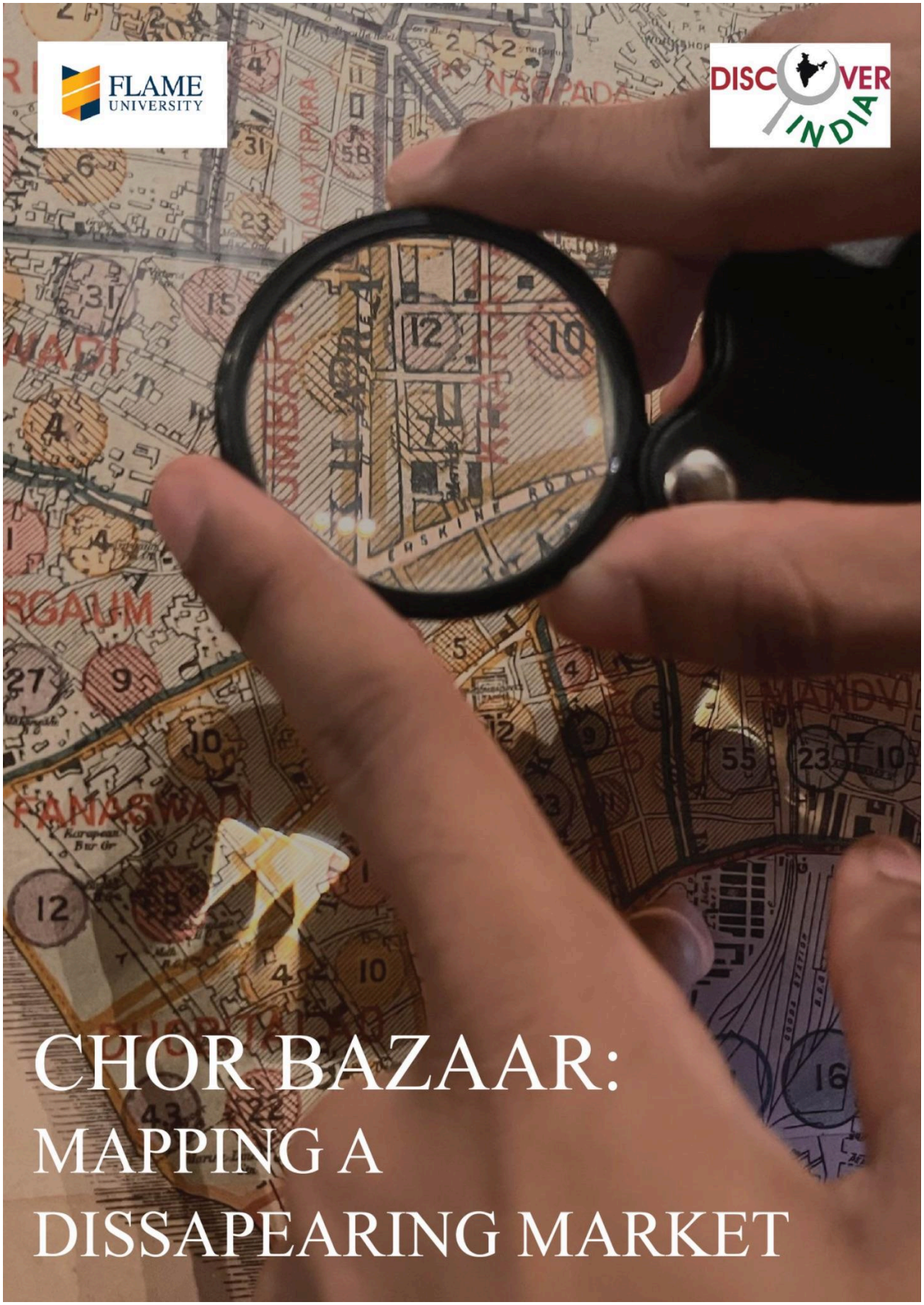

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CHOR BAZAAR:
MAPPING A
DISSAPEARING MARKET

CHOR BAZAAR : Mapping a Disappearing Market
DIP GROUP 29
2025

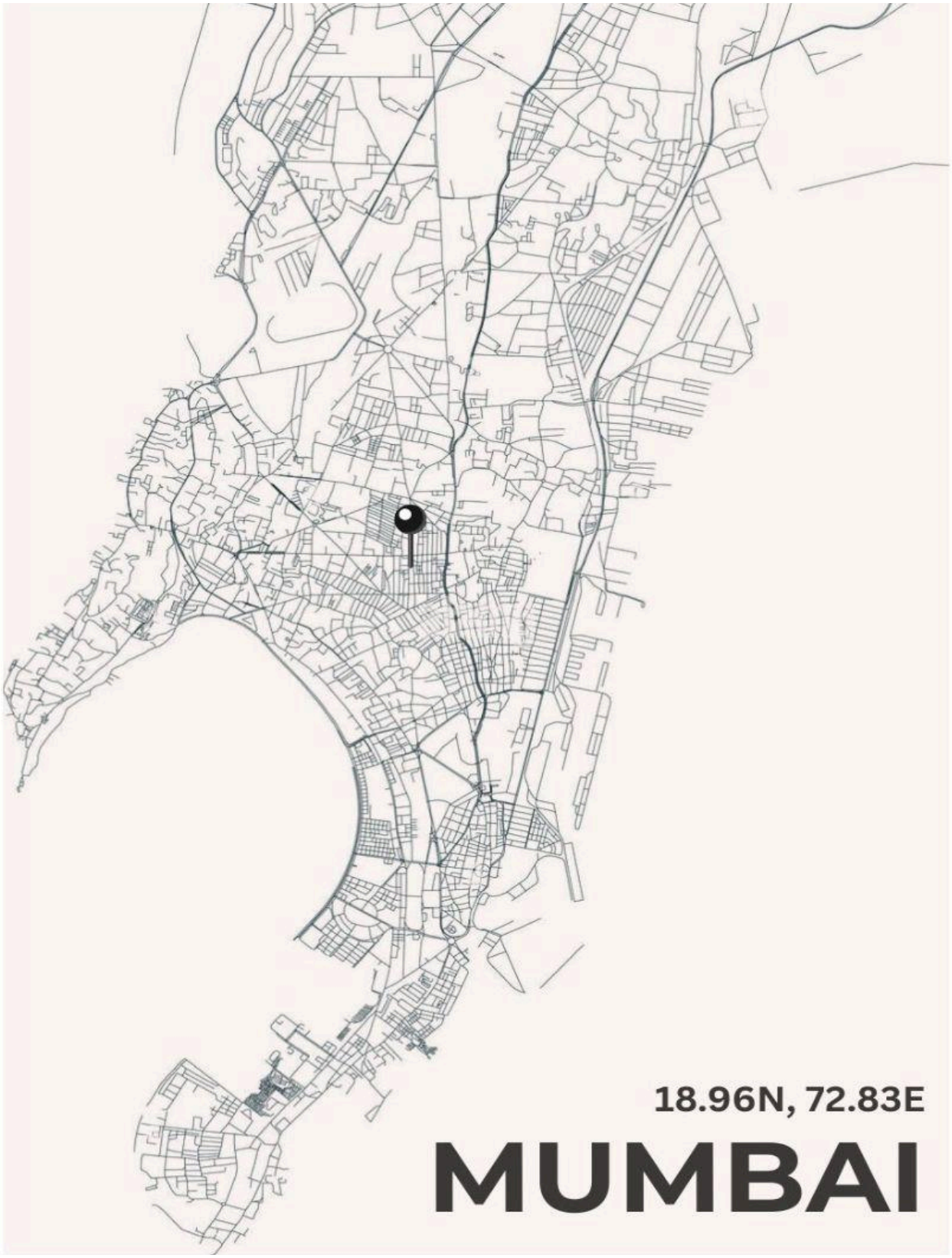
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(Alamy, n.d.)

Certificate

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this DIP report titled "*Chor Bazaar: Mapping a Disappearing Market*"
submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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Abstract

Chor Bazaar is the monomer of the city of Bombay with a complex identity which is very hard to map out. This paper looks at the search for an identity of market through maps, survey, archival data throughout the years of the markets existence.. A detailed literature review on the secondary research about the market and explaining the research methodologies help in giving context to our research. The report starts from a historic overview of the creation of the area where Chor Bazaar existed as an anecdote to it actually existing starting 1803 and how the fire of 1803 affected the market. We map the bazaar and the areas around it over time and see how it has changed over the years. We use 'Geographical Information System' (GIS) throughout our paper to link the shrinkage of the market, alongside understanding its demography and complications of the market. We also look into the people, demographics and economics of the market to understand the sourcing and distribution of vendors. Part 2 of our report talks about the urbanization and redevelopment that took place in 2009, as gentrification hit many parts of Mumbai, it also started affecting Chor Bazaar. We use GIS again to make our own map of chor bazaar and mark out the shop clusters, construction areas and religious clusters. The paper then looks at the effects of this Gentrification throughout the recent decades and the effects of tourism on the market. The paper then ends by looking at the effects of this gentrification and how it has affected the overall identity of the market.

Keywords

- Chor Bazaar
- Shor Bazaar
- Antique Market
- Mumbai
- Urban Development
- Colonial History
- Second Hand Goods
- Culture Heritage
- Street Vendors Act
- Urbanisation

- Resale Economies
- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- GIS
- Gentrification
- Redevelopment

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Introduction

Previously known as Bombay, as known in the colonial times, Mumbai, has long been a city of contrasts, a mix of cultures, histories, and economies shaped by centuries of migration, colonial rule and urbanization. As one of India's most iconic port cities, it has been a gateway for global trade and a hub for cultural exchange since its early days under Portuguese and British rule. The city's complexity lies in its ability to seamlessly merge the old with the new—ancient traditions coexist with modern aspirations, creating a dynamic urban landscape. Within this intricate tapestry lies Chor Bazaar, a marketplace that has evolved significantly over time, reflecting the socio-economic and cultural shifts that have defined Mumbai.

Chor Bazaar, the legendary market that has planted its roots across India has traced its history back to colonial times. The antique bazaar in modern-day Mumbai derived its name from the British mispronunciation of *"Shor Bazaar"*, which translates to "noisy market", eventually becoming synonymous with its evolution over the decades (Bapat, 2015). Initially popular for dealing with and around stolen goods, the thieves' market transformed into a bustling marketplace dealing with second-hand items, antiques, and cultural artefacts. Through myths, legends, and a complex interplay of legality and illegality, Chor Bazaar has evolved over the years, yet retaining its historical essence (Bapat, 2015). The story of this market is intertwined with the development of the city, its socio-economic dynamics and the resilience of communities such as the Waghri tribe, who have long contributed to its operations, dating back centuries.

Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of studying Chor Bazaar is to understand its multifaceted identity and to determine whether its reputation aligns with reality. To achieve this, the research aims to trace the market's history from its colonial origins to its present state, analyzing the socio-economic shifts reflected in its transformation from "Shor Bazaar" to "Chor Bazaar." A key focus is on assessing the role of the Waghri community and other traders in developing the market as a center for second-hand trading, recycling, and informal business networks. Understanding how

community participation influenced the market's growth will provide valuable insights into its historical and economic relevance.

Further objectives include assessing the economic contributions of Chor Bazaar, particularly its role as an informal market sustained by supply chains, resale economies, and key trading actors. This involves investigating how the market facilitates the trading of second-hand goods and antiques, thereby supporting local businesses. The study will also assess how government policies have impacted market regulations and the livelihoods of traders, analyzing the impact of legal and institutional frameworks to understand how governance impacts the sustainability of the market. Additionally, the objective is to assess the impact of urbanization on the market. The research will also analyze changes in the locality of Chor Bazaar due to the introduction of the Bhendi Bazaar.

Research Concerns

Chor Bazaar in academia is an under-researched domain. Studying the supply chains, market mechanisms and culture, are some domains within Chor Bazaar which are not currently researched upon. Due to the neglected area of south Mumbai that our research is trying to focus on, academia and scholars too have not shed light upon the functionality of Chor Bazaar and its cultural significance. Our primary research therefore is acting as a bridge to shed light upon the side of the city that makes up for what chor bazaar is. Bridging this gap would be the second pivot of our study which would therefore increase the validity of our secondary research, and the literature review setting foundation to our primary research focus, which will only help up analyse Chor Bazaar through its lost identity.Amidst these challenges, Chor Bazaar remains an important stake in the economy of Mumbai.

Relevance of Chor Bazaar

Chor Bazaar holds significant relevance as a historical and cultural landmark in Mumbai. With a history spanning over 150 years, it reflects the socio-economic dynamics of the city and attracts

tourists and locals alike. The market is known for selling everything from authentic Victorian furniture to old Bollywood posters, vintage cameras, and rare collectibles.

Chor Bazaar is a vibrant marketplace that provides a glimpse into India's rich antique culture. Based on insights from interviews with individuals like Tosher Govadia and Rafique Baghdadi, the study aims to provide new research and objectives. They opened up avenues of research for further study. While pre pilot findings acknowledge that the municipality has been implementing rules, which they aim to learn more about in their primary research. Furthermore, it offers valuable research questions and will allow the researchers to gain insight into a more multifaceted approach.

The study of Chor Bazaar is an attempt to do justice to both the historic context of the foundational analysis of what the market was made up of, to what it has changed to today.

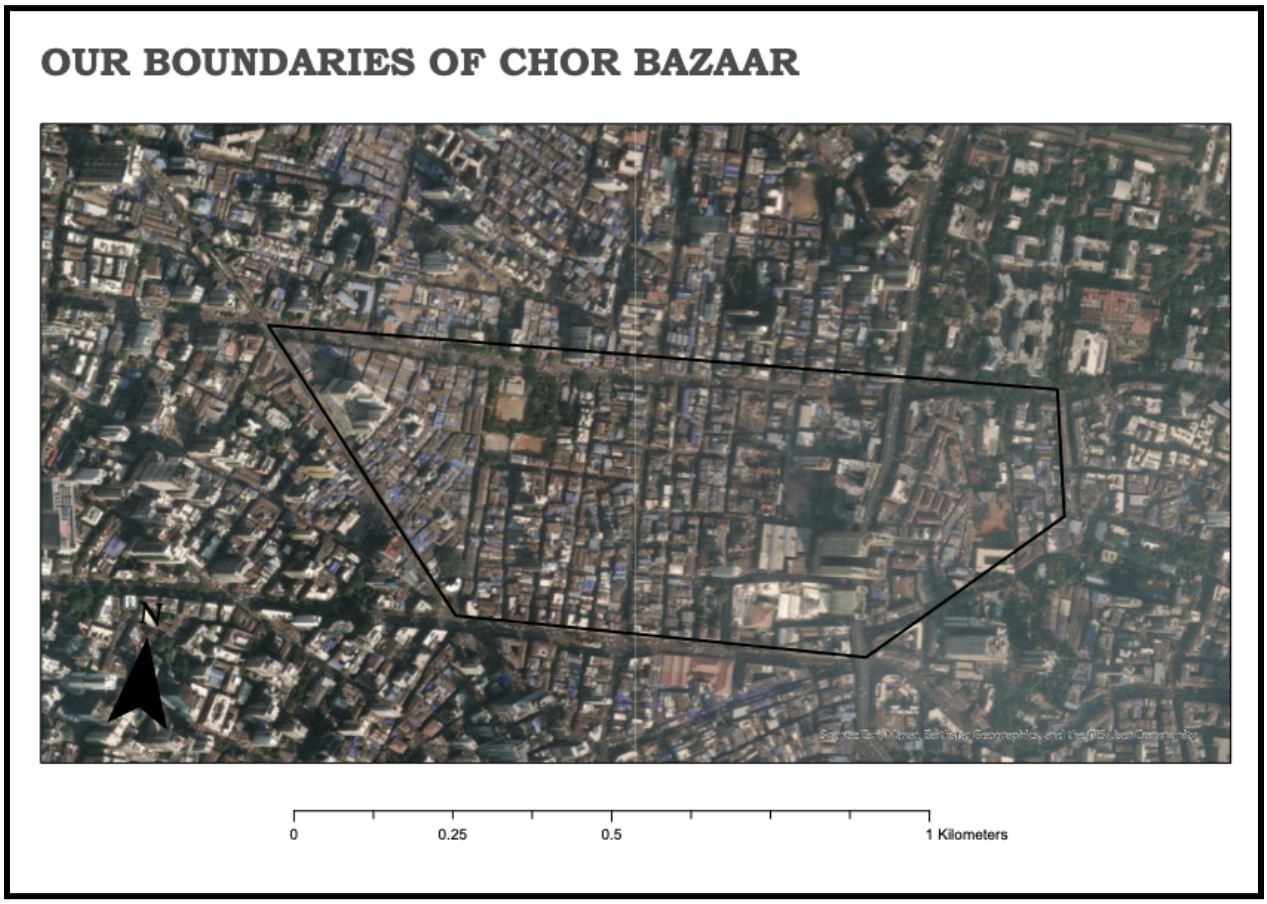
How Maps Shape Our Understanding

Situated in one of the most affluent parts of the country- Chor Bazaar contrasts its surroundings by being one of the busiest informal markets in the city. It is heavily influenced by its geographical location as well as urban dynamics that contribute to the proximity of trade routes and the masses.

The spatial organisation of the market and its accessibility to major transport networks like Mohammed Ali Road and Grant Road Station has made it a center for trade attracting buyers and sellers alike from across regions. It is a part of a larger cluster of markets as seen in *Map 5* annexure* such as Null Bazar, Bhendi Bazar and Bhat Bazar. Due to the aforementioned factors, it is crucial to understand the geographical factors that provide a deeper insight to how the Bazar functions, evolves and fluctuates.

