

Street vending management in Bangkok: the need to adapt to a changing environment

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Abstract

This research paper proposes that the administration of street vending in Bangkok is incompatible with both changes in the economic and social situation in Thailand and a significant growth in street vending around the world, reflecting a growing appreciation of its important role. To support this argument, the paper presents; street vending policy measures that have been implemented since the founding of Bangkok in 1973; the paradigm shift in employment since the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997; and empirical data from a study of street vending in four districts in Bangkok in 2016. The study collected data from street vendors and buyers in Bangrak, Pathumwan, Phranakhon and Samphanthawong. The sample size of the vendors in each district was 100 and participants were selected through random sampling. A sample of 50 consumers in each district was selected through convenience sampling. From a policy perspective, the main findings of the study document a recurring pattern of efforts to restrict street vendors' access to public space for the purposes of vending, despite strong consumer demand and the valuable role vendors play in urban public space. The municipal policies are also, often, at odds with national economic development policy. The survey data referring to vendors and consumers indicates continued strong supply and demand, despite restrictive policies implemented by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). From the documentary study and the field data, the paper recommends that the BMA should realign the administration of street vending in accordance with the roles and functions of the livelihood as well as the dynamics of the economic and social situation, and international trends.

Keywords: municipal administration, street vending, economic and social dynamics

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Introduction

Despite street vending being a clear occupational phenomenon around the world, there are few good estimates of the number of those engaged in the trade. In this paper, street vending refers to the “trading of goods of various types on a daily basis, including food items, to the general public, in a street, land, sidewalk, footpath, pavement or any other public space from a temporary built-up structure” (Nirathron, 2005). The concept of public space in Thai society is complex, and while engaging with these conceptualisations is not the focus of this article, we acknowledge work that has been done in the area (Oranratmanee and Rachakul, 2014; Yasmeen, 2006).

The mainstream stance on street vending in various countries in the global south, including Thailand, is centered on a juxtaposition between the necessity of its presence for livelihoods and its intrusion on public space, its being an obstacle to traffic, and its creating what is often seen as unfair competition for larger businesses. As an economic activity in the informal economy, street vending is often viewed as a backward economic activity, generating less income for the community when compared to formal trading, thus impeding productivity, prosperity and “modern” urbanisation (Cross, 2000: 40; Department of City Planning, 2012). Bangkok has its own unique pattern of urbanisation and gentrification, as explained by Askew (2002). The fact that there is always conflict for space, in particular in urban areas, puts street vending in a risky position compared to formal businesses, particularly with respect to pedestrians. Thus, curtailing of street vending has become a universal phenomenon though we have seen a resurgence in street vending around the world, including in the global north (Poon 2015). Street vending continues to thrive because it operates at a low cost and is able to satisfactorily respond to consumer needs. It also generates employment and livelihoods, especially among workers with a relative lack of education and skills. More recently, the issue of “inclusive cities” has been raised in favour of street vending, since it helps create equal opportunity among the general public, especially the poor and disadvantaged: providing them with the opportunity of a better urban life, employment and livelihood, as well as social inclusion (The World Bank, 2015). It also relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with reference to SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Simon, 2016; Dahmen, Leslie, Bhushan, & Rani, 2014).

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) has been making attempts to curtail street vending since 1973, continuing during the first governor’s administration despite periodic relaxation in light of the economic and political situation. However, some important changes took place when the Act on the Maintenance of Cleanliness and Orderliness in the Country, B.E. 2535 (1992) was passed, authorising local officials (with the approval of traffic officials) to allow the sale of goods in “public places or establishments”. Statistically, the period that saw the most relaxation was between 2011 and 2013, which designated more than 700 temporarily permitted areas for street vending. Over 20,000 vendors were officially registered, not to mention a far greater number of cases which went unregistered (Nirathron, 2017). Since 2014, these temporary vending places have been gradually disallowed under the operation known as “Returning the Pavements to the Public”. The BMA has allocated a number of designated selling areas to affected vendors. Unfortunately, in several instances, they are not located in places where vendors can generate enough income (Nirathron, 2017). Some have returned to sell at the original sites (Public Relations Division, BMA, 2017). As of November 2017, there were only 232 temporary permitted areas.

