

Dignity-armorring: Subsistence entrepreneurs' defense in transactional marketplaces

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Abstract

Dignity is a fundamental ethical concern and has crucial implications within the marketing domain. Within marketplaces, institutions that preserve dignity could be market regulatory rules or even close social ties. But the literature is silent about the safeguarding of dignity in transactional subsistence marketplaces characterized by an absence of formal and informal dignity-protecting institutions. Adopting a qualitative inquiry, we interviewed 32 subsistence entrepreneurs at the Desia marketplace. We theorize dignity armor, which are institutionalized practices evolved and deployed by subsistence entrepreneurs to defend themselves from chronic and multi-dimensional dignity threats. Our findings further reveal that these practices armor dignity against structural, interactional, and procedural threats. The study also helps illuminate the transactional side of subsistence marketplaces and highlights avenues for the State, market regulators, and policymakers.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Public Policy*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics