animation.

Shafiee: *Mungkin dari segi teknologi lah. Itu mungkin apa yang kita dapat tengok, dengan orang kata, benda pertama yang kita dapat lihat lah. Saya rasa dari segi teknologi.*

Maybe in terms of technology. That is what we can see, the first thing that we can see. I think it's in terms of technology.

6.7.6.3 Soundtrack

Music soundtrack is also an element of comparison. Informants state that local animation soundtracks are less attractive. Furthermore, soundtracks for anime can be downloaded due to the availability of these music on the internet. Soundtracks for anime are normally played by real bands and are songs from their albums.

Chan: If I can add, the soundtrack is unattractive. They should add in more children rhymes. And also, for Japanese animation, you can download. Very easy. But Upin & Ipin are hard to download. Cannot find.

Leonard: The soundtracks also.

Leonard: The music for animation is like normal only. Like in Japan, real bands play real songs for the animation. Sound effects in Malaysia also normal. If other countries, more action type. Adults can watch. But for Malaysia, animation is more to kids.

6.7.6.4 Voice Acting

Voice acting is also an element of comparison by the informants. The tone and sound of the voices in Malaysian animation can be differentiated with animation from other countries. Voice mimicking is another aspect of voice acting that is different with local animation. According to Kelly, the Japanese are better at the job compared to local animation.

Hafiz: *Suara. Suara animation tu.*

Voice. Voice in the animation.

Moderator: *Suara orang Malaysia?*

Voice of Malaysians?

Hafiz: *Ha. Suara orang Malaysia.*

Yes. Voice of Malaysians.

Moderator: *Ada beza ke?*

Is there a difference?

Hafiz: *Ada beza.*

There is a difference.

Rasul: *Ada orang Jawa dalam tu. Suara dia lain.*

There are Javanese people in there. They have a different voice.

Kelly: I think voice mimicking is also very important. If compare with the Japanese, the Japanese are better.

6.8 Change of Animation Viewing Patterns

In this category, informants were asked if Malaysian animation has had an impact on their behavior of watching animation content. They were probed into explaining if there are any changes in their viewing patterns on local animation content.

6.8.1 Nothing Has Changed

To some informants, it has been the same and nothing has changed because of the existence of Malaysian animation. They still either watch or refrain themselves from watching Malaysian animation based on similar factors to before the increase of Malaysian animation titles. According to Rasul, this depends on the attractiveness of the storyline. Should the story be interesting, audiences will continue to watch local animation. If not, then he will not continue. Furthermore, according to Naqsyabandi, the same applies to foreign animation as well.

Bandi: *Sama je.*

Just the same.

Muamnah: *Sama.*

Same.

Rasul: *Sama je. Sebab dia, kita, tulah, bergantung kepada jalan cerita dia. Kalau jalan cerita dia menarik untuk ditonton dan menyebabkan penonton sentiasa rasa tertunggu-tunggu untuk menunggu, apa, untuk menonton episode seterusnya, ha itu boleh jadi lah, kalau jalan cerita tu menarik. Kalau jalan cerita tu kurang menarik, tak de point lah orang tu nak tengok lagi minggu depan, dah tahu tak menarik. Macam tu lah.*

It's the same. Because it depends on the storyline. If the storyline is interesting to watch and causes the audience to be eager to watch the next episode, then it can be that the storyline is interesting. If the storyline is not interesting, there is no point for the person to continue watching the following week knowing that it is not interesting. It's like that.

Naqsyabandi: *Tak kisahlah dalam negara ke luar negara. Sama je.*

It doesn't matter whether it's from within or outside the country. It's the same.

6.8.2 Will Consider Watching More Malaysian Animation

Informants also mentioned that they may consider watching more Malaysian animation depending on if there are any improvements along the way. Kevin believes that Malaysian animation still has a long way to go. By that time, technologies would have also improved.

Kevin: I think we can wait for the future. Because the animation in Malaysia can be improved. I cannot say that I've had enough for my life because it's not true because technologies still improves, right? And Malaysia still have yet a very long way to go. So, I think a better way is for the future, the next few years. Maybe there will be a lot of improvements.

Nadeel added that more elements should be added for her to consider watching more of Malaysian animation. Promotion, character development and image are among the factors that may influence her in watching Malaysian animation in the future. Leonard added that if he was still a small child, then he would consider watching more. Nevertheless, this basically means that to him, current local animation is meant for children rather than teenagers or adults.

Nadeel: Maybe if they add more humor or make it more energetic. Maybe they're promoting the posters, the colors, if these are more vibrant, the characters, like Irfan said, they should focus on the main character and make it not a supernatural superhero but everyone should know that Upin & Ipin, two bald twins are those. Create an image.

Leonard: Yes, it's like meant for children. If I was still a small kid then maybe I would watch it more.

Irfan: I'm looking for animation to watch myself. But if someone who played a TV channel playing Malaysian animation, I

would like to see it again but not to the extent of looking for more Malaysian animation after the show is finished.

6.8.3 Will Definitely Watch More Malaysian Animation

Apart from stating that his animation viewing patterns are the same, Naqsyabandi also stated that he cannot wait to see the sequel to the *Upin & Ipin* movie (*Geng: Pengembaraan Bermula*).

Naqsyabandi: *Lepas tengok Upin Ipin the movie tu, tu first time jugak la tengok cerita Melayu yang macam tu kan. Memang menunggu-nunggu lah kalau ada yang kedua.*

After watching Upin & Ipin's movie, it was the first time watching such a Malaysian animation. I can't wait for the second one.

Izzat believes that he will definitely continue to watch Malaysian animation. However, this is not because he favors Malaysian animation or not due to personal choice. It is because he may be watching them when his siblings invite him to join watching these animation.

Izzat: *Banyak kata, kita tonton, kita just, bukan kita personal. Kita ikut adik ke, kan. Sebab diorang yang ajak kita.*

It is not that we watch, not our personal choice. We just follow our siblings. Because they invite us to watch along.

Shafiee: *Secara tak langsung lah. Kadang-kadang, adik tengok depan TV, kita tengok sekali. Kadang-kadang, lepas tu akan timbul lah, mungkin, 'Eh, best jugak ek menatang ni, kartun ni'. Gitu kan. Cam tu lah. Mungkin akan, biasanya lah, walaupun dah besar, akan rasa, 'Eh, nak tengok lagi lah rancangan ni nanti'. Gitu lah.*

Indirectly. Sometimes, when my siblings watches them, I join them as well. Sometimes, the feeling comes like, 'Hey, this is good, this cartoon'. That's it. Maybe then I would feel like 'I want to watch this later'. That's it.

6.8.4 Will Not watch Malaysian Animation Anymore

At first, Mior stated that he was excited to watch Malaysian animation. But after watching the actual animation, he did not watch them anymore. However, for foreign animation, he still continues to watch. Nor added that there aren't many local titles to watch either.

Mior: *Mula-mula first dia keluar kita teruja nak tengoklah. So kita Malaysia, macam tadi we pretend kita menipu je lah. Setakat ni punya ni jer lah Upin Ipin macam ni cerita dia. Kita takde interest dah. Kalau negara-negara lain kita masih boleh nak layan.*

At first when it came out, I felt excited to watch. So we pretended to like it. But this is as far as *Upin & Ipin* can go. Now I have no more interest. If other countries, I still can watch.

Nor: *Lagipun dia tak banyak.*

There aren't many either.

Chan thinks that people are not eager to look for Malaysian animation and just watch them when it's on. Audiences will not go looking for local titles. SK added that people used to watch older local animation. But states that it is not the case anymore.

Chan: I think a lot of people know about these animation, but they don't watch it often. Just saw in on TV. If it's on, people watch. If not, people won't go finding them.

SK: But I remember old animation, people watch. We always discuss it at school. Nowadays, no.

Leonard suggested that they may be too old to watch current local animation. Agil, suggested the production of animation targeted at adults. The nature of how current Malaysian animation is targeted at children makes them less attractive to adults.

Leonard: Probably we are too old for it.

Caster: I agree to what they said.

Agil: If they can create some animation for adults like us, not for kids, maybe we can watch them. But since those are for kids, it is not that interesting for us.

6.9 Animation Portrayal of Malaysia

The main question in this category is on how much of Malaysia is portrayed through Malaysian animation and how far it is accepted. Generally, the acceptance of Malaysian characteristics in local animation is high (See Appendix C). It may have been obvious from the beginning. However, the aim is to also identify the elements of acceptance, partial acceptance and rejection among the informants of this Focus Group Interview.

The elements brought up by the informants were quite limited. Categorically, only clothing, culture and customs and also people were described. The researcher refrained from directing the informants in any way towards leading responses. However, on one of the questions (See Appendix C, Young Adults), the researcher

did mention 'Batik' as an example to clarify and explain the question due to informants not understanding the question phrased. Nevertheless, the following are the responses obtained from informants of the Focus Group Interview:

6.9.1 Clothing

Malaysians are defined by what they wear. According to Kevin, Malaysian animation depicts Malaysians in a different way compared to real life. The characters' attire derives from village clothing in which is not the case in real life.

Kevin: Possibly wrong. It looks so different compared to you Malaysians. Yeah, you didn't look that way because it just represents a small community in a village. They wear those type of clothes and nothing developed that much. So I think they should represent more than that, improve the design of the characters.

6.9.2 Culture & Customs

Irfan states that Malaysian animation puts a lot of focus on social issues and moral values. However, in his example, he mentions more on the characteristics and practices of different races in Malaysia particularly the Malays and the Chinese. Aziz added that, however, most of these portrayals are from villages rather than cities.

Irfan: For me, the Malaysian characters are focusing on how to teach the children about social issues. Like Bola Kampung, the animation is teaching about how to control our ego, how opportunities can change our ego. The Malaysian animation is focusing more on how to teach the children good things as a child. But for the characters, they're not similar with the real one. For example, they don't separate well like how Malay characters are like, how Chinese characters are like. They are not representing the real race of Malaysians. That's why the

Indians, Malay or the Chinese are quite similar characters in Malaysian animation. They should differentiate more like how Malay characters are like, how Chinese characters are like.

Aziz: Yes, exactly. Outside of the city, I think that people is living like this quietly and friendly. Not in Kuala Lumpur. They portray not the city town. They portray the village.

Kelly described portrayal of Malaysia can be seen through festive celebrations such as the Hari Raya or Eid. This was also mentioned by Nor. However, she did mention her dissatisfaction in the lack of coverage of other festivities such as Chinese New Year and Deepavali.

Kelly: I would agree. Like for example we can see Hari Raya in Upin Ipin. But sadly not much on Chinese New Year, Deepavali. They should show more.

Nor: *Pada saya Upin Ipin lah, macam ada yang Hari Raya.*

To me, it's *Upin & Ipin*, there is Eid.

6.9.3 People

In this category, informants mainly describe the different races in Malaysia as the element that portrays the country. Malays, Chinese and Indians are the races mentioned as being the reflection of Malaysia. However, Caster and Mior stated that the representation is not proportional to the reality of racial composition.

Agil: I think the Bola Kampung that Kevin kid, he was supposed to be Indian, right? But he looks like an African girl.

Caster: I think it reflects more on Malays than Malaysia.

Moderator: How's that?

Caster: A lot of Malay characters, Malay language. Chinese culture, not so much.

Mior: *Dia cuba nak portray tapi sebenarnya apa yang dia portray tu tak sepenuhnya, terlalu sedikit. Contoh kalau orang India jaga lembu, memang ada kebenarannya tapi kebenarannya terlalu sedikit. Kita masyarakat menggambarkan masyarakat tu secara keseluruhan. Ianya lebih kepada Melayu.*

They try to portray but what they portray is not the whole picture, too little. For example, if Indian people are cowherds, there is truth in it but the truth is too little. We should depict the society as a whole. But this is more towards Malays.

6.10 Suggestions for Malaysian Animation

In this section, informants were asked about their suggestions on what they want to see about Malaysian animation in the future. There are a number of suggestions with some being general suggestions to very specific suggestions. The categorization of these suggestions are based on the nature of their suggestions.

6.10.1 General

Suggestions in this category are general in nature and do not fall into a specific category. Adding choices, creating compilations and government support are among the many suggestions given by informants which reflects what they want to see in Malaysian animation.

6.10.1.1 Add Variety

One of the main issues as mentioned in the previous responses was that there is a lack of choice for watching Malaysian animation. According to Shafiee, Malaysian animation focuses too much on village settings and a change of scenery to a modern city environment may do some good.

Shafiee: *Mungkin bak kata saudara Rasul tadi, kita pelbagaikanlah. Mungkin tak straight macam, macam Rasul cakap tadi, katalah, kartun Malaysia ni lebih tumpu kepada kampung. Nampak*

macam suasana kampung. Mungkin kita akan jadikan jalan cerita tu lagi menarik lah kalau ada suasana bandar, dengan, orang kata, keadaan, apa ni, teknologi-teknologi canggih kan. Macam tu lah.

Like what Rasul said just now, we should add more variety. Probably, like what Rasul said, Malaysian cartoons focuses too much on village settings. Looks interesting. But it may be more interesting should there be city environments as well with sophisticated technology. That's it.

Rasul: *Pelbagaikan lagilah, cerita-cerita animasi tempatan, dan mungkin kerajaan patut beri peluang lebih banyak lagi kepada karyawan untuk buat cerita.*

We should add variety to local animation and maybe the government should provide more opportunities to writers to create stories.

Naqsyabandi: *Mungkin boleh diperbanyakkanlah. Setakat sekarang ni, rasanya boleh bilang lah animasi Malaysia. Kalau lagi banyak lagi best ah.*

Maybe there can be more variety. Up till now, we can actually count the number of Malaysian animation that is available. The more we have, the better it is.

6.10.1.2 Create a Compilation of Malaysian Animation

SK believes that there should be a compilation or collection of Malaysian animation available for purchase. This can encourage people to buy and learn about local animation on top of other animation content available in the market.

SK: There should be a collection of all animation in history. Then people can buy and learn about local animation as well.

6.10.1.3 Additional Government Support

Informants have also encouraged the government to lend support to animation writers. Izzat believes that the government should provide more channels for the broadcasting or airing of local animation to encourage more production. SK added that government should help to support producers through promotion of these animation.

Izzat: *Untuk kerajaan, kerajaan patut bukak peluang pada karya yang baru lah. Diorang macam, diorang punya karya, diorang yang buat pastu macam RTM diorang sediakan satu siaran untuk diorang cari yang terbaik kan. Lepas tu just, daripada situ, diorang akan rasa lebih berminat untuk buat karya lagi banyak.*

For the government, they should provide opportunities for new material. Writers will write and RTM should provide the channel for them to produce their best work. Probably it will further encourage writers to write more.

SK: Our government should help to promote local animation. They should give support. I see very rare that local animation is shown in cinema. We want all animation in cinema to be cheaper.

Moderator: There are local animation in the cinema, right?

SK: Last I remember was *Upin & Ipin*. Not that many. Government should do campaigns. To parents, if they know of animation in the cinema, they should bring their children to watch the animation.

6.10.1.4 Improve Merchandizing

Another aspect to be considered is merchandizing. Kelly noted that Japanese merchandize are selling quite well and that the Malaysian animation industry should be looking deeper into this even though when told by the researcher that there are Malaysian animation products already available in the market.

- Kelly: I recently paid attention to Japanese merchandize. They sell quite well. Malaysia must look at this.
- Moderator: Merchandising?
- Kelly: Yes.
- Moderator: *Upin & Ipin* has been doing it. Same as *Boboiboy*.
- Kelly: But we need more.

6.10.1.5 Improve Storyline

Informants also want to see improved storylines in Malaysian animation. As Rasul put it, he wants to see more inspirational stories for Malaysians. For example, sports-based animation can be very interesting and at the same time can help improve the quality of sports in Malaysia.

- Rasul: *Kalau idea saya, saya rasa macam saudara Bandi (Naqsyabandi) kata tadi, kartun ni salah satu perkara fantasi imaginasi kita. So saya berharap satu hari nanti ada kartun yang menjadikan satu, sebagai sumber inspirasi kepada rakyat Malaysia lah. Contoh, kita ambil kartun sukan. Mungkin Malaysia boleh create satu kartun yang berkonsepkan sukan yang sangat menarik dan akan menyebabkan penonton yang menontonnya, apa orang kata, rasa tertarik, teruja dan secara tak langsung boleh meningkatkan mutu sukan negara lah.*

If it's my idea, I would feel like what Bandi (Naqsyabandi) said just now, that cartoons are products of our imagination. So I hope that one day, there will be a cartoon that becomes an inspiration for the Malaysian people. For example, sports cartoons. Maybe Malaysia can create a cartoon that is based on a sports that is so interesting and encourages the audience to watch it, feeling attracted, excited and can indirectly improve the quality of sports in this country.

Rasul: *Contoh macam kat Jepun tu, Captain Tsubasa tu, itu fenomena sebenarnya kat Jepun dulu. Menyebabkan sampai satu tahap, bolasepak Jepun pada tahap ni. Ah, macam tu lah. Walaupun kartun tu nampak macam simple, lari tak habis padang kan? Ha, macam tu lah ibaratnya. Boleh jadi satu sumber inspirasi kepada rakyat Malaysia.*

For example like in Japan, *Captain Tsubasa*, it was a phenomenon in Japan. It caused Japanese football to rise up to this level. It's like that. Even though the cartoon seems simple, running without an end, right? That's the thing. It can become a source of inspiration for Malaysians.

Shafiee: *Contohnya macam Anak-anak Sidek tu lah, macam mana cara bapak dia tu train anak-anak dia dengan semangat apa semua sampailah anak dia tu berjaya. Ni salah satu kita dapat tengok nilai-nilai moral daripada cerita tu disamping dia punya, orang kata, gaya hidup dia, apa dia lakukan sehari-harian, gitulah. Mungkin akan memberi kesan. Betul gak bak kata Rasul tadi.*

For example like *Anak-anak Sidek*, how the father trains his sons with a great spirit until the sons succeed. This is one way we can see moral values from the story alongside their lifestyle, what they do everyday. Maybe it will have an effect. Correctly as what Rasul said.

