



Stratification among Small Shopkeepers: A Study on the Shopkeepers of Howrah Contextualising Congruence of Market Situation and Status Position

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ARTICLE INFO **ABSTRACT**

The field of social stratification has predominantly focused on the working class, leaving other social strata underexplored. This bias, heavily influenced by Marxian and anti-Marxian perspectives, has shaped both theoretical debates and empirical research, emphasizing working-class responses to structural changes in post-war advanced industrial societies. As a result, while considerable data exists on the working class, comparable studies addressing the middle class, particularly the lower middle class, remain scarce. Within this overlooked stratum, the small independent businessman—a significant subset of the lower middle class—has received minimal scholarly attention. This paper argues that economic and social transformations have profoundly affected the position of small entrepreneurs, challenging their traditional middle-class identity anchored in property ownership and control. These changes, while extensively studied in the context of white-collar workers and debates on proletarianization or embourgeoisement, have left the dynamics of small business ownership under-examined. By focusing on the market situations and social status of small independent businessmen, this study seeks to illuminate how economic forces have reshaped their status, rendering their middle-class membership more tenuous. Through a qualitative lens, this research explores the nuanced ways in which these individuals navigate changing market conditions and societal expectations. It highlights the need for a broader and more inclusive understanding of social stratification that extends beyond the working class, addressing the complexities and transformations within the middle class. This study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive discourse on class dynamics in contemporary society.

Keywords: Convenient sampling, lupenbourgeoisie, market situation, middleclass, status position, stratification, small shopkeepers, unstructured interview, work situation.

Introduction

For many years, research in the field of social stratification has disproportionately focused on analyzing and describing the working class. Theoretical discussions have largely centered on the transformations that advanced industrial societies underwent during the relative prosperity of the post-war era (Savage, 2000). Scholars have explored political ideologies, consumption habits, aspirations, and interpersonal relationships within these societies, often linking these elements to broader structural changes (Crompton, 1998). However, this focus—shaped by both Marxist and anti-Marxist perspectives—has primarily examined how these changes affect the working class (Wright, 1997). Consequently, while we possess a wealth of data and discussions concerning the working class, there is a marked lack of equivalent studies for other social classes. Particularly in the context of this country, theoretical inquiries into issues specific to the middle class have received minimal attention (Giddens, 1973).

In community studies, researchers frequently treat behaviours observed in working-class samples as representative of broader societal patterns. Little consideration has been given to whether these behaviours might also characterize the middle class, with assumptions about “middle-class” behaviour often leading to its exclusion from such comparisons (Bourdieu, 1984).

This paper does not aim to diminish the value of research on working-class sociological issues but argues that it is time to extend comparable attention to the middle class. Specifically, it focuses on the lower middle class, particularly small independent business owners. Most studies on the lower middle class have concentrated on white-collar workers, examining the effects of industrial and social changes on these groups and framing debates in terms of either their '*proletarianization*' (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) or the '*embourgeoisement*' of segments of the working class (Lockwood, 1966). In contrast, small independent businessmen—a vital subgroup within the lower middle class—have received limited attention. This neglect likely stems from the assumption that their reliance on property ownership and control insulates them from significant social or economic shifts (Mills, 1946).

This paper contends that the position of small business owners has undergone profound changes. The same economic forces that have reshaped the lives of clerks and other white-collar workers have also disrupted the traditional status of small entrepreneurs (Crompton, 2008). Their tenuous membership in the middle class now rests almost entirely on the criterion of property ownership, making them more vulnerable to market fluctuations and shifting social dynamics (Harvey, 2011).

To address this gap, this study examines the evolving market situations and social statuses of small business owners, employing qualitative methods to capture the complexity of these transformations. By doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of social stratification, encouraging a more balanced exploration of class dynamics across all strata (Savage et al., 2013). It also highlights the need to redefine class identity beyond conventional frameworks, considering the fluid and interconnected nature of economic and social change (Beck, 1992).

