

Six Strategic locations of Bangkok and the Outlook of becoming the Creative City

As a matter of fact, all capital cities that have exceeded the reputation of a creative city must have physical characteristics aiming to support local creative workforce. As for Bangkok, the finding undertaken by the City Research Unit from the Faculty of Architecture and Planning in Thammasat University on the topic "Bangkok Creative City", shows that there are six strategic areas in Bangkok which are Jatujak, Thong Lor, Siam Square, Town in Town, RCA and Sukhumvit. The areas have suitable elements for the growth of Creative Economy and potential for driving Bangkok into becoming the creative city in the future.

Jatujak: The Creative Market

Jatujak, as known as JJ Market, is filled with over 10,000 permanent stores. More than 200,000 people do their shopping here every weekend. This creates cash flow of 100-120 million baht per week. Common products in the market can be characterised into eight main categories which are garment and fashion, furniture and home decorative, pets, antiques and collectables, books, secondhand products, plants and garden equipment and food and drinks.

The finding also suggests that products in some business categories related to one another in a supply chain. According to the finding, domestic businesses amongst the market vendors can be divided into three groups:

- 1) **Shops selling raw materials** e.g. beads, stones, and strings. These are often whole sellers who locate near the main roads of the market for a convenience of logistic.
- 2) **Shops selling merchandises produced from domestic supplies.** These shops sell their own creative products that supply the materials from the first group. Most of them locate nearby each other on the West side of the market.
- 3) **Shops selling merchandises produced from external supplies.** These shops create their own products but supply the materials from outside the market. They are scattered all over the market.

Nowadays, Jatujak market is a hub of creative entrepreneurs. Most of them are small businesses, yet they have enough skills to design and produce creative goods. Some of these entrepreneurs manage to sell their products to traders outside Jatujak market and some go as far as exporting into other countries.

Thong Lor: Center of Creative Resources

Soi Thong Lor (Sukhumvit 55) is a six-lane street that connects between Sukhumvit road and New Petchaburi road. It is easy to access by BTS Thong Lor and the MRT Klongton (in the future). Today, Thong Lor is crowded with people, residential complexes, trendy shops, and entirely equipped with a Wi-Fi network. Most importantly, it is now one of the largest creative resources in Bangkok.

Common businesses found in Soi Thong Lor range from wedding studios, design studios, community malls, furniture and decorative stores, to restaurants and nightclubs. The street also holds many creative events on regular basis. A cluster of creative businesses helps forming business networks within Soi Thong Lor. For example, the group of Wedding Business Consultants (WBC) which gathered their businesses together to create approach strategies in marketing as well as to share resources.

Nowadays, Thong Lor is a happening place with activities and movements throughout day and night. Combining a strong human capital, good infrastructure, and fully developed market, it could be considered as the top-class location for any creative business in Bangkok.

Siam Square: Space for Young Fashion Designers

Siam Square is Thailand's No.1 shopping destination with 20-50 millions baht being passed around each day. Furthermore, history shows that many well-established fashion brands, like Greyhound, ISSUE and It's happened to be a closet, had started their first retail stores here at this trend center.

In the present, Siam Square has a sky-high rental rate. Yet, it still attracts new generation of creative entrepreneurs. Having its name branded as the all-time-favorite fashion hub, the area is believed to help young fashion designers in building their names and realising businesses. (Most successful brands only took 1-3 years in Siam square to get established)

The research on 107 creative shops in Siam Square shows that there is an average income of around 290,000 baht per month which can be estimated around 372 millions baht in each year. It is quite a significant number economic wise. However, whether Siam Square will remain the 'incubation center' of creative business also depends on a reasonable rental rate in the long run.

Town in Town: Creative Enclaves

From an ordinary residential zone, Town in Town has turned into 'Home offices for creative people' due to its cheap rent. Nowadays, the area is scattered with many creative businesses especially advertising, architecture and designs.

The finding suggests that creative businesses in Town in Town, particularly in the advertising sector (such as advertising agency, production house, post production, sound studio, etc.), tend to collaborate with each other in every process. Many call it a 'One Stop Service' for the advertising industry. A large number of these establishments help elevating Town in Town into being Bangkok's creative cluster. This cluster alone generated 2,640 million baht in 2006 and it is also believed to thrive with the global economic trends.

RCA: The Media Hub

Royal City Avenue or RCA is best known for Bangkok's nightlife. Yet, during the day, RCA is not as quiet as expected. There are groups of creative people who see the potential of this area in running office-based businesses. With an advantage in rental rate and flexible renting policy, RCA is now a hub for small creative offices during a daytime, from music studios, radio stations, publications, to advertising agencies.

The small creative firms in RCA make 36 percent out of all the rental space. This helps creating working interaction and business network within the area, where many businesses share resources with one another, particularly in terms of media and human resources.

Sukhumvit: Home of Expats

Sukhumvit is a main street that is best known among the expats, especially between Sukhumvit 3 (Soi Nana) and Sukhumvit 63 (Soi Ekamai). The street packed with amenities and services such as shopping malls, hospitals, hotels, condominiums and public transportations.

The statistic shows that the Japanese are the biggest expat group in Thailand. With approximately 10 percent increase of the Japanese resident in each year; currently there are roughly 45,000 Japanese people in Thailand. More than three of out four in this group are businessmen and academics who live in the area between Sukhumvit 23 and Sukhumvit 55. Since the Japanese expats come with their family, it helps promoting several new businesses catered for Japanese lifestyles such as bookstores, restaurants, spas, schools and hospitals. Even though these businesses are run by Thai people, the businesses maintain Japanese's quality and standard.

These high-end businesses not only attract the Japanese expats, they also draw Thai customers with similar taste and high purchasing power (the City Research Unit calls this group of Thai people as Thai Class) into the area. Sukhumvit today is full with many creative skills and talents, and is well adapted to accommodate top-tier international consumers. Such characteristics make this area becoming 'The Second home' to many foreigners. It helps promoting constant exchange of knowledge and cultures and transferring of skills within the area. This is why Sukhumvit is considered as another strategic area in raising Bangkok towards becoming the Creative City.