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**Title of the paper**

*Sponsorships in culture: Partnerships between government or statutory board and private sponsors and the public art museums in Singapore*

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Purpose**

Since the late 1990s, there has been abundant attention lavished on promoting the arts and culture in Singapore. The Singapore government's initiative, *The Report of the Advisory Council on Culture and The Arts* was released in 1989 recommending the importance of culture and the arts. Ten years later, the Renaissance City Reports in 1999, highlighted the plans to establish a 'Global City for the Arts'. The state's reasons for creating a strong arts industry were to strengthen the social cohesion of the nation and to boost the economy by contributing to the tourist and entertainment sectors. The ambitions of government were global and outward looking. The continual emphasis on developing the arts and allowing more room for creativity in the arts and cultural industry was sustained by the government's aspiration to become an international arts centre. The development of the arts and cultural industry would provide more avenues for expansion and progress of the economy. Infrastructural investments resulted in the formation of the public art museums, namely the Singapore Arts Museum, National Museum of Singapore and National Gallery Singapore. These public art museums have been actively involved in the visual arts in Singapore, but there has been little research undertaken on the work of these public art museums, with special reference to working with government or statutory board and private sponsors. In addition, these public art museums work closely with government or statutory board and private sponsors for funding sponsorships to carry out their full spectrum of exhibitions and public programmes. The work of the public art museums in the visual arts in partnerships with the government or statutory board and private sponsors are seen as sustainable development trajectories that contribute to local cultural policy/ies that have influence and impacts on the visual arts scene in Singapore.

### **Originality and value**

This research is offered as one contribution to rectifying the apparent imbalance; it focuses on three closely interrelated aspects of the work of the public art museums in the visual arts. First, it will develop an understanding of the historical background (2004 to 2008). Second, it will develop an understanding of recent developments (2009 to 2013). Third, it will develop an understanding of the perspectives of the public art museums key leaders on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts, with special reference to working with government or statutory board and private sponsors.

### **Design / methodology**

The research is located within the interpretivist paradigm and will adopt thematic analysis approach to data analysis. Qualitative in-depth semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to reveal concerns of the public art museums key leaders regarding the work of the public art museums in the visual arts, with special reference to working with government or statutory board and private sponsors. National Heritage Board annual reports were analysed in relation to the historical background and recent developments in the public art museums' work in the visual arts in Singapore.

### **Findings**

The themes related to working with government or statutory board sponsor are 'National responsibility' and 'Communication'. Alongside these, the themes related to working with private sponsors are 'Extended exhibition programming' and 'Negotiation'. An interesting discovery is that the theme of 'Agreement terms' appeared in both working with government or statutory board and private sponsors.

The public art museums key leaders identified that the public art museums are national institutions constructed by the government to fulfil their national responsibility through the organization of community-focused exhibitions and public programmes, and this is because of the importance of accountability to the public for the funds provided. The sponsorship came with agreement terms and had restrictions on the type of exhibitions and public programmes that were organized, as the need to avoid controversial and politically sensitive artworks was important to avoid unnecessary attention from the social media platforms and press. Communication with the government or statutory board sponsor was crucial as they had to be updated them on the curatorial selection of artworks. Having continuous discussions with them on the exhibitions and public programmes enabled a positive partnership to take place, which then resulted in future funding opportunities.

In addition to the above, working with the private sponsor permitted the public art museums key leaders to have an extended exhibition programming which was made possible through the additional funding and access to private collections, therefore enriching the aesthetic and learning experiences of the public. This opportunity to work with the private sponsor also came with agreement terms, which for the private sponsor was mainly about the return on investments that would be obtained through this partnership with the public art museums key leaders. The need for negotiation with the private sponsor was something that the public art museums key leaders had to pursue as part of this sponsorship and this was achieved by cultivating good working relationships with them that employed a win-win strategy where both parties benefitted from this collaborative partnership.

The need to work with government or statutory board and private sponsor was a necessity and the public art museums key leaders to enable the public to have a holistic experience in the visual arts in Singapore embraced this. Therefore, this research identified the themes that were crucial in these partnerships and understanding the perspectives of the public art museums key leaders gave a fresh outlook on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts in Singapore.

### **Key words**

Historical background, recent developments, sponsorship, partnership, public art museums, public art museums key leaders, cultural policy, cultural sustainability, cultural sensitivities.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

The story of museums in Singapore begins with the Raffles Museum. Initiated by Raffles himself in 1823, and established in 1874 as part of a joint Raffles Library and Museum before it moved to its present Stamford Road premises in 1887, its purpose was to acquire specimens from and undertake research into Peninsula Malaya's wealth of natural history, ethnology and archaeology. It was renamed the National Museum a year later in 1960 after Singapore attained self-government in 1959. In place of its natural history displays, the National Museum introduced a new gallery dedicated to art from Singapore and the region (National Heritage Board, 2015).

It was not until the mid-1980s that the Government finally decided that it was necessary to address the National Museum's long-term role in Singapore. A high-level Task Force on the Long-Term Development of the Museum (also known as the Museum Development Committee) was appointed by the Government to look into this. Almost concurrently, a larger Advisory Council for Culture and the Arts was initiated by then Second Deputy Prime Minister, the late Dr. On Teng Cheong. The Advisory Council for Culture and the Arts' (ACCA) mission was to review Singapore's entire cultural landscape and to propose a comprehensive strategy that would boost the island's cultural vibrancy and preserve its heritage. Dr. Ong wanted to turn around popular notions that Singapore was a "cultural desert" (National Heritage Board, 2015, p.20)

The recommendations of the Museum Development Committee were eventually packaged as part of the slate of recommendations announced by the Advisory Council for Culture and the Arts in 1989. Chief among the recommendations announced was a proposal to split the museum into five major standalone galleries: a Fine Arts Gallery, A Southeast Asian Natural History / Ethnology Gallery, A Singapore History Gallery, a Community Gallery and a Children's Museum. These galleries would be located in a "National Museum Precinct" centered around Fort Canning Hill and Bras Basah (National Heritage Board, 2015, p.21). Building on the 1989 Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts Report, the government developed a Renaissance City Report in 1999, which has a vision of transforming Singapore into an arts hub (Ministry of Information and the Arts, 2000).

The policy set the role of the importance of the arts as a form of personal enrichment that "broaden minds and deepen our sensitivities"; "to improve the general quality of life", "strengthen our social bond" and "contribute to our tourist and entertainment sectors" (Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, 1989, p.11). The key strategies of this report were to fulfil the need to "encourage more people to develop an interest in culture and the arts, to take part in art activities as amateurs or as professionals, to build up a pool of good artists, arts administrators, art entrepreneurs and other related professionals, to develop more modern purpose-built performing, working and exhibition facilities for the arts, libraries and specialized museums and galleries, to step up the level and tempo of cultural activities and have more works of art in public places and to encourage and promote more original Singapore works" (Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, 1989, p.26).

