

A Sociological Study on the Market Economy of "Long" and "Feng" Counties in the Border Ethnic Areas of Hunan and Hubei Provinces

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Abstract: Under the background of the normal epidemic situation, the survival and development problems confronting the "Loong" and "Feng" counties stall economy are investigated, hoping to help the stall economy adapt to the post-epidemic era. In this paper, questionnaire survey and field interview are used to get first-hand information about the real life of street vendors in ethnic areas, and from the perspective of grounded theory, it is found that the occurrence of street vendors is affected by the values and rules of the social situation in which they are located, so as to have a deeper understanding of informal groups such as street vendors. At the same time, it is found that the social and economic development of "Loong" and "Feng" counties tends to be integrated.

Keywords: Market economy; Ethnic areas; Social situation; Grounded theory

1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19, under the circumstances of which the global economic situation is not optimistic and the domestic employment difficulties are worsening, the land stall economy has received high attention. The land stall economy in many places has developed rapidly, but a series of management problems, health and safety problems have also emerged one after another. Farmland economy is an inevitable phenomenon in the social development, but it is also considered as one of the difficult points of urban management. Different from previous studies on the economy of land stalls in big cities, this paper focuses on the economy of land stalls in ethnic areas, taking the counties of neighboring provinces -- Longshan County of Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hunan Province and Laifeng County of Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei Province as the research object. The two places are separated by water, although they belong to different administrative divisions, they share a similar geography, history and culture. Under the guidance of grounded theory, this paper makes full use of the research methods of questionnaire survey, field interview and field observation to collect data, and establishes a category analysis on the collected data, so as to discuss the current living situation and development predicament of mobile street vendors in the two places, and whether there is homogeneity or difference in the economic development of street vendors in the two places to offer help to the study the "Loong" and "Feng" double county stall economy of sustainable development.

2. Research design and data collection

2.1. Related concepts

2.1.1. Mobile vendors

The study of itinerant stallholder is earlier in foreign countries, which is closely related to the development of urbanization and focuses on the governance of itinerant stallholder. Scholars in western countries call the operation behavior of itinerant stallholders as "stallholder economy", which belongs to the middle and lower level of economic development. David Bensman^[1] analyzed the current living situation of mobile vendors in his research, and expounded the concept of mobile vendors. The vendor economy is actually the retail industry, which is an important component of the social economic structure. The management of mobile vendors should be mainly by administrative and legislative means.

Domestic research on mobile vendors began after the reform and opening up. Mobile vendors, with

low threshold, high flexibility, low cost and considerable income, are popular in urban space. At present, there is no consistent definition of mobile stallholders in Chinese academia. For example, Cui Li believes that mobile stallholders are individual small commodity operators who do not have fixed business sites, business licenses, operating time and pay relevant taxes and fees.^[2] In general, most of these theoretical concepts define itinerant stallholder groups as "informal employment groups". In addition, domestic studies focus on the impact of mobile street vendors on urban socialization and development. In the post-epidemic era, such informal employment forms as mobile street vendors provide a way for people to make a living, while their negative impact on urban spatial order cannot be ignored.^[3]

2.1.2. Market economy

Foreign academic research on the market economy started earlier, and from the information found, most countries hold an inclusive attitude towards the development of the market economy. Marc Holzer put forward that the market economy is an indispensable part to enhance the charm of the city and plays a non-negligible role in displaying the characteristics of the city. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs proposed that the charm of a city cannot be separated from the urban culture created by street stalls. Streets full of commercial atmosphere and sidewalks attract residents to gather and become a platform for communication.^[4]

In China, the land stall economy can be widely understood as an economic form that obtains economic sources through the sale of commodities by setting up land stalls. In the urban economy, the land stall economy is a relatively marginal economic type. As it is easy to affect the city appearance and environmental health, it is generally the focus of urban management. The domestic research perspective is mainly to solve the contradiction between farmland economy and urban governance. In terms of the causes of the market economy, Li Xin believes that urban low-income people, employees of private enterprises, poor farmers and the unemployed are the main groups that turn into vendors.^[5] From the perspective of the two sides of the market economy, there is controversy in the academic circle. For example, Li Meng pointed out in his article that the market economy can meet the diversified needs of consumers, relieve the pressure of local employment, promote the development of local economy, show the comprehensive management ability of the city and other positive aspects, but it also affect the appearance of the city and the consumer rights protection difficulties, increase the difficulty of urban management and other negative aspects.^[6] From the perspective of its governance problems, Wang Yuanyu believes that the root cause is the negative nature caused by the unclear definition of property rights in the land stall economy, as well as the repeated and imperfect policies.^[7]

2.2. Research design and data analysis

2.2.1. Survey objects

This study takes Laifeng County of Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei Province and Longshan County of Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hunan Province as research sites. The main research objects are local street vendors who take street stalls as their occupation, and the auxiliary research objects are local residents.

