

Symbiotic Relationship in Commercial Area: Case Study of Khaosan Road

Rosaline Shaw

Faculty of Architecture, Rangsit University, Thailand
e-mail: rosaline.s@rsu.ac.th

Abstract

This article's objective is to search for the pattern that shows how a symbiotic relationship in a commercial area is created when people occupy the public area of Khaosan Road and use it as a walking street. Additionally, the study will find the proper management system that suits the adaptive activities changing through timing of the day: traffic is enable during daytime and traffic is disabled and turned to a walking street at night time. The research methodology is to observe physical aspects of temporary shops and interview merchants and people who organize the area, then analyze data to find relevant factors that create the principal of area usage.

The initial study in this research found 2 important factors in a symbiosis relationship commercial area. First, the commercial area should be organized and clean to please its customers. Second, social involvement in the process of area development is important. Society members should participate in specific designate areas and regulations; public space must be defined by its functions. Moreover, this social regulation can be upscaled to local law.

The symbiotic relationship commercial area of Khaosan road reflects the Thai approach of public area usage. The wisdom from this research points out the relation of how area management and characteristics of symbiotic relationship commercial area influence the adaption of public areas. The result of this research will benefit academically and physically in development of public area management that schedule functions and time; using area as different functions due to different time, and still keep the charisma and Thai approach.

Keywords: *symbiosis relationship, Khaosan road, public area, walking street*

1. Introduction

Khaosan Walking Street Events can be used as a guideline for tourism activities. It supports local activities and also supports local people: which consists of residents, merchants, tourists and officers to participate in managing activities on site.

Relationship between local people and limited usable area create symbiotic relationship formation in public spaces usage (Appleyard, 1987; Gehl, 2001). They have to share space at different times of the day. This formation of dependent relationship creates a standard of public area usage. The idea of "the public sphere" is a conceptual resource that can help to understand the relationship between humans and space in a public area (Fraser, 1990). However, there are still a low number of study of formations and management systems that relate to walking street activities.

This research focuses on symbiosis relationship in the Khaosan road commercial area and its surrounding area. Khaosan road is a public space where people from different cultures and backgrounds share limited area for their own purposes. According to western philosophers, the "public space" is defined as a tool for people to share culture, freedom and opportunity (Crawford, 1999). There must be relation between the plaza, open space and private area (Whyte, 1976). Moreover, it is a quality of living as measurement tools for people around them (Habermas, 1989). Khaosan Road is a public area that serves local requirements for their commercial purposes, residential purposes and also local people. Activities that are active in the area are changed through the time of the day.

Initial observations in this research lead to these following questions.

How is the public area at Khaosan road managed? What is the principle? And how does each part depend on others (symbiosis relationship in the area).

What is the main problem of Khaosan walking street which needs to be solved for society to gain the most benefit?

What is the main factor of area management in a symbiotic relationship? And how does society: local people, merchants, tourists and officers: involve in the progress of development?
How local people create local environment?

Khaosan Road - Symbiosis behavior of the occupied area - Background of the problems – Why and How

Khaosan road has been a center of different cultural activities since it was constructed in 1892. It is located in the Bang Lamphu Area to transport commercial goods from Bang Lamphu pier to the city. There has been a variety of users alternately occupying the area. At first, Khaosan road was used for a local merchandising purpose. By the way, after 1982, the 200th anniversary of Rattanakorin, the 400 meters long road has welcomed large numbers of tourists from around the world. This increases density of the area and needs an organized area management.

In 1992, Khaosan road fully turned itself into a tourism spot. The traffic was shut down and to become a walking street for Song Kran Festival. At the time, there was no word like “walking street”. This word was used on 2002 for tourism promotion purposes of National Economic and Social Development Plan of 2002-2006.

Variation of activities along the road creates the adaption of commercial areas and architecture of the area. From 2002, there has been some time managing for using the same space. For example, at 5pm to 2am, merchants are allowed to use the street surface for commercial purposes:

There are rules and regulations that evidentially supports the idea.