With a vision of becoming a global city for the arts, Singapore has carefully nurtured its arts and culture scene over the past two decades. The island city has witnessed increasing attendance and participation in key events and festivals such as the Singapore Biennale, Singapore Arts Festival and Singapore Art Show. These events have helped propel Singapore onto the international scene, highlighting her prominence as an international arts hub – a place where the global arts community can come together for exchange and collaboration (National

Heritage Board, 2015). Since the 1990s, Singapore has had a robust cultural policy of developing its arts and heritage leading to the development of several world-class public art museums such as the Singapore Art Museum and the National Museum of Singapore (Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, 1989). In 2007, the government announced the development of the former Supreme Court being turned into the National Gallery Singapore, which will be ready by 2015 (National Gallery Singapore, 2010). Since then, the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore and National Gallery Singapore have been actively catering to the artistic needs of both local and international members of public with their numerous exhibitions and public programmes.

Number of visitors to museums and heritage outreach activities scored record high. The number of visitors to the National Heritage Board's museums has risen from 7.7 million in Financial Year 2010 to 8.4 million in Financial Year 2012 (National Arts Council, 2013). The museums are no longer regarded as dusty repositories of forgotten artefacts as Koh claims (2010), and have transformed themselves into exciting destinations for visitors of all ages. The exhibitions and programmes of the museums were more engaging and relevant, attracting children, students, young adults and others. The total contributions to arts and culture, including cash and in-kind donations and sponsorship as well as artefact donations, stood at \$45.0 million in 2012, up from \$40.6 million in 2011 (National Arts Council, 2013). Likewise, the Government funding for the arts and culture has continued to grow, increasing by about ten percent from 2011 to \$478.8 million in 2012 (National Arts Council, 2013). The statistics reflect both the public art museums' constant involvement in raising public awareness of the visual arts as well as the government's commitment to developing the arts and culture scene and thus achieving the vision of 'a nation of cultured and gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity' (National Arts Council, 2013, p.8).

For the purpose of this research, when public art museums are mentioned, only one of them presently comes under the purview of the National Heritage Board and that is the National Museum of Singapore. The other two public art museums are the Singapore Art Museum and the National Gallery Singapore. The Singapore Art Museum was incorporated as an independent company limited by guarantee on 1 January 2014 resulting its detachment from the National Heritage Board (Singapore Art Museum, 2013). The National Gallery Singapore will be officially opened at its new premises in 2015 and will be Singapore's brand new visual arts institution building upon a solid foundation of scholarship and experience (National Gallery Singapore, 2010).

### **1.1 Why is this study needed?**

There has been a growing trend towards greater accountability by government, philanthropic and corporate funding bodies as to where they direct funding and how they measure the impact of such funding. This has increased the pressure on arts organizations, as funding recipients, to undergo a cultural shift and focus on demonstrating the economic and/or social impact of their activities. Public art museums, in particular are an important segment of the non-profit, social, arts and heritage arena. Today, public art museums have diverse missions that require them to fulfil a public mandate as well as be accountable to a range of stakeholders, such as government, board of trustees, curators (as "keepers" of the objects), benefactors and the public (Evans, Bridson and Minkiewicz, 2013, p.15).

A closer look at both the funding from the government over the years and the type of exhibitions that were organized by the National Heritage Board public art museums, it can be

observed that there exist multiple influences in decision-making concerning the types of exhibitions and public programmes that were organized. To further support their programming, the public art museums, also sought funding from private organizations. These funding supports from the government and private organizations have direct impacts on their programmes because of contractual agreements. The public art museums are accountable to the government and private funding bodies and this is clearly reflected in the annual reports as presented by the National Heritage Board. In light of these, this research will provide a consolidated literature on the concerns of the public art museums' key leaders, historical background and recent developments of the public art museums' work in the visual arts.

In line with the above, as described by the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (1989) the policy set the role of the importance of the arts as a form of personal enrichment that "broaden minds and deepen our sensitivities"; "to improve the general quality of life", "strengthen our social bond" and "contribute to our tourist and entertainment sectors" (p.11). The need to work with the government or statutory board and private sponsors was a need that the public art museums key leaders embraced. The collaborative elements related to this sponsorship partnership are intertwined with existing cultural policy. The report by the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995) linked cultural policy and sustainable development and connected culture to a range of economic, political and societal issues. The ecology in which the public art museums exist and operate in are delicately integrated into the platform of having to work with the government or statutory board and private sponsors for reasons centred on cultural sustainability (funding sponsorships) in order to survive in a competitive economic environment that is driven by a sense of cultural continuity. Public art museums have experienced the need of structural and administrative transformations to ensure their survival and sustainability in a cultural scenario that has been subjected to changes in times of economic, political and social instability as well as more accountability to government or statutory board and private sponsors, taking into account also the need to discuss through exhibitions and public programmes societal issues that matter to the contemporary community.

The partnership with the government or statutory board and private sponsors is intrinsically linked to the issue of sustainability, which in turn operate for the common good of the community. This approach is concerned with preserving and improving social and environmental conditions while also safeguarding the financial health of the public art museums. Collins and Porras (1994, 1996) described that funding comes to museums when stakeholders' preference in the art museums' offering depends on how attractive is its brand image and diversified its cultural program. The public art museums working with the relevant sponsor was to impact the community in a positive manner that would lead to a cultural policy that ensures an artistic and culturally vibrant environment. As acknowledged by Harold Skramstad during the Smithsonian Institute 150th anniversary, institutions exist for their distinctive ability to provide 'value for the society in a way that builds on unique institutional strengths and senses unique community needs' (Smithsonian Institution, 1997: 33-55). The aim of cultural institutions shall be changing social behaviours as well as power relationships between stakeholders. For this reason, concepts such as sustainability come with instances likewise 'making the difference' or 'value-add' language. From a managerial perspectives, art museums are defined as 'effective' organizations (Griffin, Abraham, 2007), i. e. corporations or institutions whose aim is to positively affect stakeholders' lives.

The public art museums' pursuit for environmental, economic and social sustainability through their eligibility in sponsorship from the government or statutory board and private sponsors stems from a position of cultural policy/ies centred on the notions of enrichment and value adding to the well-being of the community. The public art museums' sustainability strategies are frequently linked to ideas such as 'making the difference' in a specific context and 'value-branding'. In recent years, the public art museums have branded themselves as culture- generators and have attracted constant sponsorships that support strategic cultural policy/ies as stipulated by the local government.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research questions addressed in this research are:

- What is the historical background to the public art museums work in the visual arts?
- What are the recent developments regarding the work of the public art museums in the visual arts?
- What are the perspectives of the key leaders on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts?

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1 The First and Second Research Questions**

The first and second research questions reported in this research are aimed at developing an understanding on the historical background and recent developments in the public art museums work in the visual arts. To this end data contained in a wide range of public records were reviewed and in this research the documents reviewed were the National Heritage Board annual reports.

### **2.2 Document Study**

Researchers "study documents as much as, if not more than people" (Sarantakos, 2005, p.293). On this Punch (2009) supports the study of documents by explaining that "documents, both historical and contemporary, are rich source of data for education and social research" (p. 158). In this research, the National Heritage Board annual reports were studied to identify emerging trends and patterns in the work of the public art museums. As the public art museums came under the purview of the National Heritage Board for the period of 2004 to 2013, they were not required and they did not produce their own respective annual reports but instead their annual major contributions (i.e. exhibitions, public programmes and publications) are highlighted in the National Heritage Board's annual report for that particular year.