Methodology

The paper mainly focuses on the small shopkeepers and how market situation and their status positions cater to social stratification in the area. Mainly the area taken into consideration is *Bally* in *Howrah* district. Rationale behind selecting the area is the concentration of small shopkeepers in close proximity and rapid development of posh communities at the heart of the area alongside accumulation of working sections at the circumference. It became an unavoidable fact that shopkeeper-clientele dynamics plays an important role in understanding process of stratification among the shopkeepers. The methods used to collect data was mainly qualitative in nature based on unstructured interview and regular interaction with owners of four shops in the area. The data was collected using convenient sampling where the researcher tried to focus on four shopkeepers representing the entire target population of small shopkeepers in the neighbourhood. Primarily the data used here is an admixture of primary and secondary data. The primary data helped in understanding first hand experiences of the shopkeepers whereas the secondary data have been used to draw relation among theories and the first hand experiences. The graph of stratification is analysed through the processes of open coding, where the researcher tries to establish himself as an external observer to understand patterns of working dynamics of the shopkeepers and qualitative analysis have been used to analyse how stratification is being established in relation to market situation and the status positions of the shopkeepers.

Market situation

An analysis of the class position of small shopkeepers must inevitably account for their market situation, as this significantly influences their economic and social standing. Economists have provided valuable insights into this area, highlighting the precarious position of small business owners in the face of structural changes in the retail sector (Harvey, 2011; Savage, 2000). These insights reveal that it is increasingly challenging for small shopkeepers to sustain their businesses due to the competitive pressures of large-scale enterprises.

The post-war era of global economic growth and increasing prosperity has driven the expansion of a mass consumer market. While this development has created some opportunities for small businesses to survive, it has primarily favoured larger retail organizations with extensive networks of outlets (Crompton, 1998; Giddens, 1973). These large-scale enterprises have captured the lion's share of the market, leaving small businesses with a diminishing proportional market share despite their absolute numbers remaining stable (Mills, 1946).

Small traders often operate with limited capital, minimal formal business training, and insufficient marketing expertise, making them reliant on narrow profit margins (Wright, 1997). This trend is particularly evident in the grocery sector, where rising consumer demand has coincided with shifts favouring larger retail outlets. These outlets benefit from economies of scale, enabling them to lower prices while offering a wider variety of goods, which appeals to consumers seeking affordability and choice (Beck, 1992; Savage et al., 2013).

Societal changes, such as the widespread ownership of automobiles, have further eroded the geographic advantages traditionally held by small businesses. Consumer mobility has increased, enabling shoppers to access larger retail establishments with greater ease, diminishing the competitive edge of small shopkeepers (Crompton, 2008). Accessibility, once a key asset for small businesses, has lost much of its value in an increasingly mobile society (Bourdieu, 1984).

This paper argues that these developments reflect not only economic challenges but also significant implications for the social status and class identity of small business owners, particularly in the context of the

sub-continent. Their diminishing market power and relative decline underscore the need for further research into the intersection of market dynamics, class stratification, and the resilience of small entrepreneurs in rapidly evolving economic landscapes. Addressing these dynamics is essential for developing policies that mitigate the vulnerabilities of small businesses and foster more equitable market participation (Harvey, 2011).

According to the owner of "*Mahamaya* : all in one store" people of today's generation are preferring to visit the '*Spencer*' near the area of concern as they get attracted to the discounted prices and special offers on almost every product. According to him retail chains like Spencer can offer products of groceries and others at a discounted price because of their ability of larger capital generation, on other hand small shopkeepers like him only have the provision to stock their shops with limited products and resources that to at a higher rate as they are not directly buying from the producers or farmers as the retail outlets like Spencer or Big bazar are doing. Another reason for lower profit margins for smaller shopkeepers in the area as he pointed out was lack of placing bulk orders, he said that if they could place bulk order they could get certain discount from the producers but unfortunately the reduction in the customers in recent years have forced them to stop placing bulk orders. As a result they have to buy products at the rate decided by the selling organisations (for e.g: if they bought 20 packets of Kellogg's cornflakes, it would cost them around 20 rupees per pack, whereas they are buying 5packs which cost them around 15 rupees per pack) and need to sell them at a minimized marked up price to the customers to keep up to the market demand and competition.

Small entrepreneurs, particularly those in the retail sector, increasingly view the evolving landscape of retailing with apprehension. The rise of large corporate organizations poses significant challenges, as these entities advocate for the removal of protective mechanisms such as retail price maintenance, effectively undermining the competitive position of small shopkeepers (Wrigley & Lowe, 2002). Large retailers dominate prime locations on High Streets and command a growing share of retail sales, further marginalizing small businesses (Harvey, 2011).

