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**Department of Sociology
The University of Hong Kong**

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Master of Social Sciences in Media, Culture and Creative Cities

**SOCI 8030 Capstone Project
Final Report**

Research topic: Disappearing of traditional stores on Shanghai Street: How can/ cannot the traditional stores survive?

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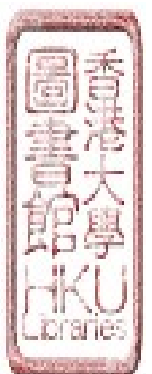
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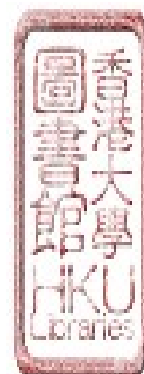
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Abstract

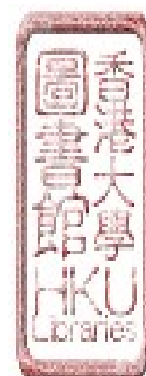
Disappearing of traditional stores on Shanghai Street: How can/ cannot the traditional stores survive?

When different traditional stores face the same era and are located at the same place, they are unique and using different tactics to survive. We always uphold the warm social network of an old store but overlook the presence of the traditional store until we know its deadline. In this paper, it explores a more multi-dimensional understanding of traditional stores on Shanghai Street. It argues that two main elements, which are interpersonal relationship and crafts, as two tactics for them to survive. Both of them can be nurtured with a stable place. A place is vital for the fate of traditional stores. No 102-228 Shanghai Street are targeted. Study of press report, participate observation, casual talks and interviews are the main ways to explore their stories on this disappearing street.



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1. Introduction

Hong Kong as a metropolitan, people tend to avoid eye contact with another in their fast-paced life, and now, people tend to avoid eye contact with the city as Abbas (1997) mentioned. The tourists may be the group of people who still value the time of “seeing the city” but unfortunately, most of them only gaze on landmarks and tourist spots exotically. If we really spend time on “seeing the city”, what we find dominating the streets are shopping malls and chains stores especially pharmacies, electronic and jewelry shops.

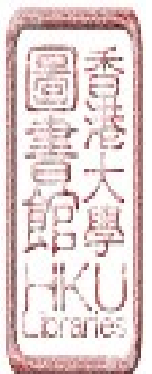
It seems that there is increasing awareness of the disappearing of local individual shops or traditional shops in the social space of Hong Kong. Actually, they usually gain public attention when they are soon die in this society. The mainstream discourse are praising the social network and upholding the touching qualities of people (人情味) of the stores. These kind of grand narrations are no longer new to us. However, are we really treasure the presence of these traditional stores? And, are we just satisfied by all these superficial and simplified descriptions of traditional stores?

In this project, I would like to have a closer look of the traditional stores before they are ready to close down and try to enrich the narrations of traditional store. Unique, vivid and lively traditional stores are waiting us to explore and appreciate. As it is a fruitful topic, I choose to focus on the tactics that traditional stores use to maintain their business.

2. Literature review

What is a traditional store?

I will first started by stating the working definition of a traditional store in this project. There is no unified and recognized definition used in this research area and it is not difficult to find out even organizations, researchers try to avoid giving a definition of it. Therefore, I try to summarize some ideas coming from the discussions of my academic supervisor and project supervisor. Also, I would like to take my project supervisor’s advice and take reference of UNESCO's definition of “intangible cultural heritage”. Finally, six core elements of traditional stores are raised out by me and used in this capstone project. In other words, it is the working definition of traditional store and the criteria for me to screen out non-traditional stores in this project. Here are the six core elements. i) Year that the shop opened; ii) Ways of trade practice; iii) Products or services that the shop provides; iv) Relationship



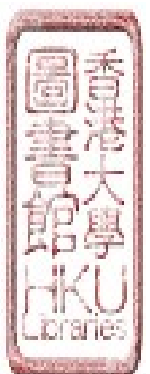
between the employers and employees; v) Presence of traditional craftsmanship; vi) Place that the shop locates.

If I found a store like Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) which has opened for more than 30 years ago. They use traditional ways such as face-to-face interaction and verbal description of the products to sell and provide their services and probably it is related to craft. The employees of the stores are blood-related or worked for many years and committed. It would be the ideal typical case of a traditional store.

There are always exceptional cases. For instance, a store has started many years ago but it locates at a huge and new shopping mall. Or, a store that have close relationship among owners and employees for many years but it sells something not related to craft. Are they traditional stores? People may have different thoughts and interpretations. It is arguable. The interpretation of whether it is traditional or not is somehow subjective and maybe it is the reason why no one has tried to give it a straight definition. Let us put this issue aside as it is not my main focus in this project. Rather, in this project, I have started by picking up some stores that are less arguable and they fulfill most of the criteria as I have stated as a traditional store.

Disappearing of place

Abbas(1997) described Hong Kong as a place of disappearance in colonial period, and in postcolonial time, disappearing is still happening. He tried to divide Hong Kong built space into three types which are *placeless* buildings, *merely local* buildings and *anonymous* buildings. *Placeless* buildings have no local memories and just landed in Hong Kong but actually it could land in anywhere in the world such as the impressive multinational hotels. *Merely local* buildings mean that they are largely belonging to another historical time and they exist till now and they are placed at the economic margins of Hong Kong. They have a close link with Hong Kong's history and have many interesting stories behind. More importantly, the third one, *anonymous* buildings, contribute the largest part of Hong Kong architecture. They include non-descript residential and commercial buildings which people may not pay attention or spend a second more on them but they represent the ordinary and daily life of many Hong Kong people. For the traditional stores on Shanghai Street, they



could be mainly classified into two kinds which are merely local and anonymous buildings by Abbas's definition.

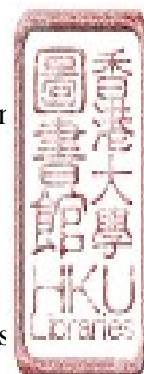
Abbas did not explain much on what objects, events and places are disappearing and here, he spares a space for us to explore. Certainly, I think the traditional stores on Shanghai Street are valuable and worthy for us to study and have a closer look of them as they are vanishing. As Lui (1989) mentioned, it is important to study the objects, events and places in city culture. There is imminence and urgency for us to see the objects, events and places of traditional stores on Shanghai Street now. Let us hear their stories without delay.