Izzat: *Macam jalan cerita kan, macam dia, bagusnya macam yang first lah, yang bagusnya cerita macam Upin Ipin. Kalau kita tengok sekali tu, lepas tu, kita nak tengok lagi esoknya, tapi kita still nak tengok, apa, yang dia punya episode dia yang sebelum ni. Kalau macam cerita Bola Kampung tu saya tak pasti lah sebab saya jarang tengok cerita tu kan. Macam, yang bagusnya kalau akan datang lah, lebih bagusnya adakan cerita lagi banyak saspens, konflik, lepas tu, macam lebih banyak kepada, apa tu, lagi satu macam, apa nak cakap tadi, dia macam benda yang kita nak tahu, tapi benda tu berlaku secara tiba-tiba. Lepas tu, kita tengok sekali, ok, ini confirm cerita ni sedap, best nak tengok kan.*

Like for example if we look at storylines, like the first ones, like the good ones like *Upin & Ipin*. If we watch it once, after that, we want to watch it again the next day, but we still want to watch the previous episodes as well. But if it's *Bola Kampung*, I'm not sure as I rarely watch that story. It would be good if in the future, there would be more suspense, conflicts, things that,

what was I going to say, more on things that we want to know, but then things happen all of the sudden. After that, we watch once, okay, this story is good, I'll watch it.

Naqsyabandi: *Saya ambik contoh Dragonball ya. Dragonball, dia memang mengekalkan ciri-ciri Jepun. Dia tengok, bila dia punya pakaian, dia punya tu, tapi dia, bila tentang jalan cerita dia, jalan cerita dia tak de pun menunjukkan macam terlalu orang Jepun je faham. Bagi saya macam tu lah.*

Let me take Dragonball as an example. Dragonball does retain Japanese characteristics. When we see their clothing, when we see their storyline, it doesn't show things that only the Japanese can understand. To me, it's like that.

Chan: What other friends say, local animation is more towards kampung. Malaysia should produce two categories, i. kampung and ii. modern storyline. We would like to maintain local stories, like children to watch.

Chan: I think the storyline must be improved while maintaining culture. Right now I think Indonesian drama series is more interesting than drama in Malaysia.

6.10.1.6 More Adaptation

Informants also suggested Malaysian animation to use adaptation from books or comics to turn it into animation.

Izzat: *Yang kat Malaysia ni saya tak pasti lah kan. Macam kat Jepun, diorang ada keluaran satu komik macam Dragonball. Dia keluaran komik dulu, pastu macam orang suka, pastu dia buat cerita tu. Tu yang best tu. Kat Malaysia, still tak de lagi lah.*

The ones in Malaysia, I'm not sure. Like in Japan, someone produced a comic similar to Dragonball. They publish the comic first, and after they find that people like it, then they come up with stories. That is something good. If in Malaysia, there isn't any.

Shafiee: Bagi saya dia menarik lah.

To me, that is interesting.

6.10.1.7 Re-Introduce Sang Kancil

Informants also suggested for Sang Kancil to be re-introduced as it addresses positive values and would be good for children.

Nor: *Saya rasakan kalau boleh Sang Kancil apa semua kena ulang balik sebab ianya bagus biar anak-anak tengok.*

I think if Sang Kancil is aired again, it would be good for children to watch.

Megat: *Walaupun tak cantik.*

Even though it doesn't look nice.

Nor: *Sebab value dia.*

Because of the values.

Megat: Kena buat balik

It has to be remade.

Nor: *Ada dekat TV Hijrah, satu zaman dahulu. Ada.*

It was aired in TV Hijrah, once upon a time. Yes.

6.10.2 Culture & Customs

Informants also suggested that Malaysian animation should create awareness and introduce more cultural elements to make it more interesting and to understand the sensitivities of others. Irfan suggested including legends or folklores of Malaysia.

Irfan: They should come out with more cultural, more local animation itself to make it more interesting. Maybe like legends of Malaysia itself or old stories that come out in Malaysia itself.

Moderator: You mean myths and folklores?

- Irfan: Not too much following the westerners but how about we improvise the legends and the folklores that are already in Malaysia.
- Kelly: Well, local animation is based on our own culture. They should try to create awareness about our culture, educate children on personal safety, survival needs.
- Moderator: Survival needs?
- Kelly: I mean in a multi-racial country like Malaysia, people need to know how to survive. They need to understand the sensitivities of others.

6.10.3 Language & Communication

There were also suggestions on improving the usage of proper language and communication practices as well as usage of other languages in Malaysian animation.

6.10.3.1 Improve Language

Nor, who previously stated her discontent on the usage of bad language, stated that usage of bad language should be detached and replaced with more positive language practices. She ties the usage of language with moral values.

- Nor: *Bahasa. Sebab saya suka dan bangga sangat. Sejajurnya saya bangga sangat dengan animasi sekarang sebab dulu-dulu waktu kecil kalau kita tengok kartun, ianya lembab dan kita tak akan tengok tapi bila Upin Ipin keluar kita tengok laju apa semua tetapi tolonglah kalau value dia dekat situ dicantikkan apa semua.*

Language. Because I like and I'm proud. Honestly, I'm proud with the animation that we have now because when we were younger, when we watched cartoons, it was very slow and we don't really watch it but when *Upin & Ipin* came out, we saw that it was fast but the values need to be improved.

- Khair: *Perlukan pakar bahasa.*
- We need language experts.

Nor: *Kena banyakkannya lah. Sebab sekarang ni, saya rasa mencabar. Biar bila awal-awal tengah naik ni, biar foundation yang betul. Kalau kita nak ikut zaman sekarang, yang cakap, tak taulah zaman sekarang ni, kalau kita nak follow zaman tu, kita nak suapkan anak kita dengan yang tak elok so problem lah. Biar benda betul sebab kita tahu itu salah kan.*

We should add more. Because right now, it's a challenge. When it's at the early stage, there should be a good foundation. If we follow how it is now, I'm lost for words how it is now as we don't want our children to consume values which are not good. It's a problem. We have to ensure it's the right thing because we know at the moment, they are wrong.

Zuhrah also added about usage of additional languages.

Zuhrah: *Dari situ juga boleh masuk dari segi pengolahan orang kata tambahan bahasa. Kalau setakat plot yang melibatkan bangsa berbeza, kita boleh pakai bahasa dia, bahasa Tamil, Cina dan dari situ budak-budak kita secara santainya dia belajar dua bahasa serentak. Jadi dia boleh faham juga bukan kita nak bahasa berat orang kata bahasa sapaan harian. At least budak kita pun dia boleh belajar dialek bahasa Chinese sapaan dia macam ni bahasa dia, yang ringan-ringan, santai-santai. Bukan untuk tujuan untuk dia belajar berat. Contoh ucap selamat pagi ke, Muthu bangun ucap selamat pagi dekat ayah. Dalam tu budak-budak pun, automitacally, dia pun learn fast dari segi bahasa.*

From there we can also add in additional languages. If minor plots involve people from different races, we can use their language, Tamil, Chinese language and children can informally learn two languages at once. So they can also understand simple or everyday language. At least our children can learn Chinese dialects and how the communicate using simple language. Not for serious learning. For example, how to say 'good morning', Muthu will say 'good morning' to his father. In that sense, children will learn language fast.

Zuhrah: *Kalau kita tengok balik macam En. Megat kata tadi. Apa yang berlaku dekat Malaysia? Kita kata kita 1Malaysia tapi bila kita tengok realitinya ialah anak Melayu kita cuma boleh dua bahasa sahaja, Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Inggeris. Chinese tak boleh, Indian tak boleh. What happen they are not marketable. Tapi budak Cina diaorang marketable sebab diaorang boleh*

lebih daripada dua bahasa. Bahasa dialek tempatan dah la satu, Mandarin kebangsaan dah satu. Bahasa Inggeris satu, Bahasa Melayu satu. Dia orang ada empat bahasa dalam tangan.

If we look back on what En. Megat said just now. What is happening in Malaysia? We say that we are 1Malaysia but when we see the reality is that Malay children can only use two languages, Bahasa Malaysia and English. Chinese, no. Indian, no. What happens is that they are not marketable. But Chinese kids, they are marketable because they can use more than two languages. Local language dialect is one, national Mandarin is one. English, one. Bahasa Malaysia, one. They have four languages in hand.

6.10.3.2 Usage of English

Among other suggestions is the usage of English as the language of the animation. According to Leonard, this is due to English being an international language.

Leonard:	I would prefer they use English than BM so that there's better proficiency because English is an international language.
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6.10.3.3 Usage of Mandarin

Besides English, informants also want to see Mandarin being used as a language in Malaysian animation as well. Caster stated that Chinese people must be able to speak Mandarin and the usage of Mandarin in animation can help achieve that.

Caster:	Yes, and Chinese must be used as well. Every language must be learned and known. That's what makes us special. A lot of Chinese people have to speak Mandarin.
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6.10.4 People

Other elements that the informants suggest to improve are the people or characters used in Malaysian animation. Seeing that a lot of Malaysian animation involve multi-racial characters, informant suggested the introduction of other races, usage of public icons as the main characters, introduction of strong and inspiring characters and also the usage of more local names.

6.10.4.1 Introduction of Other Races

According to Nor, the involvement from Chinese and Indian characters are lacking. Leonard and Nor suggest that more characters from other races are featured.

Leonard: And more use of characters from other races besides Malays.

Nor: *Saya setuju sebab penglibatan bangsa Cina, India amat kurang. Boleh bagi input yang lebih.*

I agree because the involvement of Chinese, Indians are really lacking. They could give more input.

6.10.4.2 Public Icons

Chan specifically suggested the production of a P. Ramlee-based animation, which would be of interest to the audience due to the popularity of P. Ramlee.

Chan: We should have a P. Ramlee cartoon. P. Ramlee is a Malaysian icon. We should have a cartoon of him.

Moderator: Interesting idea!

Chan: Everyone knows P. Ramlee. I just thought it would be interesting.

6.10.4.3 Stronger Characters

The importance of characters in animation can be seen through the suggestions of informants. Nadeel believe that strong characters can make an impact towards children and make the animation more entertaining. Furthermore, strong characters can be link to endorsements.

Nadeel: A bit more stronger characters. Like the main character should be very strong. It should be linked with the commercials. They should be very strong. They should be able to make an impact on the kids and make it more entertaining. These are very good but the music and the beat is a bit slow. So if you're watching or coming after school, you'll probably just sleep.

Main characters should also stand out among the rest as at times, it is difficult the main character from the other characters. This was brought up by Matilda and Agil.

Matilda: And also the main character, they don't really show who's the main character. It's like, all the team are the main characters. They have to change that.

Agil: Mostly it's the characters. In all the animation we have watched, they're much similar.

In response to asking about aspects to improve on Malaysian animation, there were responses stating that there should be improvements on characters.

Hafiz: *Karakter-karakter.*
Characters.

Shafiee: *Ha, karakter lagi.*
Yes, characters again.

- Hafiz: *Karakter, kalau boleh ubah karakter lah dalam animasi tu.*
 Characters, if possible, change the characters in the animation.
- Moderator: *Karakter macam mana tu?*
 What type of characters?
- Hafiz: *Dalam Upin Ipin kan selalu, apa, tunjuk budak-budak kan. Boleh ubahsuai karakter lain ke.*
 In *Upin & Ipin*, they always show children. They can change to other characters.
- Moderator: *Ye lah, nak mintak contoh lah, contoh karakter macam mana? Upin Ipin tu kanak-kanak. Karakter yang En. Hafiz ni nak macam mana?*
 Yes, just asking for an example, what type of characters? Upin and Ipin are children. What type of characters do you want?
- Hafiz: *Karakter mengarut-ngarut sikit lah.*
 Characters which are a bit ridiculous.

Informants also suggested including local heroes as a pulling factor towards watching Malaysian animation. Characters such as Hang Tuah can be presented in a more interesting form. Alternatively, usage of other heroes can also be considered as long as the background and other elements are kept as Malaysian.

- Mior: *Kalau saya, saya suka tengok anime portray local macam Naruto semua tuh kan. Jadi saya nak cerita Malaysia ni portray local herolah.*
 For me, I like seeing anime portraying local identity like Naruto and all that. So I want Malaysian stories to portray local heroes.
- Nor: *Dia sejarahkan Hang Tuah punya semua tu dalam bentuk yang lebih menarik. Kita pun boleh follow.*
 They should create a Hang Tuah history in a more interesting way (animation). We can also follow.

Mior: *Kita nampak power macam tuh kan. Local-local hero macam Ultraman tu kan. Dia masih lagi futuristic tapi dia punya background still Malaysian la.*

We seem powerful like that. Local heroes like Ultraman. They are more futuristic but the background is still Malaysian.

6.10.4.4 Usage of Local Names

Names can a form of identity for Malaysians. An informant suggested the usage of local names for Malaysian animation.

Toghzan: I think, first of all, the design of the characters and I think the names. They're using the names like Kevin, Ivan. Not like local names.

6.10.5 Technical

Feedback from the informants during the Focus Group Interview included criticism on the technical quality of animation in Malaysia. These qualities mentioned included design, illustrations, graphics and others. Informants suggested for further training, particularly, overseas training for animation practitioners to improve design and graphics.

6.10.5.1 Overseas Training

Hemma and Chan believes that animators should be sent to the United States and Japan for further training in 2D and 3D animation. The government, through scholarships, should sponsor training.

Hemma: I think we should send 2D, 3D companies to the US for training. We are just beginning. We are working hard but it is up to us whether to go and learn.

Chan: I think the government should provide more training and scholarships to people to go to Japan and US.

6.10.5.2 Better Graphics and Design

Graphics and design are among the elements to be improved by the animation industry in Malaysia. Kelly stated that the design should be better to capture more attention from the audience. Leonard added that the industry should also be looking more into 3D animation as he believes that 3D animation is more current.

Kelly: Better graphics. The design and all should be better. So they can grab more attention.

Leonard: 3D option than 2D. Nowadays everyone is doing 3D animation. 2D is old technology.

Moderator: But Japanese anime still works on 2D, right?

Leonard: Yes, but more people are using 3D nowadays. Japanese, they are different. They have a lot of followers.

Kelly: I think local animation needs to improve drawing, storyline. There is lack of detail. Sometimes, the animation is not properly done.

6.10.6 Values

Values are also another element mentioned by the informants that need improvements. Kelvin believes that animation in this country can be used to deliver important messages about the country which includes unity and the relationship between races.

Kelvin: I think Malaysia should use animation to express voice over country matters. Deliver messages which is important about the country.

Moderator: Can you explain?

Kelvin: If like talk about national unity, relationship between races. Like that.

Kelly: Yes. Something similar to Anak-anak Sidek, about sports, athletes and still have moral values.

Megat added that Malaysian cartoons should portray good personalities and values. These values include courtesy, Islamic values, entrepreneurship and diligence.

Megat: *Kartun kena tunjuk sahsiah yang baiklah.*

Cartoons should portray good personalities.

Megat: *Saya nak kalau boleh animasi dekat Malaysia ni tak portray satu stereotaip bangsa sahaja. I tell you kita boleh belajar daripada bangsa lain especially the Chinese ya. Kalau boleh buat satu animation yang boleh terapkan jugak memang kita Melayu memang berbudi bahasa, Islamik but budi bangsa lain boleh diterapkan contoh nilai keusahawan, business minded diaorang dan dia orang rajin. So tak ada race-centric. That's sad but true, there is stereotyping in Malaysian animation. Kalau Ah Meng itu betul dia portray businessman tetapi tak ada nilai-nilai tu untuk budak-budak.*

What I want is that Malaysian animation do not portray only racial stereotypes. I tell you, we can learn from other races especially the Chinese. If possible, produce an animation that can show that Malays have courtesy, Islamic but traits of other races should be included as well, for example, entrepreneurship, business-mindedness and diligence. So it isn't race-centric. That's sad but true, there is stereotyping in Malaysian animation. It is right that they show that Ah Meng is a businessman but there are no values there for children.

6.10.7 Places

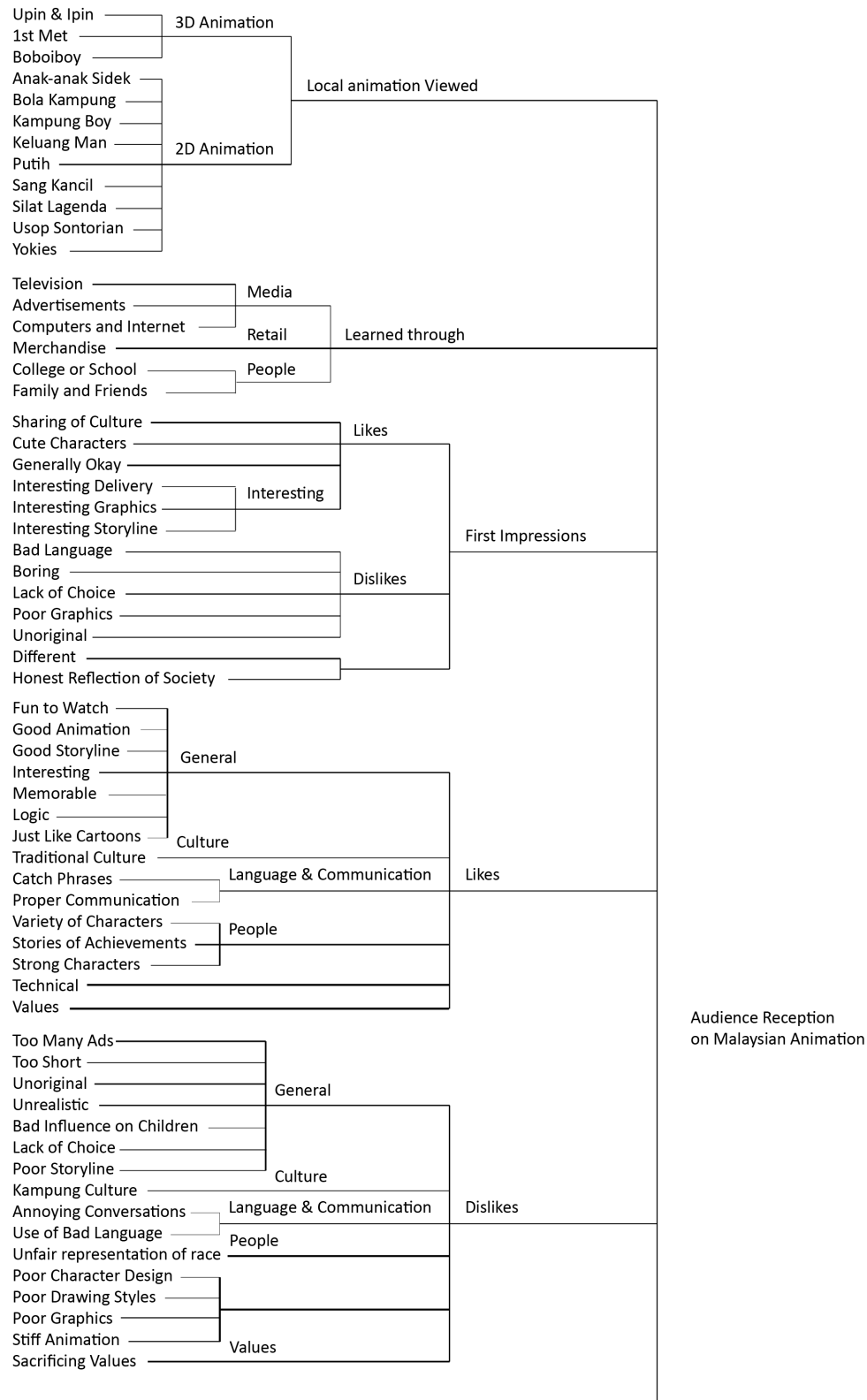
As informants stated that the settings of Malaysian animation uses a lot of villages and rural areas, they also suggested that the location settings of Malaysian animation should have city settings as well.

