

# Interpreting Sense of Place in Insa-dong, a Cultural District in Seoul

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore and interpret the sense of place in Insa-dong a traditional street designated as a cultural district in Seoul through the thoughts and opinions of insiders who actually experience it. The study also aimed to identify a plan for the development and preservation of Insa-dong. Insa-dong was found to have the characteristic of an “unconscious sense of place,” which had formed naturally over time. This characteristic applies to most physical, social, cultural, and experiential elements that make up Insa-dong. It developed as a place of tradition and arts culture, and thus Insa-dong has continued to be a representative place of traditional and Korean culture until the present. While a uniform modern consumer culture is emerging as a result of the integrated designs and socio-economic changes brought about by urban capitalism, these changes arguably fall within such a range that Insa-dong’s unique, unconscious sense of place is not greatly damaged. Accordingly, Insa-dong as a unique, attractive place where the new cultural characteristic of “modernity” blends appropriately with “traditionality” can be understood as a representative place that expresses Korea’s past and present life. This study is significant because it examined Insa-dong’s sense of place by moving away from expert perspectives and focusing on interviews with insiders. Based on the results, the study developed a plan for the preservation and formation of Insa-dong’s sense of place. Though this study’s results can suggest basic directions and processes for interpreting sense of place, they are limited in terms of suggesting specific planning and design elements. Therefore, a limitation exists in terms of drawing practical implications. Follow-up studies using this study’s suggestions for preserving and improving Insa-dong’s sense of place can formulate more concrete strategies.

## Keywords

*Sense of Place, Insa-dong, Landscape Interpretation, In-depth Interview, Sightseeing*

## 1. Introduction

Regarding modern cities, there has been an emphasis on understanding the urban culture and scenery that arise from the process of combining physical spaces and human activities. As systems of local autonomy are established worldwide, attempts are made to improve local images and economies by using existing resources, developing facilities in specific areas, and building infrastructure. Cities have become involved in the marketing of place, which enhances their image in terms of urban and local brand value, tourism revenue, and sense of place. In other words, as we enter the age of endless competition between cities and regions, place marketing has emerged as a key concept for establishing urban development policy in the twenty-first century (Lee, 2006; Binder, 2008; Heo and Park, 2009; Kwon, 2016).

Seoul is also trying to express its identity and utilize place as a means of city marketing. Components are designed in an integrated way to develop a competitiveness that distinguishes Seoul from other regions both inside and outside of Korea based on its unique history and culture.

In this context, Seoul designated Insa-dong as a cultural district representing traditional culture, and the area has attracted many tourists. To preserve the area’s inherent characteristics, Seoul has conducted streetscape improvement projects, including protecting the traditional culture industry and improving the street environment. However, these efforts have not only been able to sufficiently distinguish the area from other regions, but also brought commercialization. This, along with increases in rent, has generated criticism that the area is changing into a uniform and indistinct streetscape<sup>1)</sup>.

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This situation arose because experts (e.g., environmental planners and designers) tend to introduce uniform planning standards without considering the in-depth meaning or character of a place. Through such processes, place-making in Insa-dong, have not been persuasive, and then it has caused unintended phenomena, such as the spread of a general culture that does not express Insa-dong's unique cultural characteristics (Choi, 2009; Lee, 2003; Kwon, 2013; Asia Economy, 2015).

Accordingly, this study aimed to discover the implicit meaning in Insa-dong's sense of place based on the thoughts and opinions of insiders who actually experience the area rather than those of experts. By interpreting such a sense of place, this study aimed to find an appropriate plan for the area's development and preservation.

## 2. Trends in Related Studies

### 2.1 Definition of Place and Sense of Place

As a result of rapid growth in the late 1990s, the shapes of modern cities have become uniform and human characteristics have been lost (Joo and Kim, 2010). To restore a sense of belonging and revive memories of place, there has been a recent focus on development policies, environmental planning, and design theories that aim to create cities rich with a "sense of place" (Korea Land Corporation, 2002).

"Place" refers to an area or place where things happen (Eunpyeong Language Institute, 1997) or where things are carried out (Yonsei University Language Information Development Institute, 1998). It is a complex concept that contains a physical aspect in that it refers to a limited spatial unit; an active aspect, insofar as it has a specific purpose or is the site of events; and a symbolic aspect, such as centrality (Hong, 2009). That is, place is associated with a symbolic meaning that arises from human activities in a physical space, and its meaning derives from "experience" and "participation" (Lee and Hwang, 1997; Choi, 2008). Accordingly, "place" refers to a specific space formed by a certain act or event as well as a physical space that receives meaning through diverse cultural experiences and activities.

"Sense of place" is the nature of a place, specifically its meaning. It refers to the individual or collective consciousness, or awareness, of a physical environment

that arises from human experience (Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements). Moreover, it has to do with the characteristics of a unique, imaginative place, which can be remembered based on the characteristics of the place itself (Johnston et al., 1986). It refers, also, to a feeling of attachment based on experiencing a place as unique and different from other places. (Hong, 2009). Accordingly, "sense of place", as a place-related meaning created or acquired through human experience, refers to the distinctive atmosphere and identity or character of a place. This can be defined as a nonphysical space that emphasizes psychological aspects such as perception of place and behavior.