The National Heritage Board annual reports analyzed were for the period of 2004 to 2013. This period was broken down into two sections, historical background (2004 to 2008) and recent developments (2009 to 2013). The reason for selecting a ten-year span starting from 2004 to 2013 is that, it provided a balanced and holistic perspective on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts. It also highlighted the strategic directions employed to achieve organizational goals that were centered on the community. The purpose of reviewing these annual reports is to obtain inputs and discover the various public-centred activities that occurred in these respective public art museums during the period of 2004 to 2013. The annual reports are useful documents as they showcased the strategic directions adopted, sustainability measures employed and achievements of the respective public art museums and this in turn will enable a better understanding of their work in the visual arts, thus, surfacing the reasons for their existence and purposes.

### 2.3 Historical Contributions: Time Frame—From 2004 to 2008

Year	Activity
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing heritage to the people – Heighten the appreciation amongst the public of the relevance of history and the arts</li> <li>• Cultivating awareness and appreciation – Encourage art collecting and promoting greater appreciation of local art amongst the public</li> <li>• Strengthening our roots.</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forging rootedness</li> <li>• Reaching new audiences – Targeting youths</li> <li>• Blockbuster and major exhibitions.</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing new audiences</li> <li>• Reaching out through heritage.</li> </ul>
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exporting our cultural capital</li> <li>• Peppering our city with public art.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcasing Singapore's vibrant contemporary art scene</li> <li>• Heritage in Transit.</li> </ul>

### 2.4 Recent Developments: Time frame—From 2009 to 2013

Year	Activity
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major blockbusters</li> <li>• Celebrating Asia.</li> </ul>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art on site</li> <li>• Stronger Programming.</li> </ul>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free entry to museums</li> <li>• Workshops and programs.</li> </ul>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore exhibitions</li> <li>• International collaborations.</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement.</li> </ul>



## **2.5 Third Research Question**

The third question in this research is aimed at developing an understanding of the perspectives of the key leaders on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts, with special reference to working with government or statutory board and private sponsors. The interpretative approach is appropriate, as it is concerned with human choice and meaning (Carr & Kemmis, 1996; Erickson, 1998; Usher, 1997). The interview questions are directed to the public art museums key leaders' experiences working with government or statutory board and private sponsors.

The third central research question is investigated exclusively by means of in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with nine key leaders of the public art museums. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind the participant's experiences. In-depth interviews can be defined as a qualitative research technique which involves "conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation" (Boyce and Neale, 2006, p.3).

The transcribed data from the qualitative in-depth semi-structured individual interviews of the nine public arts museums' key leaders are analyzed using thematic analysis resulting in the inductive identification of sub-themes and themes that are in the data (Figures 2 and 3).

The key leaders are recruited from three different public art museums, namely, Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Singapore and the National Gallery Singapore and they have a range of five to twenty-five years of experience between them. As the public art museum key leaders are the prime focus of this research, the first consideration was given to the number of public art museum key leaders to recruit. Purposeful sampling is used in this research, and it specifically selects participants for their potential to provide the richest amount of information relevant to the purposes of the research (Boddan & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 2001).

Altogether nine public art museum keys leaders are selected for the interview (Figure 1). The public art museum key leaders are crucial contributors in the visual arts scene and by interviewing them, their perspectives regarding the public art museums' work in the visual arts are ascertained. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) indicated that qualitative research should be comprised of small numbers of participants who provide information-rich interviews. Therefore, nine public art museum key leaders were approached and were individually interviewed and were deemed sufficient to collect data that would address the third central research question and feasible given the research timeline.

**Figure 1: The breakdown of public art museums key leaders interviewed**

Public art museum	Key leaders interviewed for this research (based on availability)
Singapore Art Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One senior curator</li> <li>• Two curators</li> <li>• One assistant curator.</li> </ul>
National Museum of Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One deputy director</li> <li>• One curator.</li> </ul>
National Gallery Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One director</li> <li>• One senior curator</li> <li>• One curator.</li> </ul>

The criteria taken into account for selecting these public art museums key leaders were, (i) they were staff who had positional authority to initiate and contribute directly and were responsible for the organization of the exhibitions and public programmes, (ii) they were responsible for the development of the budget and project timelines for the exhibitions and public programmes, (iii) they were responsible for leading the various internal and external staff involved in the exhibition and public programmes, (iv) they were responsible for the artworks exhibited and stored in their public art museums and (v) they were responsible for acquiring the relevant funding from government or statutory board and private sponsors.

**3. Findings**

An overview map of the major themes and corresponding sub-themes developed from the findings for the government or statutory board sponsor and private sponsors are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3 respectively and these subsequently form the structure for the reporting of the findings.

**Figure 2: Themes and sub-themes—Government or Statutory Board Sponsors**

Theme	Sub-theme
National responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-focus</li> <li>• Accountability.</li> </ul>
Agreement terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrictions.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curatorial planning</li> <li>• Continuous discussions.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3: Themes and sub-themes—Private Sponsors**

Theme	Sub-theme(s)
Extended exhibition programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional funding</li> <li>• Access to private collections.</li> </ul>
Agreement terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return on investment.</li> </ul>
Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivating good working relationship.</li> </ul>

**3.1 Theme—National responsibility**

The public art museums in Singapore were primarily funded by the government or statutory board sponsors and therefore, they had the responsibility as national institutions to showcase exhibitions and public programmes that promoted social cohesion and nation-building. In essence, the public art museums were permanent national institutions in the service of society and its development. By fulfilling their national responsibilities, the public art museums in Singapore inculcated in the people a deeper understanding of the nation’s developments over the years.

In light of this, the first main theme identified was National responsibility and this was supported by two sub-themes, namely, Community-focus and Accountability. The sub-theme of Community-focus concentrated primarily on community outreach with events, exhibitions and public programmes centred on national agendas, heritage, community outreach and appreciation of the local contemporary and historical art scenes.

On the other hand, the sub-theme of Accountability reflected the need for accountability to the government or statutory board sponsor who were primarily the main funding agency in Singapore, as well as to the tax payers who indirectly provided these money. The need for accountability further entailed the necessity to achieve key performance indicators as stipulated in the funding arrangements which had the community as its utmost agenda

**3.1.1 Sub-theme—Community-focus**

Working closely with the government or statutory board sponsor, created opportunities for the public art museums key leaders to reach wider audiences by offering new experiences through community-focused exhibition and public programmes. Through these sponsorship they were able to reach out to the community more extensively, therefore resulting in lasting relationships that ensured the community’s continual visitorship to the public art museums and created within them the awareness of the importance of Singapore. As national institutions, the public art museums’ purpose of engaging with the community was to make them an integral aspect of the people’s social lives.

The key leaders of the public art museums interviewed expressed that the community was the central figure around which the public art museums’ exhibitions and public programmes were organized. The need to have curatorial themes that enriched the lives of the community were of utmost priority. Some of the other areas of interest that were presented by the key leaders of the public art museums were, engaging with the community, forging a collective national identity, educating the public on the social issues and the dissemination of national agendas and all these were coordinated through the public art museums’ exhibitions and public

programmes:

*“It is important to work with them in terms of exhibitions as they are funded by the government...help to shape certain national agendas...in terms of nation building...it creates a sense of rootedness for Singaporeans. Therefore, exhibitions that promote nation building, national cultural identity is regarded as important...and the government sees these as important”* (Yosef, personal communication, October 13, 2015).

