



Trunk Vendor Economy: Development, Current Situation and Challenges — The Case of Changsha City

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Abstract: As a traditional economic form with a long history, the ground stall economy has ushered in new development opportunities in recent years. Taking Liuyanghe Street in Kaifu District and Orange Island Street in Yuelu District of Changsha City as samples, this paper explores the development, status quo, challenges and coping strategies of the trunk bazaar as a new type of ground stall economy by collecting first-hand data and understanding in detail the information on the composition of its vendors, types of vendors, and business modes. The study found that trunk bazaars play an important role in providing entrepreneurial opportunities, promoting consumption, and enlivening the market, but they also face challenges in terms of management regulation, market competition, and safety and security. In order to realize the sustainable development of the trunk bazaar economy, it is necessary for the government, enterprises and all sectors of society to work together to establish a sound management mechanism and support system.

Keywords: ground floor economy, trunk bazaar, entrepreneurial opportunities, market competition

1. Introduction

As a traditional form of economy with a long history, the stall economy has always played the role of serving the people and promoting the economic development of the community. In recent years, the stall economy has taken on new vigor and vitality. Among them, the trunk bazaar, as a new form of economy, has attracted wide attention. Trunk bazaar not only continues the characteristics of the traditional stall economy, but also integrates the Internet technology and modern business concepts, which has become the new wind mouth of the stall economy. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the development history of the trunk bazaar hawker economy and deeply analyze its current situation and challenges, in order to put forward corresponding countermeasures and provide reference for the sustainable development of the trunk bazaar hawker economy.

1.1 Research methodology

Literature review: a review of the literature related to the trunk bazaar vendor economy to understand its development and related research findings.

Field survey: Two streets in Changsha City, Liuyanghe Street in Kaifu District and Orange Island Street in Yuelu District, where trunk bazaar vendors are relatively concentrated, were selected for field survey to understand in detail the composition of their vendors, the types of vendors, the mode of operation, and other information, as well as to conduct a case study.

Data analysis: The data obtained from the field survey were statistically and analytically analyzed to reveal the current status and challenges of the development of the trunk bazaar vendor economy.

1.2 Expected results

Through the above research methods, this paper is expected to reveal the current development status and problems of the trunk bazaar vendor economy, and put forward corresponding countermeasures to solve them. This will help to deepen the understanding of the trunk bazaar vendor economy and also contribute to exploring new paths for the development of the ground floor vendor economy and promoting stable economic growth and harmonious social development.

2. Trunk bazaar definition and background

2.1 Definitions

Vendor economy is a marginal form of economy in cities, which belongs to the category of typical informal economic

forms and is a complement to the national mainstream economy. It is estimated that there are about 114 million urban informal workers in China [1]. Traditionally, the stall economy refers to the informal economy that takes place in urban or rural streets, markets, or other public places. In urban or rural streets, markets, or other public places, individual operators rent or occupy a certain area of ground stalls and set up goods for sale and purchase as an economic model. With its low-cost, low-skill and low-risk qualities, the stall economy has helped some of the low-income people at the bottom of the city to solve their livelihood problems [2]. The flexibility of the ground stall economy is also high, as operators can choose to set up their stalls at different times and locations and adjust their business strategies according to market demand. In addition, the stall economy can provide employment opportunities, especially for some low-skilled laborers or the unemployed, the stall economy is a way for them to make a living. However, its disorderly development has also been criticized, and the main criticisms include occupying public space, affecting traffic and city order, etc. [2].

The trunk economy, on the other hand, is a new mode of stalls that has emerged in recent years, which utilizes the trunk of a car as a temporary stall for the sale of goods or the provision of services. Compared with the traditional hawker economy, trunk bazaars have the following characteristics: first, trunk bazaars are more flexible and convenient because traders can organize bazaars at different locations at any time and anywhere without being constrained by fixed stalls or markets. Second, trunk bazaars usually have lower costs because there is no need to pay for fixed venue rent or stall fees, which lowers the threshold for starting a business and attracts more entrepreneurs to participate. In addition, trunk fairs are promoted and organized through emerging channels such as social media, which are more likely to attract the attention and participation of the youth population.

