

From the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

-Understanding Reciprocal Relationships in Car Boot Markets

CHUNKIT CHAU^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Anthropology and Sociology, Sun Yat-sen University, Xin Gang Xi Road, Guangzhou, China*

a. chauck@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This research study explores the emergence and development of reciprocal relationships within the car boot market in Guangzhou. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism, the motivation behind these relationships is examined. The study uses field research, including in-depth interviews and observations, to gather data on the motivations, interactions, and reciprocal exchanges among market participants. The research objectives include understanding the background and characteristics of the car boot market, exploring the establishment of reciprocal relationships from the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, and investigating the implications of these relationships for social identities. The research methodology encompasses qualitative methods, such as participant observation and interviews, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the car boot market and its reciprocal dynamics. The research findings indicate that in the car boot market, reciprocal relationships are formed through the exchange of symbols and meaningful interactions among vendors and customers. These relationships contribute to the construction of social identities and foster economic development within the market. Through direct and indirect reciprocity, vendors build networks and expand their social identities beyond their existing relationships. The conclusions drawn from this study underscore the significance of interactional behaviors and symbolic exchanges in the car boot market. The research highlights the applicability of Symbolic Interactionism in analyzing and understanding the nuanced dynamics of reciprocal relationships within informal economies. It offers valuable insights for the development and management of the car boot market and recommends strategies for fostering and sustaining reciprocal relationships.

Keywords: symbolic interactionism, reciprocity, informal economy, social identity, social transformation

1. Introduction

The car boot market originated from flea markets in Western countries and has gained significant popularity in Guangzhou since 2021. Stallholders set up simple tables and chairs, creating a unique car boot market stall that attracts many young consumers. Compared to traditional street stallholders,

the car boot market appears to be more organized, with frequent interactions and exchanges among participants.

However, this recent phenomenon has yet to receive scholarly attention. By shedding light on the reciprocal relationships within the car boot market, this study contributes to understanding informal economies and provides insights into the complexities of social interactions and exchange dynamics. The findings of this research can inspire policymakers, market organizers, and stallholders themselves to create a supportive and thriving market environment that fosters mutually beneficial relationships. Through this exploration, the author aims to contribute to the existing literature on informal economies and shed light on the unique societal motivation of car boot markets in contemporary urban contexts.

The research question is: How do reciprocal relationships emerge and develop in the car boot market, focusing on establishing mutual benefits? To answer this question, field research is conducted. Through in-depth interviews and observations, valuable data is collected on the motivations, interactions, and reciprocal exchanges among the market participants.

In the subsequent sections of this paper, an overview of Symbolic Interactionism will be provided as a theoretical framework. The background and characteristics of the car boot market will be discussed, followed by an analysis of the establishment of reciprocal relationships within the car boot market in Guangzhou. Finally, the implications of these relationships for the construction of social identities will be explored. Based on researcher's findings, recommendations for fostering and sustaining reciprocal relationships in the car boot market setting will be provided.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Overview of Symbolic Interactionism: Origins, Historical Development and Significance

The Symbolic Interactionism theory originated in the early 20th century within the field of sociology in the United States. It is a social analytical and psychological theory focusing on the socialization process through which individuals establish their identities in social interactions. Key figures associated with this theory include Mead, Cooley, Goffman, and Blumer.

The development of Symbolic Interactionism theory was influenced by American pragmatist philosophers, such as William James and John Dewey, as well as the theory of evolution put forth by Charles Darwin. Pragmatist philosophers argue that individuals understand things based on their practical use and utility in specific contexts. Darwin's theory of evolution also had an impact on Symbolic Interactionism theory, emphasizing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the universe. Therefore, American sociologists have developed a unique sociology in symbolic interactionism, combining features of the German historicist tradition and the pragmatic tradition that has emerged in the United States [1].

