

## **Street Business in Cambodia – Contribution to the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The share of the street business is approximately 8.3% of the whole establishments in Cambodia. Main sectors of street business are wholesale and retail trade, and food service activities. The features of the street business are (1) the number of female representatives is greater than male, (2) the share of the street business of the whole establishments in cities is greater than it in rural areas, and (3) the scale of business is limited in terms of the number of employees and the area of the business place. The street business in Cambodia can be categorized into three business types: (1) retail sales such as food and beverage are the most profitable business, (2) services such as barbershop and repairing motorcycles are less profitable, and (3) restaurant business is in the middle of them.

*JEL Classification: O170*

*Keywords: street business; informal sector; profitability; poverty reduction; Cambodia*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cambodian economy has been achieving the high economic growth under the background of the economic system transformation from the planned economy to the market economy, and the political stability since 1990's. The main features of Cambodian industrial structures are (1) the existence of traditional agriculture, handicraft, and tourism (Angkor monuments), (2) the continuous growth of garment production as the modern industry, (3) the formation of the dual structure with the domestic traditional industry and the modern industry operated by foreign companies, (4) the dependence on the foreign aids and the demands of daily life by foreigners in charge of the international cooperation, and (5) the advance of the internationalization under the rapid deregulation on investments, trades, and finance. In recent years, the number of foreign direct investments has been rapidly increasing. Under this background, Cambodian governments placed the enhancement of the domestic industries, especially SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), as one of the most important policy in the national development plans. The most of enterprises are small companies (97.7% of the whole establishments in Cambodia employ under ten persons), and 8.5% of the whole establishments are the street business in the informal sector.

The ILO (International Labor Organization) took up the issues of informal sector, and pointed out the features, (1) ease of entry, (2) reliance on indigenous resources, (3) family ownership of enterprises, (4) small scale of operation, (5) labor-intensive and adapted technology, (6) skills acquired outside the formal school systems, and 7) unregulated and competitive markets (ILO, 1972). Bromley (1978) pointed out the importance of the distinction between the formal and informal sector for studying employment issues in urban area under the dual industrial structure with traditional and modern sectors caused by foreign direct investments in developing countries. Some issues on the street business are surveyed mainly from the view point of sanitary, landscape, and working condition. Less survey on the income of the street business are conducted because of the limitation of data collection. Some sample surveys are reported by Tokman (1989) in Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, Evers and Mehmet (1949) in Indonesia, and Timothy and Wall (1997) in Indonesia. No surveys on the street business are conducted in Cambodia, and this paper describes the features of the street businesses, especially focusing on the profit structure of them in Cambodia. The street business contributes to the economic growth and poverty reduction in Cambodia. Jobs are instrumental to achieving economic and social development. Beyond their critical importance for individual well-being, they lie at the heart of many broader societal objectives, such as poverty reduction, economy-wide productivity growth, and social cohesion (World Bank, 2012). In this paper, (1) the real situation and features of the street businesses in Cambodia are surveyed; (2) the real activities of the street businesses are classified; and (3) the profit structure of the street businesses is analyzed.

In this paper, the micro data of the Economic Census of Cambodia 2011 that is the first survey in the country is used. The survey was held through interviews with all establishments in Cambodia in March, 2013. The definition and classification of establishments are followed to the ISIC4 (United Nations International Standard Industrial Classification, Revision 4). The definition of the street business is an

establishment such as a stall, a booth etc. that runs at a fixed location on the sidewalk or the roadside, or around but outside a market. Less statistical surveys are conducted on the informal sector, in this sense, the survey shows valuable information. In addition, the results of interviews with owners of street businesses in Phnom Penh capital by author from August through October, 2013 are also used in this paper.

