



**HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION)**

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**Declaration**

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

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Date of Submission:

## **Abstract**

Singapore takes pride in being a cultural hotspot. However, faced with a growing post-racial society and an over-commercialised world, it is concerning that cultural authenticity might not hold. This paper explores whether such authenticity has been perceived to be upheld across Chinatown, Little India, and Geylang Serai; whether the efforts of the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the National Heritage Board, the two main stakeholders, have been substantial; and what else improve these conservation efforts. Using a survey, Urban Development Common Indicator analyses, and feasibility reviews, it was found that while conservation efforts failed in Chinatown, they succeeded in Geylang Serai and Little India. Additionally, it was found that the URA was effective, though it did not suit all areas; NHB was effective but its impact was not substantial in Chinatown. Finally, six solutions were found plausible to boost conservation efforts, including giving the community a bigger role in cultural conservation.

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 General Background**

As Singapore inches past her bicentennial celebrations, we will undoubtedly ask ourselves who we are as a nation. Often, we turn back to our culture; our past. But how effective has the conservation been of this culture?

This research is regarding the conservation of cultural areas in Singapore. As cultural areas, these landmarks are supposed to be representative of the different racial cultures in Singapore, as they have been recognised as racial enclaves for the most of Singaporean history (Ong, 2017). It is therefore of utmost importance that these cultural enclaves are preserved to ensure that they do not get lost in the future.

What, then, has the government done to conserve Singapore's culture? In 1986, the Urban Redevelopment Authority identified six historical sites to conserve following the "3R" principle: maximum Retention, sensitive Restoration and careful Repair- any alterations to conserved buildings have to be approved by the Urban Redevelopment Authority. However, these "conservation" efforts have only been for the structure, but not the culture itself.

In 1993, the National Heritage Board was set up to "preserve, commemorate and promote our tangible and intangible cultural heritage". It has done this by not only preserving National Monuments and sites like those historical sites identified earlier by the Urban Redevelopment Authority, but promoting them too. Additionally, they set up national heritage trails in an attempt to make experiencing our culture more accessible. Lastly, they document and celebrate our shared traditions through exhibitions and festivals.

With all these in place, though, is it enough? Millennials in Singapore have a declining religiosity (Zaccheus, Pang & Ng, 2016) and thus are more likely to leave behind their ethnic customs. Matheus et. al (2017) found that, among young Singaporeans, they “scored high on appreciating ethnic festivities”, but “low in appreciating ethnic dress and art”. This brings up questions regarding whether future generations will continue appreciating their own ethnic cultures- the Pew Research Center describes millennials and people born after to be “post-racial”; that is- to leave behind ethnic race for a more homogeneous identity through the Internet. In the next few years, culture conservation policies will have to be increasingly effective and firm, before it is too late.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The deciding factor as to whether our uniquely Singaporean ethnic cultures will be preserved and left for the future is how well we are able to conserve the historical and current cultures not only in form of architecture, but in spirit. Thus, this research aims to find out and question how effectively different cultural areas have been conserved in spirit, and whether people, local and foreign, still see our cultural areas as culturally representative. From this, we can find out what exactly helped or failed the conservation efforts in these areas, and to what extent the authenticity of the cultural area was compromised.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How successful has the authenticity of cultural areas been conserved?
2. How has the URA and NHB affected the conservation of cultural areas?
3. What solutions are there to conserve these areas better?

### **1.4 Thesis Statement**

Among the three, Chinatown has become commercially saturated and is therefore not a good representation of the Chinese culture in Singapore, Little India is the most successful of all of them, while Geylang Serai is doing substantially well.

In terms of the agencies, while the Urban Redevelopment Authority succeeds in architectural conservation, it does not have any effect on cultural authenticity. The National Heritage Board is more effective, due to its various outreach and experiential programs.

### **1.5 Scope of Research**

The research is limited to three areas, namely Little India, Chinatown and Geylang Serai. These three areas have been chosen because they are of significance when comparing. Chinatown and Little India are both considered historic conservation areas by URA: and can be compared with each other. Geylang Serai is not considered a historic conservation by URA but still considered a symbol of the Malay culture in Singapore, especially its Ramadan Bazaar. It can be compared with Chinatown and Little India to question whether URA conservation has effectively helped these areas.

Additionally, the research is on the culture conservation efforts of the area itself, and will try its best not to analyse the differences between race, religion or the culture itself across the three areas, although they do play a large role in these areas. This is to avoid racial sensitivities and belabouring the project analyses later on.

### **1.6 Significance of Research**

The conclusions for this research will highlight the failures and successes of the Singaporean government in conserving and preserving Singaporean culture, and will assist in finding out which conservation methods work and are most effective, which will aid the Additionally, this research will also question the effectiveness and success of the Urban Redevelopment Authority and National Heritage Board.

### **1.7 Limitations**

It is important to note that, due to the COVID-19 situation, many parts of the research will be affected. Firstly, there will be no field observations that can be held. Although this can be circumvented through the use of Google Street View, the atmosphere of the area cannot be felt. Additionally, because of social distancing measures, there will be no physical surveys or interviews, which might compromise the integrity of the surveys and remove the chance of obtaining personal recounts of the history of cultural areas from long-term employees there. Lastly, tourism (local and foreign) data will be affected, and therefore the project has to rely on older data.

Furthermore, due to time constraints, only three areas are selected and other sites like food courts or the Botanic Gardens will be missed out on. Lastly, current developments or demolishments in the area will affect the data in the future.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 The use of Urban Development Common Indicators (UDCIs)**

In order to achieve an objective comparison between cultural areas, subjective inputs are not sufficient as it fails to account for the bias and other external factors that may affect the results. Therefore, objective indicators are essential in order to paint a holistic assessment of these cultural sites.

However, according to Tanguay et al. (2009), there is a lack of consensus between indicators measuring the sustainability of heritage conservation across researches regarding urban development. However, global trends can be identified when comparing global urban indicator frameworks (Guzman et. al, 2018, pg. 5). After the shortlisting and comparing of eight different frameworks, it was found that there were 476 indicators used across all eight, and of them 41 key ideas appeared across three or more of them. (Guzman et. al, pg. 8).

These forty-one indicators, known as the Urban Development Common Indicators (UDCI) are a good breakdown of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of and to the cultural sites and their recurrence in frameworks used by many indexes such as the Global Cities Index provides it with the assurance of reliability.

However, some of the UDCI are applied to entire cities and towns in general, and do not fit in the local context. Therefore, in order to be used in this research, indicators that apply to all three heritage sites the same way (aircraft movement, car ownership) will be removed, while some others can be adapted to still keep the essence of the indicator.

## **2.2 The importance of cultural authenticity**

In order to ideate solutions for the issues regarding culture conservation in Singapore, the topic of authenticity is frequently touched upon. Many researches have been done regarding the representation and authenticity of these cultural areas. In particular, there is a common theme regarding the issues and necessity of preserving authenticity in Singapore.

In Singapore, because the government has total control over the cultural areas through the Urban Redevelopment Authority and National Heritage Board, they get to decide and weave the narrative of these cultural sites (Yeoh and Kong, 1996). This results in the discrepancies between the government and citizens' views on the definition of their "heritage", which results in the locals being dissatisfied with the renovation, refurbishment and conservation of these areas. Although much has been done by the government to help preserve the areas architecturally, many locals found that it was the community spirit, coupled with the unique lifestyles and activities, with most activities replaced by economic enterprises. (Kong and Yeoh, 1994). In addition, it was found that although renovation made an area more accessible, its cultural authenticity will be lost in the process, and that as a result Singapore was no longer seen as a city for heritage tourism but more for transit and leisure, as compared to similar cities like Hong Kong (Li, 2003). This, then, highlights the question of whether conservation efforts are really necessary and whether they are ironically harming the area instead.

However, (Tunbridge, 1981) argues that, because such experiences are intangible and almost to recreate, it is inevitable the "physical and community fabric" is sacrificed but rather it is the extent it is replaced that is the "prime bone of contention". Lowenthal (1985) concurs, arguing that it is the "pastness of the past" that is the root of the nostalgia. and Ong C. T. (2017)

found that it was more economically beneficial to the local members of these areas to trade-off the authenticity for commercialisation or they would be otherwise be subject to living in a less-developed, disadvantaged area.

These researches thus provide us with an insightful framework to ideate our solutions with. Although it can be conceded that even in the most ideal states authenticity can never be fully intact, in order to strike a harmonious balance between renovation and conservation (Li, 2003, pg. 258), economic efficiency and pragmatism cannot take front seat. Instead, solutions must acknowledge that any change to authenticity is indirectly “rewriting history” (Yeoh and Kong, 1996, pg. 62), and that such sensibilities must be taken into consideration when ideating.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Survey

To start with a basis for analysis, data is required through the use of surveys. As such, a survey will be conducted on at least 90 people from different ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, spanning the three cultural areas. To get a most accurate depiction of the public's attitude towards these three areas, participants will be asked to answer questions on the sites they are most familiar with.