Symbolic Interactionism theory was founded by Mead of the Chicago School, where the principles of semiotics are applied to the field of social psychology. Mead's Symbolic Interactionism ideas are most prominently expressed in his book *Mind, Self, and Society*. The theory is based on two assumptions: First, human beings cooperate with each other in social groups for survival due to their physical vulnerability. Second, behaviors that facilitate cooperation, consequently ensuring survival and adaptation, are preserved [2]. Mead's definition of acts involves stages of perception, impulse, manipulation, and the consummation by a self-reflexive subject towards a social object. To be more specific, consciousness is always conscious of something, even if that something is negated [3,4].

Herbert Blumer of the Chicago School and Manford Kuhn of the Iowa School's theoretical explorations culminated in the establishment of the fundamental framework of contemporary Symbolic Interactionism theory. While the Chicago School opposed the quantitative research

methods of positivism, arguing that such methods were better suited for laboratory experiments, they advocated for researchers to directly study the informative, diverse, and vivid experiential world of people in real-life settings. They used sympathetic introspection as a research method, developing corresponding concepts and theories and continuously testing and refining them through practical experiences [5].

Symbolic Interactionism theory serves as a motivation and direction for behavior, making it a social relationship theory and one of the qualitative research methods used in communication studies. Its contribution to the field of communication lies in placing communication at the core of sociological explanations, providing insights into interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and even mass communication.

2.2. Definition and Fundamental Concepts: Symbols, Meaning, Interaction and Social Construction

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, individuals assign meaning to things through the exchange and interaction of symbols, constructing and interpreting the meaning of the social world [6]. This theory holds great prominence in sociology as it emphasizes the significance of symbols and social interactions in shaping social behaviors and maintaining relationships. According to Symbolic Interactionism, individuals attribute meaning to objects by utilizing symbols and establish and sustain social connections through the exchange of symbolic representations in social interactions.

Symbolic Interactionism recognizes that meaning is not inherent in objects or actions but rather emerges from the interactions between individuals. It highlights the dynamic process of social construction, where individuals collectively create and interpret the shared meanings that underpin their social reality. Through the use of symbols, such as language, gestures, and other forms of communication, individuals engage in a continuous process of negotiating and redefining the meaning of their social world.

This theoretical framework also emphasizes the role of social interactions in shaping individuals' behaviours and identities. As individuals engage with one another, they actively negotiate and navigate the symbolic meanings attached to various objects, actions, and situations [7]. These interactions contribute to the formation of personal identities and the development of social roles within society. Furthermore, Symbolic Interactionism underscores the importance of context in influencing the interpretation and meaning assigned to symbols. The same symbol can be interpreted with different meanings in different social contexts, highlighting the subjective and contextual nature of Symbolic Interaction [6]. In other words, the meaning attributed to a symbol is not fixed or universal but varies depending on the social, cultural, and situational context in which it is employed [8,9].

In essence, Symbolic Interactionism provides a comprehensive understanding of how symbols, meaning, interaction, and social construction intertwine to shape human behavior and social structures. By assigning meaning to symbols and engaging in symbolic exchanges, individuals actively participate in the ongoing construction and interpretation of their social reality.

2.3. The Establishment of Reciprocal Relationships: Analysis of the Applicability

Symbolic Interactionism offers a valuable theoretical framework for understanding and explaining the formation and development of reciprocal relationships within the street-stall economy. Through the framework of Symbolic Interactionism, researchers can delve into how street stallholders establish reciprocal relationships through symbolic communication and interaction, meeting multiple needs, including economic, social, and emotional [10]. Moreover, Symbolic Interactionism

enables researchers to comprehend the motivation of reciprocal relationships and the transformation of symbolic meanings in social interactions.

By adopting the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism, this study will delve into establishing and developing reciprocal relationships in the street-stall economy, shedding light on the importance of interactional behaviors and symbolic exchanges among street stall holders and between stallholders and customers. Additionally, an examination of the applicability of Symbolic Interactionism in elucidating reciprocal relationships within the street-stall economy will be undertaken, exploring its implications for understanding the construction of social identities and the transformation of social networks. It will contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of reciprocal relationships in the street-stall economy, offering valuable insights into developing and managing this economic sector.