When traditional stores meet “consuming life”

Bauman (2005) pointed out that we are living in a society of consumers as the society judge a person according to their consumption pattern and capacity. In this society of consumers, people are guided by “consumer syndrome” including their perception and action. One of the characteristics of “consumer syndrome” is the value of novelty is much higher than its lastingness, thus it shortens the lifespan of a product. People treasure fast-fulfilled satisfaction and enjoy new sensation rather than long duration and delayed satisfaction. In other words, this “consumer syndrome” is about speed, excess and waste. Like what Bauman said, these are the live we have in a liquid modern society. For all these characteristics of the consumers in the society, it seems that business focusing on long-lasting products and fine handcraft which need long production time have lose their advantages. In this report, I would show how some of the traditional businesses in Shanghai Street adopt, handle or deal with this changing society.

Tactics of the traditional stores

Strategies and *tactics* are two important terms raised by Certeau which are commonly used in modern science, military and politics. Certeau (1984) stressed the distinction between two concepts. *Strategies* refers to a subject delimit a place as its own and work like a base to manage the relationship of its targets or handle the threats. In other words, to have a good strategy is to find a good place working out its own will and power. For Certeau, a *tactic* is an art of the weak. There is no delimitation of the place, but it is a clever calculated action that takes advantage of the chances and opportunity of the moment. It is more mobile, flexible and less expected, even cannot find its proper locus. If we put these ideas into business field, the tradition shops on Shanghai Street also have their special and unique strategies and tactics



to survive in this challenging time and place. The close interpersonal relationship and micro-interaction within and among the traditional shops and the work of handcrafts are seen as two critical tactics for them to maintain business in the street.

Three layers of interpersonal relationship as a tactic

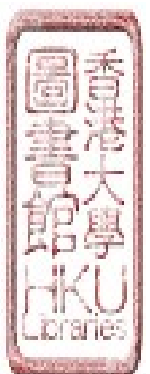
Louis Wirth (1938) suggests there are three layers of interpersonal relationship. The closest layer is the first layer. It focuses on human relationship, face to face direct contact and interaction. Therefore, it mainly includes blood-related and other closed relationship. The next one is the second layer interpersonal relationship. People who have relationship classified as second layer mean they still have direct contact or interaction but they have loose relationship. They focus on social role, social function and mostly economic related relationship. For the third layer, strangeness and indirect contact or interaction are the characteristics. Moreover, they have relationship that largely relate to commercial standardization. Usually, people use these three layers to describe different interpersonal relationship among different places, different time and different context. However, in this project, we could try to see how interpersonal relationships naturally become a tactic for traditional stores to survive.

Craftsmanship as a tactic

Craftsmanship is a basic impulse of men which a man desires to do a job nicely due to its own sake only (Sennett, 2008). It means his labor of doing craft is not a mean to another end but the craft itself is the mean and the end. The pride in work is a vital reward for craftsmen and it gives them energy. It is difficult to do a thing in a perfect and excellent way for its own sake only, so a craftsman usually face frustration and conflicting feelings. Sennett also stressed that craftsmen are unique group in the society as they are very engaged people. They are important and play a role that bringing inspirations to our society. And in this report, the pride and unique characteristics of craftsmen would be demonstrated as one of the tactics for the traditional craft stores to maintain on Shanghai Street.

Interpersonal relationship and craft as the framework

I would try to study how the traditional stores can or cannot survive in this business environment and look into their tactics to maintain business if they can survive. I am also interested of *micro-interaction* among different people within the community and the role of *craft* in traditional stores. Two of them are viewed as the vital elements or tactics for the



traditional to maintain in Shanghai Street and the context of Hong Kong. These are my research questions of the capstone project. Furthermore, the concepts of *micro-interaction* and *craft* would be my main focus and framework to demonstrate a closer look of traditional stores in this report.

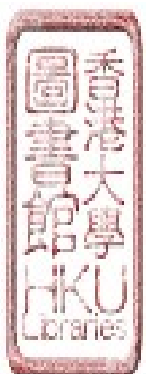
3. Methodology

My fieldwork on Shanghai Street was carried out between March to July 2015. No. 102 to 228 Shanghai Street is chosen as my research area of this study. There are around 120 shops in this selected area, and about 20 of them are classified as traditional stores by my observation and screening.

There are four reasons that this part of Shanghai Street has been selected. First, traditional shops in and around Yau Ma Tei wet market were focused in the early stage of this study when I had meeting with academic and project advisor. Shanghai Street is a street next to that wet market. Second, later on, I try to direct my research focus on examining the traditional stores on Shanghai Street. I found it is worthy to study and explore. Shanghai Street is an old street which was completed in 1887 and it was one of the most prosperous road before. Many traditional stores have their unique and long stories too. Third, it is a long street which is about 2.3 km and No. 102-228 is the area which is closest to the wet market. Last but not least, I found there are relatively more numbers of traditional stores located on this selected area on Shanghai Street. As a result, No. 102 to 228 Shanghai Street become the target of this project.

I conducted 6 times of open-ended interviews, did many times casual talks with the traditional shops owners, had 1 phone interview with professional in this field (Patsy Cheng, who is the director of SEE Network), had 3 times group discussions and meetings with Patsy Cheng and other SEE Network staff, Phoebe Chau and my academic supervisor, Dr. CH Ng. and did around 10 times participation observation. All interviews and conversations are conducted in Cantonese and I try to translated into English.

Conducting interviews and having casual talks with traditional store' owners are important in this project as I hope to know and examine the views of them. Especially, it is suitable for them to raise out their own strategies and tactics in running the business and mention how they value their own craft. Moreover, interview and discussions with my CP is critical too.



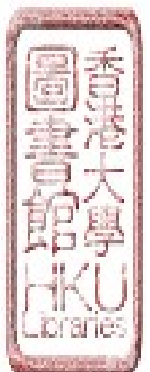
They have experience of studying traditional shops and streets, and they could provide good reference and ideas about traditional stores.

I choose to have participation observation in this study. The observation is very open in the beginning. I tried to write down and study my field notes after many times of observation. Later on, as I found out, most of the micro-interaction among people and the craft of these traditional stores are not easy to describe verbally and observation would be a better way to explore. Therefore, in the later stage of the participate observation, I mainly focus on the interpersonal relationship, craft and craftsman on Shanghai Street.

Later in this research process, I found out the traditional store owners were fatigue about being interviewed, and at the same time, I found there are different reports of traditional shops in the Internet. Therefore, I choose to do a secondary research which is the study of Chinese press report to look at how the media represent traditional stores to the public. The period of 2005-2015 is targeted. I searched a few keywords including "Shanghai Street(上海街) and Embroidery (繡)", "Nam Hing Loong (南興隆)" and "Fung Moon Kee Embroidery (馮滿記)", by WiseNews. 28 news in total that I have found and studied including 9 news of Nam Hing Loong (南興隆)", 8 news of Fung Moon Kee Embroidery (馮滿記) and 11 news of both traditional shoes. Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) and Fung Moon Kee Embroidery (馮滿記) are specially selected to study because these two traditional store were closed down in March, 2015, which coincide with my studying period.