The survey will be used to get data on participants' familiarity with cultural areas; participants' opinion on the success of cultural conservation of the site itself; what participants' thought was most integral to the cultural site; their opinion of government agencies' effort; and what they thought could be improved. Since cultural history is time-based, these data will be pivoted against time-based variables, like age, years of residence and years since last visit, to provide us with a deeper understanding of the hidden trends within our society's opinion of these areas.

### 3.2 UDCIs

Because the original UDCIs in Guzman et. al's paper, as mentioned above, do not conform to local contexts, there is a need to adapt them, and not lift them wholesale. As a result, the original UDCIs will be grouped into four categories: **Applicable, Not Applicable At All, and Not Applicable Locally, Applicable for Cities Only**. Indicators in the first category will be copied over, while the indicators in the last three categories will be either adapted if the essence of the indicator can be kept, while it would be removed if it affects all three areas equally

(Sewage, Water, etc.) or there was no way to adapt it at all. In addition, as the UDCIs were each labelled a Threat/Weakness (TW) or Opportunity/Strength (OS) in the original paper, they are also assigned a label: Positive or Negative- based on whether they fitted into the TW or OS category respectively. As such, an example of UDCI adaptations can be seen below.

UDCI classification	UDCI	Issue	how?	New UDCI	UDCI classification
Threat	Natural Disaster Risk	Not applicable locally	Adapt	Demolition Risk	Negative
Strength	km of PTS	Cities only	Adapt	Modes of Public Transport from City Centre	Positive
Opportunity	No. of Tourists	Cities only	Adapt	No. of local visitors	Positive
Opportunity	International conferences	Cities only	Adapt	No. of international cultural events	Positive
Strength	Crime	Cities only	Adapt	Crimes in the area	Positive

Figure 1: an example of UDCI adaptations.

The final eleven indicators can be found in the Appendix.

These UDCIs are useful in this research because it takes into count how variables affect the cultural authenticity of heritage site, and thus it can tell us what is being done, what is missing and what can be done. Therefore, UDCI analyses will be applied in Research Questions 2 and 3.

### 3.3 Synthesising Methodologies

By synthesising these two forms of analysis, we get a final framework which allows us to study the three research questions in-depth, as shown below:

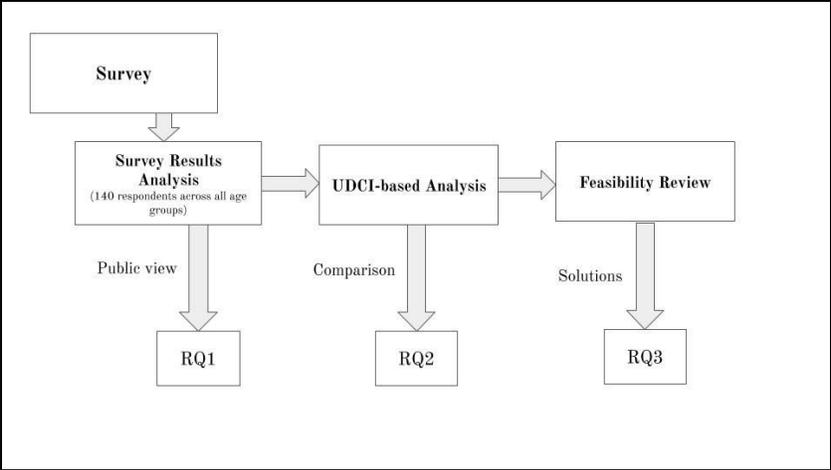


Figure 2: The framework in which this research will be based on.

## 4 Discussion and Analysis

### 4.1 Survey Demographics

The survey conducted had a total of 140 respondents, from the following demographics.

By age:

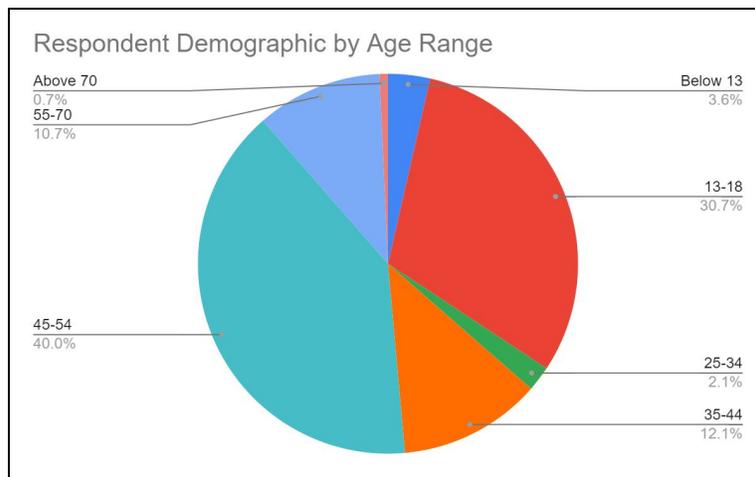


Figure 3: Respondents by Age Range

By years of residence:

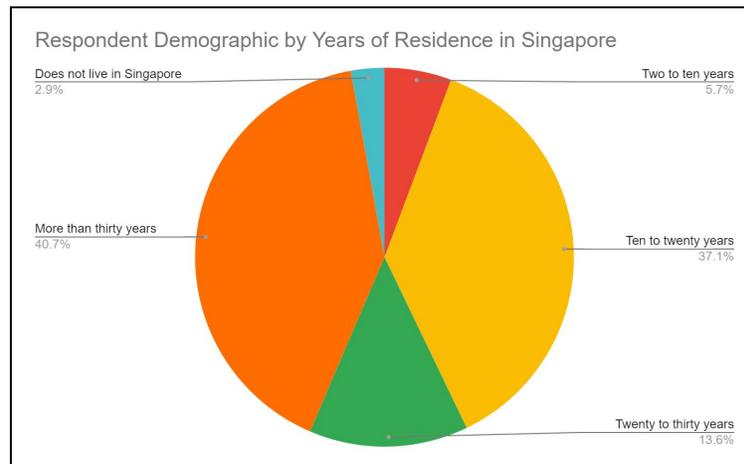


Figure 4: Respondents against years of residence

By years since first visit to the various cultural areas:

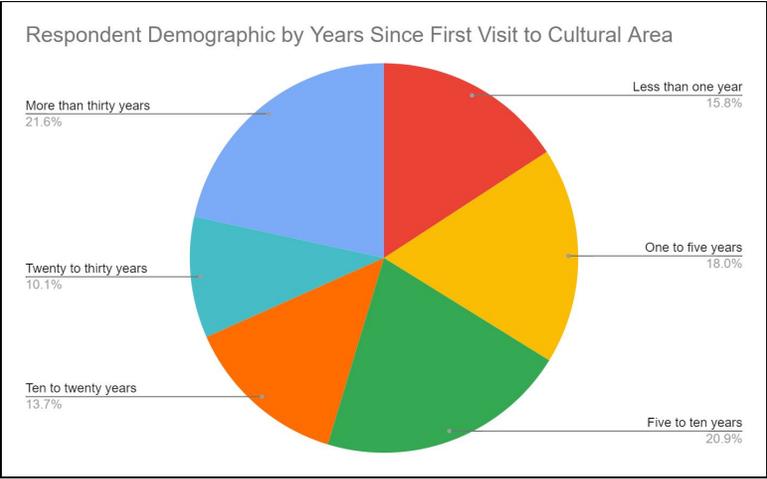


Figure 5: Years since first visit to cultural areas

Finally, by cultural area most familiar with:

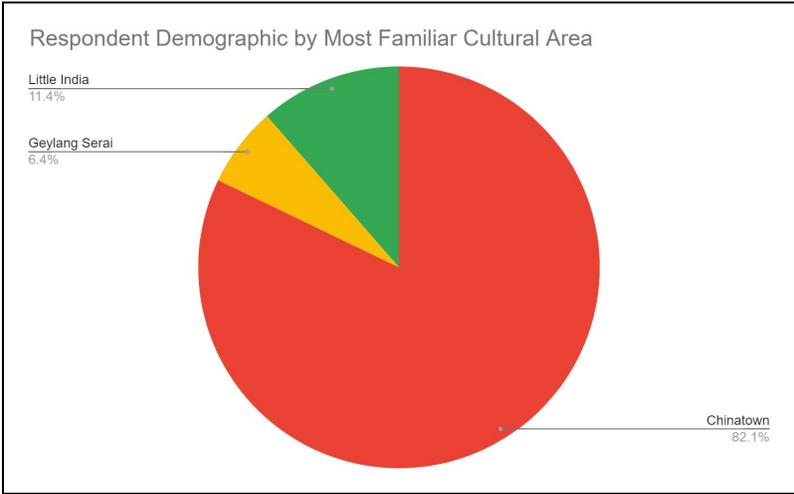


Figure 6: Respondents against cultural area.

## 4.2 Conservation Success across Three Cultural Locations

### 4.2.1 Overall Results

Overall, **67.1%** (94 out of 140) of the respondents felt that cultural conservation was successfully conserved in the area they were most familiar with. That is, these cultural areas have retained their cultural authenticity relative to the past.

