

Role of Family in Marketplace Transactions: Socio-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: The concepts concerning market look initially confusing because the 'market' itself is a complicated phenomenon to understand and interpret. Broadly, the studies on 'market' are bifurcated under the two broad headings, namely, 'marketplace' and 'market as institution'. Market operates on various other parameters. Market has been very old institution the same has catered to all other institutions in the society. These institutions act as subsystems within the largest system. Family as a basic institution provides all necessary essentials for the market transactions especially ethics, morality and communicational traits. This paper exemplifies the importance of social and cultural dimensions of family in the market transactions from a field based study of shop owners and relatively permanent customers.

Keywords: Marketplace, family business, institution

INTRODUCTION

Market societies have created more wealth and more opportunities for mankind, than any other system of social organization in history. Yet we have only a rudimentary understanding of the term. Markets themselves are social constructions that require extensive institutional support. This work seeks to fill this gap in cognitive explanation, to make sense of modern capitalism by re-examining, re-understanding and re-interpreting the 'market' phenomenon and institution from the sociological dimension. Numbers of studies have been conducted by scientists from various disciplines on matters concerning 'market'- including Economic Historians, Anthropologists, Geographers, Rural and Development study scientists, Economists, Sociologists, and the like. However, the 'market' is yet to become a prominent and practicable area for sociological enquiry, despite its ubiquitous and all pervasive nature. It is not uncommon, even today, to consider the concerns of the market research interests of economists alone. What needs to be stressed is that the 'market', which is a part of the daily social life, involves not only economic but also cultural, political and social aspects. Market has been very old institution the same has catered to all other institutions in the society. These institutions act as subsystems within the largest system as discussed by Talcott Parsons in the social systems theory. Bahr & Bahr [1] discuss about the role of family as an institution importance of utilitarianism, individualism in the rationalized market place. Carlson & Walsh [2] examines the relationship between family communication patterns and mothers' marketplace motivations, attitudes and behaviours. Consumption and behavioural patterns are rooted very much to family in terms of decision making, relational and collective identities (Epp & Price) [3]. Socialization theory based on similarities in general parenting tendencies was used to group mothers. Consumer

socialization has been defined as the "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace" (Carlson & Walsh) [2]. Family communication regarding consumer issues and consumption is an important aspect of consumer socialization, because such communication is one of the processes by which parents impart marketplace skills and knowledge to their children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The market is 'merely' the sum of economic behaviour of men and women. It is a way of describing what Adam Smith identifies as our natural propensity to 'truck and basket'. The market therefore cannot be abolished. Soviet Russia tried, and failed miserably. Markets will always be with us. The real question at hand, then, is not whether to have a market, but what kind of market is most appropriate for the human person, to what extent it should be controlled, and by whom (Sirico) [4].

Frank [5] says, market efficiency had been assumed at times as a simplifying generalization but more often it had been assumed to be an inevitable outcome based on a series of theoretical assumptions. These assumptions have included maximizing behaviour both on the part of consumers (maximizing utility) and firms (maximizing profits), with actors having perfect information and no transaction costs, another properties including non-satiation and transitivity of preferences.

Frank [5] with an illustration says, applying memetics to financial markets does not indicate that markets would evolve towards efficiency. In fact, evolution may actually lead to less efficient financial strategies prevailing. If we assume evolution, Frank

adds, takes place in financial markets and that the investment meme is the unit of selection, under real-world conditions, interpersonal reproduction will dominate economic reproduction as the primary reproductive method of investment strategy memes. ...this leads to a conclusion quite different from that previously assumed by financial theorists. Financial evolution will probably not lead to efficient markets and more likely would result in the dominance of inefficient market strategies [5]. Grabowski [6] analyses the evolution of impersonal market along with the market evolution and economic development.

Ritzmann [7] says, “[F]rom Rice Vaughan, 1675: “The first invention of Money was for a Pledge and instead of a Surety” to John Maynard Keynes, 1937: “Our desire to hold money as a store of wealth is a barometer of the degree of our distrust”, there is a tradition of monetary theory linking the demand for money with the state of confidence”.

Supporting the rational position Wang [8] proposes a premise that:

1. Every economic agent is strictly an individual being.
2. Another is that self-interest alone drives economic behaviour.
3. A third is that the common good is served through the invisible hand.