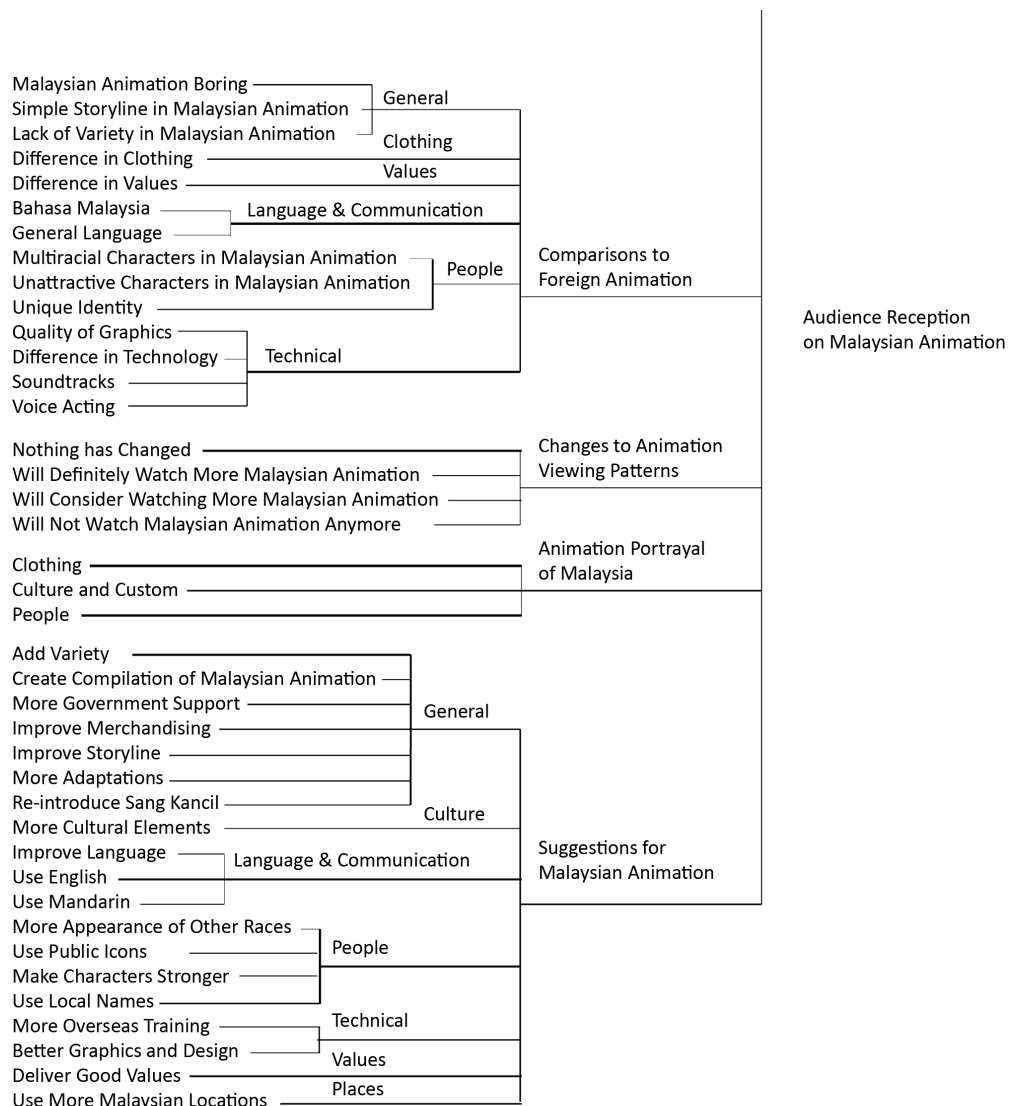
Matilda: I think they should change the location where they took the scene. They're based on the village. But according to *Bola Kampung*, there's a scene that showed that some footballers, they went for some holiday. They run past village, but the village and the city looks like it's the same thing. There's no difference between the city and the village. They should change that.

Agil: They should come out of the village and go to the city as well.

6.11 Dendrogram of Audience Reception Clusters

Based on the findings from the Focus Group Interviews, the following illustrates the clusters formed for audience reception on Malaysian animation.





6.12 Conclusion

The focus group interviews conducted have brought up many interesting points. Firstly, there is agreement among the informants that Malaysian animation is performing decently with plenty of rooms for improvement. The reach of Malaysian animation has gone quite far, stretching from local audiences to even foreign audiences. Some have laid praise on the effort of Malaysian animation industry practitioners in order to bring good quality animation to the market. However, some also stressed the need for improvements in many areas of animation such as the graphics, drawings, effects, stories, plots and others.

Secondly, there are some aspects of Malaysian animation deemed ‘foreign’ by both local and foreign audiences. Some informants cite ‘unoriginality’ while others spoke of the influence of foreign values. Whether it is possible to produce 100% Malaysian content and at the same time attract a high number of both local and foreign audiences is still a big question mark. However, it is agreed by the informants in general that these animation, in general, do portray Malaysian characteristics.

Third, based on the feedback obtained by the informants, there is a demand in good quality animation by the audience. However, the informants cited external factors in determining the success or failure of Malaysian animation. Although each audience may differ in taste of media content consumption, it is agreed that there are room for improvements in order for the audience to gracefully accept the animation as part of their frequent media content consumption. In this sense, quality comes in many different forms and some are even outside of the direct production process and its technical aspects themselves. Merchandising, government support and usage of other languages are among the points cited by the informants.

Finally, there is still strong belief that Malaysian animation is targeted at children. Based on the feedback from informants, many feel that these animation are not meant for them but rather for the younger segment of the audience. Compared to anime and some American animation, there is a lack of variety of Malaysian animation that can be offered to a more matured set of audience.

These conclusions have provided more information than the researcher was initially looking for and provides better insight in understanding the reception of the audience towards Malaysian animation.

CHAPTER 7
CHALLENGES IN MALAYSIAN ANIMATION

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7.1 Introduction

The third and final portion of this research aims to identify the challenges in Malaysian animation and the path it is heading towards based on the information obtained from three important decision-making figures within the animation industry and also policy-makers. Responses from interviewees provide insights and comparisons to the gap between the wants and needs of the audience and the current understanding of the animation industry and their plans for the future.

Three figures within the Malaysian animation industry were interviewed. Managing Director of Quest Animation Sdn. Bhd. and also President of the Animation Society of Malaysia (ANIMAS), Kamn Ismail, Former UiTM academic and former President of ANIMAS, Hassan Muthalib and Vice President of MDeC, Kamil Othman. These figures were selected based on their experiences, decision-making, policy-drafting and direct impact on the Malaysian animation industry.

Based on the in-depth interview conducted on the animation industry players and policy-makers in Malaysia, the researcher has categorized the findings into specific categories according to the questions used. This form of categorization is meant to provide more focus towards important issues brought up by the interviewees and shall help in achieving the third research objective. These categories are as listed as follows:

- i. Current state of Malaysian Animation
- ii. Organizational Contributions
- iii. Recent Trends on Malaysian Animation
- iv. Challenges Faced by the Animation Industry

- v. Reception on Malaysian Animation
- vi. Identity of Malaysian Animation
- vii. Government Support Towards Malaysian Animation
- viii. Industry Efforts in Promoting Cultural Identity and Values

7.2 Current State of Malaysian Animation

In order to understand the outline of things to come for Malaysian animation, it is imperative to understand the current state of affairs in the industry. It is vital in the sense that based on what has been done in the past, it is reflected in the present. Hence, any outcome that is expected or may occur in the future should be reflected in the planning and action taken during the present.

7.2.1 Malaysian Animation: A Growing Industry

Malaysian animation is in the process of growth. There are still many areas in need of improvement. When referring to the question of the current state of Malaysian animation, Kamn Ismail (Kamn), the President of the Animation Society of Malaysia and also Managing Director of Quest Animation indicated that the development of animation in Malaysia is believed to be on par with other developing nations. A number of companies are doing well, both financially and in terms of creative development. However, a significant number of companies are also finding it difficult to survive.

Kamn stated that the industry is in a healthy state in terms of its development since it began. A number of television series have been produced. In terms of the level of development, Kamn believes that the Malaysian animation industry at the moment is halfway towards being fully developed. He stressed that while technical ability has significantly enhanced, storytelling still has plenty of room for improvement.

“Well, Malaysian animation at this moment is growing in development. As per other countries, we are at the same path in developing and producing animation healthily.”

The growth of the animation industry is seeing practitioners reaching the technical proficiency of other seasoned animators around the world. The feedback obtained from the Vice President of MDeC, Kamil Othman (Kamil), affirmed that the current state of Malaysian animation is at ‘just reaching the technical proficiency level’. Kamil believes that Malaysians have familiarized themselves with the necessary tools to express their manifestation of animation.

“I would actually put the current state at a time when Malaysia is just reaching the technical proficiency level. So basically I think Malaysians are getting used to the tools right now to express what they want to express. But we still have some issues with the way the stories are being expressed.”

Kamn states that the young age of the industry is among the reasons why Malaysian animation is still lagging behind. Time will come when Malaysia would produce a significant number of animation. Compared to the seasoned and experience Japanese with about 100 years of experience, Malaysia is improving and becoming better in terms of quantity of animation.

“Of course there is a topic between production and tools. Because we are still new, we have not yet produced millions of animation in Malaysia. As things come by, with experience, Malaysia can compete and settle the situation. Because we must remember, Malaysia began animation only 20 years back. Compare to what we see visual in Japan, it’s about 100 years already. Malaysia is just 20 years and it’s becoming better and better.”

7.2.2 Increase of Export Due to Government Support

Kamil feels that from MDeC's point of view, MDeC has succeeded in exposing Malaysians to the world as a market that produces animation. Malaysians are gradually leaving the previous mindset behind, the domestic-centric mindset that thinks that local animation is mainly intended for the domestic market.

“Why I say this is because I have a feeling that all these years especially from MDeC's point of view, we have actually exposed Malaysians to the world as a market. So Malaysians are just coming out from the previous mindset, in which animation was initially meant for the domestic market. So I suppose this would be the same thing for the cinema as well. Everything that has been written, everything that has been done is really domestic-centric. That's what we've been doing all these years. So now that people know what the rest of the world want, then they have to readjust. So they have to adjust the process that's going on.”

Former President of ANIMAS, Hassan Muthalib (Hassan) has echoed Kamil's statements by stating the importance of MDeC's contribution, Kamil Othman's involvement in particular, towards the progress of the animation industry in Malaysia. MDeC has been at the forefront of promoting local digital content and animation, especially due to the efforts put in by Kamil himself. As a result, Malaysian animation has successfully been introduced to the international market. This is contrary with the role of FINAS, which Hassan believes have been lacking and with FINAS only appearing once these animation have been introduced to the world.

“Right now we have gone global and this was through the hard work of the Multimedia Development Corporation where I would point to one person who has been at the forefront, which is Kamil Othman, who is the Vice President of Creative Content, I think. So, he and I are very good friends. We go back a long time. What he does is, he goes to the ground. So he will meet us outside of office hours to find out what actually is happening. Unlike FINAS, who sit in their air-conditioned offices and then have meetings and try to imagine things. Because Kamil Othman did all of this from about 1999, the Multimedia

Development Corporation has been in the forefront promoting our local digital content and animation, so they have broken into the international market. And then only FINAS came into the picture giving free booths to our people who want to market their products and so on.”

Hassan added that MDeC have come out with books on creative content and have distributed them as part as their own initiative in developing the industry. As a result of their efforts, Malaysian animation have managed to appear in premier networks such as Disney Asia, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. This is an achievement that exceeds those of other ASEAN countries such as Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia who have even bigger studios doing outsourcing jobs from corporations for example Hanna Barbera and Disney.

“So Multimedia Development Corporation, MDeC, so what they have done is they have even come out with books about creative content and distributed it at their decibels, to the extent now that our animation are on Disney Asia, they are on Nickelodeon, they are on Cartoon Network, they have been core productions, they have even been commissioned to make productions. And I can say that since 1998, when the first film came out, Silat Legenda, which I directed, until today, we already have eight feature films and I think more than 150 TV series, which is a record for ASEAN countries. So even though ASEAN countries like Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, they have big studios doing outsourcing work for Hanna Barbera and Disney, but they did not have their own on-going feature films or TV series because it costs a lot of money to make. Even TV stations are not willing to give more than USD500. I think because of very strong government support for digital content, so we have gone by leaps and bounds. This is also very important to us because there are so many universities teaching animation, and so, once these graduates come out, at least they have a place to go where they can work. Otherwise everybody would be sitting around doing nothing. So I think the government has been very wise having a proper vision for animation and for digital content.”

7.2.3 Improved Technical Abilities

On a separate note, Kamil indicated that in terms of technical ability and the usage of animation software, MDeC has already seen it resolved. Technical abilities are generally good.

“Maybe I can put it this way. For proficiency in using the tools to create the animation, I think we have actually resolved that.”

7.2.4 Weakness in Storytelling

Kamil added that the part that still requires attention is with regards to the creative aspects of storytelling. Even though stories are expressed through the animation produced, it is still inadequate in terms of shaping it into a universally accepted product. This is caused by the lack of effective storytelling citing the example of Spongebob Squarepants as a universally accepted animation that can maintain its authenticity even when it is dubbed in a different language from the original (English).

“What we have not resolved is the innovation and the creative part that comes at the storytelling level. So, we can tell a story but not enough to push it into what I call a universal mould, the way that some countries know their script as Spongebob can become universally acceptable. Like Spongebob, is it from the US or from the UK? It can be anything. The minute you translate or you dub that, as a concept, it is so universal. We are still at the realm of when our Sang Kancil will be known to the world. We are still trapped in that situation. But technically we are good.”

7.2.5 Undefined Characteristics of Malaysian Animation

Audiences from around the world should be able to differentiate Malaysian animation from the ones produced by the rest of the world. According to Kamn, people can use anime from Japan as an example. There are certain characteristics that define Japanese animation and those characteristics have been well understood by audiences. However, when it comes to Malaysian animation, these characteristics have yet to be defined.

“I think like I said just now, much like you compare the Japanese. They have a code of conduct that says that this is a Japanese animation. But I hope that Malaysia does not have that. It is not that it is so important to have identity. The best thing is to make people watch the animation. It can have the identity but people may not watch it. Why have animation with identity when it’s better to have a good animation and then people ask, where does this animation come from? We still go for quality animation.”

Kamn did also add that even though there is importance in having this identity, what is more important to have quality animation that people will watch rather than having animation with specific identity but is not well accepted by the audience.

“Yes, quality comes first. Identity comes later. What’s the point of having identity but your work of animation sucks?”

7.3 Organizational Contributions

It is also important to reflect upon contributions of relevant individuals and bodies in the development of the local animation industry to see the impact it has brought upon. Industry players, funders and policy makers alike, all have their own views and perception of the industry and how it should be running. While these views may not be shared by all,

7.3.1 Promoting the Animation Industry Through Local Identity

Both government and private organizations are responsible in the development of animation content in their own way. As the President of the Malaysian Animation Society (ANIMAS), Kamn believes that ANIMAS’ role is no different from other organization related to the Malaysian animation industry. The general goal of ANIMAS is to promote the animation industry through a creation of local identity. Through this, ANIMAS looks into deeper objectives as stated through their constitution:

- i. To encourage the development of all forms of animation.
- ii. To promote the standards of animation.
- iii. To support and encourage animation education.
- iv. To create public awareness of animation, its storytelling capabilities and its expansion into the emerging media.
- v. To become a liaison to encourage the exchange of ideas within the animation community.
- vi. To encourage social interaction between professional and non-professional animation enthusiasts.
- vii. To compile and keep a database related to the animation industry.
- viii. To play the advisory role in matters related to animation for the public and private sector, industry and academic.

Its main role is to identify the industry players and the people within it in order to determine the need for different types of trainings and also to keep records of animation produced. However, these are only small part of the limited functions carried out by ANIMAS.

“ANIMAS is an organization that is no different from other organizations. Our part is not that huge, but it does play an important role in indentifying the industry players and people in the industry. Our purpose is just to recognize those interested in the industry. We do find how people in the industry conduct their training and what productions have they produce. It is only a part of what ANIMAS does. Animas do not take care of the overall well being of animation in Malaysia.”

On the other hand, Kamn’s role as the Managing Director of Quest Animation gives a slightly different approach. Similar to ANIMAS, Quest Animation conducts trainings, gathering and the exchange of ideas within the animation industry on top of the production of animation. Furthermore, Quest animation also runs programs in order to create animation awareness among the people within and outside of the animation industry.

“At this moment, we only conduct animation awareness, training, gathering and exchange of ideas in the meetings that we had and of course the most important part is the training. We do give trainings all over Malaysia.”

7.3.2 Curriculum Development

Hassan, who was just recently attached to Universiti Teknologi MARA, claims to have been involved as panel members for MDeC and FINAS during his 50-odd years of involvement in the animation and film industry. Furthermore, Hassan has contributed in the development of curriculum for universities, community colleges and polytechnics.

“I was with UiTM for five years on a year-to-year contract as a resident artist. This year, I’m on my own. I have my own company where I do writing for animation, I also write articles for international publications and I’m also being consulted upon and right now I’m writing a script for an animation feature film. All these years, I have been on the panel for MDeC, I’ve been on the panel for FINAS, I’ve also been on the panel for curriculum development for a couple of universities and colleges like the community colleges, polytechnics and so on. So I have been actively involved in the industry for 50 years and I’m still being called by MDeC and FINAS and so on, as far as animation is concerned, but not only animation but also film.”