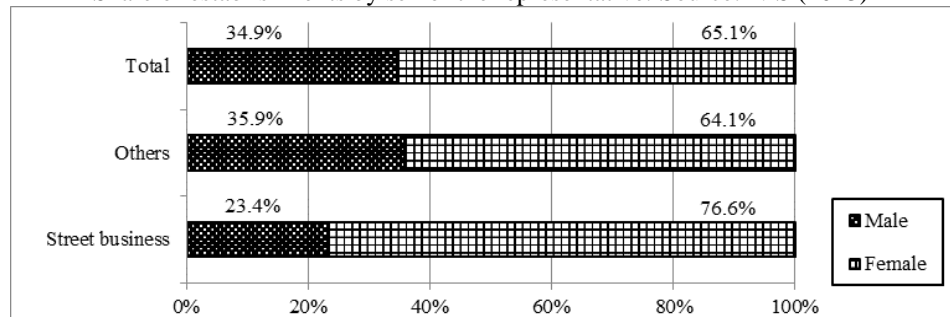
## II. STREET BUSINESS IN CAMBODIA

There are 505,134 establishments in Cambodia. The number of the street business is 41,771, and it accounts for 8.3% of the whole establishments. In this section, (1) the nationality of the owner, (2) the sex of the owner, (3) the scale of business, (4) the number of workers per establishment, (5) the number of employees, (6) the year of starting business, and (7) the number of establishments by province of street business are described for the sake of understanding the features of the street business in Cambodia.

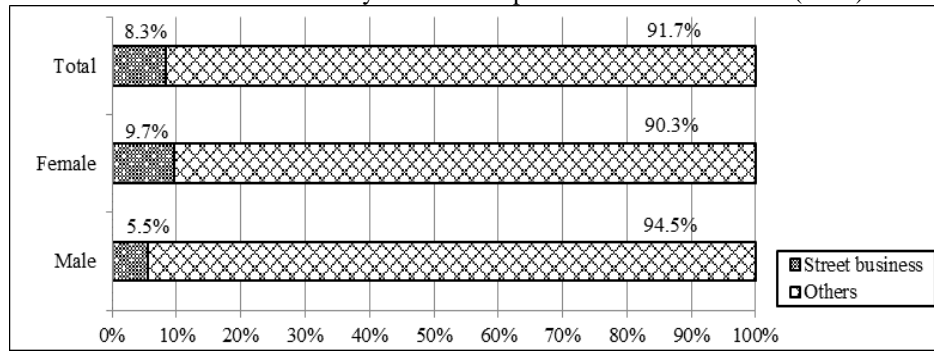
First, most of owners of the street business are Cambodian (41,311 establishments, the share of the street business of the whole establishments is 98.9%). Other owners are Vietnamese (294 establishments, 0.7%), Chinese (162 establishments, 0.4%), and others (4 establishments, 0.0%).

Second, the number of female representative is bigger than male representative especially in the street business. The share of male representative street business of the whole street business is 23.4%, and the share of female representative street business is 76.6% (see Figure 1). The share of male representative street business of the whole male representative establishments is 5.5%, and the share of female representative street business of the whole female representative establishments is 9.7% (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1**  
Share of establishments by sex of the representative. Source: NIS (2013)



**Figure 2**  
Share of street business by sex of the representative. Source: NIS (2013)

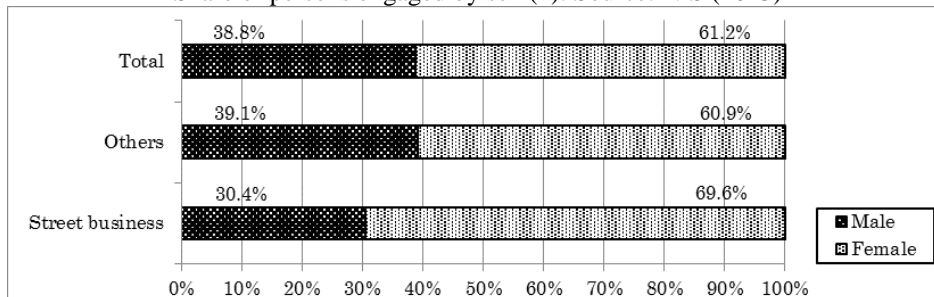


Third, all of business place of the street business is under 100m<sup>2</sup>. 25,081 establishments occupies under 5m<sup>2</sup>, 10,375 establishments occupies 5 - 9m<sup>2</sup>, 4,968 establishments occupies 10 - 29m<sup>2</sup>, 1,022 establishments occupies 30 - 49m<sup>2</sup>, and 325 establishments occupies 50 - 99m<sup>2</sup>.