### 4.2.2 Success in Chinatown

In Chinatown, out of the 115 respondents that responded, **65.2%** (or 75 people) said that culture conservation efforts were a success, as compared to a **34.8%** (or 40 people) against. Although this could at first glance be seen as a slight success for Chinatown, by plotting opinion of conservation efforts against time, this could be seen otherwise. The data is shown below:

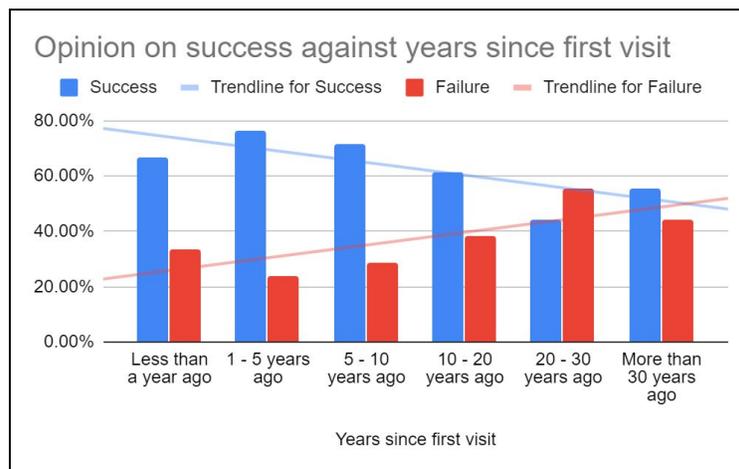


Figure 7: Opinion of success against years since first visit

When opinion of success was plotted against time-based variables (see appendix for other graphs), it was found that the longer people lived in Singapore and the older they were, the less they felt cultural conservation was successful. Most importantly, however, was that people were felt that cultural conservation was less successful the longer they knew the area. This shows a clear dissatisfaction among the older members of society with the handling of the culture in

Chinatown. Thus, it can be concluded that Chinatown’s cultural value has diminished over the years and therefore was not seen to be as authentic anymore.

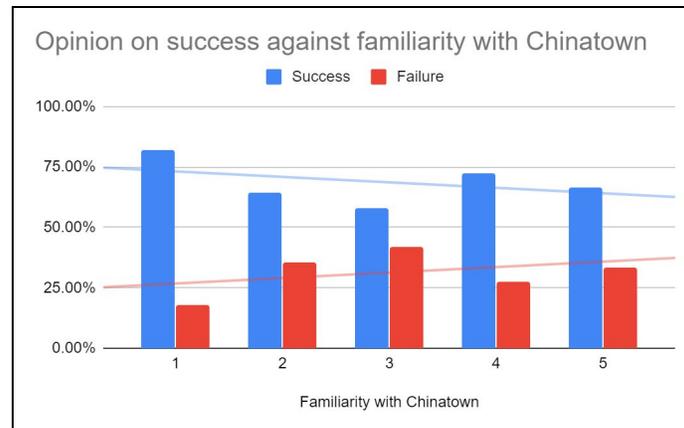


Figure 10: Opinion of success against familiarity

Moreover, it was also seen that the more familiar people said they were with Chinatown, the less they thought conservation efforts were successful. Among those that said they were familiar with Chinatown (3 and above out of 5), only **62%** of respondents felt Chinatown’s conservation efforts were successful, as compared to an overall 65%. This thus questions the underlying authenticity of Chinatown, as it shows that people could see through the “packaged cultural value” of the area the more they were familiar with it.

Therefore, it can be seen that cultural conservation efforts in Chinatown lacked history and depth across respondents’ reactions, and can therefore be considered a failure.

#### 4.2.3 Success in Geylang Serai

In Geylang Serai, out of the 9 respondents, **66.7%** (or 6 people) felt that culture conservation was successful, as compared to **33.3%** (or 3 people) against. This is slightly more

than the figure in Chinatown. By screening through demographics, we can again see a correlation between the decrease of opinion on success and the increase of years since last visit.

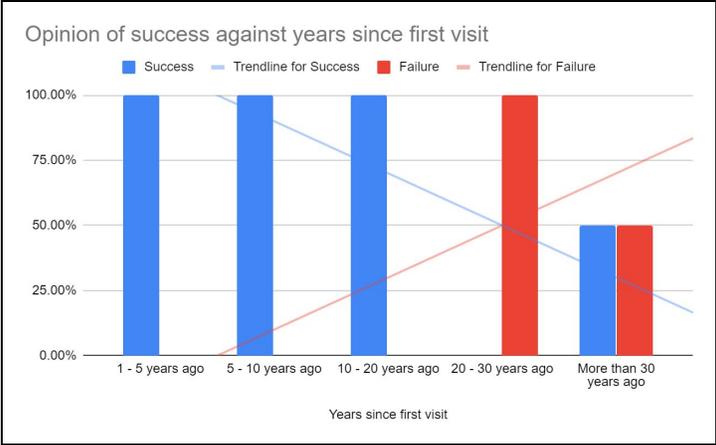


Figure 11: Opinion of success against years since first visit.

However, there was no correlation seen between the opinion of success and age, or years of residence in Singapore. Therefore, though it could be said that opinion of success decreases with time, the lack of this trend across the other two factors finds this argument weak.

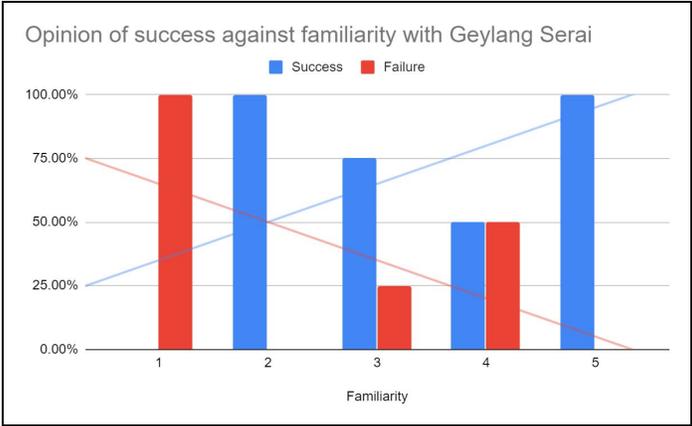


Figure 12: Opinion of success against familiarity

In contrast, we find that there opinion of success increases with familiarity in Geylang Serai. Among those that said they were familiar, **71%** of respondents said Geylang Serai was successfully preserved, as compared to a **67%** overall. This shows that Geylang Serai actually

provides and conserves the cultural depth of the area, as people who know the area more found that it represented them more.

This is an incredulous feat achieved by Geylang Serai, considering the fact that it was actually demolished and renovated once before, and thus contradicts Li (2003)'s notion that renovation affects the cultural authenticity of an area. Thus, seeing that it did not have any concrete impact on cultural conservation over time or depth, it questions whether architectural conservation efforts are really necessary, and will be explored more in depth in part 4.3.

In summary, therefore, while it seemed like cultural conservation efforts seemed to have no concrete impact on Geylang Serai, considering that its cultural significance was not diminished due to renovation against expectations, it can be considered a slight success.

#### 4.2.4 Success in Little India

In Little India, an overwhelming **81.3%** of the 16 respondents (or 13 people) agreed that cultural conservation for successfully preserved in the area, as compared to **18.7%** (or 3 people) against. This is significantly higher than the figures for Little India and Chinatown, showing the support for the cultural conservation efforts in Little India. Looking at demographics again:

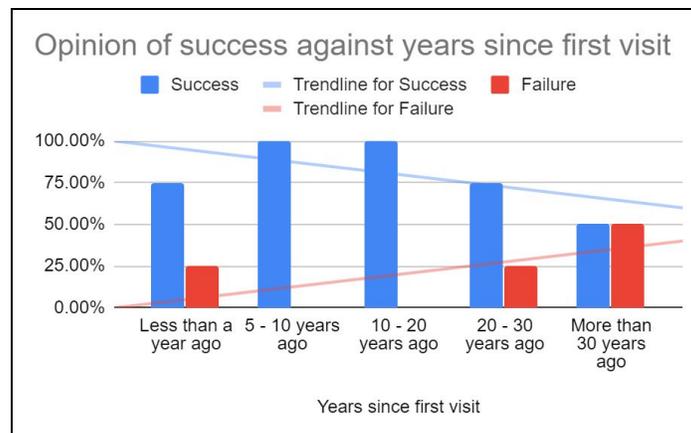


Figure 15: Opinion of success against years since first visit

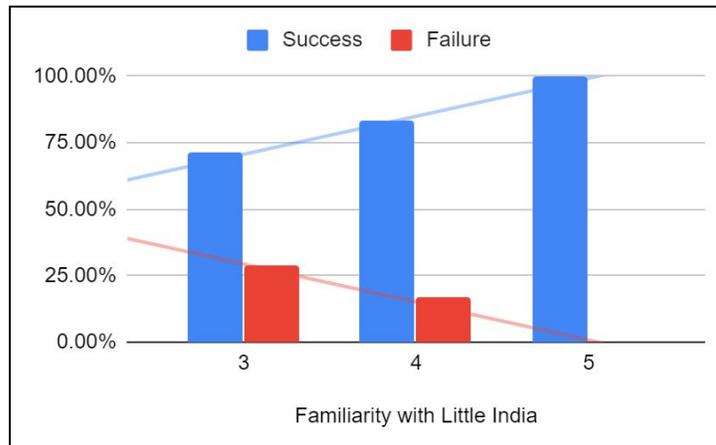


Figure 18: Opinion of success against familiarity.

