

## BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: BUILDING ACCESSIBLE DIRECTORIES FOR MALAYSIA'S CREATIVE HUBS

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### Abstract

This paper examines the creation of a digital platform to document Malaysia's creative hubs, bridging the gaps in accessibility and community engagement. Although creative hubs have been expanding in Malaysia, their visibility remains limited, especially for smaller, non-traditional spaces. Drawing on community development theories, this study emphasizes the need for structure, shared identity, and power in building effective digital directories. A comparative analysis of international platforms illustrates effective approaches in usability, detailed content, and community-driven features. Through this framework, the article offers insights into strengthening Malaysia's creative industry by fostering digital cohesion among creative hubs.

**Keywords:** Malaysia Creative Industry, directory building, creative hubs, community development

### Introduction

In 1998, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS) under the British government started a mapping project to document the UK's creative labour force through 13 categories and host them under the term creative industries (Creative Industries Mapping Documents, 1998). Later, the DCMS's documentation for creative industries triggered governments in other countries to develop their version of creative industry policies and build their creative economy. The same goes for Malaysia; the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture introduced the Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara (DIKN) in 2009 to promote the Malaysian creative economy (*Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara*, 2011). The fate of DIKNs did not stay long as the General Election, three years later, split the Ministry into two, and the DIKN policy faded into view. The results of this split can be felt today, as the application for the creative industry practices echoes financial concerns, and lack of training for cultural workers, and contributes to the lack of documentation on creative hubs in Malaysia.

Smaller non-governmental organisations, such as the British Council, researched creative hubs but relied on a smaller pool of hubs based in the Klang Valley (Low, 2017). Agencies' works, such as the report from the Cultural Economy Development Agency (CENDANA), were policy-

heavy, with barely any capacity to explain what goes behind the practice of creative hubs (Kuala Lumpur As A Cultural And Creative City Report, 2019). Even more, digital documentation is lacking in the literature on Malaysia's creative industries, as the small number of directories featured mostly individual artists. In contrast to Malaysia, other countries utilise their digital platforms not only to document their creative hubs but also to disseminate relevant resources and foster community engagement. Take, for instance, Creative Victoria (2024), which allocates a dedicated section on its website to funding programs, grants, and initiatives aimed at bolstering the development and expansion of the creative sector in Victoria, Australia. Similarly, the Creative Hubs Network (*Network*, n.d.) goes beyond merely sharing information by providing comprehensive details about each listed creative hub in its directory. This includes essential information such as hub names, locations, and contact details, enriching the user experience and facilitating connections within the creative community.

In the realm of the visual arts, finding a space for artistic expression and collaboration is pivotal for both established artists and aspiring creators. Whether seeking a platform for personal growth or professional advancement, the quest for accessible creative spaces is fundamental. However, navigating this landscape, particularly within the context of Malaysia, presents a formidable challenge. Despite the proliferation of art spaces and creative hubs, especially in regions like the Klang Valley, accessing relevant information remains hard for individuals not intimately acquainted with the artistic community. The challenge lies in the disparity between the abundance of creative hubs and the limited accessibility of pertinent information about them. While traditional art institutions and galleries often enjoy comprehensive digital documentation, smaller-scale creative hubs frequently operate in obscurity, rendering them elusive to outsiders. Consequently, individuals interested in engaging with these spaces encounter barriers to entry, hindering organic involvement within the artistic community.

Accessing information about creative hubs in Malaysia, especially for those outside the art community, thus, remains challenging despite their abundance, particularly in the Klang Valley area. While traditional art institutions and galleries are well-documented online, smaller creative hubs often go unnoticed, creating a significant gap in accessible documentation. Thus, this article hopes to bring value to creative hubs through the medium of digital directories and find solutions to making information on these hubs a lot more accessible.

### **Malaysian Digital Directories**

At the most accessible level, using the Google Arts and Culture platform, based on their "nearby" tab, only features museums and exhibitions nearby to the individual location (*Google Arts & Culture*, n.d.). The featured ones are mostly art institutions such as the National Art Gallery, Petrosains, Muzium Orang Asli Gombak, Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation, and the rest feature Singapore. Only Ilham Gallery, which this research has listed as a creative hub was also in Google Art and Culture's directory. Indeed, the Google Arts and Culture database does not fully represent what is happening in Malaysia. Even comparing other cultural institutions to those in other countries, the Malaysian version still lacks information. Despite being featured as a nearby case in Kuala Lumpur, the National Art Gallery does not have a curated profile page.

The second example of a directory is from RIUH, a curated platform for pop-up stores. Their directory features the different pop-up stores and groups featured during Riuh's events (*RIUH Directory*, 2024). The specific profile page for each pop-up store only features basic

information such as their Instagram handle, website, and some background details. While there is an attempt for digital documentation, the RIUH database is limited to artisan groups and artists who have performed or used the RIUH platform to showcase their work. There is no category for a creative hub in their directory. A single developer runs the third example. For example, *Buttermilk's Artist directory* showcases Malaysian artists who draw, paint and illustrate. (Hui, 2024) Another example is *Malaysian Who Make*, which features a creator directory to discover local creators (How, 2024). Since a single developer made the directory, content is also limited. Despite the directory having different categories, including one for artists, it only highlights the work of twelve artists. No category under both platforms features something close to creative hubs or artist's groups.