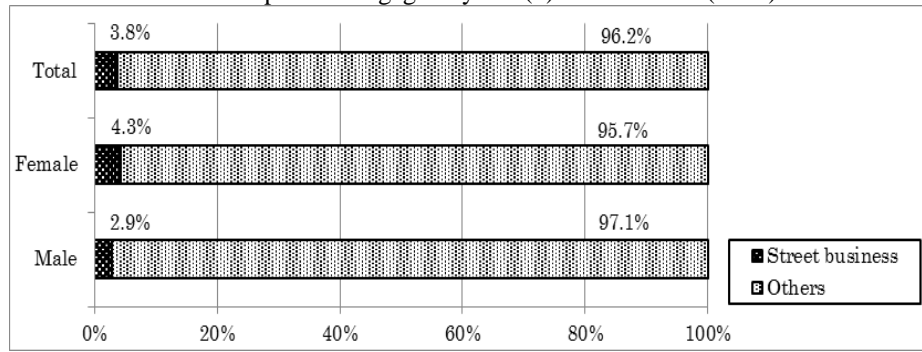
Fourth, the number of street business engaged 1 person is 26,398 (the share is 63.2% of the whole street business), the number of street business engaged 2 persons is 11,879 (the share is 28.4%), the number of street business engaged 3 persons is 2,253 (the share is 28.4%), the number of street business engaged 4 persons is 720 (the share is 1.7%), and the number of street business engaged 5 - 9 persons is 521 (the share is 1.2%). The average number of workers in the street business is 1.5 persons, and it is smaller than the average of other establishments (3.5 persons).

Fifth, the number of persons engaged is 1,673,390. The males engaged is 649,358 (the share of the whole persons engaged is 38.8%), and the number of females engaged is 1,024,232 (the share is 61.2%) (see Figure 3). The number of persons engaged in the street business is 62,780, and it accounts for 3.8% of the whole persons engaged. The number of males engaged in the street business is 19,102, and it accounts for 2.9% of the whole males engaged. The number of females engaged in the street business is 43,678, and it accounts for 4.3% of the whole females engaged (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3**  
Share of persons engaged by sex (1). Source: NIS (2013)