As seen in Figure 15 and Figure 17 (in the appendix), there is again a downward trend when opinion of success was plotted against time. Although the argument that Little India’s culture conservation efforts were ineffective against the course of time can be made, it has to be conceded that across all groups, there was not one group which had less than 55% approval of conservation efforts. Therefore, while this trend can be seen, as of the current situation, cultural conservation efforts are still largely effective.

In Figure 18, there is however a very obvious trend where opinion of success increases with familiarity with Little India. Therefore, it can be considered that Little India still has the cultural authenticity deep within that has not been lost.

In summary, considering the trends over time and depth, and that such a vast majority of respondents felt cultural conservation efforts were successful, it can be said the cultural conservation efforts in Little India are a major success.

### **4.3 URA and NHB effectiveness**

#### *4.3.1 Significance of URA and NHB*

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and National Heritage Board (NHB) arguably play the biggest roles in cultural conservation in Singapore. Both agencies have gazetted cultural areas for conservation and preservation. For example, the URA gazetted ten areas and 3200 buildings in 1989, including Chinatown and Little India, while the NHB launched its first heritage trail- the Civic District Heritage Trail- in 1999. As government agencies, they are publicly funded by the government and are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of Culture, Community and the Youth respectively.

However, the two agencies are run on two different principles. The URA, which is in charge of the management of land use, focuses on architectural integrity and conservation, while the NHB focuses on preserving heritage through public outreach. As such, by doing an analysis on the two areas, we are not only finding out their overall effectiveness as agencies, but we are defining what culture means to the average Singaporean; by comparing the two, we are able to find out whether architectural integrity or experiential authenticity takes precedence in our minds.

#### *4.3.2 URA*

To look at the effectiveness of the URA, we can firstly compare the opinion of cultural conservation success in URA conserved areas (Little India and Chinatown) with Geylang Serai, which is a non-URA conserved area.

Cultural Area	URA conservation?	NHB activities?	% Approval	Success? (from RQ1)
Chinatown	Yes	Yes	65.2	No
Geylang Serai	No	Yes	66.7	Slightly
Little India	Yes	Yes	81.3	Yes

Figure 19: Opinion of success against URA conservation

As shown in Figure 19, it can be seen that the lack of URA conservation efforts seemed to have no impact on Geylang Serai’s slight success in cultural conservation efforts. In fact, Geylang Serai, which was once named “Malay Village”, was demolished in 2012 to make way for Wisma Geylang Serai, a suburban commercial hub. Therefore, as mentioned earlier in 4.2.3, these results seem to contradict the overall consensus among current local literature on cultural conservation, which claim that the renovation or demolition of a certain area harms its cultural authenticity and acceptance among locals. More notably, these results also seem to show that the URA’s architectural conservation efforts did not materialise into actual conservation success. This thus begs the question: should architectural conservation even be funded if it has such little effect?

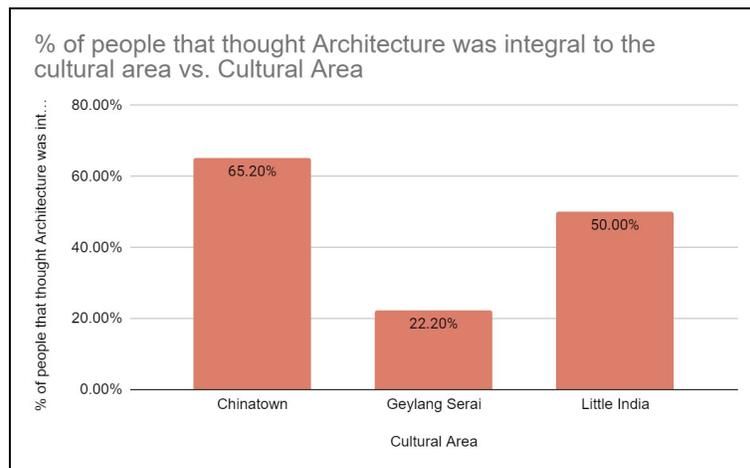


Figure 20: % of people that thought architectural was important to a specific cultural area

Upon closer inspection however, it was shown in survey results that only an underwhelming **22%** of respondents thought that architecture was integral to the cultural authenticity of Geylang Serai. This is significantly below the **65%** and **50%** registered in Chinatown and Little India respectively. Thus, as architectural significance is not as saturated in Geylang Serai, the URA would not have had worked there. However, in the other two locations, its impact would have been more substantial, especially since both are well-known for their shophouses and religious buildings (Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, for example).

Moreover, when putting the URA up against the UDCIs, it was seen that architectural conservation produces a positive effect on heritage conservation efforts by lowering demolition risk, and should therefore not be ignored in most areas. In conclusion therefore, the URA's efforts are actually effective any important in cultural areas, but is just not a one-size fit all program, as it affects all cultural areas differently due to their different contexts.

#### *4.3.3 NHB*

As the NHB heavily relies on public outreach for its cultural conservation efforts, we can firstly look at public familiarity with cultural areas across time. Therefore, if NHB's outreach was really successful, we would expect to see a greater familiarity with the cultural areas in the younger generations; firstly due to the increased media engagement; and secondly, because they have spent a larger percentage of their lives under the influence of the NHB.

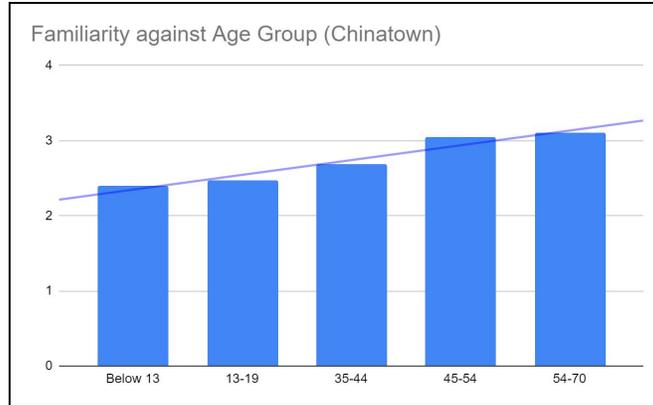


Figure 21: Familiarity with Chinatown against Age Group

In Chinatown, a trend was seen, however, where familiarity was lower among the younger groups, implying that the National Heritage Board did not have successful efforts there.

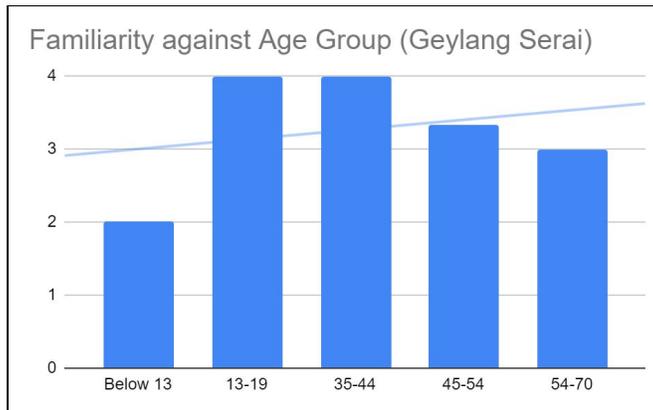


Figure 22: Familiarity with Geylang Serai against Age Group

Meanwhile, in Geylang Serai, while the same trend can be seen, it is of note that there is only one respondent in the *Below 13* category and thus can be considered an anomaly, especially when the other age groups from 13-70 follow an opposite trend. As such, there is actually a greater familiarity among younger age groups in Geylang Serai.

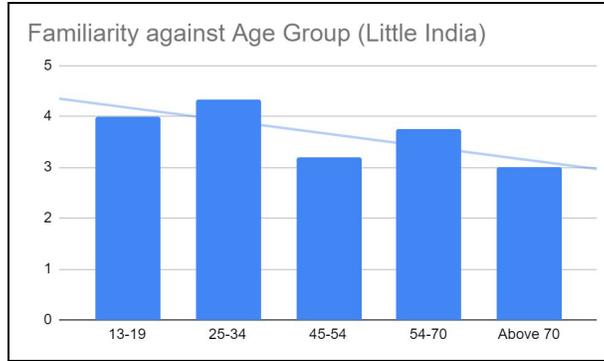


Figure 23: Familiarity with Little India against Age Group

In Little India, there is a clear trend showing the increased familiarity among younger age groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that NHB was successful there too.

What, however, caused the discrepancy between Chinatown and the trends in the other two areas? There is no doubt that the perceived loss of authenticity as seen in 4.2.2 or the over-commercialisation of the area as pointed out by Li (2003) played a factor in this. Because an area loses its cultural authenticity when people feel it does not represent them anymore, people will dissociate themselves with an area more quickly if they think cultural conservation efforts have failed. Thus, it is most likely that the growing indifference towards culture amongst the youth (as pointed out by Zaccheus, Pang & Ng (2016)), combined with these two other factors, caused a snowball effect, resulting in the seemingly ineffective effort by the NHB.