The BMA's management of street vending attaches importance to spatial arrangements, while economic development clearly follows the trend of neo-liberalism, driven by globalisation, in which self-employed work has become more prominently associated with a larger gap in income disparity. (Nirathron, 2006). However, attempts to provide street vending space have not had much success, while the number of vendors continues to grow, thus causing obstacles to traffic flow. The issue has been raised on social media where groups such as the "Thai Group against Street vending" and "Hey, this is Thailand Footpath", which advocate for pedestrian rights, were formed: calling for a stringent regulation of street vending. This paper recommends that a review be made of the BMA's management of street vending which, despite its consistency, is not compatible with changes in the social and economic situation. The paper is divided into five sections. The first section describes schools of thought on the informal economy and the development of street vending, together with theories that explain the presence of street vending in various phases. The second section discusses the development of street vending management in Bangkok, which, despite its consistency, does not correspond to the socio-economic situation. The third section presents the findings of the study on vendors and buyers in four districts of Bangkok, thus re-affirming the role and importance of street vending in the generation of work and reduction of economic disparities. The fourth section summarises and presents recommendations for the management of street vending in Bangkok in light of the changing economic and social situation.

Schools of Thought on the Informal Economy and Development of street vending in Bangkok

As a largely informal economic activity, there a number of schools of thought regarding the informal economy in general that warrant being summarised here (see Table 1). The Table builds on Chen's work published in 2012 by adding a new category referred to as the "inclusionist" school, advocating the need for pro-poor urban planning and collective organisation, which is an approach this paper finds attractive for both analysis and planning purposes.

*Table 1: Schools of Thought on the Informal Economy
(Brown and McGranahan, 2016)*

School of Thought	General view and focus	Causal roots of informal economy	Policy Implications	Major influencers
Dualist	The informal economy is a pre-modern sector acting as an intermediate space between the mainstream formal system and complete unemployment. Focused on 'survivalist' activities by the working poor with few (if any) links with the formal economy.	Labour supply far exceeding the demand brought about by industrialisation.	More state regulation designed to foster informal productivity and more appropriate forms of access to resources, including capital, in addition to the removal of unnecessary state restrictions.	K. Hart / International Labour Organization (ILO)

Legalist	The informal economy is a market-led response by entrepreneurs to excessive state regulation (as opposed to a temporary condition of excess labour supply). Focused on 'plucky' micro-entrepreneurial activity.	Excessive state regulation.	Less state regulation and more free market policies designed to enable/unlock the growth potential of informal entrepreneurs (particularly through the legalisation of informal property rights).	H. de Soto
Voluntarist	The informal economy is a result of producers and traders who choose to operate informally after weighing the costs and benefits of informality versus formality. Focused on opportunistic informal producers and traders.	Efforts to avoid taxation and costly regulation in the formal economy.	Bringing of informal firms and their workers into the formal regulatory environment in order to increase the tax base and reduce unfair competition for formal businesses.	A.R. Levenson & W.F. Maloney
Structuralist	The informal economy is an attempt by formal sector capital, acting with the complicity of the state, to reduce wages and enhance flexibility by exploiting unprotected informal workers. Focused on vulnerable workers exploited by formal sector capital.	Capitalist growth in the context of economic crises.	More regulation of commercial and employment relationships between the informal and formal economies in order to address unequal relationships between 'big business' and subordinate producers.	M. Castells & A. Portes / C. Moser
Inclusionist	The informal economy is a result of anti-poor policies and regulations and systems of governance that exclude the poorest informal producers and traders from accessing formal employment and basic urban services and space in the city to both live and work. Focused on the political agency of poor informal dwellers and workers in cities.	Anti-poor policies and regulations, and increasingly neoliberal systems of urban governance.	Collective mobilisation among informal residents and workers as a counter-hegemonic practice of resistance and inclusion. Holding local governments accountable for poor urban dwellers and workers in the process.	I. Lindell / F. Miraftab / D. Mitlin / V. Watson

Vending was one of the most traditional forms of trade in Thai culture before the establishment of Bangkok. Most vending in early Bangkok was done along the canals until the roads were constructed during the reign of King Rama I (Hongladorom et. al. 1986). A study on street vending in Bangkok mentions its important role in the rise of the economic status of Chinese migrant workers during World War II and the migration of Thai workers from rural areas after 1980 (Nirathron, 2006).

