A Comparative Study of Two Initiating Cases of Pedestrian Malls in Taiwan

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Abstract

The development of pedestrian malls in Taiwan has unfolded along two different tracks. The first is driven by government policies aimed at revitalizing a declined city center. The second is initiated by private groups in the hope of raising real estate prices. Although the impetus for these two types of development has originated in different sectors, they have many things in common.

This study will examine the two initiating cases of pedestrian malls in Taiwan, the Xi-Men pedestrian mall in Taipei City and Jing-Ming First Street in Taichung City. These two cases are representative of the two types of pedestrian mall developments. The both cases have a significant influence on the shape of subsequent pedestrian malls in Taiwan. As such, they contain important lessons for future pedestrian mall projects and for urban planning generally.

The aim of this paper is to track the development of each pedestrian mall, comparing and contrasting the two cases. The following questions will be addressed: How and why were the malls developed? What were the key factors that made them successful? How do the two projects differ? Specifically, this paper will explore the differences in the character of the respective sites, the participating groups, development concepts and strategies, spatial features, functions, and operating and management tactics.

Keywords: pedestrian mall; citizen participation; urban planning; urban renewal; diversification

1. Introduction

The development of contemporary pedestrian malls was initiated in 1920’s (Rubenstein, 1992), but did not achieve maturity until the 1970’s. The original goal of the pedestrian mall was to eliminate the huge influence of cars in the city context. The second goal was to help revitalize the decayed city center (Hajdu, 1988). This became an influential trend in the development of contemporary cities worldwide.

This trend arrived in Taiwan during the 1980’s. The development of pedestrian malls in Taiwan unfolded along two different tracks. The first was driven by government policies aimed at revitalizing declined city centers. The second track was initiated by private groups in the hopes of raising real estate prices. Although the impetus for these two types of development originated in different sectors, they have many things in common.

This study will examine two initiating pedestrian mall cases in Taiwan, the Xi-Men pedestrian mall in Taipei City and Jing-Ming First Street in Taichung City. These two cases are representative of the two types of pedestrian mall developments. The success of both cases produced a significant influence on the shape of subsequent pedestrian malls in Taiwan. As such, they contain important lessons for future pedestrian mall projects and for urban planning generally.

2. Study Methodology

The aim of this paper is to track the development of each pedestrian mall, comparing and contrasting the two cases. The following questions will be addressed: How and why were the malls developed? What were the key factors that made them successful? How do the two projects differ? Specifically, this paper will explore differences in the character of the respective sites, the participating groups, development concepts and strategies, spatial features, functions, and operating and management tactics.

The method for this study includes a review of past reports and relevant literatures; field investigations of both cases; a questionnaire survey and interview of the related participating groups.

3. The development of the Xi-Men pedestrian mall

The Xi-Men pedestrian mall is now a well-known urban space on the west side of Taipei. It provides diverse activities for all citizens and especially for young people. It was initiated by the city government in an effort to revitalize the old city center. It is also the first pedestrian mall planned by a public authority in Taiwan. The mall
consists of three streets, forming a web-shaped pedestrian area. It was developed in four stages:

(Stage 1) Introductory period (1983–1987): The Taipei city government is the pioneer that introduced the pedestrian mall tactic to urban redevelopment public policy in Taiwan. In 1983, the government conducted a one-year feasibility study on the Xi-Men area. In 1985, a master plan for a Xi-Men pedestrian mall was completed. A design exhibition was held to build publicity for the project. However local residents were reluctant to accept the plan, because they were suspicious that it would encroach on their own property rights and the absence of any workable precedent.

(Stage 2) Initial development (1987–1990): During this period, businesses in the Xi-Men area entered a period of accelerated decline, prompting local merchants to reconsider the pedestrianization project. They established an organization called the “Society of Promoting the Renewal of the Xi-Men Business Center (SPRXBC)” and pleaded with the government to revive the project. Construction began on the Xi-Men pedestrian mall in 1990. The SPRXBC then was transformed into the Xi-Men Autonomy Management Committee (XAMC).

(Stage 3) Finetuning (1990–1999): Problems began to crop up as soon as the mall was completed. They included clumsy design and rough construction quality, no specific legislation to manage the mall, management conflicts between the government and XAMC, and insufficient parking and transit support. The mall soon descended into chaos. In response to these problems, a series of improvement measures were undertaken during following years (see Figure 1). The most important of these improvements was the approval of the ‘Developing and Managing Act for Taipei City Pedestrian Malls’ in 1994. This act had three major goals: clarifying the government’s responsibilities, providing a legal basis for citizen participation and the pedestrian district committee, and formalizing the source of funding. The passage of this act was critical for the Xi-Men area but also successive projects. Other measures promoted the mall. In 1999, it was remodeled for the second time. After ten years of effort, the mall was finally successfully restored.

(Stage 4) Sustainability (after 1999): The mall has been operated successfully for almost six years since its reopening on May 21, 1999. There is a high pedestrian volume throughout the week; showing that the mall is both attractive and popular. At this point, the next goal was sustainability. A three year Business District Redevelopment Program was applied to this area in 1999. This program included the following tactics: providing assistance to the pedestrian district committee; adopting the management methods of private enterprise, including marketing and branding tactics; beautifying and adding character to the site; and adding a tourist center. All of these efforts were aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall.

3.1 Key success factors
Four key factors contributed to the success of the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall:

(a) the establishment of the mall as a culture and entertainment center: After the failure of initial development, the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall was evaluated as a poorly planned street presenting no recognizable characteristics to attract consumers. Thus, several researches were proceeded to seek a clear identity for the mall. As a result, it is featured as a culture and entertainment center for its potential cultural heritages and entertainment tradition as a collective location of several Taipei City’s oldest movie theaters. It turned out that the strategy worked out very successfully.

(b) association with related programs (see also Figure 1): Beginning from 1990, Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall has been included among the Western District Redevelopment Program (WDRP) which is an integrated Program of many redevelopment projects in Western District under the supervision of city government with the financial support of central government. The WDRP also validated a connection of Metro System to the mall. In 1992, the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) has conducted a national-wide Landscape of Public Space Enhancing Program (LPSEP). The city Department of Urban Development has applied for funding from this program to redesign and remodel the landscape of Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall. The following year, the Sign Control and Beautification Program extended from LPSEP was applied to this mall. This initiated a trend of regulating commercial signs that influenced subsequent development of commercial streets all over Taiwan. A national-wide Citizen Participation Program, also conducted by CCA, was added to the regeneration of Xi-Men Mall in 1995. The same year, city government started District Transformation Program to carry out Xi-Men Pedestrian System Improving Project. In 1999, Business District Redevelopment Program conducted by Business Department of the Ministry of Economics...
(BDME) was applied. The combination of all these related programs has led into the present prosperity of Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall.

(c) the regulation of the ‘Developing and Managing Act for Taipei City Pedestrian Malls’: The regulation of the ‘Developing and Managing Act for Taipei City Pedestrian Malls’ has established a sound legal foundation and resolved the earlier responsibility controversy between government and pedestrian district committee.

(d) the institutionalization of the Citizen Participation Policy: The Citizen Participation Policy was institutionalized under the regulation of the ‘Developing and Managing Act for Taipei City Pedestrian Malls’ and the support of CCA’s Citizen Participation Program. Institutionalization of this policy has granted a legal position for XAMC to manage and maintain the street environment and communicate with the city government; but also built a fine pattern for citizen groups to run an urban public space. The best use of Citizen Power has been made in this case.

4. The development of Jing-Ming First Street

Jing-Ming 1st Street is located just beyond the western edge of old downtown Taichung. It is the first such project to be initiated by private real estate developers in Taiwan. It was a key element of a housing, business, and office mixed-use project. The real estate company that originated the plan intended to transform the pedestrian area into an elegant business street to enhance the value of the real estate. Despite many obstacles, the street is now a famous tourist attraction and represents a new type of urban space in Taiwan. It has also become a model for other real estate development projects. It was developed in four stages (see Figure 2):

(Stage 1) Initial construction (1988–1991): The pedestrian street was planned by Zhongyang Construction Company in 1988. It is between two 14 floors buildings; one is an office, the other is an apartment. The ground floors of both buildings were designed as shops that faced Jing-Ming 1st Street. Elements of the street were unified. In 1990, the entire project was finished. The company looked for suitable retailers to settle in. However, it did not reach this goal. Half of the shops were unoccupied. The street turned into a parking space for motorcycles.

(Stage 2) Autonomous participation by residents and retailers (1991–1995): In 1991, economic difficulties prompted residents and retailers to seek a solution. They organized the Autonomy Committee in 1992. After intense discussion and negotiation, they decided to resurrect the earlier idea of pedestrianization. They eliminated the motorcycles first and then improved street fixtures and amenities, including the addition of tables on the street. The street came alive. It also became an unprecedented example of the power wielded by an involved public.

(Stage 3) Involvement by a public authority stage (1995–1997): The progress of the street attracted increasingly larger crowds and even drew the government’s attention. In 1995, Jing-Ming 1st Street was chosen as an exemplary street under the Advancing Program for Commercial Streets by the Business Department of the Ministry of Economics (BDME). Public authorities commissioned a nonprofit organization to assist in the development of the street. The organization applied marketing tactics to improve the pedestrian volume and name recognition with the cooperation of city government. With the assistance from public authorities, Jing-Ming 1st Street has transformed into a vivid urban public space with diverse entertainment, cultural, and commercial activities. Statistical data collected by BDME in 1997 showed that the street attracted 1.6 million visitors per year.

(Stage 4) Ongoing transformation (after 1997): With public-sector assistance, business on Jing-Ming 1st Street reached its peak. Afterwards, however, retailers faced new challenges, including competition from the burgeoning business on similar streets, lack of legislative support, and increasingly heavy commercial rents. To survive, they have begun to seek solutions to these problems.

4.1 Key success factors

Three key factors contributed to the success of Jing-Ming 1st Street:

(a) urban lifestyle changes lead to a preference by citizens for pedestrian streets with diverse activities: According the research report made by Business Department of the Ministry of Economics, 80 percent of consumers came to Jing-Ming 1st street for enjoying the unprecedented pedestrian commercial environment and diverse activities. Changes in urban lifestyle have made citizens favor characteristic urban spaces with numerous choices. The street has provided a unique sense of locality which meets the demand for a contemporary urban lifestyle. People can visit the pedestrian street with a lot of alternatives which is quite different from
traditional commercial streets.

(b) autonomous participation by citizenry gathers popular force: The pedestrian street was made possible mainly by the citizenry gathering popular force. The common objective that residents and retailers shared was to promote business on the street, which urged them to get together voluntarily. With no sufficient public support, the autonomous participation of the private sector was essential for ongoing development.

(c) the application of marketing tactics draw consumer attention to the street: Many marketing tactics were applied to brand the street. During 1992, poets and articles describing the unique street were published in public literature. This drew massive public attention to the street. From 1994 to 1995, the Autonomy Committee organized several cultural activities to attract more consumers. The 1995 Advancing Program conducted by BDME formally introduced business marketing tactics to brand the site; which included introducing strategies of business management to street committee, publication of guiding map, establishment of identifiable sign systems, and cultural events program. Starting from 1999, the Autonomy Committee has collaborated with nearby hotels to form an alliance to attract clients of hotels to shop in the street.

5. Comparison

By comparing these two cases we hope to provide information that will aid in the successful development of future pedestrian malls.

5.1 Site characteristics

The development of a pedestrian mall is intimately related to its urban and social context. Location and city zoning are important factors in an urban context. The site of a pedestrian mall is usually located in a historic area or in a vigorous business center. In the former case, the area’s historic heritage can be used to brand the location and add a distinctive character. A mall in a vigorous business center can potentially draw on a wider pool of support. The Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall can be categorized as a historic area (see Figure 3), while Jing-Ming 1st Street can be categorized as a business center (see Figure 4). Each was also zoned differently. The Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall was classified as a business zone, and offers the highest density of commercial use in Taipei. Jing-Ming 1st Street can be categorized as a business center (see Figure 4). Each was also zoned differently. The Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall was classified as a business zone, and offers the highest density of commercial use in Taipei. Jing-Ming 1st Street, on the other hand, was classified as a residential zone, but was allowed mixed use with a certain number of businesses.

As for social context, we find that population density and lifestyle are important determining factors in the success of a pedestrian mall. The population densities in both areas are very high. The Xi-Men area had a population of about 22,433 in 1994, while the Jing-Ming area had a population of about 49,882 in 1999. The lifestyles of both sites underwent a substantial transformation after the 1980s. In both cases pedestrian malls provided a mix of much-needed services, including shopping, entertainment, and cultural events.

5.2 Participating groups

There were several groups involved in both cases, all involved in different stages. A comparison of the participating groups is shown in Table 1, which shows clearly that both cases had completely different starting points. However, to achieve success, both eventually combined public and private-sector involvement. (The gray ellipse represents public authority, while the white ellipse represents private groups.)

Table 1. Comparison of Participating Groups

| Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall | Jing-Ming 1st Street |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| City Government        | Real Estate Developer|
| Business Groups        |                      |
| Habitant Groups        |                      |
| Central Government     |                      |
| Marketing Groups       |                      |

The involvement of the public sectors has been distinguished into two levels—the central government and the city government. On both cases, the economic department of central government, the BDME, played an important assistant role on promoting business in the district under the concern of improving national economy by commissioning marketing groups to help street committees to run the street management, establish identifiable sign systems, and organize planned events programs. The cultural department of central government, the CCA, also involved in the improvement of Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall since stage(3) due to Xi-Men area’s historical value. As for city government, it has played quite different character on both cases. In the case of Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall, Taipei City Government has always played a leading role since the very beginning. On the contrary, Taichung City Government only played as a secondary participant in the case of Jing-Ming 1st Street when the central government’s support was coming in during stage (3). It acted as a passive cooperator when the street committee asked for support of planned activities. In other words, in Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall, the city government is active; in Jing-Ming 1st Street the city government is passive.

Three private organizations participated in the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall: the SPRXBC, the XAMC, and the Xi-Men Cultural Society (XCS). The SPRXBC is a business group. The XCS is a habitant group. The XAMC is a combination group consisting of retailers and habitants. Four private organizations participated in Jing-Ming 1st Street: Zhongyang Construction Company—the real estate developer, the Autonomy Committee of Jing-Ming 1st Street consisting of retailers and habitants, and two Building Committees representing the building occupants on both sides of the street. In both cases,
private sector has played an exactly opposite role. In Jing-Ming 1st Street, the private groups is extremely active; while in Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall the private groups was first passive and has taken a more active stand during the latter stages.

The relationship with the property owners groups was awful in both cases. Both cases suffered negative impacts from the property owners groups because rents were raised after the pedestrian mall success. This was a problem even on privately initiated Jing-Ming 1st Street. About 60% of the shops were rented in the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall case during the development years. However, the ratio of shop renting has changed a little bit from about 60% in earlier development to the present 55% in the Jing-Ming case. This shows that when rents increased, renting retailers had rather bought their business properties if they could.
5.3 Development goals and concepts

In both cases, the goals of the developments were diverse and changed over the course of the various stages associated with the participants’ transformation.

As shown in Table 2, in Stage (1) the two projects began with totally different ideas. However, in successive stages they came to have some similarities. In Stage (2), even there was still no support from the government in the Jing-Ming case; it has already shared some similar developing ideas with Xi-Men case. After the government’s assistant, Jing-Ming 1st Street has put the concern of public domain by making contribution as an urban public space. In both cases, the participants were principally concerned with improving the physical quality of street, promoting business in the district, and providing an urban space that could support a diverse range of activities.

5.4 Development strategies

In shaping a pedestrian mall one usually needs to be concerned about several urban issues: most cases involve urban transportation, economic, and landscape issues; and some also involve issues of environmental protection and urban conservation. There are essentially two aspects to these issues. One is the “institutional” aspect, which are the strategies chosen to lay a sound foundation for development; and the other is the “implementation” aspect, the strategies chosen for the practical implementation of the project in the physical space (infrastructure, design, etc.). Figure 5 shows a comparison of these two aspects for the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall and Jing-Ming 1st Street. In terms of the institutional aspect, we find that the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall had more legal and policy supports than Jing-Ming 1st Street. That was because it originated as a government-sponsored urban renewal project, one of many aimed at revitalizing the historic western district of Taipei City. As such, it was concerned with urban conservation as well as economic benefits. In contrast, Jing-Ming 1st Street was concerned exclusively with economic issues. Thus, the two projects differed in their approach to implementation as well.

5.5 Spatial features

The spatial features of the two cases can be compared on four different points: the type of pedestrian mall, the scale of its streets, its organization, and its spatial elements.

The Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall is a network-type pedestrian mall (see Figure 6). It consists of three streets, Wu-Chang Street, E-Mei Street, and Han-Zhong Street. The mall's total length is 1 km., with a total road area of 14,272 square meters. The width of the streets ranges from 8 to 12 meters. The proportion of height of building to width of street ranges from 1.1 to 1.5, a very humanistic scale that feels comfortable for the pedestrian. The spatial organization includes several squares located at street intersections, as well as a series of distinct street sections. Each square and street section performs a different function. Combined together, they create a sequential experience of space. The spatial organization is also very grid-like. In addition to the three major streets, the area also contains several narrow lanes which recall the area's historic past. Spatial elements included fountains, pavements, street furniture, and plants (see Figure 8).

Jing-Ming 1st Street is a single pedestrian street (see Figure 7). The length of the street is 132 meters, with a total road area of 2,112 square meters. The width of the street is 16 meters and the proportion of height of building to width of street is 2.6. Although this ratio is not generally suitable to human scale, designers used first floor height rain proofs along the street façade to reduce the scale. The space is divided into three areas: a shopping area which is 4 meters wide and was planned to run alongside the buildings; a landscaped area in the center of street that connects to the courtyard of the Taiwan Business Center; and an outdoor seating area at both ends of the street. The various spatial elements are drawn together by the use of pavement, street furniture, and plants (see Figure 9).