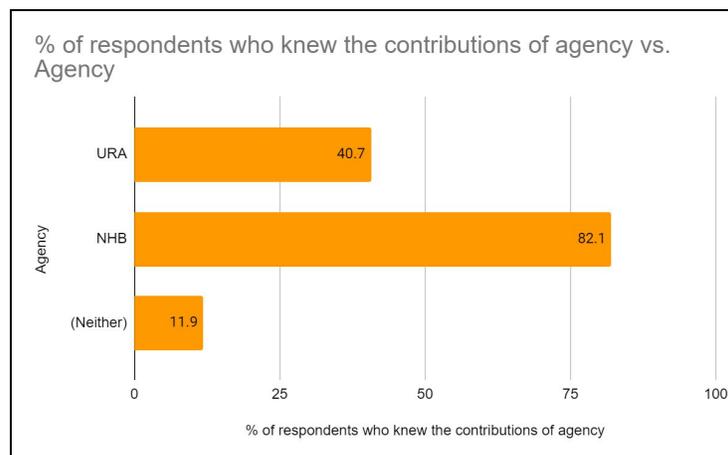


Figure 24: % of respondents knowing the contributions of each agency against agency

In fact, the National Heritage Board was successful in their outreach. An overwhelming 82% of respondents claimed to know about the contributions of the NHB and the role they play in conserving Singapore’s culture. It shows therefore that the NHB has its influence over the people. Moreover, the National Heritage Board, after judging it based on UDCIs, had a positive effect on heritage conservation from seven factors. This actually boosts cultural integrity and knowledge among citizens and thus helps greatly with cultural conservation among the people.

UDCI classification	Adapted UDCIs	NHB effect?	Overall?
Negative	Demolition Risk	Helps reduce the risk by preserving certain crucial buildings	Positive
Positive	Modes of Public Transport from City Centre	No	-
Positive	No. of local visitors	Helps encourage local visitors to visit these areas	Positive
Positive	No. of international cultural events	No, but local cultural events are held	Positive
Positive	Crimes in the area	No	-
Positive	No. of Museums	Built Heritage Centres such as IHC and MHC	Positive
Negative	Public park space	No	-
Positive	No. of Restaurants	Encourages Food Heritage	Positive
Positive	Employment business services	No	-
Positive	International Travellers	Builds trails to entice visitors from in and out of Singapore	Positive
Positive	Performing-Arts venues	Holds many public art and heritage events	Positive

Therefore, by considering the data shown, it seems that the NHB actually achieved what it set out to do, building cultural awareness in these areas, and increasing its outreach amongst the youth. However, it seems like these efforts did not have its intended effect on Chinatown, which might be due to the culturally indifferent trend amongst the youth and the failure of conservation efforts.

#### 4.3.4 Overall

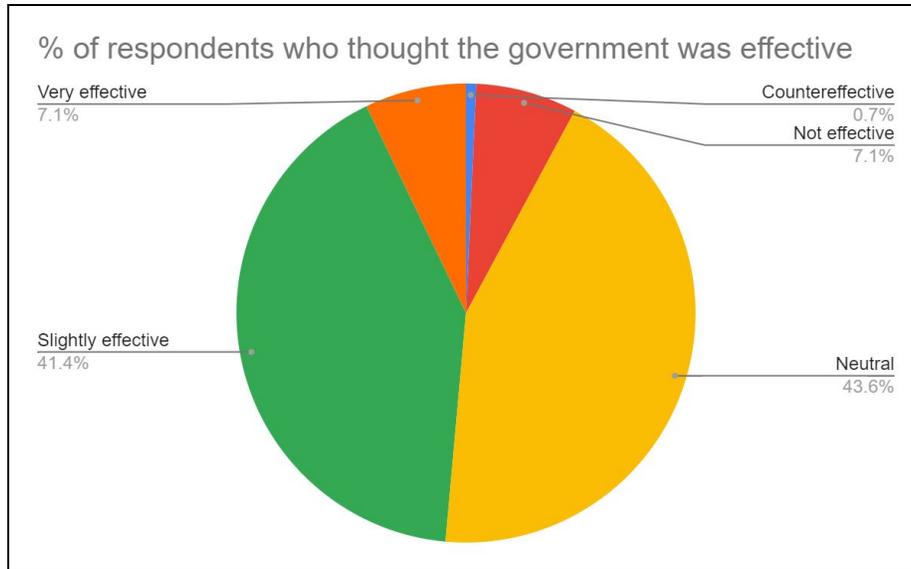


Figure 25: Respondents' opinions on whether the government was effective

All in all, however, these agencies are largely effective in their work, with 48% of respondents saying that they aided the conservation of culture in some way or another. Worth noting, however, is the large neutral block, with 44% of respondents, which think that there is some room for improvement for these agencies- as shown in NHB's failure in Chinatown.

These solutions will be the primary focus for the next part of the research paper.

## 4.4 Solutions

### 4.4.1 UDCIs

As the UDCIs provided the variables that affect heritage conservation efforts in Singapore, the list was refined (shown in the Appendix) by removing impractical solutions. The first of these is "Increasing Crime", as it compromises public safety, and the second is "Reducing Public Park Space", as it conflicts with the government's Garden In the City policy.

With the remaining nine indicators, they were refined even further, as UDCIs are only vague indicators and not concrete solutions. This was done by replacing them with ideas that maintain the essence of the indicator. For example, “Reducing Demolition Risk” became “Architectural Conservation” as the main essence for both is to reduce the chance of building being demolished. Some others were removed as they were already excessively done, such as increasing restaurants. Lastly, some were removed as they, again, seemed in hindsight to only be feasibly applicable to cities.

The most notable adaptation was adapting “Increasing Local Visitors” and “Increasing Foreign Visitors”, as it poses a challenge not to over-commercialise and advertise the area, as it would become a turn-off. Thus, they were changed to Heritage and Visitor Centres as they package the area in a less commercial but in a more down-to-earth, experiential manner. The final list of UDCI-solutions are shown in the appendix.

#### 4.4.2 Public Reception

These solutions cannot take place without a positive public reception. As such, a questionnaire of what solutions respondents would accept was included in the survey. The results are as follows:

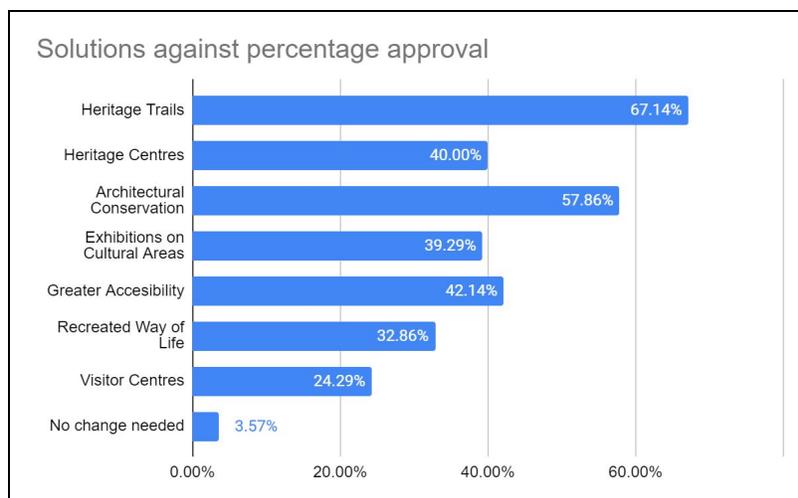


Figure 26: Proposed solutions against respondents' approval in %

Heritage Trails and Architectural Conservation take top spots, with more than a majority of people approving of such solutions. This confirms our findings in section 4.3, showing that people actually approve of the NHB's and URA's efforts, as those are the areas they specialise in. It also shows that people want to see more of these efforts, and do not want a sudden stoppage to these efforts. In addition, Greater Accessibility, Heritage Centres and Exhibitions on Cultural Areas have a sizeable number of approvals, with over a third of respondents agreeing that they are necessary. These therefore can be a good starting point for what the NHB can improve on, especially to win back the support of the younger generations.

It is also of note that only 3.6% of respondents felt nothing needed to be done in addition to the status quo, showing that more should and can be done to improve the authenticity of cultural areas for them to be more successful.

In conclusion, the most plausible solutions are improving and continuing Architectural Conservation, Heritage Trails and Heritage Centres, and increasing Accessibility to Cultural Areas and Exhibitions in/on Cultural Areas.

#### *4.4.3 Government and Community*

However, As mentioned by Kong and Yeoh (1994), because the government has total control over these areas, there is contention between what the government conserves and what people want. As such a survey was done on whether people thought government agencies and communities should play a bigger role.

