



Dominating the Space: Uncover the Existence of Street Vendors in Public Space, The case of Tengku Amir Hamzah Square, Stabat, Indonesia

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Abstract

The existence of street vendors tends to dominate public spaces, which is physically considered to affect the physical quality. Tengku Amir Hamzah Square (TAHS) in Stabat is a famous local public space. Its strategic location triggers the growth of street vendors who provide attractions for visitors. Initially, TAHS was designed not to provide a space for street vendors, and the local regulation said that the presence of street vendors was prohibited. The existence of street vendors in TAHS who occupy this public space has emerged with pros and cons. This phenomenon became the reason for this study to be conducted, specifically to uncover the pattern of temporary space and space-forming elements created by street vendors and their relationship with the public's interest in visiting TAHS. The mixed-method research approach is used in this study to disclose and analyze data descriptively. Mapping and observation were carried out to obtain quantitative data, including layout, the number of street vendors, merchandise types, and distribution patterns of displaying. The elements that form public spaces implemented by street vendors are obtained through observations and photo-trekking, and 58 respondents were involved in the interviews. Findings indicate that the strategic location and fluent permeability to and from TAHS have made this potential street vendor attraction popular among the locals. The activity created in this area acts as a generator of movement, especially at night, attracting people to come and walk through the existing street vendor outlets, contributing to urban livability.

Keywords: Existence, Street Vendor, Public Space, Space Attribute.

1. Introduction

The existence of street vendors in urban public spaces is an exciting issue to be discussed from various related perspectives. Based on the topic of the physical quality of urban areas, the existence of street vendors in urban public spaces is argued as unfavorable because it concerns conflict with the function, cleanliness, layout, security, comfort, and aesthetic of public space. The basic function should be a forum for the people to carry out all functional and ritual activities, individually and in groups [1]. Street vendors dominate urban spaces such as parks, sidewalks, and street corridors, which are physically considered to affect the comfort of people's activities inside the urban areas. The reason for becoming a street vendor amongst the people is that it is easy to implement without requiring complicated procedures [2]. The lack of formal employment opportunities for urban dwellers makes street vending an option for them to ensure the sustainability of their income [3].

Tengku Amir Hamzah Square (TAHS) in Stabat City, North Sumatra, Indonesia, is a square categorized as an urban public space. Formerly TAHS was designed as an open space to accommodate various activities for people. TAHS is situated in front of the Langkat Municipality's Office, right in the city center of Stabat (Figure 1). TAHS is a familiar landmark amongst the locals, which is always crowded with various activities such as a place to gather, play, relax, recreation, music concerts, and a place for formal ceremonies. Its strategic location triggers the growth of the informal sector, namely street vendors who provide supportive attractions for visitors. Initially, TAHS was designed not to provide a space for street vendors, and the local regulation said that the presence of street vendors was prohibited. However, the opposite fact happened; nowadays, street vendors appear and dominate the open space in TAHS by occupying pedestrian walkways and street corridors. Although its presence is against local regulation, then the existence of street vendors is believed to be an attraction for people to visit TAHS. Probably referring to that reason, there is no action from the government to disband them. This phenomenon became the reason for this study to be conducted, specifically to reveal the pattern of temporary space and space-forming elements created by street vendors and their relationship with the public's interest in visiting THAS.



