

STREET VENDING DYNAMICS ON URBAN ECONOMY OF KISUMU CITY, KENYA

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Abstract

Informal sector is a source of livelihood to many Kenyans but solutions towards their conflict lacking. Providing the informal sector with spaces to trade would integrate it into the urban economy and allow it to perform optimally. The study aims at establishing how spatial and factors affect integration of street vending into the urban economy of Kisumu City. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study established that all vendors used spaces designated for other users and creating land use conflicts. The types of conflicts created include security risks, business competition, congesting of pavement and generation of solid waste. The study concludes that land use conflict created by the street vendors can be resolved to pave way for integration and allocation of space for vending. The study recommends replanning of the city.

Keywords: Spatial, Integration, Informal sector, Street vending.

1.0 Introduction

Muiruri (2010) noted that informal sector consists of those enterprises that operate in open spaces, housed in a temporary or semi structures, does not operate from spaces assigned by government or municipal authorities, operate from backyard and are not registered.

Oyugi (2001) pointed out that the classical theories have been used to explain that the urban land uses are purely based on land rent concept and each parcel of land is sold to the highest bidder. The

informal sector workers being economically disadvantaged cannot bid high for land in Central Business District (CBD) and the alternative is to encroach into private land and open spaces. If the positioning of economic activities is based on pure economic principles, informal workers are destined to be moved to the periphery that attracts low bids. The street vendors being economically rational and having perfect knowledge that markets are good in the CBD will do all that they can to locate in the CBD. Mitullah (2006) corroborated this principle that street vendors position their businesses in urban places with heavy human traffic such as sidewalks, parks, pavements and at prominent corners of streets and roads where traders are visible to pedestrians and motorists. Though street vendors are not the legitimate owners of the spots that they occupy but once they manage to peacefully occupy certain locations for a long time, they somehow become de facto property owners of the urban public spaces. The street vendors' legitimate right to trespass on urban public spaces is justified by the doctrine of necessity. Jeremy (1993) endorsed a distributive principle that nobody should ever be permitted to use force to prevent another from satisfying his or her basic needs in circumstances where there seems to be no other way of satisfying them. In this regard, the callous attitude of urban planners and policy makers towards street vendors may need to be altered and the street vendors' right as an integral part of the urban development scheme recognized.

Critical urban theory that deals with the social and economic problems in urban environment insists that more democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanization is possible, if not suppressed by dominant institutional arrangements, practices and ideologies (Brenner, 2009). The ultimate purpose of critical urban theory is to implement the demand for the Right to the City by those who are excluded from city centre by a class of those who have financial power (Marcuse, 2009). The right to the city is a claim and a banner under which to mobilize one side in the conflict over who should have the benefit of the city.

Statement of the Problem

Informal sector is important to the urban economy of Kenya since it employs 2.4 million people and creating 75 percent of all new jobs (Kenya, Republic of, 2003). In 2001, it was estimated that informal sector employed 215,000 people and created 58 percent of new jobs in Kisumu (World Bank, 2001). In Kisumu 56 percent of street vendors are aged 35 years and under and 68 percent are married women with at least two children. These women rely on street vending to maintain their families (UN-Habitat, 2006). However, informal sector occupy spaces meant for other land users such as roadsides, pavements and parks creating conflicts. The planning authorities focus more on planning and allocating appropriate urban spaces to the formal sector with barely any economic considerations for the spaces allocated to informal sector. The study therefore, wants to find ways of resolving urban land use conflict between informal sector activities and planned urban land users without disadvantaging any of the groups. For this to be done, it is important to establish the spatial patterns of street vending so that the planning authorities can make informed decisions on how to address land use conflicts in the contested spaces and create harmony.

The objective of this study

To establish how spatial and institutional factors affect the integration of street vending into the urban economy of Kisumu City.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study sample consisted of 405 respondents selected from the 2,146 street vendors who operate in Oile Market, Bus-stop, Kenyatta Highway, OgingaOdinga Street, OjinoOkewi Street, Ang'awa Street, Paul Mbuya, Nyamlori and OtienoOyoo Road. City administrators sampled consisted of the Mayor, Town Clerk, Director of Planning, Town Treasurer, Public Health Officer and Town Engineer. Sixty-four members of the public included in the study were obtained through snowballing procedure in the targeted area of study and twenty-seven owners of formal businesses operating in Ang'awa Street, OgingaOdinga Street, Paul Mbuya, OjinoOkewi Street and Kenyatta Highway where the study was carried out.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires were used to collect data from street vendors and owners of formal businesses. Interview was used to collect data from city administrators in charge of urban planning and members of the public

Findings

The interviews with members of the public indicated that street vendors provide them with goods conveniently and they feel vendors can be allowed to occupy the spaces they are currently occupying but the formal business owners on the other hand, reported that street vendors operating in front of their shops should not be assigned or given tenure for the spaces they are currently occupying and they should be relocated from the streets in the CBD. This means that the spaces street vendors occupy are in conflict that needs to be resolved. The conflicts street vendors encounter with other urban space users are related to security risks, business competition, congestion of pavement or road reserve and generation of solid waste. Conflict in each vending zone was surveyed

A survey of the nine streets (Oile Market, Bus-stop, Kenyatta Highway, OgingaOdinga street, OjinoOkewi street, Ang'awa street, Paul Mbuya, Nyamlori and OtienoOyoo Road) in Central Business District of Kisumu City revealed various conflicts associated with the presence of street vendors' in the streets.

