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## **ROLES OF URBAN PERIODIC MARKETS IN DRIVING THE LOCAL ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY FROM THE MERCHANTS' PERSPECTIVE IN BANGKOK METROPOLIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to reveal how periodic markets in the Bangkok Metropolis promote the local economy as well as local entrepreneurs. The periodic market at Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) on Asokemontri Road, located in a Central Business District in Bangkok, was chosen as a case study. Questionnaire administration was the main technique in this research project. The questionnaire was conducted via a face-to-face interview with 250 respondents, who were running their business in the SWU periodic market. Results from this research can be discussed in three aspects. First, the operational pattern in the SWU periodic market brings about economic benefits not only for the merchants, but also for those working as store assistants or labourers in the market. Second, the key success for an urban periodic market is location. The good location of a market place draws a great number of consumers. As a result, many entrepreneurs want to run their businesses in the market as well. Third, the impact of the periodic market is discussed in this research in order to seek a plan to solve problems that stemmed from the market.

**Keywords:** Periodic market, local economy, local entrepreneurs, Bangkok metropolis

### **INTRODUCTION**

Retailing is an economic activity that has emerged in human society since the post-industrial revolution era. This tertiary activity has gradually become one of the most important activities that drive economy and society. In terms of space, this activity is normally seen in markets in an urban area. The market is the place where goods and services are bought and sold; this includes any convenient arrangement whereby people can buy and sell goods, services and factors of production, and is therefore not a particular site (Mayhew, 2004). However, retailing can be classified in many ways, such as traditional retailing and modern retailing, or the informal retail sector and the formal retail sector.

Based on the International Labor Organization, three types of informal retailing can be identified: (i) "owner-employers of micro-enterprises"; (ii) "own-account workers"; and (iii) "paid or unpaid family workers" (Warunsiri, 2011). Chalamwong and Meepien (2013, p. 9) address the role of informal retailing in Thailand, saying that "the informal sector in Thailand is very dynamic; many new jobs are created and the distribution of this sector is also very high compared with other sectors. The view of many studies is that this sector plays a very important role in Thai society." In addition, Bangkok is the capital city as well as the major economic venue of Thailand. Due to its large number of population, Bangkok is a major venue for retail businesses in both the formal and informal sectors. Thus, this study aims to reveal how periodic markets in the Bangkok Metropolis promote the local economy as well as local entrepreneurs.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Retail geography is a major field that studies the interaction of retail activities in a particular area. Wrigley (2009) explains that retail geography focuses on two aspects. First, the “orthodox” study approach focuses on the interrelations between the spatial patterns of retail location and organisation, on the one hand, and the geography of consumer behaviour on the other. Second, the new retail geography, which is characterised by theoretical engagement and by the appreciation that the transformation of retail capital and of its production and consumption spaces, offers some of the most fascinating and challenging areas of study in contemporary human geography. The two study approaches have different orientations. The former approach is interested in the dynamics of retail activity in each area, which might represent an interaction between retail activities and consumers. The dynamics of an urban growth phenomenon (particularly in the Bangkok metropolis) brings about changes in retail activities within the capital city.

The periodic market is one of the informal trading patterns usually seen in developing countries. Wheeler et al. (1998) describe the periodic market as very commonly found in many traditional societies. The term “periodic market” comes from the periodical movement from one place to another, to serve low-mobility and low-density consumers. In Thailand, Chaiboon (2006) explains the development of periodic markets, saying that the markets have existed in Thai communities for decades. A periodic market can be set up on a certain date and time by individual communities. Thus, the consumers in each area will know the operational date and time of their local periodic market. The government officially initiated the first periodic market at Sanam Luang (the Royal Field) in 1948 in order to promote the local economy. However, the location has been moved to the “Chatuchak Periodic Market” since 1982. For seven decades, the periodic market has become part of the market patterns for Thai society. In addition, Chavanavesskul (1997) explains that periodic markets in urban and suburban Bangkok are generally located in highly populated areas. Population density is inversely proportional to the distance from the market centre. In addition, the role of periodic markets in Bangkok is to fulfil the gap of market service areas. Periodic markets might develop into permanent markets in time.