7.3.3 Unearthing Talents

Kamil stated that one of the contributions of MdeC is mining talents in animation based on the premise of presenting Malaysian culture to the world. The focus is on providing support in the production of animation and position it for maximum effect. Through programs such as the Intellectual Property Creators Challenge (IPCC), talents are unearthed based on their ideas and concepts that have potential to succeed in the domestic and international market.

“We began on the premise that we had to bring Malaysian culture to the outside world as far back as 1999. So basically the logic was what would be the best vehicle by which Malaysian culture and Malaysian values can be exposed to the world? You can write as many books as you want but it all depends on people reading it. But you can make a good animation series, provided you know how to position it well and many homes and millions of eyeballs can reach the thing. That is why animation became the medium by which this focus is on. MdeC, all the while since 2000, have been doing a few critical things. One is mining the talent. We have to mine the talents. Because of that, we have yearly events like the Intellectual Property Creators Challenge or known as IPCC. The whole idea is for talent mining situation.”

7.3.4 Government Support

Based on performance in programs such as IPCC, Kamil further added that talents are also brought along to experience overseas showcases such as in South Korea and Japan.

Now, having won those kind of prizes under IPCC, we would then take care of the people who won because they would be winning only on ideas and concepts that have not been put into much thought. It's just a germ of an idea. So the next phase is that we bring them up into the pre-commercialization stage. So, it's mining the talent. After mining the talent, we bring them to pre-commercialization. Then, during the pre-commercialization stage, we expose them to the world markets. So we bring them to Korea, to France, wherever to let them see with their own eyes. Because, you see, by that time they already have the story. But now you need something that you can sell to Disney Channel, you need something that the French would buy. Last time when we were dealing with RTM, it was easy. Everything goes."

7.3.5 Funding

Funding is important part of government support due to the normally large budget of producing animation. The impact of the efforts by MdeC since 1999 can be seen as more animation have appeared in Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.

"The fourth part is to give them the funding. Because the government has given you their funding, so now you can go to your big-budget production. And because it's a very expensive thing, you also have the distributor under your belt. Well, if you consider that 10 years ago there was no Upin & Ipin, 10 years ago there was no Boboiboy, there was no Saladin, so I think with all that we have done, with all the seeds that we've planted from 1999 onwards, I think about in 2006, because that was the year when Malaysian animation started to appear on Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network or these areas which previously we did not enter, so we met our challenge."

7.4 Recent Demand Trends on Malaysian Animation

For the past five years in Malaysian animation, there have been changes in terms of content development, technology, practical competency and others that affect demands on locally produced animation. These trends are shaped based on many surrounding factors including government support, funding, training and audience acceptance.

7.4.1 Increase and Shift from 2D to 3D Animation

For Kamn, there hasn't been much change of trends in Malaysian animation from the past five years. The change seen has been majorly on the shift from 2D to 3D animation. According to Kamn, this revolution has led to a number of problems. First, there has been an increase in untrained professionals in the animation industry. These people either only have training in 2D animation but moved to 3D based on the needs of the company or may have no formal training at all. This results in the second problem, which is the lack of animation experts, or how Kamn put it, 'better people' in the animation industry. The third problem comes as a result of the lack of experts, which are inferior 3D animation companies. And all these problems are rooted to the lack of training.

“In Malaysia, there hasn't been much change except for the development from 2D to 3D animation. That is what we see with the trend now that everybody wants to do 3D animation and we have a lot of untrained people working for companies. Unless we find a solution for more people to work in that area, we may have a problem of getting better people and better 3D companies in the country.”

Hassan added that although a lot of animators are educated and trained in 2D animation and it is still relevant as a media content, there is a growing demand for 3D animation.

“I'm not sure whether it was Cartoon Network or Nickelodeon, but one of those commissioned a local company named Inspedia to make a Johnny Bravo Goes to Hollywood. So they already have a punch arm. It's 2D animation, and many of my former students were working in this company so it was quite easy for them because they learned cel animation. Whereas other companies are doing 3D, once they market it at festivals and trade shows, if people like what they see, they want to buy it immediately. We'd better have 13 episodes or 26 episodes of these. Now previously, they only had a promo. And then it would take, of course, about 18 months to get the series out.”

7.4.2 Over-reliance on Domestic Market

Since the beginning of Malaysian animation, producers have released titles which are largely focused on the domestic market. Kamil stated that there is a dilemma that exists due to this situation. Animation producers are receiving funds from the government to supply locally produced animation to local broadcasters targetted at local audiences. One of the problems lies with the fact that local broadcasters can purchase cheaper animation content from overseas thus not eager enough to purchase local animation.

“The demand is a very contentious issue because we were hoping that the demand would come from somewhere within, from Malaysia itself. But somehow the Malaysian broadcasters, because all of them either have subsidiaries themselves supplying them content, they are not hungry enough to take up the content produced by government-funded projects. In terms of that, I see a very dangerous trend here because Malaysian animation is not really being supported by the Malaysian broadcasters themselves. This is what I mean. It’s not about just getting them to broadcast, it’s about payments. They would sometimes give bad deals to Malaysian producers. That’s because the broadcasters are in the position of buyers. They just sit there like a buyer. So for them, whether that is a local animation or a syndicated animation, it doesn’t make any difference to them. What we would hope to see is basically the broadcasters starting to invest in the content development. Number one, the budget can be bigger. And number two, because you have invested in something, then you will make sure the quality is good, so we can be involved during script development. But no. Currently today, all the Malaysian broadcasters, including RTM, are just sitting there like buyers. The it makes people like us, who have been funding all these animation, finding it difficult. You see, we are using government funds to produce the animation. Why do I make animation? Because I need to sell. I need for it to be broadcasted. But our local broadcasters are still behaving like that. So MdeC has no choice but to go overseas. So we broke the overseas market. So that is why Saladin now is in 18 countries and some of those like Boboiboy seem to be very encouraging in these countries. What we do is we facilitate. We are not a marketing arm but we bring them to marketing events.”

Kamil added that television income is the least source of profit for animation. Other avenues such as licensing and merchandizing are more profitable and thus the challenge is not only to sell Malaysian animation overseas but to create a strong sense of brand that comes

with it. Titles such as Spongebob Squarepants, Ben10 and Upin & Ipin are already renowned brands familiar with the audience.

“As a source of income, television income is the least profitable of all. However, we are seeing that as being the promotional aspect of it because the answer with animation is actually the licensing and merchandizing that comes after something has become a brand. So, in short, our biggest challenge right now is not only trying to sell the titles overseas but also to try and find better ways to turn them into brands so that somebody will see it as like it is with Ben10. Why do we say that? Because like Spongebob, Spongebob and Ben10 has one thing in common with Upin & Ipin. They are already brands, meaning that people will already be familiar with what they represent. Other than the cultural part, it is also about the merchandizing part. You could see the icons on watches and pencil boxes for kids. So that is the one that will sustain in the industry. So if they ask me, how much have we made, very little. But that's because we are now in that phase where we are creating the brand.”

One of the major problems of Malaysian animation is the over-dependency on local markets and the reluctance of broadcasters to pay large amounts for animation products. According to Hassan, RTM was willing to pay RM45,000 for a single episode which is relatively high compared to other broadcasters around the world. However, the cost of producing a single episode for international standard animation may cost around RM150,000 per episode. The dilemma is that it is more costly to produce an episode and to sell it below cost price. Hence, the quality of animation produced is jeopardized with a lot of cost-cutting measures involved. These cost-slashed animation can then be produced with a budget of around RM20,000 to RM25,000 per episode while RTM purchases them for RM30,000 to RM35,000 per episode.

7.4.3 Increased Government Support

According to Hassan, currently the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), the Cradle Investment Programme (CIP) and FINAS are providing funds to create one episode that will act as an evaluation sample to determine whether an animation has the potential to become a successful series. Other companies like Makmur Megah Sdn. Bhd. are creating their own library of animation and selling them to different markets in the world. All these are happening as a result from the strong support of the government and also MDeC and FINAS.

“But today the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, plus the Cradle Investment Program and also FINAS are providing funds to create one episode of international standard and based on that, they can come up with 13 episodes or 26 episodes but other companies have gone ahead and did their own library. I can say there is one company at least called Makmur Megah who has a big library of animation films which they have sold to a French producer and they are also working with Italian producers to create our own IP like Pinnochio and so on. So a lot of things are happening on the ground now and this is because of the strong support of the government and very aggressive marketing strategy by MDeC and FINAS.”

Kamil stated that for the past few years, MDeC were anticipating demand for Malaysian animation from within the country. However, the Malaysian broadcasters already have subsidiaries in their lineup supplying them with content for their programs. Although the government is supportive enough towards Malaysian animation, the same cannot be said about Malaysian broadcasters. Getting broadcasted alone is not the main issue but rather the payment for these locally-produced animation.

7.5 Challenges Faced by the Animation Industry

The Malaysian animation industry, being relatively new and still in development, has its own unique challenges.

7.5.1 Lack of Good Scriptwriters and Storytellers

According to Kamn, Malaysian animation is currently not at its best in terms of the technical level of animation and also the content it produces. This is as a result of not having good scriptwriting and storytelling programs offered in Malaysia's tertiary education system. Added with the lack of industrial trainers and teachers, this, in turn, results in the lack of worthy storytellers, scriptwriters and other parts of animation production that can achieve world standard of animation.

“Alright, I used to accept this type of question. It depends. As right now, our animation is not considered the best ever produced. But we do produce animation that is not that high-level animation or content, but that is because we do not have good storytellers, scriptwriters and of course if you look into other parts especially the production and the world production standard should be taken into consideration. So what I see is that Malaysia is still in the development to go towards what you asked me just now. Yes, have you seen the universities? We don't have many universities that offer proper scriptwriting and storytelling programs. That is because we don't have any industrial or proper trainers, teachers to go around. That is why I said that when we studied which is the best animation production, we still have the black hole that there are none who can attain world standard. That is why we need more of the industry players to be trained by proper people.”

The inferior quality of Malaysian animation compared to foreign animation is due to the lack of good writers, production designers and musicians who can write excellent theme songs. Kamil questioned the ability of the current local writers to produce internationally-acclaimed standards.

“Do you think we can achieve an Oscar or Academy Awards standards? The answer is no. Why? Because we haven't got writers

here. We don't have production designers. We don't have musicians who can write excellent theme songs, which is another spin-off from animation. We don't have all that."

7.5.2 Fragmentation of Supporting Bodies in Malaysian Animation

Kamil states that challenges are faced by the animation industry due to the fragmented agencies trying to help them develop. The Malaysian government is very much keen to help develop the animation industry and has even accepted animation as an economic growth area. However, the number of agencies and ministries that handle this development and the fact that each ministry and agency is developing their own terms may not all go well when we look at the overall picture. There are various supporting bodies involved in the development of animation in Malaysia. These bodies include government ministries, statutory bodies, agencies, banks and the animation industry itself. According to Kamil, the fragmentation of these bodies, although meant to help the industry, is also causing problems in terms of setting terms and criteria that are not standardized and synchronized.

"The challenges right now faced by the animation industry is because of the fragmented agencies trying to help them develop. I don't know if you want to take it as an MdeC or a personal view. I suppose I can say this after 13 years in the industry, the biggest problem now is that while the government is very keen to get this industry up and running and even to accept this as an economic growth area, but what the government has not done is to rationalize the number of agencies and ministries that handle this industry development. Because each would be developing it on its own terms which may not all go well when we see it as a total."

Kamil gave the example of RTM purchasing animation without consideration for the exportability of the content. Banks, for example, are setting criteria for funding without having relevant knowledge and experience within the animation industry. For example, banks who fund animation do not have appropriate experience in funding animation. According to Kamil, other countries appoint experienced institutions for funding animation. Australia, for

example, have the funding board for the National Film Funding Corporation. Although this does not guarantee the success of animation, the success rate is still relatively higher compared to funding by inexperienced institutions. In Malaysia, MDeC, FINAS, SKMM and others provide the funding for animation. The question is, where is the central strategy that holds all the funding activities together. Monetary funds are only part of the issue. Other aspects such as writing, standards and award winning capabilities for animation products are as important in producing world class animation.

“Let me give you an example. RTM is still buying animation, but they are commissioning it only to fill in their hours. Is exportability part of their plan? Just to fill the hours. So money are given to banks who have no experience in funding these kind of things, so how do you expect the money to duplicate the system? In other countries, money like that is given to institutions that are already experienced. Australia used to have a funding board for the National Film Funding Corporation. That’s where all the funds are. These people? No. Yes, they still make mistakes. Out of that, still 20% is good and 80% is bad. But if you give to people who don’t know anything about this, chances are the success rate is only 5%. So, that’s fragmented. MdeC has funding for animation. Last time, SKMM (Malaysian Communication and Mutlimedia Commission) also had funding for animation. FINAS (National Film Development Corporation Malaysia) now also says they have funding for animation. If everybody is getting funds for animation, where is that central strategy that holds everything together? Doing animation is not only about giving the money. We have to look into the skills, like you said earlier. It’s not all about money. It’s not about giving somebody RM100 million to do animation.”

Kamil also added that the fragmentation of the supporting bodies is causing problems in terms of coordination. Hence, it opens up possibilities of abuse and producers only being involved in the industry for the money that it offers.

“But the government is still trying to help. But to achieve all that, you don’t pass it to 10 people or six people trying to develop the industry. Only go for one. That one head is accountable and the KPI (key performance indicators) can be very easy; one Malaysian animation must go to the Academy Awards. Every year, Malaysian animation

must be nominated. Then one KPI for the industry. Now that kind of KPI and six agencies are handling it, who is supposed to coordinate? And then the worst part is, the real people who could be doing the animation are not being seen because between all the six agencies, it's all spread out. So we find a lot of people who are not the real McCoy, those who are not sincere, those who just want the money. They just appear out of nowhere just to get some money and come up with mediocre products. There is no centralized institution. That is how I feel about it."

7.5.3 Staff Discipline

Among the other problems faced by the animation industry are trust issues with the staff involved in animation production. According to Hassan, cases such as deletion of files have occurred and producers had to call in technical recovery experts to salvage whatever deleted files they could. On top of that, disciplinary and work performance has also affected the performance of these animation companies. As a result, producers have started to look at other places such as India, Indonesia and Philippines.

"Upon the feedback I get from my friends from the industry, they are having the problem of they cannot depend on the staff. So a lot of negative things have happened. There have been cases where MDeC funded something, and then there was some kind of disagreement in the company, and when some people left, they deleted all the files. So now they have to have troubleshooters coming in to repair the damage. Other places, they either don't come to work or they delay, so that's another problem. So this is the reason why some of the record producers are going into India, into Indonesia, into Philippines because there, they are hungry for outsourcing. So this has got a very negative effect and many of our animators are now in Singapore working with Lucas Films and so on."

7.5.4 Brain Drain

The issue of brain drain is another problem with the animation industry. According to Hassan, animators from Malaysia have begun to migrate south to Singapore for the sake of glamor, better income and other perks that come with the job.

“So that’s another, I can say, brain drain. Well, once they are offered more, that’s why they go. On top of that, some of them are also looking for glamor, looking for feature films and so on that goes worldwide. So at least they can proudly point to their work even though their names do not appear. So we cannot stop that unless of course studios are set up. I head that FINAS is trying to do this but they have never called me to do a presentation or whatever when I should be the person who should be called. But of course, I don’t go and promote myself. But I strongly believe and I have been saying this for many, many years that we are in the position to create a major training and production academy or training institute that can provide the resources, the training and so on for the ASEAN countries. And it has to be a government-to-government basis so that the films that are produced can be dubbed and can be sold to all the various countries. Now, nobody is looking into this. So it has to be a political solution.”

7.6 Reception on Malaysian Animation

This section reviews responses from the interviewees on their understanding with regards to the reception towards Malaysian animation. While there were feedbacks on local audiences, Kamn could not account the reception of foreign audiences. In terms of foreign audiences, Kamn stated that he is not aware of the reception towards Malaysian animation. He noticed that when Malaysian animation is aired overseas, there are neither data nor ratings to suggest the acceptance of Malaysian animation. Rather, Kamn is assuming that Malaysian animation is just consumed as part of their day-to-day media content programs.

“No. Because about a few years ago, when we sent our series overseas, what we found out is that there was just international slots but there were no reports on whether they were the best. What we feel is that they just watch our animation as part of their daily programs.”

It is also worth noting that although Kamn represents the animation industry players through ANIMAS, he is unaware of any valid studies conducted with regards to identifying what the audience want in locally-produced animation, although it was mentioned that the industry players do receive guidance from MDeC and Finas on the scopes of animation to produce.

“I hope so. I hope that somebody is doing it. You see, in our country, MDeC and Finas, they do tell us the types of scope we should cover. But still, storytelling and type of animation varies from year to year. Of course the potential of marketing plays a part in the game. So if you’ve got a good story and a good marketing strategy, it can still go to waste or the other way around. So we must work together with the government or any of the marketing strategies to be applied. They will tell us what would be the best for animation and what are the world standard requirements to be applied. That should be awareness for the production houses.”

Currently, the animation industry produces animation based on assumptions of what the audience want and what the industry thinks might sell. Kamn noted that he is not aware of any hard evidence of a proper market studies. The feedback obtained were merely verbal stories that came in various versions. As a result, these animation find it difficult to be marketed outside of Malaysia.

“You see, people have gone overseas for market studies and they come back telling this and that. But never to any of my experience that they call us that this is the best story that is marketable. Not even one. So we just assume ourselves what the audience want. We just forecast and thought buy looking at things we think might sell. After that we produce, hoping to sell overseas but then we fail again.”

7.6.1 Malaysian Animation is Desirable

Hassan stated that one of the methods to identify audience acceptance towards Malaysian animation is based on ratings in RTM and the number of seasons a title has produced. He believes that *Usop Sontorian* was a big hit along with *Keluang Man* and *Yokies*. However,

the cost and budget of producing animation is a barrier that is preventing from more titles to be produced.