4. Press report : Only shine at the end of lifetime

Among 28 subjects of the Chinese press reports, 5 of them focus on the price or rent of the traditional stores, 5 of them try to raise our a single reason explaining the close down of the traditional stores, 4 of them mention the attitude of owner toward the close down of stores, 6 of them only tells the fact that the number of traditional stores are decreasing or there are two traditional stores close down soon. Among these 28 press reports, only 3 of them do not report the close down of the traditional store. Moreover, only 1 press report mention about the preserving of handcrafts, and others are just accept it reluctantly. As my study period of



the press is 2005-2015, but, before 2009, no report press about these two traditional shops are found.

The media are more likely to pay attention to the close down of the traditional stores. When a traditional store have planned and announced their closing time, suddenly, many media feel interested to report the news. Before that, the daily life and value of traditional shops seem cannot attract the media to report. While they are reporting the news relate to traditional stores, one or two reasons of closing down is being emphasized. Or they just quote a few words of the store owner, and it probably simplifies the complicated reasons into single one. For instance, “There is a declining of dress coat industry, two more dress coat stores are closing down (裙褂業式微 上海街再少 2 間老字號)” and Nam Hing Loong sold out the ground floor store and costs 29 millions (南興隆 2990 萬沽上海街地鋪). It overlooks the complexity of the traditional stores. Furthermore, More focus is placed on the price, rent and money related issue but not other aspects of the traditional stores.

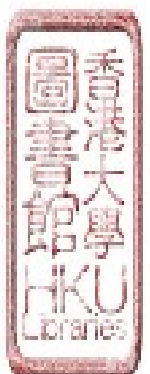
Therefore, in this paper, more dimensions of traditional stores are focused. I will show more about their daily life of handling the challenges and maintaining the business. Also, I try to demonstrate how their micro-interactions and crafty work become tactics naturally.

5. Tactics to maintain the business

As I mentioned before, even all stores are facing the same ages and similar economic challenges, traditional store’ stories are unique and fruitful than we read in news. Strategies and tactics for them to survive is one of the main concerns of this report. Actually, most of the ways for them to survive are passive and not planned. It matches with the definition of *tactics*, an art of weak. While the traditional are struggling in this society in this age, it seems that they are the weak one in the society facing the dominated one, which is the threat of chained shops. In the following, I will raise out two crucial elements that facilitate the traditional shops to maintain which are the *interpersonal relationship* and *craft*. Both of them are happened and formed naturally and seem following a rational line in the context of Shanghai Street.

A) Micro-interaction and interpersonal relationship

i) Family members: Somewhere between close and far away



The interpersonal relationship is subtle and complicated. It seems that closer relationship could be found among the family members for those who always stay in the traditional shop together. One of the owner's son, Mr. Fung mentioned:

We (My father and I) have good relationship. When I was young, I came to the store every day after school. For most of the time, we could not escape facing each other. Therefore, we always chat with each other in the stores especially on the dinner table. You know, at that time, we always eat in the store. I think we chat more in the store rather than at home. We are quiet at home as we do not want to speak to each other anymore. (Mr. Fung, Nam Hing Loong)

For Fung's family, it seems that traditional store is facilitating the face-to-face communication among two generation. However, the owner of Man Wah Tailor (文華洋服), Mr. Lee faces another situation. Mr. Lee mentioned that their family members are "far away" from each other. The next generation of Mr. Lee do not stay much or visit him in the store. They have demonstrated other kinds of family relationship:

They are busy nowadays, so they seldom come to see me here. I understand.....Sometimes, my children bring their children to see me. But, in special days and festivals only. For normal days, they seldom come to shop to visit me. (Mr. Lee, Mah Wah Tailor)

When Mr. Lee thought of his children and grand-children, he look downs quietly. It seems that he is not satisfied with the relationship with his family member. He is disappointed but at the same time, he is considerate and never complain. The family relationship is loose in some sense in this case. But Mr. Lee mentioned that he enjoys the life in the stores and refuse to retire now. I think close and warm interpersonal relationship with Shanghai Street neighbors would be one of the reason why he does not feel alone there.

ii) Close neighbors, customers and employees

It is not a news to us that the interpersonal relationship is close in many old district and traditional stores located on Shanghai Street is not an exception. I can totally smell the closeness of the neighbor and employees with the traditional store owners. In my observation for most of the time I passed by the stores, I saw there are "friends" of the owners come. They come, visit and chat in the stores. Who are those friends? From their conversation, most of the friends are the store keepers nearby, neighbors who live nearby and friends known for



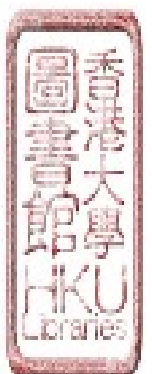
a long time. They care each other and become one of the source of strength to each other every day. Dai Dat Stationery (大達文具行) is one of the stores that I feel the love and closeness. When I was interviewing and talking to Mr. Chan (陳伯) who is the owner of Dai Dat Stationery (大達文具行). A middle age man came in and bought two staplers. At the same time, he cared and asked about the store owner health. And said:

How are you, Mr. Chan? How is your healthy today? Please take good care of yourself. (A middle aged man, who is the friend of Mr. Chan, Dai Dat Stationery)

And he kept on caring everything about Mr. Chan. Through their conversation, I know the customer is the shop keeper nearby and have been Mr. Chan's customer for a long time. And I can see the direct face-to-face interaction and support among them. the owner of Man Wah Tailor (文華洋服), Mr. Lee is another similar case. When I was interviewing Mr. Lee, his "friends" walked around the store and greeted to him twice within thirty minutes. Actually, there were many times that I passed by his stores and I chose not to go inside because he was chatting with his "friends" happily. Furthermore, he said:

I almost know everyone on the street, even the shop keepers in the wet market. (Mr. Lee, Mah Wah Tailor)

The social tie among the stores nearby or even the whole street are close. Neighbors and customers are like family members and old friends. Employees are another group of "family members". For many traditional stores, the owners hired more than ten workers to work in the companies as they had more than one branches. However, the heyday of the store have passed away. One a few employees are still working in those traditional stores. In my observation, actually it is difficult to differentiate which employees are the blood-related family members and who are not. For these employees who have worked and committed so long in the traditional stores, we have very close relationship with the owners' family. Even, they treat each other as family members.