1. The Clean and tidy Act of the BE 2535
2. Hygiene Public Act, BE 2535
3. Bangkok Regulation about public area merchandise in 2002.
4. Bangkok Regulation on Commercial Rules in the Waiver Area

The regulation that allows 5pm to 2am commercial area on the street surface creates a temporary market that responds to tourism needs. But the growth of traders and tourism in Khaosan Road recently has been expanding in terms of scope and intensity of trade according to the growing number of tourists. From the beginning tourists who shopped on Khaosan Road were those staying in the surrounding area. However, due to the reputation of the street’s pedestrian activities and the street food, it encouraged visitors to stay around the area. This increase density of the area. To meet the needs of tourism, the government and local people involved in the supervision of the area have come to facilitate and to manage; make it more organized and safe. Then the area was organically divided into 2 parts, first is the footpath area and second is the road surface (Image1) By the way, the area was still unorganized and led to other problems.

From the various activities that occur on Khaosan Road, and the restrictions of time allowed to trade in the area, the use of public space has been adjusted to be able to respond to the rule. However, the varied forms and lack of proper organization have the potential to affect the convenience and safety of tourists in the area, such as the crowded commercial space. This over-density area encourages crime and pickpockets. Additionally, all areas were lacking of cleaning and good hygiene.

The chaotic expansion of commercial space provokes the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to launch regulation in 2016 which organizes footpath areas and road surface areas. Many of the agencies involved are alert and trying to keep up with the new control. This is considered a phenomenon which may lead to the limit of public area activities. This can reduce Eastern world characteristics that area usage mostly grows organically.

This article explores the nature of space patterns and how they are organized, including the use of public space as a pedestrian street with the possibility of coping with change. This research also finds temporary public spaces in public areas in the city that match the temporary management area of Khao San Road. In addition, organized space and quality of living of people who live around the area is expected to increase.

Figure 1 and 2 shows the study area is located on Khao San Road and surrounding streets that are similar in characteristics and location. These additional streets are Ramadhat Road, Tani Road, Kraisi Road, and Mayom Lane (Figure 2). Field study: observe, inspect and interview 4 main targets such as local

people, merchants, pedestrians and officers: is used mainly for research. The data is then analyzed and summarized to meet the research objective.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this study focus is on the symbiotic relationship of an area at Khaosan walking street. This research aims to do the following:

1. To study the general situation of the use of public space as a pedestrian walkway, and to provide guidance on 2 management concepts.

1.1 Physical characteristics of commercial areas both in normal time and a walking street event.

1.2 Factors that relate and support cultural tourism, in the dimension of symbiotic relationship.

2. To study factors that encourages local people, merchants, tourists and officers to get involved in the commercial area development.

3. Materials and Methods

Research of public area usage in the form of symbiotic relationship:

case study - Khaosan walking street.

- Quality base research on

- collect quality-base-data

- formative data

- time change adaptation

- building code

- symbiosis commercial area

- Aim to study how to organize this site and use it as a guideline to others projects

The scope of this research is divided into

1. Scope of studied area - includes activity area of Khaosan Walking street

2. Scope of content - This research observes and interviews local people in the area and it gets 2 dimensions of date. First is how they share public area. Second shows they manage area in symbiotic behavior.



Figure 1 Scope of studied area

4. Results and Discussion

Field study collects physical data in the area through time changing. The study found various activities around the area as mentioned previously. Additionally, there is also a dimension to the use of space that is more complex than the concept that Western theorists have defined. The activities on different times of the day are totally different. The specific activity is set and understood as regular by local people.

Thus, area occupation and functions are related to many factors depending on physical characteristics and time. Figure 3 displays how adaptive the area of Khaosan road is through times of the day. It also shows area management that is divided into 4 main timing periods.



Figure 2 Commercial units occupy footpath area and street surface

1. Time 8.00-12.00 hrs. The footpath area is not very commercial. On the sidewalk, there may be a trolley. There are low numbers of merchants and tourists. On the road there may be parking for service or a loading pickup. The middle lane is still available to pass.

2. From 12.00 am to 5.00 pm, a trading platform is set up at the footpath. The number of vehicles entering the area will start to decrease significantly. Shopping carts are set on the street, but not too many. Officials will begin to take care of the area. Tourists will start to shop. Most of them walk on the footpath and street. Mobile shops start to come in.