### 2.2 Studies of Sense of Place in Insa-dong

As one of Seoul's representative cultural districts, Insa-dong is often identified as having a great sense of place. As such, many studies have investigated Insa-dong's sense of place.

Reviewing Insa-dong's status as a cultural district, Kang (2006) identified the effect of such designation and evaluated the district's progress, concluding that the district's operation does not sufficiently reflect its identity. Kim (2012) analyzed facility distribution and changes in use patterns to identify value changes in Insa-dong's traditional cultural space, concluding that the area's sense of place does not simply arise from "traditionality" but is evolving through "culturalism" and "modernity". Park (2012) examined which elements have an effort to form Insa-dong's identity. Although preservation of physical elements have been achieved some degree through management tools (e.g., district unit plans and cultural district management plans), but policies and regulations are limited in their ability to protect nonphysical elements from the logic of the market.

These existing studies suggest that, despite efforts to preserve Insa-dong's unique sense of place, social and cultural changes limit the ability to control changes to the area's identity. However, most studies that have investigated changes in Insa-dong and sought solutions to such problems have relied on the perspectives of experts (outsiders).

To fully understand the sense of place that arises from a unique atmosphere and identity formed through experience, we should consider the perspectives of insiders who directly experience the place rather than those of experts<sup>2)</sup>.

- 1) As consumers became more oriented toward cultural and artistic values, a unique landscape where cultural artists could gather formed, and streetscape planning that highlights such values and the unique sense of place has been carried out. However, with increased tourism, more commercial facilities and franchise facilities emerged. Although this phenomenon offers convenience for many people, it causes the place to lose its charm for those who value the past (Kim et al., 2014).
- 2) A cultural-landscape perspective should be adopted to interpret place and the sense of place. A cultural landscape is formed through the engraving of religion, worldview, life view, and other perspectives. This reveals the features of a place, and it works continuously in landscape formation. By reading and interpreting such features, the meanings and essence of a culture can be grasped (Lee, 2010).

Accordingly, this study differs from previous studies in that it examines insiders' stories to understand Insa-dong's sense of place and systemically interpret its essential meaning and characteristics.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Subject: Insa-dong

Insa-dong was named after *In* in *Gwaninbang* and *Sa* in *Daesa-dong*, which were locations in Hanseong-bu, the Joseon capital until 1914 (the Japanese colonial era). Insa-dong road is a tributary flowing from Mt. Bukak to the Cheonggyecheon stream. During the Joseon period, the riverside lowlands that were unsuitable for housing formed naturally as a narrow path, along with residential drainage functions. As such, it is a place where one can see the typical urban structure of the Joseon dynasty and the landscape of the residential area.

Geopolitically, Insa-dong is located in the middle of Seoul, where roads from Namdaemun, Dongdaemun, and Seodaemun meet among the four main

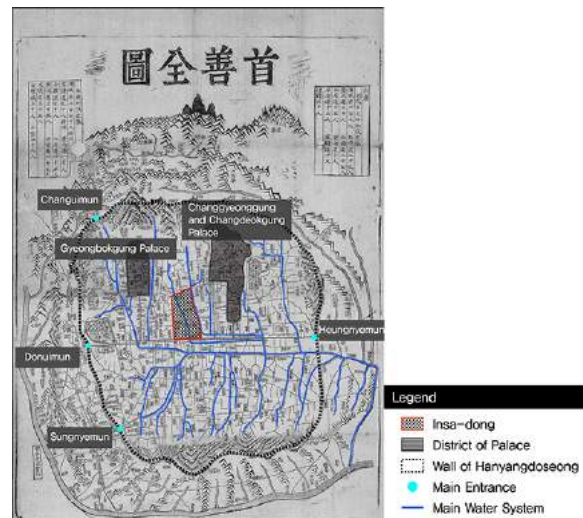


Fig. 1. Insa-dong and its surrounding areas in Suseonjeondo

gates. During the Joseon, the largest commercial area, Sijeon, was located in the Insa-dong area. Thus, the roadside of Jongro was the busiest street of the period and its most prosperous commercial center. In addition, as an area with a waterway lead-

Era	Event		Results and Effect	
Early Joseon Dynasty	Accumulation of resources	Residence area of nobleman	Concentration of artists	Entertainment district of nobleman
Middle Joseon Dynasty		Influx of local population	Inevitable split of roadside	
Late Joseon Dynasty		Residence of influential person	Historical place related men	
Japanese Colonial Era	Drain of resources, conversion of antique street	Collapsing of influential family	Massive antique spill	Antique exchange for Japanese
Liberation		Japanese withdrawal	Japanese-owned antique spill	Formation of a Korean antique market
1960s	Expansion of traditional business, promote tourism	Activating antique market	Moving in the mounter and paper store	
1970s		Foreign tourists crowded	Mery's alley	Moving in the gallery
1980s		Interest policy for asian game/olympic	Designated the traditional culture street of Seoul	
1990s	Conversion of traditional cultural yourism street	Policy and development concentration	Designated the willingness to walk and street without car	Soaring number of tourists and increasing development pressure
2000s		Designated the cultural district	District conservation concentration	Cultural merchandising in Seoul (representative tourism site)

Fig. 2. Historical development of Insa-dong (Seoul Development Institute, 2005)



**Fig. 3.** General landscape of Insa-dong

ing from the adjacent Samcheong-dong to the Cheonggyecheon stream, it was a gathering place for poets, writers, and artists who wanted to enjoy traditional culture. It was also Seoul's most prestigious residential area. The wealthy and powerful Sedo people built their homes there since it was between the Gyeongbok and Changdeok Palaces of the Joseon period. As such, Insa-dong was a representative commercial and residential area (Fig. 1).