These developments threaten not only the economic stability of small shopkeepers but also their deeply valued sense of independence. For many, the entrepreneurial ideal is rooted in self-reliance and control over their business decisions. However, the expanding influence of large-scale enterprises has necessitated a shift in strategy (Crompton, 1998). To counteract these pressures, small retailers—particularly in sectors like grocery—have increasingly turned to collective action, often joining voluntary chains or cooperatives (Beck, 1992). These alliances allow small business owners to pool resources, achieve economies of scale, and enhance their market competitiveness (Savage, 2000).

By participating in such networks, small shopkeepers can negotiate better deals with suppliers, share marketing resources, and access shared logistical support, thereby improving their resilience against the encroachments of large corporations (Wright, 1997). This collective approach underscores the growing recognition among small entrepreneurs that survival in the contemporary retail environment requires collaboration rather than isolation (Bourdieu, 1984).

This phenomenon not only reflects a pragmatic response to market challenges but also raises important questions about the evolving nature of independence and agency within the small business sector. Further research is needed to explore how such adaptations influence the social identity and class dynamics of small entrepreneurs, as well as their long-term viability in an increasingly consolidated market landscape (Harvey, 2011).

Owner of a retail unit connected to *Bigbasket* shares his experience in handling the unit for three years, according to him the only way to keep up with the demands of current generation is in taking up franchise and distribution of larger retail chains, he said that most of the third generation shopkeepers are not willing to continue with the business models that was setup by their forefathers. They instead are eyeing to join the retail chains of the organisation such as that of *Bigbasket*, *Blinkit*, or *Mia amore*. Though according to him there is no such difference in profit margins even after taking up franchise as most of the profit earned goes in paying commission to the mother retail chains. He also shares a point which sort of goes ignored in many cases i.e the training of the shopkeepers coming from a different business model. He says that they have been a business family who had a grocery store but when they entered into the franchise business they had to take real pain in understanding the technological setup and distribution pattern in the process. He also said that there was as such no difference in profit margins as compared to the other small shopkeepers but the main difference they sought to was the increased concentration of customers on a daily basis, which was equivalent to more commission to the mother agency.

In an environment where independent traders find their ability to influence the market steadily diminishing, one viable response is collective action. By uniting with others who face similar challenges, small business owners often form buying groups, cooperatives, and voluntary chains. While this approach offers increased security and competitive advantages, it inevitably comes at the cost of some degree of autonomy (Savage, 2000). Participation in such networks involves compromises, as the collective benefits necessitate adherence to shared policies and practices (Wrigley & Lowe, 2002).

The primary objective of voluntary chains is to emulate the efficiency of large retail organizations by integrating wholesaling and retailing activities. However, many of these chains have extended their scope beyond securing favourable wholesale terms. They often exert influence over critical aspects of business

operations, such as shop-fitting, advertising, and broader marketing strategies (Beck, 1992). In these instances, independent traders relinquish significant elements of their independence, which has traditionally been a hallmark of small business ownership (Crompton, 1998).

This collective action among small traders reflects a form of “defensive collectivism” aimed at preserving their individualism. The unity forged through buying groups and voluntary chains is fundamentally a strategy to safeguard their independence against the encroachment of large corporations (Wright, 1997).

As market conditions continue to deteriorate for small traders, they face two primary options: joining a voluntary chain to enhance their competitiveness or shifting their focus to retail niches where service quality and personalized attention are paramount—areas where large organizations possess no clear advantage (Bourdieu, 1984). These strategies underscore the adaptability of small business owners in navigating structural challenges while raising broader questions about the evolving nature of independence in the face of economic consolidation.

The analysis highlights the need for further research into the long-term implications of such collective strategies on the autonomy, identity, and resilience of independent traders, as well as their role in shaping the broader dynamics of the retail sector (Harvey, 2011).

Work situation

The defining feature of the small shopkeeper’s work situation is undoubtedly their independence, a quality that sets them apart from most other groups within the lower middle class. The autonomy to control one’s own working life remains a quintessential aspect of the middle-class lifestyle, and small shopkeepers arguably enjoy a degree of freedom that few other occupations provide (Wright, 1997). Although this independence is increasingly under threat due to economic pressures, it continues to be a central and highly valued characteristic of the profession (Crompton, 1998).

