



Street Vending around Heritage Structures: Analysis of Visitor Perceptions

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Abstract

Monuments of historical and heritage importance, archaeological remains and designed landscapes are places of attraction for people for leisure, recreation and tourism. Thus, they also become lucrative places for street vendors to carry out their trade. However, this gives rise to the presence of temporary structures, which become a hub of activities and contribute to the overall experience of visiting a place of heritage importance. This study attempted to analyse the ways in which the presence of street vendors affects the perception of heritage structures for the visitor. Visual perceptions and experiential perceptions of visitors are analysed. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires, observation, photography and also interviews with heritage conservation experts. The main findings revealed that, the presence of street vendors affected the visual aesthetics of heritage structure for all visitors, irrespective of their background – domestic, foreign, rural, urban. Presence of street vendors added to the overall cultural experience for foreign visitors whereas for domestic visitors, convenience was the only factor, which added positively to their perception of experience.

Keywords: Heritage structures, street vending, visual perception, experiential perception

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Street Vendors and Heritage Sites

All over the world, street vendors conflict with local governments about the use of public spaces. In tourist places especially, the situation is critical because vendors, form an indirect threat to the attractive appearance of the city (Steel, 2008). Many developing countries seek to utilize cultural heritage sites as resources for socio-economic development through heritage tourism (Kausar, 2010). Heritage structures in a city serve as important attractions for tourists, becoming a strategic location for vendors to carry out their business. At these sites, vendors interact with varied segments of visitors: local visitors, foreign tourists, domestic tourists, visitors from urban as well as rural areas. Street vending serves as a strong meeting point between communities and tourists. The presence of street vendors near heritage sites or structures is a common phenomenon in India as well as many of the South Asian countries. For example: Gateway of India-Mumbai and Mahabalipuram. Prominent case of street vending near heritage site and structures is seen in Bihar. A study on street vendors and tourism conducted by Equations, equitable tourism also highlights the heritage monuments

where street vending is dominant. This study gives us examples of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, where pilgrims come from across the world and stay for longer durations at times up to four months. Street vending activity around Lingaraj Temple, Jagannath Temple-Puri are studied.

Apart from the goods that they sell, street vending around such sites, fulfil different needs of tourists and are a platform for cultural exchange. Street vending adds site-specific flavour to the tourists' experience in many ways by serving local cuisine, and extending their hospitality in informal ways (Equations, 2012). Street vendors play a significant role in providing a market for survival of economically weaker section of the society, who depend on street vending as their primary source of income.

Historic structures, heritage sites are intrinsically associated to the culture and social history of that place. These structures and places along with its surroundings form a part of 'Place memory', as described by Casey (2000), as place being a container of experiences that contributes powerfully to the memorability. Memory is naturally place oriented or at least place supported. Hence, it is crucial to understand how people perceive the heritage structures, in today's urban setting.

1.2 Background Study

The literature studied is divided into two categories. First, the guidelines and norms published by various authorities dealing with restrictions on street vendors and visual impact assessment of structures around heritage sites. Second, the relation of tourism and street vending.

Reports and guidelines published by various urban authorities in India stress on the need for having a 'no-hawking' zone around heritage structures. Many states in India like Punjab, West Bengal, Chandigarh have declared a zone around heritage structures as a 'no-vending' zone. Notification in the Punjab Government Gazette, 2016 declares no vending within 25 meters from any crossing of two or more roads on all side and any declared heritage structures by the local authority. Such decrees fail to acknowledge that many worlds can inhabit the same space, relating to it and using it in different ways (Arabindoo, 2010). In UK, a more practical view of things is taken where detail guidelines have been made for installation of temporary structures in historic places. Here, it is acknowledged that events in historic places make a vital contribution to the economics as well as character of places. (England, 2010) In this context street vending can be taken as an 'event'.

Tourist perceptions about the presence of street vendors has been taken mostly in the context of Street food vending. However, there is a lack of literature focussing on how street vending near heritage structures affects tourist perception. Hence, a wider study of literature based on tourism and street vending was done. Majority of this literature discusses the socio-economic benefits of tourism for the street vendors. Street vendors perceive the economic gain from tourism as an opportunity. (Oppers, 2012). It is essential to understand the ground realities

and the role of street vendors in the context of tourism. (Equations, 2012). The street vendors, represent a major attraction for foreign tourists looking for an authentic experience. Especially street food has generated a substantial following among Western tourists. (WEIGO, 2018). Truong (2017) discusses the potential approaches to poverty alleviation and street vending management through tourism.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

Characteristics of vendors around heritage structures: What is the typology of street vending activities around heritage structures? What is the intensity of the street vending activities?

Challenges: What physical planning challenges arise due to the presence of street vending activities near heritage structures?

Impact: Does the presence of street vendors impact the visitor's perception about visual aesthetics of the heritage structures? How does street vending around the heritage structures impact the experience of the visitors? Do the perception of visitors change according to the type of street vendors?

2.2 Data Collection

Direct observation, photography, reconnaissance surveys, random visitor interviews were some of the techniques used for data collection. Primary data were collected through semi structured questionnaires. This data were collected from three groups of respondents - Domestic visitors, foreign visitors to the heritage structures and local visitors. A cross sectional study across ages, genders and socio-economic groups was carried out through convenience sampling technique. A total of 94 samples were collected, of which 22 samples from foreign visitors, 44 samples from domestic visitors and 28 samples were from local visitors. All questionnaires were filled through face-to-face interaction at the selected heritage sites. The questionnaires were in two parts: part one – Respondent's Profile; and part two – their perception about the street vending activity with respect to visual impact and their experience. The observation technique was used to understand the respondents' feedback of the study area. The observations include the type of street vending activity, location and its conditions using photographic recording and mapping. Interviews with experts from the field of heritage conservation, Indology were also guided by semi-structured questionnaires and were conducted either face-to-face or through telephonic communication. Secondary data was collected through articles, reports and studies available.

3. STUDY AREA

3.1 Introduction to Study Area

Pune is a city in the state of Maharashtra, India. City of Pune, with population of around 31, 32,143, as per the Census of India, 2011, is spread over an area of 243.84 sq.km. The city is organically grown with limited formal planning approaches. Currently, there are around 28,000 registered street vendors in the city as per the records from Pune Municipal

Corporation (PMC). The appropriation of public spaces for commercial activities is visibly rampant in the city, the footpaths and front setbacks along the streets are occupied with petty businesses such as food stalls, mobile vendors, vegetable sellers, tea stands, etc. The street vendor activity has its positive side as well as negative impacts like hindering the movement of people, subsequently reducing the capacity of the roadways, traffic congestion.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), taking cognizance of the situation has declared 43 roads and 153 traffic junctions as 'no hawking zones'. This decision was mainly based on the inputs by the traffic department, Pune. While at the same time, protecting the interests of street vendors, the PMC is trying to identify locations for 'Vending Zones' which would provide for relocation of a partial number of street vendors. However, a stronger basis for selection of these vending/ no hawker's zones needs to be considered other than traffic. The area around the heritage structures needs to be considered and separate policies for the same need to be framed.

Three heritage structures in the city were selected from the list published by the Heritage cell, Pune Municipal Corporation based on the intensity of street vending activity around these structures:

- a) Shaniwarwada : Grade-1 Heritage structure
- b) Vishrambagwada : Grade-1 Heritage structure
- c) Tulsiabag Ram mandir Complex : Grade-1 Heritage structure

3.2 Historical Significance and Heritage structures:

A general trend towards urban growth was seen in India in the 18th century. Due to the weakening Mughal reign, imperial governors declared themselves independent in their provinces. This proved to be very conducive for development and urbanization began in their respective provincial centers. Pune can be included amongst these 18th century thriving feudal cities (Gupta, 2000). By the mid-eighteenth century, the vestiges of rurality disappeared as the city settled and started to grow.

Shaniwarwada: The 18th century palaces for the rulers of Pune, the Peshwas are an example of Maratha Imperial architecture. Shaniwar Wada was built in the area which shared a common boundary with Kasba Peth, the origin settlement of Pune. This old ward was revitalized by the building of the palace, and this brought an influx of immigrants who came with the Peshwa in search of opportunities. The strategic location of Shaniwar Wada is close to the traditional pottery market, Copper market developed in this era. Vishrambagwada: Vishrambagwada lies on the Bajirao Road in the heart of the city. It was built by the last Peshwa, Peshwa Bajirao II in 1807. In 1871, a major part of this building was destroyed in a fire. Later, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) started many administrative offices in this complex. In the recent past, the PMC undertook the restoration project at the Vishrambagwada under the Heritage Corridor Scheme. Most of the work is completed and today the complex houses a museum, an exhibition and a shop selling the specialty handmade artifacts and souvenirs for tourists. One of the exhibitions displays the growth of the city of Pune (from a small settlement to a big metropolis with the details and photographs of various

events in the history of Pune). The other exhibition consists of small models of the heritage buildings in Pune.