The increased number of Thai street vendors in Bangkok in the period after World War II can be explained in terms of the Dualist School and the Structuralist School in that the growth was due to the role of “re-production” of capitalism whereby goods and services were provided cheaply to workers, thus helping to reduce their cost of living. When workers were able to live on low wages, their capitalist counterparts could retain more of the surplus value and minimise the friction caused by discrepancy in the capitalist economy. Taking up street vending occupations was, therefore, a strategy for survival for rural surplus workers, most of whom had a low income and little education. As they could not get a job in the formal economy, by implication these activities were undertaken for survival purposes. This trend became exacerbated in 1997 when the Asian economic downturn resulted in a large number of workers being laid off. Many turned to street vending in order to earn income. A new set of explanations for the expansion of street vending is seen in the paradigm shift in international employment in which technological development and intensive competition in the production and manufacturing sectors have resulted in greater “flexibility” in employment. However, it is clear that since 1997 the number of vendors who are not poor have been increasing (Nirathron, 2006). More middle-class vendors have joined this occupation. A prominent example is Mr. Sirivat Voravetvuthikun, a realtor affected by the economic crisis in 1997 who decided to sell sandwiches on the street (Thaipublica 2012; Sirivat Sandwich, 2013; Yasmeen 2003). Yasmeen and Nirathron’s 2014 study further confirms this trend (Yasmeen and Nirathron 2014).

Vendors who are not poor are seen more frequently in public and private places. They enter the market not because they have no other choice, but rather because they see a greater business opportunity and more flexibility in terms of managing their time (Maneepong and Walsh, 2013; Pruecksamars, 2013). This phenomenon is in line with the suggestion of the Legalist School that the entry into the street vending occupation is attributable to the vendors being content to be “informal” workers. The idea is also in line with the Voluntarist School in that the decision to choose street vending occupations is made on a voluntary basis. The reasons for choosing street vending occupations are not merely economic but are supported by other factors such as freedom and flexibility to manage their time and life. It can be argued that the latter explanation is in line with the employment trend seen in the new generation of workers born after the 1980s who desired greater flexibility in their working life as opposed to fixed working hours subjected to employment uncertainties. Such an explanation is confirmed by the surveys undertaken by the Thai National Statistical Office which evidenced that from 2008 to 2012 the proportion of the self-employed workers in the country had increased among workers of all levels of education (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2013), while traders with limited occupational opportunity continued to resort to street vending as occupations. Thus, there is a clear difference in the role of street vending in generating employment and income for vendors with different economic statuses. This phenomenon is even seen in more developed nations (Nirathron, 2017). Nevertheless, given the importance of street vending for the livelihoods of the urban poor, as well as a source of affordable goods, the emerging Inclusionist School is a useful way to conceptualise the informal economy as well as advocate for pro-poor policies and collective mobilisation.

Management of street vending in Bangkok: approaches not compatible with economic and social changes

The management of street vending in Bangkok over the years has reflected an ambivalent attitude towards the acceptance and rejection of street vending, while the national policy has been geared towards the promotion of self-employment as a means towards poverty reduction and economic self-reliance since the 3rd National Economic and Social Development Plan.

Ever since the establishment of the BMA in 1973, regulation of street vending has been on the agenda of every BMA executive team (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, 1995, p. 55). The BMA's attempt to remove street vending from Bangkok footpaths was initiated when its first governor took office in 1973. Yet, poverty and economic downturns caused by subsequent oil crises forced the administration to relax its measures and "promote" selling food on the pavements to lower the cost of living of the general public. BMA district offices therefore turned to promoting the sale of cheap street food on the pavement (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, 1995).

