

High-end Street Vendor Economy—the Status Quo, Challenges and Policy Responses of Car Boot Sales

Xu Ningxin

Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China

Abstract: Under the fully open post-epidemic period, the national demand for stable employment and people's livelihood has set off a wave of "street vendor heat", the situation of street vendor economy has changed, and the car boot sales quietly rises with the deep combination of car boot sales culture and consumption. Based on the study and analysis of the status quo of the car boot sales, this paper lists the new challenges facing the development and management of the car boot sales from the perspective of urban governance and puts forward the policy countermeasures to solve the pain spots of car boot sales.

Keywords: car boot sales, street vendor economy, challenge, policy responses

1. Introduction

In the current macroeconomic policy to promote economic recovery in the general background, a series of stimulus measures to promote consumption, expand domestic demand and activate the market of the most subtle economies have been introduced, and initial results.

In recent years, the car trunk culture and the depth of the combination of consumption "car boot sale" has become a trend, become a bright color in the city night economy. The young and fashionable new consumption scene not only attracts people to stop and watch offline, but also becomes a new field for young people to socialize online.

"See what you want to buy", "set up a stall", "Thai hand tea with lemon", "Bring Nature home", "Relief Grocery store"... (Jing, 2022)^[1]A small trunk gives birth to a new consumption space. So, what gave birth to the car boot sales? How is it different from the traditional street vendor economy? How to cultivate this new business form? What are the challenges he faces and the policies he has adopted to deal with them?

2. The status quo of car boot sales

2.1. Causes of car boot sales

Car Boot Sale dates back to September 1980. Polly Pavitt, a British person, organized the world's first car boot Sale on a farm in Kent County. That is, car owners can drive cars with clothes, shoes and hats, daily necessities, books and CDS, furniture and so on to meet at the market to exchange and trade. And open up a different kind of free shopping sky together.(Guo, 2022)^[2] This pattern was also part of rural culture in Europe and the United States at the time.

It has a certain trend of cultural attributes, but also with car culture, coffee food, nightlife, camping economy and other new forms of business. Jing Linbo, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Evaluation, believes that car boot sale is a new type of consumption scene that meets people's desire for fireworks and economic recovery.(Si, 2022)^[3] Some netizens believe that the continuous increase of the car boot sale is a signal of the rise of a new generation of consumers who pay attention to life experience and psychological needs, which has shortened the social distance that was originally estranged under the influence of the epidemic. In this perspective, the car boot sale not only has economic functions, but also has social and cultural functions, meeting the multidimensional needs of young people to live in the market and enjoy.

2.2. The difference with the traditional market economy

From the form of view, the car boot sale seems to be the carrier of selling things from the ground, the flat cart to the car, so some people call it "high-end street vendor economy". With all the fun hand-made

items, delicious coffee and gourmet, and creative decor, each rear box is like a miniature creative factory.

The car boot sale is more like young people releasing their entrepreneurial passion and expressing their yearning for a better life, rather than just making a living like the traditional market economy. Some of the stalls are clearly trying to build brands, from name design to new media operations.

2.3. Cultivate new business forms

From the perspective of business model, the car boot sale is flexible, strong mobility and low threshold, which can expand the consumption scene and stimulate the consumption vitality to a certain extent. At the same time, there are various types of participants, or people who use their spare time to increase their income, or young people who start businesses for the first time. Therefore, it has become a new way and a new way of flexible employment and free employment. The rise of this economic model makes people feel the fireworks and trendy taste brought by the fresh consumption experience.

2.3.1. New possibilities for night markets

In the post-epidemic era, many places are trying to open up the night market and street vendor economy to restore the vitality of consumption. It is in this context that the emerging business form of "car boot sale" is born, and it has become a shining new star in the urban night economy.

In the evening, Lanzhou hoppers commercial pedestrian street, cool breezes, dozens of elaborately decorated car rear trunk, arranged in turn, each car rear trunk is like a miniature version of the creative factory, very personalized - hand goods, coffee dessert, daily sundry, vintage clothing, fashion accessories, tide play MOE... Each "rear box" sells different products and attracts different customer groups. A small rear box carries not only goods, but also the energy that young people bring to a city.

2.3.2. Each gets what he needs

In Japan, roadside stalls are called "yatai", of which Fukuoka Yatai is the most popular search, and has become a tourist resource.³ Despite its small size, Yatai has become an important social place in Japan because of its quiet street corner, where you can communicate with vendors face to face and sit side by side with passers-by. In recent years, the "car boot sales", as a product of the times of the market economy, also demonstrates its social attributes. Car owners who participate in the car boot sales gather here to show their personalities and hobbies, as well as to enter more social circles.