Insa-dong began to develop when antique items were brought in during the Japanese colonial period. That was the external source of the antique shops and antiques found in Insa-dong today. Internally, antique shops began to form in Insa-dong as the noble households destroyed under Japanese imperialism began to sell antiques from the Joseon period.

These antique shops were active during the 1960s and 1970s, and the number of galleries and art-related shops increased as well. Since the opening of the Hyundai Gallery in the 1970s—which was Korea's first commercial art gallery—many other galleries have emerged.

As urban development began to take off, large-scale buildings—such as the Paradise Shopping Mall and the Pagoda Arcade—gradually took shape. Since the 1970s, Insa-dong has become an area for popular culture and the arts. In the 1980s, it transformed into a cultural consumption market. Traditional teahouses and pubs were established, and international conventions were held in the area. Accordingly, the number of visitors who wanted to enjoy the mood of Insa-dong increased, and the area was established as Insa-dong Street, where today's traditional cultural industries are gathered (Fig. 2).

These characteristics make Insa-dong a place where traditional cultural resources are concentrated and

Korean cultural tourism products can be purchased.

Samcheong-dong, Jongno, Jogyesa, and Unhyong-gung, which are around Insa-dong, play a major role in shaping the area's traditional characteristics (Fig. 3). In addition, the district's alleyways and hanok create the atmosphere of different city within the urban center (Seoul Development Institute, 2005; Kwon, 2010; Kim, 2012).

In recent years, to preserve Insa-dong's unique characteristics, Seoul has conducted projects to protect the traditional culture industry and improve the street environment. However, it does not differ from other city streets and is being criticized for rent increases and identity damage. Nevertheless, Insa-dong remains a representative area in Seoul that is regarded as having a great sense of place because of its unique characteristics.

### 3.2 Data Collection and Research Method

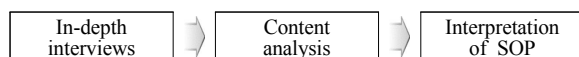
Data collection, surveys, analysis, in-depth interviews, physical traces, and behavioral observations were conducted in accordance with “naturalistic field research,” which is a qualitative method. To collect data, surveys were conducted in Insa-dong from October 9, 2012, to October 15, 2012. In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 residents and visitors for an average of 30 minutes. Additional written interviews were conducted via e-mail to gather data that was needed to derive the meaning of “sense of place” and determine improvement plans. Records, field observations, and photo shoots were used to investigate the physical environment of the study area, usage patterns, and the phenomenon of place (Table 1).



**Table 1.** In-depth interviews and demographic characteristics

Division		Content	
Study area		Insa-dong, Seoul, Korea	
Survey content		Thoughts and feelings about the study area	
Survey period		10/09/2012–10/15/2012	
Division	Characteristic	Freq.	Total
Gender	Male	6	13
	Female	7	
Age	20s	3	13
	30s	5	
	40s	3	
	50s	-	
	60s	1	

In-depth interview analysis was based on the five-step content analysis process proposed by Kvale (1996) and Ratner (2002). The study area's sense of place was interpreted, and plans for improving sense of place were developed (Fig. 4)<sup>3)</sup>.

**Fig. 4.** Research process

To verify the content collected through in-depth interviews, a list of adjectives derived from the interviews was organized<sup>4)</sup>, and the results of previous studies on Insa-dong were examined.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Interpreting Sense of Place in Insa-dong

#### 4.1.1 A place of traditionality and “Koreanity”

Insa-dong is an area where traditional and artistic cultural resources are concentrated in the locational and historical characteristics of the place. It is a place that many domestic and international tourists visit to experience Korea's unique traditions.

*[As old feelings and many Korean aspects remain, it is a place where one feels the tradition of the country. The old buildings stabilize the atmosphere.] [Quiet and traditional elements are hiding all over the place. The street facilities feelings, and the paving is well decorated in the traditional Korean style. Interiors and*

*appearances are traditional and Korean. In an alley.] [A preserved place. Some old images remain within the storm of development.] [Korean art is well expressed.]*

Insa-dong maintains an old-city feeling that is hard to find in Seoul, which is being modernized in terms of architectural elements. Traditional hanok architecture, tile roofs, and traditional exterior building materials create an old feeling. The same is true of street elements such as street lamps with traditional patterns, floor patterns, and sightseeing guides. Visitors recognize unique Korean traditions as a result of these various traditional architectural and streetscape elements (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 5.** Korean traditional architectural forms and street facilities

*[Those that represent, express, or mean Korea.] [Traditional and Korean food, too. Our light food.] [Galleries, sculptures, rare books, simple folk crafts, exhibition, old-fashioned.] [Place where antique shops, galleries, and light traditional souvenir shops are gathered. Old-looking pictures, coins, objects.]*

The art and antique trades that have been active since the 1960s and 1970s have created an atmosphere that can revitalize traditions and arts-related industries, such as galleries, traditional restaurants, traditional teahouses, handicraft shops, souvenir shops, and antique shops. Through these characteristics, visitors recognize Insa-dong as a place that leads one to recognize unique traditions and Korean characteristics (Fig. 6).

**Fig. 6.** Concentration of various traditional and art-culture industries

- 3) Regarding the in-depth interviews, face-to-face interviews were conducted in Insa-dong. The overall objectives and requirements of the study were explained, and subjects who agreed with them were selected. No limits were placed on the questions so subjects could freely express their thoughts and feelings about Insa-dong.
- 4) Since adjectives are used to understand characteristics, not evaluate quality, this was determined to be the most appropriate way to synthesize the interview content describing the characteristics of Insa-dong's sense of place, meaning, and image. The adjective list derived from the interview content was compared with the findings of previous studies.

*[Oriental painting. Experience of walking and feeling galleries are integrated.] [The only place to experience the Korean side.] [Old memories pleasurable.] [A variety of things to enjoy.] [A general market atmosphere.] [Peddling, Korean atmosphere.] [Modern feeling and various attractions.] [Small and cute.] [The only space where one can see and feel Korean traditional culture.] [To show Korean ways when foreign friends visit.] [Our way of enjoying tradition and culture, consuming and embracing them.] [Korean art is well expressed.]*

The concentration of craft shops and galleries related to traditional Korean arts and culture supports many unique Korean street events, such as rice cake mallet pounding and natural dyeing. Accordingly, Insa-dong is recognized as an area where one can diversely experience traditional Korean culture (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Experience of traditional and modern culture

*[Experience the unique culture with the five senses.] [The food is really diverse. Recommend food-culture experience to foreigners. Tea or dessert. Sikhye, Korean traditional sweets, and cookies] [Guests from outside, meals, and drinking traditional tea] [A place where Korean culture is concentrated, such as charming calligraphy shops, attractions, and traditional food.] [A variety of entertainment, attractions.] [Traditional performances. Wearing Hanbok in Korea, foreigners are very interested, colorful.] [Hahoe mask keychain. Lucky bag or mirror decorated by fan and mother-of-pearl. Go to a traditional teahouse; traditional tea with Korean traditional sweets and cookies, Korean restaurant in alley.]*

As a result of the sensory attractions of traditional Hanok architecture, street facilities, performances, restaurants, and teahouses, one recognizes Insa-dong

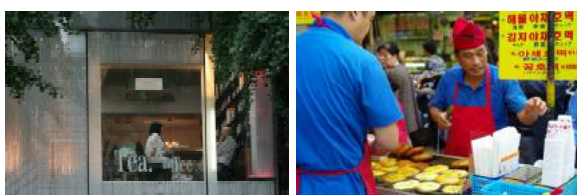


Fig. 8. Multisensory experience

as a place where one can experience traditionality and Koreanity in multisensory ways (Fig. 8).

Given these characteristics, Insa-dong is recognized as a “place of traditionality and Koreanity” that produces feelings such as “old,” “traditional,” and “Korean-style” as a result of physical elements such as structure, composition, building materials, and street facilities, as well as social and cultural elements such as history formation, traditional art, diverse foods, and sightseeing.

#### 4.1.2 Meditative place of nostalgia for the past

The spatial structure of Insa-dong formed naturally along the water road that flows to the Cheonggyecheon stream, and the Joseon noblemen’s house were divided into small pieces.

*[Earthy and folksy feeling. Hometown.] [A small alleyway, comfortable feeling. Small-sized hanok is very familiar.] [Quiet and peaceful, old movie.] [Wood material for interior, warm.] [Feeling that old buildings stabilize the atmosphere.] [Smell of human living.] [Image of how I lived when I was a child. Style. Memory. Our appearance itself.] [Familiar appearance. Memory.] [Small-sized shops, affection.] [The charm of the alleyway, nostalgia. Back street.] [Use of the small, traditional hanok as is, pajeron shops, restaurants, bars, galleries, familiar.] [Figure piled up by stone, warm feeling of rural areas.] [A peaceful atmosphere among the giant forest of buildings.]*

Small-scale buildings, narrow alleyways, winding roads, and integrated traditional-culture-related businesses form a unique image in Insa-dong, along with the old alleyway that looks just as it did in the old days. Moreover, street construction using traditional materials evokes the past and restores memories that are being lost through rapid urbanization and modernization. Accordingly, one senses comfort and familiarity, which contributes to Insa-dong’s popularity (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Retaining the past form of alleyways and buildings

*[Very stable feel when viewed visually.] [A place full of charm that makes you feel good, even if you walk.] [The lines are soft. Really*

*comfortable feeling.] [Finds a small space; it's small and has an alley. Charming stores in the alley.] [Narrow and low ceiling.] [Thanks to the low ceiling, feels comfortable.] [Although one may think it's complicated to see small alleys, one feels very comfortable. A warm feeling.]*

People feel a visual sense of stability in the soft forms of the buildings; this includes the ratio of street width to roadside for low-rise buildings, roof tiles, and eaves. In particular, with the narrow, intricate alleyways and various aspects of the low-rise architecture, visitors feel a unique sense of security and comfort (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Narrow alleys and small buildings