Although the BMA views street vending as a problem of orderliness against a certain paradigm of urbanisation, the Maintenance of Cleanliness and Orderliness in the Country Act, B.E. 2535 (1992) authorises the Administration, with the approval of traffic officials, to demarcate temporary places for vendors and penalise those who sell their wares outside the permitted areas. Meanwhile, complaints have been made by the public as to the sale of goods in the prohibited areas, though many people do not agree with the strict measures taken against the vendors. There has been news about the exploitation of street vending in the form of "unofficial service fees" – or bribes – extorted from the vendors in exchange for permission to do business even after the government's recent operation of "Returning the Pavement to the Public" (Public Relations Division, BMA, 2018).

Based on the study of the development of the policy on street vending management since 1973, it has been found that, on the whole, despite some policy differences in each administration there are recurring patterns in the management of the issue. In other words, attempts have been made to regulate street vending areas and solve problems as they come without due consideration of the impacts that may follow. There has been no long-term approach to the issue that can reflect the understanding of the changes in economic and social realities. The policy and measures on the management of street vending can be summarised as follows (Nirathron, 2017; Yasmeen and Nirathron, 2014)¹:

1. 1973-1977: This represents the attempt to regulate, with the issuance of bylaws. "Street vending" was defined and put under control, requiring permission from the Bangkok governor to operate. Temporary permission was granted in some areas. Measures were seriously supervised and enforced. Vendors staged demonstrations, and the government compromised.
2. 1977-1981: Initially strict measures were enforced, but the oil crisis forced the BMA to permit vendors to sell their goods as a means to generate employment and lower costs of living. Attempts were made to supervise the work by establishing "municipal police", responsible for regulation and control but the unit was subsequently

¹ The duration of each period represents the term of office of Bangkok Governor. Thus, the year at the end of one period will be the same as the beginning of the next. Details of the development of the management of Bangkok governors can be found in the author's research on Management of Street Vending in Thailand: Situation and Desired Policy Direction (Nirathron, 2017, pp. 66-73).

abolished. Individuals who exploited the vendors by claiming that they could negotiate with officials for the permission to do business were arrested.

3. 1981-1985: This period marked a strict supervision together with promotion of self-employment. Temporary selling places were designated; however, the attempt was subsequently abandoned, as the BMA had no legal authority to do so.
4. 1985-1992: The “City Law Enforcement Department” was established, responsible for controlling vending that might obstruct the pavement, while permission was temporarily granted at “designated areas” with a “clean, safe, and orderly” slogan to promote harmonious coexistence between vendors and pedestrians. Regulations and laws were successfully amended to make it possible to designate temporary vending areas. At the same time, the 6th National Economic and Social Development Plan was announced, promoting self-employment in various forms for the first time.
5. 1992-1996: This was an important transitory period in which two important acts were legislated, authorising the BMA to designate temporary vending areas with the approval of traffic officials. Places were designated and marked with clear signs. A registry of vendors was set up, together with their records, in temporarily-permitted vending areas, while those selling outside the designated areas would be fined.
6. 1996-2004: An important economic event took place in 1997 – the *Tom Yum Kung* Crisis. The government created a “Thai Help Thai” project to support small-scale, self-employed people. A survey of vendors was conducted to find out how many there were and to set up additional temporarily-permitted vending areas. This was a time when food sanitation was given important consideration. People Bank Projects were created, providing funding support for small-scale, self-employed entrepreneurs, especially street vendors.
7. 2004-2008: Arresting and fining vendors who sold their goods outside the permitted areas continued. More temporary vending areas were designated. An important development was the creation of hawkers and street vendors committees at district level, illustrating that important stakeholders were encouraged to participate in the management process, albeit to a limited extent.
8. 2009-2014: Supervision and control continued. Those who sold their goods outside the permitted areas were fined. The BMA admitted that street vending would not disappear from Bangkok and recognised the significance of its cultural dimension. Therefore, a project entitled “street vending, a Bangkok charm” was created to promote tourism. More temporary areas were designated in 2013.
9. 2014-2018: Another regulation was put in place, putting an end to all the temporary vending areas to “return the pavement to the public”. The BMA set up new areas for vendors. Some rejected the new proposals, while others went back to sell in the original places, risking being fined and arrested.²