5.6 Functionality

Both cases perform a diverse range of functions, and attract different kinds of users. In both cases the pedestrian mall combines business with cultural and entertainment-related mixed-use functions.
Diversification to meet the demand of contemporary lifestyles is a major characteristic in both cases. People often come to these pedestrian malls to spend their leisure time, and not necessarily to shop.

Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall boasts a range of businesses, entertainment, performances, cultural events, and festivals. The range of business types is especially diverse (see Table 3). There are 264 stores inside the pedestrian mall, including restaurants, shops selling the commodities of daily life, clothing stores, movie theaters, and so on. Every weekend there are performances showcasing celebrities and local talent. Festivals and special events are planned for cultural events and traditional holidays. This mall attracts mostly teenagers and families.

Jing-Ming 1st Street serves a mainly commercial function, and also has cultural events and festivals. The range in business types here is narrower than in the Xi-Men area (see Table 3). There are 40 small businesses here, most of which are restaurants and clothing stores. Festivals and special events are also planned for cultural events and traditional holidays. This mall attracts mostly students and young people who either work close to this area or live in the city.

5.7 Operating Tactics

Operating tactics have two important aspects: management and street marketing.

Management can be broken down into three categories: time management, environmental management, and activities management. Regarding time management, both cases had different policies. Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall is not a full-time pedestrian mall. Vehicles are restricted from entering the mall during peak business hours which are from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. on weekdays, and from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on weekends. Unlike Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall, Jing-Ming 1st Street is a full-time pedestrian mall. This difference reflects the difference in scale and complexity of the two pedestrian malls. The Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall is about ten times larger than Jing-Ming 1st Street, and therefore must deal with more complex problems, such as accessibility and negotiations with retailers. In terms of environmental management, both cases face concerns about sustainable environmental maintenance, noise control, and trash disposal. High pedestrian volume and frequent events had caused a certain degree of damage to the environment; thus, environmental management became an important issue in both cases. As for activities management, both cases have their own autonomy committees, as well as nonprofit organizations.
commissioned by the government to organize various activities to promote them.

Marketing is an extremely important tactic for contemporary pedestrian malls, due to keen competition with other shopping facilities. It also had been applied in both cases. In both cases, massive advertising efforts were launched to publicize and brand the sites, and special events or cultural festivals were frequently held to attract consumers.

6. Conclusion

This paper presented two different types of pedestrian malls. In conclusion, we see that the success of pedestrian malls in Taiwan have four major characteristics, regardless of whether the mall is dominated by a public authority or by private groups. (1) The development of the pedestrian mall must be connected with the social and economic transformations and adjust its function to meet contemporary demands. (2) Diversification is essential. People come to pedestrian malls not only to shop, but also to be entertained, to socialize, and to simply enjoy walking around. (3) Collaboration between a public authority and private groups help a pedestrian mall run more smoothly. (4) Application of management and marketing tactics is key to maintaining competitiveness.

The major differences between public and private dominated cases are the mechanism of the public sector’s participation and legislative support. Pedestrian malls conducted by private groups have limited public resources, which is also temporary. In addition, the participation of public authorities is passive. Only the private dominated mall has business potential can attract government’s attention and assistance. They also have more operational problems caused by an absence of legislative support. Pedestrian mall developed by a public authority is under the overall consideration of improving urban crisis in the city. It is to seek for public benefits by revitalizing a decayed city center. Thus, the participation of government is active and involve in long term policy.

Ever since both pedestrian malls developed successfully, there are many following their paths. There have been 7 public-conducted cases finished since 1999 with relatively a smaller scale than the Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall. Two of them are located in the other two major cities of Taiwan, Taichung and Kaohsiung, with the length around 0.5 km. The others were developed in Taipei; street length is ranged from 60m to 648m. There are about 10 private-dominated cases, which are all located in Taichung. It shows that citizens of Taichung are more active in developing pedestrian streets. However, the influence of both cases has not only showed in particular type, but in all successive pedestrian projects. Jing-Ming 1st Street has been appointed by BDME as a fine example for retailers of many commercial streets all over Taiwan to visit. Xi-Men Pedestrian Mall also has become an important model for commercial streets which intended to be transformed into pedestrian streets.

Notes (Endnotes)

1 According to Fan Ling Zeng’s research, the day-averaged pedestrian volume is 17,775 persons/hr on weekdays, and 24,611 persons/hr on the weekend.
2 According to Chien Fu Yeh, as of 1999 there had been 9 cases of rival streets attempting to imitate the Jing-Ming 1st Street and create similar pedestrian environment.

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