Tulsibag Ram Mandir Complex: Pune came to be adorned with numerous temples, ghats, wadas in the newly developed *peths* (wards) during 1740-1761. A landmark was the temple of Tulsibag, standing on one acre of land was built during this era. At first there was a small group of temples to Ram, Ganpati and Shiva. Over the years this group has grown into an important complex, with shrines, halls, rest rooms and music galleries and Shikhara (140 feet high). Location of these heritage structures with respect to the morphological development of Pune is shown in Figure 1. All these heritage structures lie within the boundaries of the congested area, as marked by the Pune Municipal Corporation. The area is also a hub for commercial activities. Major commercial roads like Laxmiroad, Bajirao road, Kumthekar road in Pune pass through the area around these structures. The main commercial market ‘Mandai’, (a market for fruits, vegetables, and items required for ritual worships) is in close proximity to Tulsibag temple and Vishrambagwada. With the pace of urbanization, the old city core, which was traditionally a residential area has gained importance as a commercial hub. The core area of Pune struggles to represent the socio-cultural traditions, heritage structures associational and notional attachment and to keep pace with the development.

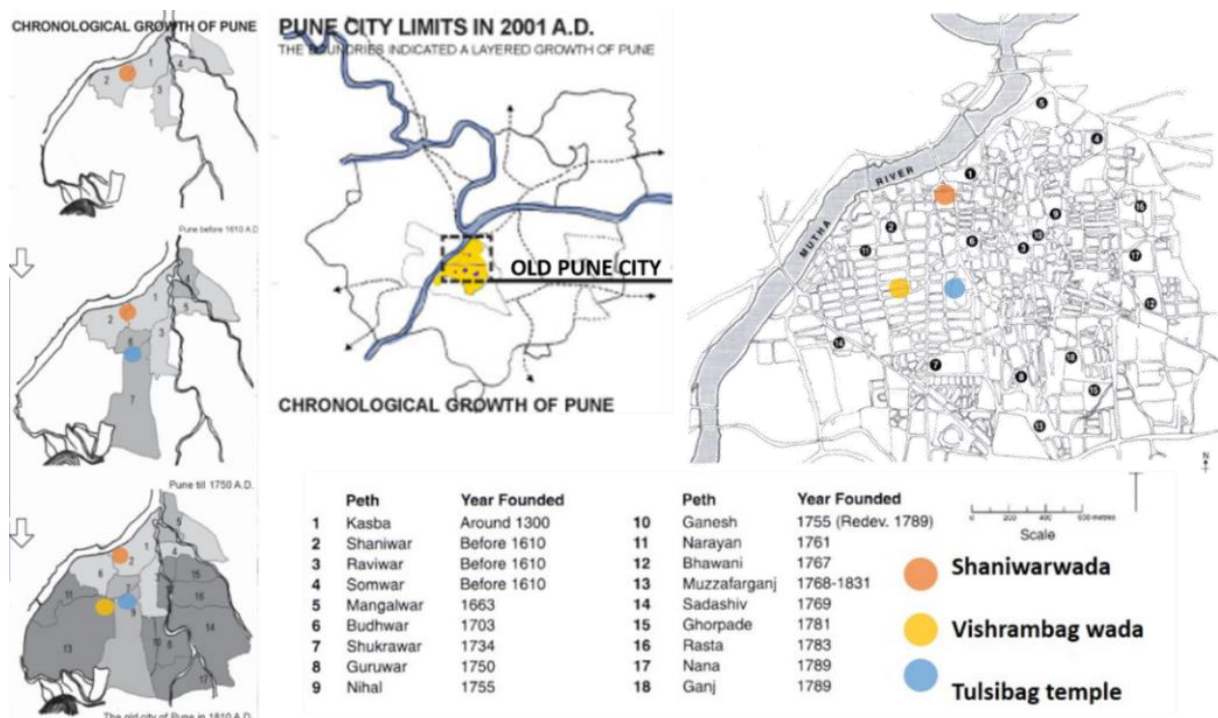


Figure 1: Location of heritage structures in Pune with respect to its morphological development

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Typology and intensity of street vendors

The typology has been established based on the commodity sold:

1. Raw food (Fruits, vegetable, nuts etc.)
2. Non-Food (Clothes, toys, household equipment, books, jewelry etc.)

3. Services (Barber shop, tire repairs, tailor, printers and copiers, key maker etc.)
4. Prepared food (Cooked, ready to eat food/drink).