2.2 Historical background

Car Boot Sale emerged in the 1980s, as an emerging sales method, becoming a part of the contemporary folk life unique to the UK [3]. The trunk economy in Europe and the United States is gradually emerging, the domestic only sporadic, did not form economies of scale. The rise of the Internet wave provides an opportunity for the development of a new type of floor stall economy. The entrepreneurial enthusiasm of young people and the transformation of consumption habits have also contributed to the rise of trunk bazaars. He Fan, who first operated the trunk market in Nanning, introduced the trunk market popular in Europe and the United States to Nanning in 2015, and became the leader of the rise of domestic "trunk fever" [4]. After the impact of the new crown epidemic, the public ushered in the post epidemic era. Post-epidemic period refers to the period of stable social development since the outbreak of new crown pneumonia in Wuhan at the end of 2019, when the domestic epidemic situation was brought under control [5]. The changes and impacts brought by the epidemic have brought new opportunities to the trunk bazaar, which is expected to develop scale effects and gain heat. In addition to this, in a weak economic situation, or increased pressure of life, people begin to look for additional sources of income, and the floor stall economy provides a simple and convenient, low-cost way to start a business or earn additional income [6].

3. Analysis of the status of field research

Through field survey and data analysis, this paper will describe in detail the current situation of the vendor economy in trunk bazaars. It will cover the information of vendor personnel, types of vendors, and business modes in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and scale of the trunk bazaar vendor economy.

In this study, two roads in Changsha City where the mobile vendors of trunk bazaars are more concentrated, namely, Fuyuan West Road, Liuyanghe Street, Kaifu District, and Fenglin First Road, Xihu Street, Yuelu District, were selected for the survey. Through two days of observation and communication, first-hand data were obtained through questionnaires and interviews to investigate in detail the composition of their vendors, the types of vendors, the mode of operation and other information. Through questionnaire analysis and processing, 168 valid questionnaires were counted among the 200 questionnaires distributed, with an effective rate of 84%.

3.1 Vendor Personnel Information

Age: The age range of the survey respondents is wide, ranging from 20 to 60 years old, but concentrated between 31 and 50, with 39% of the number of people between 31 and 40, 31% between 41 and 50, individual samples over 60 years old, and a certain proportion of young people under 30.

Household registration: most of the vendors are from Changsha, accounting for 77 percent of the total, with only a few vendors from other regions.

Education level: Education levels varied, with most vendors, 72%, having received only basic education, while others may have had high school or higher education, and the overall education level was low. Status and occupation: The survey found that the status and occupation of the vendors were diverse, including local workers, migrant workers, retirees, and

others, accounting for 32%, 44%, 17%, and 7% respectively.

Income: The income of vendors varies according to their business situation, with some having a more stable income while others have a more fluctuating income, but overall, the income level of vendors is relatively average, with most of them earning around RMB 4,000 per month, which is at a low to medium level. In terms of income distribution, 38% of the vendors were able to support the basic living of their families, while 48% were able to pay for their children's schooling, and only 14% of the vendors were able to make a surplus on top of the two.

3.2 Types of vendors

Food food category: including fruit stalls, vegetable stalls, cooked food stalls, etc., accounting for 56% of the total, characterized by simple equipment and high mobility. Food vendors usually focus on simple equipment, such as a compact tricycle or a modified barbecue cart. This simple equipment is not only inexpensive, but also easy to carry and maneuver. These vendors are very flexible in their operations and are able to change the location of their stalls at any time, catering to the needs of consumers at different times and places.

Flowers and birds: mainly selling flowers, bonsai and pets, accounting for 23% of the total, characterized by unique goods and emotional connection. Flower and bird vendors attract customers with unique commodities, such as a variety of flowers, bonsai and pets. These commodities are ornamental and companionable, and can fulfill people's pursuit of a better life and companionship. The commodities carried by flower and bird vendors are not only material transactions, but also a way to establish an emotional connection with customers. Consumers' emotional connection with creatures becomes a special kind of consumer experience in the vendor economy.

The category of daily necessities: such as clothing, shoes, hats and household goods, which accounted for 21% of the total, was characterized by necessity of life and stable operation. Commodities provided by vendors in the daily necessities category are directly related to people's daily lives, including clothing, shoes, hats and household goods. These commodities are essential to people's lives, so the vendors fulfill basic needs while also serving as a complementary point of living for the community. As the goods sold are daily necessities, the business of these vendors is relatively stable. Although the equipment is simple, they have a certain stable customer base in the community, forming a mutually beneficial and win-win relationship.

3.3 Business model

Stall hours: Mobile vendors at trunk bazaars usually work relatively long hours, usually eight hours. They tend to set up their stalls during the busiest hours of the bazaar, which usually occurs in the evening. Unlike traditional mobile vendors, mobile vendors in trunk bazaars may concentrate their work in the evening, with 88% of vendors working from 16:00-23:00, but with flexibility to adjust the time before and after depending on the circumstances.

Frequency of stalls: The frequency of mobile vendors at the Trunk Bazaar may vary over the course of the week, but is usually most frequent on Fridays and Saturdays, with a higher percentage of stalls on these days.

