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## Gender Dimensions and Market Relationship: A Marketplace Scenario

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### **Abstract:**

*Market has taken a very important position both in the academic and practical parlance. Products, goods and services are the important components of market studies, but with the evolution of market exchange, has there been any change in the division of labour especially with reference to women. Monetary issues predominate the economist's perspective, the women's role, participation and functioning pattern have hardly got the attention of many. The present study looks into the role of women in the marketplace situation and addresses the cultural dimensions involved therein. The study is based on the empirical study by selecting four varieties of markets in a town which in transition from traditional to modern market situation. Theoretical debates concerning stereotyped perceptions on women are also discussed.*

**Key words:** Marketplace, Women, Bargain, Market emotions

### **1. 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. Addressing the unruly dynamism, which capitalism brings with it, leading sociologist Fligstein (2001) argues that the basic drift of any one market and its actors, even allowing for competition, is toward stabilization. This issue also demands a careful sociological attention. The early economies are thought of as local exchange within a village (or even within a simple hunting and gathering society). Gradually, trade expanded beyond the village: first in the region, perhaps as a 'bazaar'-like economy; then to longer distances, through particular caravan or shipping routes; and eventually too much of the world. At each stage, the economy involved increasing specialization and division of labour and increasingly more productive technology. However, in this context, the role of women, especially with reference to the market, have they changed?

In understanding the competitive nature of market trading and the market structure, it is imperative to explore whether market traders engage in competition for economic reasons alone or whether social and cultural factors are also prominent here. In other words, it is intended to find how far the social and cultural factors influence the 'market'. Market exchange, while being increasingly dominant, is heavily embedded in and constitutive of relations of class, caste, locality and gender. The relationship is built on several parameters and it takes quite a bit of time to establish relationships and they are in phases (Rajesh 2010).

Numerous studies have emphasised the implications of market on various dimensions of society like gender (Gardner 1982; Wolf 1985; Scott 1988; Bossen 1989; Ayres and Peter 1995; Kapadia 1997; Neuman 1998; Ridgeway and Lynn 1999; Barrientos, et.al, 2003; Prieto-Rodriguez 2003), labour market (Poje (1986), Kelley (1991), Hyclak and Ohn (1997), Nair (1997), Cross and Johnson (2000), Wilson (2003). Gender issues and the entry of women into the job market (Nielsen 1988; Rosenfeld and Kalleberg 1991; Ackah and Heaton 1996; Neuman 1998) created further concern for the academicians as well as society in general.

### **2. Women Labour Market**

Nielsen (1988) finds contrasting results when studying women's work. He questions, will technology force unemployment, lack of influence, bad working conditions, etc.? Or will women's central functions in the social renewal processes constitute opposition to the male-dominated technological development? The consequences seem to be a question of male versus female culture, of power relations and of gender specific divisions of labour.

Rosenfeld and Kalleberg (1991) state that in general, labour's ability to bargain collectively explains more of the gender gap, directly and indirectly, than other factors. They state this in a context where women earn less, on average, than men in all advanced industrialized countries; countries vary in the size of the gender earnings gap. They use data from nine advanced men's income is associated with sex segregation, labour's power and inclusiveness, leftist parties' strength, family policies, labour demand, and relative human capital levels.

Ayres and Siegelman (1995) found substantial price differences between men and women and whites and blacks in the new car market. Ackah and Heaton (1996) examine data on the labour market participation of women in Northern Ireland, which is a traditional society within which women's primary role is defined as homemaker and mother, drawing comparisons with the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the European Union. Nezic and Kerr (1996) iterate that traders, most of whom are women, spend long hours for a number of days a week in West African markets. These markets take on aspects of a community as market participants concerns include social welfare issues – sanitation, shelter, child care ... as well as issues relating to the commercial functioning of the markets.