It can be seen that the periodic markets in Bangkok have been evolved over time. Since the Economic Crisis in 1997, periodic markets have been more often considered as a shopping destination for low-order goods categories such as food, household products and basic goods (e.g. clothes). Chaiboon (2006) notes that periodic markets have been increasing in Bangkok’s CBD in order to serve “white collar” consumers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The periodic market at SWU on Asokemontri Road, located in Bangkok’s CBD, was chosen as a case study. This research applied a questionnaire as the main research tool. The main aim of the questionnaire design was to understand merchants’ behaviours and attitudes towards doing business in the urban periodic market. The questionnaire consists of three sections.

The first involves demographic data. This section was designed to understand the demographic characteristics of local entrepreneurs in an urban periodic market.

The second relates to the operational characteristics in an urban periodic market. This section explains the operational patterns of merchants in the urban periodic market such as distribution of merchants’ journey from their place of residence to the periodic market, mode of transport, average journey time, type of selling products and operational costs in the periodic market.

The third deals with merchants’ attitudes towards an urban periodic market. It consists of three major factors: location and physical characters, the urban periodic market management, and roles of the urban periodic market towards urban lifestyles.

This research selected the SWU periodic market as a case study. The SWU periodic market can represent an urban periodic market in three aspects. First, the market is located in one of Bangkok's CBDs, where habitants of the area are office workers, university students and staff, as well as expats. Second, the market operates at a certain time of the week: every Tuesday and Thursday in the morning until afternoon. Third, the market is well-known for consumers in terms of the variety of the products and the large service area.

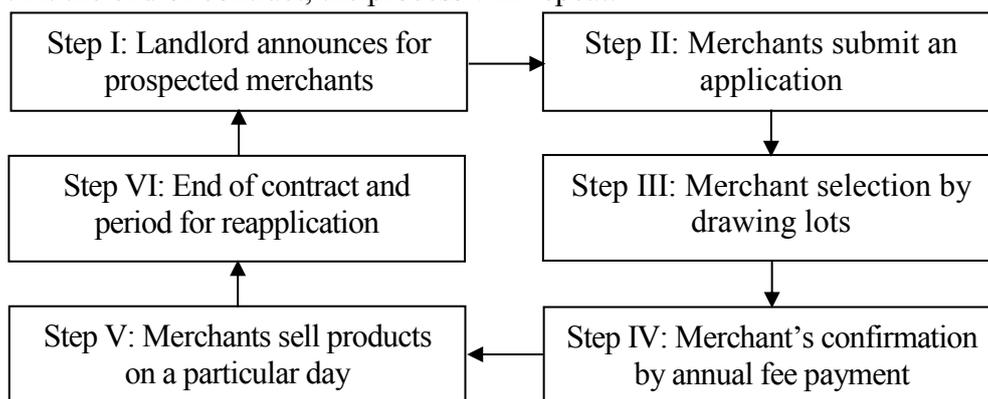
The questionnaire was administered to 250 respondents who were operating their businesses in the SWU periodic market. A face-to-face interview was applied to all merchants in the SWU periodic market on the survey date. Then, the questionnaire was decoded by using the SPSS programme. The statistical data from the programme were interpreted in three sections according to the questionnaire. The first section and second section were interpreted by using a prominent percentage of each variable. The third section, which relates to merchants' attitudes, was categorised by level of attitude. Then, conclusions were drawn.

## RESULTS

### 1. Characteristics of the SWU periodic market and its merchants

#### 1.1 Process of merchant selection

Meksangsouy (2016) explains the process of merchant selection at the SWU periodic market as having six steps (as seen in Fig. 1). It shows that the urban periodic market has a systematic procedure for merchant selection in order to be fair to all applicants wanting to operate business in the market place. All selected merchants have the right to do business on certain days for one year. At the end of contract, the process will repeat.



**Figure 1: Process of merchant selection in the SWU periodic market**

*Source: Meksangsouy (2016)*

The number of shops and types of selling products in the SWU periodic market are determined by the SWU regulation for periodic markets, which is operated by the SWU properties management division. The SWU periodic market operates every Tuesday and Thursday from 6am to 3pm. The market consists of 250 shops (Table 1).

**Table 1: Types of goods and products in a periodic market at SWU**

| Categories    | Number of shops | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| Miscellaneous | 81              | 32.40      |
| Cloths        | 76              | 30.40      |
| Food          | 76              | 30.40      |
| Fruits        | 15              | 6.00       |
| Tree plant    | 2               | 0.80       |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>250</b>      | <b>100</b> |

Meksangsouy (2016) discusses that the periodic market sells products in a wide range from low-order goods (e.g. food, fruits) to medium-order goods (e.g. clothes, body care products, household products).

