

An Investigation of the Relationship Between the Street Vendors and Built Environment to Their Business Functionality: Special Reference to Colombo-Pettah

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Abstract

Street vendors are playing a significant role in the urban economy as a part of the informal economy. The incensement of street vendors in the urban centers generates challenging disorder in contemporary cities, including Colombo. Relocation of those into a planned location as a modern planning practice has generated several complications direct to the vendors' business functionality and development project failures. Understanding the affiliation between the street vendors and the built environment provides more attention to policymakers and planners to make the city environment and informal economy more effective and vibrant by allowing different social groups. The main intention is to identify the relationship between the street vendors and the built environment as well as the level of centrality that influence their business functionality when they are in original locations and when they are in relocated locations. Floating Market and Cross Street in Pettah were selected as the case study for the comparative data analysis. A mixed data collection method was used for data collection, and for the sample, 120 vendors were selected separately at both locations using two stages of the stratified cluster sampling method. Social Network Analysis Centrality Measurements were used for comparative data analysis. The vendors in the original locations have developed their Powerful Centrality Social Network with actors of the network by being well connected, can quickly reach every actor, and is located strategically. After the relocation, their power of centrality was less, affecting their business functionality; hence they were more willing to move back to their previous locations while failing development projects. This study guides the understanding of informal economic functionality in a city that depends on different social groups. The intervention to their functional mechanism without knowing their zenith may collapse the city's functionality.

Keywords: Street Vendors, Built Environment, Business Functionality, Social Networks, Informal Economy

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