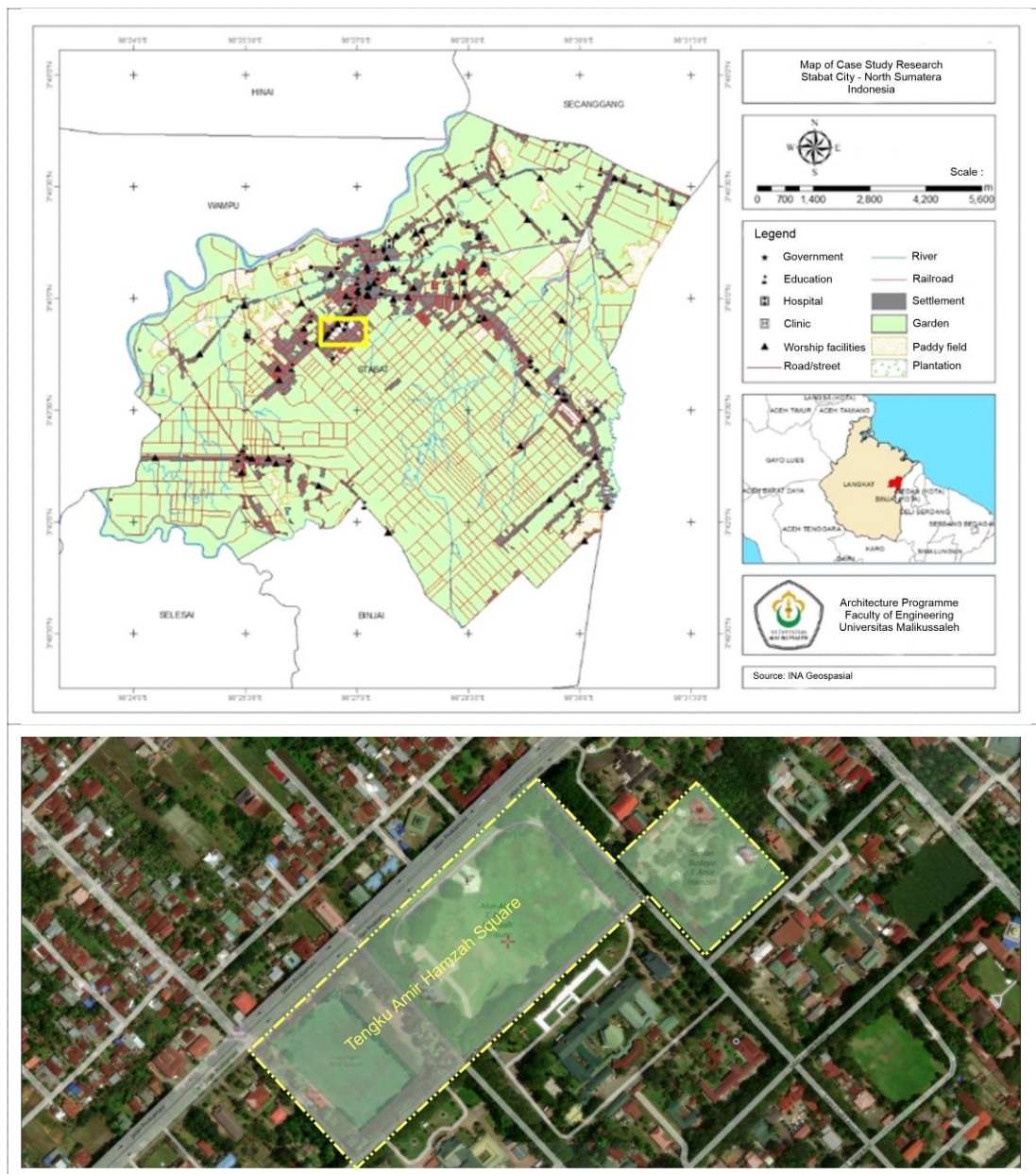


Fig 1. Location plan of Tengku Amir Hamzah Square, Stabat
Source: INA Geospasial 2022 & Satellites. Pro-2022

2. Literature Review

Street vendors are defined as someone who offer goods for sale to the public without having a permanent place to display their interests [2], [4], [5]. There are two categories of street vendors: statically occupying private or public spaces or mobile by moving their selling booth dan goods from one place to [6]– [9]. In Asian countries, street vendors are proliferating as a commercial activity in the informal sector. The existence of street vendors in the city's public space is an integral part of urban life that can accumulate to characterize a city [10]. The phenomenon of city life during the day and night can indicate the city's livability. Street vendors' activities in urban spaces are always based on considerations of location, accessibility, main activities, convenience, and character of the area [11], [12]. For some street vendors, using urban space is closely related to earning their income, and they struggle to maintain sustainability [13].

Public open space is a popular place chosen by street vendors because of its strategic location and ease to access. The role of public space is a space to serve people in their social and community activities. Public space is also a place for functional and ceremonial activities that attach people [1]. Elements that form the public space can be categorized into 4 (four), i.e., comfort and image, access and linkage, use and activity, and sociality [14]. Physical attributes setting in public spaces can provide comfort to users, such as the arrangement of temporary benches, tables, and chairs, or even shady trees can support people's attachment to a place [8], [13]. A good site is a space that is easy to see and reach and provides good access to getting there. The functions and attractions offered by public spaces to users play an essential role; the more diverse, the higher the chance for the place to be visited. An excellent public space must accommodate urban social activities as a place for refreshing and socializing, escaping a while from the bustle of the city [15].