The above-mentioned management measures all reflect how a spaced-based approach has been adopted without due regard to the integration of social and economic needs. Public space has been routinely prioritised over other dimensions despite the significant roles and functions street vending plays. First, street vendors “play a structural role in Bangkok’s economy and food system, providing affordable services for formal and informal workers alike” (Reed, Roever and Nirathron, 2017). They also play a valuable role in animating public

² As of December 2017 there are 10,578 street vendors in 232 designated areas. The plan to cancel all designated areas is still in place.

space through their making it safer by serving as “eyes on the street” in the words of the famous urbanist, Jane Jacobs (Ibid.; Yasmeen 2006). Nevertheless, measures restricting vendor access to space have been strictly enforced and then relaxed and so on. Nor is sufficient consideration given to street vending as an activity that generates both work and income that can be developed into a bigger business enterprise. Measures, in the past, were, at times, relaxed for economic reasons, together with lack of good governance surrounding the management of the issue. As a result of the approach, focusing only on spatial arrangements, street vending continues to exist but without long-term development strategies. Interestingly, after the launch of the “Return the Pavement to the Public” operation, one still sees a substantial presence of street vendors. This phenomenon concurs with the argument that in the face of attempted curtailing, street vending continues to thrive (Wongtada, 2015; Bromley, 2000). The BMA’s management style does not take into consideration other important dimensions and potential impacts, rather it focuses on street vending as an obstacle to the smooth flow of traffic. Furthermore, action is often taken during times when the government is all-powerful as a result of military dictatorship. More importantly, not only does the prevailing approach reflect inherent management problems, but it also shows how the management style is not compatible with the changing economic and social realities as well as the economic and social functions of street vending (Reed, Roever and Nirathron, 2017).

Over the years, measures against street vending have changed for various ostensible reasons ranging from unsightliness, disorderliness, and lack of cleanliness to the obstruction of the right of way of pedestrians. The incidences of obstruction have become more obvious due to the increased number of vendors and the development of public transportation such as skytrains and underground trains which increase the use of the pavements.

At the national level, it has been the Thai government’s policy to promote employment since the 3rd National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972-1976). The policy clearly recognises the role of self-employment as a tool for poverty reduction as indicated in the 4th National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981). An interesting point to note is that the State’s attitude towards street vending is built on poverty-reduction activities as enunciated in the 6th National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991), leading to economic self-reliance among the people as per the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006). The creation of the People’s Bank projects to support small business enterprises is an example that reflects the important role of small businesses and self-employment in income generation for the people as well as a clear indication of the government’s stance toward the street vending occupation. The information from the Government Savings Bank confirms that a number of street vendors are able to move up from being subsistence workers to becoming traders with savings and able to expand their businesses even further (Government Savings Bank, 2013), a fact indicative of their entrepreneurial acumen. Similarly, the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) also mentions the support of self-employment and small business enterprises by providing training and access to funding sources. In the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021), the strategies on justice and reduction of inequality affirm the creation of social and economic opportunities, occupations and income generation activities (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2016).

The current street vending situation in Bangkok: an argument in support of the role of street vending in the generation of work and reduction in economic discrepancy

In April 2016, a survey was undertaken involving both vendors and their customers across four districts in Bangkok. The objective of the study was to gain an understanding of the demographic characteristics of vendors and buyers as well as collect baseline information such as length of time in the business, goods sold, etc. In the study, the numbers of vendors within and outside of the temporarily permitted areas, as provided by the City Law Enforcement Department, were used to estimate the total vending population in each district. 100 street vendors in each area were selected, based on convenience sampling. The total number of vendors in the four districts was estimated at 400. The buyer population, on the other hand, could not be similarly estimated. Instead, a minimum of 50 buyers were sampled in each area, their selection was based on convenience sampling, from among buyers who were buying goods from street vendors. The total number of buyers sampled was 200. The findings of the study are shown in Table I.