The three types of directories discussed above share similar limitations. Initially, individuals or organisations must complete a form and arrange their details for inclusion. If the website is not widely known, there are fewer submissions and limited features. Moreover, developers creating these directories often fail to reach out to potential candidates who could be featured on their platforms. Secondly, most profile pages within these directories offer minimal information, adhering to a standard metadata template featuring logos, social links, and brief bios.

### **Design System**

When examining the literature on what constitutes a good design system for a website, the consensus revolves around consistency. A well-designed system should strive to establish a consistent and unified impression (Yoshida et al., 2006), streamline efforts by guiding designers and developers toward the creation of usable, valuable, and engaging experiences (Rose et al., 2023), and ensure the website meets design requirements and performance objectives (Yen, 2015). Achieving this requires an integrated framework encompassing construction, evaluation, and enhancement (Yen et al., 2007), employing an analytical approach to model, assess, and improve design elements (Yen et al., 2005). Thus, revisiting the three website directories mentioned earlier reveals that their limitations in documenting creative hubs in Malaysia ultimately stem from inconsistency. At their core, these directories merely serve to inform rather than function as comprehensive information hubs, lacking a cohesive design system that incorporates multiple perspectives.

### **Websites with Effective Directories**

In the realm of online platforms, certain websites stand out for their consistent structure and well-functioning directories. One such example is the Creative Hubs Network (*Network*, n.d.), a platform designed to facilitate connections among creative professionals, organizations, and spaces worldwide. This platform is distinguished by its comprehensive suite of resources, events, and directories aimed at fostering the discovery and collaboration of creative hubs on a global scale. The website of the Creative Hubs Network epitomizes its global outreach by serving as a hub for connecting creatives irrespective of geographical barriers. Through its expansive directory featuring creative hubs from diverse countries and regions, users gain access to a wealth of opportunities and avenues for collaboration across borders.

Notably, the website ensures a scholarly user experience by providing in-depth information about each listed creative hub. Users are furnished with essential details such as hub names, locations, sector focuses, available facilities, and contact information. This meticulous curation empowers their website viewers to make informed decisions regarding potential partnerships or research endeavours within the creative sphere. Another noteworthy example is Creative Victoria

(2024), the government entity entrusted with nurturing and championing Victoria, Australia's creative industries. Unlike the Creative Hubs Network's emphasis on serving as a centralized information hub, Creative Victoria adopts a distinct approach, positioning itself as a comprehensive resource hub. Their website serves as a repository of information encompassing creative hubs, funding programs, and industry initiatives, tailored to support the flourishing creative landscape of Victoria.

In its role as a resource hub, Creative Victoria's website offers extensive insights into the creative industries thriving within Victoria, Australia. Covering a diverse array of sectors such as film, television, digital media, design, and visual arts, the platform provides invaluable resources and knowledge for creatives seeking to navigate and excel within these domains. Moreover, Creative Victoria's website functions as a pivotal hub for funding programs, grants, and initiatives aimed at fostering the growth and development of the creative sector. By furnishing detailed information on available funding streams, eligibility criteria, and application processes, the platform empowers creatives to access vital financial support for their projects, thereby contributing to the vibrancy and sustainability of Victoria's creative ecosystem. Lastly, we turn our attention to Creative Lives in Progress (*Creative Lives in Progress*, n.d.), another exemplary platform featuring a commendable directory. This website offers an abundance of inspiring content, including interviews, articles, and features that delve into the lives and careers of creative professionals. Serving as a reservoir of motivation and insight, this content acts as a beacon for individuals embarking on careers within the creative industries.

Creative Lives in Progress boasts a rich tapestry of creative disciplines and professionals, showcasing insights from diverse fields such as design, photography, illustration, writing, and more. This multifaceted representation enables visitors to glean insights into various creative paths and industries, fostering a nuanced understanding of the creative landscape. Furthermore, Creative Lives in Progress serves as a valuable resource by providing practical advice and tips on crucial topics such as career development, portfolio building, freelancing, and entrepreneurship. This actionable guidance equips both aspiring and established creatives with the tools to navigate challenges and chart a course toward success in their endeavours.

### **User Friendly and Community Engagement**

Across all three website directories, several commonalities emerge. Firstly, each boasts a user-friendly interface, simplifying navigation for website visitors. The Creative Hubs Network, for instance, presents a user-friendly interface facilitating seamless navigation and directory exploration. Its search and filtering functionalities enable users to swiftly locate hubs based on specific criteria, thereby enhancing the overall user experience. Similarly, Creative Lives in Progress adopts an intuitive website layout, featuring clear categories and search functions, facilitating rapid access to relevant content for visitors.

Secondly, all three websites serve as digital hubs fostering community engagement. The Creative Hubs Network nurtures community engagement by encouraging hubs to join the network and partake in events, collaborations, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. This communal ethos strengthens the creative ecosystem, bolstering the growth of creative industries globally. Likewise, Creative Victoria's website offers a comprehensive calendar showcasing events, workshops, exhibitions, and festivals within Victoria's creative community. Serving as a valuable resource, it enables creatives to discover networking opportunities, attend industry events, and immerse themselves in the local arts and culture scene. Furthermore, Creative Lives in Progress fosters a sense of community among creatives, providing platforms for engagement, interaction, and

collaboration. Visitors can engage in discussions, share experiences, and connect with like-minded individuals, enriching their creative journeys.