By using cartographic representations, we can uncover certain patterns that might not be visible and easily comprehended through traditional research methods. With mapping technology such as ArcGIS, we are able to examine land use patterns, migration of people and commodities, and

temporal changes, providing a better insight into Chor Bazaar's role within Mumbai's cityscape. Such maps, which will be developed in subsequent sections, form a basis for analysis by crafting a story based on our firsthand observations. We have also defined our own boundaries, recognizing that the market's geographical limits are fluid—shaped not just by physical space, but by the perspectives of the communities within as well as the perceptions of outsiders.



Map 1: Our Research Area

Literature Review

Introduction and Origin

With a long history spanning more than 150 years, legends claim that items such as Queen Victoria's violin were once discovered for sale at the Bazaar, which over time came to be linked with stolen goods. Since then, nevertheless, it has developed into a center for cultural treasures, antiques, and second-hand goods.Chor Bazaar captures the historical character and socioeconomic dynamics of the city. It is a bustling area where business, culture, and history converge. The market is well-known for its wide range of products, which include rare treasures, Victorian furniture, old Bollywood posters, and auto parts (Shankar, 2024). This place has a distinct appeal since haggling is a typical activity here. Chor Bazaar has maintained its historical identity and continues to captivate both locals and visitors despite its transition from a "thieves' market" to an antique hotspot. It acts as a storehouse of customs and tales that add to Mumbai's rich cultural heritage. Through an analysis of the transition from "Shor Bazaar" to "Chor Bazaar," this study aims to document the socioeconomic shifts in identity throughout time.Victorian furniture and other artifacts gained popularity in the market throughout the colonial era.

Socio-Economic Aspects

This study seeks to assess the economic contributions of Chor Bazaar, particularly its role as an informal market sustained by supply chains, resale economies, and key trading actors. Investigating how the market facilitates the trading of second-hand goods and antiques places emphasis on supporting local businesses.

Vendors at Chor Bazaar often have deep-rooted connections to their merchandise, with many being third-generation shopkeepers. They typically specialize in specific types of antiques or collectibles, allowing them to provide knowledgeable insights about their products.

Rafique BaghdadiA local historian in Mumbai who we had the privilege to meet and interview,mentioned the changes in the locality of Chor Bazaar due to the introduction of the Bhendi Bazaar and how it has affected the Chor Bazaar dynamic. When questioned about the changes over time, he replied that there wasn't a lot of demand for these goods anymore. Furthermore, he suggested a reason could be the rules implemented by the municipality on the sellers, where they have to pay fines or bribes to be allowed to sell their goods in that area, and it is just not very economical for them anymore.This study will also assess how government policies, such as the “street vendors act-An Act to protect the rights of urban street vendors and to regulate street vending activities and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.(*StreetVendorAct2014_English(1)*, n.d.)”, have impacted market regulations and the livelihood of traders. An analysis of the impact of legal and institutional frameworks will help in understanding how governance impacts the sustainability of the market.

Chor Bazaar as a Cultural Space

The vibrant, old, and bustling market of Mumbai, Chor Bazaar is one such market that offers us a glimpse into India’s rich antique culture.This historic marketplace attracts tourists and locals alike, who are constantly on the lookout for unique antiques and collectibles. Some of the most renowned antique stores in Chor Bazaar include The Mansoori Curio Shop, known for its miniature handmade pieces and vintage furniture; Taherallys, famous for its vintage leather trunks; the Haji Ebrahim vinyl store, which houses old records spanning Bollywood to jazz; and Hesperis, celebrated for its antique lamps, mirrors, and curios salvaged from old ships.

Chor Bazaar specializes in royal and Mughal-inspired replicas, offering finely crafted swords, daggers, and coins that reflect India’s regal heritage. The market is also home to colonial-era furniture, intricately crafted British and Portuguese-style wooden cabinets, chairs, tables, and desks sourced from old estates. Another significant attraction is vintage Bollywood memorabilia, including rare film posters and vinyl records that serve as nostalgic remnants of India’s cinematic history. Additionally, brass and copper artifacts such as ornamental lamps, utensils, religious idols, and homeware showcase traditional Indian craftsmanship.
The market also boasts an impressive selection of mechanical devices like antique gramophones, typewriters, vintage wall clocks, and watches that appeal to collectors and enthusiasts of

mechanical engineering. Together, these artifacts contribute to the market's reputation as a treasure trove of historical items. Buyers range from interior designers and collectors to history enthusiasts and tourists from around the world.

Antiques were one of the subtopics explored during field research at Chor Bazaar. Antiques are typically classified as objects at least a century old with value derived from their historical significance, craftsmanship, rarity, or age. The practice of antiquing—seeking out and acquiring antiques—requires expertise in identifying valuable items. During pre fieldwork interviews with individuals like Tosher Govadia, it became evident that knowledge is key in the world of antiques. His experiences emphasized the importance of understanding authenticity in a market where reproductions have become more common over time.

Challenges and Future Prospects

This study will also assess how government policies, such as the Street Vendors Act, have impacted market regulations and the livelihood of traders.Another objective is to assess the impact of urbanization and development and how that contributes to the sustainability of the market.

Based on the literature reviewed, Chor Bazaar emerges as more than just a marketplace; it is a living testament to Mumbai's evolving history and cultural synthesis. From its origins to its current status as a hub for antiques and second-hand goods, Chor Bazaar reflects the socio-economic shifts and historical narratives that have shaped the city. The perspectives of individuals like Mr. Baghdadi and Mr. Govadia provide valuable insights into the market's changing dynamics, highlighting the challenges it faces due to urbanization, evolving consumer preferences, and regulatory frameworks. Ultimately, Chor Bazaar's enduring appeal lies in its ability to offer a unique glimpse into the past, serving as both a commercial center and a repository of cultural heritage that continues to attract diverse crowds seeking a tangible connection to Mumbai's rich and complex story. The assessment of community participation in the growth of the market will also provide valuable insights into its historical and economic relevance. There is limited discussion on how these changes affect the cultural essence of Chor Bazaar as a vibrant intersection of history, commerce, and community life. This gap underscores

the need for this project to document not only the socio-economic shifts but also the nuanced lived realities that define Chor Bazaar's evolving identity.

Research Methodology

Primary Research

In order to gain a complete understanding of Mumbai's Chor Bazaar's cultural, historical, and contemporary significance, we have integrated multiple on-field research techniques. We collected primary data through a thorough mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Closed-ended questions and questionnaires offered numerical information about footfalls, nature of goods sold, and consumer expenditure patterns. We also use mapping (GIS, cadastral maps from archives) to make sense of ongoing urban change. Further, centralising the "*Shor*" and its importance, we also use "sound-space" as a tool to capture the environmental (noise, sound, rhythm) of the Bazaar. We highlight here that our methods were not just fixed from before, rather evolved in conversation with the research question and evolving field engagement, bringing the nature of research methods and tools in a qualitative and ethnographic style of research.

Using qualitative research methods

Qualitative techniques helped us probe the cultural, historical, and social nuances of Mumbai's Chor Bazaar. Through narrative research, ethnography, and phenomenology, we examined vendors' and customers' lived experiences.

Key texts like Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences by Riessman (2008) explained how personal narratives provide rich, subjective descriptions of living situations, allowing us to grasp sellers' views on how the market has developed. Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum by Whyte (1943) showed how ethnography uncovers social conduct, community bonds, and changes over time that are relevant to comprehending Chor Bazaar's city significance. Through interviews with vendors, we revealed individual experiences, the evolution of the market over the years, and the Bazaar's place in Mumbai's city life. Testimonies from buyers and sellers involved in the market's clandestine activities revealed the traditions, dangers, and rewards of illicit transactions.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object (Smith, 2013).

Using this approach enabled us to grasp the lived experiences of participants in the "hush-hush" market. We attempted to understand what drives merchants within the nighttime economy in spite of potential risks. Interviews with veteran merchants and historians offered insights regarding the cultural status, development, and individual importance of the Bazaar to its stakeholders. Observation of daily market activity in the night market revealed patterns and what difficulties consumers encountered, including trust problems or unstated market regulations. Despite short fieldwork and limited scope of project, it remained grounded in understanding the existing phenomenon.

Ethnography-influenced approach

We mainly used an ethnography-influenced approach to analyse our research. To explain, an ethnography-influenced approach focuses on understanding a place, community, or culture from an insider (Emic) perspective. We tried to immerse ourselves as much as we could into the lives of all the stakeholders of this market. We observed their routines (shop and business cycle), interactions (amongst themselves and sellers) to gain a deeper understanding of how they navigate and experience the Bazaar.

We used a kind of "go-along" method, which allowed us to make observations of the natural interactions, social relationships and the influence their environment has on them in real-time. From an etic (outside) point of view, the Bazaar may seem at first glance to be chaotic, unregulated, and even dangerous. The people constantly moving about, the absence of formalized rules, and the apparently random nature of transactions may lead one to believe that there is disorder. Instead, here, implicit rules of conduct, human connections, and trust produce a well-ordered economy that functions well without the need for rigid limits.

In the same way, whereas an outsider may see the Bazaar as unregulated, those living and working in it tend to see it as secure and familiar. Traders depend on established relationships with suppliers and customers, and this creates a sense of mutual trust that reduces risks. Social reputation is a powerful force for maintaining order, and a self-regulating network upholds responsibility even in the absence of an official regulatory body enforcing laws.

By prioritizing the emic perspective, we could better grasp how different stakeholders make sense of their surroundings and navigate their daily challenges within the Bazaar. This approach helped us uncover not just what happens in the market, but why things function the way they do from the perspective of the people most directly involved.

Moreover, we realized that the Bazaar is more than just a marketplace—it holds different meanings for different people, making it a kind of "poly-vorous" space where multiple interpretations coexist which gives rise to multiple meanings and a granular understanding of the world.

Interviews

We live in a society dominated by tools of data collection through interviews. Interviews allow direct access to the words, meaning and worlds out there. We included several stakeholders.
We conducted semi-structured interviews, mixing predefined questions with open-ended discussions aided by thematic guide and certain probes. Our approach towards this was that we initially let them speak freely, asking them to talk about their experiences, shop, lives, the whole bazaar or anything else they wanted to. This led to us building a good rapport with participants, and also opened up new avenues of research for us, all while also encouraging candid responses in what is considered a "hush-hush" environment.

- Vendor Interviews: Focused on shop operations, sourcing of goods, target audiences, business challenges, and interpersonal dynamics.
- Visitor Interviews: Investigated why people visit, shopping behavior, and what they think about the authenticity of the Bazaar.

- Local Authority Interviews: Gave insights into the informal economy, regulatory issues, and market management.
- Informal Interviews/ Open discussions: Discussions with archivists, scholars (e.g., an archive professor) and some even shopkeepers at the Bazaar put historical aspects of the Bazaar into context.

Observations

We made extensive on-site observations, charting the layout of the Bazaar, marking residential and commercial areas and pinpointing shop clusters. This enabled us to cross-check historical records, corroborating secondary research findings. For example, archival documents referring to textile traders were verified through spatial mapping of textile sections within the Bazaar. This is salient part of this research for many reasons: first, the online maps (like google maps, google earth) do not show the locations and the locations mentions are not populated with names and details; second, people from different parts of the research site have different meaning about the area (shop and redevelopment). Thus, it became important for us on the field to first ask ourselves questions like - what is this area? What does it consist of ? How do we find out about it? We, thus, started with collective fieldwork work with mapping (on lines of mapping in human geography discipline, or transact walk in qualitative research mapping) to “locate” the place.

Physical Mapping of the Bazaar

We mapped out the entire bazaar ourselves, including clusters, religious locations, communities, residential and non-residential spaces, and areas of redevelopment. To do so, we segmented our area of interest into five sections, had A5-sized maps of each printed, and then went out to the market to map out and document each detail in person. We proceeded to systematically take note of the dominant landmarks, street pattern, zones of activity, and transition zones.We were later able to analyse these maps through ArcGIS.

This process allowed us to learn the details of the environment—how the individuals interacted, how the businesses operated, and how the atmosphere of the marketplace varied from one portion to another.

This allowed us to set our own boundaries and terms for the market and also clarify and filter our observations of the space.

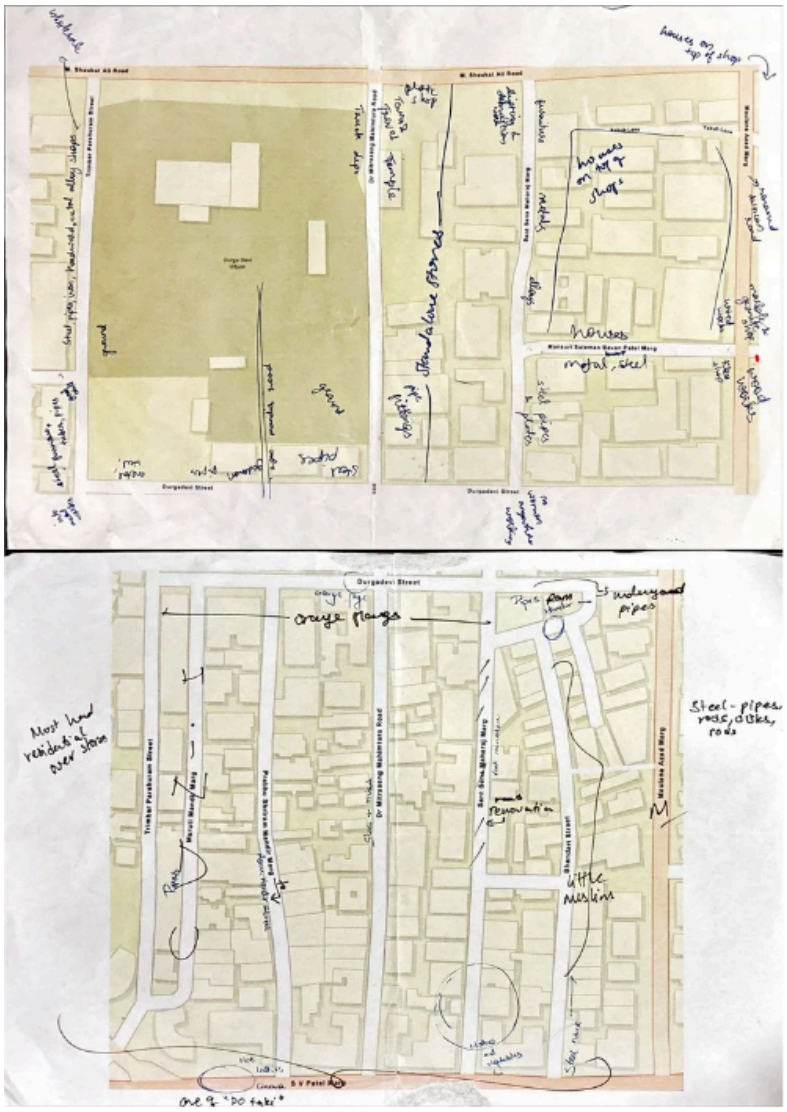


Fig. 1: Annotations on Chor Bazaar



Fig. 2: Annotations on Kumbharwada



Fig. 3: Annotations on Bhendi Bazaar

Geospatial Analysis: ArcGIS Pro

We utilized ArcGIS Pro to examine the historical and current geography of Chor Bazaar. Through georeferencing 19th-century maps and projecting them onto current GIS data, we detected spatial change, urban shrinkage, encroachments, and commercialization effects. With symbology and transparency functions, we mapped changes in street names, market limits, and land use. The use of GIS enabled us to record the market's historical development and urban changes.

Environmental Soundscape Analysis

We used an app called Decibel X and recorded the sound levels in different parts of the market at different times. This was a fun experiment that we did to see if we would see any kind of pattern with respect to location or time.

Conclusion

Our research methodology combined fieldwork, interviews, observations, and geospatial analysis to offer a multidimensional account of Chor Bazaar's development. By blending ethnographic and phenomenological information with historical and spatial evidence, we gained a holistic view of the market's cultural, economic, and social importance.

Secondary Research

Snowball sampling

A non-probability sampling method when the samples have uncommon characteristics is called snowball sampling or chain-referral sampling. This sampling method uses recommendations from current to find the amount of data for new samples for the study (Bhat, 2018). Snowball sampling, in our context, relates to sampling for interviews and data collection on secondary research. As a qualitative method, i.e., for carrying out case studies or ethnographic research, snowball sampling aids a more widespread and intense familiarity with the subject of inquiry using social and professional connections. Secondary research, too, makes use of snowball sampling in following reports, documents, or datasets which are related using references and

citations from source to source. For example, the people at the Directorate of Archives in Elphinstone College referred us to KRIVIA where we found the 2 theses.

Newspaper Articles

The Times of India, Hindustan Times, Economic Times and NDTV all published news stories and investigative studies that traced urbanization and redevelopment initiatives, such the Bhendi Bazaar project, which changed the dynamics of the market. We read and referenced about 25-30 articles to get a good understanding of all these topics. These resources brought attention to the struggles faced by vendors, in both legal and economic aspects. The government policies and legal documents including the street vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act, 1966, provided us with important insights into the governance and regulatory issues of informal marketplaces. It shed light on how these policies impacted small-scale traders and street vendors.