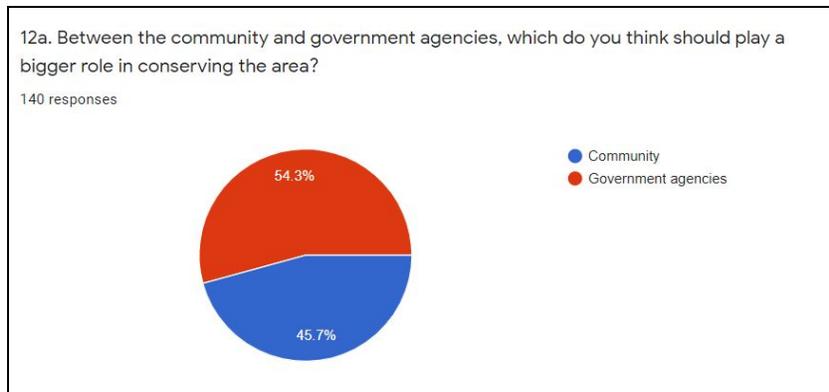


Figure 27: Community response to whether they felt which stakeholder should take a bigger role.

Overall, **45.7%** of respondents felt that the community should take a larger role in conserving cultural authenticity. Although this shows a call for change, it also shows an inner reluctance from many members of the community to take charge.

This almost fifty-fifty split between the society due to two reasons. Firstly, the pragmatic nature of the government allows for a considerable budget to be set aside for cultural conservation efforts. Furthermore, as culture is a delicate matter, the government can provide leadership by setting rules and regulations as to what can or cannot be done, which can minimise the inciting of racial tensions, or the happening of culturally insensitive matters. As stated by one response, “(there needs to be) somebody to take the lead and support monetarily”.

On the contrary, almost half of respondents felt community leadership was necessary because its idealistic nature steers the direction to where culture can and should be conserved. Besides, culture is “closer to the community”, and thus conserved culture will be more “authentic”. Last but not the least, one response highlights the importance “for the members of the community to feel connected to the culture of such areas for any cultural preservation measures to have a lasting impact,” which was demonstrated by the NHB’s failure in Chinatown in section **4.3.3**.

Thus, an ideal solution and state would be to integrate both the community and government, where people decide what to preserve, and the government vets and funds it- achieving the best of both worlds. Moreover, the notion of culture and the purpose of cultural areas should be less profit-driven and more community-spirit driven, so as to not run the risk of over-commercialisation.

## 5 Conclusion

Through the use of comparing opinion of cultural conservation success against time-based variables and familiarity, it was found that: firstly, Chinatown's cultural conservation efforts were a failure due to the lack of historical authenticity and depth in its underlying efforts; secondly, Geylang Serai's cultural conservation efforts were a slight success, due to its success in preserving heritage even though it was demolished; thirdly, Little India's cultural conservation efforts were a resounding success, due to its sensitivity and authenticity across time and depth.

Also, it was found that the Urban Redevelopment Authority efforts were effective and important in cultural areas, but should not be seen as a one-size fit all program, as it affects all cultural areas differently. The National Heritage Board, while it failed in Chinatown, achieved what it set out to do, by building cultural awareness and increasing its outreach amongst the youth. The failure in Chinatown might be due to the post-racial trend amongst the youth and the lack of perceived cultural authenticity.

Lastly, the plausible solutions to maintain and improve cultural authenticity in these areas are: improving and continuing Architectural Conservation, Heritage Trails and Heritage Centres, and increasing Accessibility to Cultural Areas and Exhibitions in/on Cultural Areas.

Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that both the community and government share control of these areas for conservation efforts to be more significant.

If I may add my personal opinion, I feel that cultural conservation efforts in Singapore have gone a long way, and I believe that it can and will turn the tide against the post-racial trend among the youth. After all, after a first taste, who would not appreciate the ingredients that make a plate of Rojak?

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## Appendix A

### Survey Demographics

Age Range	Respondents
Below 13	5
13-18	43
19-24	0
25-34	3
35-44	17
45-54	56
55-70	15
Above 70	1

Figure 3: Respondents by Age Range

Years of Residence in Singapore	Respondents
Two to ten years	8
Ten to twenty years	52
Twenty to thirty years	19
More than thirty years	57
Does not live in Singapore	4

Figure 4: Respondents against years of residence

Years since first visit	Respondents
Less than one year	22
One to five years	25
Five to ten years	29
Ten to twenty years	19
Twenty to thirty years	14
More than thirty years	30

Figure 5: Respondents against years since last visit

<b>Cultural Area</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Chinatown	115
Geylang Serai	9
Little India	16

Figure 6: Respondents against most familiar cultural area

## **Appendix B**

### **Survey Questions**

#### **Demographics**

1. What is your gender?
2. Which age group are you in?
3. What is your residential status?
4. How long have you lived in Singapore?
5. Which of the following cultural areas are you most familiar with?

#### **Cultural Area Specific Questions:**

6. When, approximately, was the FIRST time you visited the area?
7. How familiar, in your opinion, are you with the area?
8. Which of the following items, in your opinion, are the most integral to the culture of the area?
  - a. Options: Shophouses, Food, Architecture, Way of Life, Religious Structures, Atmosphere, Others
9. What is your opinion regarding the success of culture preservation in Chinatown?
  - a. If your answer to the last question was that it was not, why?

#### **Agency Questions**

10. Which of the following agencies are you familiar with?
  - a. URA, NHB or None of the above
11. How successful do you think the government has been in preserving the culture area?

12. Between the community and government agencies, which do you think should play a bigger role in conserving the area?
- a. Briefly, why did you select that option in 12a?
13. Which of these would you, personally, like to see more of? You may choose more than one option.
- a. Heritage Trails, Heritage Centres, Architectural Conservation, Exhibitions on Cultural Areas, Recreated Way of Life, Visitor Centres, None of the above

### **Feedback and Comments**

14. Do you have any further comments regarding culture conservation efforts in Singapore?
15. For seasoned travellers, do you think that the representation of our culture in cultural areas is valid? If not, do you have any opinions regarding how we can increase the validity of these areas?
16. Lastly, do you have any further feedback/comments for the survey/project?

# Appendix C

## Survey Results

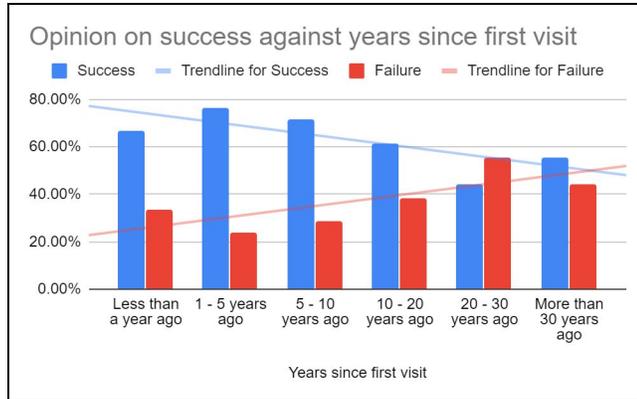


Figure 7: Opinion of success against years since first visit to Chinatown

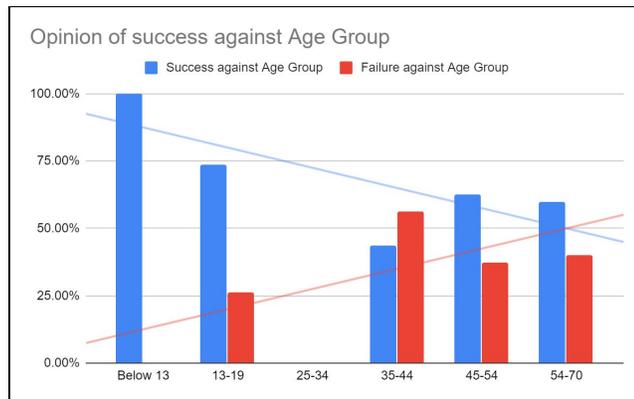


Figure 8: Opinion of success against Age Group in Chinatown

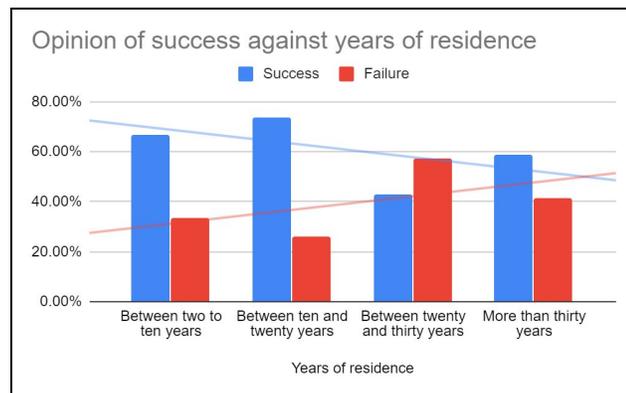


Figure 9: Opinion of success against Years of Residence in Singapore (Chinatown)

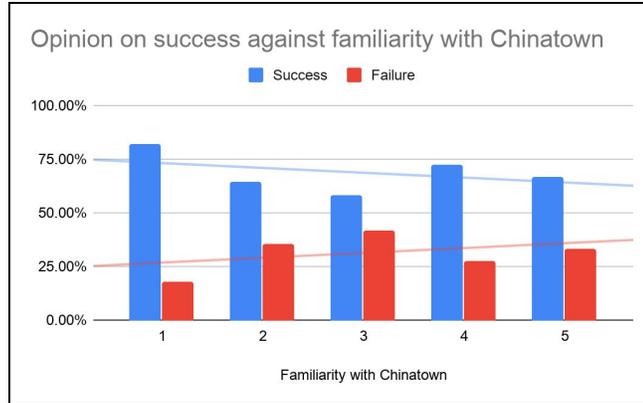


Figure 10: Opinion of success against familiarity with Chinatown

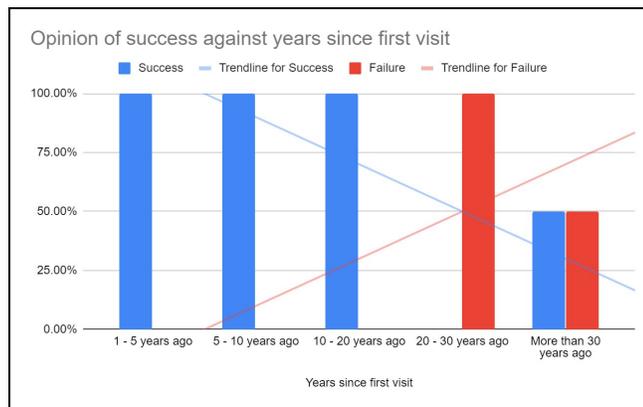


Figure 11: Opinion of success against years since first visit to Geylang Serai.