2.2.2. Investigation method

In the early stage of the investigation, by reading, analyzing and sorting out relevant literature on the market stall economy and mobile market vendors, the current status of the research on the market stall economy in ethnic areas was understood, and relevant materials on politics, economy and culture of Laifeng County of Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei Province and Longshan County of Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hunan Province were collected, so as to have a preliminary understanding of the research place.

Questionnaire survey method, semi-structured interview method, field observation method and other methods are adopted to go deep into the economic stall vendors group. Guided by the grounded theory, it explores their behavior pattern, living habits, situation, national culture, historical experience and other aspects, and further studies the living situation and development predicament faced by the group in the social stage. To explore the relationship between economic behavior and national culture and historical experience.

2.2.3. Data analysis

In the aspect of data analysis, coding is carried out through grounded theory. First-level coding

firstly finds conceptual genera through the materials collected by questionnaires and interviews, determines the attributes and dimensions of the genera, and forms the classified genera. Secondary coding is to discover and establish the relationship between taxonomic genera, and summarize into the main genera; Three-level coding is based on the second-level coding, the analysis and correlation of the existing main categories to form the core category.^[8] Firstly, the materials collected by questionnaires and interviews are broken down, each piece of information is given a concept, and then the contents under the same concept are summarized in a new way to form a category that reflects the current living situation of mobile vendors, such as "national characteristic commodities", "low cost" and "worrying about COVID-19". On this basis, the relevant categories are summarized into new main categories, such as "local complex", "difficulties in survival", "identity differentiation", "appropriate satisfaction", "mutual needs" and "ideal expectations", which can reflect the survival and development differences and influences of the surveyed land market economy from various aspects (see Table 1). Finally, by systematically connecting the relationships among the six main categories, the core category of "The construction of social scenarios on the choice of the economic behavior of land stalls" is finally formed.

Table 1: Attribute and dimension analysis

Index	Major Category	Category	Attribute	Dimension
1	Local complex	interprovincial flow	range	small , large
		out-going employment rate	degree	low , high
		commodity with national characteristics	species	more , less
2	The difficulty of survival	family financial difficulties	degree	high , low
		fear of contracting disease	attitude	negative, positive
		increase of cost	range	big , small
		loss of customers	controllability	weak , strong
3	Identity differentiation	residents' acceptance of the stall	attitude	positive , negative
4	Appropriate satisfaction	survival requirement	degree	low , high
		the stallholder's view of himself	attitude	positive , negative
		explore and sell goods	range	small , large
5	Mutual need	stallholders communicate and learn from each other	intentional	strong , weak
		residents need stalls	demand	high , low
		the stalls are needed by the residents	demand	high , low
6	Ideal expectation	farmland development	hierarchy	Individual , situational
		farmland management	aspect	Strategy , result

3. The behavior of the market economy

According to the investigation, the stalls in "Loong" and "Feng" counties are divided into fixed stalls and non-fixed stalls. Most of them are distributed in streets and squares, and some of them are concentrated in the market. The stalls are generally operated by carrying goods for sale, placing them on the spot, and using tricycles or motor vehicles as platforms for selling goods. Vendors usually operate their stalls for up to six months (six to nine months), and the hours of each day vary depending on the type of goods they sell and the audience who buy them. Most vendors have flexible employment hours, but they are also very busy. For example, vegetable and fruit sellers basically start from the second half of the night, about one or two o'clock, to prepare for the sale of goods, do the packaging and loading work and start at about three or four o'clock, about five o'clock in the morning, to arrive at the town market to start selling, which in good business, can be closed at eight or nine in the morning. Otherwise, they close their stalls at noon (the fruit vendors here are akin to mobile fruit shops selling all kinds of fruit, not just one kind). For example, mobile vendors selling snacks or toys are more inclined to set up stalls from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., mainly for the after-school time of kindergartens and primary schools.

Although the vendors from the two places rarely sell in other counties across provinces, we found through the interview that the mobile vendors near the riverbank (near the junction of the two provinces) are more from other provinces. The vendors selling vegetables generally flow from Hunan to Hubei,

while the vendors selling small handicrafts and toys generally flow from Hubei to Hunan. In general, stallholders vary in scale, time, location, income, labor input, and type of goods and services (As shown in Table 2).