Table I: Characteristics of vendors

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 400)	
	BangRak (n = 100)		Pathumwan (n = 100)		Phranakorn (n = 100)		Samphanthawong (n = 100)			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sex										
Female	75	75	64	64	75	75.00	77	77.00	291	72.75
Age										
Less than 40	24	24	36	36	26	26.00	33	33.00	119	29.75
40-49	35	35	35	35	30	30.00	20	20.00	120	30.00
50-59	24	24	20	20	21	21.00	30	30.00	95	23.75
60-69	15	15	6	6	14	14.00	16	16.00	51	12.75
70 years and older	2	2	3	3	9	9.00	1	1.00	15	3.75
Education level										
No school	4	4	5	5	4	4.00	3	3.00	16	4.00
Primary	48	48	38	38	40	40.00	47	47.00	173	43.25
Secondary	18	18	21	21	21	21.00	14	14.00	74	18.50
High School	15	5	17	17	14	14.00	10	10.00	56	14.00
Vocational	9	9	9	9	10	10.00	11	11.00	39	9.75
College	5	5	9	9	10	10.00	15	15.00	39	10.50

Domicile

Street vending management in Bangkok

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 400)	
	BangRak (n = 100)		Pathumwan (n = 100)		Phranakorn (n = 100)		Samphanthawong (n = 100)			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bangkok	39	39	30	30	50	50.00	49	49.00	168	42.00

Can street vending generate enough income

Yes	90	90	89	89	87	87.00	90	90.00	356	89.00
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Selling Location

Permitted area	64	64	54	54	32	32.00	74	74.00	224	56.00
Non-permitted	36	36	46	46	68	68.00	26	26.00	176	44.00

Goods sold*

Food (57.14% of responses)

No. of responses	n= 106		n=116		n=103		n=109		n=434	
Ready-to-cook	31	29	38	33	20	19.42	17	15.60	106	24.42
Prepared food	19	18	11	10	11	10.68	9	8.26	50	11.52
Fresh food/vegetables/fruits	8	8	8	7	12	12	18	17	46	11
Ready-to-eat food	0	0	1	1	5	5	4	4	10	2
Others (beverages)	5	5	18	16	6	6	7	6	36	8
Total food groups	63	59	76	66	54	52	55	51	248	57

Length of time in business

Less than 1 year	3	3	4	4	1	1	1	1	9	2
1-3 years	12	12	22	22	15	15	15	15	64	16
4-5 years	7	7	13	13	7	7	7	7	34	9
6-10 years	24	24	35	35	19	19	22	22	100	25
More than 10 years	54	54	26	26	58	58	55	55	193	48

Reasons for choosing this livelihood*

No. of responses	(n=218)		(n=205)		(n=181)		(n=192)		(n=796)	
Dislike being an employee	74	34	80	39	56	31	56	29	266	33
Flexible time	54	25	40	20	33	18	44	23	171	22

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 400)	
	BangRak (n = 100)		Pathumwan (n = 100)		Phranakorn (n = 100)		Samphanthawong (n = 100)			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Good income	34	16	45	22	38	21	28	15	145	18
Can't find other work	29	13	18	9	20	11	26	14	93	12

Average and lowest daily value of selling stock (in baht)					
Average value of selling stock	2,397.60	1,952.30	1,893.30	2,706.70	2,237.48
Lowest value of selling stock	200	200	200	200	200

* Can choose more than one.
Percentages may not add up due to rounding.

The vendor characteristics such as age and educational level, reasons for choosing this livelihood, length of time in business, desire and no desire to find other work may initially concord with the theories accounting for the presence of street vending; but at the same time they reflect a transition towards a new set of theories that reflect the significance of street vending as a source of employment and income as well as an occupation with potential for development.