2.4. Background and Characteristics of the Street Stall Economy

The street stall economy, a distinctive form of economic activity, has persisted since ancient times and continues to hold a significant position in contemporary urban societies. Its transient and unregistered nature often encounters conflicts and challenges in its operation and management, attracting substantial social attention [11]. It provides a typical manifestation of self-employment for marginalized urban groups, offering labor-intensive services or goods as a means of livelihood. Despite being frequently overlooked, it impacts residents' daily lives through its inherent flexibility, convenience, and autonomy. Key features of the street stall economy include adaptability to consumer demand, diverse formats, temporary establishment, and limited regulatory oversight.

3. Development Process of the Street Stall Economy

The history of street vending in China is closely tied to the country's social transformation. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, individual vendors disappeared by 1956 due to the planned economy. However, with economic reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, street vending reemerged and thrived. Conflicts between street vending and urban development led to the formation of urban management squads in the 1980s, and in 2003, the State Council implemented measures to ban unlicensed street vending activities.

In July 2009, the General Office of the State Council proposed regulations allowing vendors without fixed premises to register as individual businesses. The final version, published in 2011, delegated the formulation of management measures for such vendors to local governments. Consequently, the domestic unemployment rate decreased from 4.30% in 2009 to 4.02% after amendments in 2014 and 2016. Some regions, like Guangdong Province, introduced zoning and designated time periods for food vendors in 2015.

In August 2017, the State Council issued measures excluding certain legally conducted activities without registration from being classified as unlicensed operations, providing relief for the street vendor economy. In 2020, due to the pandemic, many regions relaxed restrictions on street vending, promoting its development and aiding economic recovery. Overall, China's street vending policy has fluctuated, with cycles of "strict and loose control".

4. Characteristics and Operational Modes of Car Boot Markets in Guangzhou

Car boot markets in Guangzhou have emerged as a result of business opportunities recognized by car enthusiasts. These markets originated from car enthusiasts gathering to showcase modifications made to their car boots. Over time, the characteristics and operational modes of car boot markets have evolved, distinguishing them from traditional mobile stall vendors. Car boot market vendors

utilize creative lighting designs and an inviting atmosphere to attract customers and operate with a well-organized and regulated structure.

The development model of car boot markets involves transitioning from individual stall owners to recruiting multiple independent stall owners who participate regularly. These markets form organized systems with management structures and cohesive teams. The selection of stall owners by team initiators is based on considerations such as product quality, personal character, and behaviours, ensuring compatibility and interpersonal harmony. Stall owners contribute to the team's management by paying designated fees to secure their positions.

Furthermore, teams establish consensus on rules and norms to facilitate smooth collective operations. This fosters a sense of belonging among team members and prompts stall owners to redefine their identities within the collective entity of the car boot market. Through this process, they strengthen their commitment to the team and develop a distinct awareness of their roles within the market. Car boot markets strive for product diversity and cater to different customer segments, minimizing competition within the same team.