Table 2: Types and operating locations of stall economy

Kinds	Proportion	Places	Proportion
Special snacks sold	57.14%	square	69.05%
Food sales (fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, aquatic products, etc.)	45.24%	roadside and alley	88.09%
Sales of small commodities (daily necessities, crafts, etc.)	33.33%	school	42.86%
Service sales (repair services such as shoe repair and umbrella repair, mobile phone film, key matching, etc.)	19.05%	food market	23.81%
		district	16.67%

4. Behavioral analysis and internal logic of the market economy

The economic behavior of street vendors is inseparable from the specific social situation. The economic behavior of street vendors such as the time, place and type of selling activities is closely related to the background and starting point of relevant individuals, the behavior and attitude of residents and the mode of urban management and governance. Through the research, there are three main reasons why local stallholders choose to work as itinerant vendors: First, it is a low-cost economic activity. The local vendors are mostly low-income people or poor families. In order to establish a foothold in the city and improve their family life, they adopt a commercial economic model with low cost and free operation. Secondly, the current social employment form is severe and the employment pressure is great. The flexible nature of the employment of the street market economy makes it easy for the street vendors to get started. Therefore, the street market economy has become a typical form of self-employed employment economy^[9], which alleviates people's employment pressure and negative emotions brought by employment. Thirdly, they are highly dependent on their hometown. Most of the vendors are native and influenced by local culture, so they seldom do business in other counties or provinces (except those vendors near the riverbank). They have strong hometown feelings for local culture and life atmosphere. From the above three reasons, it can be found that the development of local plot economy is closely related to various social situations. In the following, we will make a specific analysis of the six main categories summarized by the code, and elaborate the relationships among them, and explain how social situations construct the behavioral choice of plot economy.

4.1. Local complex

Local complex refers to the strong dependence on local cultural habits in the face of conflicts with local cultural patterns or life patterns. The local complex is the deeper cultural resistance, the transformation and development of the resistance phenomenon in the cultural exchange, and it is a positive phenomenon.^[10] From the above reasons for choosing the economic behavior of land stalls, we can also see the role of "local complex".

Although Laifeng County and Longshan County belong to Hubei Province and Hunan Province, they have great homogeneity in terms of history, culture and geographical location. Therefore, street vendors choose to carry out economic activities on the border of the two counties (two provinces). As Longshan County is far away from other counties in Hunan Province, stall holders will drive to the market less often in Longshan County, while Laifeng County is closely located with Longshan County and other counties in Hubei Province, so stall holders will mostly drive to the market in Laifeng County, and the frequency is relatively dense. In addition, we found that the two places have similar eating habits, and most of the food sold is characteristic of the two places, such as "rice tofu, oil excrement, sour radish, sour and spicy powder, stinky tofu". Similar eating habits are also one of the reasons why vendors are willing to set up stalls in the two places. Through the street vendors' behaviors and eating habits, we can find that people in areas with similar cultural backgrounds have close interactions with each other and have a high sense of identity with the two places, which to a certain extent will identify the two places as the same region. Meanwhile, the economy of the two places has a trend of integrated development. Interviewee B also said, "Now Laifeng and Longshan want to develop together. Less neither side is good", which will undoubtedly deepen the two vendors "local complex".

4.2. "The Difficulty of Survival" and "Fit for Satisfaction"

The main reasons for "difficult survival" include the background of the vendors themselves, the attitude of the people towards the vendors, the way of urban management, major social health events, and the impact of social economy. According to the survey, most of the street vendors who carry out the economic behavior of street vendors will more or less have greater family economic pressure, such as mortgage, car loan, children's school problems, sick medical problems and so on. In addition to their own economic pressures, external pressures should not be ignored, such as the loss of customers due to the outbreak of COVID-19, slow sales of goods or pneumonia, the failure of harvests due to natural disasters, the rise in costs due to economic conditions, residents' rejection of the market economy, or the expulsion of street vendors by city managers. All of them have a negative impact on the economic behavior of street stalls to varying degrees, thus exacerbating the "survival dilemma" of street vendors.

Although the living situation of the street stall economy in both places is not optimistic, most of the street vendors hold a more optimistic attitude towards their current situation. The survey data shows that 42.86% of the street vendors think that the street stall can meet their daily life needs, 38.1% of the street vendors think that it depends on the situation, the overall present a positive and satisfied attitude. After in-depth understanding, I found that the simple and positive customs of the two places are the cradle of this mentality. Both fit and satisfaction are indispensable, and they go hand in hand. In the interview, the interviewee C said that he had tried his way from selling grain at the beginning to selling clothes and finally to selling fruit step by step. He also summed up the characteristics of the customers who took care of their business between each market (market) We find that stall holders have their own observation and experience of what kind of goods are sold on the street, and will adjust their sales types according to the consumption demand of the social market, actively explore and seek for the right way.