2.3.3. Development concerns

Car boot sale through innovation will be young people's attitude towards life into the square inch rear box, not only the scene is free and flexible, but also comes with a literary filter, this is the "car boot sale" in recent years in some domestic cities' popular development charm. On social platforms, such as Beijing Sprese Ole, Nanjing Wumadu, Xi'an Chanba and other places, car boot sale has become an Internet celebrity punching card.(She, 2022)^[4] However, while such a refreshing consumption scene brings different consumption experience and pressure release to people, its hidden worries are also obvious: mainly in the food safety, urban order and son on.

There is no doubt that how to make the car boot sales such an emerging business form, to add fireworks to the city while achieving healthy development, tests the wisdom of city managers. Operators should operate in good faith, and relevant departments should take measures to supervise, so that the market can achieve sustainable development while adding fireworks to the city's nightlife.

3. Challenges faced by tailgate market

Under the background of "epidemic normalization", the development and management of street vendor economy, including car boot sales, are facing new challenges. Now, in the post-epidemic era of full liberalization, the market economy has become an important means to alleviate employment pressure and livelihood difficulties in the short term. Local governments have relaxed policies and no longer regard it as the object of "crackdown" affecting the appearance of the city. However, while bringing opportunities, the problems brought by the market economy in the past still exist. Through collection and collation, we condensed the following four problems from the perspective of urban governance and conducted an in-depth analysis of the problems.

3.1. The business community of the car boot sales lacks the legal status and the right to speak and speak. How to define the scale of collection and release is the primary factor of governance

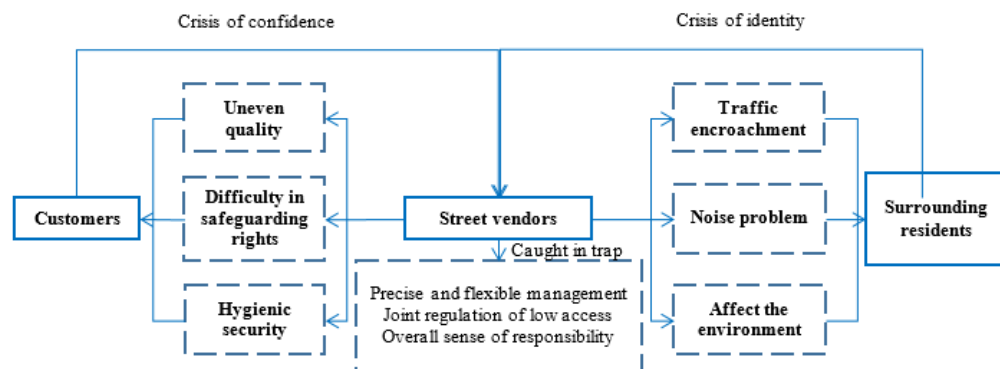
Nowadays, the urbanization development brings industrial transformation, the reduction of low-skilled positions increases the pressure on employment, the rise of land rent is squeezing the bottom business space, and some people start to seek livelihoods as "self-employment" behavior in the car boot sales. This kind of self-employment is actually in line with citizens' right to survival, right to development and right to work, but the definition of the legitimacy of car boot sales is still "one city, one policy" or even "one policy at a time", facing the awkward dilemma that the legitimacy and scale of income and relief have not been clarified. [5]

In addition, after the release of macro policies to encourage the night economy and flexible employment, the corresponding implementation measures lag behind the economic development, resulting in the confrontation between the car boot sales and public power has never stopped. Some city managers encourage tailgate market and other innovative characteristic business forms during holidays, and in peacetime, they encourage and expel the floating market due to problems such as congestion and difficult management. There is too much discretion in the overall management, and the scale has a large disassociation owing to the change of time and the direction of public opinion. During the epidemic lockdown in Nanjing in the summer of 2021, "Wumadu", the origin of Nanjing car boot sales, was banned due to the operation of occupying the road.

So the car boot sales, whether as a source of life for the unemployed or a low-cost test field for entrepreneurs, needs the legalization of the community and the right to speak in rulemaking.

3.2. The car boot sales forms an interwoven field of informal economic space and urban life, which implies inherent contradictions with multiple subjects

The market economy, including the car boot sales, has gone through a huge transformation in policy and public opinion from negative to positive due to the epidemic, but the intrinsic contradictions between the market economy and surrounding residents, consumers and other main groups still exist (see Figure 1). As shown in the survey conducted by the Institute of Public Policy of Zhejiang University and the Institute of Public Policy of Zhejiang Province: even among the potential customers near the street vendors, 44% of them still refuse to buy products from the mobile street vendors, mainly believing that the products sold by them are at risk of fake and shoddy products, and there are difficulties in after-sales service and insecurity. 64% of nearby residents believe that the noise and road occupying caused by their sales have affected their daily life. ⁵ A considerable number of snack sellers in the "Hinanli" car boot sales did not hang up public notice cards and health certificates in prominent positions in accordance with regulations, which also caused some consumers' hidden worries.