iii) Frenemy

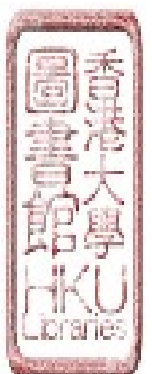
Only friend or enemy, close and far away may not be the best or most suitable words to describe their relationship. I found paradoxical relationship among the traditional stores:

We (Nam Hing Loong and Fung Moon Kee Embroidery) treat each other nicely, have lunch together, exchange business trips and even borrow products from each other. We even close up at the same date. Actually, I don't know why they (Fung Moon Kee Embroidery) soon close up. I have good relationship with all the same industries nearby except one embroidery. We have bad relationship as one of our previous employee (embroidery maker) left us and went to the shop opposite to us. And he asked our clients to leave us too so we are angry with him. (Mr. Fung, Nam Hing Loong)

The son of owner of Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) Mr. Fung said with smile. He has many friends and enemies on this street where he has grown for more than 30 years. The memories of helping each other, quarreling with opposite shop, exchanging business trips make his life in Shanghai street become more fruitful. Sometimes, it is impossible to describe who is our friend or enemy. Maybe, frenemy is a more appropriate word to represent the relationship among the people among the traditional stores.

Summary of micro-interaction and interpersonal relationship

Firstly, as I mentioned before, there are three layers of interpersonal relationship according to Louis Wirth (1938). The closest is the first layer, then the second layer, and the third layer would be the most far away and strange. As we can see, unsurprisingly, most of the relationship among the traditional stores can be classified as the first and second layers of interpersonal relationship. However, I would argue that their relationship are more complicated than that. Three layers of interpersonal relation is not sufficient to describe the subtle and unique relationship among the family members, employers and employees, sellers and buyers and sellers in same industry and on the same street. Frenemy may be a better word to represent as the traditional stores have located at Shanghai Street for long time, they have



walked through different period of time in Hong Kong. Love and hate are generating at the same time.

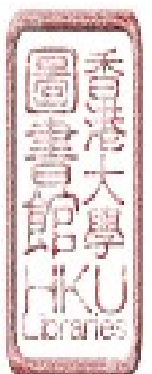
Secondly, it seems that the close relationship is difficult to form in our society nowadays. However, the relationship of frenemy may act as a tactic for the traditional stores to survive in the context on Shanghai Street. For instance, they exchange business ideas and borrow products from each other. They share the information of their product importers. Close social network can help them to maintain their business. They come together naturally in this challenging time and against the threat of the huge chained shops. At the same time, the mutual support among the stores are very important. Some of the store owners thought of closing down the shop in the past. For the critical moment, the emotional support and close relationship are particularly important for them. It becomes one of the reasons that they stay there as they know they are not alone to face this challenging era.

Thirdly, place and time are two essential elements for the relationship to form and build up. There is nothing to say if they have no place to run their business on Shanghai Street. Actually, most all traditional stores own the shop by their own. It is the first and the essential asset that they should have to maintain their business there. If they have this economic capital, they have the entry ticket to maintain and survive on Shanghai Street and start to build up unique relationship with the neighbors.

B) Craftsman at work

i) Superiority of a craftsman: The pride

As Sennett (2008) said, when a man desires to do a job well only due to its own sake, he is the craftsman. The craft itself is no longer the mean only but the end of his labor. Therefore, the craftsmen usually have the feeling of superiority of what they make and proud of himself. It is the important source of energy to facilitate them to work continually. I would see and smell the pride of craftsman when I had interviews with them. When Mr. Lee of Man Wah Tailor (文華洋服) were explaining what is a “good suit”, he kept on explaining, explaining and explaining.

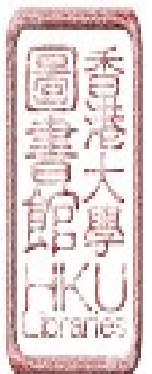


In the past, people had higher standard of a suit. Everything must be accurate even an inch. However, time has changed now. People do not know what is a “good suit”. For example, they do not care about the length of sleeves. They even do not care how to wear a suit, but only focus on what they said “fashion”... (Mr. Lee, Mah Wah Tailor)

When he was talking, convenience and light are shining in his eyes and I can see his sincere toward the suit he makes by hand. I also know how he care about the craft. It is just like what Sennett said, the pride of a craftsman. He appreciates what he is doing, and think it has better quality than other. This kind of pride helps Mr. Lee to differentiate him from himself. At the same time, it gives him strength to continue his craftwork. When he gleams on his own product, he has the satisfaction. The sincere of a craftsman could be seen in the case of Miss Wong, who is a female hand-maker of Chinese Wedding Gown (裙褂) working in Capital Embroidery (京華禮服繡品公司) too. Her colleagues rejected my interview because Miss Wong was so concentrated on the craft in hand. She even did not put up her head and watched me for a second. She chose to put her eyes on the Chinese Wedding Gown and kept making it. I know, it is what I said, the superiority of a craftsman. She is so professional and respect what she is doing. Also, she concerns about the quality of her craftwork. The craft itself is an end of her labor, as the craft is more than a product of trading only.

ii) The virtues of the hand of Craftsman

The skill of hands, are the soul for a craftsman. In the selected area of Shanghai Street I have studied in this project, I found most of the traditional stores such as Suit tailor, embroidery, painting and mirror making are related to craft work. Their hands are appealing to me. I would say non-stop working, long-committed, full of physical labor and do-everything-by-himself are their hands’ characteristics. Sennett (2008) describe the hands of a craftsman in a detailed way in his book. He mentioned how to grasp something by fingers, how to use the fingertip to play the instrument and how the hands interact with eyes etc. He paid much attention to the skill of a hand as the hand is so important for the work of craft.

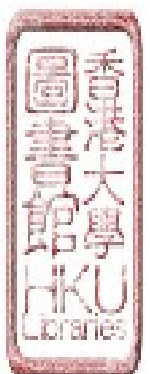


I try to observe in the field and especially pay attention to the hand of the skilled craft worker on Shanghai Street. And I found out the their hands are worthy to describe not only due to their contribution of craft, but also the virtue of their hands. Those hands are hard working without rest. Mr. Lee, the owner of Man Wah Tailor, is the suit tailor who make the male suit by hand. Every time I pass through his stores, one of the two screens can be seen. He must be chatting with friends and neighbors. Or, his hands are working hard with the suit making.

