

# Sky Economy: Economic Effects of Trading on the Upper Floors of Kotokuraba Market in Cape Coast, Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the economic effects of trading on upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market on traders in Cape Coast. The study employed a case study design with a qualitative approach. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used to select 17 participants for the study. Data for the study was collected using an in-depth interview. The results showed that the Kotokuraba market was constructed as a story building to meet the demand of Ghana's Land Use and Spatial Planning Policy. Traders on the upper floor levels do not earn a substantial income, leading to irregular tax payments. It was also discovered that the lack of traders' classification and division, inadequate space, the absence of regulations within the market, and consumers' unwillingness to climb to the upper floors were factors affecting trading on the upper floors. To resolve the challenges, this study recommends that city authorities strategize to ensure that traders are regrouped based on the commodities they sell. The study further recommends that city authorities ensure strict compliance and drive all traders who sell in unauthorized places in the Kotokuraba market to enable traders to go back to their various stalls in the upper levels.

**Keywords:** Urbanization; Trade; Income, Market; Regulation; Economic

## INTRODUCTION

The development of urban infrastructure is transforming most African countries. The role of urban infrastructure is crucial, and urban planning plays a significant role in supporting such sustainability (Asibey, Osei, Doe & Agyei, 2024). Bisht (2022) shows that African urban spaces have been altered in distinct ways when juxtaposed with multinational urban settings in America, China, and Europe. Although few African settlements are sometimes crowded, they are vertically constrained (Amin & Cirolia, 2018). Tall building constructions are becoming a feature of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) cities, but are of marginal proportion. The nature of story buildings in the central business districts (CBD) in African cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu (Kenya), Lago, Abuja, Ibadan (Nigeria), Accra, Kumasi, Tamale (Ghana), Kampala, Entebbe, and Jinja (Uganda) is nowhere close to Europe, and Southeast Asia, and the United States of America.

“Sky Economy” is conceptualized to denote an economic activity on various top floors of high-rise or storey-building markets (Botti 2023; Danewid, 2020; Gambo, 2019). Evidently, in recent times, the governments of Ghana have resorted to helping solve the increasing population challenges, thereby ensuring decongestion in most urban areas (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2017). Given that, it has taken a keen interest in relocating, renovating,

and re-constructing new markets across the country. These market structures have taken the status of storey buildings with varying numbers of floor levels. This trend seems not to respond to the needs of major actors such as traders and consumers, leading to the abandonment or limited use of the upper-level floor. In examining the politics of market redevelopment in African cities, taking insights from two market projects in Ghana, Asante (2022) notes that traders trade on the streets and the pavements of newly constructed markets.

Ankrah et. al (2023) and Ayiine-Etigo (2022) purport that the population surge of Cape Coast, the Central Regional capital of Ghana, has contributed to its growing economy. With the city's economic boom in key trading zones such as Abura and Kotokuraba markets, traders, visitors, and consumers strive to acquire and utilize the limited spaces for their gains (Ankrah et. al, 2023). However, the dilapidated wooden structures and poor planning resulted in high congestion in the market spaces for several decades. Agitations and calls to stakeholders to help curb the menace, particularly in the Kotokuraba market, led to the government's intervention to renovate the dilapidated market into a facility-enhanced market (Ayiine-Etigo, 2022), second to the Kejetia market in Kumasi, the Ashanti regional capital, as the most beautiful market in Ghana.

Local Government Act, 2016 (936) and Land Use and Spatial Planning (2016) of Ghana specify the need for effectively utilizing urban space. The Kotokuraba market was therefore constructed in a three-storey building, featuring stores and sheds of varying sizes, and parking spaces to meet traders' and consumers' needs. With the market having three floors structured for traders to engage in a variety of goods, one would expect that the upper floors would be fully utilized, just like the basement. Unfortunately, that is not the case; some of the stores and sheds owned by traders who congest the ground floors are not open, leading to few traders with adequate spaces on the upper floors.

This situation is not peculiar to the Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast; other central markets such as the Kejetia in Adum Central Market (Kumasi), Kaneshie (Accra), the Takoradi Market Circle, etc., experience the same. The Kotokuraba Market is being studied because of its economic impact, influenced by Cape Coast's role in the Year of Return and its status as an educational hub attracting foreigners and educators. Kalantari and Shepley (2021), Yang and Chen (2020), and Kalcheva (2018) indicate that previous studies have concentrated on the effects of high-rise buildings on air quality, residential preferences, meeting modernity, and beautification in urban areas in developed countries. This leaves a knowledge gap in how traders and consumers respond to changing market infrastructure (storey-building) in developing countries like Ghana. This paper, therefore, examines the economic effects of trading on upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana. Specifically, the study aims to explore factors that led to the construction of the Kotokuraba market in a story-building structure, find out the effect of trading on the upper floor levels on the traders' economic conditions, and explore factors that influence trading on the upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market.

The study is significant in that it will inform urban planning policy formulations on market infrastructure development to help market players contribute to urban planning policies of effective space use and add to theoretical underpinnings for future consideration.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Tall buildings of thirty meters to well over one hundred meters of skyscrapers are increasingly becoming popular in urban areas in Africa (Al-Kodmany, 2018). Researchers are grappling with how emerging workplaces and livelihoods stem from the rise of metropolitan areas where these massive buildings are found (Awumbila, Owusu & Teye, 2014). People in urban areas such as Hong Kong, in which high-rise buildings are the most common type of housing, prefer to choose the floor of a tall structure to live on rather than which sort of house to live in (Generalova & Generalov, 2020). According to Nethercote (2019), if a worker's profession requires them to work in a high-rise structure, they would not have a choice. As a result, it is crucial to understand, analyze, and act in this new setting.

One of the most inherent benefits of towering buildings is that they bring pleasure to people (Maurrasse, 2014). In Hong Kong, studies show that people were willing to pay more for an intermediate apartment (18th–28th floor) in a 26–30-storey building (Zhang, 2020). In two multistorey buildings in Korea, 63 percent of working

professionals selected intermediary high-rise buildings with 6th to 15th floors for apartments (Usach, 2016). Another ostensible importance of renting top-floor apartments is improved air quality. According to a Hong Kong study, a reduced level of pollution had a detrimental impact on housing costs below the 21st floor (Leung & You, 2019). During a study in Korea, residents' willingness to live on the upper floors of two high-rise buildings was due to air quality (Engur, 2013; Park, 2014). The added benefit of living on the upper levels is that there is less noise. In a Hong Kong study, excessive noise pollution was measured with the utmost sensitivity, with the varied tall buildings of up to seventy-one floors (Kalantari & Shepley, 2021). Avoidance of noise pollution can influence the housing values of tower flats below the 20th level, but not beyond (Kalantari & Shepley, 2021).

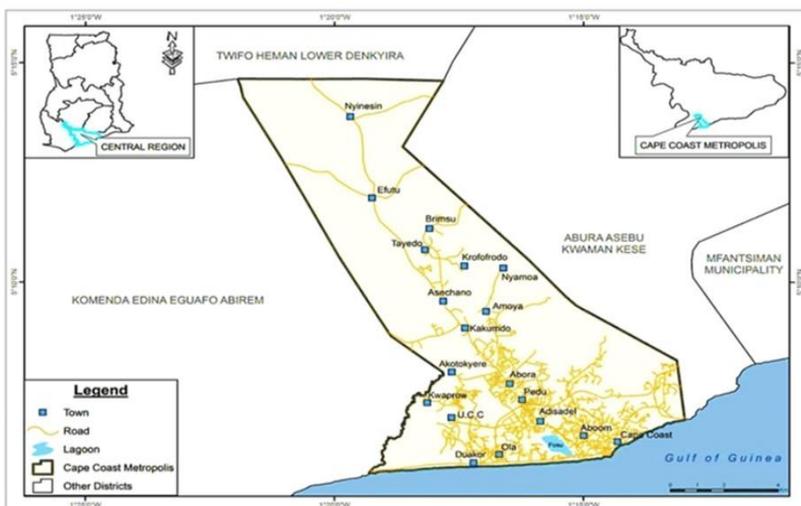
Conversely, one of the principal factors why people preferred to live on the lower-level floor was their fear of high altitude (Mulliner, Riley & Maliene, 2020). When people are on tall structures, they often notice that they are unbalanced. The human vision may provide information that disagrees with the somatosensory and vestibular systems when the length between the eye and the object is larger than 20 meters in a steady position, resulting in a height mismatch (Genzel, Firzlafl, Wiegrebe & MacNeilage, 2016). When a person is faced with the prospect of falling, they feel threatened (Zaback, 2014). Acrophobia, indifference to heights, tolerance to heights, and even enjoying cruising altitude are all psychological sensitivities to heights (Zaback, 2014). People, therefore, choose lower-level floors to reduce such consequences.