In summary, the Malaysian digital database lacks comprehensive content representing the activities of the creative hubs community and exhibits inconsistencies in its design system. By prioritizing user-friendly design and enhancing community engagement opportunities, these websites can transcend their primary function as directories and evolve into immersive platforms enriching the creative experience for users.

### **Community Development Theory**

This research relies on the Community Development field from the viewpoint of Structuration theory as a conceptual framework. According to Bhattacharyya (Bhattacharyya, 1995), Community Development is central to solidarity (shared identity/ shared code of conduct) and agency (dependency to make a choice). Community Development principles are essential to limit being blinded by personal ideologies and to gain solidarity and agency. This concept is a necessary framework for this research, especially when developing the website, as the end goal is to provide a directory and resources for the creative hub to gain a shared identity and have the capacity to make their own choice.

Community Development is also critical in this research to synthesise theory with practice and give better recommendations for future research. It is essential for this research to look from the viewpoint of solidarity and agency as it provides a better framework for the motivation of people looking to start their hub, maintain a hub, or just look to connect. It also helps that it is not just limited to the capitalistic viewpoint for making a profit, like the readings on creative industries.

However, according to Bhattacharyya, Community Development on its own, despite its extensive body of literature, lacks specificity. Similarly, Hustedde and Ganowicz (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002) argued that community development could be bombarded by many theories from many disciplines and compounded by jargon. Their study has identified several fundamental theories for community development research and practice: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactions. According to Hustedde and Ganowicz, these three classical theories are insufficient without each other because communities and social change are complex. Instead, Hustedde and Ganowicz suggested that community development professions look at Giddens' model of Structuration theory, as it is the most dynamic way to consider all three views in one viewpoint instead of seeing them as separate theories. By relying on Giddens' structuration theory, these three theories, though varying in concept, can take a more profound meaning because they link both micro and macro levels through the coideal modalities. Unfortunately, even Giddens' theory has its limitations. According to Hustedde and Ganowicz, his writing is too analytical and abstract, and he rarely gives examples that can be frustrating for community developers to practice. Hustedde and Ganowicz recommend a simpler version of his theory from the modalities between power, structure, and shared meaning.

This simpler version is more applicable for this research to acknowledge that structures and power differences within the creative industry practices in Malaysia can shape the creative hub's symbolic norms and patterns. Instead of viewing these key concerns as separate entities, this research can shape a better sense of solidarity and agency when building the website directory and resources.

## **Building the Content for the Website**

This research relies on content analysis to build a directory of creative hubs. All information we gathered, either the interview transcriptions or notes on the hubs from online research, was organised into a database using *Airtable* (*Airtable*, n.d.). As explained by Dennis Buckmaster, *Airtable* has been utilized in various fields for database development (Buckmaster et al., 2023). Buckmaster demonstrated its use in digital agriculture, providing templates for operational data collection and analysis. The paper discusses providing well-structured database templates for agriculturalists to improve enterprise analysis and facilitate the infusion of digital agriculture principles through educational programming.

Part of the critical analysis process in this research involved establishing a robust database system. While spreadsheets can serve as databases, dedicated database software like *Airtable* enhances data synthesis capabilities significantly. For instance, while Google Forms can facilitate data entry into a Google Sheet, it often necessitates complex pseudo-coding and meticulous planning to ensure data integrity and completeness (Buckmaster et al., 2023). In contrast, *Airtable* offers comparable functionalities with the added advantages of enhanced data validation for form submissions and the seamless integration of custom applications, providing a more intuitive and efficient user experience (Luc, 2024). Therefore, *Airtable* was used to ease the process of sharing between our research work and the website developer. *Airtable* provides a solution with its functional database, as we can share the hub's profile copies and metadata and make real-time changes.

### *Content Management System*

The first stage will be on the content management system used to document information for the different stakeholders.

Based on the *Airtable* below, the content database has four different sections:

- i. The profile copies for each creative hub and their metadata
- ii. The credits for each photograph or graphic on the website
- iii. The list of consent from each creative hub
- iv. Any edits or feedback