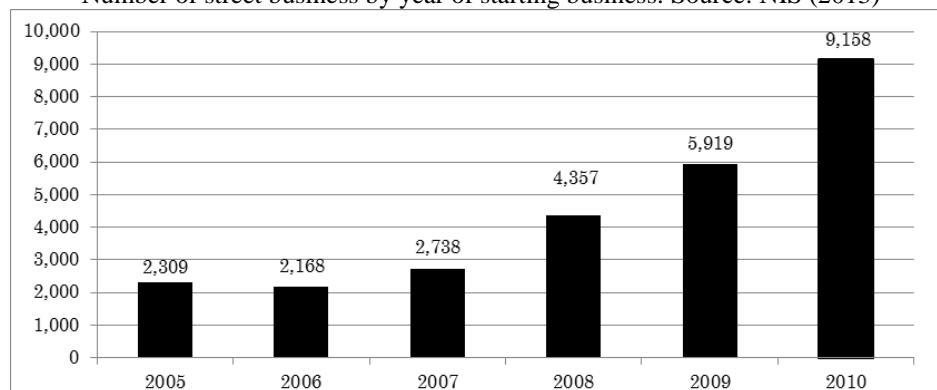


**Figure 4**  
Share of persons engaged by sex (2). Source: NIS (2013)

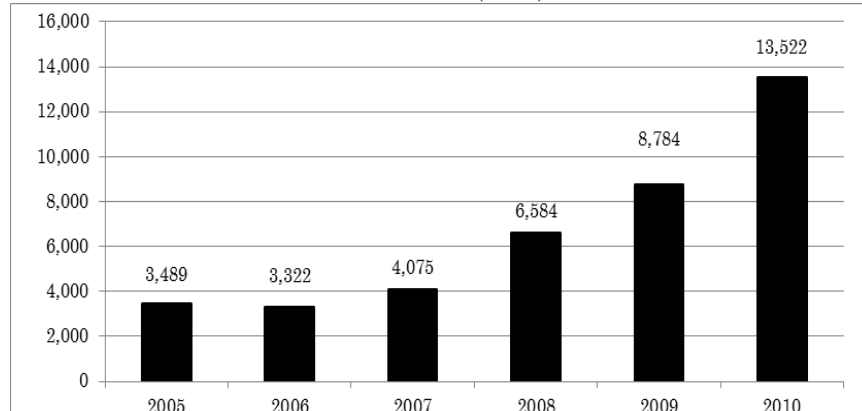


Sixth, among the whole street business, only 145 establishments (the share is 0.4% of the whole street business) started business before 1979, 1,036 establishments (the share is 2.5%) started business in 1980's, 3,409 establishments (the share is 8.3%) started business in 1990's, and 5,892 establishments (the share is 14.3%) started business from 2000 through 2004, respectively. The number of new street business has been increasing dramatically since 2007. 2,738 establishments (the share is 6.6% of the whole street business) started business in 2007, 4,357 establishments (the share is 10.5%) started business in 2008, 5,919 establishments (the share is 14.3%) started business in 2009, and 9,158 establishments (the share is 22.2%) started business in 2010, respectively. During this period, the share of the new street business of the new establishments has been gradually increasing (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).

**Figure 5**  
Number of street business by year of starting business. Source: NIS (2013)



**Figure 6**  
 Number of persons engaged by year of starting business in street business.  
 Source: NIS (2013)



Seventh, in the northeast area, there are 4,029 street businesses in Kampong Cham province, and it accounts for 9.6% of the number of the whole street business. In the northwest area, there are 2,870 street businesses in Battambang province, and it accounts for 6.9% of the number of the whole street business. Also, there are 4,197 street businesses in Siem Reap province, and it accounts for 10.0% of the number of the whole street business. In the southeast area, there are 2,195 street businesses in Prey Veng province, and it accounts for 5.3% of the number of the whole street business. In the central area, there are 11,118 street businesses in Phnom Penh capital, and it accounts for 26.6% of the number of the whole street business. Also, there are 2,870 street businesses in Kandal province, and it accounts for 6.9% of the number of the whole street business. The share of the street business of the whole establishments in Phnom Penh capital is 11.6%.

The main features of the street business in Cambodia are (1) very small business, (2) operated by Cambodian, (3) working place for women, and (4) increasing rapidly under the urbanization.

### III. ACTIVITIES OF THE STREET BUSINESS IN CAMBODIA

#### A. Establishment of the Street Business

Among the whole establishment of the street business in Cambodia, “Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles sector” is the main sector categorized by the large segment of the ISIC4. In this sector, there are 24,181 street businesses, and it accounts for 57.9% of the whole street business. The second largest sector is “Accommodation and food service activities sector”. In this sector, there are 12,810 street businesses, and it accounts for 30.7% of the whole street business (see Table 1). In addition, the share of the street business of the whole establishments is 18.4% in “Accommodation and food service activities sector”, and 12.7% in “Information and communication sector”.

**Table 1**  
Number of the street business by industry

	Class of ISIC	Street business	Share by industry (%)	Share to the whole establishments (%)
1)	4721 Retail sale of food in specialized stores	10,883	26.1	34.1
2)	5610 Restaurants and mobile food service activities	8,548	20.5	19.3
3)	5630 Beverage serving activities	4,255	10.2	19.4
4)	9602 Hairdressing and other beauty treatment	1,925	4.6	11.5
5)	4540 Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories	1,867	4.5	11.0
6)	4722 Retail sale of beverages in specialized stores	977	2.3	15.1
7)	4771 Retail sale of clothing, footwear and leather articles in specialized stores	938	2.2	18.0
8)	4730 Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores	926	2.2	16.8
9)	9529 Repair of other personal and household goods	837	2.0	23.1
10)	4741 Retail sale of computers, peripheral units, software and telecommunications equipment in specialized stores	545	1.3	8.3
	Others	10,070	24.1	—
	Total	41,771	100.0	8.3

Source: NIS (2012)

In the street businesses, “Retail sale of food in specialized store” (10,883 establishments, the share of the whole street business is 26.1%), “Restaurants and mobile food service activities” (8,548 establishments, 20.5%), “Beverage serving activities” (4,255 establishments, 10.2%), “Hairdressing and other beauty treatment” (1,925 establishments, 4.6%), and “Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories” (1,867 establishments, 4.5%) categorized by the small segment of the ISIC4 are main activities. In addition, the share of the street business of the whole establishments is 34.1% in “Retail sale of food in specialized stores”, and 23.1% in “Repair of other personal and household goods”.