5. The Establishment of Reciprocal Relationships from the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

This qualitative study delves into the establishment of reciprocal relationships within car boot markets, colloquially known as car boot markets, situated in Haixinsha, Fangcun, and Panyu Districts, specifically at Liangcang Creative Park. Researcher undertook extensive fieldwork, including participant observation with nine selected vendors and interviews with three stall owners. Additionally, two local radio interviews with car boot market vendors were analyzed, along with information gathered from news media outlets such as Yang-Cheng Net. Complementing these primary data collection methods, a comprehensive review of existing literature on symbolic interactionism was conducted. Grounded in the foundational elements of symbolic interactionism theory, including symbols and situational definitions, this research investigates the various types, motives, and specific manifestations of reciprocity within car boot markets. It explores how individuals utilize symbols to interpret and define situations, shaping their reciprocal interactions. The study analyzes the correlation between the frequency of reciprocal exchanges and the depth of relationships, examining how different relationships vary in their levels of reciprocity. Moreover, it investigates the role and manifestation of reciprocity within group organizations, exploring its impact on intra-group interactions and external implications. The study also examines potential instances where reciprocity may undermine the interests of other parties and explores whether relationships can be sustained in the absence of reciprocity. By contextualizing the research within the framework of Chinese society, this study sheds light on the applicability of symbolic interactionism theory in analyzing the nuanced dynamics of reciprocal relationships within car boot markets.

6. The Concept and Significance of Reciprocal Relationships

In sociology, reciprocal relationships are extensively examined from functionalist and exchange theory perspectives. Homans argues that individuals seek to maximize their gratifications, and in social interactions, people mutually pursue rewards [12]. Reciprocity forms the foundation of social interactions. Blau suggests that the benefits of reciprocity form social bonds among equals, while the absence of reciprocity leads to status differentiation [13]. Both scholars adopt an individualistic viewpoint, viewing the exchange of resources as a rational social phenomenon for individuals to satisfy their desires and acquire resources.

Chinese scholars have borrowed these concepts to examine reciprocity within the Chinese context. Fei XiaoTong argues that China follows a system based on ritual order, where individuals handle interpersonal relationships through "human relations" or "renlun" in Chinese [14]. Social relationships gradually extend from one individual to another, with networks formed by personal connections. In contrast, Western religious beliefs underlie the organizational mode of association, where the group is an intangible entity beyond the individual.

In modern Chinese society, under the implementation of the market economy, reciprocal relationships may face various constraints. Research on symbolic interactions and reciprocal relationships can provide a clearer understanding of how Chinese society is interconnected by material exchanges and symbolic meanings, shaping social order and public actions. This research can also provide a reference for establishing harmonious management practices in current contexts, such as street vendors regulations.

7. The Establishment Process of Reciprocal Relationships in Car Boot Markets in Guangzhou

The establishment of reciprocal relationships in car boot markets in Guangzhou progresses through several distinct stages. The initial stage consists of individual stallholders operating independently. The second stage sees the emergence of small groups of loosely affiliated stallholders organizing regular slots at the market. The third and most advanced stage involves the formation of well-organized car teams with management structures and rules.

This progression represents evolving reciprocity among participants. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Types of reciprocity in car boot markets in Guangzhou.

Reciprocity Type	Internal Group	External Group
Stable	The material exchange between same-team vendors, Activities of discount, gift, and reduction between Deep and Divination vendors, Joint music performance by vendors, Reciprocity between Vvw and team members (S sister, C sister), Reciprocity between Vvw and her friends	Camp activities are organized by Vvw with customer support, Vvw offers rides home for customers who come alone late at night, vvw's customers invite their friends to join the communication group, Vvw and customers share food with each other
Unstable	Reciprocity of tea and snacks between individual vendors, Information exchange and collaborative vending between Hé and his classmates, and Emotional chat between same-team vendors, vvw's colleague recommends she to try car boot markets	Reciprocity between Hé and the children and parents he "hires", Information and emotional exchange between vendors and customers, vvw's customers' friends are attracted to the good atmosphere and environment created by VOA

Table 1: (continued).

Direct	Material exchange between same-team vendors, Information exchange and collaborative vending between Hé and his classmates, Reciprocity of tea and snacks between individual vendors, vvw's friend provides material resources for vending, and Vvw supports their business	Reciprocity between Hé and the children and parents he "hires," Food sharing brought by vvw's customers and vvw's drink invitation, Vvw introduces Fangcun vendors to customers and solicits their help to advertise her own stall
Indirect	Vendors recommend other goods to customers	Information and emotional exchange between vendors

Table 1 summarizes the establishment process of reciprocal relationships in car boot markets in Guangzhou, categorized by the types of reciprocity. The internal and external groups involved in each type of reciprocity are also listed.