Source: Institute for Public Policy of Zhejiang University and Institute for Public Policy of Zhejiang Province

Figure 1: Multi-agent contradiction diagram

Therefore, seeking for flexible management methods with more precise positioning, supervision mode with lower entry threshold, and training path to improve the overall responsibility consciousness of mobile operators are the key to retaining mobile car boot sales.

3.3. The rapid change of the main body of the business, the mode of operation and the temporal and spatial distribution of the car boot sale has increasingly tested the embroidery skill of urban governance

The modern flexible transportation mode has broken the localism of the working group. "Car boot sale" expands the space limit of employees and realizes the whole city flow of stalls. At the same time, the flexibility of temporal and spatial location has become an effective way to avoid municipal management. In the period when the organizational framework and management framework have not been perfected, the "guerrilla war" between street vendors and urban management personnel in the city of "enemy retreat, I pendulum" is still sometimes staged. In this context, the management of temporary stall space has become a shadow area that many people turn a blind eye to, directly affecting the quality of life of nearby residents. Although the system clearly stipulates the centralized "outdoor bazaar", the actual space management for highly mobile and temporary Spaces can only rely on the street vendors' own quality and the self-restraint and coordination of the gathering groups.

As an informal economic organization, the car boot sale should theoretically follow the market control framework and restrict its negative externalities. However, the spatial basis of the car boot sale is the public space, and neither street vendors, nor surrounding residents, nor the floating population can directly have the right to communicate and coordinate. Therefore, the solution of the actual spatial conflict and rights infringement depends more on the degree of damage to the interests of all parties. Therefore, refined spatial governance needs to accurately discover the profit and loss subjects of spatial externalities, and multi-subjects can cooperatively shape the internal power of public space governance. In addition, with the promotion of the construction of smart cities, the introduction of big data and information platforms on the one hand can further explore the spatial-temporal regularity of mobile street vendors, on the other hand, it also provides new development opportunities for the refined governance of "car boot sales".

3.4. For the purpose of the development of the "car boot sale", the virtuous cycle and endogenous impetus between urban public services and municipal administration have not yet formed

After the market involved in urban management, traffic, sanitation, market supervision and many other management departments of the serious segmentation, if a relatively flexible regulatory approach, compared to the "one-size-fits-all" intensified the difficulty of management. According to the Zhejiang University Institute of Public Policy and Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Public Policy interviews with urban management department staff, several managers maintain a negative view of the legalization of the car boot sale, believing that it will increase the workload of managers, and cannot provide them with more benefits.⁵ At the same time, the managers believe that the supervision of itinerant street vendors will require huge human costs, and the buck-passing problem will inevitably occur among various departments. For example, in the car boot sales encroaching on the motor road illegal operation, there is an uncertain division of powers and responsibilities between the traffic department and the urban management department. The negative attitude of the management body reflects the inherent conflict between the economic supervision of the rear box and the urban management system.

The car boot sale produces negative externalities that squeeze urban public space and occupy urban management, transportation and sanitation resources. The operation of low or even zero tax revenue leads to the car boot sales increasing the cost of municipal control while failing to provide new endogenous power for public services, so it falls into a management dilemma. To break this problem, on the one hand, we need to explore a more diversified governance model, change the previous single top-down perspective, bottom-up to explore the car boot sales management group internal autonomy method or social supervision model, save municipal management costs; On the other hand, a more precise way of taxation is needed to form a virtuous cycle from "public service - municipal - management - market economy".

4. Promote the policy response to the standardized development of car boot sales

4.1. Integrate the "multi-subject" governance model and improve the urban governance level as a whole

All-round supervision and evaluation will be carried out. From food safety and product quality to the reputation of street vendors, irregular inspections are needed, and special supervisory bodies are set up to monitor urban management officers taking bribes or sabotaging work.(He et al., 2023)^[6] In order to

guarantee the safety of food operations, vendors are required to present health certificates, food business licenses and other relevant licenses. No matter for the equipment construction of the rear box, or sanitary treatment, it is necessary to ensure regular sterilization and disinfection. We should be deeply aware of the necessity of its transformation to clean, sanitary and orderly, so as to achieve a new form of harmonious coexistence between the car boot sales and people's life.

Big data will effectively solve problems for standardized management of street vendors. Let each street vendor according to personal information to match the palm business hall and field booth registration, actively implement the booth real-name matching system, in order to real-time positioning and selection, reservation booth. In addition, the behavior of the vendors in the operation of the stalls will be controlled by the online supervision system, so as to facilitate the government to establish a credit system to govern them. As for post-transaction services, the government can track every dissenting transaction through cooperation with online payment platforms, safeguard the rights and interests of consumers, deal with the potential quality problems of the goods in the car boot sales, effectively avoid consumption disputes and improve the credibility of the car boot sales in the public group.