Media Analysis - Films

The media analysis influenced our understanding of how Chor Bazaar is viewed in popular culture, specifically Bollywood films like Deewar (1975) and Baazigar (1992), as well as documentaries like The Spool Man (2016), helping us analyze the market's identity through outside eyes and how it has changed over time. For instance, Deewar constructs the market as a site of struggle but also of reinvention, where the lines between right and wrong blur. On the other hand, Baazigar personifies the same unpredictability and high stakes that the market thrives on. In contrast, Spool man represents Chor bazaar as not a site of reinvention or dishonesty, but of quiet devotion and unflinching commitment to the work. (“THE SPOOL MAN | Shorts | Reel 13 | THIRTEEN”)

Past Theses & Archives

The field provided basic, divergent, evolving and contemporary details. The Bazaar has stayed there for centuries. To understand it from a historical, political and urban change perspective, it was important to find secondary data. For this, we started exploring institutions like archives, academic institutions, and getting in touch with scholars and reporters who have conducted research before. Much of the data is not found “online”, despite the fact that we live in an

increasingly digital world. We were informed by many interlocutors to go to several sources and “triangulate” data from there. We obtained secondary data not found online by going to Mumbai's Directorate of Archives in Elphinstone College. We wanted to find historical maps and articles from the colonial period to learn about the Bazaar's history. From a professor, we found two important theses from the Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies (KRVIA):

- Chor Bazaar: Archiving the Residues of History by Aditya Sawant
- Re-Stitching the Fabric: A Case for Chor Bazaar by Tanushree Kothari

Additionally, we went to places like The Asiatic Society, David Sassoon Library and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation B and C Ward offices to obtain old maps, articles, texts, and any information about Chor Bazaar during the British Rule since the Directorate of Archives at Elphinstone College only had archives till 1947.

Our experience of fieldwork and trying to get hold of data which could be relevant was enriching and indeed added meaning to our research. We didn't find much at the David Sassoon Library or the local ward offices, apart from a few maps, as both were not open to the public—especially the ward offices. Our goal, at the local ward office, was to access pipeline maps to understand the network and gain insights into how the area had evolved over the years by speaking with those involved in its planning. However, we were denied access. As one officer at the ward office explained (translated), "Since the 2008 terrorist attack, the public is no longer allowed to access such plans." But, this led to us thinking of places where we could have open access to information. On searching, we came across a library, The Asiatic Society where we found quite a few old maps of the area where Chor Bazaar is currently located which gave us a better perspective on the information we had already found and laid a basis for us to link it back to history of how it all began.

Approach to finding Secondary Research on-field

Our initial objective at the Mumbai archive department was to search for historical city maps. One of the beauties of investigative qualitative research is how researchers often discover

unexpected findings in unlikely places. The Directorate of Archives at Elphinstone College in Mumbai provided an excellent starting point for our research.

The archives were divided into various sections, and gathering data proved tedious since the department housed centuries of physical documents that were challenging to navigate. We weren't sure which year or department would contain the specific information relevant to our research.

We began by examining court jurisdictions from 1901–1947, searching for keywords like "chor," "Vaghri," and "Kamathipura." Though this approach didn't yield results, we fortunately discovered the 1901 Census. We realized this census would provide direct demographic data about Mumbai during that period. This led us to information about the Vaghris and residents of the area that would later become known as Chor Bazaar.

Conclusion

This information that we came across justified our findings and completed research lacunas by extending historical viewpoints for understanding Chor Bazaar's spatial and economic change.

Gaps Identified & Solutions Proposed

Our journey to Mumbai for this project started with an unexpected but eye-opening event. Although our goal was to investigate Chor Bazaar's complex identity, our first day provided a raw glimpse into the city's inherent unpredictable nature. We were left without a place to stay for several hours after the hotel we had originally reserved turned out to be significantly below our expectations—completely unlike its online depiction. However, this challenging beginning was a necessary introduction to Mumbai's complex realities, particularly in South Bombay, where contrast and ambiguity are still prevalent. It forced us to put aside our preconceptions and get acquainted with the area—beyond tourist labels and presumptions—in order to start comprehending Chor Bazaar through lived context, discomfort, and local subtleties as well as through observation. This experience gave us insights on the unpredictability and at the same time, convenience at which Mumbai is in terms of adaptability.

While conducting our research, despite our efforts to gain in-depth comprehensive information, we faced a few challenges that curbed our access to important information. The first main difficulty we faced stemmed from the reluctance of the vendors to reveal details about their sources and supply chains. Most of these vendors were hesitant to disclose information, they also vehemently objected to the persistent stigma around the markets association with *'Chori ka Maal'* (stolen goods). Due to this, there was a gap in our understanding of how the sourcing and procurement of goods take place to sustain chor bazaar. This prevented us from documenting the supply chain structure of vendors from the market. Moreover, we faced resistance when we attempted to engage with Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust Officials. When approached, These officials were not willing to provide their insights about their ongoing redevelopment process, because of this we were unable to assess their perspective on how their initiative would impact the vendors and residents in the area. The lack of transparency from their side made it more difficult to verify the information obtained from secondary sources. Furthermore, while visiting the ward offices of ward B and C, to obtain the official maps, we faced more restrictions. They withheld the maps because of safety concerns linked to past security threats such as the 2008 mumbai attacks (26/11). They were reluctant to share the maps, as they contained dense and complex layouts of chor bazaar. This hindered our ability to analyze pre and post redevelopment

changes within the area. The lack of access to these key maps and information diminished our ability to illustrate the significant transformations throughout Chor Bazaar. The reluctance of critical stakeholders to engage with us during the course of our research, ultimately left unavoidable gaps in our understanding and findings.

Another key research gap we identified was the differential impact of redevelopment on stakeholders. Although the Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment project aims to modernize the area and the infrastructure, The resulting effects are not uniform throughout. The Larger businesses and the higher-income stakeholders benefit, whereas the small-scale vendors and residents face uncertainty, displacement and cultural loss. This uneven distribution of benefits calls for a more equitable urban renewal, to address this gap redevelopment must be democratized. This essentially means that vendors and residents must have an active role and voice through transparent resettlement ,inclusive participatory planning workshops and economic assistance programs. This increased transparency from the concerned authorities involved can foster trust and inclusion, which ensures that the voices of these people are taken into consideration in the decision making process. Thus, by addressing these research gaps and inculcating inclusive urban planning methods, cities such as Mumbai can achieve a balance between modernization, economic sustainability and cultural preservation, this would make sure that the redevelopment creates advantages for all the stakeholders involved rather than just a privileged few.

Pilot Study: Field and Respondents

Overview

We decided to focus on our experience with Rafique Baghdadi as this interview was our very first attempt at conducting fieldwork for our project, making it a significant learning opportunity for us. We were eager to dive into the research, and we quickly realized how complex it could be. Despite the challenges we faced during the interview, this experience provided us with valuable insights that will inform our future efforts.

Mr Bhagdadi, a local historian in Mumbai who we had the privilege to meet and interview. Prior to the pilot, a conversation surrounding Chor Bazaar took place with Mr. Rafique, where he mentioned a little glimpse of his childhood around Chor Bazaar and his experiences growing up around the area. It did not take him too long to immediately mention the changes in the locality of Chor Bazaar due to the introduction of the Bhendi Bazaar and how it has affected the Chor Bazaar dynamic. He is based in Mumbai and has received the '*Dadasaheb Phalke'* award from our former President Pratibha Patil. He is known for his knowledge in movies and books and has given numerous interviews to journalists, filmmakers, researchers and students and continues to share his love and knowledge about Bombay to others through his guided walks that explore the city's culture and heritage. He started by informing us that he loved reading magazines which was no surprise, and ever since he was a kid and his first memory of Chor Bazaar was when he used to journey there with his friends to buy magazines for cheap. "Chor Bazaar opened up opportunities for those on a budget to acquire goods at lower prices that they usually wouldn't have access to," he asserted.

> *"But recently, the Bhendi Bazaar has been occupying the area, and Chor Bazaar is seen to be diminishing. There's not much to see anymore except for the floating laborers that live there in that area. Sellers (mostly Parsis) just come, open up a blanket, take out the things they want to sell, and the moment it's sold, they leave. These items are sometimes stolen, and sometimes sourced, being*

second-hand items, but none of this information is available to us."

When we further questioned his knowledge about why the Bazaar had been changing over time, he replied that there wasn't a lot of demand for these goods anymore, and now it's just a place where people come to buy posters and furniture. Another reason could be because of the rules-which we aim to find out during our primary research-that the municipality has been implementing on the sellers. Many have to pay fines or bribes to be allowed to sell their goods in that area, and it is just not very economical for them anymore.

Challenges Faced During the Interview

Our interview with Rafique Baghdadi, was relatively different from what we had envisioned. Despite our excitement and preparation, we found ourselves struggling to extract the information we needed. Mainly due to the dynamics of the interview and the complications of logistics on field. We had come equipped with a structured set of questions, eager to delve into the rich history and cultural significance of Chor Bazaar. However, the conversation quickly took an unexpected turn.

Baghdadi began by sharing fond memories of his childhood visits to Chor Bazaar, where he would buy magazines at bargain prices. While these stories were charming, they soon led him to assert that the bazaar as it once existed no longer exists today. This statement caught us off guard and left us feeling disoriented about our research focus.

Even though we had spent a good part of the day building rapport with him—sharing meals, taking leisurely strolls, and enjoying his company—Baghdadi seemed more interested in reminiscing about his past than engaging with our research topic. He often drifted away from our questions, focusing instead on personal anecdotes that, while delightful, didn't provide the insights we were hoping for. As we tried to steer the conversation back to Chor Bazaar, we noticed he was becoming increasingly frustrated and agitated. It was clear that our structured approach might have felt more like an interrogation than a conversation.

What surprised us most was Baghdadi's vague responses regarding Chor Bazaar itself. Despite being known for his extensive knowledge of Bombay's history and culture, he didn't seem to have much to say about the market's current state or its evolution over time. This disconnect between his expertise and our research objectives was disheartening.

Reflecting on this experience, we realized that several factors may have contributed to the challenges we faced during the interview. First, it became evident that Baghdadi wasn't particularly invested in discussing Chor Bazaar or its significance; his lack of interest in the topic hindered meaningful engagement. Additionally, while we had successfully built a friendly connection with him earlier in the day, this rapport may have created an atmosphere that felt too casual for a focused interview. The physical environment also played a role—the interview took place in his small room cluttered with books and memorabilia. While it showcased his passion for literature and history, it may have felt overwhelming for both him and us. Furthermore, having multiple interviewers present in such a confined space might have made Baghdadi feel uncomfortable or intimidated. Finally, his assertion that Chor Bazaar no longer exists as it once did threw us off balance and made it difficult to adapt our questions on the spot, mainly because our entire research and its purpose was questioned for its existence.

This information however would've ideally led us to changing the research focus and could've potentially demotivated us to understanding where we take the direction of our research. This in turn was a pivotal role in our entire experience of our research mainly because it on the contrary gave us the direction of our research that we took forward throughout our project. An identity of a place being questioned and mapped out could've only been possible if the foundational understanding of the place's existence to begin with was questioned.

Lessons Learned

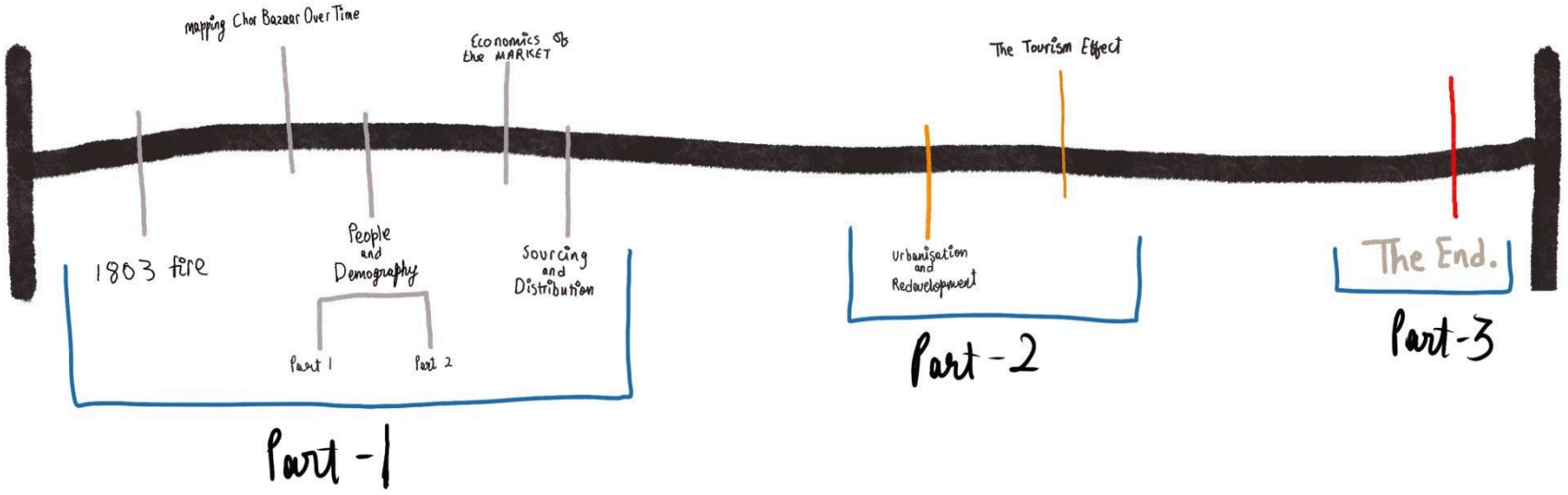
Visiting Rafique Baghdadi taught us more than just facts; it offered a peek into his world and a valuable lesson in human connection. Stepping into his one-room home, we were immediately struck by the sheer number of books that surrounded us, highlighting both his passion and his solitude. Living alone, with few possessions, he seemed to cherish the simple act of conversation.

When Baghdadi welcomed us to explore his collection and take any book we wanted, it felt less like a formal invitation and more like an offering of friendship. We realized then that perhaps he valued our company even more than answering our questions.

Looking back, we understand that we might have been too focused on our research agenda. Maybe spending more time with him, as people rather than interviewers, would have created a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Our well-meaning efforts to build rapport might have inadvertently made the interview feel too formal or even intimidating, especially with so many of us in his small space.

This experience underscored the importance of empathy and flexibility in research. It reminded us that building trust and genuine connection can be just as valuable as gathering data. Ultimately, we learned that honoring someone's humanity—recognizing their need for companionship and comfort—can be the key to unlocking richer insights and creating a more meaningful interaction.

Timeline


mapping Chor Bazaar Over Time
Economics & the MARKET
The Tourism Effect
1803 fire
People and Demography
Part 1
Part 2
Sourcing and Distribution
Urbanisation and Redevelopment
The End.
Part -1
Part -2
Part -3

Part 1: Chor Bazaar Through the Ages

The 1803 Fire

Historical Foundation of Chor Bazaar

Chor Bazaar traces its origins back to the Great Fire of 1803—a pivotal period in Bombay's urban history. This fire, which started in February of that year, destroyed barracks, the custom house, public buildings, and a significant amount of native merchants' merchandise, demolishing over three-fourths of the market area inside the Fort walls.

According to the 1901 Census of India: Bombay Town and Island, *"a destructive fire caused significant damage to this part of the town, destroying property of great value that belonged to the native merchants."* (Edwardes,1901).

Following this catastrophe, British colonial officials took a bold decision that would fundamentally alter the layout of the city: they forbade reconstruction inside the Fort and instead started the process of establishing a new community outside of it.

"The fire of 1803 was in reality a blessing in disguise; for it accelerated the foundation of that settlement, which gradually grew into the City of Bombay," (Edwardes,1901).

This denoted the start of a planned urban division, with the formation of the "Old Town" inside the Fort and the "New Town" outside. The devastation served as a catalyst for the British to impose spatial control. They drove the indigenous inhabitants and unofficial trade beyond the city walls and reserved the Fort region for European elites and legitimate trade.

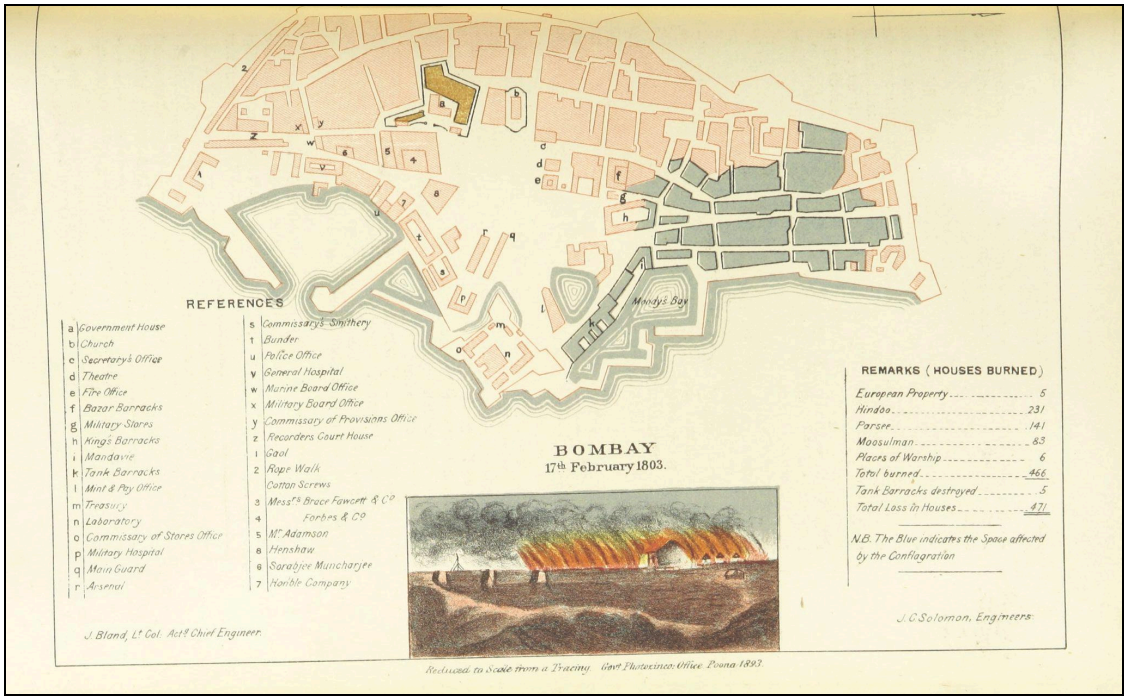


Fig. 4: Map of Areas Affected by the Fire- grey shaded parts

Evidence of colonial planners' developing the urban vision was present even before the fire. The Principal Engineer suggested displacing the Koli villages from Dongri Hill in as early as 1770. The government forbade Church Street residents from making repairs to their homes in 1772, arguing that the neighborhood was more appropriate for European use.
"The shops to the south of Church Street having become a great nuisance, they shall all be removed to the bazaar. In future no shop must be permitted to the south of the north side of Church Street." (Edwardes,1901). This decision essentially laid the foundation for future marketplaces by signaling the first shift of informal business from inside the Fort to outside it.