*[When one walks slowly, one feels comfortable in a tranquil atmosphere.] [Food or things one saw or experienced sometime in the past. Familiar.] [Since the streets are crowded, delightful scissoring by sellers of sticks of taffy, hot rice cakes cooked on oil plates; it is more of our old view instead of tradition.]*

Since people can experience various elements that produce an appearance of the past (e.g., street vendors selling snacks such as roasted chestnuts and pancakes stuffed with brown sugar, folk games including top-spinning games, and street fortune-tellers), they gain a sense of nostalgia (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Nostalgic street vendor

Considering these characteristics, Insa-dong is regarded as a “meditative place of nostalgia for the past” that induces feelings such as “familiarity” and “comfort” through physical elements such as traditional alleyways and buildings, sociocultural elements such as street vendors, and traditional art-related industries.

#### 4.1.3 A place that harmonizes traditionality and modernity

Various Korean tradition-related industries, such as antique and calligraphy shops, are concentrated in Insa-dong. As a result, domestic and international visitors continue to increase steadily. Insa-dong is constantly trying to meet the diverse needs of its visitors.

*[First Starbucks in Hangul.] [Signboard in Korean, Korean-ish atmosphere.] [Unique Hangul sign, a different feeling from other streets; ours can also be beautiful.] [It is well managed.] [Recent modern image. Do not think people go just to enjoy the tradition. Feels modern.] [Korean life rather than tradition. Feeling that the past and present are combined.]*

To create a street of traditional Korean culture and maintain its unique characteristics, all outdoor advertisements in Insa-dong are translated into Korean. A harmonization of traditionality and modernity is recognized in the various attempts to preserve the area's inherent characteristics (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Outdoor advertisements in Korean language

*[Unique building, ssamjigil, handicraft sale. Very extraordinary since it is connected in the form of an alleyway.] [Structure in which buildings are connected in a spiral sloping road is very interesting; charming stores. As if Insa-dong road is a collection of buildings.] [Plants and packing that visualize waterways on streets or waters give rise to characteristic atmosphere.]*

Reinterpreting the “narrow alley route”—a unique Korean spatial structure—from a modern perspective, *ssamjigil*, which is constructed in the form of a spiral sloping road, is a complex cultural space. *Ssamjigil*



Fig. 13. Reinterpreting tradition



plays a role in maximizing the sense of place in Insa-dong. Such characteristics are also recognized in street facilities that are designed to symbolize traditionalism (Fig. 13).

*[Modern. Recently mixed Korea.] [Traditional painting. Contemporary and modern pop art.] [A mixture of historical and modern atmosphere; unique area that truly expresses Korea's culture and history.] [Shopping on street; traditional souvenirs, galleries, various cosmetic products, or high heels.] [Modernly maintained streets, street vendors selling handicrafts; one can enjoy culture through delicate traditional teahouses among alleys.] [Sell old books, photos, souvenirs, ceramics.] [Traditional teahouse, eating and drinking are exotic experiences.] [Place one goes when one needs a special experience. Unusual space.] [Watch the gallery.] [Sloppy old antiques and Turkish vendor selling ice cream; memories of making ppobgi, lively view.] [Feeling tradition by sitting in a traditional coffee shop and sipping tea.] [It's packed with colorful accessories.] [Street musicians playing an instrument; traditional Korean performance.]*

Traditional and modern culture became mixed with the introduction of a modern consumer culture selling pop art and various accessories. Combined with traditional calligraphy shops and galleries, a sense of diversity is created (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Selling various accessories

Considering these characteristics, Insa-dong is regarded as a “place that harmonizes tradition and modernity” through physical elements such as outdoor advertising and street facilities, as well as sociocultural elements such as sectors selling various accessories.

#### 4.1.4 A place of gallery culture

Insa-dong is an area where one feels the formation of a gallery culture through existing traditional culture-related industries as well as numerous galleries and artworks displayed at galleries.

*[Accessibility. Easy to navigate gallery.] [The*

*advantage of being able to easily navigate galleries.] [Concentrated galleries.] [Something different from other places in Seoul.] [Artists have been doing a lot of work for a long time.] [Art gallery. Gallery is unique.]*

Since many of Insa-dong's galleries have good accessibility, and traditional and contemporary art coexist, they are regarded as different from other local galleries. Considering these characteristics, Insa-dong is recognized as “a place of gallery culture” (Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Various exhibitions of galleries

#### 4.1.5 Reproducible place of uniform modern consumer culture

Insa-dong has lost traditional characteristics, and a uniform modern consumer culture is being reproduced as a result of high rent, a flood of low-priced products, emerging heterogeneous industries confronted by traditional industries, and increasing development pressure.

*[Traditional products, uniform, poor quality. Products made in China.] [Sell worthless travel souvenirs.] [News that it is turning into a cosmetics street. Traditional shops turn into alleyways due to rent increases.] [Feels complex as many shops, like cosmetic stores and shoes shops, entered.]*

With the increase of modern consumer industries such as low-quality products emphasizing traditionality, cosmetics shops, and clothing stores damage to the unique identity has been recognized (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Introduction of modern consumer culture

Given these characteristics, there is concern that traditional cultural identity may be damaged in Insa-dong. With the increase in consumer industries, it is recognized as a “reproducible place of uniform modern consumer culture”, which evokes feelings such as “complexity”, “uniformity”, and “discomfort”.