*“Our dealings with them are largely to draw on their funding..., we still receive bulk of our funding from the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. So in that sense we work with them to get the funding for our programmes... because it had a community and family focus, we were able to apply for the funding. for projects which have a more community-based approach”* (Sharon, personal communication, October 23, 2015).

### **3.1.2 Sub-theme—Accountability**

Accountability is a paramount aspect because the public art museums key leaders had to consistently live up to the mandates as stipulated by the government or statutory board sponsor and also its accountability to various stakeholders, one of them being the community. Cultural institutions in receipt of public funds are under more and more pressure to explain what they do and why they do it and to articulate their role in an environment where the agenda is increasingly determined by external agencies (Scott, 2003).

For the sub-theme of Accountability, the views of the key leaders of the public art museums were that the exhibitions and public programmes organized had to have the community as a central element. They in general agreed that the funds provided had to be efficiently utilised and produced results that justified the existence of the public art museums and its spending. The key leaders of the public art museums collectively agreed that in receipt of these funds, key performance indicators had to be achieved as stipulated in the agreement with the government or statutory sponsor:

*“....and of course we update them on our exhibition programming, because as our paymaster they want to know what’s up on our calendar and in which directions we’re moving towards...so in that sense we work with them to get the funding for our programmes... and for specific projects”* (Sharon, personal communication, October 23, 2015).

*“As a curator who has been working with public institutions, it’s important to work with government or statutory board because they are the ones who fund the museum. So, they are the first people whom we are responsible to in terms of our performance. Therefore, in terms of what we do, we have to be accountable to them...”*(Sean, personal communication, October 26, 2015).

### **3.2 Theme—Agreement terms**

The theme of Agreement terms was governed by the reality that funds provided to the public art museums by the government or statutory sponsor had targets that had to be achieved in return for the support provided. This was an expected norm, as the main focus of the government or statutory sponsor was that the funds had to be used efficiently. The sub-theme supporting the theme of Agreement is Restrictions which highlighted the guidelines that controlled resource utilizations and operations of the public art museums in respect to exhibitions and public programmes.

#### **3.2.1 Sub-theme—Restrictions**

The views of the key leaders of the public art museums on Restrictions were that, generally controversial or politically sensitive artworks were not favoured by the government or statutory board sponsor. Primarily this was to avoid any negative feedback from the print and social media platforms. Another focal aspect in the sub-theme of Restrictions was terms and conditions which governed the working relationship between the public art museums and the government or statutory board sponsor. The individual responses of the keys leaders are expressed in the following paragraphs substantiating the relevance of the sub-theme, Restrictions:

*“Often the funding is usually tied to some criteria which is aligned with other agendas set out by the government in order to achieve specific outcomes...when it comes to exhibitions making, these objectives may not be aligned....the artistic or curatorial aspirations may not be necessarily aligned with some of the objectives or criteria as indicated in the agreement that came along with the funding”* (Mary, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

### **3.3 Theme—Communication**

In the theme of Communication, it was evident that efficient curatorial planning with the inclusion of continuous discussions with the key stakeholders, such as the government or statutory board sponsor and academics who were subject experts lead to the positive feedback received from the pubic regarding the exhibitions and public programmes. The strategy of adopting a clear communication pathway and conflict resolution benefitted all parties concerned and resulted in a win-win situation.

The sub-theme of Curatorial planning in essence focused on the importance of advance planning and seeking approvals from the relevant authorities regarding all aspects of the exhibition making process. Whereas, the sub-theme Continuous discussions in brief emphasized the relevance of open communication with the government or statutory board sponsor regarding the curatorial concept as well as the desire to resolve any concerns that might arise from these collaborations.

### **3.3.1 Sub-theme—Curatorial planning**

The key leaders of the public art museums expressed that advance planning regarding the curatorial components was crucial in the execution of well-planned exhibitions and public programmes. They collectively shared the importance of working amicably and professionally with the government or statutory board sponsor and public. The outcomes of these collaborations were productive when their concerns were addressed by the curator either prior to the onset of or during the exhibition process:

*“...your boss would have known your text, your brief and your approach to the exhibition so before it even goes up to the ministry, or to the government sponsor. There is already say a level of vetting or gatekeeping for that matter”* (Mary, personal conversation, October 19, 2015).

*“Next we engage our public stakeholders early and not give them a shock at the last minute. So we should engage them early to let them know, these are the artworks that are potentially going to be on show and then explain to them why we feel this artist is important or why these artworks are important to show. So it is important to prepare the ground early. I think we also need to demonstrate to the stakeholders that we are prepared with responses if there’s adverse feedback from the crowd and not be caught off-guard if some people might be offended”* (Sean, personal conversation, October 26, 2015).

### **3.3.2 Sub-theme—Continuous discussions**

The key leaders of the public art museums conscientiously agreed that the sub-theme of Continuous discussions enabled a win-win opportunity for the public art museums and the government or statutory board sponsor. They reinforced the reality that problems do surface in the midst of the exhibition making process and talking through them one at a time benefits all concerned parties. The key leaders collectively expressed the need to have continuous discussions from the time when the application for the sponsorships took place and these discussion should be carried throughout the collaboration:

*“One way is to solicit a kind of a broader kind of meeting of minds especially with scholarship because museums also function as important space to promote, to generate scholarship. So here, we tie it with the academia. It’s not about looking at this with different ways of understanding our history but the academia as well. We bring in scholars who would also contribute essays to our catalogues and also perform as advisers to our exhibitions. We try to bring in different stakeholders that support us and also in a way, these scholars are respected scholars in their own right, so perhaps that will help the ministry better understand where we’re coming from, which is really to broaden, enrich a deeper understanding of our own country’s history”* (Yosef, personal communication, October 13, 2015):

*“...because these are the people who are going to present your project to a separate, higher level of administration, and go like, “This is a project worth fighting for, because we know these people and we trust them, and they do meaningful content. So I think it’s a very delicate balance of how you give them what they want to get what you want”* (Nathalie, personal communication, November 3, 2015).

### **3.4 Theme—Extended exhibition programming**

The main theme of Extended exhibition programming expressed the notions of providing more exhibitions and public programmes to the community with the supplementation of additional funding from private sponsors on top of what was provided by the government or statutory board sponsor, thereby increasing the audiences' experiences and exposures to the contemporary visual arts. The sub-themes of Additional funding and Access to private collections were testament to the reality of this extended exhibition programming. The Additional funding sub-theme focused on insufficiency of existing funding to provide a holistic contemporary visual arts experience and the need to reach out to private sponsors to obtain additional funds as well as the need to provide opportunities to the private sponsors to participate in a worthwhile collaboration with the public art museums.

On the other hand, the sub-theme of Access to private collection magnified the importance of tapping on important and relevant artworks that were owned by rich and influential private collectors with whom the public art museums could collaborate with to showcase these artworks to the public.