The presence of this typology varies across the heritage structures studied (Figure 2). The commodity sold by the vendors, is not based only on the visitor’s need but is based on the commercial activity in the area surrounding the heritage structure.

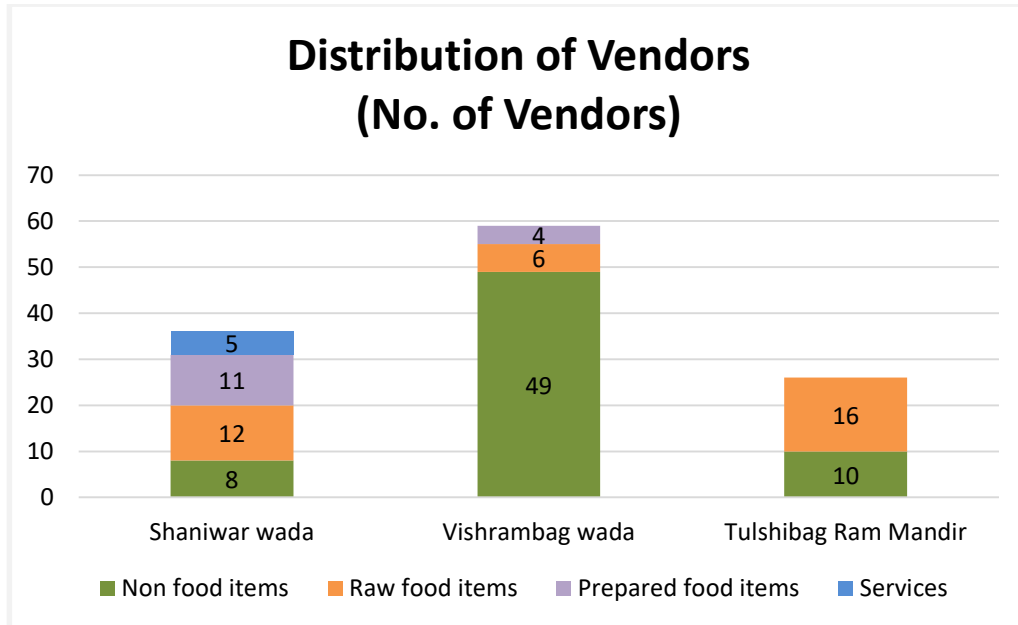


Figure 2: Type and distribution of vendors around heritage structures

The typology can also be established based on the vendors using any part of the heritage structure like walls, railing, etc., for displaying goods. Although, most of the vending activity is usually carried out around heritage structures without directly using the structure (Figure 3), a few vendors display their goods on the railings around the structures (Figure 5).

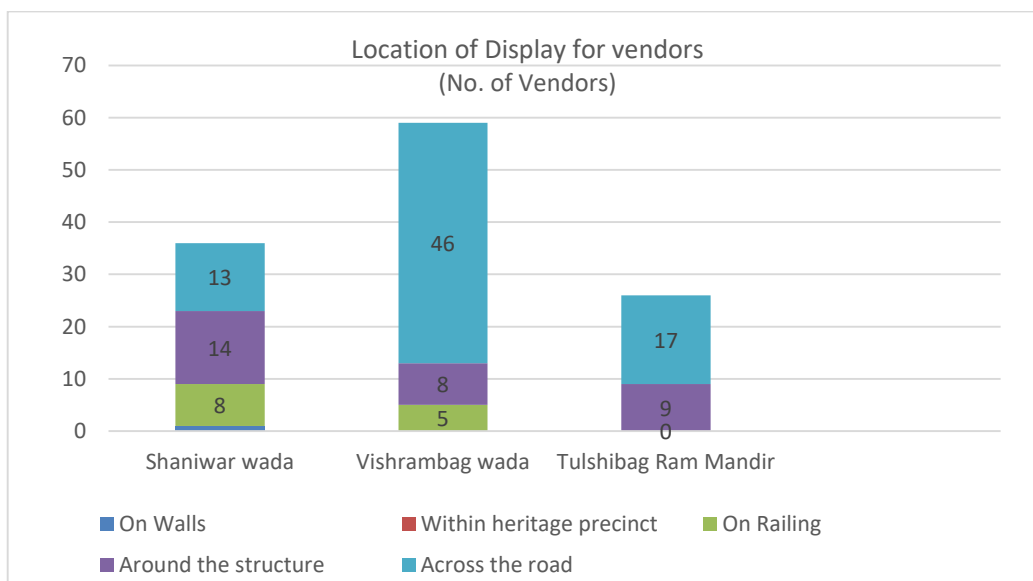


Figure 3: Location of display around heritage structures



Figure 4: Street Vendors across the road near the entrance to Tulsibag Ram Mandir