Furthermore, people choose lower-level floors due to the fear of being trapped on the top floors in case of a fire accident (Hicks, 2021). There has been much research on fire prevention, escape, and rescuing (Hicks, 2021), but there has also been research on how residents perceive the situation, draw conclusions, and respond initially and during a fire. It is important to note that fire attributes, human characteristics, and structural factors of buildings affect fire escape and response-ability (Li, Liu, Zhang, Li & Wang, 2022).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Area

Cape Coast serves as the capital of the Central Region in Ghana. The city is located approximately 165 kilometers west of Accra, Ghana's capital. The city lies between latitudes 5°04' and 5°18' North and longitudes 1°11' and 1°41' West geographically (Effah, 2014). It shares borders with the Gulf of Guinea to the south, Twifo-Heman-Lower Denkyira District to the north, Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District to the east, and Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) District to the west (Effah, 2014). The map below depicts the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area and its neighboring towns. It provides a perspective of the study area (Kotokuraba market). This is shown as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Study area map (Cape Coast Metropolitan)**

**Source: University of Cape Coast, GIS lab (2023)**

According to the Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) 2021, Cape Coast has a population of 189,925, with 92,790 males and 97,135 females. Cape Coast is well-known for its involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and is home to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle (Kreamer, 2006). Being the region's economic hub, and with competitive schools, mainly Senior High and tertiary institutions, it receives many migrants who strive to meet their socioeconomic and educational needs. Though a coastal city, many of the residents engage in trading in a variety of goods in its main market, Kotokuraba, which, as a result of the increasing population, was renovated to decongest the area and to meet modernity. Despite being one of the most beautiful market edifices in Ghana, the spaces and stalls on the upper floors are unused, leaving many unopened and unoccupied stores, yet the ground floors are highly congested. Therefore, the Kotokuraba market was purposely selected to ascertain the effects of trading on the upper floors of the Kotokuraba market on traders in Cape Coast, Ghana.

### **Study design**

The study employed an explanatory case study design with a qualitative approach. This design is intended to explore and explain a phenomenon, event, case, or topic of interest in-depth within the framework of natural life (Crowe et al., 2011; Poku et al., 2024). Case studies investigate complex phenomena and examine a person, group, or event to comprehend the underlying principles, components, and dynamics fully (Creswell, 2014; Poku et al., 2024). The researchers used this design to explore and explain the factors that influence consumers' and traders' choices of trading on the ground floors rather than the upper floors and the economic effects of trading on the upper floors of Kotokuraba on traders in Cape Coast. The design allowed the researchers to use appropriate approaches to understanding this phenomenon by using a qualitative method to engage the participants in in-depth interviews to get detailed information.

### **Sample size, sampling technique, and procedure**

In all, seventeen (17) participants, comprising eleven (12 females and 5 males, were sampled using purposive and convenient sampling techniques. As Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) and Lawrence et. al (2019) indicated, convenience sampling's primary goal is to get data from readily available subjects. The researchers conveniently sampled eight traders and four consumers who were ready and willing to participate and solicited information from them. Five (5) key informants comprising two officials from the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA), one CCMA revenue collector, and two traders' leaders were purposely selected. Purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative studies to determine and choose participants who have adequate knowledge of the subject to obtain in-depth information from them (Patton, 2002; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

### **Data generation and ethical considerations**

The researchers used an in-depth interview to gather the information from the participants. The participants were initially informed about the purpose of the study and obtained verbal informed consent from each of them before the interviews were conducted. The questions on the interview guide were read aloud and translated into the local dialect (Fante) of the participants to cater for the diverse socio-economic and literacy levels of the participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants in a secure environment devoid of any third-party interference, which was mostly in their offices and shops in the market. Thus, interviews with key informants, including 2 officials from the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA), 1 CCMA revenue collector, and 2 traders' leaders, took place in their offices, while other participants, comprising 8 traders and 4 consumers were interviewed at the market devoid of noise pollution and third-party interference.