#### **3.4.1 Sub-theme—Additional funding**

The need for additional funding as always been a paramount concern and need of the public art museums. It allowed the public art museum to function in its maximum capacity by the providing an extensive array of contemporary visual arts exhibitions and public programmes to the community. The thoughts of the public art museum key leaders collectively were that the present funding was insufficient to fulfil all of the objectives of the public art museums and the annual operating costs of the public art museums were way and beyond the existing funds provided by the government or statutory board sponsor. The financial burdens on the public art museums at times were overwhelming and the support from the private sponsors assisted to alleviate these burdens. The opportunities to collaborate with the private sponsors also gave them the opportunities to give back to the society through their considerable donations, thereby enabling them to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities:

*“At the fundamental level exhibitions are expensive. So, the more resources you can get, the better. It’s important to have patronage for the arts coming from all walks of life, besides just a public sector because that can only lead to a more vibrant art scene”* (Mary, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

*“I would say because government funding is never enough for the museum’s ambitions...so this is where I think private sponsors can come in, especially since these days a lot of companies are looking at CSR initiatives, community outreach kind of initiatives, and many of them also recognize the cultural capital that the visual arts can offer, the kind of prestige”* (Sharon, personal communication, October 23, 2015).

### **3.4.2 Sub-theme—Access to Private Collections**

The local public art museums in Singapore do not have in their possessions the whole arrange of contemporary visual artwork. Many times the key leaders of these public art museums have to work closely with private collectors who own these crucial artworks in order to complete the whole spectrum of artworks thereby presenting the curatorial concept in its entirety. It was also important to note that private sponsorship went beyond monetary support for exhibitions and public programmes to instances where these sponsorship came in the format of artwork loans from wealthy and influential private collectors:

*“Private collectors are important because in Southeast Asia, a lot of the works are in the hands of private collectors. The national museums don’t have the kind of funding to get these artworks for them to put up in the national collection. A lot of the works tend to bleed out into private collections. So it’s important for us to work with private collectors. And from there, we’re able to draw the important works from their collections for our own exhibition. So it’s important to work with them”* (Yosef, personal communication, October 13, 2015).

*“In the case of private collectors, the museums cannot possibly own everything. These collectors hold very important earlier works that the museums may have missed acquiring. In order to tap into these works or to be able to allow the public access to these works from private collections that are not often unveiled, so, that’s the reason why it’s important to work with private collectors to access some of these important works”* (Mary, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

*“Working with collections, whether private individual collections or institutional collections is, again, quite important for us. Because when we curate an exhibition, we can’t just rely on what we have in our own national collection. Our national collection has gaps. We have to acknowledge that. In any country around the world, public museums always rely on other collections to complete their exhibition. So as is the case for us, when we open, you’ll see that in our permanent galleries, about a quarter to a third of our works, are on loan from either individuals or institutions”* (Sean, personal communication, October 26, 2015).

### **3.5 Theme—Agreement terms**

For the funds provided by the private sponsor, the sub-theme of Return on investment asserted the implications of the private sponsors wanting their companies’ objectives and ideals to be achieved through these collaborative partnerships with the public art museums. The key leaders articulated that certain private sponsors also informed that portions of the funds provided be designated to activities as directed by them.

#### **3.5.1 Sub-theme—Return on investments**

The key leaders of the public art museums shared in principle the private sponsors needed to qualify and quantify their investments and expected certain arrangements to be fulfilled in their favour for the funds provided. The funds provided were tied with elements of return on investments such as their own companies’ targets being met and also extensive media coverage on their collaboration with the public art museums:

*“...when we are approaching large corporations, we’re aware that they have their own objectives as well. It’s quite natural, actually because when you go to someone for money, that person wants to get something from you as well. For example, when I*



*approached a particular bank many years back, they said that they would only support projects that would reflect their company's values. It's not unreasonable for them to seek for projects that reflect the kind of ideals or values they want to"* (Mary, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

*"...they usually have certain, how do I say, targets that they want us to meet. So in terms of visitorship, they often have a very big say in how the program or exhibition is marketed"* (Sharon, personal communication, October 23, 2015).

### **3.6 Theme—Negotiation**

In the order for negotiation to take place, the key leaders of the public art museums described that cultivating a good working relationship with the private sponsors was paramount to the success of the collaboration. Anchoring on this reality, the key leaders expressed that elements that generally contributed to the cultivating a good working relationship were regular updates to the private sponsors on the progress of the exhibition making activities, handling the private sponsors tactfully and being well-prepared to address their concerns and maintaining ongoing working relationships well so as to ensure they become long-term partners.

#### **3.6.1 Sub-theme—Cultivating good working relationship**

To develop good working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, and to avoid conflict, it is essential to share a common purpose. This may relate to a single project goal or it may be the overall aim of a whole organization. Communicating with colleagues and stakeholders is the only way of identifying and agreeing a common sense of purpose. Once you have identified stakeholders and their importance, then you must start to think about how to communicate with them, and what your message is for them (Pearson, 2013).

Developing a positive relationship with all of your stakeholders is vital. If the stakeholder trusts you or your organization; they will be more likely to compromise and work towards joint goals. By listening to and building strong relationships with your stakeholders, you can use them to help identify potential opportunities and threats for your organization. Developing strong relationships with internal stakeholders also builds on your professional network, which will help you throughout your career (Pearson, 2013):

*"I think the most important is to be open with the sponsor. Open means we talk about, we explain the whole curatorial concept and framework of the exhibition, aims and objectives, and we share with them our plans, public programs and everything. We're very open with them in terms of how the work is going to be shown"* (Yosef, personal communication, October 13, 2015).

*"I have to anticipate their needs in advance. I have to research, learn more about this organization in advance so that I can persuade them and convince them on why my project is beneficial to their needs and downplay other aspects. It is important because we want to make sure a good relationship for the future, possible collaborations"* (Mary, personal communication, October 19, 2015).

*"It's always a very long process of negotiation, trying to balance the museum's interests with the company's interests, and sometimes you give some and sometimes you take some. It needs to be a compromise on both sides. I would say that, a lot of*

*this boils down to personal relationships” (Mary, personal communication, October 23, 2015).*

*“I think one of the key attributes of being a curator is you must have good interpersonal skills because collectors are human beings too. So we have to be quite mindful of certain sensitivities and when issues like that arise, ” (Sean, personal communication, October 26, 2015).*

## **4. Discussions**

### **4.1 Community as a Central Focus**

As democratic institutions created by the Singapore government, the public art museums have a wide appeal among the community and are relevant to its artistic appreciation and development through the transmission of knowledge of the visual arts through exhibitions and public programmes organised by the public art museums key leaders. This coincides with Fleming (2011), who concluded that the museums are by nature, socially responsible institutions, even in performing their most basic tasks of assembling, researching and caring for collections, they can benefit society. The public art museums are accountable for the sponsorship provided by the government or statutory board sponsor and therefore had to utilize the funds provided in a cost effective and efficient manner providing exhibition and public programmes that had the community at the core of its agenda. This facilitates the study by Scott (2003), who described, cultural institutions in receipt of public funds are under more and more pressure to explain what they do and why they do it and to articulate their role in an environment where the agenda is increasingly determined by external agencies.

The public art museums key leaders acknowledged that the public art museums have the power to help promote good and active citizenship, and to act as agents of social change. By organising exhibitions and public programmes that immerse the visitors into community-focused themes, the public art museums key leaders were able to through their curatorial expertise assist the visitors to cognitively (i) appreciate and preserve the past, (ii) define and enjoy the present and (iii) educate for the future about the essences of nation-building and social issues related to the nation and heritage. This is consistent with Fleming (2011) who stated, museums are increasingly involved in contemporary social issues. They are changing into institutions where the public can find opinions about the present day, and where human stories predominate. In providing confidence to the government or statutory board sponsor that the funds provided are carefully utilized demonstrate that the public art museums’ key leaders are good steward of its resources held in the public trust. This creates an image of positive culture and vision for the public art museums. Being accountable to the government or statutory board sponsor creates a sense of confidence in the partnership.