Hub Database for Website									
Web profile copies   Photo Reference Link   Hubs for Consent - Copies   Launch Update - feedback   +									
Views   Overall List   15 hidden fields   Filtered by Status, Phase   Grouped by 1 field   Sorted by 2 fields   Color   Share view   Extensions									
	Name	Status	Phase	Categories 02	Background	Areas of Focus	Achievement Story	Programming and...	Photos
STATUS: Published Count 103									
1	Comic Arts Festival Kuala Lumpur (CAFKL)	Published	New - Week 1	Community   Event Organiser / P	Comic Arts Festival KL (CAFKL) is...	CAFKL is organised by SAY...	Due to the Covid-19 Pande...	CAFKL has given recognitio...	
2	35@Jetty	Published	Phase 4	Venue / Event Space Managem...	Located down a secluded alleyw...	The space is facilitated by ...	The space facilitates for fes...	At 35@Jetty, an exhibition ...	
3	90 Degrees Café & Art	Published	Phase 4	Culinary Arts   Venue / Event Spac	90 Degrees Café & Art is first an...	90 Degrees Art is connecte...	The space is fluid, hosting ...	Connecting and exhibiting ...	
4	A+ WORKS of Arts	Published	Phase 3	Visual Art   Event Organiser / Prod	Based in Kuala Lumpur, A+ WO...	Joshua Lim arts practitio...	Although the main focus of...	Since its establishment, the...	
5	APW Bangsar	Published	Phase 2	Event Organiser / Producer / C...	Located in Bangsar, APW is in a ...	The premises is owned by ...	APW means A Place Where...	One of the major achievem...	
6	Art Seni	Published	Phase 5	Community   Event Organiser / P	The Art Seni is an online platfor...	Art Seni was founded by A...	The art tour that Art Seni r...	Since their first art tour, Art...	
7	Arts-ED	Published	Phase 2	Creative Education   Event Organi	Arts-ED is a non-profit organisa...	Arts-ED is led by a 7-perso...	The organizations ethos is t...	Over the years, their work ...	
8	ARTSPIRE	Published	Phase 4	Creative Education   Performing A	Founded in 2017, ARTSPIRE is a...	With the COVID-19 pande...	ARTSPIRE has started to us...	Previously, ARTSPIRE gaine...	
9	ARUS	Published	Phase 3	Craft   Creative Education   Fabri	Arus is based in a shop lot in Bu...	Arus Education Sdn Bhd is ...	Arus is an afterschool spac...	Students have the opportu...	
10	ASK Dance Company	Published	Phase 2	Performing Arts   Creative Educati	ASK Dance Company (ADC) is a ...	The company was first for...	ASK Dance Company provi...	By 2011, the professional c...	
11	Asylum Art Club	Published	Phase 4	Creative Education   Event Organi	Asylum art club is located in Kot...	Asylum Art Club was establ...	Asylum Art Club holds exhi...	A recent beneficiary of the ...	
12	BENTARAKATA	Published	Phase 4	Community   Event Organiser / P	BENTARAKATA is a Deaf-friendly...	BENTARAKATA annually ho...	BENTARAKATA has publish...	There are not many spaces ...	
13	Borneo Bengkel	Published	Phase 4	Community   Craft   Creative Ed	Borneo Bengkel is an annual cre...	The program emerged as a...	The two week programme ...	The methodology, progra...	
14	Borneo Laboratory@Borneo Art Collective	Published	Phase 2	Event Organiser / Producer / C...	Borneo Laboratory is an organis...	They consciously engage wi...	The hub's interest revolves ...	Some of their regional coll...	
15	Butterworth Fringe Festival	Published	Phase 2	Event Organiser / Producer / C...	Butterworth fringe festival is a p...	Butterworth Fringe Festival ...	Aligning with the George T...	In previous iterations, Butte...	
16	Comic Fiesta	Published	New - Week 2	Community   Event Organiser / P	Comic Fiesta gathers tens of tho...	Comic Fiesta curates a two...	The first Comic Fiesta was ...	-	
17	Cult Creative	Published	January 2021	Community   Literature / Publicat	Cult Creative is a community pla...	Cult Creative conducted Liv...	Cult Creative has three pre...	Cult Creative's significant e...	
18	Damansara Performing Arts Centre	Published	Phase 3	Performing Arts   Creative Educati	Damansara Performing Arts Cen...	Part of Mammoth Empire H...	Their mission as a centre is ...	Damansara Performing Art...	
+	Add...	Published	Phase 4	Community   Literature / Publicat	Eksentrika is a platform for write...	Eksentrika is ran by Ista Kyr...	Eksentrika was created to g...	The shift towards quality ve...	

**Figure 1:** A screenshot of the content management system built to manage the content for different stakeholders using the software Airtable

The Airtable content database was shared across different stakeholders at different levels of expectations:

- 1. Researchers:** With full access to the database to manage hub profile copies and their metadata.
- 2. Website Developers:** With view access where after the relevant information is completed and approved, they will use the content database and upload them to the website.
- 3. Sponsors:** With view access, the sponsors of the website project, especially the British Council, will use the content database for reviews and give any comments.

As Airtable is entirely cloud-based, all stakeholders can see the changes and edits to this database in real-time. The different level of access also avoids any duplication of information.

### *Writing, Reviewing, and Hosting Processes by Stakeholders*

The next type of implementation for the website is building the process for content writing, reviewing, and hosting. The process for collaboration with the different stakeholders, considering the three stages mentioned above, can be seen below.

*Wireframe Low Fidelity:* At this initial stage, the objective is to identify and validate what section the researchers will have to include on the website. Thus, the wireframe we build at this stage is

low fidelity. It consists of a sketch of paragraphs and headings to visualize how long the write-up will be and maps the content within the specific page.