The existence of street vendors in public spaces is an integral part of urban life that can be accumulated to characterize a city. City life at night can be an indicator of the city's livability. For example, street vendors at night in the street corridors in the city of Hat Yai, Thailand, play a vital role as an attraction for visitors [12]. Meanwhile, the utilization of street vendors in urban spaces is based on the location, accessibility, main activity, comfort, and characteristics referring to their activity [16]. Street vendor activities at night can contribute to the sustainability of urban space life [17]–[19]. Crowds of people around street vendors can act as an 'eye on the street' in urban spaces,

which psychologically will create a sense of security for the people [11], [12], [20]. Activities in the street corridors become a medium to make the street come alive, especially at night [8], [12].

3. Research Method

This study adopted a mixed methods research approach to disclose and analyze the data [21] descriptively. Figure 1 shows the study area, including TAHS, where street vendors dominate. Administratively, TAHS is located on Proklamasi Road, Kwala Bingai Village, Stabat, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Mapping and observation were performed in the case study area to obtain quantitative data, including layout, number of street vendors, type of merchandise, distribution patterns, and presentation [22]. Elements of public space implemented by street vendors were obtained through observations based on comfort and image, access and connection, use and activity, and social variables, along with photo-walking and interviews of the study area [23]. A photographic tour was carried out in the study area to understand the process from construction to closure to gain a comprehensive understanding of how street vendors form temporary spaces and the physical characteristics of creating space-forming elements. Random interviews were conducted with 58 respondents consisting of street vendors and tourists. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain feedback on the variables of the space-forming elements.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Street vendor's profile

Table 1 describes profile data for street vendors in TAHS; there were 58 street vendors. Those aged 26 to 45 were the highest age group at 65.2%. While 81.03% of street vendors are residents. Regarding educational background, most street vendors (67.24%) graduated from high school. Participation time showed that most street vendors (48.27%) had received income from TAHS for more than five years. While 34.48% were dominant in the TAHS range of 1-5 years. The ownership status of street vendors is 48.27%, most of whom are self-owned, 27.58% owned by relatives, and others hold the rest.

Table 1. Summary of street vendors' profile data $\Sigma = 58$

Overview of street vendors' profile data $\Sigma = 58$		
AGE		
12-25 years	16	27.58%
26-45 years	38	65.51%
46-65 years	4	6.91%
ORIGIN & PLACE OF RESIDENCE		
Around Stabat city	47	81.03%
Outside Stabat city	11	18.96%
EDUCATION BACKGROUND		
Primary school	4	6.89%
Junior high school	15	25.86%
Senior high school	39	67.24%
LENGTH OF ENGAGEMENT		
< 1 year	10	17.24%
1 – 5 years	20	34.48%
> 5 years	28	48.27%
BUSINESS OWNERSHIP STATUS		
Own	28	48.27%
Relatives	16	27.58%
Other people	14	24.13%

4.2. Street Vendor Layout Pattern

Based on the observation, various goods offered by street vendors can be categorized into 3 (three): food and drinks, kid's toys, and outdoor playing game. Fig. 2 explains the distribution of street vendors grouped into four zones. Zone A is occupied by street vendors offering outdoor playing games, and zone B, located next to the main road, is occupied by street vendors who provide food and drinks. Meanwhile, zones C and D tend to be mixed zones between food and beverages, toys, and playgrounds. Concerning the way to display the goods, it shows that at least 3 (three) methods existed, i.e., using a mat on the ground, a moveable hawker cart, and a moveable tent. At the same time, 2 (two) layout pattern of street vendors are shown in TAHS, including linear and elongated in zones A, B, and D, while layout pattern zone C tend to form into a grouped grid pattern. The street vendors in TAHS generally can be categorized into two types: static street vendors and mobile street vendors. Stationary street vendors occupy the same space consistently daily for a certain period. Meanwhile, mobile street vendors tend to move around and only sometimes occupy the same area. Static street vendors dominate zone A and C, while mobile street vendors dominate zone B. As for zone D, there is a mixture of fixed and mobile street vendors.