“Based on the ratings in RTM. You know, RTM started the TV series in 1995. I was in the panel in 1994. We had a look at two pilot episodes. We saw Usop Sontorian and Sang Wira. So I told them we have to begin somewhere even if the quality is not good. So based on that, in 1995, Usop Sontorian was shown. And then, other producers got into the picture. So I can say that from 1995 till now, we have about 150 TV series with many, many seasons. So, I can say that Usop Sontorian was a big hit. So were Keluang Man and Yokies, among the lower range. And now, there are quite a lot more episodes, which I have not seen myself, but there is a market. So the only reason why RTM was willing to give RM45,000 per episode which no channel in the world would give, it's only USD500. So we need to also sell overseas. So, if you can spend RM150,000 per episode, you will have something of international quality. But of course, the producers cannot afford that. So they are only making it around RM20,000 to RM25,000 and RTM gives only about RM30,000 to RM35,000 depending on the quality. So therefore, if the quality is good, advertisers will come in. So it all depends on the advertisers. So all childrens' products will come in because it aims at kids. But we don't have any teen shows yet. Mostly aimed at the lower group.”

Kamn believes that we can see that local audiences have the desire to watch Malaysian animation. Audiences crave for local content and the exhibition of local culture through animation. He claims that there is potential for local animation and ratings are high as well.

“Locally, what we found out a few years ago is that people like to see local animation. What I mean is in terms of local content, local culture and so on. That is what we see. There is no doubt about it that Malaysians like to see other animation but compared to every time we show locally produced animation and local content, there is high potential audience or viewers and the ratings are still high for local animation.”

The reason for the assumption is because the unavailability of ratings to suggest any conclusions on audience reception towards Malaysian animation. However, he did mention the need for better quality or standard of animation through production. Audiences in the rest

of the world have been accustomed to good and fast storytelling and also decent character creation and development. In order to see improvements in audience reception, Kamn believes those things that audiences have been accustomed to must be improved. If not, there will be rejection from the audience. Hence, Malaysian animation producers must think for the sake both sides, the producers and also the audience.

“You see, it is really something difficult for me to say because anything shown on their television means that there is a rating. But then that is one of the things we don’t know. For instance, any television station will now show any programs that lack the world standard, the story type and so on. But we do have some Malaysian animation programs that receive that type of audience.”

Kamn added that in order to further improve audience reception, the standard of production must also improve to meet international standards. This standard includes aspects of storytelling and the establishment and development of characters within animation.

“Yes. I would say one thing, it’s the world standard in production. When we say world standard production, what we mean is the standard form that every production house in the world follows. The audience all over the world are used to good stories, fast methods of telling the story and certain elements on how the characters are being developed and created. They have these standards. So we should follow that. A few years ago, I talked to certain directors in Cannes they said that there is a lot of animation produced overseas, especially in the Asian region. They still find that the audience does not accept ineffective characters. That is why Malaysia has to think on both sides (the producers and the audience).”

7.6.2 Access to Animation Using New Media Tools

MDeC, in general, focuses a lot, but not limited, on children’s animation. Kamil stated that MdeC notes the changes in viewing habits where children are accessing animation from other means than television. In lieu of Malaysian animation development, MDeC has also commissioned a study on Viewing Habits of Animation. The study covers animation viewed by children and the medium they use to access them. This study finds that most

children access animation through media other than television. The development of technology has allowed new media tools such as tablet computers to be used to access animation content. Before this, Malaysian animation are a rarity among children. Nowadays, according to Kamil, we can find them even in orphanages with titles such as Upin & Ipin stacked alongside Ultraman, Spongebob and Naruto.

“When we talk about animation, we in MdeC are actually talking about children’s animation. Animation can also be for adults. So our focus area has been animation for children. If you look at animation in terms of children’s take-up, we have commissioned a study called Viewing Habits of Animation. There are some data there about children and what is their favourite program and they are watching it through what. You’ll be surprised, probably no surprise, that most of them are not watching it through your traditional TV at home, but they are watching it through their iPads and whatnot. Anyway, the point is this. The menu for Malaysia has fortunately changed for the children’s programming diet. So in other words, they would be watching Ben10, they would be watching Boboiboy, they would be watching Disney Channel or whatever on the same par.”

7.6.3 Blurred Distinction Between Local and Foreign Animation

Kamil states that to some sections of the audience, particularly children, there is not much difference between animation that is produced locally or from other countries. According to Kamil, there has been an increase in the acceptance towards Malaysian animation. However, that does not mean that the audience (children) are aware of the origins of the content they are watching.

“Some of them don’t even know that some of the things they have been watching are actually local, like Supa Strikas. People will watch because they are football fans. In that sense, our study will show you right now that there has been an increase in the acceptance by Malaysian children. It is only that adult cartoons that we don’t have the figures. What I mean by adults are teenagers. That one we don’t have the facts. But if you ask me, acceptance? Yes. Children are there. A typical example, we go to an orphanage. We would find that their collection of DVDs contain Ultraman, Upin & Ipin, there is also Spongebob or Naruto. Before, you would find that there aren’t any Malaysian titles in their collections. But now they do. If you ask them

whether they know that Bola Kampung is local, they would say that they don't know. So that means that for them, it is no different from Spongebob or Ben10. Which is good because it means that we can now supply to our market, which now you are neutral. Whether it works well for the cultural part, it doesn't matter because the minute when you say it's neutral but the Malaysian-ness is still there. It's still Bola Kampung. It's still Badang."

7.6.4 Lack of Awareness

The media can play a very important role in the promotion of Malaysian animation. According to Hassan, while it has done so to a certain extent, more exposure is needed to increase the awareness on Malaysian animation. At the moment, Malaysians or the rest of the world do not have access to information on Malaysian animation, whether they are about the history of animation or even the current list of animation available for audience consumption.

"The thing is the media plays a very important role. So every time a new series comes on, there needs to be some kind of write-up in the papers so that people are aware. Who made it? What is it about? Who's the target audience? What are the themes? The subjects? And so on. Now this is not happening. And there also should be interviews with the people involved on shows like Selamat Pagi Malaysia, Malaysia Hari Ini and so on so that there is some awareness. So right now, we actually do not know what are the shows on now. If you look at the newspapers, there are titles but you do not know whether they are animation films or TV programs. So there has to be this. Even on the social media which is very important now, they should spread it out on Facebook and so on so that people keep in touch or like people like you who are trying to research. So at least there is somewhere people can go. All you have to do is type in to the internet and you'll get a link."

7.7 Identity of Malaysian Animation

As mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter, defining Malaysian animation is not as straightforward as it may seem. The way Malaysian animation is defined goes beyond a single creator of iconic characters. According to Hassan, Kampung Boy, for instance was an adaptation from Lat's series of comic strips, Kampung Boy. Although the origins of the animation is purely Malaysian, but when it came to producing it, the planning was done in

Los Angeles and the animation was done in the Philippines. Similar to South African popular comic book Supa Strikas, which was produced by a Malaysian animation studio named Animasia Studio. As another example, Stephen Hillenburg, who is an American from Lawton, Oklahoma, created the iconic Spongebob Squarepants that was produced by Nickelodeon Animation Studios in Burbank, California and animated by Rough Draft Studios in South Korea.

“So, let’s take a look at the cartoonists. Lat has made it. So we have Kampung Boy which has gone into the collective memory of the public, isn’t it? His comic strips and a lot of other things and then it was animated. But the animation was done in the Philippines, the planning was done in Los Angeles. So it’s not actually a Malaysian product even though it was produced by Malaysians. And then it costed RM800,000 per episode. That’s because they had to pay in American currency based on the gear and audio. Hikayat Sang Kancil was first shown in 1978 is very common in so many cultures. In the Philippines, among the Kadazandusun in Sabah, in Indonesia and also among the Orang Asli in Malaysia, not just the Malays. So you can read about it in my book. Now, this character has become very iconic. You mention Sang Kancil, everybody knows. The first one, it’s too long. It did not make use of the animation medium. But when I did Sang Kancil dan Monyet and Sang Kancil dan Buaya, it caught the imagination of the public. But then, nobody followed it up until my friend Najat Affendi from Aniotek, he’s an MMU graduate, he did in 3D. He won an award. And then he made a series. But then I’m not sure whether it was screened or not. Now Les Copaque has also come up with Cerita Zaman Dulu, I think. It’s a series where you have stories of Sang Kancil and so on. But somehow or rather, you haven’t heard of it. So again, you see, somebody needs to do a write-up. Actually, I should probably be writing from time to time explaining what is going on but I was more into film. You can read about this in some of my journal articles that have come out and also some of the papers I’ve presented overseas like in Singapore, in Tokyo and so on.”

According to Kamn, the identity of Malaysian animation lies in its origins, which in turns relate to culture. Culture is translated through people’s lifestyle and life values. Hence, Malaysian animation’s identity can be seen through the lifestyles and values practiced and applied by the characters and other objects within the animation.

However, Kamn also raises the question whether or not Malaysian culture or the portrayal of Malaysian culture is marketable towards overseas market. Citing examples such as *Brave* and *Kungfu Panda*, these animations are just a form of conceptual art. The success behind these animations, rather than the portrayal of culture, lies in the strength of the story itself and how the integration of the culture is applied in the story.

Kamn believes that culture is only a part of the conceptual art and does not serve the purpose of pulling the audience towards watching Malaysian animation. Animation producers must first clear their minds and not put forth anything else but content which is as global as possible. Kamn also added that the fact that we are pushing for the inclusion of cultural elements in our locally-produced animation is like a double-edge sword. On one hand, the inclusion of those cultural elements can enhance the awareness of the audience with regards to Malaysia, its cultures and values. On the other hand, should there be any form of negativity within the animation, it will reflect badly on the country.

“Well, it’s very simple to answer because when we talk about identity, we talk about origins. When we talk about origins, of course it’s the culture. So, when we talk about culture, we talk about lifestyle and our life values. So if that’s the question, then that is the answer to the content that should be applied. We should study even more. Is it true that our culture, or portrayal of our culture can or will be marketable towards overseas market? You must understand that films like *Brave* and *Kungfu Panda*, those are just conceptual art. Sometimes, the story probably would be something else. But they choose what culture to include. So, it’s the same thing with us. When we make something a story, we must know what our culture is. Now, then or from a long ago? That is already an interpretation of conceptual art. If we portray things like the costume during Hang Tuah’s time and say ‘that is our culture’, it means that we have made up our minds that it is our culture just like *Mulan* and *Kungfu Panda*. Then we should impose it. Disregard other things with regards to the dialogues and the storyline and everything. We should impose so that the new generation can see. In other words, what I’m trying to say is that the cultural only plays a part in the conceptual art. It does not portray a lot in pulling people. So where do you want to start? Hang Tuah’s time, Parameswara’s time, or Leftenan Adnan’s time? You choose which part of the modern times to use as culture. So you must clear your mind first. But don’t say how

are we going to portray our total Malaysian culture. What are the values? Which one? I asked a lot of Malaysian people about global content. They say let's do it. I can't be doing just the Hang Tuah and Mat Kilau stories."

While he believes that identity helps with signifying Malaysian animation, Kamn also disagrees on creating physical traits as means to identify Malaysian animation. He added that this will restrict the artistic and esthetics aspects of animation and that Malaysia should follow the footsteps of the animation industry in Europe where freedom of art allows animators to produce all styles of art.

"You see, those recognitions are just talking about origins. Not every Japanese movie that we recognize is a good story. Sorry, Hayao Miyazaki, sometimes you can't identify as being Japanese. Unless the story portrays Japan. But Hayao Miyazaki does not follow the Japanese style of cartoons. The big eyes, the small mouth, Hayao Mizayaki does not do. That means, he's failed. I remember those days, the Japanese got together and created animation and everybody recognizes it. But back to your question, it's good. You can do a lot, but just because of the identity, you are restricting the art. I do not agree with that part. I believe Malaysia should be like Europe. You can do all styles of art, freedom in art."

As far as the awareness of the presence of Malaysian identity in locally produced animation goes, the industry players are perfectly aware of them. However, the extent of their understanding of what these identities are differs from one another. This is added by the issue that if these characteristics are positive, then it is a good sign and becomes a positive outcome for Malaysia. In the contrary, negative characteristics will only result in criticism towards the country.

"I think what I've seen like Upin Ipin, Geng, War of the Worlds: Goliath, they do portray Malaysian content by saying, in the storyline, this is Malaysia, this is the character of Malaysia. That's the only way. Then we can say that it belongs to Malaysia. But if you don't say the words, people might say that it is not Malaysia. But you ask yourself, is it important? To us, yes, it is important. We want the world to know this is Malaysia. Yes, it's a good sign because people can relate that this is Malaysian animation. But if somebody did something bad, then

people will criticize and say that Malaysian animation sucks. That would be interesting.”

MDeC is currently in the midst of trying to get industry players to produce animation that carries Malaysian identity. According to Hassan, *Kampung Boy*, *Silat Lagenda* and *Mat Gelap* did embed some sense of Malaysian identity, which was visibly distinctive compared to Japanese and American animation. Hassan did, however, add that another aspect to be taken into consideration is with regards to the integrity of the people involved in and with the industry, either the industry players themselves or the representatives of the government.

“So right now, that is the question everybody is asking and MDeC started a program where companies are asked to pitch and they are trying to get something that is very, very Malaysian. So *Cerita Rakyat Malaysia* was proposed but it was abandoned. But I think if you looked at Lat’s *Kampung Boy* and Imuda’s *Mat Gelap*, there is some sense of identity. Something very different that does not look like Japanese or American. Now, I did the animation for *Mat Gelap* and of course logically people will assume that it’s good enough for a TV series. Same thing with *Silat Lagenda*, every time Dr. Mahathir went to RTM, it was to speak about *Silat Lagenda*. Why? Because it’s based on our heroes. But even though the characters were very ‘anime’, because the character designer was an anime fan, but we modified a bit. Now that one could have easily been transferred into a TV series. But there is another problem associated. You have to have something under the counter to make certain people happy so that they will accept your product. Now, if we did not have corruption, it’s very easy for many-many kinds of production to come out where we can discover our identity. But it’s not happening. So I’ve seen some really good work like *Anak-anak Sidek*, which is very original, done by my friend Sidi Hamdan. But it didn’t continue. And the heroes are real live heroes who can inspire the young people in sports. How come nothing is moving? So it’s the same story. They have to grease the palms.”

Malaysian animation is reflective of what Malaysians really are. Malaysian animation do not need to try too hard to be Malaysian as it would come naturally. According to Kamil, however a story is told, a Malaysian writer would indeed show elements of Malaysia even if the writer tries hard to show it.

Kamil stated that although not all Malaysian animation are true reflections of society, at least it portrays what Malaysians really desire. Kamil used the samples of the common Malaysian version of Tom, Dick and Harry in Ali, Muthu and Ah Chong. However, in practice, Malay animation is still for Malays, Chinese animation is still for Chinese and Indian animation is still for Indians.

“This is not going to be an academic answer. I personally believe that in whatever you do, when you write a novel, that novel will have elements of Malaysia even if try hard not to show it. You can’t help it. If you eat belacan (shrimp paste), you would have to have elements of that. So a typical Malaysian animation I would say as 1) it is reflective of what we really are. The honest part of it which is like Upin & Ipin, although it tries to show what Malaysians really are, there is still the real Malaysian flavor and there’s the forced Malaysian behavior. So the forced behavior is when we have to show in Malaysian animation what actually we secretly really desire like racial harmony, like Ali, Muthu and Ah Chong all together. So it does express that desire, which like everybody says, should be together. But in terms of the natural style, what we still have is that Malay animation is still for Malays, just like the movies. Chinese animation is still for Chinese. Indian animation is still for Indians. That is the reality. And one of our challenges is to see where the common ground is to burn these two. Sure, Upin & Ipin has made some attempts in getting Benggalis in, as with Boboiboy. That’s what I meant. As Malaysian, first of all it reflects what we secretly desire. But you go back to your own comfort level, all you have if you’re Malay, are Malay content. If Indian, then Indian content. Why? Is it because of the language? Or is it because of religion? I don’t know. I don’t think that plays much role. But when we were talking earlier about Japan, Japan is homogenous. They are all Japanese. There’s only one language. So if we ask them what is their national food, if a foreigner were to ask a Japanese, nobody would have any arguments. Then they would say sushi. In Malaysia, it depends on who you are asking the question. You ask a Malay, you will get Malay answers. You ask a Chinese, you will get Chinese answers. Some common things like Rojak, Rendang. Even rendang is very much Malay. So it depends. That is our challenge.”

7.8 Malaysian Animation Industry Efforts in Promoting Cultural Identity and Values

According to Kamn, the Malaysian animation industry does put its efforts in signifying that their animation is indeed Malaysian. Malaysian animation products embrace content that demonstrates that Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with various characters and a wide array defining Malaysian culture. Citing the example of Usop Sontorian, Malaysian animation visually portrays the beauty of Malaysian geographical nature just by using visuals without having to verbally deliver the same messages through dialogues or other form of written text.

“Like I said just now. It doesn’t go far. We practice ourselves that whatever story we make, we try to show that it’s Malaysia. We use content that shows Malaysia is a multi-racial country, lots of characters, and lots of culture. Use all the content. But quality should be imposed. Then use the element of culture. Before we do it, we have to understand what the culture is all about. Like Usop Sontorian, we show the well being of the country, the nature. It also plays a good part in portraying our country. Without mentioning, we can tell visually and people can understand. We don’t have to say that Malaysia is a good country. Pictures tell a thousand words.”

Efforts to put towards promoting culture outside of the Malay society have not been clearly visible or to a certain extent, absent. Animators may have to consider involving other races as the main character or plot. Being a multi-racial country, there are many other aspects of Malaysian that can be shared with both the people residing inside the country as well as ones around the world. According to Kamn, people are not limited in the sense of the type of content they like to watch. The multi-ethnic background of Malaysians provides an array of possibilities for storytelling.

“I’ve never seen yet. At one time, I’ve seen one Cantonese. This was Baba Chia. That guy portrayed the Chinese in the country. I was so impressed. I think animators should also think of that. It’s a story of other races in Malaysia besides Malays. Sometimes, we don’t say that Malaysia is a multi-racial and people only like to watch their race. I don’t think so. When you see other cultures like Indian stories, you just

say this is an Indian story is in Malaysia. There is a different entity all together. We've got variety and that shows we have lots of stories to tell."

As seen in the structuralist-semiotic analysis on Malaysian animation conducted earlier in this study, Malaysian identity can be found within other animation as well. According to Hassan, Tan Jin Ho produced a short 3D animation film titled A Malaysian Friday in the year 2000. This animation centered around a man who lived alone in a paddy field. Items such as bananas, the paddy field and the azan are among the ones mentioned by Hassan to appear in A Malaysian Friday. This is also similar to Singapura Dilanggar Todak, which is an animation produced by Alan Aziz Shamsudin while he was a student in Poland. Singapura Dilanggar Todak were based on wayang kulit with batik background designs and gamelan as the music.