Accountability required that the public art museums key leaders identify the specific type of exhibitions and public programmes that are suitable and that would enrich the aesthetic experience of the audience. The public art museums key leaders in the planning and execution of the exhibitions and public programmes strive to be inclusive and offer opportunities for diverse participation among the visitors and also their enrich their well-being. Accountability also made the public art museums key leaders value the importance of them being staff of national institutions and their public service role to the community. The public art museums key leaders were driven to work hard and have a sense of ownership towards the community and what they could do for it. This allowed the public art museums key leaders to value their contributions to the community through their curatorial expertise of organizing exhibitions public programmes.

The public art museums key leaders expressed that community-focus exhibitions and public programmes present the material evidence of the creativity of humankind and the riches of the local talents which in return inspire, enthrall and enlighten the community on the visual arts and its developments over the years in Singapore. This therefore offered new experiences to the visitors through aesthetic encounters resulting in the transmission and expansion of their knowledge in the developments of Singapore's visual arts culture. This coincides with the findings of Marsh (2004), that Tate Modern London in presenting art to its public was to enable an aesthetic experience, one where participants can make meaning from their inquiry. It was seen as an enabler, not only in the presenting of art, but also in offering effective vehicles to support the understanding (and questioning) of it.

The public art museums key leaders presented that keeping the interests of the community as a focal point enabled them to curate exhibitions and develop public programmes that stimulated creativity and enrich the cultural, social and economic life, not only of the local community, but this also transcended across boundaries to the rest of the whole world, showcasing the rich talents and achievements of the local artists as well as the developments of the visual art scene in Singapore. This permitted the curatorial concept of the exhibitions and public programmes to be co-produced by the public art museums key leaders and the community, as the driving force behind the planning and execution of the exhibitions and public programmes was the element of community-focus. The public art museums key leaders through their exhibitions and public programmes created deeply rooted connection that fostered a unique sense of belonging among the diverse groups of people in the community. Through a wide range of programmes and practice, the public art museums key leaders became leading agents in the nation's move towards social and the innovative community-focus endeavors in the visual art scene in Singapore through a collaborative effort with the artists, providing them with support to create works of arts that accentuate the interests of the community.

#### **4.2 Learning through Aesthetic Experience**

The public art museums key leaders strategy of working with private sponsors was to increase existing funds, so that the capacity and sustainability of the exhibitions and public programmes were widened to accommodate a holistic representation of the experiences that the visitors encountered as they enter the artistic realm of the public art museums. The public art museums key leaders utilised exhibitions as catalyst to expand its use as an educational tool for the understanding of art and the ideas it portrayed to the public. The exhibitions represented a way of displaying the tangible knowledge of the visual arts language and contextualizing art makes it relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences which were the focus of the public art museums' key leaders. This ties well with the proposal of Marincola (2006, p.9) that, "Exhibitions are strategically located at the nexus where artists, their work, the arts institution, and many different publics intersect." The public art museums key leaders perceive the exhibitions as a mirror that depicts society, reflecting to the audiences their interests and concerns that effects and affects their daily lives, while at the same time confronting society's modus operandi and preconceptions.

The educational purpose of the exhibitions and public programmes as outlined by the public art museums key leaders was to keep the visual arts relevant to the diverse audiences in the community. Each member in the audience responded uniquely in the understanding of the visual arts and learning took place in an idiosyncratic manner, where the visitor learnt in manner that portrayed individuality. The visitors experienced individually the implicit way of

indulging in the process of 'meaning making' through their encounters with the artworks in the exhibition as this provided them with a platform for interaction.

The public art museums key leaders use the exhibitions as the principle public programme to reach as many visitors as possible and expose these visitors to a wide array of visual arts discourse and artworks. Marincola (2006), described that exhibitions act as the catalyst of art and ideas to the public; they represent a way of displaying and contextualizing art that makes it relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences. The art exhibition, by its nature, holds a mirror up to society, reflecting its interests and concerns while at the same time challenging its ideologies and preconceptions. The public art museums believe that transformative learning place in a way reality is being interpreted through the interactions that the visitors have with the exhibitions. The visitors experience with works of art facilitates critical thinking, and this opens up their minds to different points of views concerning the subject matter portrayed in the exhibitions and public programmes.

The public art museums are essential centres of learning and through their community-focus exhibition programmes, the public art museums key leaders were able to create a platform for learning which is experienced through both physical and virtual artefacts and aids, enabling people from every layers of community and cultural background to have a first-hand opportunity to explore and therefore breaking all boundaries to experiential learning. This therefore permitted the visitors to understand the rich culture and developments of the nation, creating the opportunities for the visitors to explore and be enlightened on factual matters that concerns them. As evidenced by Newson (1975), the art museum has become an important centre of culture and intellectual inquiry and the uniqueness of art museums as learning resources and called for development of programs and approaches to learning from within the museum.

#### **4.3 Accountability to Sponsors**

The public art museums key leaders' opinions on Restrictions were that controversial or politically sensitive artworks were not favoured by the government or statutory board sponsor. They shared that the government or statutory board sponsor was concerned with artworks that were controversial or radical in nature. This inevitability indicated the need for the government or statutory board sponsor to safeguard its own interests. As recipients of sponsorship from the government or statutory board sponsor, the public art museums are accountable to its sponsors for its curatorial direction and the need to be conservative in its selection of artworks. In essence the public art museum key leaders accepted the fact that the government or statutory board sponsor is a regulator that governed to a certain degree the extent to which the public art museums could operate its curatorial discretions. This is a view shared by Alexander (1996), the government is a regulator, government involvement in anything means rule by committees; and a committee distributing taxpayers' money has to concern itself with gender and geographical balance, and all kinds of equity issues that a private patron can afford to ignore. The simple display of an object can be controversial.

When exhibits go beyond the wonder of the object standing alone and are designed to inform and stimulate visitor learning, they consciously invite controversy as they should. The sole reason expressed by the public art museums key leaders was that by introducing these artworks it would create unwarranted attention and negative feedback from the public and therefore efforts to avoid any negative feedback from the print and social media platforms should be in place, as the government or statutory board sponsor was likewise accountable to the general public. This further supports the theory by Alexander (1996), organizations face

pressures from their environments. Art museums face an uncertain budget every year and must work constantly to raise funds. Museums rely on large, external donors. Further, museum exhibitions are sponsored directly by various funders, notably individual philanthropists, foundations, corporations, and government agencies. Thus, there is a very clear connection between external force (funder) and organizational output (exhibition). Both resource dependency and institutional theories predict that these external funders will have a say in what museums exhibit (Alexander, 1996).

The need to ensure that the funds are efficiently spent was a priority to the government or statutory board sponsor as they were accountable to the taxpayers. This is consistent with Maddison (2004), who presented that museums are major recipients of public money. The recent focus on performance-based budgeting suggests that government might also attempt to allocate museum grants on the basis of museum's achievements with respect to quantitative targets. Managing the museum environment can be difficult since it requires expertise and time. It also requires the efforts of the public art museums' staff as well as the cooperation of the public. The public art museums key leaders expressed that restrictions were inevitable especially when funds are received from the government or statutory board sponsors. The public art museums key leaders pointed out the expectations of the government or statutory board sponsor the public had to be competently managed.