*Wireframe and Copywriting:* After the low-fidelity wireframe version was discussed and reviewed between the researchers and the British Council team, the researchers started making drafts of the copywriting. The wireframe also includes photos or other design details for consideration, along with copywriting. This process is crucial to avoid the back-and-forth between developers for confirmation. Instead, with this process, the researchers can communicate with the stakeholders in a medium-fidelity view. So they would know what it will look like and can already give feedback to the copywriting without waiting for the final version.

*Mockup page:* Having both processes validated, the researchers communicate with the web developer team. At this stage, the developer will build the mockup page as per the confirmed wireframe and copywriting. After they make the mockup page, we validate the pages by checking the links and design work. If there are comments, it is usually minor.

#### *Reviews by Creative Hubs*

At the initial review stage between creative hubs templates, the researchers saved the hubs template in PDF format. The PDF document includes the mockup view of the creative hub profile with copywriting, photography, and meta-data that the researchers developed. After the website launch, the following profile templates were saved in a WORD document instead. The format for review between the creative hubs shifted to accommodate more accessible communication. With the WORD document, the person in charge of the creative hub can make immediate changes and share their comments.

Finally, considering all three types of website implementation, the content was managed through six phases, as seen below.

Phase	Goal	Deadline	Actual Publishing Date
1	Produced and published first 60 copies of hubs profiles	28 April 2020	24 April 2020
2	Produced and published the next 30 hubs profile copies	15 April 2020	8 May 2020
3	Produced and published the next 30 hubs profile copies and developed the system for contact us page	20 May 2020	4 June 2020
4	Produced and published the next 40 hubs profile copies and update the directory categories	3 July 2020	12 July 2020
5	Draft toolkit and update the resource page	1 August 2020	30 September 2021
6	Draft report and update the resource page	1 December 2020	30 September 2021



**Table 1:** The implementation of website content in 6 phases

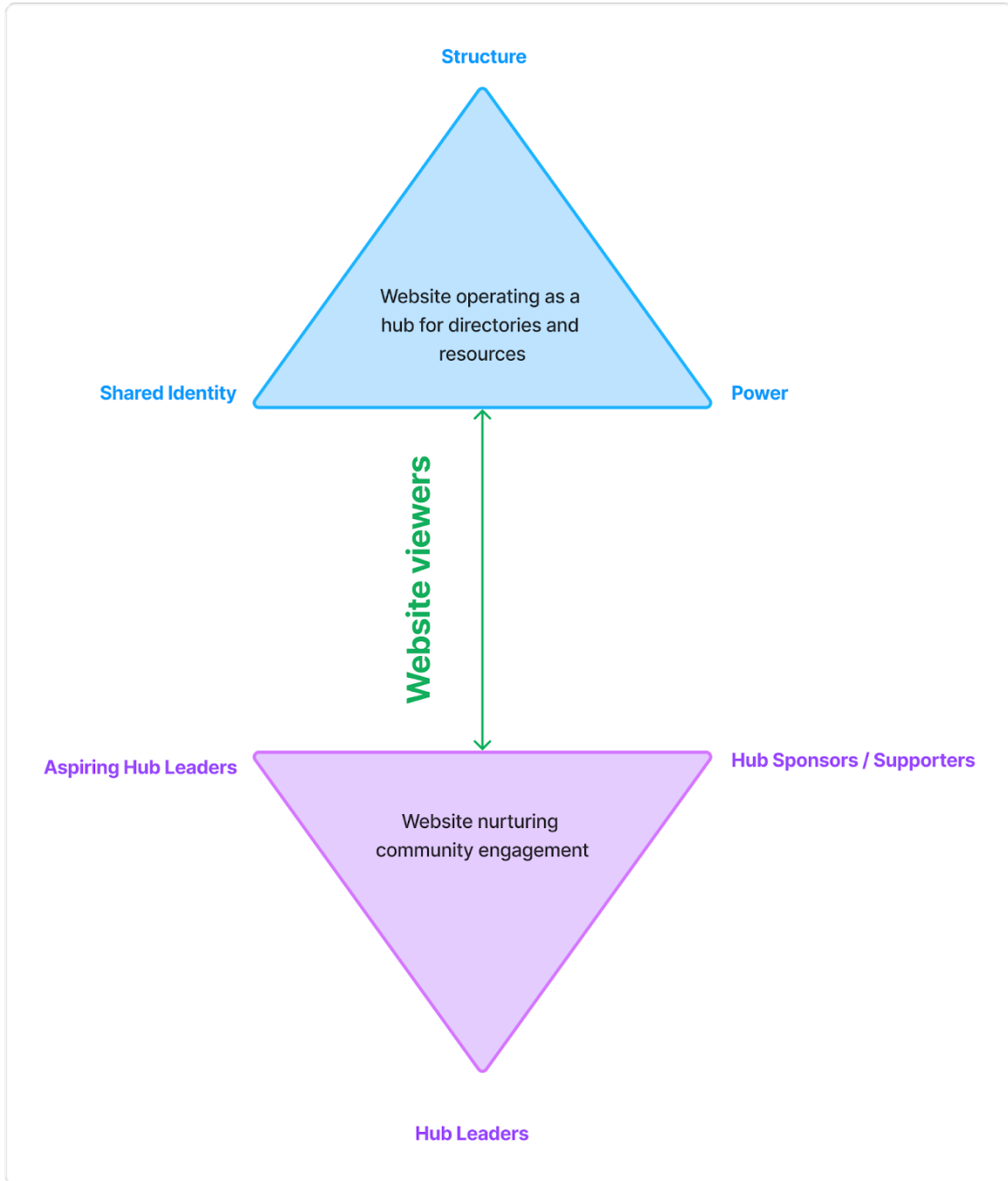
As seen from the table above, phase 1 to phase 4 follows closely to the deadline with minimal gap in terms of the actual publishing date. However, phase 5 to 6 have a big gap between the deadline and the actual publishing date. This is because both draft for report and toolkit were developed by the two other researchers, Ali and Clarissa. Since they were both assisting in the development of the website, they can only start work on their respective draft after the launch of the website directory. At the same time, both researchers had to go through their own reviewing stage with stakeholders which is why the gap of time is reflected in the table above.