## 4.2 Improvement Plan for the Formation of Insa-dong's Sense of Place

### 4.2.1 Physical factor improvement plan

Based on the analysis of Insa-dong's sense of place, adding various small shops-since front sections are divided into several sections, despite small buildings and large-scale buildings-and improving buildings and street facilities using traditional materials can improve the recognition of unique characteristics.

*[Buildings are quite large with several buildings combined.] [Advantage of having small shops.] [Although street width and elevations are small, cute and traditional compared to other large commercial streets, they are getting more and more modern.]*

Insa-dong's small buildings and shops are important for experiencing a sense of place. However, the expansion of stores and enlargement through the combination of lots hinder the sense of place. To solve this problem, future development projects should consider "avoiding the large-scale development of buildings".

*[Bad feeling of recent buildings, remodeling, changing to glass, a mismatched atmosphere. Feeling that characteristics disappear. As a tourist destination, its merit is also falling. Gradually losing that color.] [Even if it gets remodeled, I would like to see if it uses Korean elements to keep the unique characteristics. Compromise plan.] [Limitations at the government level.]*

Buildings constructed using traditional materials are important for experiencing a sense of place. However, the use of heterogeneous building materials is identified as a factor impeding sense of place in Insa-dong. To solve this problem, future development projects should consider "the use of traditional materials for buildings".

*[If the current image collapses, the mood will disappear. The square buildings that are still happening now. You will not find Korean emotions and sensitivity. Even buildings are built; the buildings that have a function like "ssamjigil" are clearly welcomed.]*

Architecture emphasizing the traditional aspect of Insa-dong is an important factor for experiencing a sense of place. However, the recent development of heterogeneous architecture poses an obstacle to the sense of place. To solve this problem, future devel-

opment projects should consider "the orientation of building types in consideration of identity".

*[It is important to continue to care about street facilities, signs, paving, etc.] [Better to plant more trees or flowers.] [Regarding the establishment of an installation or space that can promote traditional form or traditional culture, sustainable, private, and government support, establishing traditional performances, continuous promotion, and providing English guide signs and diversification for foreigners.] [Cleaning up garbage and flowerbeds should be performed often.]*

Street facilities emphasizing the traditional aspects of Insa-dong are an important factor for experiencing a sense of place. However, the recent installation and management of heterogeneous street facilities hinders the sense of place. To solve this problem, future development projects should consider "forming and managing street facilities to reflect identity".

*[Unconstitutional. Infringe on personal property rights. Will give a subsidy to maintain. Get rid of opportunity costs to get higher profits. Too much regulation is bad. Excessive regulation hinders dynamic change.]*

To preserve Insa-dong's sense of place, it may be necessary to limit the form, size, and materials of buildings in development projects. However, excessive regulation is identified as possibly hindering dynamic changes in Insa-dong's sense of place. To solve this problem, future development projects should think carefully about "excessive restrictions".

*[Expand the atmosphere of Insa-dong, keep the current marketplace, distribute functionality.] [Buildings like ssamjigil, it will be a marketplace where many people can come, even if they are elsewhere.]*

Socioeconomic changes caused by the centralization of Insa-dong's sense of place are identified as obstacles to the sense of place. To solve this problem, "expanding the area" by dispersing roads extending east and west centered on Insa-dong road should be considered.

*[I would like to see more room for artists. Lack of uniqueness means issues with stores' content. To obtain uniqueness, there should be more spaces for writers.]*

Insa-dong's traditional arts and culture-related industries are important for forming a sense of place. Thus, the recent phenomenon of losing spaces for art-related activities due to recent socioeconomic changes is identified as a factor hindering the sense of place. To solve this problem, we should consider "creating spaces for artists related to traditional arts and culture".

#### 4.2.2 Improving social and cultural factors

The analysis of Insa-dong's sense of place showed that many industries that sell traditional and art-related items, as well as various modern elements, play a role in recognizing Insa-dong's unique characteristics.

*[The size of the building or the type of business should be maintained as they are or properly limited.] [Cosmetics stores and clothing stores are advantageous from the point of view of tourism but disadvantageous considering the overall identity of Insa-dong. Industries that are not suitable for the atmosphere need management.] [Industry fragmentation.] [Stores are becoming too complex and their characteristics are disappearing. Strongly restrict.] [Limit the use of industry in Insa-dong, make good use of the community of merchants.] [Shops that were diverse became complex as big companies came in slowly, but there should be some good stores to attract people.]*

Insa-dong's traditional culture-related industry is an important factor in the sense of place, but recent modern consumer-related industries and simple industry distribution are factors that hinder the sense of place. To solve this problem, "diversifying industries suitable for restriction of business type and identity" without compromising the sense of place should be considered.

*[Korea's representative street. When you enter the souvenir shop, you will find Korean goods as well as antiques from around the world. Hoped it would only sell things with Korean characteristics; it is no different from a market in Southeast Asia or Chinatown.] [Increase in traditional goods that are monotonous rather than original.]*

Although Insa-dong's traditional culture-related products are important for experiencing a sense of place, they are identified as hindering the sense of place as a result of goods lacking originality and identity. To solve this problem, the "diversification of products reflecting a unique identity" should be taken into account.