The market exists to reduce transaction costs and facilitate economic transactions. When consumers and producers can freely meet each other to execute transactions at no cost, the market as described above does not exist. In the world of zero transaction cost, as neoclassical economics has nicely demonstrated, the market becomes a price-determining mechanism, and its institutional setting becomes irrelevant. The ubiquitous existence of transaction costs means that the institutional structure of exchange matters (Wang) [8].

“[S]ocial culture may affect the economic performance by altering the effective production technology of the economy” (Fang) [9], such a negative assumption of social and cultural aspects on economy, whereas Becker [10] and others have highlighted the importance of social as well as cultural aspects in the economy both in terms of development and maintenance. In spite of such heated argument and staunch support of rational doctrine, slowly by mid 20th century onwards one could witness many economists like Becker [11, 12, 13], North [14], Peoples and Robinson [15] and Schroeder [16] shift from the classical notion to the realistic and interpretative notion of the market phenomenon.

In a certain sense the ‘new economic approach’ appears to be the climax in the history of the theoretical development. Becker [13] interprets ‘what economists do’ in a wider sense and suggests that the

principle of economic rationality should also be applied to non-market behaviour. This would include decisions, for example, about family size, the frequency of church attendance or the allocation of time between sleeping and working hours. Further, the cornerstone of the ‘new economic approach’ is Gary Becker’s theory of the allocation of time. Becker [11] departs from the traditional consumption theory with his understanding of consumer behaviour. In this theoretical framework the consumer is not considered to be a passive maximizer of the utility of market goods; instead, he/she proceeds from the idea of private households as producing units which combine market goods and (non-working) time to produce so-called ‘basic commodities’ – commodities to be consumed directly” (Schroeder) [16]. Thus the ‘new economic approach’ (also labelled as ‘household production model’) does not make use of the market system to define ‘products’ in a traditional sense. However, with the newly introduced element ‘time’ Becker’s theory remains closely connected with the institution ‘market system’.

Unlike other disciplines, Sociology has been playing different role particularly in relation with market and related aspects. ‘Market’ activities have a reality sui generis that should not be reduced to economic activity alone. On these lines, questioning the hegemony of economists over the ‘market’, many classical and modern sociologists have raised several apprehensions on the logic of the concept of ‘homo economicus’, the doctrine of ‘rationality’ of ‘man’ in market and also on ‘the maximization of profit and utility’ resulting in heated debates. Classical sociologists, Weber [17], Durkheim [18] and other sociologists like Parsons and Smelser [19], Smelser [20], Simmel [21] and Veblen [22, 23] have studied the ‘economic life’ of human beings from the sociological perspectives. Simmel [21] has worked considerably on the sociological aspects of economic life. Sociological investigations of economic exchange reveal how institutions and social structures shape transaction patterns among economic actors (Sorenson and Stuart) [24]. Few academic battles were lost in 19th century as well (Swedberg) [25]. Economic Sociology was the fallout of these arguments and the development in the intellectual pursuit in late 19th century (Swedberg) [25]. Weber in his ‘Economy and Society’ [17] insisted on the separate branch of sociology titled ‘Sociology of Markets’ followed by Pareto, Durkheim, Veblen and few others adding to this idea. The questions on economists’ dominance over market aspects in India have been raised by sociologists (Rajesh) [26].

FOCUS OF THE STUDY:

1. The social structure of market,
2. Market as an institution, and
3. Markets and Culture.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To develop a comprehensive literature base on sociological conception of ‘market’ in its structural and interactive meaning.
2. To understand the evolution of market in a semi-urban area.
3. To study the social matrix within the market in terms of family institution:
4. Relationship between customers and shop owners.
5. Hierarchy in the relationship.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