3. Time 17.00-21.00 hrs. Cars are not allowed and officers obstruct the road by large steel barriers on both sides of the road. Mobile shop carts and trailers come to the market and start their business. Tourists search for street food and drinks. The restaurant attracts tourists by their shows and outdoor tables located on the footpath.

4. From 21.00 - 02.00 hrs, it is a full time walking street. Commercial units occupied the footpath area and street surface. After 2am, official staff enter the area and start cleaning.

From the exploration of the pattern of trade area allocation in relation to the trade patterns in the area, it was found that existing styles are related to the style and location of the store. Also, the physical components of the road plays an important role in determining patterns and behavior, both from the buyer and the seller. The survey found that, most of the tourists prefer walking on the street, rather than on the footpath. The shop located on the footpath is less popular for the pedestrians, because they have to walk one person at the time as the footpath is not wide enough as the shop is set upon double sides and leave the narrow middle of the path for walking. In the afternoon, the street side shops (street side of the footpath) change their store front to face the main road. This behavior is normal practice along the entire road.

Results from the survey area (in order to collect data), show all shops are categorized by the size and proportion. The shops are categorized by analysis of physical characteristics and ability to move. There are classified into 4 types as follows:

1. Permanent store
2. Semi-mobile store
3. mobile store
4. Wheeled mobile store

These 4 categories are classified by physical characteristics such as products, locations and area management that relates to the commercial activities.

Format 1 is a permanent store. The shop is a commercial building running their services such as restaurants, tour companies, selling clothing and souvenirs. Permanent shops normally open from early morning until the end of the walk. Most are owned by old and rich owners who have power in the community and have a good relationship with officers.

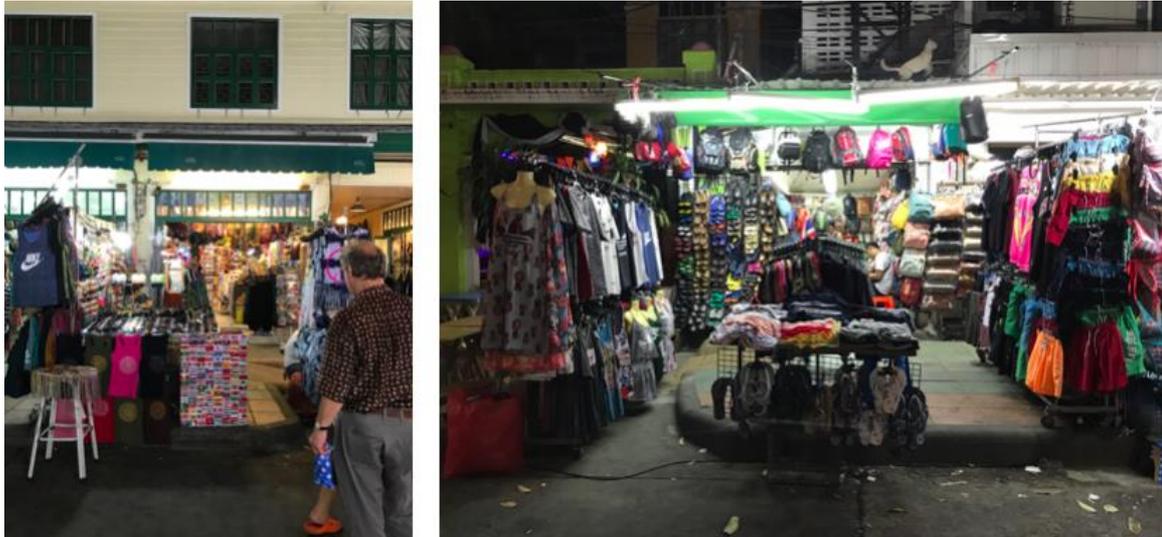


Figure 3 Symbiosis relationship between a permanent store and semi-mobile storefront

Format 2 is a semi-mobile storefront which are mostly stalls or cheap rails to hang clothes or product display. These shops are mostly covered by canvas. They are located on footpaths and some are attachments expanded from the permanent shop. Some of them stand individually. They mostly open at noon time or afternoon time. There is a tent or a promotion sign or display to emphasize the main entrance of some shops. This type of shop has a format of opening and closing time. The footpath shops open late morning, the individual shops open in the afternoon. Street food shops open in the late afternoon and occupy most of the footpath surface. Shop installations never have a formal pattern to follow, they just grow organically but they loosely follow a principal. Every shop has a small corridor and small visual approach to attract tourists and it becomes a loose format for the area.