Restrictions play the role of societal gauge that draws a clear line that identifies aesthetic, which distinguishes the artistic from the controversial. Restrictions act as a moral compass, which the public art museums' key leaders could use to guide them to the location where the government or statutory board sponsor and the public art museums could reach the point of mediation. This therefore creates a platform where a win-win situation is established for both the public art museums key leaders and the government or statutory board sponsor. This process is identified by Mather (2005), win-win situations are the best type of strategic partnerships. Both parties should benefit in some way from the relationship. The public art museums key leaders intentions were to enable a partnership that eventually benefitted the audience.

#### **4.4 Private sponsorship—An extension to aesthetic appreciation**

The public art museums exist in an environment where they need to work with different stakeholders, namely the government or statutory board or private sponsor. Collaborating with these entities gives them a united agenda, which is to enrich the lives of the community through their exposure to the visual arts. Tobelem (2007) stated, museums have become complex organizations, which engage in an extremely wide range of activities and programmes in an effort to meet the challenge of emerging social demands. All of this has obviously led to a substantial increase in the required resources (Lindqvist, 2012). The public art museums key leaders ambition to work with the private sponsors was to support the execution of the public art museums' exhibition programmes so that this increased the quality of life of the community through the visual arts.

The public art museums key leaders' strategy of working with private sponsor was capacity building of existing funds sustainability of the exhibitions programmes for the large benefit of the community. By sponsoring an event or cultural organization, the sponsoring firm seeks to enhance its corporate image and reputation (Benhamou, 1996). Firms, which provide support, thus strive to achieve a higher profile, project their corporate identity and have their name linked to a good social cause. The need to address gaps in art history presentation through exhibitions is a critical notion of the public art museums. Funds are limited as to cover all

aspects of the desired exhibition programming and therefore the need to collaborate with private sponsor is paramount to address the societal needs through the exploration of artistic talents and presentations. To this end, the major trend to seek private sponsorship is becoming disciplined, rigorous and strategic.

The public art museums' key leaders interest in wanting to work with private collectors to showcase their artworks has multiple benefits to the community. For a start, the private collector fulfills social responsibility by allowing the artworks to be on loan to the public art museums so that the curatorial concept of the exhibition is optimized. This permits the public to view and experience the artworks that would not have been possible without the collaboration. Private collectors are considered drivers of taste rather than the traditional museums, these private collections and collectors arguably have a duty, if not responsibility, to the public to a degree to engage and to give back with their extensive collections, thus bridging the gap between the public and private spheres of the art market. The access to private collections also has made the public art museums as cultural, educational and civic centers of the nation. The collaboration with the private sponsor to share their artworks with the public has ensured the continued growth, diversification and relevance of these incomparable resources, proclaiming and maintaining the development and cultivation of strategic relationships with private collectors and the public art museums' key leaders.

#### **4.5 Clarity through communication**

The public art museums key leaders express that it is essential to provide clear information to the government or statutory board sponsor through effectual communication as this increases the government or statutory board sponsor's awareness of the entire curatorial and exhibition making process. Morreale, Osborn and Pearson (2000) put forth, that effective communication builds strong business and personal relationships and allowing you to understand exactly what people want and how to give to them. The public art museums key leaders specify that this communication with the government or statutory board sponsor granted them the opportunity in the production of meaning associated with the exhibitions and public programmes. The public art museums key leaders were concerned with the identification of activities that directed the exhibition making process and the need to share this information with the government or statutory board sponsor as this allowed for the expected results to be informed early and allowed for any curatorial discussions to take place before or during the curatorial placement stage of the exhibition making process. As Cornelissen, points out that the strategic function of communication involves its contribution in decision making in the overall strategy, where communication is fully linked to long-term objectives (2004).

Working with government or statutory board sponsor required the public art museums key leaders to develop a communication strategy that had to be planned from the onset when the proposal for the exhibition was first discussed with the curatorial director. Museums and cultural organizations worldwide have, over the last few years been forced to adopt proactive strategies with their stakeholders (Johnson, 2003). This proved effective as the public art museums key leaders are never caught unprepared for any unforeseen circumstances as strategies were in place and these were implemented when needed to deal with matters pertaining to curatorial inputs or adjustments. The need to communicate regularly with government or statutory board concerning curatorial concept and planning allowed for on going exchange of ideas between the public art museums key leaders and the government or statutory board sponsor allowing for closer working relationship to take place and resulting in trust between the two parties. Active communication, especially in the formative stages of the

partnership, ensured the pursuit of commonly held objectives within the alliance. The role of knowledge sharing in the combination of complementary resources has been previously treated in the broader literature on strategic alliances (Dyer and Singh, 1998).

The public art museums key leaders reiterated that the continuous discussions with the government or statutory board sponsor enabled them to test their curatorial concept ideas and directions against the views of the academic panel or representatives as appointed by the funding agency. Silverman (1964) described, how we listen to and hear people depends upon our psychological mind set – our perceptions, needs, and temperament. It is essential to realize this, because it oftentimes accounts for differences in end results of casual conversations and poignant discussions between people. This allowed for open-ended discussions to take place and enabled curatorial expertise to be positively challenged resulting in areas that could have been overlooked by the public art museums key leaders. The results of this continuous discussions enabled the public art museums' key leaders to fine-tune their cognitive skills to monitor the developments of these continuous discussions and how these would eventually lead to achieving the desired outcomes that both fulfills the objectives of both parties.

#### **4.6 Cultivating good working relationships**

The public art museums key leaders expressed that in working with the private sponsor, it was necessary to have the attitude of negotiation in place to resolve concerns that the private sponsor might have regarding the curatorial arrangement of the artworks or curatorial concept. The public art museums key leaders reiterated that it was necessary to have good listening skills and verbal skills and so that the private sponsor is aware that their concerns are addressed at the very onset when it occurs. Rao (1992) illustrated that negotiation depends on communication. Effective negotiation leads to a situation where there is a win-win solution. Each party comes out of a negotiation with the feeling that they have the best deal. In so doing the public art museums key leaders strive to cultivate a reputation for reliability and integrity which are crucial in their dealings with the private sponsor to ensure a fruitful partnership in producing innovative exhibitions and public programmes for the general public.

Pearson (2013) recounts that to develop good working relationships with stakeholders and to avoid conflict, it is essential to share a common purpose. Forming a deep connection with the private sponsor involves continual close working relationship with regular updates on the exhibition making process. This creates a genuine and ensuring sense of attachment to the exhibition for the private sponsor as it allows them to take a personal interest in the growth and success of the partnership. Cultivating a good working relationship with the private sponsor is important to the public art museums key leaders as it helps the private sponsor to be satisfied with the collaboration. This positive working relationship is built on trust and allows both parties to share knowledge freely regarding the curatorial concept or framework and this results in efficiency and is beneficial to both parties.

