

## **ABSTRACT**

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### **AN INQUIRY INTO SUBALTERN CONSUMPTION**

Illegality is a ubiquitous phenomenon in subaltern markets. Despite acknowledging the role of illegality in subaltern markets and consumption, marketing scholarship has not engaged with this aspect. In this research, I critically investigate the nature and roots of illegal practices in subaltern consumption and markets. I conducted ethnography over a period of twenty months in a village in north-central India. I employed observations and ethnographic interviews as primary data collection methods. I follow the three-essay format in my dissertation.

margins of political society. Moreover, this essay contributes to the under-researched area of illegal markets by conceptualizing market as a state of exception. I also draw attention to the role of violence that remains an under-researched aspect of markets.

In the third essay, I investigate the relationship between illegality and institutional context. My findings reveal that my institutional context exhibits Kafkaesque properties such as indecipherable and inaccessible law, and centrality and abuse of power. I highlight alienation of subaltern consumers in such a Kafkaesque context. The findings enable us to attend to power relations, abuse of power, and the subjectivity of alienated subaltern subjects. These elements are at the root of illegal practices in subaltern settings.

In summary, I uncover important facets of discursive silencing of subalterns, marketized sovereignty, Kafkaesque institutional context, and violence that have not been understood in extant marketing theory. This dissertation offers some valuable insights on illegality in subaltern consumption and markets.