The in-depth interviews were done in Fante and English, based on the participant's choice. The instruments were done based on the questions related to the objectives of the study, specifically, the instrument included questions related to the construction of the Kotokuraba market in a storey-building structure, effects of upper floor levels on traders' income generation and tax payment, and factors that affect trading on the upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market.

Interviews were audio recorded in addition to field notes taken. This ensured the recording of the participants'

responses verbatim. The audio records were later transcribed into English. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 minutes. To ensure ethical consideration, participation was entirely voluntary, with no direct benefits, and individuals could withdraw at any time without consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality were also strictly maintained to uphold ethical standards.

## Data analysis

Data obtained from the participants were transcribed manually and analyzed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis involves familiarization of data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Caulfield, 2023). The content of the interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then reviewed by the researchers. These generated many themes after multiple readings of the transcripts. The themes were compared with the responses to identify any common patterns, trends, convergence, and divergence. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative method for identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns and themes within data.

## RESULTS

Participants were engaged to gather information on the effects of trading on the upper floors of Kotokuraba market on traders in Cape Coast, Ghana. Three main themes emerged, including the construction of the Kotokuraba market in a storey-building structure, the effects of upper floor levels on traders' income generation and tax payment, and factors that affect trading on the upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market. These insights were systematically organized and supported with participants' responses verbatim.

### Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Data on the socio-demographic characteristics of participants showed that a majority of them (n=11) were females, with 4 of them being males. All the participants were between the ages of 25 to 55 years and have stayed in the market for over ten years. Also, most of the traders (n=7) sell clothes, vegetables, and other foodstuffs in the market. The consumers usually buy foodstuffs from the market. Of the five (5) key informants, 2 were officials from the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA), 1 CCMA revenue collector, and 2 traders' leaders.

### Construction of Kotokuraba market in a storey-building structure

Participants were asked questions on the construction of Kotokuraba market in a storey-building structure. The study revealed that most of them (12 out of 15) indicated that the Kotokuraba market was restructured into a storey building in 2012 to meet the demand of the 2016 land use and spatial planning. They further indicated that it was reconstructed in a story-building due to limited land space, to provide a beautiful edifice, and to add modernity to absorb the increasing market population within the Cape Coast Metropolis. In this regard, some of them said:

*“The recent urban planning of Ghana requires that the central business district of the urban centers take a story-building style. However, the issues of land litigations and cultural demands do not promote building tall structures.” (Participant 1, 52 years old).*

*“The authorities said that they wanted to make good of the space so that many traders could come here, that was why they built the market in a story building.” (Participant 4, 48 years old).*

It is evident from the quotation that the government rebuilt the Kotokuraba market in a storey structure due to the increasing pressure on the market as a result of the increased population and economic boom in the Central Business District of Cape Coast. Thus, the government restructured it into a storey due to limited land space and to provide enough space for the market to absorb the population, and also to add modernity to the ancient market.

## Effects of upper floor levels on traders' income generation and tax payments

Participants were asked questions on the effects of the upper floor level on traders' income generation and tax payment in the market. The study revealed that traders do not earn adequate income, and this has negatively impacted on tax compliance of traders. They reported that they have lost most of their customers, leading to low purchases and low revenue. Some of the participants noted that:

*"I have lost most of my customers, and this has affected my business entirely. Few people visit my shop, leading to low purchases. Sometimes it takes a longer time for my goods to finish..." (Participant 6, 35 years old).*

*"I don't usually open my shop because of low sales. My customers feel lazy climbing up here. This does not promote trading at this level at all...." (Participant 6, 35 years old).*

*"If I get some money, then I pay my tax. But the business here is slow because they get what they want down there, so they do not come here..." (Participant 5, 31 years old).*

It can be inferred from the quotations that trading on the upper floors of the market has affected the sales and revenues of traders. Customers are unwilling to climb the upper floors, which has made business slow. The reduction in sales of traders affected the ability of the traders to file their taxes and other market tolls to revenue collectors at the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly.