Despite the precarious economic conditions of small-scale retailing, the overall number of small businesses has remained relatively stable. This apparent stability masks a dynamic reality in which a steady influx of new entrants replaces those forced out of business. This cycle reflects the enduring allure of shop-keeping for individuals willing to invest their capital in exchange for the perceived freedom of running their own enterprise (Harvey, 2011).

A notable aspect of the small shopkeeper’s work environment is the lack of clear separation between home and work. Many small businesses operate as family enterprises, where economic and domestic life are deeply intertwined. As C. Wright Mills (1946) described the *‘lumpenbourgeoisie’*, small business owners often serve as owners, managers, and workers, relying heavily on family members for labor. In such “Mom-and-Pop” stores, parents manage the business while simultaneously overseeing household and childcare responsibilities (Mills, 1946).

While some may view this overlap of home and work as harmonious, it often obscures the economic realities of these businesses. The financial returns frequently reflect the collective labor of the entire family rather than an individual’s efforts, making their profitability appear even lower upon closer examination (Wrigley & Lowe, 2002). Furthermore, the long working hours and often substandard physical conditions faced by small shopkeepers starkly contrast with the improved working conditions and reduced hours enjoyed by many other occupational groups (Beck, 1992).

These challenges are compounded by the growing difficulty small shopkeepers face in attracting and retaining staff, as better opportunities are available in larger retail chains or factories. Consequently, family labor often becomes a necessity rather than a choice, ensuring the survival of these businesses but at the cost of increasing the burden on family members (Savage, 2000).

According to the owner of *Ghosh* sweets, they are in the bakery business for around 50 years and their home itself is their workshop cum shop, though there is smooth running of their business the problem they mainly face is the problem of balancing the work and family life. According to him there are many instances when they need to keep the shop open for the whole day due to extreme customer’s rush and due to that their working hours increases creating a dis balance in the family life. There are even many instances when they feel the problem of space crunch and being marginal shopkeepers they don’t have the capacity to expand as well. He also says that their house’s lay out is such that it cannot handle increased number of customers at one space, forcefully they need to keep open the door which separates the shop and the house, this according to him creates issues of privacy. He also adds a point that being a family business they want their children to continue with this heritage of bakery and sweet making but somehow they are not interested in these processes rather they are more intrigued by the technological field, though he is not against the processual but he says that over there his children would be made “slaves with a time frame”. Though he do not ignore that they are facing financial issues and a job or a professional course by their children would help the family, but still he exclaimed himself as owner and which is a more respectable positionality than the status of workers in any sort, according to him.

Thus, in seeking independence, the petty businessman will usually find himself at a relative disadvantage with respect to a number of other very important aspects of the work situation. If the portrait of the archetypical “little man” as one working in poor, uncomfortable surroundings, deriving a meagre profit, employing his family because he can neither afford nor attract other labor, and constantly facing the threat of

economic disaster, is not too overdrawn, we can but marvel at the potency of the idea of independence (Mills, 1946; Wright, 1997). This underscores the dual nature of independence in small shop keeping: while it remains a cherished ideal, it is increasingly constrained by economic realities, changing labor dynamics, and evolving societal expectations (Beck, 1992; Crompton, 1998). Further research is needed to explore how these pressures reshape the identity, sustainability, and long-term viability of family-run businesses in contemporary economic contexts (Savage, 2000; Wrigley & Lowe, 2002).

Status position

The broad societal changes affecting the economic stability of small independent traders have also had significant implications for their status position. The social prestige traditionally associated with this group primarily stems from their ability to control their own working lives, a key feature distinguishing them from the working class and aligning them more closely with the traditional middle class (Marshall, 1997; Wright, 1997). Historically, this autonomy has been linked to a lifestyle marked by the outward signs of “respectability,” a value that continues to hold importance but is increasingly difficult for small shopkeepers to sustain in contemporary conditions (Savage, 2000).

As dominant market forces erode the economic security of independent traders, their capacity to maintain a distinctly middle-class lifestyle diminishes. Declining returns on capital investment result in reduced surpluses available for consumption aligned with middle-class norms (Beck, 1992). However, this does not necessarily relegate small shopkeepers to the working class, any more than newfound wealth elevates manual workers to middle-class status. Despite economic challenges, small shopkeepers are likely to retain their middle-class identification, driven by property ownership and work autonomy, even if situational constraints like long hours limit their interactions with other middle-class individuals (Crompton, 1998).