In OgingaOdinga street, vending lead to security, competition, congestion and solid waste conflicts. The security conflict in this street is as a result of many banks that are located in it. The security risk cannot be compromised during working hours of the banks. Competition, congestion and solid waste generation are mentioned a number of times as conflict brought about by street vending. This means that it only possible to open the street for vendors at 5.00 p.m. when major the businesses at OgingaOdinga Street have closed for the day. The problem of solid waste generation may be solved by having a code of conduct which the vendors must adhere to. The only possible time when this street may be open to vendors is on Saturdays and Sundays. This can create more space for street vendors to operate.

In OjinoOkewi street, conflict is caused by large number of street vendors who congest the street and cause security concern to other land users. Competition between formal shops and street vendors was recorded the least number of times as a conflict. OjinoOkewi being a back street the competition with formal shops is lower but the vendors hinder the movement of goods into the shops.

Competition and solid waste generation are not a serious problem like security and congestion. Security conflict arises from the fact that most businesses and banks use this street as back entry into the businesses. To have street vendors use this street during day time their numbers have to be regulated through licensing and the rest allowed to operate after 5.00.p.m. to control conflict of congestion in this street. On Saturdays after the major businesses close at 1.00 p. m. conflict of security may not be a problem and on Sunday, the street can be open to vendors.

Ang'awa Street

The main source of conflict between street vendors and formal businesses in Ang'awa Street was found to be congestion and solid waste generation.

Competition is not a source of conflict in this street. Security risks and solid waste generation are mild problems that can be solved by vigilance of security personnel and urban authorities. The congestion in this street can be solved by introducing licensing of vendors as a measure to control their numbers. This will allow smooth operation of vending activities in the street with formal shop owners.

Kenyatta Highway

The street vendors were found to face all the four main conflicts in Kenyatta Highway. Congestion was identified as the leading form of conflict making it the main conflict faced by traders on that street. Security and solid waste generation although mentioned did not rank as high as congestion. Congestion and competition were the main conflicts affecting urban land users in Kenyatta Highway. Congestion in this street can be solved by licensing only the number of vendors that can be accommodated in this street. Competition conflict may be addressed by ensuring that the vendors license to operate in this street sell items that are different from what the formal shops are selling. Once these are sorted out the vendors can operate without a problem.

Bus-Stop

At the bus Stop security and competition were not found to be sources of conflict between the street vendors and formal business owners. The main source of conflict was identified as congestion. Security, waste generation and competition conflicts do not affect vendors operating in Bus-stop. Again license is an appropriate tool that can be used to control the congestion in the Bus stop. Only the numbers street vendors that can be accommodated in the bus-stop should be allowed to operate.

Oile Market

The two main conflicts in this street are solid waste generation and congestion. The park attracts a huge crowd because of its central location. The three roads that surround Oile market namely; Ang'awa, OtienoOyoo and Kenyatta Highway are very busy. Any attempt to allow vending will lead to congestion and solid waste generation. Therefore, street vending should not be allowed in this market. These conflicts may not be solve easily to allow vending in this area.

Paul Mbuya Street.

The main conflict identified in this street is congestion. Vendors in this street are mainly selling shoes and clothes. Therefore street vendors had no conflict related to security, competition and

solid waste generation. Congestion is the only conflict in this street. This can be addressed through licensing of street vendors that can be accommodated in this street.

Nyamlori Street

The conflicts street vendors' encountered in Nyamlori are mainly due to congestion and solid waste generation. There is no conflict related to security and competition. Congestion and to a smaller extent security is a problem in this street. Congestion in this street can be controlled through licensing of enough vendors who can be accommodated in this street. The mild security conflict can be addressed by involving security personnel from central police station to step up security.

Otieno Oyoo Road

Along Otieno Oyoo Road there are no conflicts regarding security, competition and solid waste generation although the main conflict is related to congestion. To allow vendors operate smoothly, licensing can be used to control the number allowed to vend.

Conclusion

The land use conflict created by the street vendors in Kisumu can to a large extent be resolved to pave way for integration. Allocation of space for vending can be done by including the informal sector in the city planning processes as provided for in the Cities and Urban Areas Act. New planning approaches such as Multifunctional land use planning have potential for expanding land use on any given space to accommodate more diversity and higher densities.

Recommendation

The Kisumu City Board should initiate replanning in Kisumu City with a view to including the informal sector in the resulting City land use plans. The Multifunctional land use planning approach presents a viable approach for the inclusion of more land use requirements.

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