The study found that female vendors account for 72.75 per cent of respondents. The Pathumwan area has the lowest percentage of female vendors. Forty-four percent of vendors sold outside permitted areas. Most vendors had completed no more than 9 years of education. More than half of the vendors surveyed had more than 10 years of experience in the occupation. A quarter of them had worked for less than 5 years. Most of them sold in the Pathumwan district. A high percentage of vendors (54 per cent if one combines “dislike being an employee” and “flexible time”) cited autonomy and flexibility as reasons for vending though there were some vendors who cited “good earnings” (18 per cent) and “having no choice” (12 per cent). A high percentage of vendors sold food (57 per cent). The average daily value of selling stock, or merchandise, was 2,237.48 baht and the average daily income after selling this merchandise was 3,208.40 baht. Inferential statistics found no difference between daily investment between food and non-food vendors. In all four districts, the minimum value of selling stock was 200 baht. The vendors who had low value selling stock tended to earn less. Other issues were discussed informally with vendors. For example, with respect to opinions on the administration of street vending, vendors suggested that low-income vendors should have priority over the space. They also agreed that cleaning fees must be collected and that the number of vendors should be limited.

The study found that Pathumwan district offered the highest earning opportunities. A lower percentage of female vendors are active in the Pathumwan district, compared to other

districts. This may be related to higher income-earning potential but more research is needed to confirm this.

Below is a narrative interpretation of the findings of the survey of buyers, reflecting the importance the role of street vending plays in their lives (Table 2). The study on buyers found that most of them were labourers. 35 per cent earned no more than the daily minimum wage. 40 per cent of buyers purchased from vendors on a daily basis. The most cited reasons for buying were convenience and lower prices compared to purchasing from formal enterprises. The customers surveyed believe that the increase of street vending is due to unemployment and that the new generation of workers prefer autonomy and flexibility. Almost 97 per cent of buyers contended that street vending is significant. In discussions not reported in the table, consumers recommended that the areas permitted for vending must be specified and closely monitored and that the number of vendors must be limited.

Table 2: Characteristics of buyers

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 200)	
	Bangrak (n = 50)		Pathumwan (n = 50)		Phranakorn (n = 50)		Samphanthawong (n = 50)			
	No	%	No.	%	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sex										
Female	25	50	21	42	34	68	31	62	111	55.50
Age										
Less than 20 years old	7	14	11	22	9	18	8	16	35	17.50
20-59 years	43	86	35	58	36	54	41	82	155	63
60-69 years	-	-	2	4	5	10	1	2	8	4
Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100
Occupations										
Students	9	18	20	40	17	34	17	34	63	32
Employees with monthly wages	16	32	10	20	9	18	13	26	48	24
Employees with daily wages	12	24	6	12	10	20	4	8	32	16
Government/state enterprise	1	2	4	8	6	12	6	12	17	9
Average monthly income (baht)										
Less than 9,000	12	24	28	56	16	32	14	28	70	35
9,000-15,000	22	44	11	22	21	42	14	28	68	34
15,001-20,000	7	14	5	10	4	8	9	18	25	13

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 200)	
	Bangrak (n = 50)		Pathumwan (n = 50)		Phranakorn (n = 50)		Samphanthawong (n = 50)			
	No	%	No.	%	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
More than 20,000	9	18	6	12	9	18	7	14	31	16

Highest level of education

No school	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Primary	7	14	8	16	11	22	2	4	28	14
Lower Secondary	8	16	4	8	3	6	5	10	20	10
Upper secondary-vocational diploma	20	40	25	50	17	34	13	26	75	38
First degree-higher	15	30	13	26	19	38	29	58	76	38

Accommodation

Rented house/room	25	50	27	54	19	38	18	36	89	45
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Frequency of buying

Every day	24	48	21	42	20	40	13	26	78	39
3-5 days/week	14	28	24	48	11	22	20	40	69	35

Most frequently bought goods*

Food (60.37%)

No. of responses	(n=140)		(n=148)		(n=118)		(n=129)		(n=535)	
Food prepared at point of sale	29	21	26	17	21	18	22	17	98	18
Fresh food/vegetables/fruits	24	17	21	14	20	17	21	16	86	16
Prepared food	22	16	27	18	19	16	18	14	86	16
Ready-to-eat food	10	7	12	8	6	5	15	12	43	8