Glass and Estes (1997) point out, women's entrance into the labour market in large numbers has exacerbated incompatibilities between employer and family interests. They reveal that conflict between paid work and family functioning. They explore the nature of job/family incompatibility, organisational interests in family responsive policies, and the current prevalence of various policies within work organizations. They then review what is known about the effectiveness of particular family-responsive policies on organisational and family functioning. Finally, they consider barriers to further institutionalization of family responsive policy and suggest future research and policy directions. Boyd (1997) explains the process of feminization of paid work.

Neuman (1998) examines gender and ethnic occupational segregation in Israel, focusing on the interaction between gender and ethnicity. Uses data from the 1983 and 1961 population and housing census, and two different indices to examine three issues; ethnic versus gender occupational segregation. Finds that gender segregation is much higher than ethnic segregation, that, overall, women are not more ethnically segregated than men and that there are ethnic differences in the overall gender dissimilarity indices. Also investigates and presents long-term trends between 1961 and 1983 and comparisons with the US. Explores the linkage between educational disparities are responsible for differences in ethnic, occupational segregation, but not in gender occupational segregation. Offers demand side explanations.

Irwin and Bottero (2000) explore recent arguments about the marketisation of female labour, in the content of a wider analysis of the role of concepts like 'the market' and 'individualization' in sociological accounts of change in employment relations. Aliefendioglu (2003) presents in his study, the dynamics of market with the dimension of the relationships of the marketer women among themselves, with the clients, the local government and the town, gender based division of labour....marketer women expose a heterogeneous structure with regard to income, family situation, are group and income level. Barrientos (2003) explores the gender sensitivity of codes currently applied in the African export horticulture sector from an analytical; it develops a 'gender pyramid', and the code of conduct. Prieto (2003) made a study to find out the influence of the entry of married women into the labour market and its effects. Bourdieu argues that the role of institutions in reproducing gender inequality needs to be better understood. Thought considerable work has been done on the role of the family in reproducing gender asymmetries, the institutional analysis must expand to better capture the role of religion, school, and in reproducing masculine domination (Bourdieu 2001). He adds, that this is a part of the culture of almost all societies around the globe through society that is thoroughly organised by what he calls the 'androcentric principle' (Hull 2002). Bourdieu's work on Masculine Domination has been reviewed by some (Hull 2002; Williams 2002) and a few others have commented on the same (Chodos et. al 2002).

Traders, most of whom are women, spend long hours for a number of days a week in West African markets. These markets take on aspects of a community as market participants concerns include social welfare issues – sanitation, shelter, child care as well as issues relating to the commercial functioning of the markets (Nezic and Kerr 1996). Boyd (1997) highlights on the theoretical perspective and also the figures of women entering the job market and analysing the gender differential treatments.

Kapadia (1997) attempted to understand market opportunities with reference to gender, caste and class in rural south India, Nair (1997) has explored the rural labour market in Kerala in the context of changing scenario of the labour market structure. Dhesi (1998) analysed caste and class discrimination, Gupta (1998) gives the historical account of marketing taking social status, prestige of actors (ardhatiya community) in the marketplace. Caste, as a matter of fact is so prominent in Indian society that they get reflected even the television commercials (Rajesh 2014). Further, it is highlighted that confidence and trust played an important role in this context.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

Every society constitutes a structure of its own and evolves norms to follow. It has actors who perform market roles as well. It is not unnatural to assume that social institutions like hierarchy and gender play their role affecting the transaction, trade or exchange relationships in the market.

### 4. Focus of the Study

To understand market from the perspective of social structure, its process, as an institution and its culture.

### 5. Aims, Objectives and Significance of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To understand the evolution of market in a semi-urban area.
- To understand the institution of market both as a 'structure' and as a 'process' along with gender.
- To Study the interaction of important institutions like caste, class and gender with 'market'.

### 6. Method

Data collection both in the form of primary and secondary is essential in any research. 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 (Karnataka, India) '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 four types of 'markets' that were selected carefully are Vegetable, Grocery, Textile, and Stationery shops. 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.