### **Enhancing Viewer Engagement Through Community Development**

As discussed earlier in this paper, an exploration of effective directories shares similar traits: a dual focus on user-friendly interface design and the cultivation of community engagement. However, the practical implementation of this principle proves to be a complex endeavour, necessitating a return to our conceptual framework with community development theory.

Our conceptual framework posits that effective community development hinges upon the interplay of three essential modalities: power dynamics, structural frameworks, and the cultivation of shared meaning. These elements are pivotal in fostering solidarity and empowering agency within the community. Thus, in our pursuit to leverage digital platforms as catalysts for community engagement, it becomes imperative to not only prioritize intuitive interface design but also to strategically embed mechanisms that facilitate the formation of communal bonds and the exchange of shared values.

In essence, this reflection underscores the multifaceted nature of nurturing viewer engagement within digital platforms. It emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that integrates technological functionality with the fundamental principles of community development.



**Figure 2:** Application of Community Development Theory to nurture website viewers towards community engagement

As depicted in the Figure above, this research unveils a symbiotic relationship between the foundational triangle framework of community development theory—comprising power, structure, and shared identity—and the triangular segmentation of targeted viewers for this website project. Specifically, the nexus between aspiring hub leaders, existing hub leaders, and hub sponsors or supporters mirrors the core elements of community empowerment and cohesion.

Through the strategic implementation of an effective directory and comprehensive resource allocation, the intrinsic value of the digital platform transcends its conventional role, evolving into a dynamic catalyst for fostering community engagement. In essence, this connection between theory and practice emphasizes how digital platforms can help build strong communities, while also showing how theories and specific audience groups can work together effectively.

### *Structure*

A significant gap in the literature concerning collaboration within artistic endeavours. Existing studies tend to focus on collaboration within small groups rather than at an organizational level involving multiple stakeholders. While the fluidity of collaboration may suit individual artists working closely together, a more structured approach becomes imperative for organizational collaboration to thrive.

Even in the initial phases of website development as discussed earlier in this paper, it became evident that clear steps were essential. Without structured guidelines, deliverables and goals would lack coherence, rendering communication with other stakeholders challenging and potentially undermining project success. This gap is more prevalent as seen in Table 1, where we delved into the significance of Structure within Community Development theory, highlighting its pivotal role not only in content development but also in the review process for the website. By leveraging structured metadata and profiling, the website's workflow was streamlined, expediting the drafting phase and providing a framework for stakeholder reviews.

Through this structured approach, feedback from stakeholders was integrated at an early stage, facilitating iterative improvements and adaptations long before the final stages of development. The key takeaway here is that a structured approach fosters consistency, instilling confidence not only among external stakeholders but also internally among researchers and website developers. Clear and defined steps enhanced communication, making the collaborative process smoother and more efficient, towards developing the website's content.

However, as evidenced throughout this research paper, it becomes apparent that structure alone does not suffice for the overall website development process. While it serves as a crucial starting point and requires maintenance at various levels within the project's framework, it is equally essential to consider the other two components of modalities.

### *Shared Identity*

By implementing a tailored filtering system that resonates with the local context, we observed a notable enhancement in fostering a sense of shared identity among users, rendering the content evergreen. For example, an unexpected outcome emerged from the 'Contact Us' page, which initially lacked anticipation for engagement due to limited marketing efforts. Surprisingly, it garnered substantial interaction, with users recommending hubs for inclusion in the directory or hub leaders expressing interest in being featured. This experience underscores the importance of investing time in laying the groundwork for content foundation, particularly in contextualizing the filtering system. Such efforts are pivotal in ensuring the longevity and relevance of the website content to the intended audience.

This research underscores the lesson that while it may require more effort to develop context-specific filtering systems, it is an indispensable component for creating enduring and relatable content. Simply adopting existing templates, such as those from the UK's creative industries context, overlooks crucial nuances. What works in one context may not necessarily

translate effectively to another, as evidenced by the disparities between the UK and Malaysia. This disparity is evident based on the table below, where the prevalence of production and education-oriented creative hubs in Malaysia contrasts starkly with the emphasis on maker spaces in the UK. Despite this nuanced understanding, significant room for improvement remains in terms of government support and subsidies.