An another example is Kang Ming Picture Frame & Glass (鏡明畫框). Mr. Chan is third generation of the founder of this traditional store. When I passed through his shop, he always very busy at working as he does everything by himself. He leads two of his brother to run the business too. He likes to do everything by himself. Even when the products are transported to his shops, he uses his own hand to carry and move the products such as the mirrors and paintings and pack it tidily in his frame and glass store. I can see the Do-It-Myself spirit inside him with a non-stop working hand.

Moreover, many craftsmen are long-committed as they have spent a long period of time staying in Shanghai Street and work with the craft. Mr. Lam is the manager of Hong Kong branch of Fong Moon Kee (馮滿記). He has been in the traditional store for half a century. As I witnessed the close down of Fong Moon Kee (馮滿記), he showed complicated feeling and expression for the last few days of the store.

In Sennett description of a craftsman, craftsman is a broad idea that include all people that do a job well due to its own sake only, and the craft itself is the mean and the end. I think in traditional stores, we can always see this element. For instance, Mr. Chan is the present owner of Hing Wah Stationery (興華文具行). His store sells stationery. However, the pen holder placed in the middle of the store attracted me because it is hand-made by himself. I do think he is regarded as a craftsman in Sennett's concept. All of these are the virtues and uniqueness of a craftsman which gain our respect.



iii) Paradoxical feelings toward the disappearing of traditional handcrafts

It is not difficult to find that the traditional stores owners and workers have contradictive expressions and thoughts about the disappearing of traditional handcraft and thus, the whole industry of their own. Among our interaction, Mr. Lee of Man Wah Tailor expressed much contradictive feelings:

I am so glad that my son could do a high-paid job, he chose not to stay here. (Mr. Lee, Man Wah Tailor)

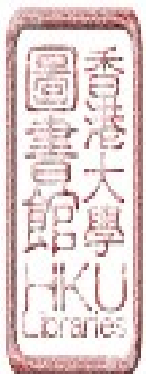
In the same day, he told me that he felt disappointed and helpless as his next generation will not continue his business and handcraft. It shows that he feels uncertain about the future of embroidery and the whole industry. He knows the heyday of embroidery has passed, and he cannot see the hope in the near future, at least before he dies. Therefore he would be worry if his son does the same with him, at the same time, he hopes that his skills and crafts can be continued and inherited. We can see his complicated thoughts toward the close down of traditional stores too:

It is not a pity if I die and the store closes. (Mr. Lee, Man Wah Tailor)

However, when he said this, his face looked quite sad with wry smile. It is difficult to use words to describe the contradictive feelings when they face the close down of the store. If you see his facial expression, you know, his words are not easy but heavy.

As a craftsman, Mr. Lee concerns about the standard and quality of his own Chinese Wedding gown. He is a person that insist the principles especially something relate to his craftwork. However, when he would like to maintain the business, he still need to change his pattern, which we called tactics. For instance, some customers would like to have shorter sleeves. In Mr. Lee's eyes, it is not professional. But still, he tries to fulfill the demand of different customers. Between your profession and other demand, he always need to sacrifice and compromise. I can see his contradictive feelings for what he is doing.

iv) Committing father Versus drifting son

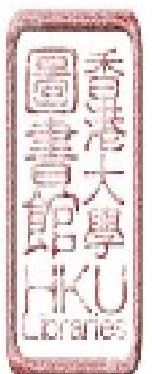


This may not be representative but I think it is a interesting case to share. As it is very similar to the case of a book, *Corrosion of Character in flexible capitalism* which was written by Richard Sennett in 1988. In Nam Hing Loong (南興隆), the current owner of the store is Mr. Fung, who is 63 years old. He has committed more than half of his lifetime to work in the store. He regards Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) and Shanghai Street as his home. he seldom leaves this district even he finish his duty in the store. As he is a hard working and patient person, he gives himself no holidays. He does not have much variation in his life. But, he works and accumulate achievement, gain respect and recognition through his effort paid in Nam Hing Loong (南興隆).

However, his son is totally another story. His son, Mr. Fung is now 32 years old. He has changed job for many times. While I was interviewing him, he said he has just quitted the job in United States and came back to Hong Kong. For him, the friendships built in Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) are relatively long-term comparing to his other relationships. Many relationship are short-lived as he always moves. He has refused to continue the business affirmatively as he thinks it is too hard for him. Using Sennett's term, he feels the sense of drift about his work, his relationships and his life.

Summary of craftsman at work

Craft is a critical element in traditional stores. As I mentioned before, while we are living in a consuming society, we may have the “consumer syndrome”. We overlook the lastingness of a product and we do not pay attention to the production process of a product. Speed is the first priority. Our hands are typing on computers, smart phones and many people works. However, have we used one more minute to pay attention to our hands which have virtues? do we still appreciate what we are dong every day? Craft could regards as one of the tactics of traditional stores because the high-quality of craft are still encouraged and practiced. Pride of craftsman can still be seen in those stores. It is the uniqueness of a traditional stores comparing with the chained shops. It could be a very important factor to attract the customer,



thus construct a customer base who appreciate craftwork. The business can survive as they are not in mainstream but they find their role and specialty in this society.

Other tactics

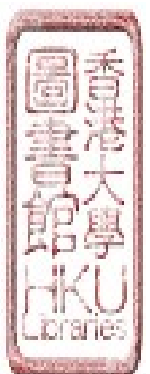
Actually, except interpersonal relationship and crafts, there are other tactics for the stores to survive on Shanghai Street. However, this report would not include all. Only one case I would like to highlight and lead us to a reflection. Wong On Embroidery Goods (永安繡莊) have its own tactics to face the changing need in the district. He adds English on their signboard to attract non-local consumers and new immigrants. Also, it sells the cheaper bedclothes and curtain to attract consumer with less purchasing power. However, when I looked into this traditional stores, they no longer selling Chinese wedding dress although they still called themselves an embroidery. Can we still say that it is their tactic to maintain the business? Can we still call it a traditional store? Or they are just using the name of traditional stores to do the business?

6. Implications

i) Same era, Same street, Same core elements; Different tactics, Different attitudes

Among all these representations of traditional stores, two tactics are found in the blood of traditional stores which are craftsman and human relationship. They are naturally formed and they are the core nature of the traditional stores. I argue that these two tactics which are the valuable assets and capitals for them to fight with chained stores. How can these two tactics related to economic gain? From the interviews and participate observation, we can summarize a few points. 1) Sharing: Share business tips and products ; 2) Support: Emotional support from neighbors, employees and customers; 3) Superiority: Pride of craftsman and good quality of craft; 4) Hand virtues: Hard working and long committed hands. These are the main elements of the traditional stores can strengthen them to survive.