### 7. Definition of Variables Studied

- **Dependent Variable - Permanent Customer:** Permanent customer a qualitative variable, in this research is a regular customer to the specific shop and not just the potential buyer in economic terms but a person who has relationship with the shop owner for quite some time. The process of a customer becoming permanent is dependent on the following independent variables.
- **Shop Owner:** A person who owns a shop in the urban area having a pakka structure in a specific location to sell commodities to the customers (exception in case of street vendors). In addition, the shop owners' background is characterised by the socio-cultural capital.
- **Gender:** Gender a dichotomous and qualitative variable, is a social construction in society is examined and testified in relation to various characters and features attributed to them in market particularly.
- **Age:** Age is used as a variable to verify the changes in the behaviour and perception of people in the market. The age data obtained are recoded in to age groups of regular intervals for better analysis.

### 8. Gender Distribution

<b>Gender of the respondents</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Shop Owners</b>	<b>Customers</b>
<b>Male</b>	114 (95%)	411 (68.5%)
<b>Female</b>	6 (5%)	189 (31.5%)
<b>Total</b>	120 (100%)	600 (100%)

Table 1

Here the statistics explicitly show error in the distribution by variance being 4.79, skewness being 4.183 and kurtosis being 15.751 and male: female ratio is 19:1 (95:5). The reasons for such sample were, it was very difficult to find women shop owners, it may be a conventional or traditional town wherein not many women own these types conventional markets. Of course, women were found owning shops but they were not the part of this research. As such, it was not possible to find many women owners. However, a couple of women owning vegetable shops and street vendors were identified and data was collected. In fact, in many shops wives of shop owners were found in stationery and more in textile shops. They were there to assist the business.

A proper normal distribution curve of the above age group distribution of the sample was obtained. However, the normal distribution indicates the proper representation of the larger population of the research area as such, which in deed is the working population in case of shop owners. At the same time as the researcher used the snowball technique of sampling, there might have been an element of error in sample selection. The mean age of shop owners is 38.25 years and customers 41.97 years.

### 9. Gender

In the history any society the issue of gender and gender relations has been a matter contention. Women who are no longer confined to the household work are entering spheres of the world and particularly job market. This aspect is reiterated by the review of literature on gender studies. Women are also seen the market scenario playing and enacting different roles in the market interactions. Though the use of women in form of commodification in advertisements and promotional campaigns is accused and criticised, the role of women has made a difference in the market situation. In continuation, it is observed in several writings that women attract more customers; hence it was enquired in case of Shimoga town as well. Customers were asked to give their opinion regarding their sex preference in the market situation.

**10. Customers' Gender Preference as Shop Owners**

CUSTOMERS' SEX PREFERENCE AS SHOP OWNER	GENDER OF THE CUSTOMERS		TOTAL
	1 MALE	2 FEMALE	
1 MALE	96	21	117
	23.4%	11.1%	19.5%
2 FEMALE	54	96	150
	13.1%	50.8%	25.0%
3 BOTH	117	21	138
	28.5%	11.1%	23.0%
4 ANYONE	144	51	195
	35.0%	27.0%	32.5%
TOTAL	411	189	600
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Table 2: Sex preference as shop owner \* gender of the Customers*

Though proper data on women owning shops was not available, it is found that there is preference for particular gender by both men and women. It is clearly evident from the table above, that 50% of women prefer women and rest are not particular about the shop owners' gender. In case of men, it is clear that only 23% of the male customers preferred male exclusively and the remaining indirectly preferred female shop owners. The meaning of the terms used that is both and anyone gives the same meaning but has deeper ingredient behind that word especially. The term both would give the image of being modest, whereas, the term anyone, comes with the negligence and arrogance at the point of time but the expectation is also inbuilt but cleverly expressed.

