

Toward Preservation of the Traditional Marketplace: A Preference Study of Traditional and Modern Shopping Environments in Bangkok, Thailand

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Design and Planning

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February 21, 2002
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Preservation, Traditional Marketplace, Preference, Perception, Shopping Environments, Bangkok, Thailand

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(Abstract)

The objectives of this dissertation are to: 1) identify the aspects of shopping environments that are important to people; and 2) identify strategies to maintain the cultural relevance and viability of traditional marketplaces in the new global economy. This dissertation uses a Content Identifying Methodology (CIM) to determine preferences of general Thai shoppers for different shopping environments in Bangkok, Thailand. The procedures include preference rating, scene description, and respondents' background surveys. Data were analyzed using factor analysis, content analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), canonical correlation analysis, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). In addition, interviews with designers and developers of shopping environments are used to establish implications for future development, design, and renovation of shopping environments.

Three major factors, environmental, shopping, and background, were found to influence preferences for shopping environments. The environmental factors include the perceived environmental types; spacious and well-organized spatial configurations; physical content, such as fresh products, vegetation, and sitting areas; and environmental conditions, such as maintenance level, crowdedness, and cool temperatures. Shopping factors include recreational and value shopping. Respondent's background factors include shopping behaviors and socio-economic backgrounds, such as age and household economic status.

Shoppers prefer certain shopping environments based on their shopping purpose: recreational versus value shopping. Recreational shopping appeals to young, single, and big group shoppers at modern malls, which provide the most opportunities for exploring, recreating, and socializing. Value shopping appeals to older, married, and large family shoppers at traditional markets that offer the high quality fresh products at low price.

The dissertation's findings are consistent with previous studies and support theoretical explanations in the environmental perception and assessment field. Coherence, complexity, legibility, and mystery, and the concept of affordance influence preference; and are useful in making recommendations. The results indicate that, by identifying the preferences and perceptions of Thai shoppers, it is possible to preserve important aspects of the traditional Thai marketplace. This is achieved by incorporating aspects of traditional Thai markets into new shopping environments; and enhancing existing traditional markets to give them broader appeal and make them more viable in today's economy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all the contributions from the following individuals. Without their help and support, this dissertation would not have been completed.

To begin with, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dear parents for their unconditional love and unlimited support. Thanks also to my brother and sister-in-law for their help and moral support.

My special thanks go to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Patrick A. Miller for all his guidance and contribution to my research from the very first day we met until the end. Additional thanks go to my committee members, Dr. Robert G. Dyck, Dr. Edward H. Sewell, Dr. James R. Bohland, and Dr. James E. Littlefield for all their support and advice throughout my entire doctoral study.

My thanks also go to families and friends in Thailand who provided additional help in the data collection process. Without their assistance and favors, I could not have done it. Special thanks go to Jirapun and Pornprapa Paowarut for the several big favors they provided. Thanks to all the interviewees and respondents who participated in the interviews and survey as well as those who granted their permissions for every process of data collection. Thanks also to those who helped establish the connections that made everything possible.

Thanks to those who have made my gloomy days in Blacksburg bearable and occasionally pleasant. Thanks to friends from EDP Studio for their suggestions, comments, companionships, friendship, and moral support. Thanks to Thai students at Virginia Tech for the homelike friendships in Blacksburg. Not to forget, this portion of my education would not be possible without the support from the Thai Government and the Environmental Design and Planning Program at Virginia Tech by offering this opportunity and provided financial support. Finally, thanks to all the teachers who have taught me from the very first lessons until now. I will always remember their wisdom, kindness, and intellectual contributions.

“Dag is from Toronto, Canada (dual citizenship). Claire is from Los Angeles, California. I, for that matter, am from Portland, Oregon, but where you're from feels sort of irrelevant these days ('Since everyone has the same stores in their mini-malls,' according to my younger brother, Tyler.)”

(Copeland, 1991, p. 4)

“...saving vernacular environments does not involve merely the preservation of actual environments (important as this may be). Nor does it involve merely the documentation of such environments... as such environments increasingly, and ever more rapidly disappear. It also involves the preservation of the lessons and principles that such environments embody—and this is a form of preservation that has not yet really been considered or investigated.”

(Rapoport, 1999, p. 57)

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