

## A Study on Seating Spaces on Shopping Streets in Japan

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**Abstract.** This study examined the current status of the installation and use of seating spaces on shopping streets, which serve as resting places for customers and make the streets more shopping-friendly. The purpose of the study is to seek ways to revitalize shopping streets, which have been in decline due to lifestyle changes such as the development of electronics industry and online shopping, an increase in automobile traffic, low fertility, and an aging population.

**Keywords:** shopping street, seating space, low fertility, aging population

### 1 Introduction

Buying things is not only an often necessary behavior for survival but also a way of spending leisure time. Shopping streets, where such behavior occurs, are therefore considered an important place in people's daily lives. The streets, as part of a city, reflect the lifestyle and history of the city and play a role in creating the atmosphere unique to that city. They also serve as places for communication and social exchange as well as for purchasing everyday goods. Today, these streets are in decline as a result of lifestyle changes such as the development of internet-related technologies, the increase of motor vehicle dependency, low fertility, and an aging population. With the rising consumers' supports to the large-scale shops, the central shopping districts are decaying that the number of empty shop lots are increasing remarkably. The sharp increase of online shopping, which has attracted much attention from researchers in recent years, has also contributed to their decline.

This study examined the current status of the installation and use of seating spaces on shopping streets, and then demonstrated the effectiveness of those spaces in revitalizing shopping streets.

## 2 The current status of the installation and use of seating spaces

### 2.1 The current status of the installation of seating spaces by the type of shopping street

In order to explore the current status of the installation of seating spaces on shopping streets, a field survey was conducted on a total of 88 shopping streets-14 in Chiba Prefecture and 74 in Tokyo. The characteristics of the 88 streets in terms their surrounding environment and street conditions are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The surrounding environment and street conditions of the shopping streets surveyed

Street conditions	Surrounding environment	Residential area	In front of train station	Apartment complex	Shrine or Temple	Roadside	Business office street	Total
Driveway and sidewalk (separated by lines)		22 (25.0%)	6 (6.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	31 (35.2%)
Pedestrian zone		11 (12.5%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (21.6%)
Arcade		4 (4.5%)	4 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (9.0%)
Pedestrian zone with roof		0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (8.0%)
Driveway and sidewalk with no separation		6 (6.8%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (8.0%)
Driveway and sidewalk (level difference)		2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.3%)	2 (2.3%)	7 (8.0%)
Driveway and sidewalk (level difference + guardrail)		2 (2.3%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (5.7%)
Driveway and sidewalk (level difference + roof)		1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	3 (3.4%)
Driveway and sidewalk (level difference + guardrail + roof)		0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)
Total		48 (54.5%)	21 (23.9%)	7 (8.0%)	4 (4.5%)	5 (5.7%)	3 (3.4%)	88 (100.0%)

Seating space in this study refers to a place with benches which are located by a street lined with shops or in a public place such as a square. Private seating spaces inside shops were not included in the study. According to results from the survey, up to 382 seating spaces were installed in the 88 shopping streets. Data of those seating spaces are presented in the following table.

**Table 2.** Data of the seating spaces surveyed

Item	Content	Figure
Installer	private	299(78.3%)
	public	83(21.7%)
Installation site	Semi-private space	171(44.8%)

### 3 The current status of use of seating spaces by installation site

#### 3.1 The current status of use of seating spaces in semi-private spaces

Seating spaces were initially meant to serve as places where people could sit and rest. However, the field survey found that they were used not only for resting but also for various other purposes including promoting and decorating shops. The examples of use of seating space are presented in the following figure.



Fig. 1. The examples of use of seating space

#### 3.2 The current status of use of seating spaces in semi-public spaces and public spaces

According to the results of the field study, seating spaces in public places were used not only for resting but also for meeting and social exchange.

## 4 Conclusion

Seating spaces on shopping streets were initially meant to serve as resting places for customers. However, they have been used for various other purposes such as promoting shops, meeting and social exchange. As customers use the spaces for various purposes, they naturally spend more time on the shopping streets, which in turn facilitate their shopping activities, revitalizing the shopping streets.

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