

## Informal Economy: Case Study of Street Vendors in Bangkok

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**Abstract :** Street vending is one of the informal economy activities which considered significance to Thai people in the economic and the day-to-day social life. It had been believed that the street vendor is a group of the poor and uneducated people. With the increasing numbers of the street vendor occupying space on public sidewalks especially in central business districts, it becomes unclear whether street vending continues as a solution to unemployment for access labors. This research attempts to study and analyze types of street vendors in Bangkok under the informal economy framework. The debate on the heterogeneous informal economy has categorized into four schools; the dualism, the structuralism, the legalism and the voluntarism. The examination also embodies with market concept with Porter's Five Forces of Competitive Position Model analysis and the interviews with the street vendors in three case study areas: Inner zone (Pathumwan district - the sidewalk on the opposite side of Siam Paragon mall), Middle zone (Ramkhamhaeng district - the sidewalk on the opposite side of Ramkhamhaeng University) and Outer zone (Minburi district- the sidewalk of Sriburanukit Road). The result indicates that most of street vendors in Siam square are voluntarily choose to make a living in vending on a sidewalk and tend to take it as a long-term occupation even though they can be in formal wage employment. Moreover, average income and positive attitude towards self-employed are the important factors that drive them to operate street vending businesses. Meanwhile, street vending is often a family enterprise in Ramkhamhaeng area and most vendors do not wish to transform their businesses into the formal sectors. Whereas the survey conducted in Sriburankit Road reveals that almost all of street vendors migrated from other provinces and were previously paid as the unskilled workers in formal sectors. They moved to informal trades because of the uncertainty of employment in the mainstream sectors and the inconsistent income with knowledge support of friends and relatives from the same hometown. In particular, the result reveals a common pattern that street vending is the very first occupation of some group of vendors and they will continue to engage in this activity. Thus, it is important for the government to design optimal policy which not only integrating informal workers into the formal economy but also monitoring the enforcement of regulations on the modern informal economy.

**Keywords :** informal economy, sidewalks, street vendors, occupation

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