In this report, a multi-dimensional traditional stores are showed. Especially, we can see deeper that different stores are using different tactics to maintain their business. They have varied or even sometimes contradictive attitudes toward the fade of stores, the future of themselves and the role of craft in this particular time on Shanghai Street. Within this half



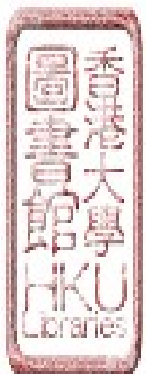
year, I have witnessed three traditional stores closing down. Two of them located at the targeted area while the other one was nearby. Actually, we have very different ideas and attitudes of closing down. One sharing are particularly touched my heart. While some of traditional stores “choose” to close down due to personal reasons or financial reason, some of them use “quit” as a tactic to make their life. Actually some of them choose to stay as Mr. Chan of Kang Ming Picture Frame and Glass (鏡明畫框) thinks leaving Shanghai Street is a temptation as the real estate agents always find them and give him good offer. However, he would like to stay to serve the regulars and people around continually.

Although they are different tactics to handle, different attitude towards the same era, there is still one point that we can confirm. Place is the basic assumption for them to maintain the business. And it will leads us to another topic. How can the growth of craftsmanship and human relationship relate to place?

ii) Place as a critical factor to nurture

Almost all traditional stores I reached told me that, the first capital they should have to maintain the business is their own place. It means the business store must be owned by themselves. It is like the basic requirement. Not surprisingly, it is due to financial concern, thus, it affects the stability of the running their business. In my observation, as I stated it before, place is the critical element that nurture the two tactics of traditional stores.

According to Tim Cresswell (2004), a place is not simply mean a room, a town or a nation. A place is somewhere people give it a meaning. In other words, a place is a meaningful location. Cresswell (2004) also stated that there is a “sense of place” which is the emotional and subjective attachment toward a place. As Hayden (1995) stated, the urban landscapes of a city are the storehouses of social memories. All features including trees, streets, stores and other patterns of settlement are framing the lives of people especially the local citizens. Therefore, all tangible or intangible things in the urban landscape construct people identity as they experience there. Also, all these urban landscape have specific meaning to local citizens.



Both scholars highlighted the importance of a place and its meaning especially to those local citizens.

On Shanghai Street, while people are saying they need a place. What they need is not only a physical store, but also, they need a space for them to build up their interpersonal relationship and train up their skills of craftwork. At least three traditional store I interviewed told me the same message. They thought a place is important for them as they have very close social network here. They have accumulate regular patrons here. For example, there are a few schools near to Dai Dat Stationery (大達文具行) and those students are one of the main customers of the stationery.

Furthermore, Cresswell (2004) said a place is not just something in the world but it is a way of understanding the world. For him, a world is making up by places and it is full of experiences and connection between the place and people. I do think it takes time. It takes times for the social network become closer and the skills of craftwork become experienced. For Man Wah Tailor(文華洋服), Dai Dat Stationery(大達文具行) and Hing Wah Stationery (興華文具行) mentioned the similar stories. They have served one generation after one generation on Shanghai Street. Their social network and reputation were eventually built up and have their role on Shanghai Street. Therefore, a stable place is important for them and nurture one of the tactics, close social network.

For the craftsmanship, once again, a place is equally important in a sense that the skills and virtues of craftsmen hands are not developed in a sudden moment. All need many practices as practice make things perfect. Also, practices train up the skills of making craft, becoming more skillful and seasoned. Therefore, a craftsman is better to be nurtured in a stable place. Ms Patsy Cheng of SEE Network has the same stand. She said it is important for the handcraft traditional store to have their own place on street to maintain their business. Also, She suggested other kinds of handcraft may be more appropriate to run in wet market such as

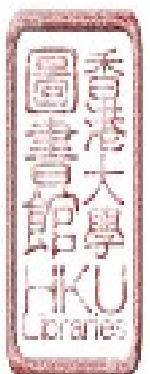


handmade Shanghai noodle. Mr. Fung of Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) exactly suggested the same.

As a result, place is irreplaceable as it is the most important factor to nurture the tactics of the traditional stores on Shanghai Street. The stores are not only a business place for them, but also a third place.

iii) Traditional stores as a third place

According to Oldenburg (1997), a “first place” is the home that people live with while the “second place” is the working place. A third place is a place where people can gather, relax and enjoy away from home and workplace. As Oldenburg said (1997), it is surprising that the third place is so important for us but we pay too little attention on these places. These are many characteristics of a third place, but here I would focus on five points here. First, a third place is a place that is inclusive to all people without any formal criteria of exclusion. While many companies and associations try to narrow down the people coming in, trying to exclude some group of people, a third place does not. Second, it is a place that people can know more aspects about their workmates. People work there could engage themselves beyond duties, roles only. Third, conversation is primary activity in a third place. In a restaurant or café, people are socializing rather than eating and drinking. In a embroidery, people like to chat with each other rather than buy a Chinese wedding dress. Moreover, the regulars are the soul of the place. The third place is nothing unless they are regulars always stay there. It is the right people and regular visitors make the third place come alive and become a true third place. Therefore, human itself is the soul of a third place. Last but not least, it is a place often feel more homelike than home. It is like home because of the warmth given, thus enhances our sense of being. Also, it is like home due to the freedom it gives to us as we can freely do what we want to such as teasing and joking with each other. We can actively express ourselves including our thoughts and personalities here. As Ray Oldenburg (1997) said, coffee counters, candy stores, cafes, pubs and libraries are the examples.

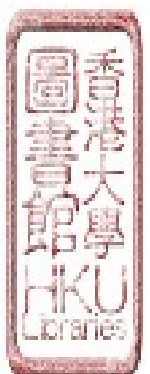


These are exactly what the traditional stores on Shanghai Street are doing. Sometimes, the first, second and third places are overlapping. For example, for Chan family of Kang Ming Picture Frame & Glass (鏡明畫框), nine brothers and sisters come back to the store, which we call the “family shop” almost every week. They visit their mother and have dinner together. Almost 40 family members gather together in the store. Also, Mr. Fung of Nam Hing Loong (南興隆) mentioned they chat more in the store more than home. He thought that the store is like “home” for him rather the real home. And their family relationship and closeness have been built up in the store. When I walked into Dai Dat Stationery (大達文具行), I heard 1960s Putonghua music, it feels that I am not staying at a place of 21st Century and I can see many birdcages in the stationer. Mr. Chan said if other do not want to keep the bird and they would give the bird to him. Therefore he keeps all the bird with the birdcages in the stationer. In all these case, we can see they are not treating the store as a business place only. But rather a third place that have freedom, inclusive to others, have much conversation and feel more homelike than the real home.