*[A large cosmetics shop or clerk who touts on the street in Japanese; although street vendors do not match the traditional atmosphere, it seems to be advantageous if you break the prejudice that it has to be traditional.]*

Insa-dong's unique sense of place is partly related to the blending elements from various nationalities. Thus, "the introduction of modern and foreign cultural industries within the scope of not impeding the traditional atmosphere of Insa-dong" should be considered.

#### 4.2.3 Plan for improving the experiential factors

The analysis of Insa-dong's sense of place showed that Insa-dong has various experiential programs for experiencing tradition and Koreanity. This plays a key role in forming a unique sense of place in Insa-dong.

*[Place filled up with traditional culture, maintenance and management are needed.] [Think of how to use things that are current.] [When playing Samulnori, if content familiar to foreigners is performed, they will feel greater familiarity. Performances and promotions at scheduled times.] [Pottery experience, experience wearing traditional costumes, and taking pictures. Traditional food making, calligraphy. Making light with Hanji, performance of traditional mask dances.] [It's not easy to know where and how to get involved. Hoped I could get such information more easily. Experience of making odd ends of cloth and embroidery. Hope there are various things that one feels comfortable of experiencing.] [What if you offer brief descriptions of the performance in Korean and English, and install a large monitor? It would not be bad just to show that it just happened in the old days of Korea.] [Quiet and enviable road feels more Korean.]*

Various experiences and viewing programs related to traditional arts are important for the sense of place, but they have become obstacles as a result of insufficient information about participation. To solve this problem, "improving participation methods" should be considered.

*[It will be a place that attracts people continuously if things to see, enjoy, and eat are maintained properly rather than everything]*

*being traditional or historical.] [There are many places where you can learn tea, Korean paper art, dyeing, doll making, etc. There are a lot of Korean and traditional things to see and enjoy. For foreigners, there is no place like Insa-dong to experience Korean culture. It would be nice to be able to create a lot of memories.] [I wish there were more shows.] [It should be a place where people who really maintain tradition can gather rather than just an appearance of traditional culture. The unique characteristics of Insa-dong can be maintained for a long time if it becomes a true place of tradition where people, such as human cultural assets who make traditional props, can gather to create their own community and educate.]*

For visitors who come anticipating various experiences and viewing programs related to traditional art culture, it is regarded as either an important factor for experiencing the sense of place or one that hinders the sense of place due to a lack of programs. To solve this problem, “developing experience content that allows people to have various experiences” should be considered.

*[If it is a region of traditional culture and a representative tourist area in Korea, how about running a program to experience the alley culture? A program that gives you the feeling of venturing into the unknown world. Make them pound around here and there and check out the shops in the alleyway. Pleasure of finding things one can experience.] [The reason why ssamjigil is so popular among foreigners is that it leads you to walk around the building like a snail and see all the shops inside. It would be good to have a program that enables one to see the whole alley and all of Insa-dong like this.] [In the old days, it seemed that foreigners were unable to find alleyways. Nowadays, foreigners seem to find and enter them. Perhaps fear has disappeared due to increased information about restaurants? I wish there were more foreigners using the alley. I think the shape of the small alleyway shows the old form of our country. Could it be a show of our culture that is soaked with excitement?]*

Insa-dong's alleyways are identified as important factors for experiencing the unique sense of place. Thus, the “development of content to experience alley culture” should be considered.

To examine the relationship between Insa-dong's sense-of-place formation and the content of the in-depth interviews, adjectives describing Insa-dong and their frequency were drawn from the in-depth interviews (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Adjectives in the in-depth interviews

Freq.	Adjectives
51	• Traditional (+ historical)
32	• Various (+ spectacular scenes)
27	• Korean
25	• Unusual (+ unfamiliar, distinctive, unusual, different, strange, marvelous, special, characteristic, unique)
23	• Comfortable (+ relaxed)
20	• Charming (+ lovely, elaborate)
17	• Funny (+ pleasant, joyful, interesting)
15	• Modern (+ antique, modern, sophisticated, neat)
12	• Inherent (+ sole, folksy)
11	• Complicated (+ crowded), stable (+ low, stuffy, small, narrow)
10	• Representative (+ important, authentic, expression) • Good (+ happy, satisfactory)
9	• Old (+ former face, think of the past)
8	• Quiet (+ monotone, simple)
6	• Soft (+ warm)
4	• Familiar
3	• Savory, impressive, tranquil (+ leisurely, lonely)
2	• Emotional, like home, lively (+ feel taste, meaningful, famous (+ populous), fancy, active (+ energetic), uniform (+ monotony), experienced
1	• Nice, beautiful, harmonious, favorite

When classified into adjectives judged to have similar meanings based on the dictionary meanings of place adjectives, the more regression coefficient of the adjectives of Sense of Place, the more high-frequency. However, place-based adjectives with a relatively low regression coefficient did not have a similar trend in frequency relations (Table 3).