Beyond financial pressures, other structural factors complicate the cultivation of a middle-class lifestyle. Many occupations have benefited from reduced working hours and increased incomes, resulting in more leisure time—a hallmark of middle-class life (Wrigley & Lowe, 2002). In contrast, small shopkeepers remain excluded from such advancements. Even professionals, though working long hours, often enjoy the benefits of bureaucratic employment, including more predictable schedules (Crompton, 1998). Notably, improvements in working conditions and income levels have extended to groups of lower status than small shopkeepers, including many manual and white-collar workers, fostering a sense of relative deprivation among small traders (Wright, 1997).

This sense of disadvantage extends beyond income and working conditions to job security, where small shopkeepers often find themselves on par with or even less secure than manual workers. Despite these challenges, small traders are likely to make significant sacrifices to sustain a lifestyle distinct from that of the working class. However, their difficulties in achieving this are apparent, particularly as their economic circumstances diverge further from those of other middle-class groups (Beck, 1992).

An additional factor shaping the status and lifestyle of small shopkeepers is the growing purchasing power of the working class. As small traders rely increasingly on working-class customers for their income, they must adapt their services and cultivate goodwill with this demographic. The ability to establish personal relationships with customers is often cited as a competitive advantage for small shopkeepers in their struggle against large retail outlets (Marshall, 1997).

Historically, shop-keeping was heavily oriented toward serving the needs of the middle class, with shopkeepers employing refined social skills to appeal to this group (Savage, 2000). However, the rise of a mass market driven by the working class’s increased purchasing power has diminished the relevance of these traditional approaches. The deference and servitude that once characterized shopkeeper-customer interactions are now neither expected nor suitable, reflecting the evolving dynamics of retail and the broader societal shifts impacting small traders (Beck, 1992; Wright, 1997).

According to the owner of *Tara jewellers* their only way of upholding their business identity is by maintaining close personal relationship with existing customers. He says that his family has been in this business for around 90 years and were specialized in making jewellery for people of the aristocrat group but with the advent of technology and incoming of larger retail units of varied companies such as *Senco*, *Anjali*, *Annapurna*, etc. their client base kept on decreasing, and now only a handful of customers come to their shop. He identifies that there has been a transition of client base from upper middle class to lower middle class who visit their shop, he continues that most of their known clients shifted to those big jewellery houses where there is low interest rates of EMI and much more machine oriented varieties. According to him even though they are facing huge financial crunch but still they identify themselves as ‘respectable middle class jewellers’. He says that this shop is their identity and their neighbours know them as respectable people even though their financial condition is not worth it in current scenario.

The composition of shopkeepers’ clientele has evolved significantly over time, with many businesses that once catered almost exclusively to middle-class customers now serving a substantial working-class demographic (Savage, 2000). As the economic significance of manual labor groups as consumers has grown, small business owners have had to adapt their sales strategies—both in style and content—to align with the

preferences of working-class customers (Marshall, 1997). This increased interaction has amplified shopkeepers' awareness of their relative deprivation. They observe that economic advancements have disproportionately benefited the working class, while their own economic and social conditions remain stagnant. Moreover, this shift requires them to allocate more effort to catering to the needs of manual workers, often at the expense of their traditional middle-class status markers (Beck, 1992).

Shop keeping inherently carries the potential for status incongruence, a condition exacerbated by the growing economic power of the working class (Wright, 1997). As small traders engage more frequently with manual workers, they become acutely aware of their own lack of corresponding improvements in income and work conditions. For those in retail sectors where personal service is paramount, serving manual workers often necessitates displays of deference to individuals they perceive as lower in status. This dynamic reduces their ability to maintain a sense of status superiority, even as their desire to uphold such a differential intensifies (Savage, 2000).

Historically, small shopkeepers could afford to show deference to all customers, including those of lower status, while maintaining a high standing in the community. However, this standing is now increasingly challenged by the economic ascent of affluent working-class individuals and white-collar clerical workers, whose improved conditions blur traditional status distinctions (Crompton, 1998).