The urban transformation was not without opposition. Moormen, part-owners, *hamals* (porters), and other working-class individuals filed petitions against the loss of their houses and livelihoods, but were unsuccessful. According to the census, *" "a new town began to rise to the north of the Bazaar Gate"* (Edwardes,1901) after the town was progressively cleansed of what colonial officials deemed undesirable elements. This is especially significant because today's

Chor Bazaar and Bhendi Bazaar are located precisely in this area—north of the Fort, near Bazaar Gate, on the colonial city's outskirts.

Many of these merchants and working-class citizens started reestablishing their lives just outside the Fort's boundaries after being forced to leave their homes and businesses. They began selling reused, salvaged, or second-hand things at Bazaar Gate, either directly from their homes or from makeshift stands. These unofficial activities established the groundwork for Bombay's long-lasting unofficial economy, with Bhendi Bazaar growing into a thriving residential-commercial district fueled by tight-knit communities and Chor Bazaar becoming a hub for old and sometimes untraceable items.

Although the colonial records do not specifically mention the titles "Chor Bazaar" and "Bhendi Bazaar," their emergence is evident due to the geography and policy trends. Bhendi Bazaar's etymology, for example, has its roots in local geography: *"“To the north-west of Dongri there must have existed a plantation of the Thespesia populuca, called in the native tongue 'Bhendi,' which has given its name to the well-known Bhendy Bazaar"* (Edwardes 1901). Bhendi Bazaar is located in the "New Town" area because it is northwest of Dongri. In the meantime, Chor Bazaar is located directly north of the port and Fort walls, as confirmed by census data and maps of the fire-affected districts. This location precisely matches the description of the post-fire settlement area.

In conclusion, the colonial strategies of exclusion, relocation, and urban restructuring are integrally linked to the growth of Chor Bazaar and Bhendi Bazaar. In addition to being a catastrophe, the Great Fire of 1803 provided rationale for a more significant change that drove informal trading to the outside of the city. These bazaars are more than simply relics of the past; they are live examples of Bombay's adaptability, hybridity, and the ability of people to reclaim and redefine space in the face of exclusion.

Functionality and People of the Market

The establishment of the new marketplace outside the Fort represented a change in the way community and commerce operated. The result was a vibrant, self-sufficient ecosystem that was molded by everyday workers and displaced traders who reshaped the city's economic structure from its periphery.

> *"In order to encourage the building and rebuilding of houses outside the walls, a fresh site was selected for the import and traffic in such inflammable substances as oil, dam mer and ghi ; the old passage of the Mandvi Or custom house was closed; and every facility was afforded to the dealers in:meh substances for settling in close proximity to the new site. Pressure was also brought to bear upon those whose houses had been destroyed, and who were anxious to rebuild upon their old sites, in order that the area of the conflagration might be reserved for a better and less inflammable style of building."* (Edwardes, 1901)

The British colonial government in Bombay took advantage of the disastrous fire of 1803, especially in the Fort district, to restructure the city. Authorities chose a new location outside the Fort walls for the processing and trading of flammable commodities including oil, dammer, and ghee in order to reduce the risk of future fires and encourage greater planning. Through incentives and infrastructure support, traders dealing in these substances were urged to relocate close to this newly designated region, and the old Mandvi passage and custom house route were closed. Since the cleared land was now set aside for safer, more planned development, former homeowners whose homes were burned in the fire were under pressure not to rebuild on their original plots.

Lower-income groups that had little protection or privilege under the colonial system, including small-scale dealers, hawkers, artisans, and local merchants, made up the majority of the population in this market. Despite being the backbone of Bombay's local economy, these people were viewed as undesirable in the Fort's carefully directed vision. The new market consequently

developed into a vibrant, natural, and mixed-use area where residential life coexisted with business and where used, salvaged, or even unclaimed products were free to move about.

This strategic displacement and redirection of native merchants and petty traders laid the groundwork for the emergence of informal commercial hubs just beyond the Fort's walls, allowing markets such as Chor Bazaar and Bhendi Bazaar to emerge as spaces where commerce, residence, and community intersected.



Fig. 5: Map of the 7 Islands of Bombay

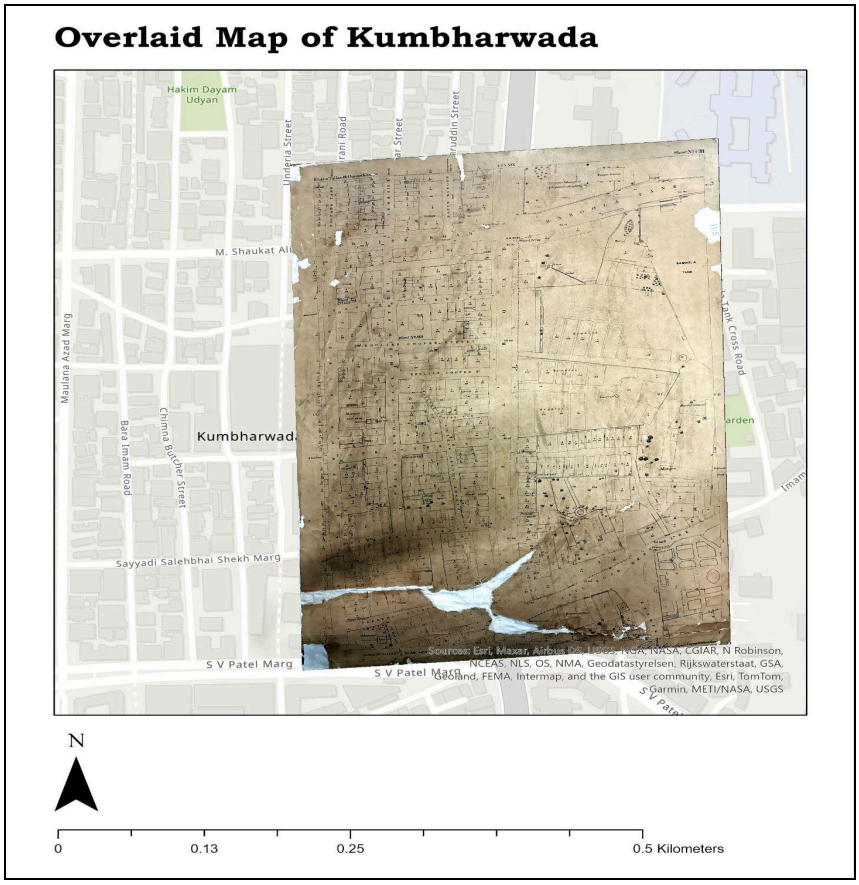
This study of the 1803 fire and the following urban redevelopment provides an in-depth understanding of the physical, social, and economic underpinnings of Chor Bazaar and Bhendi Bazaar. By examining how colonial governance used displacement, exclusion, and re-zoning to turn an unfortunate event into an opportunity for city planning, we gain a better understanding of how these markets emerged as direct results of political intent and community resilience, rather than coincidental developments. Mapping these events and people reveals how Chor Bazaar's current functionality—a dense, hybrid space for trade, reuse, and local livelihood—is anchored in a history of forced adaptation.

Mapping Chor Bazar Over Time

Mapping Chor Bazaar's Evolution

From its initial conception, Chor Bazaar has evolved and shifted through its geographical boundaries as well as its demography and nature.

To map the geographical historical transformation and development of Chor Bazaar, we overlaid the maps of 1855 and 1870 of Kumbharwada and its surrounding areas. We mapped each area by aligning them lane by lane and compared the naming conventions, size, and layout of the maps of different segments of the Bazaar through each period after independence. One of the main differences we observed was the variations in the street name spellings, which were given by the British Colonial administrators. For instance, Kamathipura was once recorded as *Commatteepoora*, and Abdul Pakmodia Street was spelled *Abdool Pack Modin Street*, representing the British effort to record regional names based on their own phonetics. To visualise this, we overlaid the colonial map of 1870 to scale using ArcGIS Pro. Road networks have shifted and been reconstructed, shops have been built over road areas and names of streets have changed overtime in accordance with local preferences.



Map 2: Colonial Kumbharwada Overlaid on Modern Map (ArcGis Pro)

We can also observe and track how the market has shrunk over time due to commercialization and encroachment in the area through this mapping technique. What was once a widespread trading hub is now divided, with parts lost to urban redevelopment.

We can also investigate two common colloquial theories regarding the origin and location of Chor Bazaar:

The "Do Taki" Theory – Two Talkies (Cinemas)

According to one account, the British gave the market its original name, *"Do Taki"*. Two well-known movie theaters (also known as "talkies") that were located on the eastern and western ends of the market gave rise to this moniker. Language changes and variations in pronunciation caused *"Do Taki"* to progressively change into "*Dotaki*." The locations of these

two movie theaters are displayed on our superimposed maps, supporting this idea and demonstrating how geographic markers might influence urban naming practices.

The "Do Tanki" Theory – Two Tanks

According to a second, more widely recognized account, Chor Bazaar was first known as "Do Tanki"—a reference to the two nearby water tanks. The market's historical boundaries are clearly marked on early maps, including the one from 1855, which places Babula Tank on the right and Kara Tank on the left. British officials eventually spelled "Do Tanki" incorrectly as "*Do Tankey*," and this spelling of the name stuck since it made sense, given the location of the market. This demonstrates how important topography and urban landmarks are in establishing local identities.

The installation of two huge tanks to supply drinking water to the locals was a simple landmark. Soon, the two tanks began to be associated with the neighborhood, which led to its naming as Do Tanki. It was a popular place because Dhobis washed their clothes at Metro's famous "Dhobi Talao." This street's busyness attracted retailers and vendors who sold stolen and used goods, which is how it became nicknamed as "Chor Bazaar".(TNN, 2003).



Map 3: Map of 1885 Showing Chor Bazaar Between Two Tanks (The Map Lab, n.d.)

Chor Bazaar's Changing Boundaries: Observation-Based Mapping vs. Historical Maps

The spatial footprint of Chor Bazaar has changed significantly when comparing old maps with current observations. While contemporary mapping depicts encroachments, organic expansions, and a more fluid boundary structure, earlier maps suggested a broader marketplace with discrete trade zones- as seen in the series of maps below. We have overlaid a map of 1855 of the colonial era to show the discrepancies with the modern day map. Overtime, railways were constructed, shifting the pioneering shops of the Bazaar and more residential properties continued to get added to the area.



Map 4 : Changing Boundaries of Chor Bazaar (The Map Lab, n.d., Google Earth Pro)

Due to rising commercialization, residential buildings, and infrastructure modifications, the core commercial district has stayed unchanged, but its periphery has changed. As business activity spills into adjacent lanes, streets that once delineated distinct entry and exit locations have become vague. The boundary change is also a result of land-use conversions, evolving municipal ordinances, and informal settlements adjusting to the needs of the market.

Urban Shrinkage & Encroachments

The landscape of Chor Bazaar has changed dramatically over time due to urban expansion and contraction. Older, large market spaces were gradually reduced, fragmented or repurposed as the city changed, as seen in the maps above. The market's spatial organization has been altered by encroachments, both legal and illegal, which have compelled companies to adapt to diminishing spaces. Once wide streets are becoming smaller, open trading squares are disappearing, and older buildings are being repurposed into temporary stores or storage spaces, as seen in the Kumbharwada overlaid map.

The historic market footprint has been reduced by new development, slum encroachment, road reconfigurations, and boundaries once clearly defined are now blurred when comparing older maps with modern configurations. Long-established businesses have also had to move due to government efforts to beautify or redevelop certain areas. While Chor Bazaar's image as a crowded, busy center of commerce has persisted, physical constraints now control the way business is conducted there.

This change is emphasized by the overlay of maps from various historical periods, which demonstrate how open marketplaces have decreased under the weight of urbanization, how interior passageways have been reconfigured and how once-prominent thoroughfares have been absorbed by informal settlements. Traders are carrying on their tradition in increasingly restricted geographic areas, making Chor Bazaar a testament to resilience in spite of these changes.

Commercialisation's Impact on the Geography

Commercialisation radically redefined Chor Bazaar's spatial dynamics as Mumbai modernized. The market has transformed from a local trading post serving a niche market to a successful commercial center that draws a wide variety of visitors, ranging from tourists and collectors to high-end consumers. This transformation has altered the economic profile of the market as well as its physical layout.

Chor Bazaar has historically been a hub for local traders, antiquities and second-hand goods. Street vendors now coexist alongside boutique antique shops, branded refurbishment stores and digital marketplaces brought about by commercialization. Many of the original street-side stalls have been transformed into permanent commercial establishments, reflecting this shift in land use.

Price inflation and exclusivity are two of the most notable consequences of commercialization. Accessibility for small traders is reducing as spaces that were formerly used for community-driven trading activities are now repurposed for premium stores. The bazaar has also changed due to the increasing impact of tourism and media, with particular sections being designed to draw foreign customers and influencers, further changing the market's trading geography.

The shift in land use patterns from organic, street-based retailing to structured, high-value trade zones is evident when historical maps are superimposed with current commercial distribution data. The bounds of the once-flexible market are now being set by foot traffic, commercial real estate speculation, and rental value.

In Mumbai, where colonial-era trading hubs have transitioned into hyper-commercialized areas affected by both encroachments and economic forces, Chor Bazaar's geographical evolution mirrors the city's overall transformation. The area has continuously changed to survive, from the crowded urban bazaar to the sprawling informal market of the 19th century.

This versatility is symbolized by the two mythologies surrounding its name—Do Tanki and Do Taki. In the same way that historical retellings allowed for a flexible interpretation of its identity, its physical and commercial borders have altered to accommodate new realities.

In spite of these modifications, Chor Bazaar continues to represent Mumbai's complex past, where the past and present coexist in a vibrant, dynamic urban fabric. A tribute to the lasting nature of traditional marketplaces in a world that is increasingly modernizing, it is a location where mythology meets maps, geography meets business and tradition meets transformation.

The area's historical and contemporary mapping emphasizes Chor Bazaar's dynamic transition from a structured commerce hub to a versatile, adaptive bazaar. Mumbai's general urbanization trends are seen in the increase of commercial spaces, the decrease of residential areas, and the increased encroachments. The market's changing bounds and functional changes show how legacy, business, and modern urban demands interact, despite the fact that its basic qualities have remained constant.

People and Demography (Segment 1)



Fig.6 : Vaghri Community

The Vaghri are a Hindu group of people who originated from Gujarat (Project, n.d.). Their name derives from the Sanskrit word ‘net’ and were originally forest hunters (Project, n.d.). They were named a caste of petty thieves under the British caste system and were soon transformed into “criminal tribes” under the caste hierarchy (The Social Challenge | Ashraya, 2016). Criminal

Tribes or “ex-Criminal Tribes” is a colonial construct, it explains the identity of tribes and groups of people who were nomads and moved from one place to another (How the Waghri…). The British found their activities suspicious and tried settling them into new lands. They eventually got the identity of criminal tribes under the ‘Criminal Tribes Act of 1871’ (How the Vaghri). This, however, transformed through their movement to Mumbai during colonial industrialisation. This change led to their identity transforming one of the nomadic tribes to one that took an active part in the barter system and exchanged steel utensils for used clothes (Bapat).

While one of our main research focuses was on understanding the night market of Chor Bazaar, one of our pilot study objectives was also to conduct an observation and study of this night market. However, a gap in our information led to us going to Chor Bazaar at a time in the night during the pilot when we thought the night market would be up and running. However, at our arrival, we couldn’t find the night market and the people around mentioned that the night market was not open on the day we went there, and was up and running on the day earlier. This information left us in shambles as we’d primarily gone to understand the market. However, an observation around the same time at the market kept us curious, as instead of the market being filled with people selling goods and services, the street was filled with people camping out with bags filled with clothes, and they were in numbers.

Our literature review on the history of Chor Bazaar and its ‘demography’ gave a slight understanding of the tribal settlement around the area of Chor Bazaar, called the Vaghri. But the existence of the Vaghri and understanding their settlement around Chor Bazaar was rather difficult to find out. This was mainly because the existing qualitative research available on the Vaghri wasn’t directly related to Chor Bazaar and was rather anecdotal in nature because it mainly focussed on the history of the Vaghri and the reasonings behind their settlement in

Bombay at the time. However, the pilot study gave us great insights on who the Vaghri’s are and how their settlement is directly linked to Chor Bazaar.

Upon our arrival, we immediately interviewed the police officer (Inspector Waghmun) to understand why there were over 100 people camping out on the streets with big bag of clothes on them.

Transcribed interview with Inspector Mukund

When asked about the antique market, Inspector Mukund quite quickly mentioned how Chor Bazaar is essentially the city's biggest thrift market. Shopkeepers source these antiques from individuals from all around the country who come to sell their old goods to them. The shopkeepers in turn sell these old goods, however, some of the goods could potentially also be stolen. These might include phones and parts of the phone and because the market is big, it is relatively difficult to identify between phones that are stolen and the ones that are not. And the phones and automobile vehicles are completely disassembled after being stolen, which only makes the task harder to siege and track the owners down. And legally, the policy authority seizes the goods and tracks down the IMDEI to find the original customer of the goods.