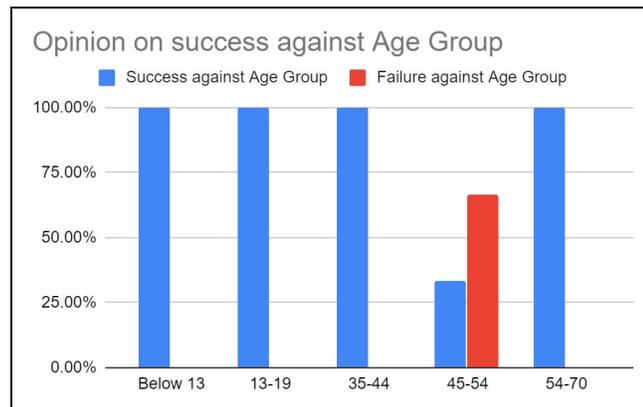


Figure 12: Opinion of success against Age Group in Geylang Serai

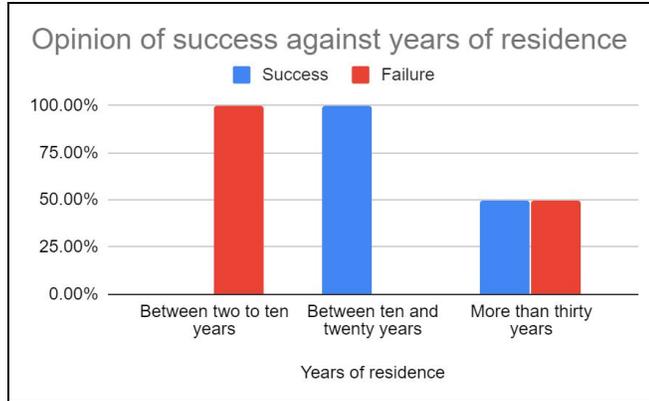


Figure 13: Opinion of success against years of residence in Singapore (Geylang Serai)

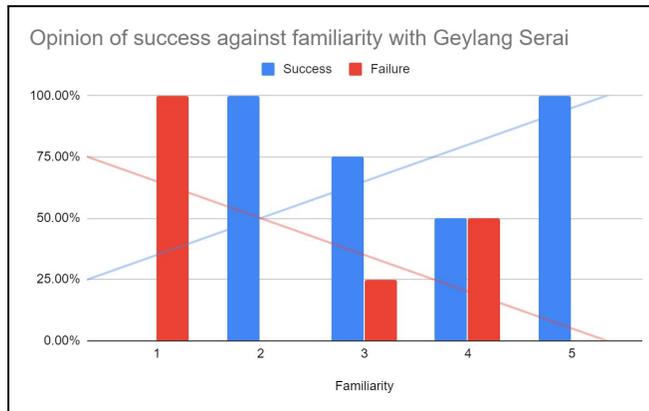


Figure 14: Opinion of success against familiarity with Geylang Serai

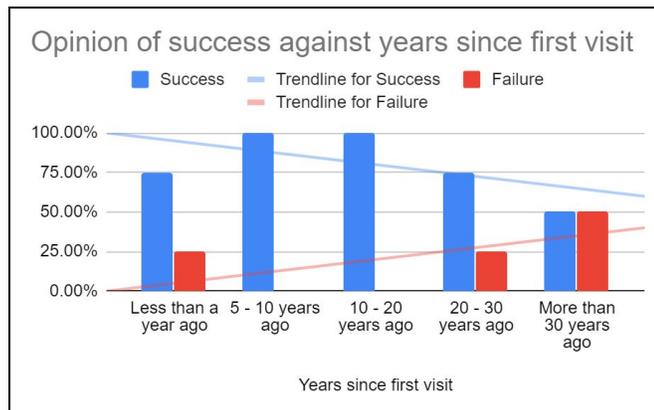


Figure 15: Opinion of success against years since first visit to Little India

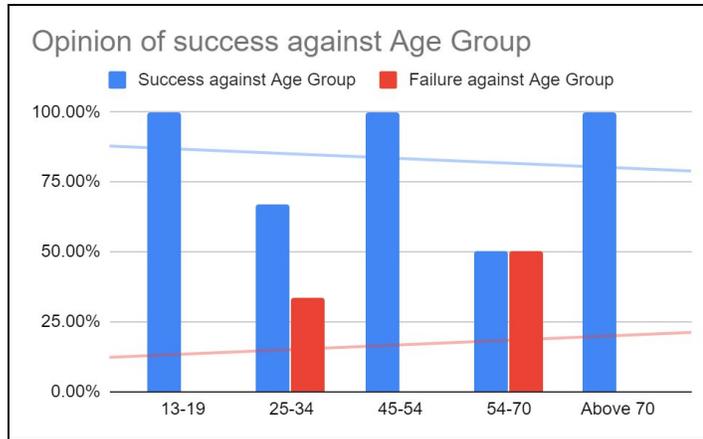


Figure 16: Opinion of success against Age Group in Little India

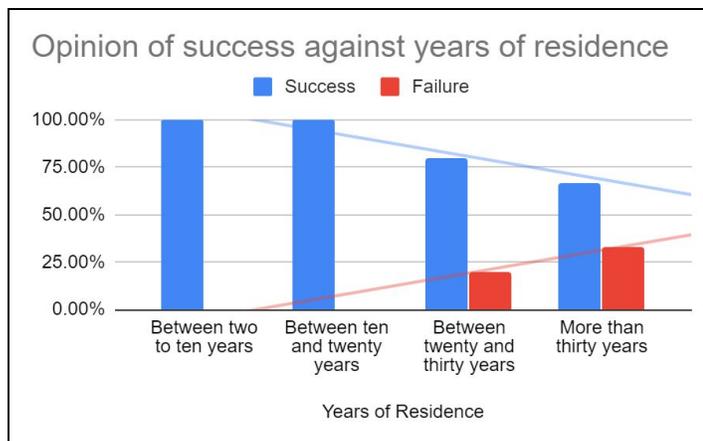


Figure 17: Opinion of success against Years of Residence in Singapore (Little India)

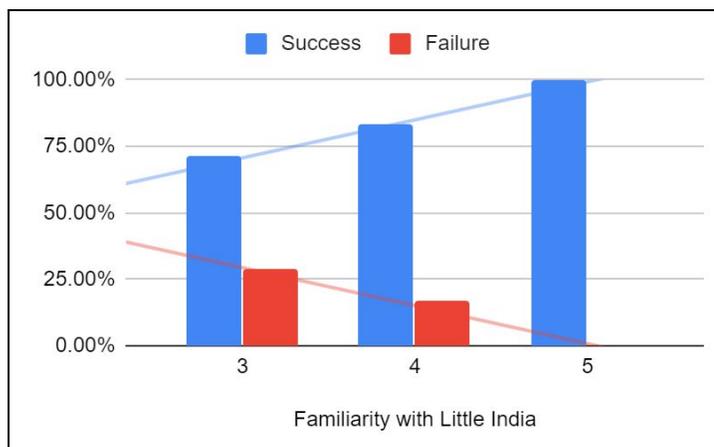


Figure 18: Opinion of success against familiarity with Little India

Cultural Area	URA conservation?	NHB activities?	% Approval	Success? (from RQ1)
Chinatown	Yes	Yes	65.2	No
Geylang Serai	No	Yes	66.7	Slightly
Little India	Yes	Yes	81.3	Yes