Another angle towards the problem of identity in storytelling that can be seen is through the education system. According to Hassan, a large number of current Malaysian animation projects produced by students center around mechanical robots and encompasses Western characteristics that affects the Malaysian identity found in these animation.

"Current efforts? I'm not aware. But I can tell you at least, there are two done by students. One is by Tan Jin Ho. A short film called A Malaysian Friday made in the year 2000 and in the same year, there was a film called Singapura Dilanggar Todak done by a student, Alan Aziz Shamsudin who studied in Poland. He based it on Singapura Dilanggar Todak. His character designs were based on wayang kulit, background designs were based on batik, and he had gamelan music. And if you show this film anywhere, even though people didn't know about Malaysia, they would say, "Ah! Indonesia," at least. Tan Jin Ho did a film called A Malaysian Friday. It was all in 3D. It was about a Malay man who was living alone in the paddy field. You see him returning home with a bunch of bananas, then there's the azan, and then he went home to take a bath. So, it's very Malaysian. Nobody will say that it's American and so on. But many students, and I blame the lecturers for this, their final year projects use robots and the characters are very western. So if you send those films to international film festivals, nobody will say that it's made in Malaysia. So this is the

problem all the universities in Malaysia are facing now. I think one of the reasons is that the universities and colleges do not have books on all the *hikayats*, all the folktales, the legends and so on. Maybe that's it. I have mentioned this in my book.”

According to Hassan, a number of current Malay films uses common social problems as a the major background of their story. Mat rempit and illegal street racing plots, combined with characters dressing similar to western African-American and Hispanic culture and high usage of foul language simply does not reflect Malaysian culture. Hassan uses the example of *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* and the way the characters interact with each other to describe the general problem with human interaction within the local films.

“If you look at our Malay films, they are a disgrace. You see *mat rempit*, you see people driving fast cars, dressed like Negros and Mexicans, and their language is so cold. If you take for example, P. Ramlee's *Pendekar Bujang Lapok*, you can see how P. Ramlee is saying, and that film is relevant until today, he's telling the Malays, the Ahmad Nisfu and gang on the ferry on the right side, which is Singapore, to leave this place where the Malays have lost their roots and have become arrogant and uncultured, cross the river symbolically, cross over to Malaya and look for the original Malay, which is personified by Wak Mustar, the wife and daughter. The three *bujang lapok* cannot read or write but Ahmad Nisfu and gang can read and write. So, education did nothing for them. It just made them worst. So what he was saying in *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* in 1959, I think, is relevant until today. You look at the films done even by the academics, you should know better, people like Razak Mohaidin, Faizul Rashid and so on. You should know better because you also do research and so on. Why is it that they are even worst? I just tell you one scene in the film called *Tangkai Jering*. There was a medium shot of an older man wearing Malay costume and his dialogue is so coze. “Aku sepak kau!”, “Aku terajang kau” to Piee looking to ask for the hand of his daughter. Now what kind of signal are you giving to the young people? Is it ok for an older Malay man to do that? But you look at how the three bachelors approach the guru. Even though they made fun of the guru, but it was done in such a very nice manner. So we have actually lost our way. But if you look at Dr. Anuar Nor Arai's *Johnny Bikin Filem*, which has never been completed, you can see the Malayness. And if you look at *Bunohan*, you can see what he's saying, and he's saying that if you bring UMNO style development into Kelantan, you are going to destroy everything that is there and you end up with the son killing the father. And then the screen is torn. Which means that

the film industry has been damaged and the future generation of filmmakers have nowhere to go. It's very metaphorical.”

RTM, to a certain extent, has set a certain guides to what producers can and cannot do. According to Hassan, if a film or series attempts to portray a traditional Malay house, they must show that these houses are well equipped with modern facilities such as television and refrigerators. However, these do's and don't's are not consistent all the time and producers keep having to change the way their series appear based on the feedback from RTM. These changes involve additional financial expenditure towards their production budget.

“Well, at least I can say that RTM is telling them that there are certain things that they cannot do and so on. So even if you show a traditional Malay house, but you must show that they have TVs and refrigerators rather than showing that they are in the 1950s. Yes. There is some kind of control. Because they have gatekeepers who ask to change, sometimes it effects the production. Because after they ask to change something, and they come back, they say something else. So this gives a lot of trouble to the producers, they have to spend more money and more time and they can't get paid quickly.”

According to Kamil, government organizations should be encouraged to work together in marketing Malaysian animation as products that will attract tourists to the country. Through animation, audiences can see many different aspects of the country such as the different ethnicities of the people, the harmony of people from different faith and culture and also the different food that defines the country thus becoming the melting pot of Asia. Food such as Nasi Lemak is consumed by all races in the country and has become an integrated cuisine.

“That's why when we, MDeC, go and market these Malaysian animation, we use the label just Malaysian. That's why, one of my wish is that Tourism Malaysia can come hand-in-hand with us in marketing this thing. Because in a way, we are marketing the country also. Why do I say Tourism Malaysia? Because the animation that

we're sending out is really about a country that is multi-racial. Different faith, different culture, different food. But despite the difference, there is something uniquely Malaysian when you see it in an integrated way. Like when you talk about Nasi Lemak. Nasi Lemak is right now slowly becoming an integrated cuisine. So we always encourage our animators that everytime they produce animation, include Nasi Lemak as well because that one looks more common. Chinese, Indians all eat Nasi Lemak. So, those are the kind of things that we're doing. What I find is that what we say about Malaysia, most of them who do not know about Malaysia at all will find it easy to identify that this is the melting pot of Asia. So this ties back to tourism, Malaysia Truly Asia. That's what we want. Because their parents could be seeing CNN and whatnot and they notice the Malaysia Truly Asia tagline, so the children also watch Malaysian content. So children normally ask parents what they think of this. The parents may say that, yes, Malaysia is a melting pot. That's all we should be taking advantage of. Is there anything original, anything new about that? Singapore is doing it now. Singapore animation is all about Singapore being the melting pot of Asia. In their animation, they are trying to say things like banana leaf are theirs. That's what they're doing. They still have Indian-looking characters, their Samys, their Ah Chongs and their Mats. They have it because they are Singaporean animation. But because Singapore is more Chinese-centric, so you will see most of the background, the proportion is more heavy towards the Chinese parts of Singapore. You can't help it. While in Malaysia, the animation that we see, like Boboiboy, they try to be progressive and move out from that Malayness. They try to make it as open as possible. In a way Malaysia has an identity crisis, but then it has nothing to do with what we are talking. I feel we are sometimes confused Malaysian race."

Generally, Malaysian animation products are largely ethnocentric and at the same time lack the pulling power to persuade the urban young audiences from watching American and Japanese animation to local ones. As stated by Kamil, the Malaysian animation is in need of doing more than what has currently been done. Kamil suggested for policies to be put in place that forces broadcasters to be fair and less biased in the demand of content. The basic premise behind the animation industry are demand and supply. At the moment, supply does not seem to be an issue. On the other hand, demand is.

"What happened to the rest? Do we have the kind of demand power that can sustain us for a year and all that? No. Why? Because when you produce animation, you ask yourself, who watches them? If you produce Upin & Ipin, the only ones who watch are Malays. Even those

Malays who watch them are from rural areas because the Malays in urban areas are used to Ben10 and Hannah Montana on Disney XD. So, that's where the problem is. What we need right now is something more than what we are doing now. I do not know how I can put it to you, but MDeC's main role, or my personal role over the last 10 years is to try to find out more than what is happening right now. Because we know all those elements already. Now, where is the answer coming from? Well, I think the answer can come from policy, from playing around with law and legislation that forces our broadcasters to stop behaving bias. It could be like that. In terms of the industry, they should learn. A business works because there is always a demand. Because all this industry is a supply. You only need to supply if there is demand. Our problem now is that the supply part is not the issue. The demand part is. To depend on the rest of the world is difficult because not everybody can accept Boboiboy in North America, in a place where they have a lot of other things. So there is always something else."

7.9 Government Support Towards Malaysian Animation

There is definitely strong support from the Malaysian government in terms of development and funding. This strong support has allowed the industry to grow and currently heading towards producing world-class animation. Kamn believes the government has done well enough that to a certain extent, foreign players are benefitting from it as well. According to Kamn, the government's intention with all the various types of assistance is to help the industry grow similar to the path South Korea and other Asian countries have taken. However, there are expected failures as well. Some companies have failed to deliver in terms of the impact of the animation and the return of investment.

"The government has help a lot. I still remember from my days. Of course, during the earlier days, the government was not ready yet. But after that, there is a lot of support especially in helping the industry to develop. And of course the television stations accepted all the content. Then later on, these people will have ideas to produce good animation and of course some have already gone overseas. That shows that we are on the verge of having that world standard class. The government helps a lot."

Kamn added that in terms of government support, it is good enough that a number of people in the industry are taking the opportunities to produce more. Compared to the past, the

number of animation titles have increased. However, some titles have not met expectations of success.

“What more do you want to ask? I think it’s good enough. What’s important now is that if the government starts giving, I feel sure that the people outside are taking the opportunity to make the industry better or just take opportunities. We would like to see that with government help, the industry grows just like Korea and other Asian countries. If the government does help the industry, then it grows. And I think, Malaysia, compared to 20 years ago, there are no animation companies. But now you see. Everyone wants to do animation. Of course there are some who achieve and some who fail. Probably 80% fail and 20% achieve. But that’s good enough. Year by year they keep on increasing and one day, Malaysia can produce for the world market.”

Kamn also stated that the government, through its offerings of support, intends to help the animation industry grow. Some companies are successful. However, others are not due to factors such as lack of experience.

“Of course it’s simple. You see the government’s intention, through the Prime Minister, is to help the industry grow. Once the government supports, the people starting the business can go for grants. Of course some of these companies start from zero. The government can give them the grant staggeringly and the government will look into it. Of course there are news of certain companies being successful in producing animation like what they promise but of course some also fail because lack of experience or something like that. But we hope that the government is aware of all the situation.”

Although the government does provide assistance in the form of funds, grants, promotion etc., Hassan believes that one of the barriers to maximizing potential are the bureaucrats within the government and the industry themselves. Hassan stated that while MDeC tries to provide sufficient support, the producers end up not delivering. Misuse of money, staff integrity and job satisfaction issues are among the many problems faced by the industry. On the government’s side, Hassan believes that the people from FINAS do not fully understand about production to be effectively managing the industry.

As a result of these problems, RTM has resorted to outsourcing. According to Hassan, for 3D animation there are two different manners of how animation studios produce their animation. First is the straightforward manner of where each and every element of the animation is fully produced and each individual object within the animation is digitally animated and produced. However, the second manner involves a short-cut or the easy way of utilizing post-production and visual effects software by the method of squash and stretch to generate footage that appears to look like animation. These techniques are not clearly visible to the untrained eyes.

“The government provides the support, but down the line the problem is the bureaucrats. I can say that MDeC, even though they have tried their best, but sometimes the producers don’t deliver. Some misuse the money, then of course we have the problem of files being deleted, the staff are angry and so on. In FINAS, they have staff sitting on the panel but these people do not know their stuff. So many people in the industry are very angry at these people but of course they can’t say anything and they ask silly questions as if they know when they actually don’t understand about production. Even RTM are being cheated by a few companies. For instance, when the contract is done, the whole idea is for it to be done in Malaysia so that you develop the industry. But they go to India to get it done, they go to Indonesia, they go to the Philippines. Yes, they outsource it. The other problem is RTM looks at 3D animation. Of course they love 3D. But they don’t understand that there are two companies. One company does 3D correctly, spending more time, more money and so on. Another company is cheating. For instance, I give you the example of Kacang. Now Kacang, the background is live action. Not 3D. And then the characters of Kacang itself, when they do the squash and stretch, it’s not an animated squash and stretch. It’s using the post-production tools. Which means that they just pull the lever, it squashes. That’s not animation. But a company called EL Video Graphics which does Dianos, that one is true 3D. But they get paid the same. So even RTM people do not understand what’s happening. So, I have never been called as an advisor or consultant. It’s a problem with government departments. They think they are smart.”

So far, the animation industry has been heavily dependent on support from the government. Kamil stated that at times, the government funds up to 90% of an animation production. There are very few entrepreneurs among the industry players and the hunger for success is lacking as well. Hence, rather than being an industry, Kamil refers to the situation as charity and generates what he calls 'grant-erpreneurs'. Even the producers of Upin & Ipin are still relying on funds from the government to survive.

Kamil believes that the industry should be working on funding alternatives in order to further enhance the industry.

“Well, the industry is another little problem. Their problem is that they have been, so far right now, very few are actually entrepreneurs that are coming out from a private passion or private hungry mould. It's all supported by the government. The government is sometimes funding up to 90% of their production. So in that kind of situation, you don't have an industry. But you have a lot of charity. And in that kind of environment, you can't create that artistic mould that will push Malaysian identity and all that. You can't. I have not seen any evidence of it. Even Upin & Ipin also, they're supposed to be rich and all that, still depending on government funds to do the things that they do. In Hollywood, LA and all that, you will drop to the floor. But you learn, you wake up and then you become something else. So over here, they're so pampered by the government. That's why I said the government must switch off and one of the things we are trying to do right now is trying to find alternatives, means of funding all this. It shouldn't just be government money, you know. Why should I open up a stationery store when I'm not interested in selling stationery? You know it's going to be a disaster. When I was in Shell, people who run petrol stations can even make money. If you don't devote 80%, 90% of your time to it, it will still collapse. Malaysia is charitable. We have a lot of 'granter-preneurs' here. Not entrepreneurs but people who depend on grants. Why isn't this industry moving up? I'll tell you why. One, the market is not big enough to sustain and besides, we are split into different demographics, Indians, Malays. So you won't find one superstar that can make millions. When was the last time you heard any artist here really making money. Well, Siti Nurhaliza, cheating because she got married to a rich family and maybe she can make money on her own. But she's an exception. The rest? The majority? No. If we're talking about all these AC Mizals, they are just one in a thousand. Even that is not sustainable.”

7.10 Future Direction

According to Hassan, in terms of technical abilities, Malaysia is not facing much of a problem due to the higher competency among the younger generation of Malaysian animators.

This is further helped by the wide array of tutorial videos on how to use animation software widely available through the internet. However, an important aspect that requires improvement is on visual storytelling that begins from story development to visual development and then the storyboard that in turn completes the concept or story, which is to be animated.

Hassan theorizes that Hollywood delivers visual storytelling using four theories, which are archetypes, semiotics, binary opposition and the principles of gestalt perception.

“As far as technical abilities, there is no problem at all because the young people of today, they are very computer savvy. Even if you don’t teach them the software, even in a week or two, they can master it because their brain is wired like that. Unlike me, I have to call my son all the time. So, there is another aspect. This is where I come in. That is why I am still popular with the universities, especially the private sector who call me in for visual storytelling. Visual storytelling begins with story development. So from story development, we go to visual development. In visual development, we start to go on the storyboard. And the storyboard is about visual storytelling. Now, Hollywood has never revealed how they tell stories visually. Over the last 40 years of teaching, I discovered that Hollywood has been using four theories, archetypes, semiotics, binary opposition and the principles of gestalt perception. Something to do with perception. And I discovered that we are using all of it but we didn’t know the theories. So if you go to academia.edu, and then you can type my name, you can find 20 over of my papers. And some of them I talk about visual storytelling and these theories, about how important it is to teach these theories in schools today. So visual storytelling is about communicating meaning without dialogue. Like the frame, left, right, top, bottom, center, every part has got a meaning. I give you an example, if the hero is standing on the left, he will win. But when he stands on the right, he will lose. So if you look at Hollywood movies, the army that’s coming from the left will win. The army that’s coming from the right will lose. And if somebody’s wearing dark glasses, he’s a bad guy. Or, when you take a shot from the back, he’s the bad guy. This is visual storytelling that has never been revealed and there are no

books. I'm the only one teaching this. In Philippines, I went to Norway, Singapore. I taught all over and they didn't know all this."

Hassan believes that it is imperative to go back to the fundamentals of storytelling to improve the Malaysian animation industry. While the younger generation are able to cope well with developing technology and the technical aspects of animation, storytelling involves going deeper into a story, understanding the characters and story structure and in turn identifying how to effectively put all these items into visuals using icons, indexes or symbols.

"Ok. On the training side, more and more important is that we go back to the basics which is about storytelling. You don't have to teach them so much on the techniques, on the technical aspects, software and so on. You have to go deeper in developing the story, understanding the characters, understanding story structure and then understanding how to put it across visually using icons or indexes or symbols. So then only we can be on par with international production. The other thing is, in the final year, especially for degree students, they should go into experimental animation. This is where you explore ideas and you break the rules that you have learned. And teaching of literature, theatre, music and philosophy is as important as all the animation subjects because I believe, since I've been doing these outcome-based trainings from 1970s. Only last year they came up with OBE. So I've been doing this from the 70s and what I did was, whenever I had to train people, I started from the bottom. Come up with an idea, create a story, create the characters, until the final stage in post-production. Now, the idea is not to make you an animator but to make you an animation filmmaker. That's how they teach in Europe. So in America, it's about big businesses and specialization of labor, which we cannot go in because sometimes the animator has to go in as the writer, as the voice over guy. We can't have that because our studios are smaller."

One aspect that should be investigated upon is the education curriculum. Hassan believes that generally, non-Malay students (and to a certain extent, Malay students as well) are unaware of various Malaysian folktales and legends.

"I can say that among my non-Malay students, they are not aware of all these folktales, legends and so on. But then, even Malays students also, they don't know. Now there is something wrong with our curriculum that Malay literature is not being taught. Only when you teach Malay

literature can they understand about the roots of the country, the culture of the country. So you cannot blame people when they don't understand our own culture and then they start to copy western culture. So during the British time, they taught English literature and they had literary and debating societies and they stage plays and so on. Now all this became missing when Anwar Ibrahim took over. So he was the one who threw away English literature. He's the one to be blamed."

Two of the important elements that will determine the future of Malaysian animation are storytelling capabilities and mastering of technology. According to Kamil, animation is the best form of expression. The limitless possibilities provided by animation enables people to generate ideas without having to worry about how to visualize them for an audience. What cannot be shown through real-live demonstrations due to constraints such as danger, complexity of process, limited camera angles etc. can now be shown as realistic as possible as shown in films such as Avatar and in video games such as Tom Clancy's The Division, which was powered by Snowdrop Engine.

Kamil added that animation is no longer limited to producing film and television series. It has moved on to training, industrial design and urban town planning. Animation has also enhanced other areas like medicine where medical practitioners are able to explain various medical conditions even better through visuals.