Figure 5: Street Vendors using the Railing as display around Vishrambagwada

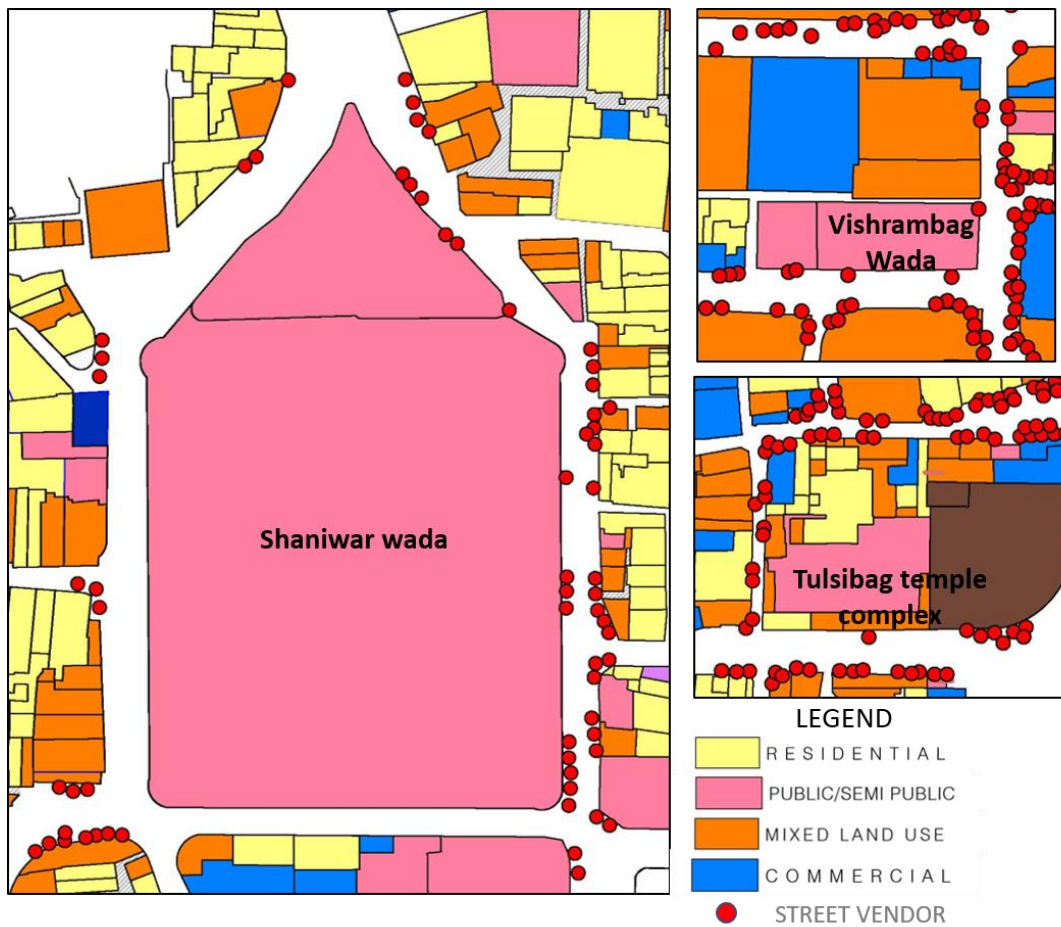


Figure 6: Land use and vendor locations around heritage structures

Out of the total 106 vendors observed near the three heritage structures, Vishrambagwada has a maximum number of vendors of 59 surrounding it due to the proximity of Tulsibag commercial market. Also, the commercial market for vegetables and fruits *Mandai* is close to the Tulsibag and hence the road to the Ram Mandir is teeming with vendors. The vendors, when plotted on the landuse map, show that the landuse around the heritage structure is commercial and mixed landuse (Figure 6). Vendors tend to locate themselves near the plots with these landuse.