The revenue collector and officials of the CCMA also confirmed that due to low sales at the upper floor of the market, traders do not pay their taxes and tolls as expected of them, which has dire consequences on the revenue generation of the assembly.

## Factors that affect trading on the upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market

The researchers therefore sought information from the respondents on the factors affecting trading on the upper floor levels in the Kotokuraba market. Several subthemes emerge from the responses of participants, including lack of traders' classification/division, lack of regulations within the market, and consumers' unwillingness to climb to the top floors.

### Lack of traders' classification/division

Information gathered from the participants revealed that traders are not classified or grouped based on the commodities they sell, however, they are mixed up at the market. They further indicated that irrespective of the item a trader sells, they are always together, and this has affected trading at the market. Some of the participants commented:

*"The stalls were not shared based on what traders sell, and this has caused a major problem. Some fish, vegetable, and cloth sellers are mixed up. Some of the traders do not want to mingle with others because of the type of commodities that they sell. In meeting their demand, they try to create spaces on authorized places on the ground floors, leaving almost empty spaces on the upper floors". (Participant 5, 31 years old).*

*"Hmm, traders are mixed up without any division, while I am selling clothing materials, see, my friends are also selling vegetables here, and this affects trading here". (Participant 4, 55 years old).*

*"The way the authorities share the stores was not good at all, the traders are mixed up so consumers can get what they want anywhere, especially at the down there so there is no need to climb to the upper floors". (Participant 4, 55 years old)*

Responses from the quotations showed that traders who sell clothes, vegetables, fish, among other items, are in the same location. The non-division or classification of traders based on the items they sell affects their sales.

Most traders leave the upper floor to sell on the ground floor.

### **Lack of regulations within the market**

The study also found that a lack of regulations within the market affects trading on the upper floor levels of the market. A majority (n=12) of them revealed that authorities are relaxed with enforcing regulations in the market, and due to that, traders and customers trade everywhere within the market, leaving the upper floors as expressed in the following comments.

*“In this market, people do what they want. All these closed stores have their owners trading on the pavements because there is no order. The authorities have relaxed, so people trade anywhere”.* (Participant 3, 48 years old).

*“I will say that one thing affecting the lack of use of the upper floor is the relaxation of the authorities. Every shop and shed up here is occupied, but their owners are down there on the pavements, yet they are not sacking them”.* (Participant 5, 31 years old).

The responses indicate that the lack of regulations in the Kotokuraba market has affected trading activities at the market. Thus, people buy and sell at any place, going to visit the designated shops to purchase their items, thereby affecting traders who occupy the top floor of the Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast.

### **Consumers' unwillingness to climb to the top floors.**

Most of the (n=3) consumers revealed that they feel reluctant to climb the top floors of the Kotokuraba to engage in trading activities. According to the customers, they do not climb the top floor since they buy their items from the ground floor. One of them further indicated that because she does not get all her items to buy on the top floor, she mostly purchases them from the basement. Participants commented:

*“I do not have a specific customer on the upper floors, so I mostly buy my goods down here since I can get almost everything on the basements”.* (Participant 12, 25 years).

*“I hardly climb the stairs to the upper floor because I get everything, I want to buy down...”.* (Participant 13, 29 years old)

*“Since I get all the items I come to buy, I don't bother climbing up there...”.* (Participant 14, 48 years old).

## **DISCUSSION**

The recent National Building Regulations, 1996, and the Local Government Act, 2016, require that the Central Business Districts in Ghana take the form of storey-building, and this is to ensure the effective utilization of limited urban spaces (Safo, Duah, Liwur & Marfo, 2024). The construction of the Kotokuraba market in a story building was necessary due to Cape Coast's population growth, which caused congestion in the market area. Anafo, Owusu-Addo and Takyi (2021) also noted that Ghana's current urban planning system exposes many people's lives to the present and future while leaving many behind.