"The future of Malaysian animation lies in the use of animation technology for other things. Remember, we talk about animation here. We talked only about the entertainment side but we have a 'beyond entertainment' agenda. This is where animation is used. So previously we were talking about how paper and pen was invented to write only children's stories. Now we are entering the area where the pen can now write on the paper, scientific things, medical things, religious things, information things. That's where we are entering right now. The good thing about animation is that later, animation will be the best form of expression. It's not just for entertainment. It can be about as simple as the *solat*, you can use 3D animation. So it's not a waste. The same people that we are training right now in 3D animation, the same people can be used by the people in Proton, by EON to design a new car. They can be used by DBKL for 3D simulation of urban planning. They can also be used by FMM low food plastic to design the next container. But they can also be used by the medical profession to design the

human heart so that later when you have other things like tele-health and all that, the doctor can explain to you. More importantly, it can go straight to that education mode. It's digital animation, it's the best way to represent things. So to me, that is where we should be heading. The entertainment side is there but we shouldn't be saying that animation is all there is to animation. Animation comes from the Greek word, to animate, bring something to life. So, what is it? We have our education sector that requires simulation. I can tell history lessons right now by visualizing what Parameswara was like during the founding of Malacca. Why isn't Malaysia heading towards this direction yet? Because there are no policies."

MDeC provides support to the animation industry not just by funding animation production alone, but to provide training funds through scholarships. Unfortunately, according to Kamil, there has been very minimal takers for the scholarships offered. While opportunities have been made available, there aren't enough people grabbing them.

"Yes. We have a scholarship system here. I mean right now, what do you want to study? Augmented reality? Be my guest. We have had the scholarship for a year and a half but no takers. And then we are always accused of not campaigning. I said, my goodness. I put it on a website but then people just don't come. So what are we? Malaysians, we are not a hungry nation. We are not really a hungry nation. We only know how to complain. We don't have this and that. Like the development fund I was talking about. How long has it been around? We put it on websites across universities, still, people don't read. Malaysia is a country where action speaks louder than words. The success of Upin & Ipin have actually made a lot of people stop whatever they are doing and open up animation studios because they hear stories about millions being made. Upin & Ipin was a gamble for us at one time. The gamble was this, they were also thinking like everybody else. Animation which was different than the rest. To stamp the US imports from coming in. So, they were right. US imports are all about US culture. They think hot dogs are cool, Kentucky Fried Chicken, burgers are all cool. So where is the local equivalent that makes eating *cincalok* cool. So Upin & Ipin was born out of that thing. But guess what, the main person there was a businessman. He was the least artistic person. You know Haji Borhan, right? He was smart enough to go to MMU to attend the convocation and then saw the work of the final year students. So that's where he picked up his first batch of animators. So that's what we need now. The business side married to the artistic side. Not just to help the animation industry but to help the other industries also. So right now, it is the government who is fulfilling the role of the business. The government is only a temporary gatekeeper. Later, it should go to the

Mydins of the world. That's why I am a firm believer, because of my finance background, I am a firm believer in tax. If there are fiscal incentives in creative, people like Mydin will start investing in this. And when they do, there will be one new element that comes in, the return of investment in their part. I give you RM1 million, don't think you can escape just like that. I need to see what is my return. It will force the creative people to also become business savvy which is not happening right now because 90% of them are funded by the government. If we want to summarize, yes, the government has been putting money into this area. There is already a success story. So right now, I'm saying the raw materials are there. It just needs one more spark to emerge and that is the business side. Because it is the business side which will force Malaysians to understand markets. Right now, they don't even understand the market that they are in. MDeC has to do that. My department is the one that has to go and tell them that girls' animation are currently selling better than the boys'. And even that, we can divide. Either four to eight-year-olds. The pre-school girls. Up to that level. The government is still doing the job. But if you are a businessman, you don't open a shop selling beef in a community of Indian Hindus who don't eat beef. That's about the nearest thing I can give as an example. So that's our next challenge, the business part. The minute that starts, then the banks will start to come in. Right now, the banks are afraid to handle it. Mention the word of doing animation, banks are all scared because this is the least ROI."

Kamil, who is also a self-proclaimed film buff, stated that Malaysian animation does not have that strong cultural, nationalistic background. Generally, Malaysian animation are mirroring the practices of the American animation industry. However, Kamil stressed that the Americans have the advantage of concealing subliminal messages within their animation and thus indirectly injecting their cultural values into the audience without the audience even realizing it. Examples such as the popularity of fries and soda has shown that when these items are embeded within animation, it strengthens the acceptance of these foods within a society.

"First and foremost, I am also a film buff because I watch a lot of movies. It's not just watching, I also analyze, try to see it as a work of art of the people behind making it. If I apply the same rules for animation, a lot of animation in Malaysia do not have that strong cultural, nationalistic background. Why? Because most are creating it on the basis that, to get commercialized, you need to have something that is fun and accessible and doesn't inject the mind. In other words,

they are following the same examples as the Americans. But what they don't understand is that Americans have the advantage of putting subliminal text even into their animation which makes it easy for them to embed their cultural values in their animation into people without people knowing it. And they in fact have one big advantage, they are affecting our young. Because parents do not watch. So their teachers right now are their animation. That's why it is easy for a Malaysian kid today to be raised. You can go to McDonalds very easily. Since they were young, french fries is not an issue. Tell me how many American animation which doesn't have Coke or soda or fries or something to do with that, the ones going for drive-ins and all that? So, that's one example. So if you tell me where we are heading, we need to have that cultural policy instituted for the country. That cultural thing that says that everything that we do is consciously shown to other nations, what we really are. Does it mean that everybody must do animation like Upin & Ipin? No. It could be part of our history, a book like the ones by A. Samad Said. And this is where we go to another realm using animation as real storytelling. Remember like Futurama that exist as an animated series? It runs week by week. It's normal for them. The effectiveness is when they reinforce this all the time. You watch Ben10 three times a day, you'll get it. These are all commercial-driven things. So why is it popular around the world until people cry watching them? You see, people don't cry watching animation, but this one, a lot of people cry. Because, after a while, you forget that it is an animation. Can Malaysia reach that standard? If you ask me, yes, we can? But they must have good material. You see, after a while people watch Grave of the Fireflies, they don't realize that they are watching an animation and that is exactly the effect that we want. After a while, they just get absorbed into the story the same way you get absorbed five minutes into White House Down, you get straight into the story. So this is where the power of animation comes in which we haven't exploited yet. The part where we use animation to tell a story. Now for children, it is just about telling the story, like Ben10. It's like showing anything in 20 minutes but that is the perfect vehicle to creating the brand. But the other type is the cultural carrier where it is based and we take up the story from. You ask me, what Malaysian stories can we do? Plenty. If you have a look at some of the novels like *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan*, but that one maybe a little too complicated. But maybe *Patah Sayap Terbang Jua*, you know, that kind of thing. It can all be turned. Even 2D is fine. It doesn't have to be 2D or 3D. Right now everybody here thinks that 3D is the best. No, 2D can still work. The one I said before, Grave of the Fireflies is 2D. Why don't you go all the way back to Disney, the few animation that the Americans normally cry or have much watching are the Walt Disneys. All of the Walt Disney classics are in 2D. So that is the quality of the story. Everybody knows. What is the difference between that? You ask me, do you want to reach the level of Disney? I would say, yes. Why? Because that is driven by passion and that is also driven by this obsession for perfection but using animation as the medium. We have a lot of mythical stories. But you see, Snow White is not a copyrighted work. It's a public domain.

And yet, when you think about Snow White, you only think about the Disney version. So in Malaysia, if we talk about Pak Pandir, why can't we have a Malaysian version of Pak Pandir? When I meet my artiste friends, they all say that it is possible but we don't have the money. You see? It all comes back to that. I firmly believe that money is only one part of the equation. I don't know how to explain. But it's been like there always hasn't been enough money. But it is worthwhile as an issue. Maybe you can create forums. Just ask. Because I don't have the answers, but maybe 10 other people do. So we're asking, what is really the problem here? If you ask me, is it the lack of talent? No. I will tell you personally. If I am living in the kind of environment in the west right now, I would be writing books. I wouldn't be working here because secretly I want to be a writer. But in Malaysia, if I were to write a book, how do you think I'm going to make a living? Our population is 26 million. If it is 26 million Malays, it is ok. If Malaysians did not have religious barriers, it's fine. But when the government is pouring money, supposedly it is for all. But when you do it, it increases the audience number but still within the realm of the same race. None of which are horizontal. Malay productions are still targeted at Malays. Well, I hope all this isn't too much."

Kamil believes that in terms of technology, the capability to afford animation software and the abilities to use them, the Malaysian animation industry is not really facing any problems since industry practitioners are already familiar and has mastered software such as Adobe, Maya and ToonBoom. However, that does not necessarily guarantee award-winning animation since there are other aspects such as storytelling involved. As Kamil further put it, Malaysia is advanced in terms of what money can buy. Unfortunately, the attitudes and mindsets of the people has not evolved at the same pace.

"If you say future direction of animation, as a technology tool, it's not a stranger to Malaysian animation industry because everybody's aware. Software such as Adobe, Maya, ToonBoom, everyone knows them. But that's just a bit like me telling everybody how to write. But whether you can write a Nobel Prize-winning book or not, it's another story. So what is the story? That is the same answer for this. The future direction is how can Malaysia produce Nobel Prize or Booker Prize winners? Why is it that Tash Aw, who is Malaysian-born, had to go to England, write a book, then win an award. What would have happened to Tash Aw if he stayed here? Maybe he wouldn't write. So immediately when you look at those kinds of issues, we can all ask, how many Nobel Prize potential winners that are now in Malaysia and they don't even know they can be Nobel Prize winners? How many

researchers and universities right now who could become Nobel Prize for physics, biology or whatever. Those who are here but do not know that they had it. That is the measurement of a nation standard. So when people say that Malaysia has become a very advanced nation, I would say that I disagree. Malaysia is very advanced in terms of what money can buy. But it is not advanced in a natural evolution of our attitude and our mindset. I don't know if that would take another whole philosophy but the connection is that animation is the branch of the creative industry. The creative industry is an industry that is build around individual creativity that can be monetized. That's what it's all about. I think of something and make money out of it. That is what this industry is all about. So any other sub-ecosystem that doesn't support in giving me my freedom of thinking will not help this industry, animation included. That's why even our film industry is in trouble. Like what we were talking about just now. Animation is part of the creative industry. Film and television are also part of the creative industry. So the creative industry is the mother of all. What is happening to the new generation of people who are going to hold the future of this industry? Has anybody looked at the curriculum in primary one?"

The public education system in Malaysia is another challenge to look at. At this moment in time, Kamil believes that the current public education system is somewhat hindering the creativity of young Malaysians. Education systems should continuously be synergizing to enable more creative ideas to blossom.

"Yes. I know. That's why I send them to private school. People tell me that when I send my children to private school, I'm showing off. It's not about that. It hurts my pocket every month having to fork out extras but in the school in Section 13, Shah Alam, I saw that creativity was dead. I consider my children creative because since they were very young, I taught them drawing and all that, music. When they entered school, it all perished. I asked, what happened? Then I had to send to a private school. Although it's a private school, it applies the local curriculum. The best part is that after school, they have activities like plays, drama, theater, and poetry. That's what I want because you will be thankful for knowing these things. Sometimes you would curse the fact that you have to memorize poetry but later on when you become someone like an accountant, like me, this somehow makes be become a better accountant. My friends, better engineers. That's why when you see how we are right now, all homework based. So, this is the problem. That's the whole problem with this country right now. Our education system, our whole support system is only for the current generation. Where is the next one? Like I said, we say we miss P. Ramlee. How many potential P. Ramlees we have now who are aged from 8-10? For all you know, it's half a million. But then, they are oppressed. What is

an artiste? The environment has to be correct, the support must be correct. Then it works. And the other thing about creative is that it must be continuously synergizing and then a lot of ideas come up. This is not an individual job that you do alone sitting in a corner and you expect to find inspiration. That's why at the beginning of our discussion I said the books are here. Now is just the matter of interpreting because one book, you can interpret it 10 times. Even the Bible has been interpreted numerous times. They can even interpret the Gospel. So when people say censorship is the problem here, what are they worried about? They say that they can't do this and that. Well, even if they were told they can't, what are they thinking of doing in the first place? Corrupt policemen? I'm not interested to see a movie about a corrupt policeman? I'm more interested to see what makes a policeman corrupt because that one does not involve censorship anymore. That one involves good writing. It's roughly what I tell people in forums and whatnot. So that's about it."

7.11 Conclusion

The in-depth interviews conducted has shed light to the challenges faced by the Malaysian animation industry towards providing animation content that meets or exceeds the demands of both local and foreign audiences. The responses of Kamil Othman, Hassan Abd Muthalib and Kamn Ismail may vary from one another. However, their arguments share a common conclusion; Malaysian animation has plenty of room to grow.

Kamn Ismail and Kamil Othman, for example, has cited that government support has been more than enough and that the problem lies more on the storytelling aspect of animation. This however has been refuted by Hassan Abd Muthalib who stated that although there is support from the government, there are those within power (not necessarily politicians) whom are abusing the funds for their own personal gain which is preventing from maximizing the benefits of the funds for the production of good quality animation.

There is also strong belief as well towards the importance of storytelling over including national identity as part of the content. As mentioned by Kamil Othman, if a story is well told, the identity will automatically follow. At the moment, the future of Malaysian animation is full of hope. The key lies within the industry practitioners to produce animation

that is too good to be left on the shelf and force television stations to air the content due to the huge potential of well-produced animation content.

In order to improve, practitioners in the industry must be willing to experiment on new things, gain experience and further their training to enhance competency in producing high quality output. With the rapid development of both hardware and software technology, there is hope.

CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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8.1 Introduction

Animation in Malaysia is undeniably growing, showing glimpses of its potential and weaknesses at the same time. Quite a number of animated series and films have been produced. However, it still lacking in terms of numbers, strength of stories and other aspects. Each and every one of the animation produced in Malaysia, by Malaysians and for Malaysians would intentionally or unintentionally depict characteristics of Malaysia. This was never a question to begin with. Rather, what these characteristics are is the issue investigated as part of this study.

Identifying these characteristics help in recognizing common traits and patterns shared among Malaysian animation and differentiate locally produced animation with those from other countries. These characteristics also allow the presentation of Malaysia, its people, its culture and many other aspects to the local audience and also to the world. Bearing in mind the success of anime in Japan and the popularity of American cartoons, Malaysian animation still has some way to go in becoming identifiable to audiences.

At the moment, there are even local audiences, mainly children, who unconsciously consume animation content without being able to distinguish between local and foreign products. One may question the importance of the ability to differentiate Malaysian animation from the rest. However, based on the aims, policy and support of various governing agencies in developing the creative content industry and at the same time promoting the country, it is vital for Malaysian animation to be easily distinguishable from those of other countries. Achieving this would enable the country to develop a unique trait of popular creative culture similar to anime in Japan, K-Pop from South Korea, Hollywood movies from the United States, telenovela from Venezuela and soap operas from Indonesia.

The National Creative Industry Policy (DIKN), for example, aims at developing talent based on creativity, innovation and technology to achieve economic success through creative products and intellectual property rights. All these are to be achieved consistently with culture and pristine values of a multi-ethnic racial composition. Hence, bearing Malaysian identity, animation has the capability to promote Malaysia through the offering of creative content. This has been demonstrated by the support of MdeC towards titles such as Upin & Ipin through training, funding and promotion.

By now, all of the research questions have been addressed and the answers will help in describing the animation titles produced in Malaysia, understanding what makes local animation Malaysian, the views and reactions of local and foreign audiences towards Malaysian animation and the direction Malaysian animation is heading towards. This is achieved through identification of Malaysian animation characteristics and the identification of gaps between the audience reception and the understanding and actions of the animation industry on the current state of Malaysian animation.

The results of this study are used to analyze the difference between audience reception and the understanding of the animation industry on audiences' views, perception and reception that helps recognize the strength and issues of Malaysian animation. There is a gap and difference of understanding that should be resolved, particularly by the animation industry, in order to further develop the Malaysian animation industry by fulfilling the needs and wants of audiences and other relevant parties such as governing bodies and funders.

To a certain extent, animation in Malaysia has seen many positive developments. The increasing number of animated titles, the improvement of technical capabilities, the increasing support by governing and funding bodies and the reception of the audience are all indications that Malaysian animation is headed in the right direction. However, being a growing industry,

there are barriers and challenges faced by Malaysian animation producers in providing the best content they can produce.

8.2 Animation Titles in Malaysia from 1978 to 2010

The first objective study aims to identify the animation titles that have been produced since 1978 until 2010. A total of 40 animated series and nine animated films were identified through web searches, phone enquiries and email enquiries. While some of the titles were identified along with the year of broadcast, others did not include that info due to the unavailability of the information. These animation titles covers many forms of genre with most of them targeted at children.

8.2.1 Lack of Choice and Variety

It is apparent that throughout the history of animation in Malaysia until 2010, there have only been 40 animated series and nine animated films identified through this study. There is a possibility that there may be more. However, since these other titles fall outside the category of a feature film and did not appear in Malaysian cinema, these titles were more difficult to trace. Furthermore, only *Silat Lagenda*, *Putih*, *Budak Lapok* and *Geng: Pengembaraan Bermula* are feature films that have appeared in Malaysian cinemas since 1978.

The number of titles produced both for television and film reflect the responses from the informants from Focus Group Interviews (see page 264 and 293) as well as the interviewees during the In-Depth interview (see page 331). There is a lack of numbers in terms of animation produced in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the numbers are growing over the years and emerging new technologies have allowed more animation to be produced in shorter periods of time.

There is obviously a need to increase the number of animation titles should all relevant parties intend to further develop the industry in terms of quality and quantity. Informants have cited the lack of variety and choice towards consuming Malaysian animation content. These are due to reasons as stated by interviewees such as the small number of animation studios, the high production costs and lack of good stories and scripts that are deemed to have the potential to become profitable.

Additionally, informants from the Focus Group Interview brought up the issue of Malaysian animation being heavily-targeted at children rather than focusing on other groups of audiences as well.

8.3 Characteristics of Malaysian Animation

Three animated series were studied to identify the characteristics of Malaysian animation. The whole series of *Usop Sontorian*, *Bola Kampung* (Season 1 to Season 4) and *Upin & Ipin* (Season 1 to Season 3) were used as samples for the research. A structuralist-semiotic analysis of these series was done by reviewing the animation, frame by frame, to identify the tangible, intangible, verbal and non-verbal traits that define Malaysian animation. These traits were identified through both audio and visual means.