While strengthening the standardized management of the car boot sale, the conflicts between the car boot sales and urban governance should be solved with gentle governance forms. Promote the establishment of a benign consultation mechanism, and create a market economy operating environment where harmonious development and standardized management coexist.

4.2. Strengthen assistance and support to guide the orderly growth of the car boot sales

Diversified assistance and support to promote the robust growth of car boot sales.(Huang, 2022)^[7] Before entering the car boot sale, the corresponding process such as business qualification license and commodity quality inspection should be properly simplified and fast, making the license audit process smoother. For the car boot sale vendors belonging to low-income and vulnerable groups, the relevant departments can combine the poverty alleviation policy, according to the actual situation to give discretionary preferential relief, to care for the people's livelihood as the basis of acceptance. When the economic management plan of the car boot sale is implemented to the specific details of the location, time and business projects, the government departments need to strengthen the linkage, establish an inspection service system, and timely discover and help solve the economic management problems of the car boot sale. Of course, community streets, traffic management departments in civilized law enforcement at the same time, for the violation of discipline, malicious cause of trouble vendors need to uphold the requirements of fair law enforcement, resolutely resist the potential chaos in the car boot sales, maintain normal market order.

Many channels of goods supply to support the development of the car boot sales. Ali 1688 platform has released the street vendor economy support plan, Jingdong has set up the Spark plan, Suning has created the night shopping partner plan, and Tencent Wechat has released the national shop fireworks plan to more than 50 million small and micro businesses on the platform(Wu, 2020)^[8], providing high-quality goods for the street vendor economy and even the car boot sales. Government departments can cooperate with market supervision departments to formulate relevant policies on the supply of goods, so that large e-commerce platforms can inject standardized supply of goods into the car boot sales, and improve the normal situation of the street vendor flooded with fake and shoddy products from the source.

4.3. Highlight urban culture and build characteristic cultural blocks while meeting consumer demand, the car boot sales in different regions can highlight some business characteristics, form region-specific consumer culture, and build a fixed street vendor block

The mature model of international street vendor economy is worth learning from. The Dongmyo Flea Market in Seoul's Jongno district, for example, focuses on secondhand goods. Clusters of tailgating and sales-themed products attract customers, similar to urban evacuation zones.⁶ Rear-box cultural blocks with different characteristics can be created according to the types of commodities, such as snack street, department store street, etc. In today's developed we-media era, video and text publicity can also improve the visibility of the block, attract urban consumers, and even become a tourist punch in order to enhance its commercial value.

The model of Chinese street vendor economy is also improving day by day. The old urban area has made some improvements to the shanty town, from the characteristics of the area to the characteristics of the commodities sold, to retain certain cultural characteristics, and is committed to becoming a local classic cultural symbol. Ancient street vendors, which exist in various cities, are full of urban

memories and tourists' active exploration of fireworks. They often become the places where Internet celebrities punch their cards or attract tourists from outside. Handicrafts, local snacks, and other goods can raise the temperature of a city.

In this way, characteristic cultural and cultural blocks can not only guarantee fixed business places for vendors, convenient management and control, but also bring satisfactory income to vendors. They can also add luster to the repetitive monotonous life, enrich the ways of leisure and entertainment for citizens, and bring warm fire to the reinforced concrete city. Therefore, to a certain extent, the car boot sale meets the diversified, personalized and flexible needs of consumers. It can fit in with the trend of China's high-quality economic development, and constantly enhance the resilience, potential and power of the supply side of the Chinese market.

5. Conclusion

In the post-epidemic period of full liberalization, the rise of the car boot sale has injected vitality into the domestic economic market which was slightly depressed due to the impact of the epidemic, and solved such problems as large inventory to be digested by consumers, restructuring of economic structure, consumer behavior gradually moving closer to online retail, and consumption had to be stimulated for economic recovery. It has also mobilized the enthusiasm of domestic consumption to a certain extent. At the same time, it is a good opportunity for mass entrepreneurship and innovation. In addition to adding fireworks to the city, it will greatly promote the development of economic circulation.^[9]This is the start point and ultimate goal of our urban work. The moving scenery of the city not only lies in the height of the high-rise buildings and the degree of economic development, but also lies in the temperature and happiness of the people. Encouraging and guiding the healthy development of "car boot sales" will not only help cities retain steam, but also inject new momentum into stabilizing the economy and ensuring people's livelihood. With the concept of flexible employment deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, "car boot sale" has become a trend. It may also stimulate the innovation vitality of the city, allowing individuals, small and micro economy and cultural and creative industries to collide and spark inspiration.

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