

Space Utilization by Street Vendors in World Heritage Site: A case of Patan Durbar Square

Ananta Gautam ^a, Inu Pradhan Salike ^b

^{a, b} *Department of Architecture, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal*

Corresponding Email: ^a gautamananta74@gmail.com, ^b inupradhan@gmail.com

Abstract

Urbanisation, lack of skills and education to work in formal sectors make people absorbed by informal sectors like Street vending. Because the government lacks a clear reference to arrange the place that can be utilised by them and in accordance with the features of their activity, street sellers occupying public space are frequently regarded as troublemakers. They are associated with the infringement of public spaces and the causes of traffic congestion. As many studies have been carried from the economic perspectives of street vendors, there is a need to study street vendors' space use and distribution pattern. In this context, the vicinity of Patan Durbar Square is taken for the study. This research aims to study the space use, requirement and distribution pattern of street vendors and spatial qualities that encourage vending activities. The data has been collected using observation method, interview with the structured and unstructured questionnaire, mapping of street vendors and other qualitative methods, including case studies. The study demonstrates pedestrian traffic to be the main reason behind choosing the location by street vendors and mostly using space less than ten square feet. The research concludes with the need for their improved recognition and integration in urban space and planning.

Keywords

Street vendors, Street vending, Space Use

1. Introduction

Rapid urbanisation has attracted people from rural areas to city areas for better employment opportunities. People are forced to work in informal sectors like Street vending due to a lack of skills and education. They are considered illegal and are associated with problems like overcrowding and encroachment of public space. Because street selling is the most apparent of all informal enterprises, it has the most impact on the urban environment and landscape, attracting the most attention from local government and urban policymakers [1]. In developing countries, street vending plays a significant role in generating employment and offsetting urban poverty along with providing goods and services at affordable prices. Street vending began as a timely survival strategy and a means of delivering goods closer to consumers. It was then consolidated as a market extension and a perennial activity that shaped the city's economics and life. Vending has been a profession since the dawn of time,

and street sellers are an important component of our urban culture. In the conventional sense, shopping and marketing were essentially casual. In contrast to the automated and sterile concept of shopping favoured by modern market and supermarket structures, social interaction is a fundamental part of Nepalese markets. Center for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD) (2011) identifies 110 numbers of vending centers with 10713 vendors, and the daily transaction that occurs through such informal vending centers comes around N.R.s. 26.4 million. The Nepal Street Vendors Trade Union (NEST) predicts the number of street vendors in the Kathmandu Valley is more than 30,000 and in the Kathmandu Metropolitan City is more than 20,000 [2]. Even with the improved recognition, street vendors and their rights to space have not been integrated into urban space usage and planning. This increasing no. of street vendors shows the challenges to be faced by the government in managing and organising street vendors. This research aims to study the space use, requirement and distribution pattern of street vendors and spatial

qualities that encourage vending activities.

2. Literature review

Keith Hart coined the phrase "informal sector" in 1973. The ILO then came up with a widely accepted definition that took into account aspects like ease of entry, small-scale businesses, reliance on indigenous resources, and family ownership. People have been forced out of their villages in quest of a better life in the cities due to a lack of good jobs and poverty in rural areas. These migrants lack the skills and knowledge necessary to find better-paying, more secure jobs in the formal sector, so they must settle for work in the informal sector. Street vending is an ancient and important occupation found in every country, firstly developed as a strategy for survival and for bringing goods closer to consumers. Later it consolidates as a market extension and a perennial activity shaping urban life in a town. Self-employed workers in the informal sector who give their labor to sell goods and services without having a permanent built-up structure are referred to as street vendors. People working as street vendors involves a diverse kind of people, work very long hours 8-12 hours every day and mobility and flexibility of those temporary structures can turn empty spaces into a lively one. Street vending is a necessity for those people rather than a choice which sometimes can be a survival strategy and profit-driven decision. They are uncertain and insecure as they occasionally face problems like municipal evictions, lack of proper infrastructures, lack of access to toilets, climatic conditions and sale fluctuation. Because most street sellers are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and cannot afford to rent or acquire store space, they cluster in urban public spaces. The attraction of customers was the factor that most influenced site selection, followed by the availability of access roads [3]. It was found that street vendors position themselves at strategic points where there is heavy human traffic, such as main roads, market places and taxi ranks where people walking are exposed to goods and services making impulse purchases [4]. In a city, heritage structures serve as essential tourist attractions, as well as a strategic site for vendors to conduct business. Around such places, street vendors cater to a variety of tourist demands and provide a forum for cultural exchange. Vendors, particularly in tourist areas, pose an indirect threat to the city's appealing image. There are two types of street vendors stationary and mobile.