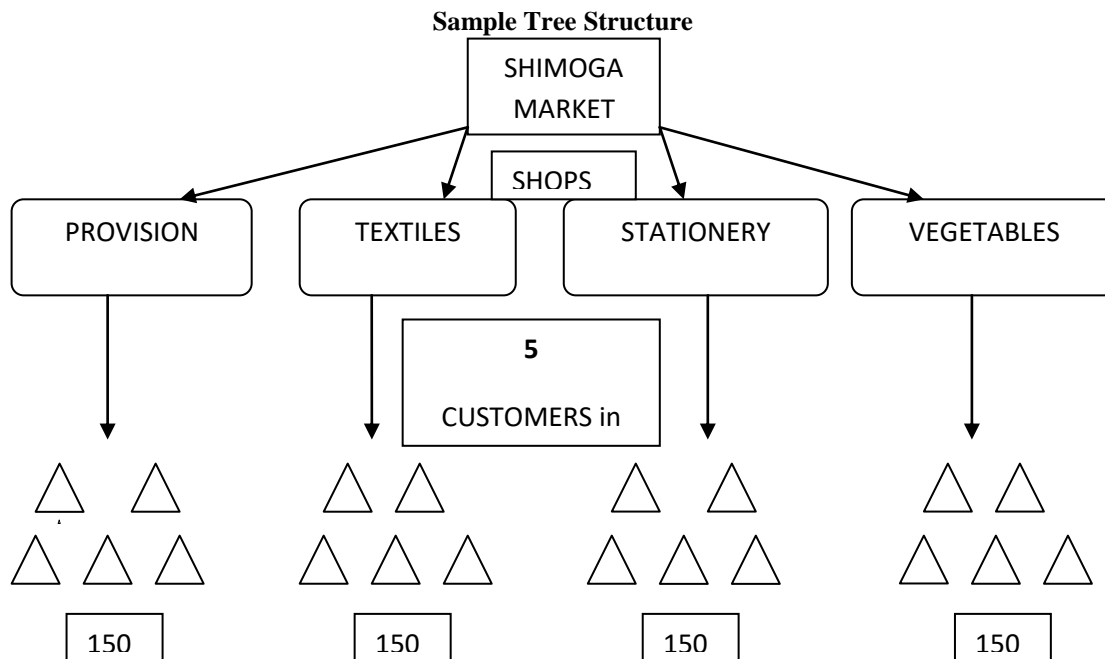
As actors of market live in a society, they constitute a structure of their own and evolve norms to follow. It is not unnatural to assume that social institutions like family, relationships, family business and gender play their role affecting the transaction, trade or exchange relationships in the market. Succinctly, the present research has attempted to study the structure and processes of relationships especially of family related aspects of a regional market system, within the broad context of Indian social realities and sociological theory.

METHODS

In order to explain the market phenomenon carefully, the actors and the important elements or players of market need to be understood. The ratio of

sellers to buyers provides a simple but powerful measure of the level of competition in a market or a group’s bargaining power (Emerson [27]; Blau [28]; Burt [29]). In this direction, it was decided to study the structure of market and the relationship between the actors i.e., the shop owner and the customer in the market, to have a proper understanding of the market transaction and it’s functioning. To understand the ‘market’ phenomenon, a marketplace had to be selected to obtain primary data from the respondents directly. In this context, it was decided to select specific markets in the Shimoga ‘market’. It was decided to have four types of ‘market’ in its popular conception, which meant four types of shops to study the relationship between the shop owner and the customer. The reason for selecting only four markets is to make comparative study of markets in various considerations, though not in detail. One of the major factors for selecting these markets was the frequency of customers’ visits to the said markets. Having large numbers to study various types of market would be a major problem, and hence it was decided to have four types of ‘markets’. The four types of ‘markets’ that were selected carefully are Vegetable, Grocery, Textile, and Stationery shops.

After making a detailed analysis and thought, it was decided to have the following sample tree structure for the collection of data from the primary source.



30 shops in each category are multiplied by 4 types which in total is **120 shops**. After making a clear cut sample design for the shop owners, the sample design structure for the customers was also well thought of. The researcher was required to sit along with the

shop owner, all the day and right from the time the shops were opened in the morning till the shops were closed late in the evening or night. The non-participant observation technique was used in this context. Along with the interview schedule a detailed field notes was

also maintained of each shop separately to make a detailed analysis. Each shop has exhibited different story of course with certain common aspects. In that process, the researcher, with the help of the shop owner identified **5 permanent customers** (defined later) and conducted a detailed interview with the help of interview schedule. Then, the ratio of 1:5 i.e., 1 shop is to 5 customers, **600 customers** (120 shops X 5 customers = 600 customers) were chosen. This is the sample structure cum design of the research.

Analysis & Interpretation:

As it evident that traditionally certain groups have been assigned certain specific jobs in the society

and this continued and passed on from one generation to another through the family setup. Family being the primary institution and provider of actors to all segments of the society, has been instrumental in supporting and strengthen all other institutions including economic institution like market and trade. In this regard, data on family background of the shop owners was obtained. It is also true that family as an institution has witnessed tremendous change from joint family to extended and then to nuclear family system. Again, the study area is also a place which is in the process of transformation.