Findings show that being Malaysian animation, these titles portrayed various characteristics that include tangible, intangible, verbal and non-verbal signs that reflect the origins of its production. 13 categories were formed based on the analysis of the mentioned animated series. These findings have been categorized through the method of Inductive Category Development and evaluated halfway through to ensure the accuracy of categorization. These categories include general traits, clothing, food and drinks, language and communication, people, buildings, structures and landmarks, culture and custom, values,

geographical features and locations, agriculture, entertainment and games, religions and mythologies.

Clothes are among the signs that depict the identity of a society. Through Malaysian animation, from headwear, to shirts, to shoes, clothes reveal a sense of uniqueness of Malaysians. The Songkok, Kopiah, Baju Melayu, Saree and others portray the heritage and background of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the Malaysian society. These signs were evident throughout all the titles analyzed.

Another element found that was categorized, as one of the characteristics is food and drinks. Although similar to cuisine from nearby archipelagos, food and drinks that were listed in this category are commonly found food and beverages influenced by the cooking styles of the society. Further added into this category are related practices with regards to handling of food and drinks such as eating using fingers and the use of plastic packets to contain drinks.

Officially, the four major language used in Malaysia are Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, Tamil and English. As the main tool of communication, various languages, accents, dialects are practiced in Malaysia. Bahasa Malaysia and different accents of Bahasa Malaysia were found in the analysis. This is in addition to the usage of tones and the different methods of addressing within the different races in the society. However, it is also important to note that there are other official languages in Malaysia that did not make an appearance in any of the animated series analyzed. Informants from the Focus Group Interviews did mention that they were expecting more content featuring other languages used in Malaysia.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation comprising of Malays, Chinese, Indians and other minority races. The analysis of Malaysian animation sampled revealed all major races with an addition to Punjabs and aboriginals. The multi-ethnic composition of Malaysian people is an identity of the country. However, what was depicted through these animation was heavily ethnocentric and skewed towards the Malays. All the main characters such as Usop from

Usop Sontorian, Iwan from *Bola Kampung* and Upin and Ipin from *Upin & Ipin* were dominantly Malay. There are appearances from other races. However, it is at a minimum. This has also been pointed out by informants of the Focus Group Interview and also by Kamil Othman.

Buildings, structures and landmarks are also symbols of a country. Through analysis on Malaysian animation, buildings such as the Petronas Twin Towers, the KL Tower and the Sultan Abdul Samad Building were noted. These buildings are iconic landmarks that carry behind it various historical facts about the country.

Cultures and custom are common practices that symbolize and represent a group of people or society. With the multi-ethnic background of Malaysians, there are various practices that were depicted in Malaysian animation. However, similar to the dominant appearance of Malays, the cultures and custom that appeared were also predominantly Malay. There is a lack of cultural elements from other races.

Another element that was found in Malaysian animation reflecting Malaysian identity was the values involved. These were ideas and concepts commonly agreed upon by either the Malaysian society as a whole or by certain ethnic groups in particular. Similar to the appearance of the Malay people and culture, the values that appeared in these animation were also predominantly Malay.

There were also geographical features and locations symbolizing Malaysian identity. The general climate and places such as states and villages that depict Malaysian characteristics were among the elements found in Malaysian animation. Warm climate, rain, the states of Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak and Pahang, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, the area of Gombak and also the village of Parit Sonto in Johor are the elements identified.

Agricultural elements were also evident in Malaysian animation. Major agricultural crops for both export and domestic markets were identified such as rubber, coconut, bananas and paddy. These agricultural crops relate directly to some of the food identified in this animation such as paddy and rice, bananas and banana goreng pisang as well as coconut and rendang.

There were also games and entertainment elements depicting Malaysian identity. Elements such as Tarik Upih and Baling Selipar are common childhood games while sports such as Badminton and Sepaktakraw have a more serious tone to it with Malaysia being among the top dominating countries in these sports.

Religion and mythology were also evident in Malaysian animation. However, being predominantly Malay, most of these elements revolved around Malay people, Malay beliefs, Malay culture and Islam. These elements included tools and signs of worship such as the Sejadah, decorative Quran verses and places of worship such as the Masjid and Surau. Additionally, other findings that are worth noting include the following:

8.3.1 Reflection of Malaysia

All of the the characteristics identified are signs that reflect Malaysia as the origin of these animation. Although not fully noted by the informants from the Focus Group Interviews and In-Depth Interviews, some of the characteristics were indeed mentioned and recognized by both the audience and the industry. However, as Kamn Ismail puts, the extent of understanding these characteristics differ from one party to the other. Hence, it results in a blurred distinction between local and foreign content. Kamil Othman defined *Supa Strikas* as a Malaysian animation even though it originates from South Africa and falls outside the definition of ‘Malaysian animation’ according to the researcher. *Supa Strikas* was produced in Malaysia by the Malaysian studio, Animasia.

Although, as expected, these characteristics and all the elements identified serve as indications and answers the question of what makes local animation Malaysian, the main purpose was to identify what these characteristics were rather than debate about whether or not Malaysian animation would reflect Malaysian characteristics. This would be too obvious.

8.3.2 Sharing of Identity Elements with Other Countries

The characteristics identified are verified against general knowledge, references and intercoder reliability to ensure the validity of the findings in this section of the study. It is important to note that some of these characteristics are commonly shared with those from other countries. Hence, it is vital to stress that this study is not meant to put claims on who owns what but rather to simply identify the signs of Malaysian animation. Batik, for example, is a cultural heritage not only for Malaysia but also for countries such as Indonesia, India and China. However, this does not deter the fact that it still is part of the Malaysian heritage and thus listed in one of the categories.

8.3.3 Uncertainties in Categorization

Some characteristics were more difficult to categorize. Bloops, discrepancies and overlapping of voices in Bola Kampung may not be tangible signs of Malaysian animation per se, but the fact that Malaysian animation is deemed by audiences to still be lagging behind due to technical inferiority compared to other countries is a sign that the industry is still developing and hiccups are expected here and there.

Other items within the categories are at times more difficult to be verified due to insufficient information. For example, drinks sold in plastic packets are not part of a traditional heritage, but is still a sign that reflects the usage of drinkware in Malaysia. Where

people in other countries are used to cups, mugs and tumblers, Malaysians are familiar with the usage of plastic bags to contain drinks. However, this piece of information is just based on the observations of the researcher and verified through intercoder reliability.

8.4 Audience Reception

Whether the audience accepts, partially accepts or rejects Malaysian animation defines their reception towards it. The method of understanding audience reception was done through Focus Group Interviews where the results were categorized through the usage of NVIVO tree nodes. Rather than simply labeling the responses as acceptance, partial acceptance or rejection, the feedback obtained were divided into items that contain details to the knowledge, understanding, views and behaviors of the audience pertaining to Malaysian animation. This was done to help identify further details that are still lacking in understanding Malaysian animation reception.

In terms of Malaysian animation viewed, the informants of the Focus Group Interview mentioned a total of 12 animation titles. These titles are *1st Met*, *Anak-anak Sidek*, *Boboiboy*, *Bola Kampung*, *Kampung Boy*, *Keluang Man*, *Putih*, *Sang Kancil*, *Silat Lagenda*, *Upin & Ipin*, *Usop Sontorian* and *Yokies*. Among these animation, only *1st Met* is an animated short film, *Silat Lagenda* and *Putih* are feature films while the rest are animated series.

Audiences were introduced to Malaysian animation through various channels. Traditional and new media channels such as television, computers and internet applications such as social networking sites and web searches have allowed audiences to access animation from almost anywhere and at any time. There are also advertisements introducing the informants to Malaysian animation. Additionally, informants also stated that they learn about these titles from family members and friends either at home, in schools or college or from merchandize sold at various outlets.

There were mixed responses by the informants with regards to their first impressions towards Malaysian animation. Some informants were neutral in their responses and stated that Malaysian animation is different compared to foreign animation. These differences were in terms of characters, the language used, location settings of the animation and how the storylines were deployed. Informants also added that Malaysian animation are honest reflections of society.

Some provided positive first impression reviews due to the fact that Malaysian culture can be shared with the rest of the world. This was in addition to the interest generated by Malaysian animation which some perceive as being generally satisfactory. Additionally, informants also stated their liking towards the cute, physical appearance of the characters.

There were also informants who indicated their displeasure towards Malaysian animation when they first encountered them. The usage of bad language, how boring and unoriginal the shows were, and poor graphics were all the negative inputs provided by the informants. Furthermore, the lack of choice and variety of local animation content that was also echoed by Kamil Othman, Hassan Muthalib and Kamn Ismail during the In-Depth Interviews.

Upon further investigation on their favorable impression on Malaysian animation, informants stated that Malaysian animation was of good quality with good and logical storylines, interesting and fun to watch which in some cases made them memorable. There were also attractive catch phrases such as ‘Betul, betul, betul!’ from *Upin & Ipin* that were catchy to the audience. There were a variety of characters with some being conceptualized and developed well. Additionally, there were values in which lessons could be learned in Malaysian animation.

Further investigations also revealed dislikes on Malaysian animation. Some informants believed that Malaysian animation also brought a bad influence on local culture and how village or *Kampung* culture was heavily used in Malaysian animation. Contrary to other informants, some believe that Malaysian animation can also be unrealistic, unoriginal and runs on poor storylines. Other comments included the high quantity of ads and also some animation being very short in duration. Finally, consistent with other responses received from both the Focus Group Interviews and also the In-Depth Interviews, informants also stated the lack of variety and choice for locally-produced animation.

Informants were also asked to provide feedback on the differences between Malaysian animation with foreign animation. Informants identified differences that included clothing, lifestyle, usage of language, multi-racial characters, storylines and plots, and technical qualities that included quality of graphics, soundtrack and voice acting. All of these were deemed by the informants to have some influence on the attractiveness of Malaysian animation.

Informants agreed that there are elements of Malaysian identity found in Malaysian animation. These elements include clothing, culture and custom and also the people or the characters involved in the animation. These elements are also consistent with the characteristics found in the structuralist-semiotic analysis. However, as stated before, the predominant appearance and depiction of Malay people and their practices have resulted in a more biased and ethnocentric portrayal of Malay society rather than representing all the races in the country.

When questioned on the changes to their animation-viewing patterns due to the existence of Malaysian animation, informants provided mixed feedback. Some informants mentioned that nothing had changed due to the lack of choice and variety of local animation content. Some informants stated that they would definitely watch more Malaysian animation

while others will either not watch them anymore or shall only consider watching them should there be improvements in the future.

Informants suggested that Malaysian animation should be used to create awareness on Malaysian culture. This can be done through adding more choices and varieties for local animation content. Government support must also expand along with improvements in the development of better storylines and merchandizing. Informants also suggested the usage of proper language and add other languages as well to reflect on the composition of races in Malaysia with the insertion of messages important to the country. This can be achieved with the inclusion of other races in Malaysian animation. The strength of characters must be improved as well and this can be accomplished by the usage of public icons or adaptations from other stories. Additionally, according to informants, technical competence must also be improved by sending animation practitioners for overseas training to improve graphics and design.

Furthermore, these Focus Group Interviews also identified other findings such as the difference and gaps between the knowledge, attitude and behavior towards Malaysian animation. The knowledge of the audiences in terms of technical elements was expected to be less than those from the industry. Hence, regardless whether their statements were inaccurate in a number of occasions, it still provides an insight as to their acceptance or rejection towards how certain qualities were defined by the animation industry. For example, in terms of technical competency, Kamn Ismail, Hassan Muthalib and Kamil Othman all stated that in terms of technical competency, animators in Malaysia are more or less at par with their overseas counterparts. However, feedback from the audience suggested that in terms of graphics, drawings and illustrations, Malaysia is still lagging behind. This is one example of a gap that can be addressed by the animation industry as these are among the elements that encourages viewers to watch more of locally produced animation.

8.5 Challenges in Malaysian Animation

Malaysian animation is currently still at the developing stage. Although industry players are claiming that technical capabilities have improved to be at par with foreign animation, audiences beg to differ. The increasing number of 3D animation is a sign that animators have become more and more competent with the skills required for the production of 3D animation. However, audiences have repeatedly stated in the Focus Group Interview that poor graphics and illustrations are preventing them from enjoying Malaysian animation even more.

i. Technical Proficiency

Generally, the industry believes that the technical proficiency of the Malaysian animation practitioners are already at par with the rest of the world, although this contradicts with views from informants of the Focus Group Interview. However, common consensus between both the informants of the Focus Group Interview and the interviewees of the In-Depth Interview noted a weakness in terms of the plots and storylines in Malaysian animation.

ii. Training

MDeC and ANIMAS both realize the issues and weaknesses in storytelling. Hence, these bodies are offering various types of support from funding to training in order to encourage the production of well-written stories. However, you can only lead a horse to the water, but you can't make it drink. According to Kamil Othman, the offerings of training funds such as Cill did not do much in the increase of applications from animation practitioners to further their studies and improve their skills.

iii. Dependency on Government Financial Support

At the moment, there is an increase in the trend of Malaysian animation being funded by government agencies such as MdeC and FINAS. Kamil Othman stated that such support was meant to help propel the animation industry and not become the source of income for the Malaysian animation industry. However, it was also noted by Kamil Othman and Hassan Muthalib that some animation companies have taken the positive step of marketing their products and services to foreign markets.

iv. Venturing into Other Purposes of Animation

Kamil Othman also noted that another function of animation is for instructional simulation and education purposes and this should be undertaken in the future. Animation can help explain various topics through better visual aids. However, this practice is still at its very minimum and should increase if appropriate policies are being put in place.

v. Malaysian Identity

MDeC and FINAS are supportive towards the inclusion of Malaysian identity through policies such as DIKN. However, it is also important that the story produced is good enough to profit the portrayal of Malaysian identity. Kamil Othman stated that even without Malaysian identity in mind, writers and animators will somehow include Malaysian identity without realizing it due to the background of the writers and animators.

8.6 Overall Contribution

Due to limited information on Malaysia animation, this study contributes in terms of the characteristics defining Malaysian animation. Identifying these characteristics is a contribution on its own due to the unavailability of such information. Hence, to examine whether these elements are existant in other Malaysian animation would be a huge challenge should one not have information on characteristics to begin with. These characteristics can be used as identification tools and as a symbol and outcome of Malaysian creative content production.

This study has also contributed in terms of providing audience insights and behaviors toward Malaysian animation. This can be used as an opportunity to identify areas for improvements within the animation industry. Additionally, views from the industry leaders and policy makers can also be of use for general knowledge, ideas for future studies as well as input that can be applied by the animation industry.

8.7 Suggestions for Future Studies

As with any other reasearch, there are bound to be weaknesses and room for further improvements or expansions of a study. The selection of *Usop Sontorian*, *Bola Kampung* and *Upin & Ipin* involved animation in which all the location settings involved village areas. Hence, it is best to suggest more animation titles to be analyzed as well as a more quantitative approach to further verify such findings.

i. Study of More Animation Titles

There were only three animated series analyzed in this study. Additional samples can be helpful in identifying more characteristics in Malaysian animation due to the different ideas and concepts involved

in animation production. Animated series and feature films with more modern backgrounds and settings such as *Boboiboy* and *War of the Worlds: Goliath* may provide different types of characteristics.

ii. Quantitative Studies

Research through quantitative means is also recommended to obtain statistics on frequencies of the characteristics of Malaysian animation and the amount of time these characteristics appeared, statistics and significance of information on audience reception. Larger samples would help broaden the validity of the representation of audiences.

iii. Study on Malaysian Animation Education and Training

It is also recommended to conduct a study on Malaysian animation education and training to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs due to the current flaws identified by both the informants of the Focus Group Interview and the interviewees of the In-Depth Interview. Other suggestions and recommendations can be made out of this study to further improve and develop Malaysian animation.

8.8 Suggestions for the Animation Industry

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has described six suggestions to improve and develop the animation industry. These suggestions include improvements on storytelling, adding more variety to animation content, the inclusion of Malaysian identity, the improvement on technical proficiency, improvement on merchandizing and also to explore foreign markets.

i. Improve plots, storylines and storytelling

Storytelling was an element of dissatisfaction among both the informants of the Focus Group Interviews as well as the practitioners and interviewees of the In-Depth Interview. An improved design of plots and storylines added by the improvement of storytelling are vital issues to be addressed in order to develop the industry even more and attract the audience towards watching their products.

ii. Add more variety and choices

Besides the improvements in storytelling, both informants from the Focus Group Interviews and interviewees from the In-Depth interviews noted the lack of choice and variety in Malaysian animation thus requiring improvements of some sort in this area. So far, animation content have seen a lot of offerings from mainly the United States and Japan with some contributions from Europe and Asia with Malaysian animation having minimal appearances.

iii. Include More on Malaysian Identity

In line with the National Creative Industry Policy (DIKN), Malaysian animation should be designed with a Malaysian identity in mind. The inclusion of Malaysian characteristics such as the ones found in this study shall help achieve that. However, animation producers have to bear in mind that it would be pointless to include these characteristics without a strong plot or storyline.

iv. More Representation of Other Races

As there are many different races in Malaysia, there should be more representation of other races as well in Malaysian animation. This does not only mean the inclusion of other races in numbers, but also other aspects of these characters such as their language, culture, values and others. Analysis have shown that the current crop of Malaysian animation has been largely Malay-centric with the focus on the Malay people, Malay culture, Malay values and so on. This, according to informants of the Focus Group Interview, is what they want to see in Malaysian animation.

v. Improve technical proficiency

While recent development of technology has allowed for the production of more esthetically pleasing animation in shorter periods of time, other elements such as illustration of characters, animation movements, lighting and background graphics do have plenty of room for improvement. These fine details behind animation would increase the quality of production and raise the reputation of practitioners in the industry, which in turn would make Malaysian animation and its industry more marketable throughout the world.

vi. Improve merchandizing

While there are evidences of merchandizing by local animation companies, the quantity and quality of merchandize are still rather

questionable. Both informants of the Focus Group Interviews and the interviewees from the In-Depth Interviews noted this. Although separate from the production process itself, merchandizing is a vital part as an additional means to generate profit.

vii. Explore more international markets

With a limited number of broadcasters and viewers in Malaysia, it would be best for the Malaysian animation industry to explore and venture into international markets due to the limited opportunities within the country. This has been proven as a successful approach as shown by Animasia with the production of *Supa Strikas*.

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