7. Limitations

I admit that there are a few limitations of this project. First, the fatigue of interview of the traditional store owner bring pros and cons to the project. What is beneficial is that it leads me a way to examine how the media represents the traditional stores especially the two embroideries on Shanghai Street. It is critical as it reminds me the neglected part. If media plays an important role to affect the public interpretation of places and events. Then, it means our understanding of traditional stores are restricted by the media. They are representing a distorted and simplified image of the stores. What is bad is that many owners of stores refuse to have interview. It limits my chance of having a deeper talk with the owners as many of them told me that they are tired of being interviewed and do not want to share the stories anymore. It leads to other problem. Actually, too many interruptions and outsiders come into Shanghai Street to take photos and conduct interview and they affect the dynamic and ecology of the areas.

Second, when I started this research, I am aware of my participation of myself in Shanghai Street. As an outsider of traditional stores, as a 27-year-old lady, as a student, I do think it affects the angle of what I have observed and the findings that I found. There are advantages and disadvantages again. For example, As a outsider as I am not grow here, they may think



that I know so little about Shanghai Street and hesitate to share deeper with me. I pay attention to my own stand and identity when I do the participate observation and interviews.

Last but not least, I believe the last limitation of this project is everyone's limitation which is the time limit. As I remember I asked when should I stop the participate observation, and the answer I got was "the time that you feel enough". However, every time I go to the targeted area of Shanghai Street, I still observe new things and I think that my participate observation is not sufficient. More could be explored but due to time limit, I remind myself to stop.

8. Conclusion: A restoration

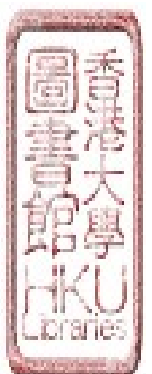
Hopefully, this paper gives reader a more fruitful image and understanding about the traditional stores, especially their tactics to survive on Shanghai Street at this particular time. Touching qualities of people (人情味) in traditional store is no longer a slogan or empty words only, but with a plentiful and rich content.

To conclude, I think traditional store can be a place of restoration (恢復). A restoration of our hands and head as most of the people use their hands to type nowadays. The virtues and other skills of hands are losing. A traditional store which do crafts is a way to restore the skills and virtues. Furthermore, it can be a place for restoration of human relationship. As we have less face-to-face interaction and most of the communication are done by smart phones and computers. A traditional place could act as a third place that gives us space to chat, to exchange ideas, to relax, to appreciate the uniqueness of different people and beauty of craftwork.

A few suggestions are given here. Further research of this area is highly recommended. As we know "place" are so critical for these few craft-related traditional stores located on Shanghai Street, then how about other kinds of stores? What kinds of stores are appropriate to move in wet market? Second, task-based and short term projects of restoration of social networks are not encouraged as we know long commitment and place are critical to nurture the tactics for running business. Both human relationship and craft need time. Third, there are alternative ways of keeping handcraft in this consuming society. For example, the dress coat maker of Fung Moon Kee Embroidery (馮滿記) has joined a NGO and teach his craft and



transfer knowledge to younger generation after it closed down. Except transferring skills and cultural tours which are popular nowadays, it is worthy for us to think of more alternatives for the craft and traditional stores to survive.



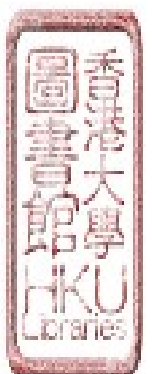
Acknowledgments

During the process of doing this capstone project, I have to admitted that it is challenging in term of workload and time limit. Sometimes, I hesitate; sometimes, I frustrated. However, it is a really great learning process and I experienced and gained a lot. All interactions with Shanghai Street buddies are enjoyable and enriching. I would like to thank them for talking and sharing to me.

I would like to give special thanks to two persons. The first is my academic supervisor, Dr. Ng for encouraging, guiding, and inspiriting me. I am so blessed to learn from Dr. Ng. He lets me know how interesting and meaningful a research can be. And the second is my project supervisor, Ms Patsy Cheng. I would like to thank for all the inspirations and fruitful discussions. Those are so valuable for me.

Finally, many thanks for my beloved one, family, boyfriend and friends, who always support and be my side.

I look forward to participate in more similar researches if there is chance as I am falling in love with it.



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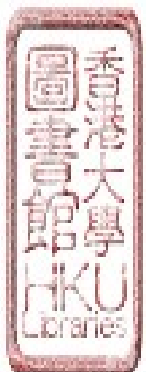
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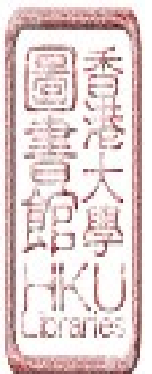
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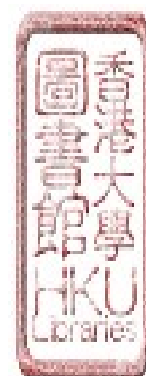
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Appendix 1

The basic information of interviewees

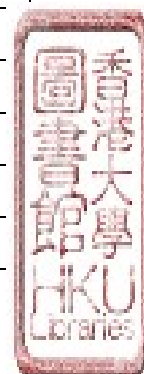
	Name	Gender	Age (around)	Name of traditional shop (Chinese/English)	Services/ Products provided
1	Mr. Lee	M	79	文華洋服/ Man Wah Tailor	Hand-made man suit
2	Mr. Fung	M	32	南興隆/ Nam Hing Loong	Chinese Wedding gown, bedclothes, curtain, etc
3	Mrs. Fung	F	60	南興隆/ Nam Hing Loong	Chinese Wedding gown, bedclothes, curtain, etc
4	Mr. Lam	M	75	馮滿/ Fung Moon Kee Embroidery	Chinese Wedding gown, bedclothes, curtain, etc
5	Ms. Wong	F	50	京華禮服繡品公司/ Capital Embroidery	Chinese Wedding gown, bedclothes, curtain, etc
6	Mrs. Kwan	F	60	永安繡莊/ Wing on Embroidery Goods	Bedclothes, curtain, Furniture etc
7	Mr. Chan	M	80	大達文具行/ Dai Dat Stationery	Stationery
8	Mrs. Chan	F	85	興華文具行/ Hing Wah Stationery	Stationery