Urbanization has further complicated the status dynamics of small shopkeepers. In smaller towns, all independent traders often enjoy relatively high social status due to their association with "business." The smaller community size allows them to retain a prominent position (Beck, 1992). However, as urban areas expand and populations grow, finer distinctions in the social hierarchy emerge. Larger communities enable the formation of more homogeneous groups with distinct status levels, intensifying the visibility and importance of these divisions (Wrigley & Lowe, 2002).

In highly urbanized settings, small shopkeepers face a decline in status as they become increasingly differentiated from the owners and managers of large business enterprises. Their previous association with "big business," which conferred an inflated social standing, diminishes in significance. The sheer size of urban agglomerations makes it more difficult for small shopkeepers to interact and align with the elite owners and executives of large enterprises, thereby isolating them socially and further eroding their status (Marshall, 1997).

This evolving landscape reflects the broader economic and social transformations reshaping small business ownership, highlighting the pressures on shopkeepers to adapt while grappling with diminishing status and relative economic stagnation. Further exploration of these trends could yield insights into the intersection of urbanization, social stratification, and small-scale entrepreneurship (Savage, 2000; Beck, 1992).

Conclusion

The increasing threats posed by large business enterprise in the current scenario of socio-economic dimensionalities are likely to be countered through collective rather than individual action. Historically, trade associations have sought to stabilize or improve the market conditions for small traders by limiting competition, often through price-fixing or other restrictive measures. However, traditional national-level trade associations, which are typically sector-specific, are now dominated by larger, multi-outlet businesses and are less frequented by small independent traders.

In contrast, locality-based associations, which represent the interests of diverse small retailers in specific areas, appear to have grown in importance. This shift may be due to recent challenges that affect entire shopping districts rather than specific types of retailing. Efforts such as rezoning shopping areas or conducting planning surveys have often galvanized resistance among small traders, leading to the emergence of vocal and coordinated opposition to such external interferences. Local associations focus on enhancing the market position of their members by attracting more customers and preventing competition from large enterprises. These efforts include lobbying against the sale of business properties to large chains and opposing the entry of multi-store establishments into local shopping areas. These activities align with the goals of voluntary chains, which also aim to safeguard the market position of small traders through collective measures.

For many small shopkeepers, the professional middle class has traditionally served as their reference group. This identification is rooted in the frequent interactions between shopkeepers and middle-class customers who historically constituted their primary clientele. Like clerks and other petty bourgeoisie, small shopkeepers often derived their social and economic orientations from these interactions. Consequently, the degree to which a shopkeeper identifies with the professional middle class is significantly influenced by the class composition of their clientele. Shopkeepers serving predominantly middle-class customers are more likely to adopt the economic, social, and cultural patterns of the professional middle class. Conversely, those catering primarily to working-class clientele may find it more challenging to align with middle-class norms and values.

The nature of a shopkeeper's clientele is closely linked to the location of their business. Shops situated in predominantly middle-class or working-class neighborhoods will naturally exhibit differences in the social composition of their customers, though the correlation is not absolute. In general, the location of a shop influences the shopkeeper's social identification in a manner similar to the class characteristics of their

customers. Shopkeepers operating in middle-class areas are more likely to align themselves with middle-class norms than those in working-class districts. Similarly, a shopkeeper's residential location also plays a critical role in shaping their social identification. Residential areas carry implicit status evaluations, which influence the opportunities for shopkeepers to interact with their reference groups and adopt corresponding social identities.

Additionally, the motivations and aspirations of small shopkeepers significantly shape their business decisions, including the choice of goods they sell, the location of their shop, and the clientele they aim to attract. Social background, personal ambitions, and the symbolic meaning attached to retailing activities guide these decisions.

In this context, small shopkeepers can be conceptualized along a spectrum. At one end are shopkeepers with middle-class backgrounds, operating in middle-class neighborhoods, serving middle-class customers, and residing in middle-class districts. At the other end are those with working-class roots who align with similar working-class parameters. Despite these differences, both groups experience a convergence of declining class and status positions, diminishing political influence, and the enduring middle-class value of independence and control over their work lives.

The small shopkeeper thus presents an illustrative case study for examining the relative importance of property ownership and autonomy in shaping their broader social class position. This analysis highlights how the interplay of economic challenges, social aspirations, and collective strategies influence the survival and identity of small traders in a rapidly changing economic and social landscape.

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