## B. Employment of Street Business

Among the whole persons engaged in street business in Cambodia, “Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles sector” categorized by the large segment of the ISIC4 is the main sector. In this sector, 35,481 persons are engaged in street businesses, and it accounts for 56.5% of the whole persons engaged in street business. The second largest sector is “Accommodation and food service activities sector”. In this sector, 20,628 persons are engaged in street businesses, and it accounts for 32.9% of the whole persons engaged in street business (see Table 2). In addition, the share of the street business of the whole establishments is 10.6% in “Accommodation and food service activities sector”.

**Table 2**  
Number of persons engaged by industry in the street business

Class of ISIC		Street business	Share by industry (%)	Share to the whole establishments (%)
1)	4721 Retail sale of food in specialized stores	14,514	23.1	28.8
2)	5610 Restaurants and mobile food service activities	14,302	22.8	12.3
3)	5630 Beverage serving activities	6,306	10.0	14.3
4)	4540 Hairdressing and other beauty treatment	2,902	4.6	9.2
5)	9602 Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories	2,493	4.0	7.7
6)	4722 Retail sale of beverages in specialized stores	1,572	2.5	11.3
7)	4771 Retail sale of clothing, footwear and leather articles in specialized stores	1,311	2.1	12.9
8)	4730 Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores	1,393	2.2	9.7
9)	9529 Repair of other personal and household goods	1,044	1.7	20.3
10)	4741 Retail sale of computers, peripheral units, software and telecom equipment in specialized stores	785	1.3	5.9
	Others	16,158	25.7	—
	Total	62,780	100.0	8.3

Source: NIS (2012)

In the street businesses, “Retail sale of food in specialized store” (14,514 persons are engaged, the share of the whole street business is 23.1%), “Restaurants and mobile food service activities” (14,302 persons, the share is 22.8%), “Beverage serving activities” (6,306 persons, the share is 10.0%), “Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories” (2,902 persons, the share is 4.6%), and “Hairdressing and other beauty treatment” (2,493 persons, the share is 4.0%) categorized by the small segment of the ISIC4 are main subsectors in terms of the number of persons engaged (see Table 2). In addition, the share of the persons engaged in the street business of the whole persons engaged is 28.8% in “Retail sale of food in specialized stores”, and 20.3% in “Repair of other personal and household goods”.

### C. Management of Street Business

The total amount of annual revenues of the whole establishments is 12,678 million US dollars. The total amount of annual revenues of the street business is 366 million US dollars, and it accounts for 2.9% of the total amount of annual revenues of the whole establishments. The average amount of annual revenues per establishment other than the street business is 26,575 US dollars. The average amount of annual



revenues of the street business is 8,763 US dollars. The average amount of annual revenues per person other than the street business is 7,693 US dollars. The average amount of annual revenues per person of the street business is 5,831 US dollars (see Table 3 and Table 4).

The total amount of annual profits of the whole establishments is 1,699 million US dollars. The total amount of annual profits of the street business is 79 million US dollars, and it accounts for 4.6% of the total amount of annual profits of the whole establishments. The average amount of annual profit per establishment other than the street business is 3,499 US dollars. The average amount of annual profit per establishment of the street business is 1,881 US dollars. The average amount of annual profit per person other than the street business is 1,013 US dollars. The average amount of annual profit per person of the street business is 1,251 US dollars (see Table 5 and Table 6).

**Table 3**  
Sales

Item	Street business	Share (%)	Others	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)
Sales (million US dollars)	366	2.9	12,312	97.1	12,678	100.0
Average sales (dollars)	8,763	-	26,575	-	25,102	-
Average sales per employee (dollars)	5,831	-	7,693	-	7,623	-

Source: NIS (2013)

**Table 4**  
Number of establishments by sales

Sales	Street business	Share (%)	Others	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)
0	0	0.0	94	0.0	94	0.0
Under 500 dollars	657	1.6	13,449	3.0	14,106	2.8
500 - 999 dollars	2,417	5.8	27,800	6.1	30,217	6.1
1,000 - 1,999 dollars	7,128	17.1	66,348	14.6	73,476	14.8
2,000 - 2,999 dollars	4,790	11.5	41,559	9.1	46,349	9.3
3,000 - 4,999 dollars	7,720	18.5	78,610	17.3	86,330	17.4
5,000 - 7,499 dollars	6,550	15.7	66,107	14.5	72,657	14.6
7,500 - 9,999 dollars	3,852	9.2	42,916	9.4	46,768	9.4
10,000 - 24,999 dollars	5,729	13.7	68,677	15.1	74,406	15.0
25,000 - 49,999 dollars	2,082	5.0	28,028	6.2	30,110	6.1
50,000 dollars and over	846	2.0	20,996	4.6	21,842	4.4
Sub total	41,771	100.0	454,584	100.0	496,355	100.0
Non-response	0	-	8,779	-	8,779	-
Total	41,771	-	463,363	-	505,134	-