When asked if these people on the street were Vaghri's, inspector Mukund immediately denied the identification of them being of the Vaghri Community. They tend to be people who travel across Rajasthan and Gujarat and tend to sell old goods around the market.Understanding this side of the market, got us more curious to understand who the people were on the streets and what exactly was their role to play in the market.

Transcribed interview with Vaghri (Gauri Kharwa)

When asked to introduce themselves, the group of people simultaneously told us that they were Gujarati who moved to Mumbai from Ahmedabad, and their business is to sell used clothes in these 'Potala's' (bags full of clothes). They continued to tell us the operations of their business where they go to housing societies to trade kitchen utensils to the residents of these housing societies, and they, in turn, give them their used clothes. And these clothes are then sold and invested back into buying utensils to go trade for old clothes. And this is a business model that they run to make a living. And while they continued to share about their lives, they mentioned that all the people on the street are of the same caste, and when asked what caste they were of, they quickly identified themselves as the Devipuja Vaghri Caste.

They then disclosed that they personally had been doing this for the past 40 or so years, but this culture and their business had essentially been passed down to them by earlier generations and this cycle would continue to exist in the future, too. However, considering the recent generation

and their grandkids, they ideally aim to break the cycle, get an education and continue to pursue a job in the future.

The Vaghri's continued to mention how they are asked for rent by the Municipality to set up shop at Chor Bazaar in the middle of the night, and the charges for this rent range from 20-50 rupees at max.

It is quite interesting to notice how dynamic the demography of Chor Bazaar is and how the people of Chor Bazaar are puzzled by the very existence of the ecosystem around them. This sense of dynamics in understanding the ecosystem that has been created gives a clear sense of uncertainty and the lack of a concrete identity of the market and its people itself. An Inspector patrolling and inspecting the area of Chor Bazaar was unclear about the very caste who set up shop there every Friday morning and have been doing so for the past 40 years. The people of the community themselves identified themselves as the Vaghris.

A fruitful aspect of our primary research involved visiting the Directorate of Archives in Mumbai and attempting to gather archived maps of the city to draw out the areas around Chor Bazaar in the past to identify the rate at which gentrification has affected Chor Bazaar. However, it was intriguing to understand if we could use the archives to map out the demography of the place in addition to our original plan. We managed to get our hands on the census of 1911 which aided us in understanding the people of Chor Bazaar and the areas surrounding it simultaneously, as well as the castes and tribes that settled in the area.

The data from the census suggests that there were a total of 802 people of the Vaghri Community who settled around Bombay at the time, of which 559 were males and 243 were Females. Bombay was at the time divided into wards based on the composition of the areas and it's surroundings. Areas surrounding Chor Bazaar including, *Market, Dhobi Talao, Fanaswadi, Bhuleshwar, Khumbharwala and Khara Talao,* came under the Ward C of the city. Below is the table which identifies the population that shows people of the religions, 'Hindus' and 'Musalman' of the area as given in the census. (Mead & Macgregor, 1911)

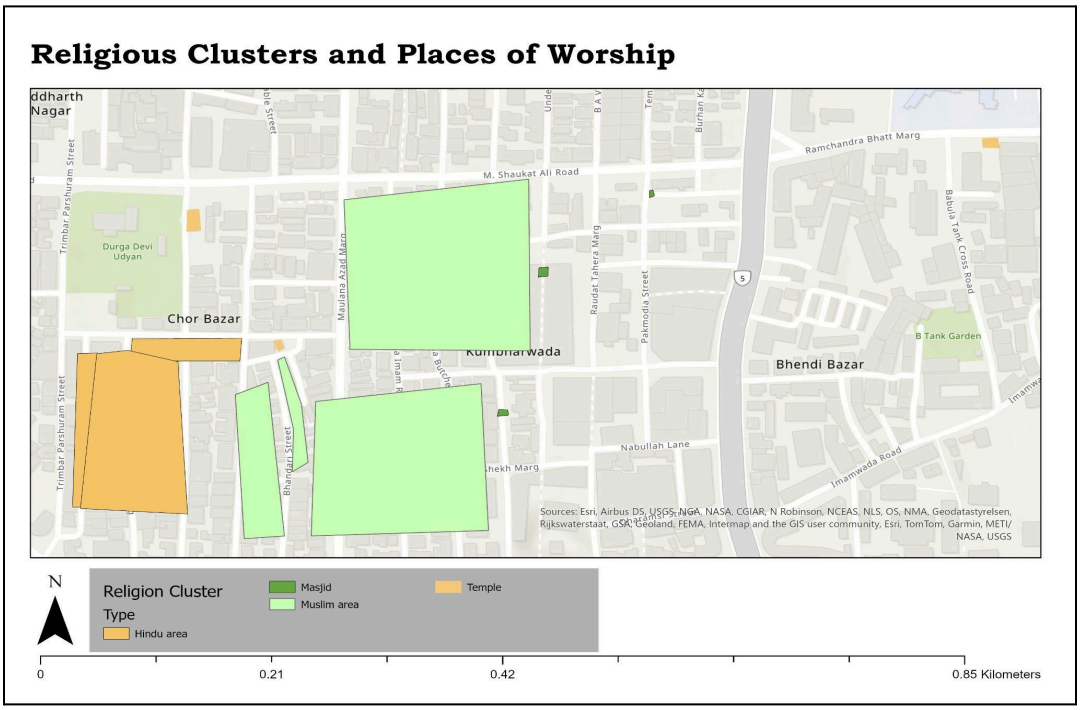
Area	Population	Hindus	Musalman
Market	30,172	19,824	3415
Dhobi Talao	38,684	21299	1050
Fanaswadi	27403	22136	502
Bhuleshwar	36459	22386	11377
Kumbharwada	27703	24095	2822
Khara Talao	22939	6330	15938

The table above depicts that Chor Bazaar at the time was anecdotal in nature, and the only way to study the people of the Bazaar is to study the geography of that area. It was intriguing to notice how all the areas surrounding at the time were filled a population of a Hindu Majority, and the only area that was Muslim Dominated was Khara talao. This shift in the population over the years and the demography dynamic makes sense because the Syedna Taher Saifuddin masjid was not built until 1926 (Sumana, 2023).

This data suggests that Chor bazaar was anecdotal during the late 1800's up to the early 1900's. The maps of the time don't point us towards a specific clue as to what the market is or the existence of it. Duncan Road is the only hint we get towards understanding where the bazaar was potentially placed. Areas at the time including Khetwadi, Khumbadhwala and Khara Talao are the only major segments that can be used to map out where Chor Bazaar potentially could have been placed in comparison to the areas existence on the maps today. The sole street that existed where we do get a slight direction towards our plotting of the market is the 'Kamathipoora' market, which happens to be a street which was called so during 1868 and 1869, as seen through *Map 4*.

The street 'Kamathipoora Bazaar' later had its name changed to 'Duncan Road' which can be seen in the map *Fig. 5* Dated, 1897. Which is available as an artifact at the David Sassoon library

in Kala Ghoda today. This is the only change plotted for that time period which gives us a slight understanding of where Chor Bazaar could have potentially existed as an anecdote at the time.



Map 5 : Religious Clusters and Places of Worship (ArcGis Pro)

The religious geography contributes cultural depth to the neighborhood setting. Hindu zones (orange) dominate more in the west, but Muslim zones (light green) with masjids (dark green dots) are clustered more in the central and eastern ends. What stands out is that these religious clusters are living near one another but both clustering together as well as blending together. Religious boundaries also don't coincidentally fall where commercial or residential zones do, implying that folks are crossing among functional zones in order to pray. This multi-religious nature is characteristic of most Indian urban residential areas, where various faith communities coexist in close proximity but retain some spatial identity.

People and Demography (Segment 2)

The Experience and the Vendors

With its roots in community, tradition, and complex histories, Chor Bazaar is more than just a marketplace. Numerous stores in Chor Bazaar are multigenerational businesses that have been operated by families for many years. Most owners were the third generation, continuing to increase the customer base and collection of antiques built by their ancestors. Another vendor we interacted with, proudly displayed artifacts that his father had gotten from Parsi homes that had been demolished, demonstrating strong generational ties to the community and the products they sell.

We also sensed a difference in the way we were approached by the shopkeepers at different parts of the market. While the Mutton Street vendors were welcoming and made the initiative to call us to their shops, in other areas like the steel and metal clusters, vendors were very skeptical and not very open to new customers. We could understand that their business functions on a B2B model, where construction or renovation businesses would use them to source their material on a larger scale, and hence they are not used to personally interacting with customers and making an initiative to make sales.

Some vendors were more informal, such as the watch vendor we came across with his shop next to a food stall. In order to avoid being disturbed by events occurring around him, he kept himself occupied with his own stall. We observed that the majority of his watches were broken, he did not have the skills to repair them and little understanding of their origins. However, he did know how to sell them well since his mat was placed right beside the main road which attracted a lot of customers on bikes with people during peak traffic hours, taking a moment to look at his watches as they passed by.

Depending on the kind of business it serves, each area of Chor Bazaar has a different atmosphere that creates a variety of experiences. You quickly discover that while parts of its little, narrow streets are quite open and friendly, others are more hidden, crowded, and even a little wary of strangers. The primary drivers of the difference are the type of buyers that such markets deal in,

the type of operations they have, and the degree to which they rely on occasional shoppers compared to bulk purchasers.

For example, the most tourist-friendly location, the antique market, is filled with sellers who are used to having collectors, interested travelers, and even interior designers looking for special pieces. They are ready to answer questions, they often use narration to make their wares more valuable, and negotiating prices is a part of the norm. In contrast, the steel market appears entirely different—transactional and straightforward. This section is less conducive to casual shopping since it primarily caters to corporations and industrial buyers who come with a definite purpose. Strangers who are not there to make heavy purchases might find the section cold since the sellers here value efficiency over courtesy.

As you move further into the bazaar, the industrial and spare parts market seems rough and almost exclusive. It is overcrowded with workshop owners and mechanics haggling over industrial equipment, auto parts, and tools. Because there is a chance that some of the materials will be stolen or used, vendors might be suspicious of new people. Unlike in the furniture business, where the experience is middling, the experience is different there. Shop owners are ready to interact if they think you're a genuine client, but don't let you waste too much time meandering around.

The flea market and street stall vendors bring about a different type of chaos—this section of the bazaar lives on impulse purchases. Vendors are proactive, shouting to prospective buyers, anticipating haggling, and tending to push aggressively for a sale. But the atmosphere can change again when you reach the electronics and mobile market, which is more reserved. Because this section occasionally handles unverified second-hand items, vendors may be wary of strangers who do not appear to be serious buyers. Prices are not always clearly marked, and the transaction can be more intense than in other parts of the bazaar.

Ultimately, these differences arise from the way each market operates. Industries that cater to wholesale or specialized industrial buyers, like steel, auto parts, and electronics, can feel more inaccessible than others that depend on incidental browsing, like antique and bazaar flea markets. While some parts of Chor Bazaar value efficiency and speed over engagement, others live off

curiosity and talk. Due to this combination of openness and exclusivity, Chor Bazaar is a place where interactions of various types are shaped by what is on sale and who is expected to buy it.

We spoke to a second-generation vendor who gave us insightful information on the history, culture, and development of the market. He clarified that every Friday, regular shops close, and the streets are transformed into the Friday Market, also known as the free market, where sellers offer discounted products including clothing and electronics, drawing large crowds. He told us how the market has evolved over time, observing that there were not as many small shops earlier as there are now and that the area had a more authentic, antique market atmosphere which is now being replaced by mall-like complexes. He talked about how the charm of antiques used to define the space and expressed nostalgia for the earlier stores. When asked about the origin of the term Chor Bazaar, he pointed out that the word "Shor" (noise) is sometimes mispronounced as "Chor" (thief). He claimed that the name "Shor Bazaar" originated from the fact that vendors used to loudly call out names of various goods they were selling. As time went on, the public's perception of this changed to "Chor Bazaar." In addition, he clarified that, contrary to popular assumption, the original market had only one lane. The name Chor Bazaar is now used for three interconnected streets, including the most well-known antique street. His viewpoint provided a deep understanding of the market's functional changes as well as the cultural myths that define its character.

An interaction with the ‘MI and Sons’ vendor, who had a vintage Sony TV from the 1980s on display outside his store, stood out in particular. He brought up how Bollywood producers rent these kinds of objects as props, which brought up an intriguing question: could the value of items increase if they were sold explicitly as movie props?

Despite these interactions with vendors, there was a noticeable culture of caution and concealment. A number of vendors declined to be photographed because they were worried of them being copied or perhaps because they were not genuine and most likely stolen. Many were even reluctant to interact with us and answer questions. At the ‘Curio Shop’, we noticed that most shop owners were not comfortable with sharing information about their business and only converse if we are customers. One of them specifically cautioned us to not ask too many

questions because apparently people who talk too much have been known to cause problems. The existence of a shadow economy is suggested by this secrecy, with middlemen potentially dealing in smuggled or stolen items, especially inside the steel/automobile components cluster.



Fig.7 : Antique Shop- Haji Ibrahim

Antiques- Dealers and Collectors

A unique collection of antique stores selling chandeliers, paintings, mirrors, *Peetal* objects and other artifacts can be found on Mutton Street. Marwari store owners were recognized as important suppliers of brass (*peetal*) products while other dealers either received regular sourcing or a whole lot of goods were delivered and they divided it into slots among themselves.

We came across a Bollywood Poster shop on Mutton Street which sells original bollywood posters, awards and advertisements. These posters are usually thrown away after the movies leave the cinemas and the awards are destroyed by production houses. This particular vendor collects them and sells them at the market. These posters are not only sold in India but have a huge demand in Germany and France where they are auctioned off in lakhs. While he has had many foreigners purchase posters from the market, he too believes that the population of

foreigners in the market has reduced drastically and he now mostly sells to middlemen who resell in upscale markets like Colaba at premium prices.

"Chor Bazaar is one of the greatest places for buying and selling antiques in Bombay. I have 3 shops, and the tourists say that my shop is the 'bible' for antiques. They come here every year and I'm happy that my shops are knows so we'll among tourists"- Bollywood bazaar shop owner

Nitin Jadia, a collector, provided valuable insights as well. After his inventory was stolen during an Income Tax raid, he transitioned from being a diamond merchant to the antiquities industry. During diamond merchanting, he would often buy paintings and collect perfume bottles in various shapes and sizes. Soon his interest in vintage paintings and perfume bottles developed to full-fledged collecting, which now includes ivory and timepieces from World War II

I like it, I buy it- his words when he used to come to Chor Bazaar to collect antiques.

if I come to Chor Bazaar, I come to empty my wallet



Fig.8 : Antique Store - Art Corner

Customers

We conducted several interviews and conversations with visitors and consumers. Amongst the crowd, we focused on old and new visitors and aimed to understand their purpose of visiting the market. One of the customers we interviewed had been visiting the market for 7 years. Ritik was a teenage entrepreneur who ran an Instagram store which resells used goods, most of which come from Chor bazaar, including radios, cameras and handy cams. When asked about the market's misunderstandings, he said that although some people think the things are *"chori ka maal"* (stolen goods), his experience has proven that most of them are either thrown away or sold for a low price by those who no longer need them. He acknowledged that some cameras which he bought still had pictures of people which he removed before selling them due to privacy reasons. Ritik also has a generational tie to the market; his parents used to come to the market to buy antiques as well.

"My parents used to come here when they were younger. They told me that one guy just parked his scooter here and the moment he came outside, his entire scooter was dismantled and they were selling its parts."

They had informed him of the dangers to the market, especially while taking women since they themselves had experienced occasional discomfort when visiting. In keeping with the market's long standing reputation for trading in a variety of salvaged parts, he shared a story that was passed down from his parents about a man who's scooter was disassembled while he was shopping. Although they are aware of the Bazaar's reputation, today's customers are more knowledgeable, deliberate, and they frequently view it as an opportunity rather than a risk.

Ritik's experience is representative of a larger trend. They see Chor Bazaar as a vibrant, culturally diverse bazaar where history, business, and community come together rather than as a holdover from the past.

Most of the tourists we spoke to were drawn to the market because of its intriguing name and curiosity after learning about it online from travel blogs or lists like *"Top Things to Do in Mumbai."* One of them stated that the name "Chor Bazaar" was the primary reason behind their visit and ended up collecting multiple souvenirs from the market. Some visitors found that

vendors were not always friendly or open, and there was a noticeable language barrier, but this did not seem to reduce their interest.

We interviewed a tourist who was visiting the market for the third time. He said he was fascinated by the market's disorderly yet well-organized layout, particularly the entire streets devoted to particular products, such as horns of different shapes and colors. They said they wanted to check out the night market but were not aware of it, even though they had been to the Friday market. The interactions collectively showed us that many visitors view Chor Bazaar as more than just a place to shop; it is a cultural wonder that draws them back for its visual spectacle, local spirit, and uniqueness.

Police and Government officials

Introduction to Law Enforcement Dynamics

The two primary elements that shape and impact the diverse personality of Chor Bazaar which is a traditional marketplace full of a mix of business, culture and tradition is the regulatory supervision by the police and government officials and its ongoing redevelopment projects headed by the SBUT. The nuanced interaction between these two forces is very important to understand the present and future course of this renowned setting.