Reasons for buying*

No. of responses	n=146	n=165	n=152	n=155	n=618
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Street vending management in Bangkok

Data	Districts in Bangkok								Total (n = 200)	
	Bangrak (n = 50)		Pathumwan (n = 50)		Phranakorn (n = 50)		Samphanthawong (n = 50)			
	No	%	No.	%	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
Price (25.31%)										
Cheap	35	24	33	20	28	18	24	16	120	19
Negotiable	5	3	14	9	10	7	8	5	37	6
Convenience (50.65%)										
Near home	21	14	34	21	16	11	24	16	95	15
Saves time	21	14	18	11	20	13	24	16	83	13
On the way	18	12	15	9	20	13	29	19	82	13
Near workplace	19	13	9	6	13	9	12	8	53	9
Why street vendors increase										
Unemployment	34	46	40	49	37	49	33	44	144	43
Autonomy	22	30	19	23	19	25	19	25	79	26
Is street vending necessary?										
Yes										
Convenience	28	21	26	16	30	18	29	21	113	19
Employment	22	16	31	19	33	20	27	19	113	19
Reduce social problems	17	13	28	17	23	14	24	17	92	15
Consumers should have choices	24	18	27	16.77	24	14	25	18	100	17
Cheap goods	28	21	27	17	28	17	21	15	104	17
Unique goods	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0
Tourism	8	6	9	6	15	9	8	6	40	7
Culture	8	6	12	7	13	8	6	4	39	7
No	7	35	3	15	4	20	6	30	20	100

* Can choose more than one.
Percentages may not add up due to rounding.

The buyer information reflects the importance of street vending for the general public. The fact that many buyers do not enjoy a high income reflects its function in the reduction of economic disparities. The reasons for buying cited are price and convenience.

Summary and Recommendations

The BMA's approach to the management of street vending, alternating between stringent and relaxed measures, reflects its way of thinking which pays much importance to area-based management. On the other hand, the persistence of street vending in Bangkok reflects the roles of street vending in the realms of poverty reduction, reducing inequality and entrepreneurial development, and its ability to respond to the needs and lifestyles of younger generations. Data from the research pointed out that street vending plays a predominant role in Bangkok and the management of street vending should not be limited solely to spatial management, although one cannot deny the importance of spatial management in considering the pedestrians who are a major stakeholder in the use of public space. However, discussions with vendors and consumers show both groups are willing to make compromises in terms of restricting selling spaces and regimenting cleanliness.

Under such circumstances, the authors recommend that the management of street vending in Bangkok be based on the following premises:

- Affirmation of the status of street vending in terms of its ability to; generate work and income; reduce economic disparities; eradicate poverty; offer entrepreneurial support; and serve as a mechanism to absorb the impact of employment termination;
- Taking into consideration other aspects as mentioned above, and not only spatial aspects in the administration of street vending;
- Promoting integrated strategic management, taking into consideration the stakeholders concerned, the role and function of street vending in its various dimensions, including managing problems derived from street vending; and
- Putting the importance attached to regulating access to public space into perspective. The management need not be identical in every area but should be based on the same concepts and policies.

Based on the above premises, recommendations are as follows:

1. Setting strategies for the management of street vending to ensure its clear status with regard to its ability to generate work, income, employment and business operations. Case studies from other countries can be applied which feature a clear understanding of the necessity of an integrated approach to the management of areas designated for street vending purposes, including vendor characteristics, connectivity with the agencies concerned, and other mechanisms conducive to successful management;
2. Setting up or assigning an agency to look after street vending affairs in a serious manner, with clear duties covering more than regulating street vending, and with an integrated understanding of the issue in terms of economic, social and cultural dimensions;
3. Promoting sustainability-oriented management rather than solving immediate problems, attaching importance to the creation of inclusive and sustainable cities; and
4. Encourage vendors to form groups, with clear representation, to ensure their participation in the management of street vending on the basis of corporate social responsibility.

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