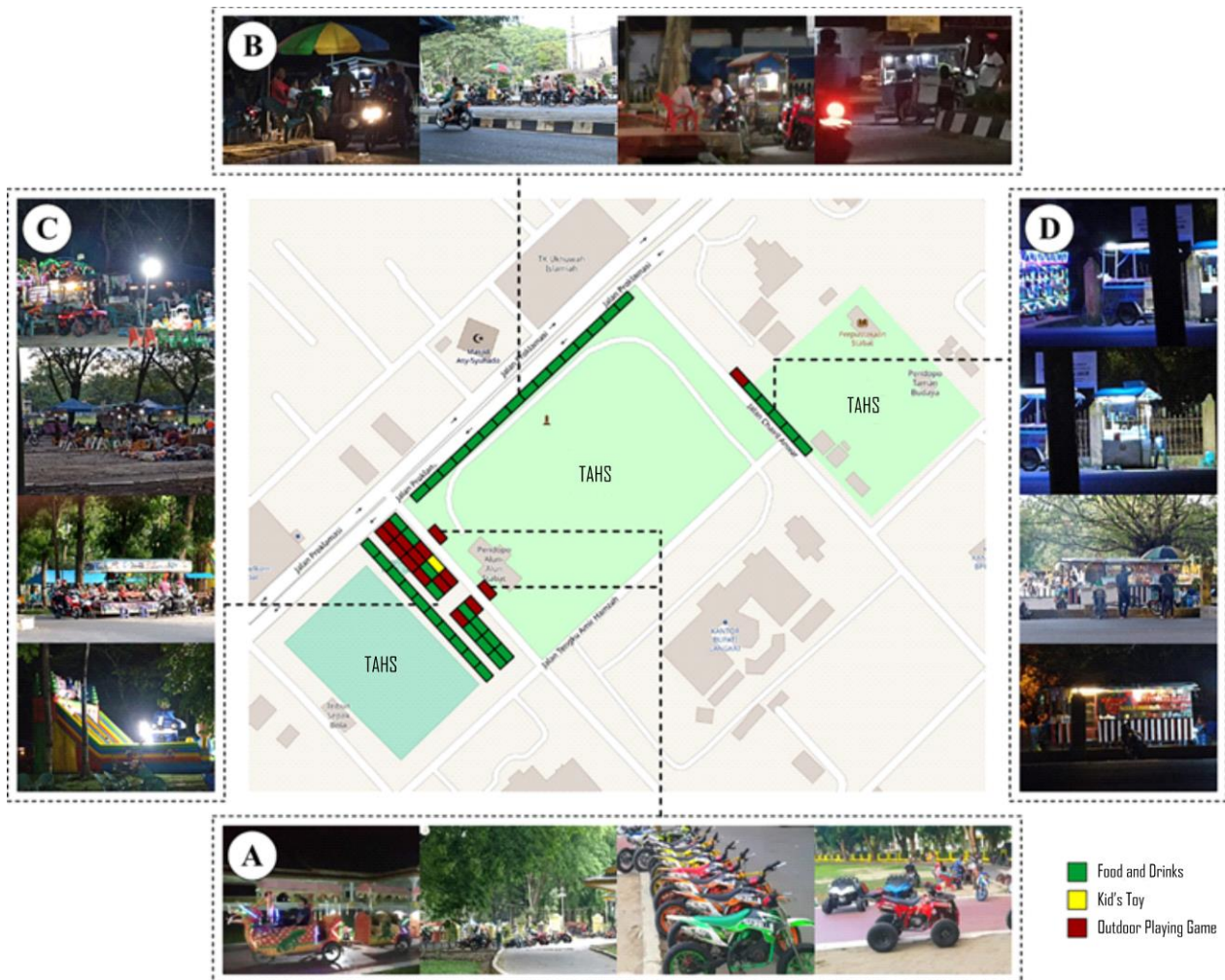


Fig 2. Spatial pattern occupied by street vendors

4.3. Space-Forming Elements Provided by The Street Vendor

4.3.1. Comfort and Image

The physical attributes provided by street vendors generally are movable chairs, movable tables, and moveable tents that existed in zones B, C, and D, which are dominated by food and drinks. This attribute layout is arranged to follow the perimeter of each street vending outlet and is made from simple and inexpensive fabrication materials. Street vendors provide these attributes to provide a sense of comfort for visitors. The massive shaded area produced by the trees around TAHS provides suitable thermal comfort for humans in tropical outdoor spaces. This is the strength of the place, so street vendors add other attributes to enhance the existing shaded area provided by the nature so that the visitors can enjoy the atmosphere more. Interviews with the visitors indicate that they tend to visit and involve in the atmosphere to relax and release stress while enjoying food and drinks in the comfort-shaded area. Some visitors bring their children to TAHS to get the outdoor playing game provided by street vendors, especially in the evening. Mainly, visitors' engagement within this area varies between 30 minutes and 2 hours. However, some visitors highlight the issues regarding the area's need for more aesthetics and cleanliness. The arrangement of tables, chairs, tents, and ways of displaying the goods are considered untidy. Fig 3 provides a visual illustration of the attribute of comfort and the image of the study area.

4.3.2. Access and linkage

The location of street vendors at TAHS is considered strategic because it is situated at the center of Stabat. The direct access to TAHS is through Jalan Proklamasi, which has 24 meters wide, two ways. Four lanes and a pedestrian pathway are provided on both sides (Fig. 4). Another access to the area can be used secondary street that intersects with the main road, including Jalan Chairil Anwar, Jalan Tengku Amir Hamzah, and Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan. TAHS also has a good permeability linkage to the residential areas surrounding the TAHS.