The frequencies of “modern”, “complex”, and “stable” adjectives are high next to adjectives similar to sense-of-place adjectives. This points to detailed characteristics of Insa-dong that cannot be expressed by sense-of-place adjectives. This implies that Insa-dong is regarded as an attractive and traditional place where various sights and entertainments can be enjoyed as a result of the coexistence of traditional and artistic cultures based on both modern and traditional culture, such as galleries and cafes. At the same time, small-scale buildings and narrow alleyways formed by Insa-dong's unique spatial structure are regarded as warm places that help evoke the past.



**Table 3.** Comparison of SOP adjectives and adjectives from in-depth interviews

SOP Adjectives	Meaning	Strength	Adjectives from in-depth interviews	Freq.
Attractive	Pleasing to the eye or mind, especially through beauty or charm	0.78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various (+ spectacular scenes), Nice</li> <li>• Charming (+ lovely, elaborate), Beautiful, Harmonious</li> <li>• Famous (+ populous), Impressive</li> <li>• Funny (+ pleasant, joyful, interesting)</li> <li>• Good (+ happy, satisfactory), Favorite, Fancy</li> <li>• Active (+ energetic)</li> </ul>	91
Traditional	Consisting of or derived from tradition	0.74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional (+ historical), Korean</li> </ul>	78
Affectionate	Having or displaying warmth or affection	0.73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional, Like home, Savory, Lively (+ feel taste)</li> <li>• Old (+ former face, think of the past), Soft (+ warm)</li> <li>• Tranquil (+ leisurely, lonely), Experienced</li> </ul>	31
Meaningful	Having a meaning or purpose	0.66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful</li> </ul>	2
Characteristic	Typical or distinctive	0.65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unusual (+ unfamiliar, distinctive, unusual, different, strange, marvelous, special, characteristic, unique)</li> </ul>	25
Unique	Radically distinctive and without equal	0.63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inherent (+ sole, folksy)</li> </ul>	12
Important	Of great significance or value	0.63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative (+ important, authentic, expression)</li> </ul>	10
Familiar	Well known or easily recognized	0.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable (+ relaxed), Familiar</li> </ul>	25
etc.	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern (+ antique, modern, sophisticated, neat)</li> </ul>	15
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated (+ crowded)</li> </ul>	11
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable (+ low, stuffy, small, narrow)</li> </ul>	11
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet (+ monotone, simple)</li> </ul>	8
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform (+ monotony)</li> </ul>	2

Source: Reconstitution based on the results of this research and Kwon et al. (2011)

## 5. Conclusions

This study found and interpreted the locational meaning inherent in the sense of place in Insa-dong—a traditional cultural street designated as a cultural district in Seoul—through the thoughts and opinions of insiders who actually experience it.

In addition, as it interpreted the opinions of insiders, the study aimed to find a plan for the development and preservation of Insa-dong.

Through the interviews, Insa-dong was found to have the characteristic of an “unconscious sense of place”, which formed naturally over a long period of time<sup>5)</sup>. This characteristic applied to most physical, social, cultural, and experiential factors that make up Insa-dong. Through its efforts to create a place traditional culture, Insa-dong remains a representative site of traditional and Korean culture. Furthermore, it is regarded as a place of nostalgia through its alleyways and buildings that have retained their past form, as well as its various street vendors. In addition, outdoor advertisements in Korean, buildings and street facilities that reflect the local identity, and stores that sell various products create a sense of diversity by mixing traditional and modern cultures. In particular, the co-existence of traditional and contemporary art in Insa-dong is recognized as a factor that distinguishes

it from other local galleries. Thus, it is also recognized as a place of gallery culture. Meanwhile, although uniform modern consumer culture is being reproduced as a result of the integrated designs and socioeconomic changes of urban capitalism, these changes fall within a range where Insa-dong’s sense of place is not significantly damaged. Thus, Insa-dong’s sense of place can be understood as expressing the past and present life of Korea as a unique and attractive place where new culture is formed through a proper mixture of “modernity” and “traditionality”.

In terms of physical factors, to preserve Insa-dong’s sense of place, this study recommends small-scale development that uses building forms and materials, as well as street facilities, that consider Insa-dong’s identity and follow the Korean compromise plan. By additionally creating landmark buildings reflecting the same identity, like ssamjigil, functions concentrated on Insa-dong road can be dispersed. Creating spaces for traditional arts and culture should also be considered. Regarding socio-cultural factors, diversifying products that reflect the unique identity should be considered. Industries that take into account the characteristics of Insa-dong, mixing traditional and modern culture, should be considered. Regarding experiential factors, along with reorganizing currently utilized content, develop-

5) The unconscious sense of place provides an important source of personal identity and also becomes a source of identity for the community (Relph, 1976).

ing various kinds of experiential content, including alley culture experiences, should also be considered.

This study is significant because it examined Insa-dong's sense of place from the perspective of insiders rather than experts and developed a plan for preserving that sense of place based on the results.

While this study suggested basic directions for interpreting sense of place, it was limited in terms of deriving practical implications, such as specific planning and design elements, because of the small number of subjects and interviews. In this regard, more specific and objective strategies can be drawn by conducting additional in-depth interviews. Follow-up studies can use the content of the improvement plan to develop concrete strategies for developing and preserving Insa-dong's sense of place.

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