Format 3 is a mobile type, easy to move around, mostly found on the road surface near a footpath. This type of shop sells handmade crafts, souvenirs, fried insects and magical gadgets. Merchants often dress and perform in front of their shop. Examples of this kind are street magicians, ethnic groups with their specific dresses and something that attracts attention from tourists such as fried insects and strange people who earn money when being photographed. Thus, main characteristics of this type emphasizes on light weight, small and movable trading displays which can move easily to find sufficient exposure for photographing. The study observed and interview to find that there is a boundary of a group of shops (3-5 merchants). They have dependent relationships, and need to trust each other and can leave the shop with them. These group relationships are around the area where each group does not cross their own boundary.

Format 4 is a mobile shop with wheels. There are a lot of trolleys, trailers and cars selling food or food trucks. These mobile shops run in the evening selling foods and beverages. In the afternoon around 2:00 pm, few numbers of shops open before allowance time, the traffic is still on and they take risk to be fined by officers. But after 5:00 pm, many trolleys start wheeling into the area. Most of them enter Khaosan road from Tanao road. There are usually staff in the area such as police, municipal employees and volunteers bringing steel panels to block traffic. These merchants are mostly registered, even if some are not, they also roam around the area. Both Thai and foreigners tourists gradually come inside the area to grab street food. Most mobile shops stop at the Khaosan entrance and cause congestion.