Fig. 3: Attributes of comfort and image in TAHS

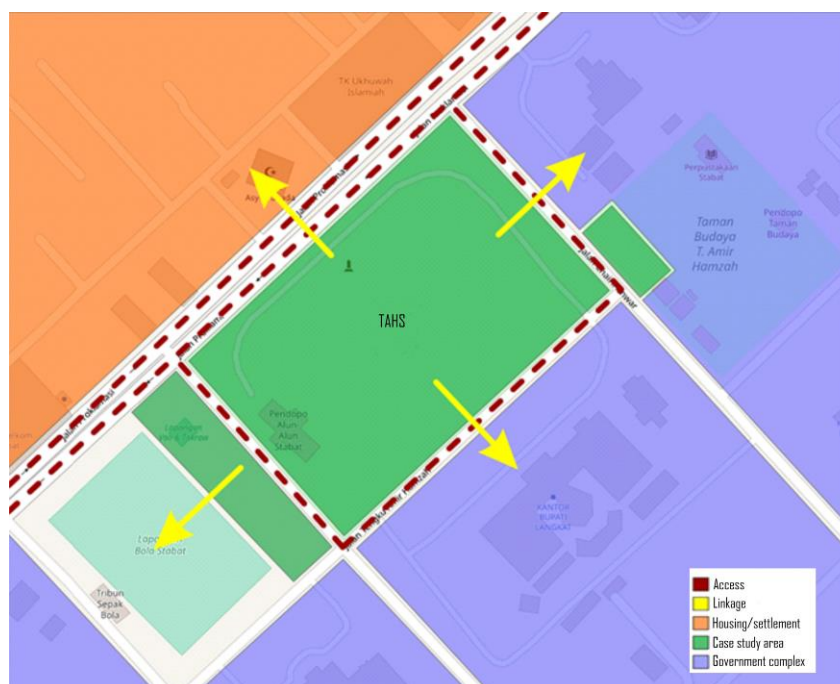


Fig 4. Access and linkage

4.3.3. Uses and Activity

The uses and activities elements in the study area mainly consist of places to eat and drink, play, relax, and recreation. Activities carried out by street vendors take place from 10.00 am to around 10.00 pm. From 10.00 am–1.00 pm, activities are concentrated in zone C which offers snacks and drinks, not many visitors are at this time. Moving on to 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm, the intensity of street vendors starts to increase in zones B, C, and D, and the intensity of visitors also gradually increases. Visitor activities such as eating, drinking, and relaxing in the temporary space provided by street vendors are starting to increase. Playgrounds in zone A has also begun to increase children's activity using them. At 4.00 pm – 7.00 pm, street vendors in zone A dominate with outdoor game activities and ATV/mini cross bike rental begin increases. In zone B, mobile street vendors take place on the pedestrian walkway and visitors are crowding to buy the goods offered. The most prominent and crowd activity is in zones C and D, generally, the activities are the visitors who enjoy food/drinks, while of some parents watching their children playing the available outdoor games. During 7.00 pm – 10.00 pm the most prominent activity is in zone A, visitors who rent ATVs/mini cross bikes observed riding the ATV around the TAHS. Likewise, in zone C the intensity of activities tends to last like the previous period, the colorful lights increasingly show the bustling activity of the people in that place. However, in zones B and D the activities were observed decrease, due to mobile street vendors start to leave from this area. Visitors provide feedback that the lack of lighting in zone D can be a factor causing activity in this area to decrease early at night.