We visited the Mazgaon police station to inquire about the ongoing renovations in Chor Bazaar and to get the police’s stand on it. There we were redirected to a staff member. Our interaction with the staff member helped us frame the role of law enforcement in the area, as it became evident that the communication hurdles and the lack of transparency were prevalent. He communicated primarily in Marathi, however, he showcased an adamant refusal to allow any audio or video recordings.This hesitation raised questions about the willingness of law enforcement to engage openly with external people regarding their operations and policies affecting Chor Bazaar. During our discussion,the police employee emphasized how the selling of second hand goods has been a tradition at Chor Bazaar, this was mentioned while focusing on the cultural and traditional practices exhibited by the Waghri tribe. He clarified that these roadside entrepreneurs frequently use the old-fashioned barter system to exchange utensils for clothing

and sell used clothing, a practice we had been clued into through our secondary research. This recognition of cultural customs shows that the market's distinct identity is understood, but it also shows a sophisticated approach to regulation.

The person strongly denied the existence of *"chori ka maal"* and claimed that every store in Chor Bazaar has a license. This declaration acts as a defense against charges that frequently afflict unofficial marketplaces, where lawful business procedures may be overshadowed by ideas of illegality. By emphasizing licensing, law enforcement attempts to legitimize vendors' operations while maintaining order within the market.

Challenges in Enforcement and Regulatory Actions-

Although police raids on goods are very important to maintain the integrity of the market, these actions also disrupt local economies. While raids are intended to protect consumers and uphold legal standards, they often target informal vendors who sometimes lack paperwork or licenses. The reluctance of law enforcement to engage deeply with vendors during these operations can raise tensions. Vendors may feel marginalized or unfairly targeted, leading to an adversarial relationship with authorities. As urbanization progresses and redevelopment projects like those initiated by SBUT, as we explore later on in this paper, take shape, informal vendors face increased problems from both police and municipal authorities. This leads to a form of semi-formal governance. Small illegality and informality is accepted in the eyes of the police and governing authorities. Only exceptional activities are addressed. This is the nature of markets like Chor Bazaar where formality and informality, illegality and legality and required and accepted norms remain vague, unclear but operational in the most smooth fashion.

Economics of the market

Chor Bazaar has changed from being a location where stolen goods were found, to a popular spot for vintage, antique, and second-hand products. This gradual shift in the market can be seen due to implementation of stricter regulations. Earlier it was easier to find authentic antique treasures from other cities as the discarded items from the royal families used to make their way to the bazaar. But there can only be so many antique items before you run out, due to which many sellers have now started replicating items and have started selling them as antiques. Another evident change that can be seen is that many of the sellers there have also started presenting their products on social media and selling them online.

Demographics of Vendors & Buyers

The traders in Chor Bazaar are typically small scale traders who have inherited the shops through their ancestors. Most of them belong to local Muslim communities such as the Bohra Muslim group. There are different ways in which vendors procure goods such as estate sales and scrap dealers. Additionally, the Waghri community plays a significant role in second-hand clothing sales.

A wide range of people are attracted to the market by various interests. While collectors and antique enthusiasts seek for unique vintage objects, locals often visit the region to find reasonably priced gadgets, furniture, and household goods. The film industry also plays a role, with professionals sourcing unique props for Bollywood productions. Tourists too, as we mentioned earlier, are a significant part of the market's footfall; often visiting for the experience rather than making purchases. Historically, 50% of visitors were foreign tourists, but footfall on the other hand, has declined by 60% due to redevelopment and the shift to online shopping, according to vendors. Tourists are generally drawn to the market's name and reputation, they often visit the place for the experience rather than with the intent of purchasing goods. On the contrary, Nitin Jadia, an antique collector we interviewed, had a different perception of the market. He said,*"If I come to Chor Bazaar, I come to empty my wallet."* This indicates that there are people with both mentalities who visit the market.

Pricing, Bargaining & Market Practices

The prices in Chor Bazaar are not fixed, the vendors tend to change their pricing according to the buyer of the product and expect the buyer to negotiate. Things there are often priced substantially higher than their true value, leaving possibility for negotiation. Vendors increase the value of the product by giving it elaborate back stories and connecting Bollywood linkages to it. Counterfeit items and copies are also very common over there which makes buyer judgment important. These shopkeepers do not usually sell a lot on a daily basis but they do not mind that as long as they gain long term benefits from it. Most of these shopkeepers have other businesses too and do not rely solely on what they earn from Chor Bazaar.



Fig.9 : Bargaining in Bollywood Bazaar

Electronics and watch vendors occasionally obtain goods from unknown sources, which makes us question the authenticity of the product. The Juna Bazaar (which is what the Friday morning Chor Bazaar market is called) attracts traders from Kalyan, Pune, Bhopal and beyond, bringing a new influx of merchandise every week. Some vendors carefully arrange their stalls in high-traffic areas, such as a watch dealer who placed his mat next to a food station to entice impulse shoppers. These are a few market practices that can be observed there. Other commonly observed practices are that the goods are obtained through auctions, estate sales and illegal

channels. Many shops do not issue receipts, so transactions are generally informal and lastly dealers who specialize in restoring old items resell them as antiques.

Stolen Goods, Authenticity, & Legality

Chor Bazaar still tends to have a reputation for selling stolen goods, though vendors firmly deny any involvement in illegal trade. Vendors tend to get offended when asked about the legitimacy of the goods and do not like the legality of the goods being questioned. Many antiques offered in Chor Bazaar are copies, according to Nitin Jadia, an antique collector, over half the things are believed to be fake which makes authenticity a serious concern for buyers. Deriving the correct value of antique goods is questionable considering its legitimacy. Mainly because of the shopkeepers manipulating the value of the antique goods itself. This clearly leaves us with a question of understanding the true value of antique goods today, and whether they still hold the value they always did. Legal control is also poor and many transactions are conducted in cash, making it difficult to detect illegal purchases.

Role of Antique Dealers & Collectors

Bollywood plays an important role in fueling demand for antiques, as production houses commonly source props from the market. Instead of selling directly to Chor Bazaar customers, some high-end antique stores sell to retailers who resell antiques in premium markets like Colaba. International interest for Bollywood collectibles remains high, with purchasers from Germany and France taking part in auctions.



Fig.10 : Comparing a formal and informal store in Chor Bazaar

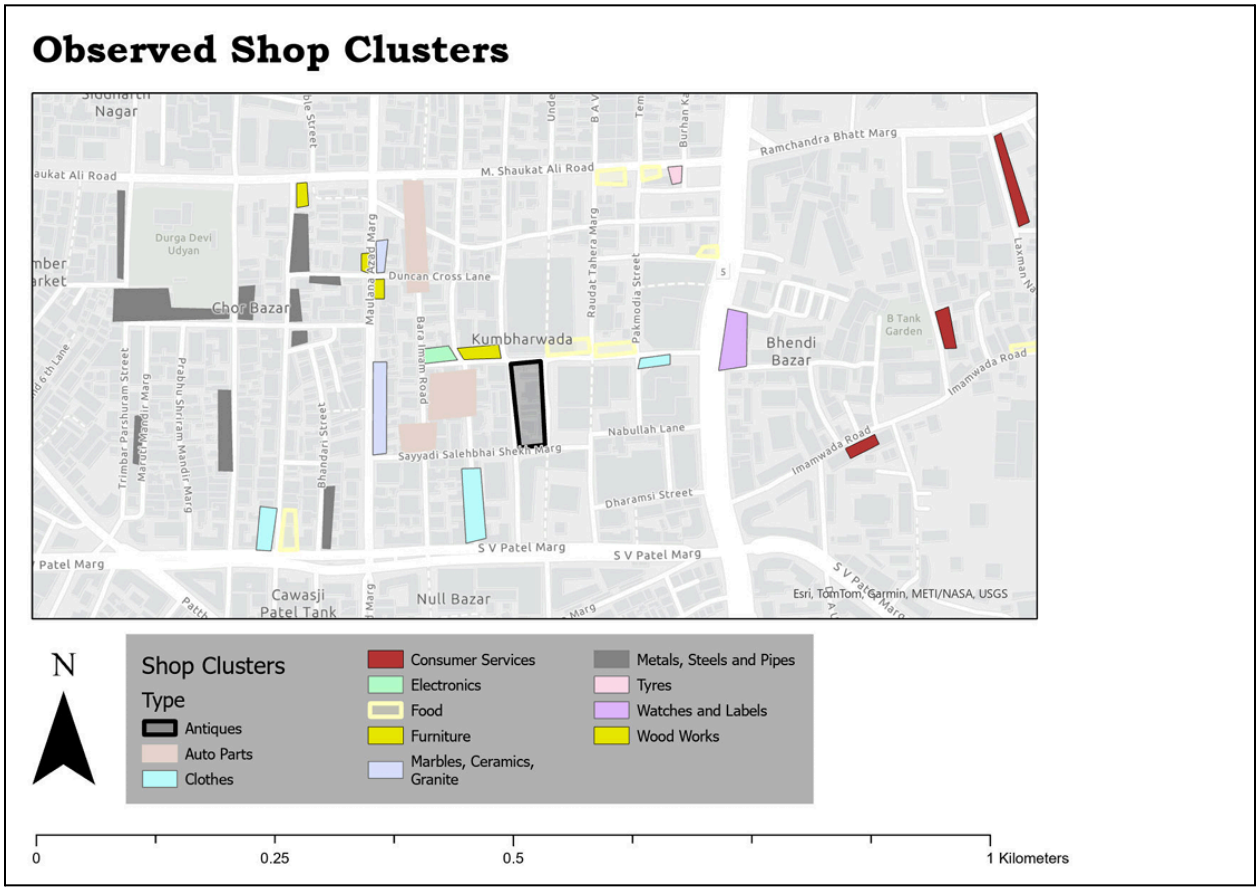
Licensed vs. Unlicensed Shops

The market is divided into two segments - the formal market, where generational shops cater to collectors and enthusiasts, and the informal market where a diverse range of sellers attract customers who are willing to bargain.

The formal market has established shops that have been operating for decades. Most of the shops have proper licences and operate completely legally. Many shops sell goods from the British era, such as old Bollywood posters, vinyls and old-fashioned furniture. Many of the goods are sourced from homes where the owners no longer want them and are willing to sell them for any price they think they are worth and able to get from shopkeepers. They restore and refurbish the goods and sell them henceforth. These goods are mostly electronics including watches, cameras, radios and furniture such as chandeliers, lamps and home decor pieces. The prices of the goods are usually fixed but sometimes they can be negotiable. But in the informal market, there is uncertainty about the origin of the goods as there are possibilities that the goods are stolen and it is not easy to authenticate the source of the goods as the shopkeepers are unwilling to tell about the sources. The formal market is open on all days usually except for Sundays, but on Friday early morning, a lot of the informal shops known as *"paltis"* or hawkers open up their temporary

mats and carts in front of the permanent stores. Some stores charge these vendors to use the area in front of their closed shops, but most allow this to occur. It is known that the formal stores sometimes source their goods from the informal stores in the form of auctions.

The difference between the two markets is when it comes to the customers they sell to and the pricing strategy of the goods. Formal shops cater to wealthier customers, collectors and sometimes Bollywood production companies for antiques and furniture. From what we were told, it is a common practice for theater productions to rent pieces from these stores as well. Informal shops are attractive to daily customers due to the ease of bargaining with the shopkeepers, who generally are accustomed to customers who are capable of bargaining. The informal market benefits from formal businesses as they bring customers to the market.



Map 7 : Shop Clusters

We can see that most of the shops are in clusters. The main lane of Cho Bazaar (black outline) as only antique stores. Watches and Labels are informal stalls set up conveniently beside the highway to attract customers. Auto parts, marble and Granite and Metal and Steel work stores are positioned deeper in the market where a lot of customers don't usually go. Very few second hand clothing stores are noticed in some areas. These shop clusters are positioned together to help vendors to utilize resources efficiently together. These markets are open every day of the week except Friday.

Friday Market

The Friday night market is one that proves to be complex due to its structure. The market is very informal in nature, our understanding of it comes through the information given by vendors in Chor Bazaar, whose shops are closed during the Juma Bazaar. From their accounts, the market transforms into a bustling sea of outdoor vendors from across the state, selling not the wares you see in everyday chor bazaar but what is required every day by the customers who come. Clothes, electronics and even watches you would deem as expensive for startlingly low prices. An interview with Tahseen, a third-generation owner of the antique shop on mutton street gave us insights on the Friday morning market.

The Friday market works as such that vendors from all around the city set up their hawkers and goods on the street and sell them at the open market. The Friday market is active from 3am to 6am in the morning. Here you'll find goods all the way from really expensive watches to electronics at the cheapest rate you can possibly think of. The only concern and anecdotal information that we realised throughout understanding the Friday night market is the safety concerns surrounding the environment it is surrounded in, and also the fact that it is a completely male dominated market. Tahseen confirmed this finding of ours by a legend that went around in the area in her childhood.

The legend stated that the Friday night market was and still is a rather hush-hush entity in all of Chor Bazaar. A child during the hustle-bustle in the olden times was said to have been kidnapped during the market's operation and was never known to be found again. This legend sent shivers down people's spines in all of Chor Bazaar and parents refused to send their child and even

themselves go to Chor Bazaar during Friday's. This stigma is one that ended up only extending the notion for the place to have it's safety questioned also because she mentioned how regardless of how unsafe this friday market was in the past, it still made up for the major identity of what Chor Bazaar is, and as she states, "stolen good were indeed sold in this market", there is just no actual justification to prove this fact, however, it still remains to be a known one.

Sourcing & Distribution

Chor Bazaar is a place where everyday objects lose their original purpose and value and end up becoming antiques over a period of time making consumers wonder about the authenticity of these objects. Just as when the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa cities were excavated in layers finding artifacts that created meaning from the time period they were first used in. Or, as academia and government use several methods to dissect the meanings of a place. Similarly, Chor Bazaar is layered. During the weekdays, the 4 big markets operate: Antique Bazaar- where all antiques and vintage items are sold, Kapda Bazaar - where textiles, second-hand and counterfeit branded clothes are sold, Joota Bazaar - where second hand shoes and branded replicas are sold and Auto Parts Bazaar - where second-hand and salvaged car parts are sold. On Friday, the market is more chaotic where the origins of some goods are unknown. Comparable to an archaeological site, Chor Bazaar has a layered past waiting to be uncovered.



Fig.11 : Depicting Layers in Archaeological Excavation

Antiques have been sold at the market for several decades there. Most of the ‘antiques’ sold in the market are simply second-hand goods discarded by their previous owners. As people clean their homes, they bring unwanted items to the Bazaar, hoping to sell them for a reasonable price. A lot of the shopkeepers have started to reproduce these antique furniture because they are

diminishing. It is a practice that is decades old and is still in use today. There have been cases where stolen goods have been seen at the market but it is difficult to authenticate if the goods have been stolen unless we can find the original owner of the goods as the shopkeepers wouldn't sell out on their "source".

Nitin Jadia who has been an antique collector for decades took us to one of the shops in Chor Bazaar and showed us a statue which he claimed to be stolen from his home. After learning that the 750 year old statue had been purchased by a local shopkeeper, Nitin went to speak with the person. The shopkeeper, though, was unwilling to reveal the origin or specifics of the purchase of the statue. Realizing the probable ineffectiveness of involving the police, Nitin knew that pursuing the issue through the proper authorities would be useless, as finding and arresting the perpetrators would be a difficult task. As a result, Nitin continues to express frustration over the loss of his antique, which he believes was unlawfully obtained.

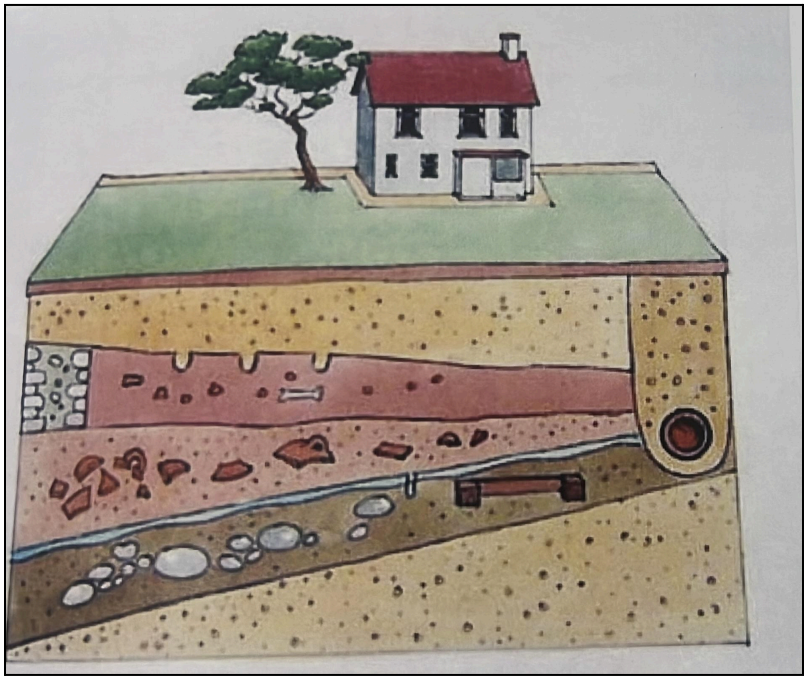


Fig.12 : Stratography

This is the statue that Nitin Jadia says was stolen from him. A statue of an Apsara which is said to be about 700-800 years old.