According to Nethercote (2019), if a worker's profession requires them to work in a high-rise structure, they would not have a choice. As a result, it is crucial to understand, analyze, and act in such a setting. This positive effect of high-rise infrastructure is unrelated to the high-rise market infrastructure of the Kotokuraba market, as traders on the upper floor levels do not earn a substantial amount of income compared to their counterparts on the ground floor. The traders' locations on the upper-level floors have resulted in customer losses in that the consumers can get most of the commodities they need on the ground floors (Neely, 2022; Hu, Cutter & Mao, 2023). The refusal of traders to stitch up their sheds and stalls provided at the various upper floor levels has had adverse effects on revenue generation. Very few traders occupying the upper floors open their shops, and this is not even regular. Revenue collectors mostly receive complaints of poor patronage, and this does not promote the

payment of taxes. The findings of Mugano's (2024) study are supported by this, suggesting that tax authorities might not be motivated to work harder at collecting taxes for a lack of compliance.

Amiteye (2015) and Wegerif (2024) explain that the lack of trader classification affects trading. This supports this study as it emerged that one major factor contributing to the traders not effectively using the top floor of the Kotokuraba market is the lack of divisions of traders or stalls concerning the type of commodities that the traders engage in on the top floor. The stalls on the top floors have sheds distributed in front of them, and because these traders deal with different goods and services (Deka, 2023), it affects harmony in the market. For example, cloth sellers have in front of their stalls sheds that are occupied by vegetable and fish sellers. The traders are distributed with different commodities in the market, and consumers can reach out to them at any place, which does not encourage consumers to climb to the upper floor levels to engage in trading with those traders there.

Aside from the lack of divisions within the market on specific commodities that traders sell, there are not enough spaces for traders to engage in. The small nature of the sheds made in the market for traders affects the quantity of goods that traders can buy and sell, and this does not promote their trade (Hieronymus, 2023). For the traders to expand their businesses, they opt for the ground floors where they can get better spaces than those provided on the top floors to promote and expand their businesses (Pandya, 2014). Even on the ground floors, the same challenge of mixing traders and a lack of space exists. However, traders have turned the walkways and pavements into trading joints and have put up structures (stalls) to engage in trading, leading to congestion on the ground floors, and this supports the studies (Jonathan, 2018; Mwawa, 2024).

It is believed that most of the traders trading in unauthorized places, such as pavements, walkways, and car parks, have their stalls or sheds in various locations (both upper floor level and ground level) in the market. The inability of the market authorities to continuously regulate and sanction lawbreakers within the market has led to traders not sticking to their stalls and sheds, thereby trading anywhere that suits them within the market (Jonathan, 2018). This study's results support King (2023) and Asante (2020), indicating that, should there be an enforcement of a law binding traders' stitching to their stores and sheds with failure implications, it can contribute to filling all the spaces on the upper floors of the Kotokuraba market.

The traders in the Kotokuraba market are distributed in providing a variety of goods and services (King, 2023). Since traders are spread, particularly on the ground floors, in meeting consumers' needs, the consumers are not motivated to climb to the top floors to engage with other traders there. If there were divisions or classifications of traders based on the commodities they sell, consumers would have no choice of getting some kinds of commodities within the market than to go to a specific group or division, which could be on the various top floors (Asante, 2020). Both wholesalers and retailers are distributed in the market.

## CONCLUSION

Cape Coast's population increase and the need for judicious land use necessitated the construction of a multi-story structure for the Kotokuraba market. This has caused low consumer visitations on the upper floors, leading to low revenue for traders and its long-term implications of irregular payment of taxes. The following factors: lack of traders' classification/division, inadequate space, lack of regulations within the market, and consumers' unwillingness to climb to the top floors affect trading on the upper floors. To resolve the challenge of neglecting upper floor levels in the market, this study recommends that city authorities strategize to ensure that traders are grouped according to the commodities they sell. The study further recommends that city authorities ensure strict compliance and drive all traders who sell in unauthorized places in the Kotokuraba market to enable traders to go back to their various stalls in the upper levels.

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