Fig. 5: Various daily activities conducted starting from 10.00 am until 10.00 pm.

4.3.4. Sociability

Elements of sociability can be seen from the ability of the temporary space provided by street vendors to accommodate social activities, such as meeting with friends, interacting with other people, and gathering with family. At zone A, the social activity that observed is interaction between children and their parents. Then at zone B and D, the most activity that captured is meeting with friends. Whereas at zone C, gathering with family is the main activity founded. Street vendors can accommodate this social activity conducted because of the variety of goods offered with cheaper prices, and the sense of comfort and security that visitors can feel.

4.4. Discussion

Findings indicate that the characteristics of street vendors in this area were dominated by street vendors who offer food and drinks using hawker carts as their display booth. They also provide additional physical attributes such as tables, chairs, and tents. The layout pattern of street vendors can be categorized into two patterns, linear and grid grouped. Static street vendors dominate zones A and C, as well as a small number in zone D. Meanwhile, mobile street vendors dominate zone B, and some occupy zone D.

The domination of street vendors in TAHS occurs informally initiated by the people due to different reasons, generally is to earn income. In terms of the physical quality of urban space, the domination of public space by street vendors can create conflicts between space users [5], [24]. However, this opinion did not occur at TAHS, the existence of street vendor is not considered as source of conflict by the users. From the interviews indicate that the user mostly did not feel disturbed by the presence of informal street vendors, instead, they chose to negotiate with the phenomenon that occurred and make it an attraction in the public space. On the other hand, street vendor activities that last until 10.00 pm can provide a sense of security to space users due to the presence of other people in public spaces as eyes on the street (ref). The intensity and continuity of human activity in public spaces will affect the sense of security and safety for its users [6], [15].

Street vendors in the study area creatively create temporary spaces pragmatically by using simple techniques and materials, consistent, and committed to sustaining these activities. The results of the observations reveal that additional physical attributes such as tables, chairs, and tents are provided and arranged instinctively by ordinary people. This simple physical attribute is an important element to provide a comfortable atmosphere, blending with the activities offered which become an image in the area. The strategic location and fluent permeability to and from TAHS have made this potential street vendor attraction become popular for the locals. The activity that is created in this area act as a generator of activity, especially at night which attracts people to come and walk through the existing street vendor outlets [24]. The intensity of visitors tends to crowd from 7 pm to 10 pm, especially on weekends, these phenomena indicate as characteristic of the livability of a place that contributes to the livability of a city.

The domination of street vendors also drives urban economic and social aspects. Most of the vendor were local residence and relied on the location to earn their income. From the interviews, it was founded that some street vendor operators have other sources of income but not enough to sufficient their daily needs. Transactions between sellers and buyers can be forming social interactions between the two actors bangkok[24]. It was found that the flexible price that can be bargained and negotiated to obtain a price agreement are the characteristics of social attachment between them. On the other hand, the friendliness and openness of the attitude of the street vendor operator become an attraction for customers which accumulates into customer loyalty. This is following the opinion that social attachment in a place can be formed because of the accumulated intensity of interaction among people in a certain period [16], [25].

5. Conclusion

The street vendors case study is located in a city in a developing country. The current impression is that the area controlled by street vendors is irregular, which is considered to disturb the physical existence of urban space [16]. The studies conducted, show that street vendors can

have a positive impact on city life, especially at night. The existence of street vendors which lasted for about twelve (12) hours from morning to midnight has played a role as a generator for regional activities. The crowd that is created then gives a psychological effect to the emergence of a sense of security and safety for users because of the presence of other people (eyes on the street) in the open spaces of the city. From an economic standpoint, place dependencies are formed especially for traders to fulfill their daily needs. Economic transactions that occur in parallel also create interactions between the actors involved, developing social interaction. Overall, it was revealed that the phenomenon of street vendors in the research area has positive implications for city life.

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