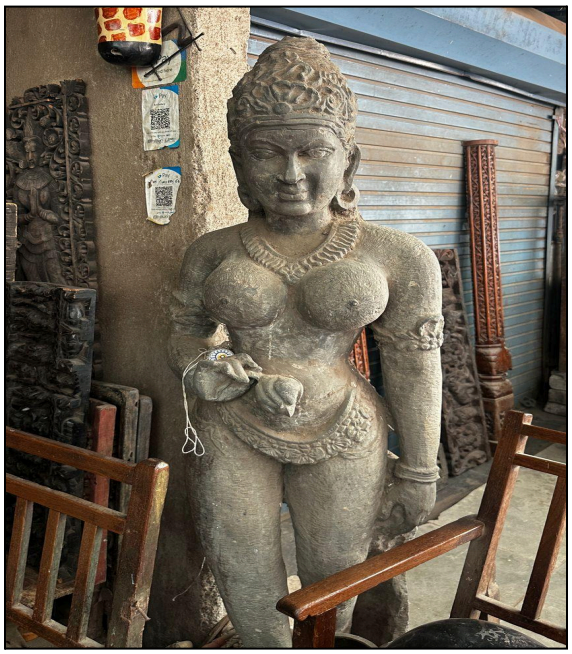


Fig.13 : Statue of Apsara

Over the years the amount of original antiques sold in the market has reduced a lot. We discuss this based on extended interviews with , like Nitin Jadia. We had spent hours talking with him about Chor Bazaar, we also visited his antique collection (outside Choz Bazaar). Nitin Jadia says that many of the goods sold in Chor Bazaar are counterfeit products. It is difficult to come by an original antique now and an object can only be classified as an antique when it is 70 or more years old. A lot of the ‘antiques’ are just really well-made replicas made to look old so consumers think they are authentic. The Mughal Art Gallery shop owner says that it is the small details that can differentiate an antique about its authenticity. For example, one of his transcriptions from the Quran is handwritten. He said that if the transcription looks too clean it is likely to be a print and not handwritten. No handwritten object is flawless but this transcription was very close to it. He found a couple of flaws in the look of the transcription that gave him assurance that it is genuinely handwritten and not a print.Many shopkeepers also try to restore old items which can diminish the authenticity of the object. The segment of the market that sells furniture and car parts mainly sources a lot of the goods from scrap yards, trying to salvage and

restore as much of it in the hopes of getting something valuable and subsequently bringing it to a condition where it is possible to sell. A lot of them supply antique furniture, automobile parts, collectables and electronics to different resellers across India. Many buy in bulk making shopkeepers offer better rates to them and provide transportation to deliver the goods. A few stores like ‘Vinterior’ have an online presence and have adapted to online selling platforms such as OLX or eBay but they also do have their own websites. Shops like Vinterior and the Mughal Art Gallery had to adjust during the CoronaVirus pandemic which we thought would have resulted in a lack of sales. However, they said that since they have a rapport with their customers who contact them directly when thye want to make a purchase, their business did not take a considerable hit. Alongside a loyal customer base, they also have contacts around Mumbai which gave them opportunities to sell/rent out their furniture to organisations that needed it. Chor Bazaar has also become a sourcing ground for foreign markets, where valuable pieces are purchased from and then sold or auctioned off at higher prices abroad.

Some say that some things like electronics and car parts are stolen goods but there is no way to prove it as any question of illegality is immediately and vehemently denied. There are ways a consumer can find out if a good is stolen. If the good has a suspiciously low price and it looks like it is very valuable, it is likely that the good is stolen, or possibly counterfeit. Most of these automobiles and car parts come from old vehicles which are discarded by the owners. These vehicles are dismantled and each part is either given to their respective manufacturing companies or given to scrap dealers. One can find a variety of tools here- from second-hand tools to newly bought ones. Few of these dealers buy these tools from places like Delhi, Ludhiana, and Punjab where they get it at a low cost. The second-hand tool dealers get them from bigger companies who have rejected that particular batch. Pheriwalas are street vendors who carry their merchandise on carts and bicycles. They come to Chor Bazaar daily to sell second-hand tools



Fig.14 : Dismantling of a Car

If a seller doesn't seem to know a lot about the product, (such as why the price is so low), then there is also another possibility that the good is stolen. Many of these vendors don't use documentation when selling their goods so there is no paper trail because they operate in an informal economy that makes transactions only in cash. Documentation could invite tax authorities or law enforcement especially if the products are of unknown origin. But no seller would admit to their source nor tell if the goods are stolen as they think their business could get harmed and could face some legal problems. In a section of Chor Bazaar called Kumbharwada were all metal works and metal shops. They did not sell finished products but raw materials in the form of metal pipes, rods and sheets and other industrial-grade materials which were sold wholesale to factories and manufacturing companies. A lot of these materials come from ship-building industries, *pheriwalas*, *kabadi walas* and *daarukahana* mills. We noticed that for the industrial-level metal shops, the majority of the trucks would arrive between 6 and 7 pm for either pick up or drop of materials. Once offloaded, the goods are transported across the market using carts. Again the shopkeepers would refuse to elaborate on where they get these materials from and who their customers are to whom they sell to. Every morning from 5 am to 8 am, there is a market on the main road where the dealers get second-hand clothes. These are mainly clothes coming from hospitals and rejected lots from various companies. The shopkeepers in Chor Bazaar buy these clothes, wash them and sell them again to industries. There are also shops in Chor bazaar which make new clothes and sell them to people.

The boundaries between genuine antiques, flawless replicas and perhaps stolen goods are blurred due to the history, trading and secrecy of locals in Chor Bazaar. This adds to the uniqueness and nuance to the Bazar. It is still an important location for selling and buying a variety of goods ranging from antiques and vintage furniture to auto parts and industrial supplies, despite its chaotic and informal atmosphere. Considering the ongoing concerns about legitimacy and legality, the bazaar is thriving and evolving with time and extending its reach to beyond Mumbai. Finally, Chor Bazaar is more than just a market, it is a multi-layered representation of the history of the goods and people there with each object holding a secret.

Auctions as a Form of Sourcing

Auctions in Chor Bazaar are held on a much informal street level basis. Antiques are on exhibit and occasionally put up for sale in the market which creates an environment of excitement and unpredictability. Rather than having a professional auctioneer, the bidding process in Chor Bazaar is typically conducted by the seller or a middleman who serves as an intermediary. In certain situations, these brokers might assist in the sale by serving as advisors to purchasers who might not be informed about the specifics of antique authenticity or cost. The market thrives on haggling, and many of the antiques here are sold through a mix of negotiation, silent bidding, and open public auctions.

The process usually starts when a seller chooses to put an antique up for auction after finding a unique or costly item, like a brass sculpture, an ancient wooden cabinet, or an old picture. Depending on the degree of demand, the seller or broker usually sets the beginning price, however it may be negotiable. The two main ways in which the auction is conducted are silent and open bidding.

In open bidding the seller invites potential consumers and the consumers shout out their offers. This results in a back and forth negotiation till one is decided. It is the buyer's ability to negotiate which eventually decides the final price. In a silent bidding the items auctioned are often more rare and valuable as compared to open bidding. In these situations, the highest bid is accepted at

the conclusion of the auction time after purchasers are asked to record their bids on paper. The silent auctions create an environment of secrecy adding mystery and intrigue to the process.

From religious statues and antique jewelry to furniture from the British colonial era, Chor Bazaar is renowned for its wide selection of antiques. Such rare items call for a lot of attention and draw interest from a wide range of people. The items do not only hold cultural and historical significance but they are also valuable artifacts for serious collectors. When we were interviewing people in the bazaar, we came across a person who had a shop for old bollywood posters. He had inherited that shop from his father and he told us how it was his father's passion for collecting posters that eventually led them to making a business out of it. The posters went back decades and he told us how they were also auctioned, not only in India but also in foreign countries like Germany, France and the United Kingdoms. We were intrigued as to who was buying old bollywood film posters in such countries but when we questioned him about it he told us that there is a very strong Bollywood fanbase in those countries.

The emphasis on bargaining is a crucial aspect of the Chor Bazaar auction procedure. Unlike the auctions where the price increases rapidly in response to the other bids, the auctions held at the bazaar are more flexible and centered on personal negotiations. Buyers with experience are aware of the complexities involved in this process. They are aware that the asking price may be exaggerated at first, and that the true value is less than what the seller originally states. The buyer needs to be smart at perceiving what the seller wants.

The auctioning of goods at the bazaar can get really competitive as serious collectors, antique dealers, and even tourists are often looking to acquire something unique. As a result of that the competition that takes place between them drives up the bid. Finding hidden treasures adds a sense of discovery that makes the process even more exciting. Through the auctioning of valuable items, Chor Bazaar offers a glimpse of India's rich cultural heritage and provides for a fascinating place for anyone looking for rare antiques.

Part 2: GIS + SBUT

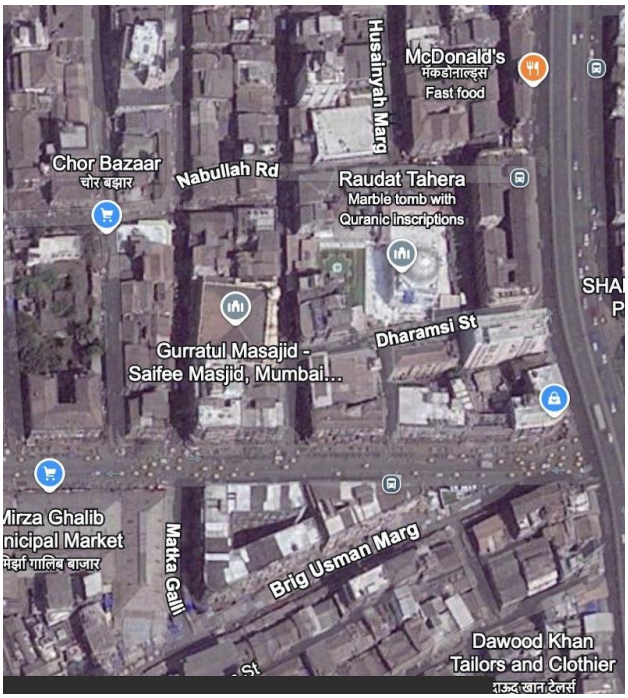
Urbanization and Redevelopment

Situated in the center of South Mumbai, Chor Bazaar is a historic market with a rich 150-year history. Originally called Shor Bazaar, which translates to "noise market," it got its current name because of its infamous history as a center for stolen goods during British rule. From its colonial beginnings, this bustling bazaar has developed into a veritable gold mine for vintage enthusiasts and antique collectors, representing Mumbai's diverse cultural fabric. As the city transforms into a contemporary cityscape, Chor Bazaar continues to be an essential part of its history, representing the diversity and tenacity of its neighborhoods in the face of swift urban development.

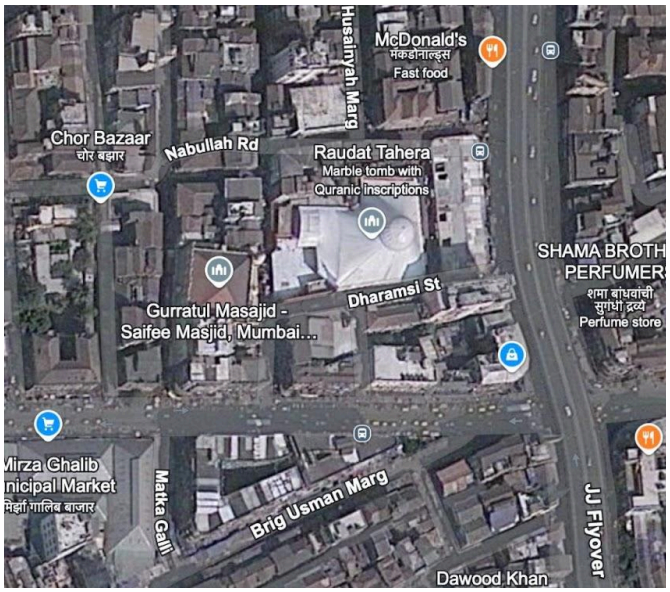
Being established after Independence, Chor Bazaar hadn’t seen any developments until a decade ago. The effects of gentrification and urbanization initiatives have been among the biggest shifts seen in recent decades. Gentrification is a fundamental concept of neighborhood transformation comprising two necessary processes- the first is an inflow of affluent residents and investment (also referred to as capital) into a neighborhood (Yeom, Mikelbank, 1). Rising living expenses and property values are frequently the result of this transition, which has the potential to uproot long-term inhabitants and change the community's cultural makeup. The living circumstances in Bhendi Bazaar have gotten much worse, with many people living in small apartments that are less than 300 square feet in size and frequently shared by several family members, making it difficult to be comfortable and private. Basic facilities like sanitary restrooms and waste disposal systems are either nonexistent or insufficient. Because it is practically impossible to get emergency services during emergencies, the narrow, crowded lanes make mobility difficult and provide significant risks. Daily life is made even more difficult by frequent power outages, water shortages, and flooded roadways during the monsoon season. These difficulties highlight how urgently reconstruction is required to enhance inhabitants' safety and quality of life.

To tackle this problem, SBUT was appointed to redevelop the area. This project explores the gentrification-led transformation through first-hand experience collected through research.

Methods include maps, interviews, walks, narrative collection, observation, photography and their analysis.



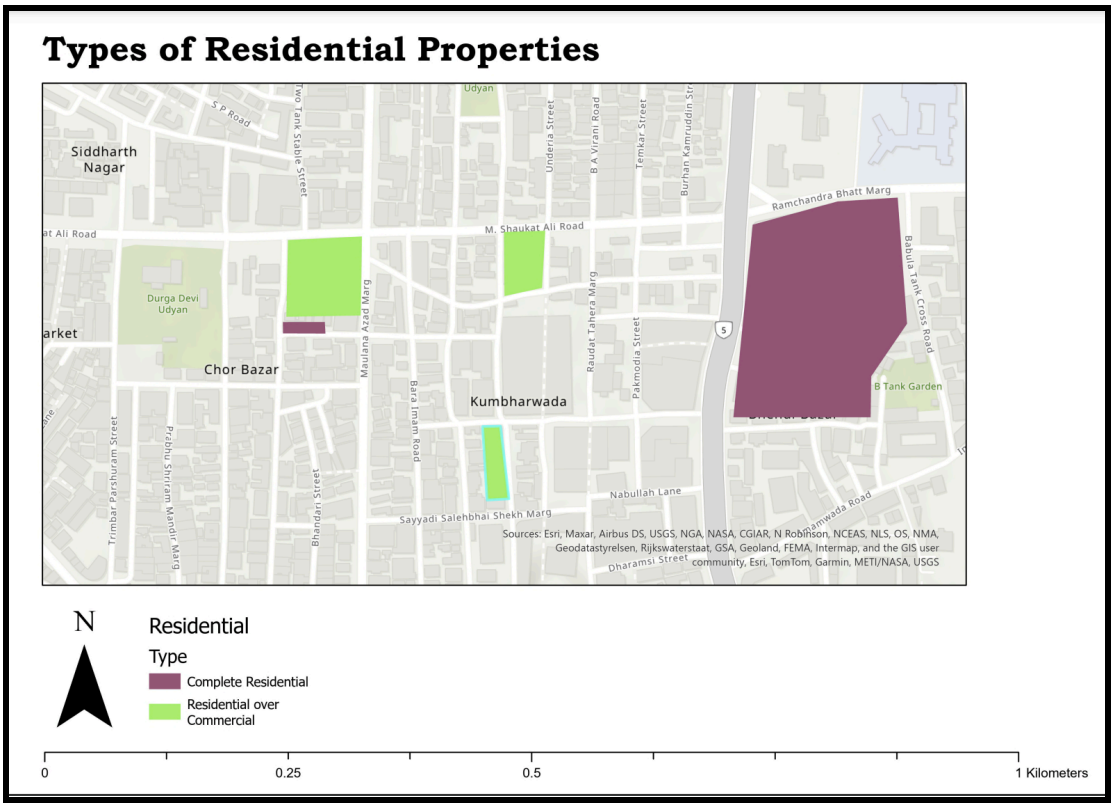
Map 8 : 2009 Map of Chor Bazaar Before Construction



Map 9: 2013 Map of Chor Bazaar. Little Construction

Over time, we can observe the changes in the development of the areas around Chor Bazaar. In 2009, we can see small shacks dominating the entire area around the Masjid. These small shacks are the small antique shops. In 2013, we can see some construction going on in the area, and bigger buildings can be seen occupying the areas that once used to be shacks. The shacks are still persistent. Currently, we can see a lot more buildings and redevelopment that has happened recently. Most of the shacks have been torn down and multiple story buildings are coming up in its place.

Mutton Street and its environment saw substantial transformations after 2013, moving from small stores crammed with antiques and curiosities to bigger, more robust buildings. Widening roads made the area more open and attracted affluent people, who started to live in these newly constructed shops. As a result of this change, the neighborhood became more accessible and attracted tourists from wealthy neighborhoods who drove there to buy antiques for their homes. With improvised vendors selling used goods on blankets along the streets, a large portion of the neighborhood maintained its bustling, chaotic charm in spite of these changes. Consumers frequently came to enjoy the market's distinct old-city ambience, which maintains its character in the face of modernization. Vendors still continued to live in small homes above or around their shops.