Category	Physical	Transient	Online	Total
Community	9	24	7	40
Collection/ Archive	6	6	3	15
Craft	14	12	1	27
Creative Education	30	23	4	57
Culinary Arts	12	3	1	16
Design	9	6	1	16
Event Organiser/Curatorial/Producer	33	24	10	67
Fabrication/Makerspace	6	0	0	6
Film/Broadcasting/Digital Video Content	9	8	3	20
Literature/Publication/Digital Content	8	10	10	28
Music	10	11	4	25
Performing Arts	16	19	3	38
Venue/Event Space Management	28	1	0	29
Visual Art	24	13	1	38

**Table 2:** List of creative hubs based on category

For instance, while Malaysia boasts abundant physical spaces, creative hubs still face challenges in accessing crucial resources such as connections, mentorship, and audience development. Additionally, even a modest increase in funding could enable them to host more artistic workshops—a substantial departure from the needs of hubs grappling with space shortages. This comparison underscores the importance of tailoring support mechanisms to the specific needs of the creative ecosystem in Malaysia, rather than merely adopting solutions based on overseas models. By addressing these distinct challenges, policymakers can foster a more conducive environment for creative innovation and growth.

#### *Power*

Lastly, it's imperative to recognize the inherent power dynamics within Malaysia's creative industry for effective community development. The trajectory of Malaysia's creative industry has

remained stagnant following the setback of the DIKN policy. Despite possessing significant funding and resource capacity, the primary challenge lies in the need for more diversity across mediums to adequately support the expansive ecosystem of creative industries.

This realization underscores the need for comprehensive reforms that address the underlying power dynamics within the sector. Moving forward, efforts should be directed towards fostering a more inclusive and diverse creative landscape, thereby unlocking the full potential of Malaysia's creative economy. By addressing these fundamental disparities, policymakers can pave the way for sustained growth and innovation within the Malaysian creative industry. For instance, one of the key findings for this research shed light on a critical aspect of Malaysia's creative industry: the distribution of funds.

There are 31 funding links in this directory, where 19 are grants, and 12 are venture capital. Meanwhile, there are 13 opportunity links in this directory; ten are for capacity building, and three are open calls. The finance industry dominates the funding directory. In contrast, art foundations dominate the opportunities directory. Contrary to a lack of funding, the issue lies in the limited diversity of funding options available to support both short-term and long-term programs. Furthermore, while opportunities exist for Malaysian creatives to engage in international art programs, reciprocity needs to be improved. There are few avenues for international creatives to participate in art exchanges within Malaysia, representing a significant missed opportunity for local talent to broaden their horizons without the need for extensive travel.

Similarly, the landscape of private foundations adds another layer of complexity. These entities often operate with their agendas for developing Malaysian creatives, functioning somewhat independently from the broader ecosystem. This fragmented approach makes it challenging for creatives to access various opportunities without a centralized directory to guide them. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach that fosters greater diversity in funding options, promotes reciprocal international exchanges, and integrates private foundations more seamlessly into the overarching creative ecosystem. By streamlining access to opportunities and resources, Malaysian creatives can unlock their full potential and thrive within the global creative landscape. The modality of power reveals that access to information is inherently empowering. While Malaysia boasts a wealth of resources, its effective utilization requires collective support from all stakeholders. The absence of diverse content represents a significant power disparity within the Malaysian creative industry.

### **Building or Burning Bridges?**

Overall, as seen in Figure 2, it becomes evident that the entire website development process in this research hinges on the core modalities of structure, shared identity, and power derived from community development theory. While nurturing the website as a digital platform for community engagement may appear as a mere byproduct, it significantly influences both the inception and culmination of the process. In light of the creative industry's lack of support since the failure of the DIKN policy, recognizing the digital platform's potential to unite stakeholders for the betterment of Malaysia's creative communities through resource sharing and community engagement holds greater significance than viewing it as a one-way conduit to a single target audience. However, despite its promise, the digital platform is not without its limitations. The subsequent section will

delve into the insights gained and considerations to be made when navigating collaborative efforts as a cohesive unit.

### *Quality Vs. Quantity*

Ensuring the quality of information in digital documentation often demands a trade-off between depth and quantity. In the pursuit of comprehensive content, considerable time is devoted to crafting detailed narratives about creative hubs. While Malaysian digital platforms as discussed earlier tend to prioritize brevity over depth, deeper exploration reveals nuanced insights about specific creative hubs and spaces that might otherwise be overlooked.

Regrettably, as revealed in the website development process outlined in Table 1, prioritizing Quality over Quantity proves to be a formidable challenge when content limitations stem from the subjects themselves. Despite their established presence in the industry, creative hubs frequently overlook digital self-promotion. Even amidst the surge of online activity spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, many hubs confine their digital presence solely to platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Consequently, their content dissemination regarding their hubs remains confined to these platforms and their respective social media followers. However, this shift towards digital engagement has highlighted a glaring gap: the absence of comprehensive information about creative hubs online. Details such as the individuals behind the hub, its history, and current events often remain elusive or require extensive searching. Unless one has been closely following these hubs since their early days or over some time, accessing such information digitally remains a challenge. Moreover, the need for digitally savvy personnel further exacerbates this issue. Without individuals equipped to navigate and curate online content effectively, the task of digitally showcasing creative hubs becomes even more daunting.