Source: NIS (2013)

**Table 5**  
Profit

Item	Street business	Share (%)	Others	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)
Profit (million US dollars)	79	4.6	1,621	95.4	1,699	100.0
Average profit (dollars)	1,881	-	3,499	-	3,365	-
Average profit per employee (dollars)	1,251	-	1,013	-	1,022	-

Source: NIS (2013)

**Table 6**  
Number of establishments by profit

Profit	Street business	Share (%)	Others	Share (%)	Total	Share (%)
Loss	714	1.7	11,681	2.6	12,395	2.5
0 - 249 dollars	3,940	9.4	60,419	13.3	64,359	13.0
250 - 499 dollars	5,218	12.5	49,445	10.9	54,663	11.0
500 - 749 dollars	6,242	14.9	58,108	12.8	64,350	13.0
750 - 999 dollars	3,588	8.6	31,632	7.0	35,220	7.1
1,000 - 1,499 dollars	5,413	13.0	51,422	11.3	56,835	11.5
1,500 - 1,999 dollars	7,047	16.9	62,902	13.8	69,949	14.1
2,000 - 2,999 dollars	3,052	7.3	31,819	7.0	34,871	7.0
3,000 - 4,999 dollars	3,671	8.8	41,386	9.1	45,057	9.1
5,000 dollars and over	2,886	6.9	55,742	12.3	58,628	11.8
Sub total	41,771	100.0	454,556	100.0	496,327	100.0
Non-response	0	-	8,807	-	8,807	-
Total	41,771	-	463,363	-	505,134	-

Source: NIS (2013)

The average rate of annual profit after tax to annual revenues per establishment of the whole establishments is 13.2%. The average rate of annual profit after tax to annual revenues per establishment of the street business is 21.6%. Tokman (1989) reported that the income level in the informal sector is higher than the governmental sector, but lower than the formal private sector in Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru. Evers and Mehmet (1949) reported that the income of 50.9% of female workers in charge of sales activities in the informal sector is lower than the legal minimum wage in the middle area of Java islands, Indonesia. On the other hand, the income level of the street business is not lower than others in Cambodia.

#### IV. BUSINESS MODEL OF THE STREET BUSINESS

##### A. Categorization of the Street Business

Main street businesses in Cambodia are able to classify into three categories. The first group is retailers including (1) retail sale of food in specialized stores, (2) retail sale of beverages in specialized stores, (3) retail sale of clothing, footwear and leather articles in specialized stores, (4) retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores, and (5) retail sale of computers, peripheral units, software and telecommunications

equipment in specialized stores by the small segment of the ISIC4. The second group is restaurants including (6) restaurants and mobile food service activities, and (7) beverage serving activities. The third group is servicers including (8) sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories, (9) hairdressing and other beauty treatment, and (10) repair of other personal and household goods (see Table 7).

**Table 7**  
Categorization of the street business

Category	Group 1 Retailer	Group 2 Restaurant	Group 3 Service
Business	1) Food 2) Beverage 3) Clothing and footwear 4) Gasoline 5) Mobile phone	6) Stall (food) 7) Stall (beverage)	8) Barber 9) Repair of motorcycles 10) Repair of other personal and household goods
Sales and cost	Relatively high in sales and cost	Middle	Relatively low in sales
Profit	Relatively high	Middle	Relatively low

Source: made by author

**Table 8**  
Profitability (street business)

	Class of ISIC	Sales per establishment	Profit per establishment	Profit rate (%)
1	4721 Retail sale of food in specialized stores	13,521	2,446	18.1
2	4722 Retail sale of beverages in specialized stores	7,470	1,900	25.4
3	4771 Retail sale of clothing, footwear and leather articles in specialized stores	8,362	2,128	25.4
4	4730 Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores	9,562	1,917	20.0
5	4741 Retail sale of computers, peripheral units, software and telecommunications equipment in specialized stores	12,272	2,860	23.3
6	5610 Restaurants and mobile food service activities	7,522	1,793	23.8
7	5630 Beverage serving activities	4,162	1,263	30.3
8	9602 Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories	2,410	1,160	48.1
9	4540 Hairdressing and other beauty treatment	4,301	1,361	30.6
10	9529 Repair of other personal and household goods	2,331	921	39.5
	Others	9,096	1,837	20.2
	Total	8,763	1,881	21.5