Car team leaders carefully screen and select members based on product quality, personal integrity and compatibility to avoid excessive competition within the team. Members pay fees for their slots and adhere to common rules and norms, developing a collective identity and sense of belonging to the team. The daily interactions and built-up trust among car team members often lead to more stable and long-lasting reciprocal relationships. Cooperative activities like sharing decorations, lights and chairs are common. Members exchange information and strategies to better serve customers, provide feedback on new products, and share their respective social resources. Through these exchanges, fresh ideas and synergies emerge.

Some car team members develop long-term cooperative promotions, like Deep's (personal communication, May 1, 2022) fortune-telling promotion or the ice cream and noodle vendors who hire bands together. They leverage each other's existing social networks to mutual benefit. Reciprocal relationships within car teams are more continuous and stable compared to those between individual stallholders. When establishing a car team, members agree on mutual benefits and common rules to govern their interactions. The "management fee" relationship between team leaders and members also reflects a form of reciprocity. During operations, reciprocity between team members is more frequent and notable.

By contrast, reciprocity between individual stallholders is less stable. For example, Oyster Man's (personal communication, September 30, 2022) temporary exchange of food and drinks with nearby stalls would likely stop once either party moves to a different market. Similarly, reciprocity based on personal connections can be unstable, as seen in the case of Hé (personal communication, October 2, 2022) and his classmate's barbecue stall.

Reciprocity also exists between stallholders and friends as well as customers. The VOA Lemon Tea stall (owned by Vvw) relies on re-source support from friends to supply materials. In return, the coffee shop that provides supplies reduces waste. VOA's initial members were a couple and close friends with similar interests in coffee and its social functions. Sister S (personal communication, October 1, 2023) initially helped to keep an eye on the stall while conversing with customers. Based on Vvw's (personal communication, September 25, 2022) invitation and her interest in coffee, she later joined the team. A similar case occurred with Sister C who initially helped out of interest in coffee making and received opportunities from Vvw to practice. After gaining customer recognition, she joined the team.

Vvw establishes reciprocal relationships not just through economic exchanges but also through shared leisure activities and social interactions with customers. Vvw often shares barbecue and hotpot food with customers, which becomes a norm in their street vending life. She brings watermelons to share with customers, seeing vending as a way to make money and increase diversity. Vvw occasionally cancels vending to organize camping trips with customers. They clean up thoroughly before such trips to provide a better experience. Locations that allow for socializing and chatting with old friends are chosen, prioritizing the social environment over business. Vvw also emphasizes making friends with customers, organizing camping events and setting up canopies to create a chatting ambiance. Customers some-times share stories of their lives with Vvw, and help with packing up when it rains. After vending, Vvw sends back home customers who live far away. In return, customers introduce Vvw to their like-minded friends and share the group chat as a place to exchange and share information.

8. Analysis of Reciprocal Relationships in Car Boot Markets from the Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the establishment of reciprocal relationships involves the interaction and interpretation of symbols. For independent stallholders, temporary exchanges of resources symbolize a weak tie between parties, which is prone to termination once the underlying conditions change. In contrast, car team members cultivate more enduring ties through agreeing upon a shared set of symbols that govern their interactions, with the "management fee" epitomizing a symbolic indicator of reciprocity within the group.

8.1. VOA Lemon Tea Stand

According to the interviewee Vvw, she was from Hong Kong and resided in Guangzhou. The fast pace of life made her enjoy drinking coffee as a means of relieving the pressures she felt. She believed that compared to Fangcun, car boot markets lacked the human affection that existed when she used to have a stall there; they were more commercialized. The customers were transient, not like the regular residents of Fangcun, who visited regularly. She also discussed how mobility and customer flow had decreased due to the pandemic impact on running stalls. She pointed out that her team members were like her, working during the day and running the stalls part-time at night to expand their social circle. Through communication, they slowly felt that running the stalls was not just about making money but more about enjoying the slow life after work and allowing more visitors to stop by, have a coffee, and relax, she noted.