NATURE OF THE FAMILY:

TABLE NO. 1: NATURE OF THE FAMILY

MARKET/SHOP TYPE * NATURE OF THE FAMILY CROSS TABULATION				
MARKET/SHOP TYPE	NATURE OF THE FAMILY			TOTAL
	NUCLEAR	EXTENDED	JOINT	
PROVISION	6	18	6	30
TEXTILES	15	12	3	30
STATIONERY	9	21	0	30
VEGETABLES	9	18	3	30
TOTAL	39	69	12	120
	32.50%	57.50%	10.00%	100.00%

The above table indicates that nearly 70% of the shop owners leave in joint and extended families. This indicates that business is still a family activity and not an individual activity. Even the big businessmen are the members of big business families and they continue to do so because of the family support, security, education, socialisation in their respective sense. These families also give the trusted manpower particularly whenever it is required. Many a time family members accompany to the shops so as to ensure the routine pattern and function does not get affected. This pattern seems structural, functional and institutionalised. Nuclear families, on the contrary are emerging as a large number almost one third of the total sample. This phenomenon may be witnessed as the conflict of ideas, functioning pattern in the families as the individualist notions are upheld now a days.

In this direction, information regarding who accompanies the shop owners' was sought. It is interesting to note that 99 respondents (68 +31) had their family members accompanying to the shop. Surprisingly, the 68 family members accompanying corresponds exactly with the extended family number in the previous table. These figures ascertain the validity of the data and also the cross verification gets authenticated. The remaining data particularly 18 respondents do not have anyone accompanying could be the part of nuclear family and also depends on the size and volume of shops' turn over and commodities. Further, a rich nuclear family and joint families might also afford to have servants in the shop.

ACCOMPANIER TO THE SHOP:

TABLE NO -2: ACCOMPANIER TO THE SHOP

ACCOMPANIER TO THE SHOP	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
NONE	18	15%
FAMILY MEMBER	68	56.7%
PAID SERVANT	3	2.5%
FAMILY MEMBERS AND SERVANTS	31	25.8%
TOTAL	120	100%

The next following question was what kind of help these accompaniers provided, and the response was family members helped in assisting the sales (12

respondents), ensuring security (3 respondents), relieving (15 respondents) and the mixture of all helps (69 respondents), whereas, servants (3 respondents)

helped in carrying goods. Further, the presence of other persons helped the shop owners in maintenance (50%), building rapport with the customers as others would

perform the necessary work, door delivery (3%) with the help of servants, and a mixture of other works (47%).

ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER:

TABLE NO. 3: ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER

ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER		FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT
VALID	FATHER	18	15%	18.2%
	SPOUSE	21	17.5%	21.2%
	BROTHER	39	32.5%	39.4%
	SON/S	6	5%	6.1%
	FATHER AND SPOUSE	3	2.5%	3%
	OTHERS	6	5%	6.1%
	ALL	6	5%	6.1%
	TOTAL	99	82.5%	100%
MISSING	NOT APPLICABLE	21	17.5%	
TOTAL		120	100%	

More interesting is, brothers (39) out number all other family member accompanying the shop followed by the spouse (21) and then father (18).

The very fact that family members, particularly the father, brother and spouse accompany to the shop indicates the structure and institutionalisation of business as a family activity and it still continues to do so. These types of dependency on the family members spell the trust and faith in the family members particularly. Even within the family members there is the feeling of insider and outsider in connection with their proximity of relationship. For instance, trust and faith is stronger in the primary relation, than compared with the secondary and tertiary relations. Probably, it is in this connection there is a saying that '*jala aur sala dhono dhukan me nahi rehena*' which means bother-in-law and spider cob web should not be seen in the shop. This is seen as an indication of some trouble.

After getting it confirmed that business is more a family activity and less of individual activity, it is essential to identify the shop owners' parents'

profession. This is also essential to identify and relate market activities to the traditional setup particularly, the seller. By tradition and as a culture the parents impart knowledge, skill and expertise to their offspring's particularly of their occupational structures. So, to find out the history and experience of the shop owners, related questions like ownership, parents' profession and experience were asked. The majority of the respondents owned their shops interviewed independently, in some cases jointly, and in very little cases still owned by the father.