Stationary vendors carry their business regularly at a particular area while mobile vendors roam from one area to other carrying goods in pushcarts and cycles. There are various types of vendors categorising by the goods they sell, from fruits, vegetables, fast foods, clothes, flowers to services like electronic accessories, repairing, tailoring, etc. for this study, street vendors are mainly categorised into five different types.

S.N.	Types of street vendors	Details
1	Fruits and vegetables	All kinds of fruits and vegetables
2	Food and Drinks	Tea sellers, Snacks, Icecreams
3	Clothes	Cloths-readymade, Bed sheets, Shoes
4	Accessories	Flowers, Flower pots, Leaves(Tapari), Candles(diyos), Electronic items, Newspaper
5	Service	Tailoring, Weighing, Repair

Table 1: Types of Street Vendors

Street vendors save their customers' time and effort while also meeting their demands but still are accused of misusing public space when they and their customers block the public path, obstructing pedestrian circulation. Formal sectors complained street vendors as unattractive urban views and sources of chaos [5]. Some property owners assisted them by providing free water and protecting them in the municipal raid. Eviction and relocation campaigns are undertaken by city authorities to clean up the city and make it more attractive [6], with some instances of police and authorities helping them by advising them to stand off the sidewalks during those kinds of campaigns. The Hotelling location model was studied for understanding why retailers locate near one another. Agglomeration economies occur when a group of businesses providing comparable or complementary goods cluster together, resulting in favourable externalities for those businesses [7]. The majority of vendors work near the city center; thus they live there despite the exorbitant rents. The potential cost of commuting is also included in transportation expenditures. Travelling time could be better spent at work, creating utility. Different innovative planning interventions have been adopted in different cities to provide space for street vendors, and they are: Use of incidental (or leftover) space, market allocation through planning legislations and space sharing over time. In the absence of specific acts dealing with the problem in Nepal, numerous acts that are directly or indirectly relevant to the problem were investigated.

3. Research setting

Although street selling is now seen as a modern practice and a growing concern, the tradition of trading on streets, squares, and public areas can be traced back to ancient times. History is littered with accounts of merchants from Lhasa selling their wares in conventional metropolitan towns. Streets, squares, and other public places were once regarded as key urban fabrics where people interacted and promoted socioeconomic activity in a conventional urban context. Street vending, once a popular socioeconomic activity, is now seen as a nuisance in a rapidly increasing metropolis. The area around Patan Durbar squares was investigated for the study in order to understand how street vendors utilise space. Street sellers were found in and around prominent and historically significant squares. The influx of locals and visitors visiting historic places has attracted street sellers, who have turned those locations into commercial venues. The streets surrounding the durbar area are studied for street entrepreneurs. This research will focus on Kwalkhu, Mangalbazar, and Swotha roads surrounding the world heritage site, i.e. Patan Durbar Square.



Figure 1: Study Area

4. Methodology

Because of the relevance of Street selling for many urban poor people, this study employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. First, street sellers were observed and field-mapped to determine the type, characteristics, and space requirements for diverse vending operations. Mapping of the street vendors in the morning and in the evening was carried out. The demographic, social, geographical, and occupational

characteristics of street vendors were then collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Due to the global pandemic COVID-19, a non-probability sampling technique, judgmental sampling was carried out. A total of 72 street vendors were questioned for this study, with questions about their livelihood, choice of site, and daily negotiations. While operating in Patan's streets, participants (street sellers) were targeted and purposefully selected. Participants were chosen from street sellers seen and encountered while wandering through the streets at various times of the morning and evening. Photographs were taken as a methodological tools for picturing the type of phenomena and spatial use of space.

5. Data and analysis

According to the survey, most people involved in Street vending in Patan durbar area belong to the age group 30-39, with 47.22% showing the involvement of an economically active population in this sector. Most of the street vendors were female, actively engaged in this economic activity and seeking independence and a way of improving their livelihood. The education level among street vendor was found to be low showing the reasons for choosing the occupation. Unemployment is the main reason behind choosing Street vending. The street vendors were categorised into five different categories according to the types of goods and services they were selling, fruits and vegetable sellers being the highest.