The case of the VOA Lemon Tea stall demonstrates how reciprocal relationships are constructed through the ongoing exchange of symbolic gestures. By regularly sharing leisure activities and meals with customers, VOA transformed vending from a purely economic activity into a social ritual imbued with symbolic meaning. Customers became part of the in-group by participating in camping trips and chatting at the stall, with Vvw reciprocating by sending them home and connecting them via group chats. Such symbolic gestures signified Vvw's willingness to go beyond economic exchange by strengthening social ties with customers. Over time, frequent interaction during vending operations and social events led parties to develop a mutual understanding and attachment. Vvw came to recognize customers not just as patrons but as friends, while customers interpreted Vvw's generosity as a symbol of care and goodwill. Reciprocal relationships emerged from this interactive process of exchanging gestures, interpreting symbolic meanings, and forging mutual understanding. By utilizing symbolic interactionism, insight can be gained into how ephemeral exchanges may blossom into enduring reciprocal relationships.

8.2. Deep's Beef Bouillon Cubes Stall

Through communicating with Deep, researcher can see that interactional relationships in the car boot market hold important meaning for her. Deep mentioned that joining teams can gain her more choices and opportunities. Here, through interacting with other stall owners, she can expand her social network and gain chances to extend her business. Interpersonal relations and interactions form a type of reciprocal relationship.

Deep specifically pointed out that chatting with other stall owners maintains their relationships while also providing her with help and suggestions. The interactions here bring positive returns, effectively satisfying interactional needs. Deep also said that trust gradually forms and accumulates through daily interactions with other stall owners. This shows that symbolic interactions continually emerge through everyday communication and interactions. Interactors progressively develop a common language, symbolism, and meaning.

Overall, researcher can see that interactional relationships in the car boot market serve utilitarian, exchange, and social functions for Deep, allowing her to gain more opportunities and resources. Interactions effectively build and maintain her social network.

8.3. Hé's Toy Stand

The interviewee, Hé, started his business after his mother suggested looking for opportunities at the boot market during Mid-Autumn Festival. Together, they sold lanterns and earned much money. Later, Hé joined a classmate's stall selling beef bouillon cubes in the "Shanghai Night" car team through a classmate's introduction. Hé got to know the person in charge of the Haizhu Place boot market through this classmate and gained a stall for Halloween through this contact.

During his time running the stall, Hé received help not only from his family and classmates but also from his customers. When selling toys at a boot market in Liwan District during National Day, Hé "hired" some neighborhood kids to help promote and sell toys, rewarding them with toys. Meanwhile, the kids' parents also came to help look after Hé's stall and gave recommendations to adjust it.

While Hé's primary purpose for entering the boot market was to make money, he also engaged in reciprocal behavior. Hé provided feedback in the form of emotions, money, information, or gifts to those who provided help during his stall operation. These interactions demonstrate how meanings, symbols, and language develop through relationships and interactions in the boot market, facilitating exchange, cooperation, and opportunities for "actors" like Hé through building social networks. This characteristic of reciprocal relationships is viewed through the lens of symbolic interactionism.

9. Construction and Presentation of Social Identity: The Shift in Patterns of Social Networks

The transition from individual to car boot market stalls involved a transfer of power and privileges from producers to managers, limiting stall owners' opportunities and surplus product control while affecting work motivation. This led to increased economic activities outside markets through reciprocal relationships constructing social networks.

Based on field data, stall owners' network building occurs in two phases through which they construct and present their social identities. The first phase involves direct reciprocity through stable ties (e.g., family, friends) utilizing human resources, funds and material support paired with immaterial returns. This allows stall owners to affirm an identity based on existing relationships [15]. The second phase leverages first-phase relations to extend beyond ascribed ties, enabling

intragroup and intergroup indirect reciprocity. This expansion allows stall owners to construct a broader social identity beyond their original networks.