4.3 Visual impact of Street vendors on Heritage structures

An area (by nature of its location, topography, character, visual appearance, available views and wider setting, a development to be located within or other special attributes) offers a visually rich setting for people to experience the area. These areas may include natural features (waterfront, hillside, green spaces, ridgeline, spur, fish ponds, country parks, streams and rivers) or manmade features (prime entry points to city, parkland, recreational ground, resort, landmark spaces, historical and heritage sites, conservation areas etc.) (Planning Department, 2006).

Perception of visitors regarding two parameters was considered:

1. Visual impact of street vendors on the heritage structures
2. Impact of street vendors on the experience of the visitors.

Parameters based on which, questionnaires were developed to analyze the visual impact include:

1. Visual compatibility with surroundings: If the structures used by street vendors for display are visually incompetent with the surrounding or if they create a disharmony with the surroundings due to scale, form, height of the structures / arrangements of street vendors.
2. Visual intrusion: If the visitors found the street vendor display and the crowd is attracted due to the activity of vending (as a visual intrusion to the visibility of the heritage structure).
3. Visual obstruction: If there is a complete or partial blocking of views and vistas, and prominent features of the heritage structure due to street vending.
4. Improvement of visual quality: Screening of visual detractors or eyesores of the street vending activities (their display structure would mitigate or make positive contribution to the visual aesthetics of heritage structure and its surrounding setting).

Most of the respondents, irrespective of their location or rural and urban background agreed that the structures used by street vendors were not compatible with the heritage surroundings. The tarpaulin sheets and handcarts were causes of visual incompatibility.

The domestic visitors rated the visual intrusion of street vending activities high and they stated that it detracted the visitors from the heritage structures. The foreign visitors agreed to the visual intrusion caused by vendors, but a few stated that they did not mind it as it gave the whole setting a local look.

Visual obstruction caused by the presence of street vendors was not rated very high by the visitors who interacted within the heritage precinct. However, the visitors who were asked this question at the entrance to the heritage structures, rated the visual obstruction high. Thus, it can be said that the visitors tend to overlook and forget this visual obstruction.



Figure 7: Street vendors near Shaniwar Wada



Figure 8: Display of clothes by a street vendor in Vishrambagwada precinct

Majority of the respondents agreed that if the street vendors used uniform structures, designed to be compatible with the heritage setting, it would improve the visual quality perception considerably. The need for cleanliness was mentioned by the visitors to improve the visual quality.



Figure 9: Uniformity in Vending structures minimizing the Visual impact. Tooth Temple, Sri Lanka



Figure 10: Reduced accessibility for pedestrians- Jaywalking at Shaniwarwada

The experts interviewed, clearly stated that they did not mind the presence of the street vendors themselves, but their displays ‘abused’ the heritage structures. The experts referred to ‘abuse’ in terms of both – physical harm to the heritage structure itself and harm to the visual aesthetics of the structure (Figure 8). This factor needs to be focused for managing street vendors. Minimizing visual intrusion caused by the street vending structures used for display of the goods by siting them and designing them in such a way that they reduce their impact on important views and disturbance of the visual character of historic area. One such example is of the Tooth temple, Kandy, Sri Lanka where the vending stalls are uniformly designed and located away from the main entry of the temple (Figure 9).

4.5 Conclusions

The challenge that confronts the planners is to reconcile the heritage architecture and everyday practices of social classes that inhabit around them. No visitors seemed to mind the presence of street vendors as much as the management of street vendors. The heritage experts too commented on the similar lines, that the street vendors would add positively to the quality of experience for the visitors if they are managed. This proves that aesthetics is experienced depending on how it is perceived and interpreted. The street vendors around heritage structures should be dealt with specially and sensitively so that they do not abuse the heritage structures but add convenience and local flavor to the setting of the heritage structure. Vending structures should be sited to minimize their impact on important views and disturbance of the visual character of historic areas. Careful design and planning needs to be implemented as a part of hawkers policy to minimize the impact of temporary display structures, signage and advertisements (put up by vendors, which would otherwise detract from the appearance and ambience of heritage sites). Visualizations and view-analysis, perspectives or photo-montages should be used to judge the impact of any structure on the heritage asset and its setting. By identifying potential problems at the planning stage, measures can be taken to avoid or to mitigate them. This can help to protect the heritage asset, by minimizing the risk of damage and as well as safeguarding the street vendors.

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