### **1.2 Merchants' characteristics at the SWU Periodic Market**

As can be seen from the survey (Table 2), the majority of merchants at the SWU periodic market are women (68%). About one third of all merchants are between 41 and 50 years old; 63.90% of all respondents are married. Almost 30% of all merchants hold a Bachelor's degree. About 70% of all merchants have a single family and 37.90% of all merchants have family members of between four and five people. In addition, the survey shows that 78.70% of all respondents live in house/townhouse, while almost three-quarters of all respondents (73.40%) live in their own house.

**Table 2: Prominent demographic characteristics of respondents in the periodic market at SWU**

|                                                                    |                      | (N=250)           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Demographic Characteristics</b>                                 |                      | <b>Percentage</b> |
| ▪ <b>Gender</b>                                                    | Female               | 68.00             |
| ▪ <b>Age</b>                                                       | 41–50                | 32.00             |
| ▪ <b>Marital status</b>                                            | Married              | 63.90             |
| ▪ <b>Educational level</b>                                         | Bachelor's Degree    | 29.60             |
| ▪ <b>Family type</b>                                               | Single family        | 70.40             |
| ▪ <b>Family members</b>                                            | 4–5 people           | 37.90             |
| ▪ <b>Type of accommodation</b>                                     | House/Townhouse      | 78.70             |
| ▪ <b>House ownership</b>                                           | Own house            | 73.40             |
| ▪ <b>Average monthly income</b>                                    | More than THB 45,001 | 32.50             |
| ▪ <b>Proportion of income derived from the SWU Periodic market</b> | 30–50%               | 34.70             |
|                                                                    | More than 50%        | 29.20             |

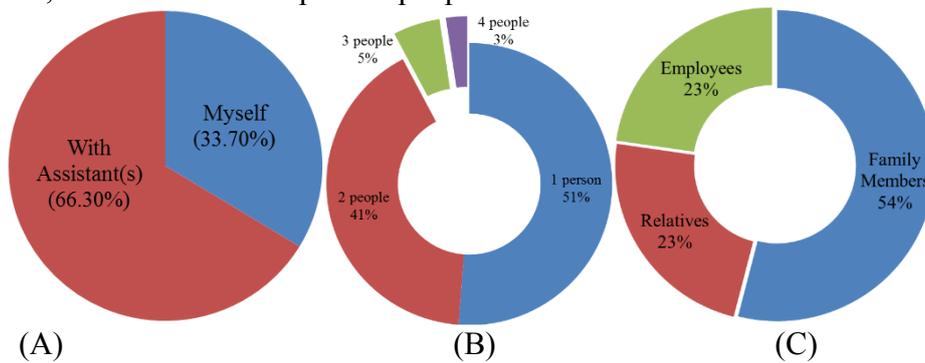
The economic aspect shows that about one-third of all merchants have an average monthly income greater than Thai Baht 45,001 (about GBP 1,000). In addition, it is found that almost 30% of all the respondents acquire half of their average monthly income or above from doing business in the SWU periodic market, while another one third of respondents receive between 30 and 50% of their average monthly income from the market. It can be then said that the SWU periodic market supports local entrepreneurs.

## **2. Merchants' Operational Patterns at the SWU Periodic Market**

### **2.1 Operational patterns at the SWU periodic market**

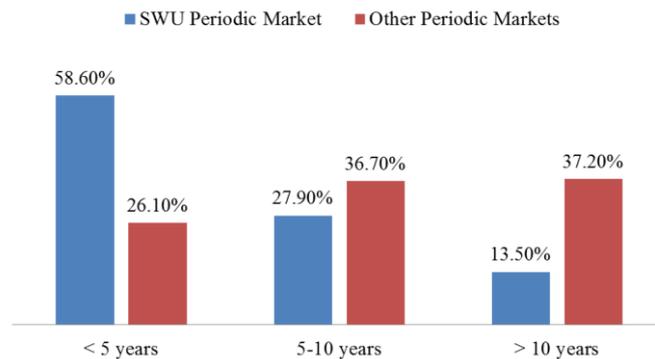
Figure 2A represents staff who are involved in the businesses in the SWU periodic market. It shows that the SWU periodic market involves many people. About two thirds of all merchants have assistants to help them to operate their businesses. Half of the merchants need one person to assist, and 41% need two staff to run the business (Figure 2B). However, it is found that

about half of the store assistants in the SWU periodic are the merchants’ family members – about a quarter of all merchants (23 percent) are relatives, while the rest are employees (Figure 2C). These figures show that the periodic market brings about economic benefits not only to the merchants, but to the other important people in the business.