A specific stall owner's network combines stable/unstable and direct/indirect reciprocity but requires group relations in institutionalized settings to present an identity fitting that context. This transition, alongside stall owners' external expansion, constitutes a process whereby they actively construct and present altered social identities amid the socio-economic transformation.

From the subtle see the spirit, transformation in Car Boot market interactions differ from pure emotional communication based on economic and non-economic objectives. Stall owners' contract-based reciprocity deepens individual and social connections, forming a reciprocal climate within which they collectively reconstruct social identities. This represents an emergent model of social identification amid China's shift from "Favor" to "contract" societies, growing silently in the corner [16].

10. Conclusions

The findings demonstrate the complex nature of such relationships and their impact on social identities and economic development while showcasing the complex nature of reciprocal relationships within car boot markets, where individuals engage in temporary exchanges of resources or cultivate more enduring ties based on shared symbols.

This research contributes to the understanding of informal economies, particularly the unique motivations and dynamics of car boot markets in urban contexts. It highlights the significance of Symbolic Interactionism in analyzing the establishment of reciprocal relationships and how individuals assign meaning to symbols through social interactions. It adds to the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism by applying it to the study of informal economies and elucidating the role of symbols and situational definitions in shaping reciprocal interactions. The study also provides insights into the implications of reciprocal relationships for social identities and economic development in the context of car boot markets. Limitations of the study include limited sample size and qualitative nature, which may affect generalizability and causal inference.

Building upon the limitations of this research, future studies could expand the scope to include larger sample size and a more diverse range of car boot markets. Quantitative methods could be employed to complement the qualitative findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations and dynamics of reciprocal relationships within these markets. Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural contexts could further enhance researcher's understanding of car boot markets as a phenomenon. These future directions would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of informal economies and their social and economic implications.

References

- [1] Zhou X.H. (2004). *Continuity and Breaking of Academic Tradition--Taking the "Symbol Interacting Theory" in Sociology as an Example*. *Social Sciences*, (12), 62-69.
- [2] Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society* (Vol. 111). Chicago: University of Chicago press.
- [3] Sartre, J. P., & Moran, R. (1943). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology* (S. Richmond, Trans.). Original work published in.
- [4] Scott, S. (2018). *A sociology of nothing: Understanding the unmarked*. *Sociology*, 52(1), 3-19.
- [5] Hu R. (1989). *The methodological implications of symbolic interactionism*. *Sociological Studies*, 1, 98-104.
- [6] Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Univ of California Press.
- [7] Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. Transaction Publishers.
- [8] Rousseau, N. (Ed.). (2002). *Self, symbols, and society: Classic readings in social psychology*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- [9] Thomas, W. I., & Znaniecki, F. (1996). *The Polish peasant in Europe and America: A classic work in immigration history*. University of Illinois Press.

- [10] Yan Y.X. (2000). *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*. Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [11] Ma Z.Q. (2021). *Vitality and quality: The resilient production of urban hawker spaces and reflections on their governance*. *Yunnan Social Sciences*, 4, 139-146.
- [12] Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). *Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review*. *Journal of management*, 31(6), 874-900.
- [13] Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R., & Nakagawa, S. (2013). *Social exchange theory*. *Handbook of social psychology*, 61-88.
- [14] Fei X.T., Hamilton, G. G., & Zheng, W. (1992). *From the soil: The foundations of Chinese society*. Univ of California Press.
- [15] Zhou Xiaohong. (2008). *Identity Theory: an Analyzing Method of Sociology and Psychology*. *Social Sciences*, (4), 46-53.
- [16] Feng B.Y. (2011). *Favor Society and Contract Society: On the Perspective of Theory of Social Exchange*. *Social Sciences*, (9), 67-75.