Ayres and Siegelman (1995) found substantial prices differences between men and women and whites and blacks in the new car market. Gender roles and the potential to tap women's experiences are keys for African economic development. The paper illustrates this potential with a gender analysis of forest product markets in the Humid Forest Zone of Cameroon by describing the functioning of the market and analyzing male-female differences. The results confirm that gender is the main basis for differentiating size of business, product specialization, and market strategies among traders. Priorities to improve trade also show some male-female differences. At the same time, there are no consistent differences in profit margins between genders, indicating that trading efficiency is similar, and that, given the right conditions, women entrepreneurs can be as successful as men. The results also indicate that the gender gap could be closing among the younger generation entering the market (Ruiz, et. al; 2002)

By looking at this data whole lot of issues come to the fore front for discussion and it does raise quite an amount of debate on matters like institution, structure, functioning pattern, change, of course from different theoretical perspectives as well. Based on this data from the structural functionalist perspective one could analyse that men are supposed to work outside the house and women are meant to work at home and that is what the data is revealing. However, it doesn't stop there, it's changing. From the conflict perspective, we can witness that women were found in other markets owning shops and running the business as well as their respective home front. Further, it was found that women were present even in the markets the researcher had selected either to assist or make their presence in the shop felt (by any one) with a 'difference' or to create a 'difference'. This alteration or shift may be analysed in terms of change from the symbolic perspective as well. Symbolically some individuals might want to modify (to their benefit may be economically, using the social scene, 'rationally' or 'logically') the existing system. This shift can be argued from different theoretical perspectives. For instance, it is functional to have women to cater to the needs and proper interaction with women and same in case of men, which rather was performed by men till 'recently' which is indeed conflicting in the minds of both men and women. This might also be because of the possibility of changing or conflicting preferences in terms of feeling comfortable with, freedom, space etc which are 'modern', talk of present days....From the rational choice perspective, the rationality behind the choosing the shop owner's gender by the customer might have made the shop owners to realise the logic behind the phenomenon. The whole crux of the argument is the changing phenomenon can neither be understood nor explained in any single theoretical perspective. In fact, one has to go deeper into the phenomenon and in vivid manner than from a single theoretical framework. Bourdieu (2001) argues that 'the most powerful mechanisms of social domination are not accessed at the conscious level of the will, but mask themselves in the unconscious dispositions of the habitus. Systems of gender domination appear to the dominated as natural and eternal, operating to influence actions, ways of thinking, and even bodily presentation apart from conscious reflection'. However, says Williams (2002) 'Bourdieu does make a major contribution to the discussion of gender

by focusing attention upon the ways that domination occurs beyond the level of the conscious, perpetuated in everyday perceptions, inclinations, and actions'. This is of conceptual relevance to the discussion on the study data here.

It is found in almost all societies that male members occupy the important position in terms of occupations, managing, holding or even controlling. The shop keeping has been a main occupation of various communities across the globe and particularly in India the Baniyas in the north or vaishyas otherwise and shetty's in the south, marwadies all over the country etc. in any of these communities whose occupation is trade and shop keeping male members having played, rather playing even now a dominant important role when it comes to family and sexes (gender). Bourdieu (2001) also speaks of the same and goes to extent of saying societies across the globe are 'andocentric' 'male dominant' or masculine dominant'. It's true in case of Indian markets as well. When it comes to the important work or maintaining the shop or such things, it is always men who play a dominant role.

This is true in all markets but it varied in degree for some markets. For instance, textile market of Shimoga men dominated, but women also had roles play. In case of grocery and stationery markets, it was complete domination of male. But in case of vegetable the presence of women was found relatively more compared to other markets. Why are we talking of gender in market? This is purely because of the assumption that market completely works on the economic considerations. Incidentally, this is not the case, but how?

Number of researches has been conducted to find out the status of role of women in the society. Certain studies have shown that women in general are given second grade social positions and in most cases, are used by men to make money. This holds true when it comes to advertisements, promotion and sales (Goffman 1983; Zaveri, et., al., 1982; Bourdieu 2001). Bourdieu (2001) highlights that society is male dominant, in his work *Masculine Domination*, is because of male power (of various reasons) has been constructed over a period of time in almost all societies. "[T]he asymmetry between the sexes" and "a society organised through and through according to the androcentric principle (Bourdieu 2001). Further, the argument of commodification of women and use of women in advertisements and promotional campaigns for the sake of money is being highlighted (Rajesh 2010) but there is also a limitation to these idea.