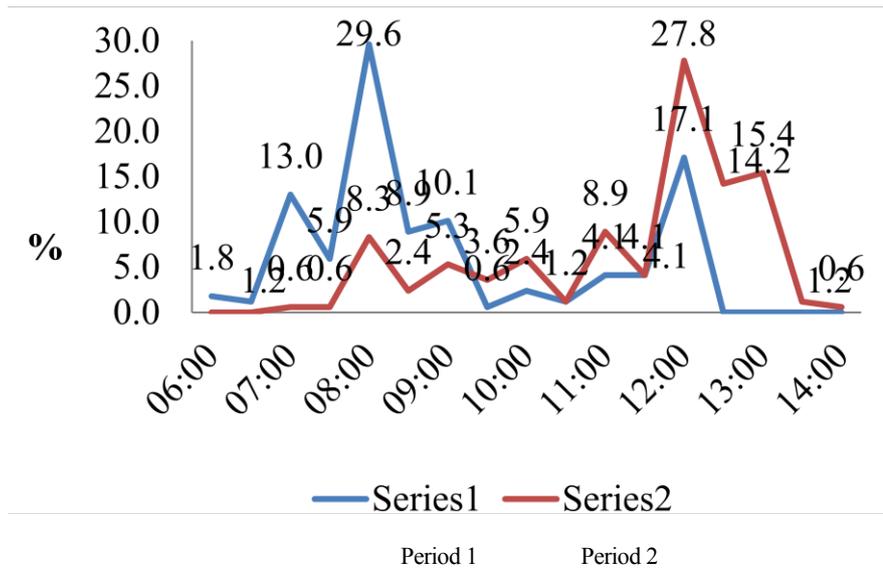
**Figure 2: Merchants’ operational patterns**

In terms of the merchants’ experience in operating business in urban periodic markets, it is found that the periodic market is open to both new and experienced entrepreneurs. Figure 3 shows that more than half of the merchants in the SWU periodic market (58.60%) are new entrepreneurs, who have less than five years of experience, whereas about a quarter of them have been operating business in the market between for between five and 10 years. The experienced merchants at the SWU market are at 13.50%. It can be inferred that the SWU periodic market applies an “open door” policy for all merchants.



**Figure 3: Merchants’ experience in operation in the SWU periodic market and other periodic markets**

Furthermore, the landlord has set an operation time for the periodic market from 6am to 3pm. However, from the survey it is found selling products at the SWU market consists of two periods of primetime. The first primetime is indicated by the merchants at 8–9am (about 50%), while the second primetime is at 12am–1pm (57.40%). These two primetime periods should represent the meal times of consumers, who are office employees, university staff and students, and dwellers from neighbouring areas.