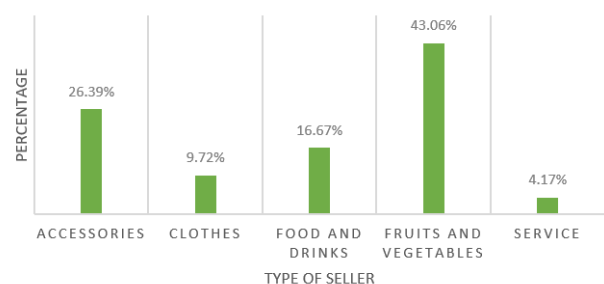


Figure 2: Types of Street Vendors

More than 60% of the street vendors were found to be working in this sector for more than five years, showing a lack of other opportunities and some beneficial aspects as well. 52.78% were involved in vending activities in the morning and in the evening and were busy in the daytime creating utilities. Locals typically shop for veggies in the morning and evening to make their meals, which has resulted in increased demand for sellers at these times of the day. The study

presents 44.44% street vendors to be mobile and others stationary, majority selling goods and services on plinths of buildings. Many fruits and vegetable sellers were occupying less than 10 ten square feet, displaying their goods on the floor using plastic.

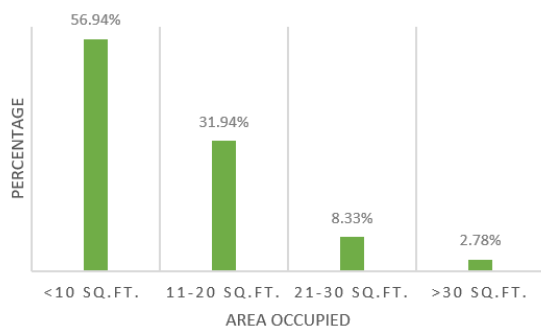


Figure 3: Area occupied by Street Vendors

Pedestrian traffic (42.31%) was the major reason for choosing the site. 91.67% didn't pay any kind of tax/rent showing the informality in the sector. There were many problems faced by the street vendors like municipal eviction, lack of proper infrastructures and bad weather. They were averagely satisfied by the livelihood they were making from Street vending. In the medium term majority, 60%, would like to get a formal job as long showing their struggles due to market instability and various situations.

6. Findings

The use of the urban public space based on the strategic location was studied. The distribution pattern of the street vendors in and around Patan Durbar Square area in the mornings and evenings were examined, and maps showing those patterns were produced.



Figure 4: Spatial distribution of street vendors

The majority (56.94%) of street vendors were occupying less than ten square feet area, which is less

than the average area required for vending 20 square feet. (Centre for Urban Equity, 2014). There is a need for proper management of spaces. The flow of the customers and pedestrian traffic is the major determining factor for the selection of a site for selling goods and services by street vendors. There is no kind of space management strategy, as vendors themselves use respective spaces in agreement with each other. Most street vendors (91.67%) didn't pay any kind of rent, showing the informality of the sector.

7. Conclusion

The vendor population is rapidly increasing and is one of the largest self-employed professions, reducing unemployment and poverty problems. The majority wanted to continue the occupation, showing the beneficial aspects. Informal sectors like Street vending have been the largest hit by Covid-19, as they have to work in crowded conditions and have limited government provided support. Street sellers around heritage structures should be treated with care and respect so that they do not abuse the structures but rather contribute convenience and local flavour to the surrounding area. Lack of infrastructures like sanitation facilities illustrates the development challenges. Street vendors are and will be part of the urban landscape, management required for managed market and dignified vendors with some policy changes and strategic interventions.

Acknowledgement

The authors are very grateful to Institute of Engineering, Pulchowk Campus, Particularly Department of Architecture and Urban Planning for helping to make good progress and achievement as far as academic knowledge is concerned. The authors are sincerely indebted to all people who contributed in a way or other to make this study a success.

References

- [1] Karen Strassler. Gendered visibilities and the dream of transparency: The chinese-indonesian rape debate in post-suharto indonesia. *Gender & History*, 16(3):689–725, 2004.
- [2] Dipak Bahadur Adhikari. Income generation in informal sector: A case study of the street vendors of kathmandu metropolitan city. *Economic Journal of Development Issues*, pages 1–14, 2011.

- [3] Paul WK Yankson. Accommodating informal economic units in the urban built environment: Petty commodity enterprises in the accra metropolitan area, ghana. *Third world planning review*, 22(3):313, 2000.
- [4] Sinenhlanhla Patience Hlengwa. *Street vending and the use of urban spaces in Tongaat central business district KwaZulu-Natal*. PhD thesis, 2016.
- [5] Chia Yang Weng. *Accommodate street vendors during the urban development process: with two empirical cases of Zhu Lian (ZL), and Guan Dong (GD) public markets in Hsinchu City, Taiwan*. PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013.
- [6] Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria. Street hawkers and public space in mumbai. *Economic and political weekly*, pages 2140–2146, 2006.
- [7] Michael E Porter et al. *Clusters and the new economics of competition*, volume 76. Harvard Business Review Boston, 1998.