Source: NIS (2012)

## B. Profit Structure of The Street Business

Three groups of the street business have different profit structures. The sales amount and costs are relatively high in the first group because of the buying and selling merchandise. On the other hand, the sales amount and costs are relatively low in the third group because of the services by hand work. The second group is in the middle of them. The average profit per establishment of the first group is relatively high among the three groups, and relatively low in the third group (see Table 8).

The average profit rate of the first group of the street business is almost same level as other establishments. The average sales amount of the second group of the street business is approximately 60% of other establishments. However, the average profit rate is almost same level. The average sales amount of the third group of the street business is 40-45%, and the average profit is 55-60% of other establishments. As a result, the average profit rate of the third group of the street business is higher than other establishments (see Table 8 and Table9).

Interviews with 24 owners of the street business in Phnom Penh were held from August through October, 2013. Table 10 and Table 11 show the outline of typical examples of the street business. The results of the interviews are consistent with the statistical data of the Economic Census of Cambodia 2011.

**Table 9**  
Profitability (other businesses)

	Class of ISIC	Sales per establishment	Profit per establishment	Profit rate (%)
1	4721 Retail sale of food in specialized stores	14,772	2,607	17.7
2	4722 Retail sale of beverages in specialized stores	15,442	3,376	21.9
3	4771 Retail sale of clothing, footwear and leather articles in specialized stores	13,781	3,573	25.9
4	4730 Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialized stores	191,962	-1,119	-0.6
5	4741 Retail sale of computers, peripheral units, software and telecommunications equipment in specialized stores	21,940	4,934	22.5
6	5610 Restaurants and mobile food service activities	13,060	3,370	25.8
7	5630 Beverage serving activities	6,778	1,977	29.2
8	9602 Sale, maintenance and repair of motorcycles and related parts and accessories	5,355	2,056	38.4
9	4540 Hairdressing and other beauty treatment	10,648	2,306	21.7
10	9529 Repair of other personal and household goods	2,626	929	35.4
	Others	30,733	3,922	12.8
	Total	27,085	3,566	13.2

Source: NIS (2012)

**Table 10**

A case of barber shop on the street

Item	Outline
Price	Adult: 1 dollar, Child: 0.5 dollar
Customers	10 customers / day (less in rainy season)
Sales	Approximately 10 dollars / day
Working day	Everyday
Average sales per month	Approximately 250 dollars
Assets	Equipment: stand, mirror, chair, Supplies: hairdressing goods
Rent	1 dollar / day
Loan	Not available
Technics	Learn by themselves

Source: made by author

**Table 11**

A case of beverage shop on the street

Item	Outline
Price	Sugar palm juice: 0.25 dollar
Customers	60 customers / day (less in rainy season)
Sales	Approximately 15 dollars / day
Working day	Everyday
Average sales per month	Approximately 350 dollars
Assets	Equipment: Stand, squeezer, material: Sugar palm, lime, ice
Rent	1 dollar / day
Loan	Not available
Technics	Learn by themselves

Source: made by author

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper describes (1) the real situation and features of the street businesses in Cambodia, (2) the real activities of the street businesses, and (3) the profit structure of the street businesses. As a result, the facts that (1) the street business is one of important activities in the Cambodian economy, (2) the street business is the work place mainly for women, and (3) the average profit rates, and the average profit per employee of the street business is relatively higher than other establishments are found.

Tokman (1989) pointed out some problems of the street business in Costa Rica, Colombia, and Peru, such as the difficulty of access to the finance and technology, the care of welfare, and the stand point as informal. The situation is as same as the street business in Cambodia. Moreover, critical issues for the street business in Cambodia are (1) the heavy burden of the rents collected by the governments etc., (2) the lack of opportunities taking useful job trainings, and (3) the difficulties to access loans. Banks and microfinance institutions excluding small NGO's do not make loans to the street businesses in Cambodia.

Cambodian economy would be achieving continuous economic growth. The street business would be contributes to the economic growth and poverty reduction in Cambodia. The key issues are to alleviate these constrains.

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