### *Transferring of Knowledge*

Transferring knowledge presents a unique challenge in the digital realm, where the relentless demand for up-to-date information can feel overwhelming. Effectively capturing the evolving landscape of creative hubs demands intentional effort and strategic planning. Ideally, the responsibility for documenting the next generation of creative hubs should be shared by both the community and individuals within the industry.

While constructing a digital space may not necessitate substantial financial investment, the absence of dedicated researchers or storytellers to document narratives could result in the loss of invaluable information. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to bridge the divide between online presence and offline engagement. Notably, limitations on travel and difficulties contacting certain hubs hindered the website's ability to showcase all creative hubs in Malaysia. Without their signed consent to be listed, some hubs were excluded.

Therefore, strategies focusing on offline engagement are vital to accommodate hubs that are not actively present online. This may require researchers to conduct additional research, particularly in regions such as states like Kedah, Perlis, Terengganu, and Kelantan are absent from the directory list. An effective platform for knowledge transfer must equip researchers with both digital skills to navigate the website and qualitative research skills to conduct interviews and craft impactful narratives.

### *Working Together*

Collaboration, though theoretically straightforward, often proves to be challenging in practice. Effective collaboration necessitates each participant fulfilling specific roles rather than simply

improvising. Timely communication and clear expectations are crucial for successful collaboration. Challenges encountered during the development process of this website stemmed from difficulties in finding the right tools to address issues in online collaboration, reviewing, and resource management. Over time, these challenges were overcome, but it's important to recognize that despite the digital nature of this research project, its development demanded significant physical effort behind the scenes.

The endeavour for this research project is far from a one-person job, encompassing tasks such as conducting interviews, documentation, writing, fact-checking, grammar checking, website content management, and coordination with all stakeholders involved. While scholarly discussions about collaboration typically focus on small groups, the complexities arise when collaboration involves multiple stakeholders with diverse interests and perspectives. However, future scholars interested in similar paths should remain open to exploring processes that work best for them and their stakeholders. Rushing through collaboration efforts with shortcuts may prove burdensome in the long run.

## **Recommendations**

Overall, here are three main recommendations in relation to in directory building as analysed from the discussion of this paper.

### *Building Structure*

For future research or web developers, prior to starting the content development, have a structured plan that consider the tasks for all stakeholders. To avoid being overwhelmed with the amount of content and integrating feedback in the process, consider also to breakdown the tasks in different stages of writing, editing, and reviewing so that there will be some time space to adapt for the directory improvements. Meanwhile, for stakeholders such as governments and corporations looking to invest or collaborate in directory building, everyone needs to be part of the process rather than a one-sided approach to the development. It is also important to consider collaborative communication as part of the process to allow space for candour and exchanging ideas. Both the government and corporations, if wanting to develop a directory that is distinguishable need to understand that content development requires time and effort and, thus should provide enough time for the project to be developed, reviewed, and published rather than pushing every stage in a short amount of time.

### *Exploring Shared Identity*

For future research or web developers, it is important to note that there are different mechanisms that can be considered when developing a directory. Thus, priority should be towards the most prominent filter, in defining a sense of identity towards the targeted subject. At the same time, the rest of the filters should not be taken lightly and be seen as complementary to the first main filter as it also have power to help users navigate the directory with more context. Thus, it is apparent to build the directory with context to the subject and audience, instead of copying existing website templates that are available online. While it's easier to follow the structure and ecosystem of the creative industries happening in other countries, it is important for governments and corporates to consider local contexts. Similar with the happenings of creative industries in other developing countries like Indonesia, there are also disparity within the cities and regional locations. Thus, when developing such digital project like the directory will need considerations to the local context so as to not be bias to just one-type of city, and not the other regions.

### *Navigating resources*

For future research or web developers, while building a directory of resources might seem easy at first as just a space to consolidate the different links, it is more apparent when considering the different type of resources available. Thus, as much as developing the map of resources is the core objective, understanding the different types within these resources would make it beneficial for users when navigating it digitally. The realm of resources can be one-sided, and in order to improve the quality of these different resources would require collaboration and effort from all stakeholders including private foundations, government agencies, and corporation to not only increase different types of financial aid, short and long-term opportunities but also promote a balance of practicality with copyright law and cultural policy.

### **Conclusion**

Towards the end, it's crucial to emphasize that building this website is a collaborative endeavour involving multiple stakeholders. Recognizing and acknowledging this collective effort is essential for developing a digital platform that comprehensively documents its subject matter. In the extensive literature on creative industries, there is a noticeable absence of information on the intricacies of collaboration. Contrary to popular belief, collaboration doesn't simply occur naturally—it requires deliberate effort. In this website project, stakeholders from three distinct areas had to be satisfied to ensure the project's success. Looking ahead, there must be a continual commitment to documenting the creative industries. However, without proper digital training, creative hubs may struggle to make their information accessible. Bridging this gap is essential for ensuring the comprehensive documentation of these hubs.

It's important not to underestimate the impact of the website. Even without extensive promotion, the project has attracted interest from other creative hubs eager to be included in the listings. This serves as a testament to the value and potential impact of the platform.

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