4.3. Identity Differentiation and Mutual Need

"Identity differentiation" refers to the social people's identity difference to the performance and function of the market economy. The study found that residents' views on the street stall economy were divided into two types: those who said they would buy things at street stalls accounted for the majority (67.44%). Those who supported the street stall economy believed that the commodities sold in the street stall economy were cheap, green and healthy, fresher than supermarkets, and convenient to buy. Such residents would often choose to consume at mobile vendors. Those who oppose the market economy argue that it will aggravate road congestion, pollute the surrounding environment, disturb people with noise, and cause serious food hygiene problems. The differentiation between the two ends of the residents' identification of the farmland economy reflects the contradictory situation of the farmland economy in the current society, which is not only necessary, but also brings many troubles.

In the study, we found that there was a positive interaction between stallholders and stallholders, and between stallholders and residents. In the interview with interviewee C, we learned that in addition to the general competition between stallholders and stallholders, there is also a harmonious relationship of learning and communication. "(and other stallholders) ask each other, see how your business is, how is my business, for example, see what other people buy today, the next day I can also go in, join my good selling goods, The next day, when others also sell, we communicate with each other and learn from each other while selling. "This kind of mutual learning and active communication among the vendors has formed a harmonious business atmosphere of the local market economy. The relationship between street vendors and residents mainly depends on residents' recognition of the street vendor economy. Above, the identification behaviors and attitudes of residents who support and oppose the street vendor economy were analyzed. However, during the period of epidemic control, residents' attitudes towards the street vendor economy changed slightly. Due to the shortage of materials and the strengthening of price control by the government during the epidemic, most residents hope that the mobile vendors can sell more fresh vegetables and fruits for purchase without worrying about the phenomenon of price gouging by the mobile vendors. From this point of view, the market economy plays a positive role in improving the quality of life of residents in special periods. At the same time, it reflects the characteristics that residents and vendors get what they need from each other.

4.4. "Ideal Expectation"

"Ideal expectation" refers to the expectations of vendors and people for the good development and governance of the market economy from their own or social level. From our survey, we found that both vendors and residents showed positive support for promoting the economic management of stalls, and

agreed that the government should supervise and manage the economic management of stalls, and provide fixed stalls. There is no serious conflict between the street vendors and the city managers in the two places. From the perspective of residents, the attitude and behavior of the city managers towards the street vendors operating the stall economy are more relevant, and violent management behaviors rarely occur.

For reasons of survival and harmonious management, most of the vendors in the two places are willing to accept government management and supervision. In the survey of street vendors and residents, the residents are more hopeful than the street vendors that the government should supervise the street vendors. More residents believe that the street vendor economy can maintain the status quo or even expect the street vendor economy to prosper. They also put forward more suggestions --allow the mobile street vendors to set up stations along some streets and regulate them appropriately; regulate the operation of mobile vendors through the provision of special areas and special practices; improve the relevant management system, strengthen management, and improve the comprehensive law enforcement quality of urban management and reduce the occurrence of violence; register business information and make mobile vendors have qualified business qualifications and so on.

5. Summary and Outlook

In his social action theory, Parsons emphasizes that individuals in social situations will be influenced by the values and norms shared by the situation, thus internalizing personality traits and influencing their actions.^[1] In the economic behavior of land stalls in Laifeng and Longshan counties, we found that the social situation affecting the economic behavior of land stalls contained the dimensions of individual street vendors, residents, urban management, social culture and natural events. These dimensions interacted with each other, thus forming the convergence behavior of land stalls economy in the two places. The market economy of the two places originated from the "local complex" and "the difficulty of survival", but it was "suitable and satisfied" in the daily economic behavior. Although the people have "identity differentiation" to the market economy, the two are symbiotic relationship of "mutual need". In the modern society full of rules, the street stall economy, which originated in the street intersection, has been seeking for development and prosperity consciously. The street vendors and the public have placed their "ideal expectation" on the supervision and the help of the city administrator. All of the above make the stall economy of "Loong" and "Feng" counties always in the social situation, constantly affected by the rules and values of the social situation, produce the characteristics of the stall economic behavior of "Loong" and "Feng" counties.

It is found from the study that the convergence development of the stall economy in the two counties of "Loong" and "Feng" to a certain extent shows that the two counties will gradually move towards the road of integrated development in the future economic society. We hope that the economic development of the two counties of "Loong" and "Feng" can be as expected by the street vendors and residents of the two counties in the future, "get the corresponding supervision and help", and even "prosper".

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