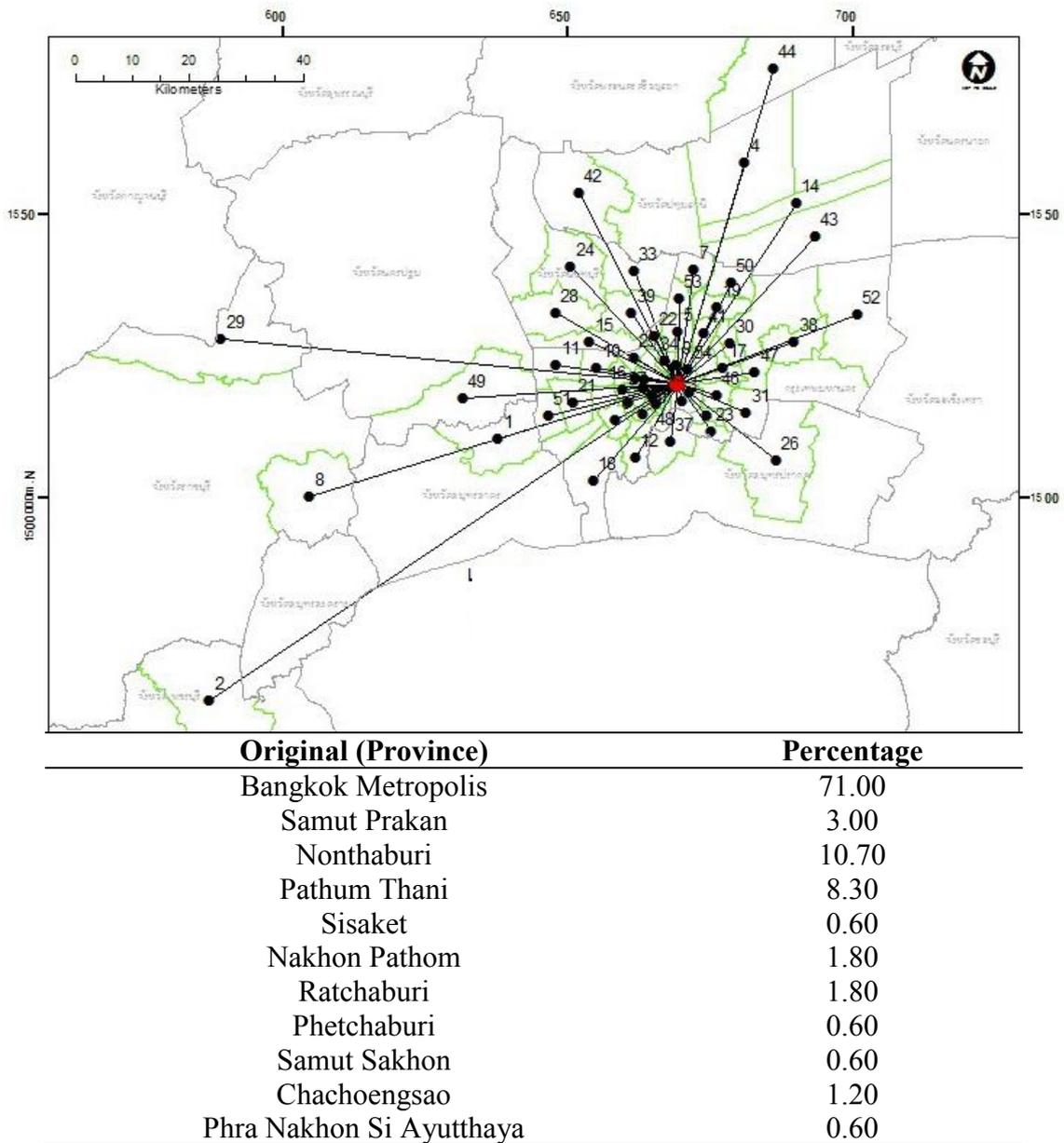
**Figure 4: Primetime for selling goods at the SWU periodic market**

**2.2 Merchants’ journey patterns**

As can be seen from Table 3 and Figure 5, it has been found that most of the respondents (93%) travel from somewhere in Bangkok Metropolis and the vicinity (Samut Prakan, Nonthaburi, and Pratum Thani) to the SWU periodic market. The maximum distance travelled to the market is 99.22 kilometres and the minimum distance is 2.48 kilometres. The average distance of merchants travelling to the SWU periodic market is 20.43 kilometres. These journey patterns show the urban periodic market’s attraction to the merchants. Even though some of the merchants have to travel almost 100 kilometres for only a nine-hour business operation at the market, they are still willing to do so.

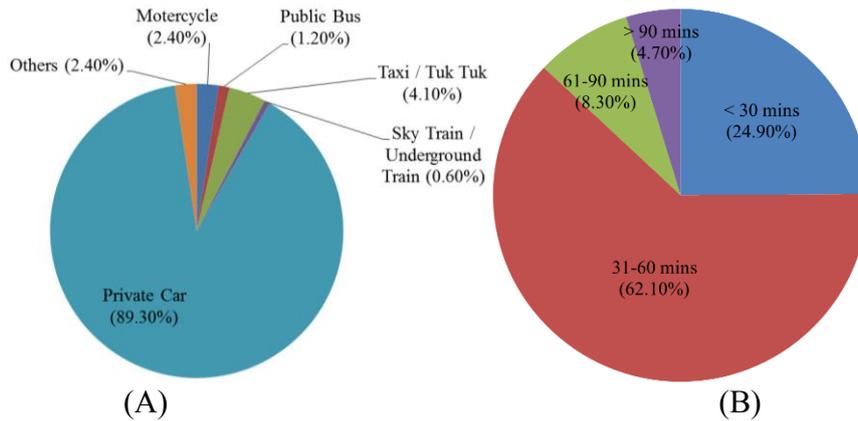
**Table 3: Merchants’ travel distance between original and the SWU market**

| Distance                                                      | Euclidean distance (km) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Maximum distance<br>(Khao Yoi District, Phetchaburi Province) | 99.22                   |
| Minimum distance<br>(Wattana district, Bangkok Metropolis)    | 2.48                    |
| Average distance                                              | 20.43                   |