Figure 19: Opinion of success against URA conservation

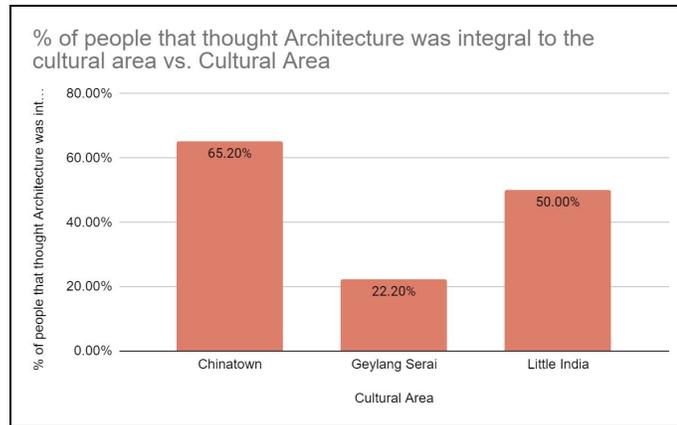


Figure 20: % of people that thought architectural was important to a specific cultural area

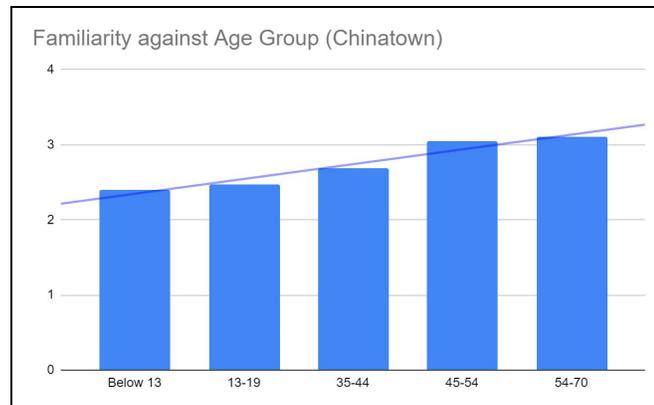


Figure 21: Familiarity with Chinatown against Age Group

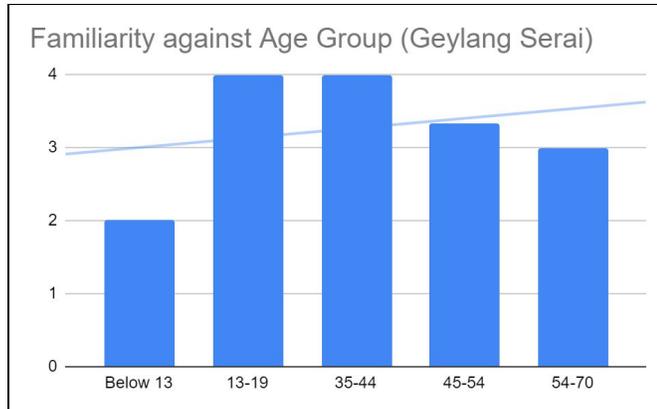


Figure 22: Familiarity with Geylang Serai against Age Group

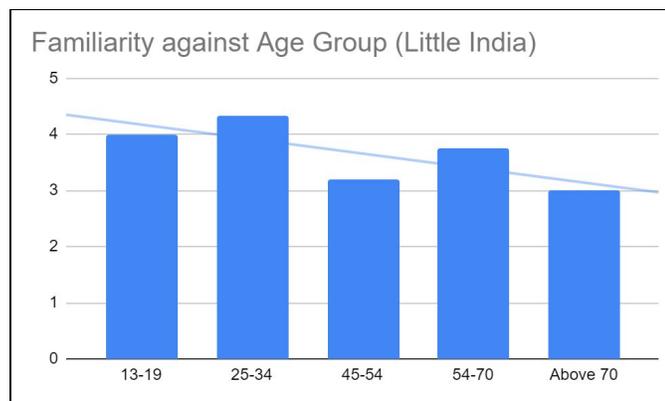


Figure 23: Familiarity with Little India against Age Group

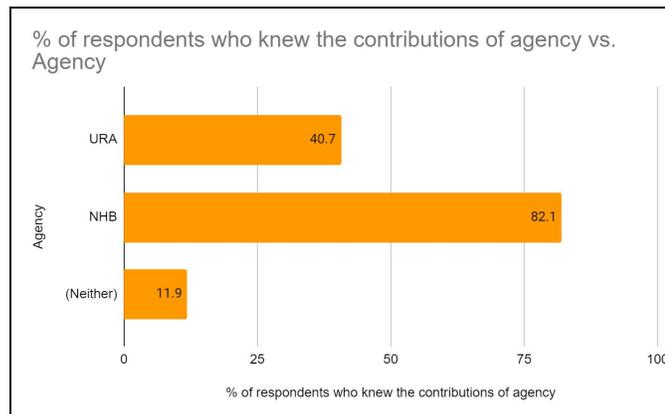


Figure 24: % of respondents knowing the contributions of each agency against agency

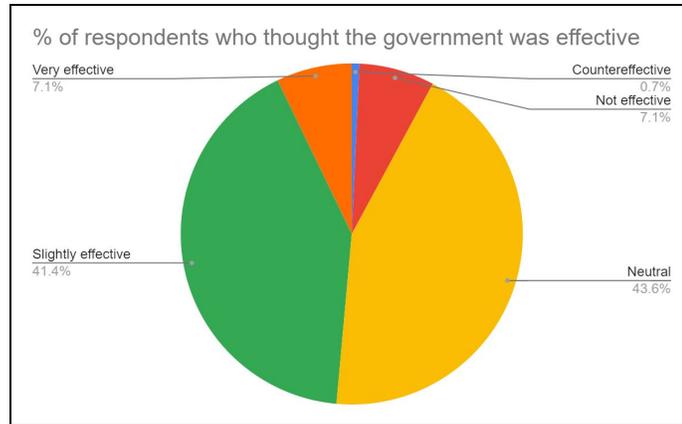


Figure 25: Respondents' opinions on whether the government was effective

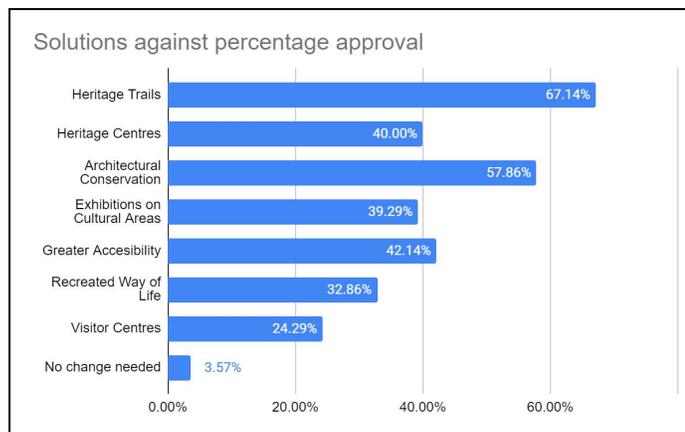


Figure 26: Proposed solutions against respondents' approval in %

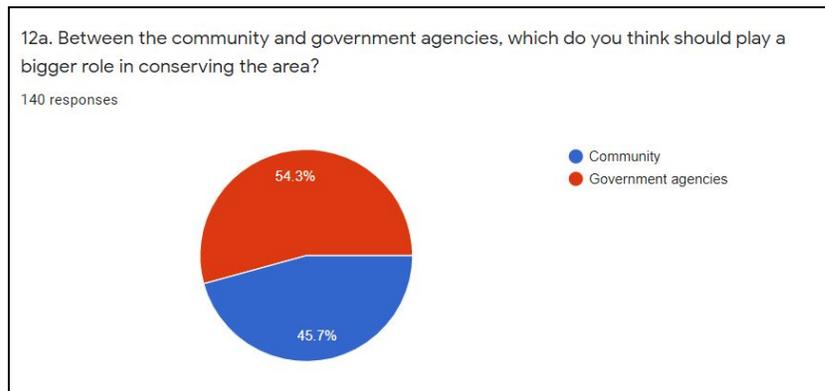


Figure 27: Community response to whether they felt which stakeholder should take a bigger role.

## Appendix D

### UDCI-related Figures

New UDCI	UDCI classification
Demolition Risk	Negative
Modes of Public Transport from City Centre	Positive
No. of local visitors	Positive
No. of international cultural events	Positive
Crimes in the area	Positive
No. of Museums	Positive
Public park space	Negative
No. of Restaurants	Positive
Employment business services	Positive
International Travellers	Positive
Performing-Arts venues	Positive

Figure 28: List of Adapted UDCIs

UDCI classification	Adapted UDCIs	How to affect positively?	Feasible?	Why?
Negative	Demolition Risk	Reduce	Yes	
Positive	Modes of Public Transport from City Centre	Increase	Yes	
Positive	No. of local visitors	Increase	Yes	
Positive	No. of international cultural events	Increase	Yes	
Positive	Crimes in the area	Increase	No	Compromises public safety
Positive	No. of Museums	Increase	Yes	
Negative	Public park space	Reduce	No	Conflicts with 'Garden in the City' policy
Positive	No. of Restaurants	Increase	Yes	
Positive	Employment business services	Increase	Yes	
Positive	International Travellers	Increase	Yes	
Positive	Performing-Arts venues	Increase	Yes	

Figure 29: Feasibility Review of Adapted UDCIs

Heritage Trails
Heritage Centres
Architectural Conservation
Exhibitions on Cultural Areas
Greater Accessibility
Recreated Way of Life
Visitor Centres

Figure 30: Final list of UDCI-based solutions.