Employment: The majority of mobile vendors at trunk bazaars are run by the vendors themselves, who may be solely responsible for setting up and selling their stalls. However, a few vendors, 12%, may employ one or two assistants to help sell their goods, especially if the market is busy or has a wide variety of goods.

3.4 Findings

Surveys have shown that in Changsha City, the main body of trunk bazaar vendors is concentrated between the ages of 31 and 50. It is inferred that there are more vendors who belonged to the 1980s and 1990s, when higher education had not yet emerged and become widespread, so most of these vendors did not receive higher education and lacked a certain amount of skills training to secure their livelihoods, so they could only engage in the basically unskilled and low-threshold vendor work. Most of these vendors are migrant workers, not Changsha locals, and a certain percentage are farmers, whose incomes are able to maintain a basic standard of living.

The study found that the trunk bazaar plays an important role in providing entrepreneurial opportunities, promoting consumption and activating the market. It provides new jobs for the lower classes of jobless and low-educated people, secures their basic needs to a greater extent, promotes new patterns of consumption and stimulates consumer activity.

The survey of this study can provide a deeper understanding of the business situation and living condition of vendors in trunk bazaars, and provide reference and basis for the formulation of relevant policies and the development of the vendor economy.

4. Challenges and countermeasures facing the trunk bazaar

4.1 Management norms

At present, the lack of adequate management regulations for trunk bazaars has led to a chaotic market order, affecting

consumer rights and the business environment for businessmen. To address this problem, the Government should formulate and implement a sound market access mechanism and business management system. Specifically, the Government can make reference to the existing policy framework and establish a set of clear vetting and approval procedures to ensure that all merchants participating in trunk bazaars meet certain qualification standards. In addition, reference should be made to relevant policy documents, such as the Negative List for Market Access and the Administrative Measures for Business Licenses, to provide a legal basis for the standardized management of trunk bazaars and to ensure the stable and orderly operation of the market.

At the same time, because the legislative power related to the management of vendors has been decentralized to the localities, the regulations on mobile vendors in many places are not unified or even conflicting. The regulations on economic management of vendors need to be further harmonized, and a scientific system of regulations should be formed by removing the roughness and saving the essence [7].

4.2 Market competition

With the rise of trunk bazaars and the increasingly fierce competition in the market, merchants need to adopt a series of countermeasures to enhance their competitiveness. First, merchants can ensure the quality and reliability of their goods by improving product quality in order to build a good reputation among consumers. Secondly, innovative marketing methods are also an important way to enhance competitiveness, including the use of social media platforms for promotion and the provision of membership services to expand the customer base. Concessionary policies and financial support can also be used to encourage the transformation and upgrading of vendors to enhance product quality and service standards. The Government can draw on regulations such as the Promotion Law in this process to regulate market competition behavior, protect consumer rights and promote healthy competition in the trunk bazaar market.

4.3 Security

As trunk bazaars are mostly set up at street level, they carry traffic safety and fire risks and therefore require effective safety management measures. The Government can co-operate with the relevant enterprises and social organizations to provide training and guidance to help vendors enhance their business management and safety awareness. The Government should also formulate and strengthen relevant policies to stipulate that trunk bazaars must meet certain safety standards, including the installation of suitable entrances and exits, fire escapes and the purchase of fire-fighting equipment. At the same time, regular safety inspections and training should be conducted to enhance the safety awareness of businessmen and staff. With reference to the Fire Services Act, the Road Traffic Safety Act and other regulations, specific safety management norms for trunk bazaars should be established to ensure the safety of the lives and property of the public during their activities there.

5. Conclusion

As an important form of the urban informal economy, the backup trunk vendor economy does play a certain economic and social role. However, we must also face up to the many challenges it faces. In the current situation, the government, enterprises and all sectors of society need to work together to establish a more sound management mechanism and support system to promote the trunk hawker economy towards standardization, safety and sustainable development. We can not just be satisfied with the momentary "prosperity", the pursuit of novelty consumer experience, but to achieve unified management, orderly operation, and promote the "trunk bazaar" long-term development.

Looking ahead, with the concerted efforts of all parties, it is believed that the trunk hawker economy will gradually be standardized, made safe and move towards sustainable development. This will not only help improve the structure of the urban economy and promote employment growth, but also enhance the public's consumption experience and promote the healthy development of the urban economy. Therefore, we have reason to believe that with the joint efforts of the government, enterprises and all sectors of the community, the "trunk bazaar" will become a new highlight of urban economic development and make greater contributions to urban construction and social progress.

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