**Figure 5: Breakdown of the distribution of merchants’ journey between origins and the SWU periodic market**

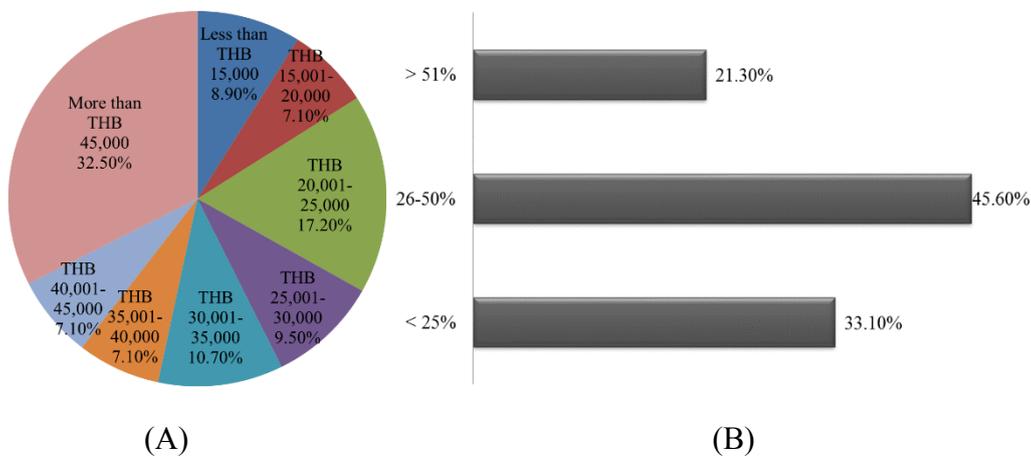
For the transport mode and journey time to the SWU periodic market, it is found that almost 90% of merchants at the market rely on a private car for travelling to the market (Figure 6A). 61.20% of merchants spent between 31 and 60 minutes travelling to the market, while a quarter of them spent less than 30 minutes doing so (Figure 6B). From the fieldwork, it was found that most of the merchants choose to travel to the market by car because they need to carry all of their goods for sale to the market. The market also provides rented parking space on the day they operate their business. In addition, about three-quarters of all the merchants spent less than an hour travelling to the market because they have to set up shops in the early morning (before 6am) in order to get ready to operate shops around 6–7am. The journey time to the market is not yet in rush hour in Bangkok.



**Figure 6: (A) Mode of transport, and (B) Journey time between origin and the SWU periodic market**

**2.3 Merchants' income**

According to the survey, it is found that almost one-third of all the respondents received a revenue of more than 45,000 Thai Baht per month from business operation in periodic markets. About a quarter of them have got a monthly income between 30,000 and 45,000 Thai Baht (Figure 7A). In addition, the survey also shows that 21.30% of merchants from the SWU periodic market have got more than 51% of their revenues from the SWU periodic market, while 45.60% of them have got between 26 and 50% of their income from the SWU periodic market. The remainder have obtained less than 25% of their income from the SWU periodic market (Figure 7B).



**Figure 7: (A) Merchants' monthly income from selling products in periodic markets; (B) income proportion derived from the SWU periodic market**

From these figures it is clear that periodic markets are the place to drive local economy in terms of support merchants to have a place for doing business. However, from the fieldwork also found that the periodic market supports local economy not only for the merchants in the market, but also for the labourers and related staff. For instance, a merchant will pay about THB 800–900 every business day. This economic distribution will go to the landlord, laborers and related staff (Table 4). As seen from Figure 8, labourers who work to set up and clear out the market place, courier merchants' products from the market to the loading area, and the cleaning staff, have got paid from the merchants every operation day.

**Table 4: Sample of an economic distribution per operation day at the SWU periodic market**

| Lists                     | Amount (Thai Bath)                               | Receivers |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Annual administration fee | 7,500                                            | landlord  |
| Shop rent fee             | 500                                              | landlord  |
| Dairy parking fee         | 100                                              | landlord  |
| Stall (tent) assembly fee | 120–140                                          | labourers |
| Courier's fee             | Depend on agreement but in average about THB 100 | labourers |

**Figure 8: Labourers and related staff having economic benefits from the periodic markets**

### 3. Merchants' Attitude towards Store Operations at the SWU Periodic Market

This research discusses the merchants' attitude towards store operation at the SWU periodic market in three topics: location and physical characteristics; market administration; and attitude of the urban periodic market towards urban lifestyle.