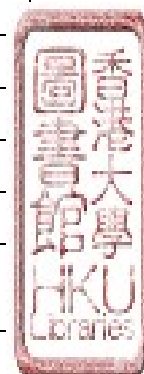
Appendix 2

Shop list on No. 102-228 of Shanghai Street

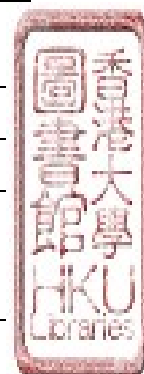
	No.	Name of shop (In Chinese)	Services or products provided	Classified as traditional stores or not Y: A traditional store N: Not a traditional store
1	102	天利行	Stationery	N
2	103A	厚興瑜記手撕鴨	Food	N
3	104	彭壽堂	Herbal tea	N
4	105	鴻興商店	Unknown	N
5	106	東海粥店	Restaurant	N
6	107	大家食	Restaurant	N
7	107	莎莉文冰室	Restaurant	N
8	108	聯合電器批發		N
9	109	友誼人民幣找換店	Currency exchange	N
10	110	兩蚊之家	Household products	N
11	111	鏡明畫框	Paintings and mirrors	Y
12	111	麥田餅店	Bakery	N
13	112	魚壽司之刺身	Food	N
14	113	新強記燒腊飯店	Restaurant	N
15	114	Unoccupied	/	N
16	116	石仔記粥店	Restaurant	N
17	117- 119	集友銀行	Bank	N
18	120	頭頭是道	Salon	N
19	121	鑽尙珠寶有限公司	Jewelry Shop	N
20	122	足海堂	Massage	N
21	123	吉野家	Restaurant	N
22	124	Unknown	Clothing	N
23	125	興華文具行	Stationery	Y
24	126	Chi Ngai Salon	Salon	N
25	127	潮興正宗滷味	Food	N
26	128	佐敦傢俬中心	Furniture	N



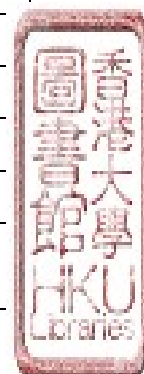
	No.	Name of shop (In Chinese)	Services or products provided	Classified as traditional stores or not Y: A traditional store N: Not a traditional store
27	129	變電站	Transformer Substation	N
28	130	德業堂	Chinese Medicine	N
29	131	聯光眼鏡	Glass	N
30	132	家潤地產	Real Estate Company	N
31	133	最好匯	Currency exchange	N
32	134	Buddha Store	Figure of The Buddha	N
33	135	飽餅皇	Bakery	N
34	136	裕民大藥房	Pharmacy	N
35	137	入口之城	South-East Asian Food	N
36	139	運通泰財務	Finance	N
37	141	7-Eleven	Convenience shop	N
38	143	佐敦大藥房	Pharmacy	N
39	145	榮森藥房	Pharmacy	N
40	146	瑞興麻雀公司	Mahjong	N
41	147- 157	上海街休憩花園	Shanghai Street Park	N
42	148	晉福珠寶金行	Jewelry Shop	N
43	150	鴻福珠寶	Jewelry Shop	N
44	152	A House	Female Clothing	N
45	154	尚宮餐廳	Restaurant	N
46	156	富榮大押	Pawnbroker	Y
47	158	北京寶石行	Jewelry Shop	Y
48	159	富成快餐店	Restaurant	N
49	160	Sunshine	Salon	N
50	161	成昌五金水喉	Metal and Plumbing	N



	No.	Name of shop (In Chinese)	Services or products provided	Classified as traditional stores or not Y: A traditional store N: Not a traditional store
51	162	新良友快餐店	Restaurant	N
52	163	何標記粥粉麵店	Restaurant	Y
53	164	千家客	Restaurant	Y
54	165	大達文具行	Stationery	Y
55	166	太和參茸藥行	Pharmacy	N
56	167	同昌五金電器家品	Electric Device	N
57	168	聯發電器行	Electric Device	N
58	169	鴻興西藥房	Pharmacy	N
59	170	新昌眼鏡公司	Glass	N
60	171	富豪燒腊飯店	Restaurant	N
61	172	恆信行	Figure of The Buddha	N
62	173	南興隆 (Closed in 2015 March)	Embroidery	Y
63	174	康力醫務	Clinic	N
64	175	永興檀香扇莊	Fan	Y
65	176	文華洋服	Tailor shop	Y
66	177	大眾麪家	Restaurant	N
67	178	德生大押	Pawnbroker	Y
68	179	大眾家常小菜	Restaurant	N
69	180	Suvakamana Store	Indonesian Grocery store	N
70	181	君盈麪包	Bakery	N
71	182	鍵樺地產	Real Estate Company	N
72	182a	Kodak	Photo	N
73	183	龍記招牌雲吞	Restaurant	N
74	184	錦泰專營潔具建材	Cleaning and construction materials	N



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75	185	祥盛檀香扇莊	Fan	Y
76	186	浪濤	Salon	N
77	188	吳覺農茶莊公司	Tea	N
78	189	南翔木藝玉器公司	Wood craft and Jade	N
79	190	永安繡莊	Embroidery	Y
80	191	Baraha Jewellery LTD	Jewelry Shop	N
81	192	英記茶莊	Tea	N
82	193	梁華生金行	Gold	N
83	194	Unoccupied	/	N
84	195	曼陀羅工藝貿易公司	Craft	N
85	196	京華裙褂	Embroidery	Y
86	197	不詳(Unknown)	Unknown	N
87	198	健康泰	Massage	N
88	199	東寶海產食品	Food	N
89	200	Unknown	/	N
90	201	和盛老金行	Gold	Y
91	202	名樂居	Apartment	N
92	203	馮滿記 (Closed in 2015 March)	Embroidery	Y
93	204	Unknown	Restaurant	N
94	205	萬威珠寶金行	Jewelry and gold Shop	N
95	206	景鴻地產	Real Estate Company	N
96	207	順發牛什茶餐廳	Restaurant	N
97	208	牙醫	Dentist	N
98	209	濤記香港仔魚蛋	Restaurant	N
99	210	天毅金燕窩莊	Bird's nest	N
100	215A	7-Eleven	Convenience shop	N



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101	216	金興	Furniture design	N
102	217- 225	香港賽馬會	Jockey Club	N
103	218	廣雅電業公司	Electric Device	N
104	220	天美行	Figure of The Buddha	N
105	222	南豐參茸燕窩	Bird's nest	N
106	224	智富地產	Real Estate Company	N
107	226	國豐蔘茸	Ginseng	N
108	228	安記海味	Dry Seafood	N