No shopkeeper would use their family members particularly for making more money even at least by their presence. This indicated that culture, esteem, self respect family respect, have not upheld the economic doctrine of market. The reason being, wherever the shop owners have their female family members in the shop it is to assist the female customers rather than in the other way round. It was also true with the sale girls, but in some cases, sales girls were also used for promotion.

In spite of gender bias, commodification and use of a particular gender, fair sex is found in market, the market still continues to prefer specific gender, which can also be seen as a part of the culture. Homophily on gender (Ridgeway et. al 1999) is also found in markets. The reason for such thing to happen is common as both men and women have different points of discussion and ways of conducting themselves. Further, there are certain commodities where people prefer their own gender, for instance, undergarments, in case of women, and may be in case of men, things related to medicine, contraceptives, and undergarments.

Sociologists have usually assumed the role of women in the family to be minimal. In reality, women play a very important role in obtaining information particularly, family aspects, market prices, etc. They have a very strong network of their own to get and spread information.

## 11. Emotions

During the last two decades, sociologists, among others, have become increasingly interested in the study of emotions, eschewing the cognitive bias of earlier generations and regarding the affective component of social life as worthy of study. It is often argued that the distinction between 'emotion' and 'rationality' is misguided and artificial; in a carefully reasoned analysis that draws partly upon James's striking insights, Barbelet shows us why this is so. (Hewitt 1999). Generally, there is a saying that men are rational and women are emotional (Gray 1992). In what sense this statement is made needs to be checked or verified. In fact, women have proved to be more rational if 'rationality' is evaluated in terms of 'calculation', 'good bargaining capacity', and paying less to commodities. Further, it is these women and more particularly housewives (or married women) who are more calculative and they bargain a lot with the vendors and shopkeepers. It is also true that women keep a proper track of price variations in the market, in other words, they are well informed than men. In that sense, women are more rational, contrary to the statement –statistically it is argued in the 'analysis' chapter of this thesis.

To disprove this statement, from the other side, men do bargain, but relatively less or in some cases significantly less. In some other cases, men did not bargain at all. They feel bargaining is below their dignity and respect, it is cheap, not a standard practice etc. Men don't even check the prices before purchases are made. They are found generally asking for a commodity, and they pay the price demanded by the shop owner. Coming down to the concept of loyalty, which in fact, a major area in the field of management studies, it was found that men are more 'loyal' to a particular shop than women. Loyalty speaks or should speak the concept of rationality of (economists) {loyalty means one is blind, doesn't check with other shops for variety, quality and prices etc.} This is not true in case of women. They keep enquiring with many shops, and while discussions with neighbours, colleagues, and friends. Loyalty on the other side also means binding people (customers) emotionally. Which is against the economic man 'homo economicus'?

Emotions have long been recognized in Sociology as crucially important, but most references to it are generalized and vague. The individualized treatment of shame in psychoanalysis and psychology, and the absence of social context will not have meaning. Hence, it is essential to understand shame in the market interaction. The contributions to the social dimensions of shame by six sociologists (George Simmel, Charles Cooley, Norbert Elias, Richard Sennett, Helen Lynd, Erving Goffman ) and a psychologist/psychoanalyst (Helen Lewis) is important in this direction. It shows that Cooley and Lynd, particularly, made contributions to a theory of shame and the social bond. Lewis's idea that shame arises from threats to the bond integrates the contributions of all six sociologists, and points toward future research on emotion, conflict, and alienation/integration (Scheff

2000). The concept of shame, especially as the premier social emotion is very important in understanding bargaining, quarrel, cheating and such other attitudes being examined, though not many studies have been made it is also having research worthiness.

## 12. Conclusion

Society consists of two genders and majority of the studies conducted so far indicate the presence of men more than the role, performance, existence of women in the market. Women have played a very significant role in building institutions and continue in the future also. There are many stereotyped notions regarding the assumptions of women with respect to the attitude, behaviour and concerns. The smartness, weakness, logic and rationality are lopsidedly understood. The present study reveals a great deal of truth and gives room for further research.

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