#### 3.1 The Attitude towards the Market's Location and its Physical Characteristics

Table 5 presents the merchants' attitudes towards the market's location and its physical characteristic factors. Overall, it is found that this aspect is ranked the highest ( $\bar{x} = 4.05$ ). According to the survey, it can be inferred that the location is a key success factor for operating business at the periodic market. Results from the survey show that good location for customers to do shopping is placed highest ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ ) of all kinds, followed by good location as place of high purchasing power consumers ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ ), easy to access for customers to buy products in the market ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ ), and easy to access for business operation ( $\bar{x} = 4.08$ ).

**Table 5: Merchants' attitude towards the location of the SWU periodic market and its physical characteristics**

| Variables                                                    | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Level of Attitude |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Location and Physical Characteristic Factors</b>          | <b>4.05</b> | <b>0.79</b> | <b>high</b>       |
| ▪ Easy to access for business operation                      | 4.08        | 0.76        | high              |
| ▪ Easy to access for customers to buy products in the market | 4.20        | 0.71        | high              |
| ▪ Good location for customers to do shopping                 | 4.30        | 0.65        | highest           |
| ▪ Good location as place of high purchasing power consumers  | 4.24        | 0.74        | highest           |

### 3.2 The Attitude towards the Market Administration

Table 6 shows merchants' attitude towards an administration of the SWU periodic market. It is found that this variable is taken into account by respondents at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 3.83$ ). This aspect shows that administration and management within the market are taken into account by merchants to select the market place for their business. From the survey, it is found that suitable business time operation factor is placed on the highest level ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ ) from this category. The second is suitable of store's size and its construction ( $\bar{x} = 4.06$ ), and well-organised shops according to product category ( $\bar{x} = 4.01$ ) is at the third place. Because of the prime location of the SWU periodic market as well as the long experience of market's administration of the landlord, the SWU market is quite successful in its space management, particularly in the physical aspect.

**Table 6: Merchants' attitudes towards the administration of the SWU periodic market**

| Variables                                            | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Level of Attitude |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Market Administration Factor</b>                  | <b>3.83</b> | <b>0.75</b> | <b>high</b>       |
| ▪ Fair regulations from the tenant for all merchants | 3.83        | 0.74        | high              |
| ▪ Suitable of business time operation                | 4.07        | 0.71        | high              |
| ▪ Fair system for store's selection                  | 3.92        | 0.95        | high              |
| ▪ Suitable of rent fee                               | 3.79        | 0.82        | high              |
| ▪ Well-organised shops according to product category | 4.01        | 0.74        | high              |
| ▪ Suitable of store's size and its construction      | 4.06        | 0.67        | high              |
| ▪ Suitable of loading area                           | 3.76        | 0.94        | high              |
| ▪ Good management of properties security scheme      | 3.82        | 0.90        | high              |

However, from the survey it is also found the bottom three attitudes towards this category are: suitable loading area ( $\bar{x} = 3.76$ ), suitable rent fee ( $\bar{x} = 3.79$ ), and good management of properties security scheme ( $\bar{x} = 3.82$ ). These factors show that the SWU periodic market is located in a prime location, one surrounded by office buildings and residential buildings. Thus, the SWU periodic market has a higher rent fee than the other periodic markets in the same area. In addition, it is found that all merchants in the SWU periodic market start and finish at the same time. Thus, the parking spaces for off-loading and loading areas cannot accommodate all the merchants. Last, the SWU market serves a lot of customers in the area, particularly in the morning and lunchtime (as discussed in topic 2.1 above). Therefore, a lot of consumers in the market sometime bring about security problems (particularly pickpocketing).

### 3.3 Attitudes towards the Periodic Market in Relation to Urban Lifestyle

Table 7 presents the merchants' attitudes towards the periodic market in relation to urban lifestyle. It shows that this aspect is considered at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 3.49$ ). Taking the role of the periodic market in relation to urban lifestyle into account, the result shows that the respondents from the SWU periodic market strongly agree with this aspect. Two variables from this aspect have been addressed from respondents at the highest level. They are "the periodic market supports lively community in the area" ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ ) and "the periodic market become a major market place for local" ( $\bar{x} = 4.22$ ). In addition, the respondents also state advantages of the periodic market as high level in many aspects as follows: the periodic markets help consumers to have more alternative shopping places ( $\bar{x} = 4.18$ ), periodic markets lift the

quality of life as well as support the local economy ( $\bar{x} = 4.09$ ), periodic markets bring about an increase in job positions ( $\bar{x} = 4.04$ ). Therefore, these variables support the important role of the urban periodic market in relation to urban lifestyle as well as driving local economy.