PARENTS' BUSINESS/PROFESSION:

Regarding the father's profession, out of total 120 respondents 39 (32.5%) respondents hailed from the same business; another 39 (32.5%) respondents are from business only but other and 3 (2.5%) respondents from related business. The remaining 39(32.5%) respondents are completely from the different profession. That means two third of the shop owners, that is 81 respondents (67.5%) have their father's help, training, and proficiency and remaining one third as per the sample are fresh to the profession.

CROSS TABLE OF CASTE OF THE SHOP OWNER AND FATHER'S PROFESSION:

TABLE NO-4: CASTE OF THE SHOP OWNER AND FATHER'S PROFESSION:

CASTE OF THE SHOP OWNER	FATHER'S BUSINESS/PROFESSION			RELATED	TOTAL
	SAME BUSINESS	OTHER BUSINESS	WAS NOT IN BUSINESS FIELD AT ALL		
BRAHMIN	0	3	15	0	18
LINGAYAT	3	9	9	0	21
MARWADI	9	0	0	0	9
VAISHAYAS	12	12	3	0	27
OTHERS	6	15	12	0	33
DHARJI	3	0	0	3	6
BHAUSARA KSHATRIYA	6	0	0	0	6
TOTAL	39	39	39	3	120

The above cross table of caste background and parents' profession explains which community had the experience and which other communities are the new entrants to the market in relation with their caste

background? It reiterates that traditional castes have continued to hold markets like Marwadi, Vaishyas, Dharji, Bhausara Kshatriya as against new castes like Brahmin and Lingayat.

EXPERIENCE BEFORE ENTERING THIS BUSINESS:

TABLE NO. 5: EXPERIENCE BEFORE ENTERING THIS BUSINESS:

EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
YES	60	50.0%	50.0%
NO	33	27.5%	77.5%
LITTLE	27	22.5%	100.0%
TOTAL	120	100.0%	

60 respondents (50%) of the total shop owners had earlier experience, 27 respondents (22.5%) had little experience and 33 respondents (27.5%) did not have any experience before entering to the business.

Data presented hitherto represent the family being supportive to the business and is all inclusive of family structure in various ways. It is witnessed that business is a family affair and not much of the individual and is sustained, backed and promoted by the family members particularly father in establishing the business and passing on to the next generation. Further, it is not only passing on the business, but concurrently imparting the traditional knowledge and experience to their off springs.

After understanding and examining business is a family activity, it is essential to verify with the customers also whether going to market and purchasing is an individual activity or a social activity. It is observed that, in case of customers also going to market is seen a get-together activity, and in majority of times it is witnessed that people are accompanied by some one or the other. The following graph explains in detail out of 600 respondents who are the accompaniers, further the second graph explains with the break-up of family members accompanied, and it is clearly evident that out of 138 family members accompanied spouse number is the maximum.