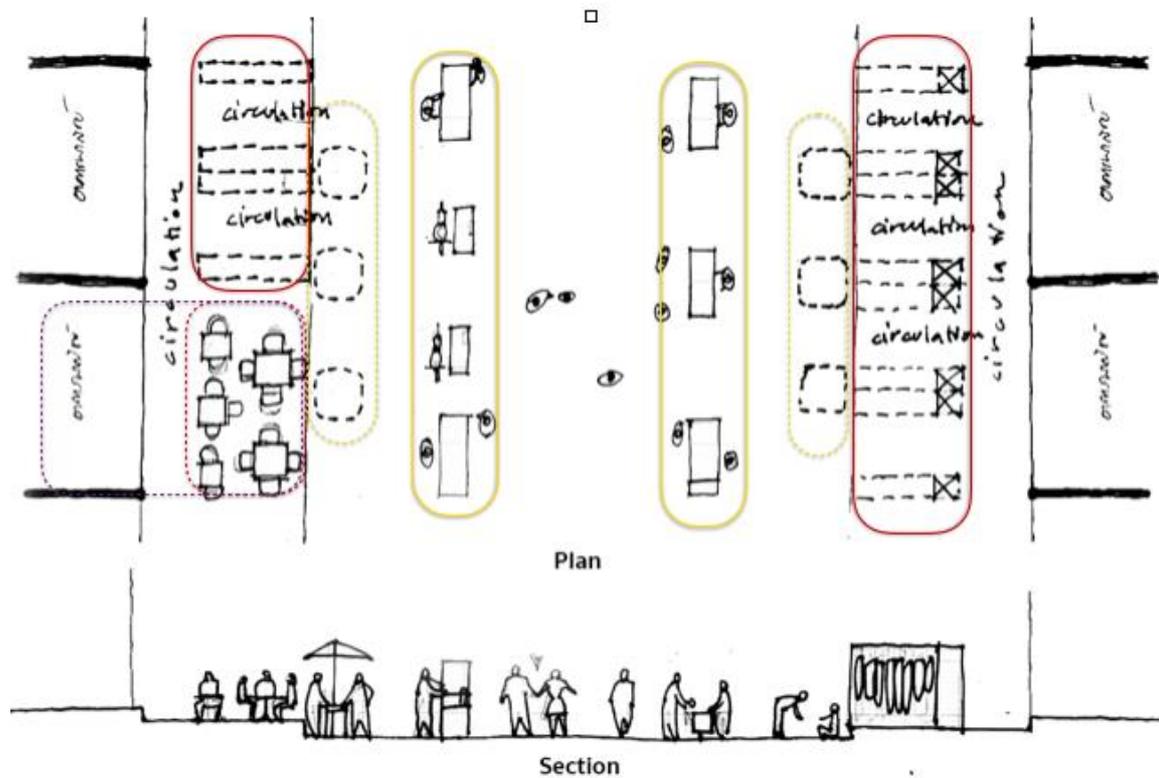


Figure 4 Symbiosis relationship when use it as a walking street

Therefore, the municipal authorities, who have a direct duty to take care of the entrance to the premises, organize and manage the shops in a crowded location. The officers manage these mobiles to locate at the side of the road and its footpath. However, a numbers of mobile shops make this situation difficult to manage and some of them are set to locate in front of permanent stores. This causes conflicts between merchants and sometimes these conflicts turn violent. The competition between shops to gain more customers messes up the area. Shops are sprawling around the area and exceeding the commercial boundary to block traffic. Another cause of traffic jams is food trucks which come occasionally or 2-3 days a week.

These trucks affect the traffic around the area. The interview says these trucks must register with the officers each time they visit the site.

The wheeled mobile shops often enter the commercial zone after 9 pm. They follow the crowd to internal areas and park in front of popular bars or permanent shops. The permanent shops prevent this mobile shops by putting dining tables and chairs and other things that can occupy the street surface.

Discussion

According to Bangkok Regulation of Commercial Rules in the Waiver Area can be summarized as follows: It is allowed to sell goods in public places or in public areas at the specific times from 5 pm to 2 am. Apart from this period, the area must be cleaned.

The research found that most of the semi-mobile stores cooperate with the opening and closing time. Moreover, they always clean the area properly when finished. Some of these shops clean and leave their trash at a permanent shop. This is an example of a symbiotic relationship and it makes the area cleaner.

Figure 4 shows a symbiotic relationship between shops is mostly found between permanent shops and semi-mobile shops. Most of permanent shops offer storage for semi-mobiles. Moreover, they share electricity and area of advertisement signs. The semi-mobiles help to clear the space in front of the permanent shops, to improve visual connection to the main part of the street and attract more customers to

come inside. Some of them select the product of semi-mobile shops that relate to their products in the permanent store such as gifts and souvenirs in front of lady clothes stores.

Other symbiotic relationships is between semi-mobile shops and mobile shops. The reason is mobile shops usually do not register correctly. They sell their goods on the street and move or flee when officers enter the zone. They also are offered main facilities such as electricity and water from permanent and semi-mobile stores. Permanent store's owners also help about contacting the officers.

Most problems occur with wheeled mobile shops that move around along the road to reach the customers. This uncontrollable behavior causes bad traffic and creates congestions in the crowded street. Moreover, they always park their mobile at 45 degrees angle of the main pedestrian traffic for visual attraction purposes. It makes affects traffic, and additionally, when they move they leave trash at the site for others to clean up.

For further research, the analysis and discussion of the various purposes and aspects of the walking street will continue, and may produce knowledge contributing to the development of management systems that suits the adaptive activities changing through every walking street area.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to evaluate success of the symbiotic relationship on trading in public spaces in tourist's activities. Walking streets by assessing the actual conditions in the area. The result is a shared purpose of the community to stimulate the economy and to preserve culture and way of life on Khaosan Road.

The results of the study lead to a conclusion of successful community tourism activities: for the case of Khaosan road, area management should be considered in 2 ways. The first aspect is to organize all commercial areas and control the symbiosis behavior or dependent relationship and to pay attention to the merchant network which increases the ability to manage. In consequence, this will attract more tourists. The second aspect is the participation of the community to be involved in the process of development and to gain shared benefit together. All parties's local people, merchants, tourists and officers have one goal and they can achieve it. This is the role model of a walking street and it can be adopted and used in other tourism developments.

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