**Table 7: Merchants' attitude towards the SWU periodic market in relation to urban lifestyle**

| Variables                                                                                   | $\bar{x}$   | S.D.        | Level of Attitude |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>Attitude of the Urban Periodic Market towards Urban Lifestyle</b>                        | <b>3.49</b> | <b>0.71</b> | <b>high</b>       |
| ▪ Periodic markets lift the quality of life as well as support local economy                | 4.09        | 0.71        | high              |
| ▪ Periodic markets bring about an increase in job positions (e.g. laborers)                 | 4.04        | 0.70        | high              |
| ▪ Periodic markets help consumers to have more alternative shopping places                  | 4.18        | 0.59        | high              |
| ▪ Periodic markets become a major market place for local                                    | 4.22        | 0.67        | highest           |
| ▪ Periodic markets support lively community in the area                                     | 4.24        | 0.73        | highest           |
| ▪ Periodic market cause chaos to the surrounding area                                       | 3.11        | 1.16        | moderate          |
| ▪ Periodic markets result in traffic problem to the area                                    | 3.05        | 1.15        | moderate          |
| ▪ Periodic markets cause waste problem in the area                                          | 2.82        | 1.21        | moderate          |
| ▪ Periodic markets result in an increasing of road accidents                                | 2.62        | 1.21        | moderate          |
| ▪ Periodic markets deliver criminal problems (e.g. pickpockets, snatch thieves) to the area | 2.71        | 1.21        | moderate          |

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research shows the important role of a periodic market in an urban area in relation to local economy in three aspects as follows:

The first is benefits of periodic markets in urban areas. Periodic markets in Bangkok bring about advantages not only to local entrepreneurs, but also to staff and labourers who are related to the market operation. The results show that the merchants are willing to pay a higher rate of administration fee in order to sell products in the SWU periodic market in view of the high purchasing power of consumers in the area. The administration fees are circulated to the other sectors such as labourers and related staff. In addition, urban periodic markets bring about vibrant dynamics in the market centre as well as the surrounding areas. People from surrounding areas come to the market not only for shopping, but also to relax from their routine work or daily life (Soontharotoke, 2006; Marasu and Badenoch, 2013; Meksangsouy, 2016).

Second, location is also a success key. Section 3.1 shows that merchants in the SWU periodic market have a strong agreement with the location variable. It is found that this market is located in a prime location, which gathers together a lot of consumers from various groups such as students and university staff, students' parents, housemaids and white-collar workers from the surrounding areas. According to the survey, some merchants point out that even though the SWU periodic market has a higher fixed payment rate (as seen from Table 4) than the other periodic markets in Bangkok, merchants are still willing to operate their businesses in this market due to the prime location, attraction to consumers, and the variety of consumer classes. At the same time, Meksangsouy (2016) reports that consumers go shopping in the periodic market because of the good location and easy access. Therefore, this research shows that good location is the key success factor for a periodic market.

The third is the impact of periodic markets on the area and society. The impact can be discussed in two aspects; positive and negative. The former involves driving local economy and changing spatial functions. Merchants' attitudes from the survey show that the periodic

market lifts their quality of life and supports the local economy. Thus, the periodic market has a role in driving the local economy. According to Warunsiri (2011) and Chalamwong and Meepien (2013), the informal sector has played a significant role in supporting the Thai labour market. In addition, it is found that the spatial function benefits the periodic market in order to maximise profits from the area. Moreover, periodic markets also have a function as relaxing and consuming space for the public (Soontharotoke, 2006; Meksangsouy, 2016). On the other hand, the periodic markets may cause some problems to the area (e.g. traffic congestion, pickpocketing, an increase in solid waste). From the fieldwork, some of merchants in the market pointed out that they had heard about the pickpocket problem in the market, particularly at the midday period, when the market is crowded with consumers. After the market operation, solid waste (e.g. plastic bags, food containers) can be found throughout the area. Thus, the market administrators have to take these problems into account and work out solutions to reduce the problems. For example, they may increase more security staff to patrol throughout the market at a peak time or promote a “green shopper scheme” in order to reduce solid waste.

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