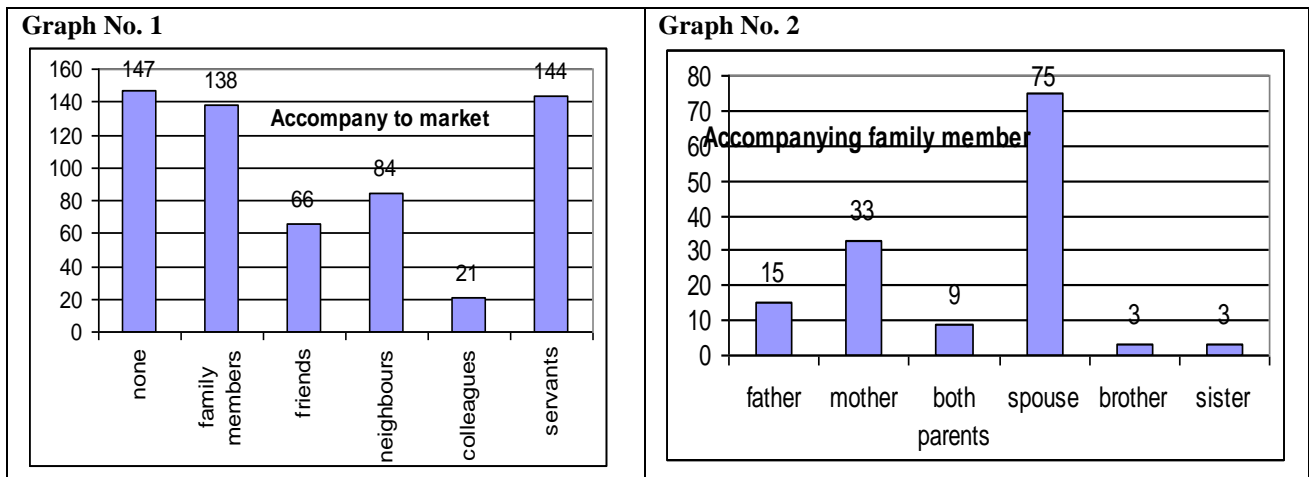


Fig: Accompany to the Market with the Customer:

Going to market is not seen as an individual activity. When carefully observed, one could find that people go to market with family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues and some times with servants. Only few go alone to the market, and that also depends on the availability of other members to accompany and the purpose of going to market. One could say from the above data that going to market for any purpose for that matter is a social activity and not an individual activity.

Towards the understanding of the market from the institutional point of view information was obtained regarding the timings of the shops functioning pattern, rules binding (involuntarily) and market conventions. It was observed that most of the shops were kept open by early morning 5-30 AM and were open up to 11 PM in the night. The interesting aspect of timings is none of the shops were closed for lunch particularly in centre of the city as the customers were also found from the surrounding villages and a part of the floating population. In case of shops located in the residential

areas very few of them were found to be closed for lunch between 3 PM to 4-30 PM.

It was interesting to note that the customers' time of visit to the market varied and was found the

activities geared up particularly after noon. Conventionally, in the marketplace the market activity starts swiftly by morning itself, whereas, in the present context with the modern technology of electricity and light market activities are seen more in the evening.

CUSTOMERS' VISITING TIME TO THE MARKET:

TABLE NO. 6: CUSTOMERS' VISITING TIME TO THE MARKET:

TIME OF VISIT	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
EARLY MORNING	9	1.5%
MORNING	114	19%
AFTERNOON	126	21%
EVENING	195	32.5%
LATE IN THE EVENING	45	7.5%
OTHERS (NOT SPECIFIC)	111	18.5%
TOTAL	600	100%

To find the composition of major (permanent) customers of the respective shops questions were asked in relation with profession, age group, gender, localities or outsiders. The response to general composition was an assortment of friends, own caste, officials, working class, villagers etc. When asked specifically on age composition, it was a mixed response. On gender, 12 respondents (10%) said majority of their customers are male, 21 respondents (17.5%) said female and the rest 87 respondents (72.5%) have both genders as their regular and permanent customers.

Similarly, 72 respondents (60%) have localities (Shimoga citizens) as their permanent customers, 12 respondents (10%) have permanent customers from surrounding villages and 36 respondents (30%) have permanent customers both from Shimoga and outside. Depending upon the requirement and necessity the regular customers visited their shops oftentimes.

MARKET AND SHOPS AS LIVELIHOOD:

The shops and this market transaction is the livelihood of all the shop owners. What is interesting in this direction is though this is the profession and occupation, these business people do not depend only on one source but they would generally have many. Most of the shop owners were having either main or side businesses along with the present one. When questioned, the response was 48 respondents (40%) were having other business establishment which included only those that were registered, legal and explicit. The remaining 72 respondents out of 120 total shop owners did not have any other side business. Out of the 48 respondents 15 respondents had same business as simultaneously somewhere else in the town and was their main business as well. Remaining 33 respondents out of the valid 48 respondents had other establishments either completely different or related as side businesses. The remaining 72 respondents who did not have an

establishment had side businesses like pigmy collection, finance, and some other unregistered businesses. This setup is found in all communities and at all ages. This is to support their business, and also not to depend on only one source of income. This is not just the other source of income, in fact, the relationships built in one business is extended to the other business in the expansion of customer base in all establishments. The concept of relationship is addressed and not just 'a customer', this makes the market different from the economic domination.

CONCLUSION

Market both as an institution and marketplace have roots in family. Since, family is the basic institution the necessary people, socialisation, training both cultural and transactional are provided in this institution. Hence, while studying the market along with the actors involved cannot be devoid of basic institutions. Even though, markets have evolved their controlling mechanisms through formal educational and legal systems, they still find the roots in the familial, cultural, ethical and moral embeddedness in their family.

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