Mutual respect between the private sponsor and the public art museums key leaders is necessary to allow for productive working relationships and this permits each entity to listen to inputs from one another and results in the working together to find the best solutions to existing concerns. Establishing, cultivating and maintaining good working relationships with the private sponsor is the key to a positive working environment for the public art museums' key leaders. A positive working relation is built by setting clear expectations, practicing constant communication with the private sponsor and offering timely responses to the private sponsor when matters of concerns arise in the midst of the partnership.

Prompt responses to the private sponsor's inquiries and concerns in real-time circumstances proves to the private sponsor that the public art museums key leaders are actively responsive to their needs and that this partnership is seen as a long-term investment which is pursued with due diligence, in return the private sponsor reciprocates by indicating interest and enthusiasm in the partnership. This corresponds to Hinde (1979), who describes relationships are defined as a sequence of interactions between two people that involves some degree of mutuality, in that the behavior of one member takes some account of the behavior of the other. The communication channel between the public art museums key leaders and the private sponsor needs to be open at all times so that either party is able to discuss matters on a timely manner and these are handled professionally and efficiently. Providing the private sponsor with realistic expectations and efficient information regarding the exhibition and public programmes on a timely basis and following up with them on new developments without over-promising facilitates satisfying positive working relationship that allows for deeper relationships to be built. Blatt and Camden (2007) highlighted that positive relationships in terms of positive connections that lead to feelings on inclusions, a felt sense of being important to others, experienced mutual benefits and shared emotions.

## **5. Conclusion**

On a micro level, the public art museums key leaders working with the government or statutory board and private sponsors not only supports the public art museums in organizing and running their annual exhibitions and public programmes but more importantly this partnership has proven to be beneficial to the community at large. The sponsorship provided to the public art museums has strengthen its social resources. This collaboration with the government or statutory board and private sponsors has enabled the public art museums to develop its internal strategies and thereby consolidating its resources through the curatorial expertise of the public art museum keys leaders to establish long term goals that results in the artistic learning and journey of the community. This partnership in sponsorship stimulates interaction between the public art museums key leaders and the government or statutory board and private sponsors thereby creating a shared interest in the visual arts, creates opportunities for communication and interaction in an informal setting. Critical factors to note are: the successful internalization of the exhibitions and public programmes with the sponsorship partners; the commitment of the sponsorship partners and their expectations; the long-term working relationships cultivated, the mobilization of resources from the sponsorship partners; open communication and the resolution to resolve matters of concerns; and the need to work collaboratively to ultimately benefit the community.

Looking at it from a macro level, this collaborative 'sponsorship partnership' between the public art museum key leaders and the government or statutory board and private sponsors has enabled cultural sustainability to exist and flourish which was the aim of the government as described in Renaissance City Report in 1999, which has a vision of transforming Singapore into an arts hub (Ministry of Information and the Arts, 2000). The cultural policy set forth to establish the creation of the public art museums and with the strategies employed by the public art museum key leaders in understanding the working mechanisms of the sponsors has resulted in sustainability of cultural initiatives thereby in the culmination of cultural continuity resulting in the enrichment or 'value-add' of the community.

The systematic engagements with the the government or statutory board and private sponsors at ground level to enhance the aesthetic experience of the community has a direct impact on sustainable development on culture and the policy it orchestrates. Therefore the impetus to work with these sponsors as not only impacted society at its main level of existence but it as



also enabled cultural policy/ies to be sustained and maintained at a platform that benefits every strata of society, in this instance the public art museums and their continuous work in the visual arts complemented and sustained by the sponsorships. In order for the public art museums to maintain their narratives in the community, they have embraced the reality that the collective partnerships maintained through sponsorships arrangements with the government or statutory board and private sponsors have assisted them to embrace a more entrepreneurial, innovative and democratic vision to develop new or enhance current internal procedures to ensure sustainability in a competitive economical environment thereby sustaining the cultural policy/ies in operation.

The understanding of the public art museums key leaders and their ‘cultural rights’ through effective sponsorship partnerships would enable them to devise solutions or narratives that would navigate them to be in tandem with existing cultural policy/ies that enables them to maintain a high degree of cultural sustainability in a competitive environment that is constantly affected by economic and social issues and concerns. The collaboration with the government or statutory board and private sponsor has enabled the public art museums to be economically viable in a competitive society and therefore this supports the existing cultural policy/ies taking into account the cultural sensitivities of stakeholders. This is achieved through the sponsorship support for the museums’ activities (i.e. exhibitions and public programmes) and this feeds into the cultural policy/ies enabling the government to better understand the needs and expectations that drive the willingness to provide the monetary support as provided by the enterprises. The cultural policy/ies are sustained by this ecology which is made up of the organic institutions (i.e. public art museums) and their short/long-term sponsors whose financial resources sustains cultural products that come under the cultural policy/ies instituted by the government and also looks into cultural planning or review of the existing cultural policy/ies. This therefore enables policy makers to understand the working principles that govern the relationship between the public art museums and the government or statutory board and private sponsors and helps the policy makers to appreciate the value of the visual arts in improving quality of life and not only looking at their sponsorships in terms of economic value and defined policy objectives to be achieved.

## **6. Implications and Value**

### **6.1 Implications for theory**

This contributes to the literature on the work of the public art museums in the visual arts in Singapore with special reference to working with government or statutory board and private sponsors. It contributes to the understanding of partnership-relationship in regards to sponsorships. This adds to the understanding of how partnership in sponsorship can add value to both the recipient and the entity providing the funds, which ultimately benefits the community. Its enables the understating of how cultural policy enables the cultural units (public art museums) to be sustainable in economically challenging times and be developmental trajectories that propel the visual arts (a crucial element of culture) and its appreciation by the community.

### **6.2 Implications for practice**

This research offers insight for public art museums key leaders, often pressed for funding to broaden their approach and strategies in reaching out to government or statutory board and private sponsors through collaborative partnerships that results in a win-win situation for both parties concerned. By having a deeper understanding of the working mechanisms of the government or statutory board and private sponsors, this would enable the public art museums key leaders to develop the appropriate approaches to negotiate a fruitful sponsorship

partnership. Understanding ground-level working mechanisms of the visual arts would enable the public art museums key leaders to appreciate the cultural policy in place that enabled the creation of these infrastructures (public art museums) and the important roles that they play in the sustainability of culture and its governing policies and how them (public art museums key leaders) could contribute to the shift in cultural policy as deemed necessary for the benefit of the community through their collaborative partnerships with the government or statutory and private sponsors. The relationship built during the ‘sponsorship partnership’ with the government or statutory board and private sponsors has created a platform for the public art museums key leaders to discuss with policy makers (i.e. government or statutory board) the importance of the investment in the visual arts and emphasize to them how this has improved the quality of everyday life. This has provided the policy makers a fresh outlook on seeing the investments as opportunities to increase the well-being of the community and not only focus on the intensive quest to measure and quantify the economic and social returns in the arts, which has been heightened in the context of austerity.

#### **7. Limitation and future research**

This research is primarily based on data derived from interviews with a limited numbers of public art museum key leaders based on the selection criteria of a minimum of five years of working experience in their respective public art museums.

Future research could also include public art museum key leaders with lesser working years of experience and/or expand the interviewee selection to include public art museum key leaders who have gone into freelance work.

It could also look into specific cultural policy/ies that are centred on the public art museums and the impacts the ‘sponsorships partnerships’ have on them.

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