Map 10 : Types of Residential Properties

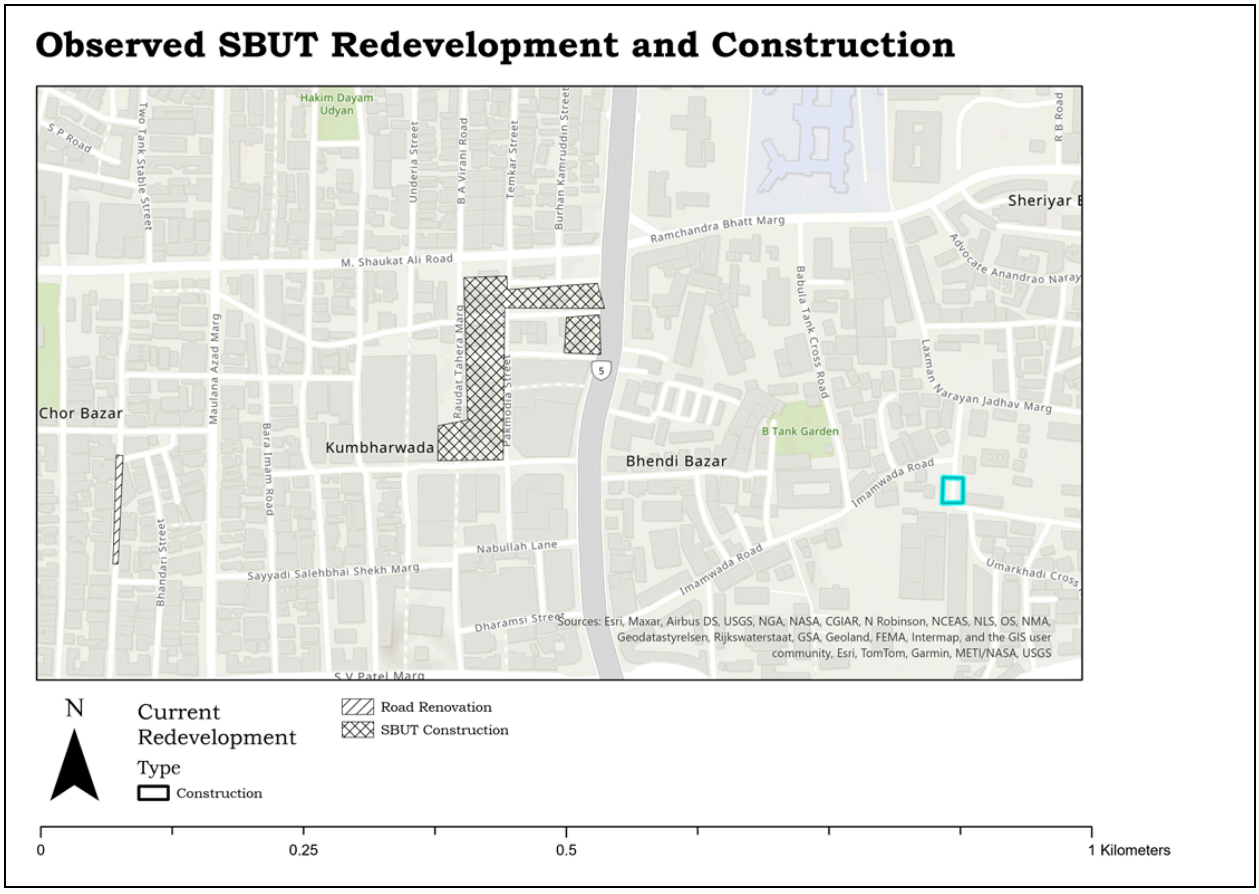
The residential map demonstrates a definitive split of city space along with the former commercial cluster map. The huge "Complete Residential" area (purple) prevails on the east side around Bhendi Bazar, forming an apparent residential quarter that is distinguishable from intensive commercial activity. Spotted throughout are tiny "Residential over Commercial" areas (green), showing vertical mixed use where individuals reside above businesses.
This spatial pattern illustrates traditional urban organization concepts: commercial functions group along principal streets with housing uses above them, and pure residential blocks develop in more sheltered areas. Sharp boundaries between diverse uses point toward organic growth rather than rigid zoning. This trend optimizes land use effectiveness and generates varied residential experiences - residents of mixed-use developments have ready access to services but probably have more noise and activity than dwellers of the purely residential district.

As part of the broader Bhendi Bazaar rehabilitation project, the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT) is heading gentrification in Mumbai's Chor Bazaar (“Home - SBUT”). It is dedicated to

the thorough reconstruction of Bhendi Bazaar to enhance the infrastructure and quality of life for locals. They work on projects that preserve the region's cultural legacy while offering contemporary housing, business spaces, and basic services. SBUT is dedicated to improving the local community's quality of life through social projects and sustainable development.

Through a comprehensive 16.5-acre reconstruction project, SBUT hopes to turn Bhendi Bazaar into a contemporary and energetic metropolis. Through the renovation of 250 buildings, this project is expected to improve the lives of nearly 25,000 people, uplift 3,200 families, and modernize 1,250 enterprises. The project, which has a deadline of 2025 and a total investment of Rs 4,000 crore, entails the construction of 11 new structures with broad roadways and contemporary infrastructure. Notable buildings include the 53-story Al-Ezz skyscraper in sector 6, the 53-story Al-Nasr tower in sector 4, and the 610-family and 128-business Al Sa'adah complex. SBUT hopes to preserve the local cultural heritage while greatly enhancing living circumstances with this reconstruction.

By erecting high-rise towers with contemporary amenities like elevators, parking lots, and well-organized commercial areas in place of outdated, run-down buildings, SBUT hopes to improve the neighborhood. By grouping comparable stores together, the proposal hopes to preserve part of the bazaar's uniqueness while also improving living conditions for locals.
I have seen this project being born, progress and transform Bhendi Bazaar. This is not just for Mumbai. Not just for India. This is a statement to the entire world on how one can declutter a concrete jungle and transform it into a liveable atmosphere. This project is a landmark for urban transition.”– Amin Patel, Member of Legislative Assembly (“Home - SBUT”).



Map 11 : Observed SBUT Redevelopment and Construction

We attempted to contact the officials in charge of this project or anyone affiliated with SBUT to get their insights but hit a wall due to their hesitancy in discussing the redevelopment. Citing the lack of staff at the time, they declined to meet with us and stated that they were uncomfortable releasing information.

We still had a few conversations with some workers and a manager and were told that they have been given the task of renovating the area around the flyover up until Mutton Street is being redeveloped (cross hatch marking). We see that development started around the highway and is expanding. The old buildings are being broken down after relocating the vendors and their shops, and huge multi-story buildings are being constructed in their place. The first 3 floors are commercial buildings where the old shops along with new stores would be located, and the remaining floors above would be residential. This is an immense change for Chor Bazaar as this is the first time a redevelopment project is taking place in this area in the post-independence era.

It is also significant because of its size, scope and possible economic-social outcome in the South Mumbai part.

However, ambiguity about the nature and scope of redevelopment exists, as we explored through fieldwork. Many didn't know more about it, but the clear redevelopment of the area seems to be making it more accessible, which lines up with what we were told by vendors as well, that the presence of convenient parking would be an advantage for their customer base. The aim was also to commercialize and capitalize on the new commercial places and residential houses. The difference between the areas falling under the redevelopment project and the ones that are still untouched is distinct. The huge buildings were replacing the small *gullies* and turning the ever-bustling rows, filled with small trinkets and memories of their past owners into modern scapes of concrete.

After conducting many interviews (over 15) and informal conversation around this during the fieldwork, and talking to established furniture antique vendors, street vendors, customers and government officials, we found many insights and perspectives that differed from each other. It added to the complexity of the ongoing project, which was a central theme to explore.

One of the stores on Mutton Street, 'Vinterior,' sold many vintage and antique trinkets, paintings, etc. The owner told us that he was happy with the SBUT redevelopment as most of his customers are car owners who come from different parts of the city. This development would make his stores more accessible. When we asked them if they think their customers come to their antique shop because of the charm and hype of the bazaar or the products they sell, he confidently said that his customers have had a very good relationship with him for many years and trust him and come to his store for the authenticity and quality of the products he sells. He also didn't have any problem with the relocation as his customers tend to contact him directly and place orders on phone. He gets very few walk-in customers, who are mostly tourists and explorers. So, closing down the shop for some time until the construction is over doesn't make much of a difference. He said that many vendors, including him, have more than one shop so shutting down one shop temporarily for construction work doesn't really affect their financials. In contrast, when asked what happened to the shops that were closed due to redevelopment and had no operational

counterparts in that time, it was conveyed that they had been using the compensation provided as a way to have a temporary hiatus until SBUT handed over their shops. We see this happening in the GIS map as well,where we observed the movements of the market through the years. Even though the vendors' business isn't being affected a lot, the market is still seen to be shrinking. What once used to be a huge area with different market segments has now been reduced to a few strips of lanes selling antiques.

On the other hand, many vendors we interacted with also shared their apprehension about the project. For example, one amongst the vendors told us that he is not very happy with the development project as the look and experience of the market as a whole is what helps get a lot of customers. He believes that if this area is turned into a professional setting with malls and huge buildings, the charm of Chor Bazaar would be lost and people would not want to come here anymore as it would become like every other developed part of the city. Also, others do exactly know about the economic and operational part of the three markets that the redevelopment project is building. This adds to the uncertainty which the project's completion and people's experiences with it will show in near future.

Urbanization and development might also disrupt the unlicensed shops that flourish in Chor Bazaar. Dozens of street vendors set up their shops on the side of the road. The Vaghri Community also depends on this for their livelihood, setting up second-hand stalls every morning. Many of these vendors would not be able to continue their business if the area is turned into an organized market due to the increased restrictions. Only the licensed antique shops will be relocated and given a place to sell their items, unlike these small sellers.

Tensions between informal market and formal redevelopment:

The recurring redevelopment of the Chor Bazaar is a worry for shop owners about the future of the market. There are people who believe that the redevelopment of the market would lead to the diminishing of the culture and identity of the market that has been established over the decades. They think that people don't come to the market just for the products but also for the experience

that people are shown. The market is known for its chaotic atmosphere and sale of antiques and second-hand goods.

Another worry is that shop owners may have to change the way they run their business from the same way that has been run for generations and they feel like it would ruin their business. Some owners see the potential and need for a larger and more organized space believing that it could allow them to expand their business and cater to an entirely new set of customers. The one major concern is the expected increase in rental prices after the redevelopment is over. Many of the shops in Chor Bazaar work on very small profit margins and a large rent increase could lead them into running out of business. If small shop owners are unable to afford the new prices, they may get evicted which could create opportunities for larger and more high-end businesses to take over the property, leading to gentrification of the market.

People are also concerned about how this redevelopment could change the customer base. Locals and foreigners may feel like the market is no longer the way it was known to be. Visitors that have come for the experience that has made the market famous worldwide would be disappointed to see that it is now a modern shopping centre.

The market would lead to better infrastructure but could also ruin the identity of the market. Shop owners hope that the characteristics of the market remain the same but could be improved with modernization.

Impact of the SBUT redevelopment on vendors and residents

The hub for vintage goods and various other curiosities in Mumbai, Chor Bazaar has been situated in the Bhendi Bazaar area for over a century now. Currently the ongoing redevelopment project initiated by the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust is aimed at modernising the area by constructing multi-story modern eco-friendly buildings, which will then contain the shops on the street. Their objective is to enhance the infrastructure and make the area more business friendly, while also retaining the historic nature of the area. This project spans a staggering 16.5 acres and it impacts approximately 1,200 businesses and 20,000 residents. Challenges and opportunities go

hand in hand with large scale urban redevelopment projects such as this one, particularly for the vendors and residents who are dependent on this area for their livelihood.



Fig.15 : SBUT- Chor Bazaar During Development and Post Development Vision

Through our field study we interviewed many vendors who also happened to be residents in the same area, acquiring firsthand knowledge of their concerns and experiences about the transforming marketplace. Although this project promises to improve living conditions and provide better infrastructure, while modernizing the area, our interviews unveiled a mix of apprehension and hope among the vendors and residents.

Beyond interviews and conversations, strolling or walking or loitering as it is called in qualitative research, helped us understand the impact of ongoing redevelopment. As we strolled through the lanes of Chor Bazaar, we witnessed firsthand the disruptions caused due to the construction, noise, pollution, demolition and construction waste lying around, which certainly affected their business. Another vendor highlighted that it is the historic charm, the tiny lanes and the clustered shops that attract people, without this Chor Bazaar would be like any other mall. There would be a significant change in business dynamics for vendors because of this project.

The more optimistic vendor, the owner of the ‘Mughal Art Gallery’ store, who also happened to be a resident there in the same building, stated that : *“This would be a good change for me as it would contribute to my business positively , since most of my customers travel by car , I feel that redevelopment would provide increased parking space , making it easier for them”*. His narrative

tells us that this change would reduce the congestion in the area , making it more convenient and accessible for his customers . On another note, he admitted that the excitement of the word ‘chor’ does draw a crowd. The sheer curiosity of discovering whether the name Chor Bazaar holds true or not brings curious wanderers to the cramped streets overflowing with miscellaneous items and fluid price tags, trying to uncover the puzzling question that brought us here as well; is this really a thieves’ market? The antique seller was fixated on the fact that this was what brought people to this area and that the identity this name brought along should never cease.

Another Vendor, the owner of the ‘Dul-Dul’ advertisement shop stated that they would not want anything to change, he is content and prefers the current set up, he seemed apprehensive about the idea of having to relocate. Despite his earlier stance, he expressed a contrasting view stating that, "*the redevelopment is necessary due to the old age and structural weakness of buildings , which posed a safety risk to residents and businesses”(Said in Hindi)* . This adds to the nature of dilapidation of buildings that calls for redevelopment.

The views of both these vendors highlight that the more affluent vendors in the market would benefit from this project as it caters to their customer base, whereas the lower-income vendors would face difficulties. Antique sellers, in particular, are not as concerned about the financial impact of relocating because they make fewer high-value sales .
“Antique business is not a grocery store where you do business every day, every hour, every minute. We only make 2 sales a week. Or sometimes 3 sales in 2 weeks. So we are used to low sales.” - Mughal Art Gallery owner

On the other hand, day-to-day sellers who are reliant on constant sales to sustain their livelihood would be the most affected by the redevelopment . Since the current set up of the marketplace provides a sense of community and familiarity for the vendors , there is a concern that modernisation might take away the traditional culture that adds to the uniqueness of the market. This is the precise on-the-ground meaning of ongoing gentrification and urban change happening in Chor Bazaar.

The Tourism Effect

A constant customer base that Chor Bazaar caters to is tourists. A growing and thriving marketplace known for its antiques, vintage goods, Bollywood memorabilia, and rare artefacts and collectibles, the market immerses outsiders in a bustling experience of history and culture. For them, Chor Bazaar is not a place for street shopping, but a way to see Bombay in another form.

For Indian tourists, Chor Bazaar is a place of nostalgia and unique finds. Visitors from other cities and states come here to buy antique furniture, home decor, electronics and automobile spare parts at reasonable prices. Bollywood enthusiasts also explore around the market to find vintage movie and song posters, movie tickets from the past, retro cameras and old photo films that are drawing travellers not just for their collectible value but mainly for the environment of the market itself. Many come to float around in the chaotic yet captivating energy, where the smell of old paper and metal rust remains in the air, as constant as the dust kicked up by the evermoving row of scooters zipping down the narrow lanes and the sounds of vendors bargaining combined with the distant noise of Mumbai's streets, and recently, the construction happening on the other side of the road, not 10 feet away.

For foreign tourists, the way they perceive Chor Bazaar lies in its history and the atmosphere of a street market. Unlike the high-end malls of Mumbai, this market offers a raw, unfiltered experience of Mumbai's culture. Many international visitors look for colonial era artifacts, movie and song posters, traditional Indian handicrafts and vintage briefcases—items that carry a piece of the past these items serve as unique and rare collectibles backed up with affordable pricing and authenticity, offering them a slice of Mumbai’s past Tourists from Europe and the U.S. specifically go in hunt for hand-carved wooden furniture, vintage typewriters, television, radio, telephones and old gramophones, which are kept as souvenirs from the past. Writers and photographers also find Chor Bazaar a visually astonishing location, with its chaotic surroundings, colorful streets and historic architecture giving them perfect storytelling images.

> One such visitor, a foreign tourist, shared their first notion of the market: *"The first time I came and turned a corner, the whole street was selling horns, it was just like ‘pee-pee’*

everywhere, and that's when I thought that this is amazing." For many travelers, Chor Bazaar is not just about shopping but about the pure experience of exploring its chaotic beauty. As this tourist says , *"I'm not really here to buy, but just to explore and experience."*

This shows that the market is less of a shopping hub and is more about its chaotic charm. It is the immersive experience people visit the market for, every lane sells and provides you with a different story, on one side of it you see car parts being sold, loud noise of horns to gather attention whereas on the other side an ornate brass statue built with expert craftsmanship sits unassumingly on the road.

Chor Bazaar gives us a taste of the Indian market culture. Unlike typical tourist attractions such as the Gateway of India or Marine Drive, Chor Bazaar offers visitors a more immersive experience , they are able to engage directly with local vendors, sit and have a chat with them, get to know them, engage in their stories, and observe Mumbai's street life up close. Many visitors just like to wander around the market, taking in the vibrant atmosphere and talking to shopkeepers who have been in the business for many generations.

Several guided heritage walks, hotel recommendations and city tours now include Chor Bazaar as a tourist spot, helping travellers understand the market's history and growth.. Some tour guides like Grand Mumbai Tours (grand mumbai, 2022) and Viator's private city tour (Viator, 2025) offer tourists greater experiences than just shopping by offering field activities like photography walks or antique-hunting tours along with the experience of engaging them with the thrill of bargaining (grand mumbai, 2022) .

One such traveler, Geeta Patel, a longtime customer in Chor Bazaar, reflects on its significance: *"I have come to sell my items here. There are a handful of things in Bombay now that remind you of its olden days, and Chor Bazaar is one of them."* Her words tell us how the market serves as a living relic of Mumbai's history, offering tourists an experience that is rare in the fast modernizing city. Unlike traditional visitors who simply wander and leave, some, like Geeta, actively engage by selling her own items making them second hand goods, making them a part of the market's dynamic culture. This exchange between locals and tourists adds to Chor

Bazaar’s original tourist appeal, making it not just a shopping destination but a space allowing people to contribute to its history and be a part of its culture.

With increasing tourism, Chor Bazaar has evolved to cater to international tourists. Most shops have started accepting online payments, and a few shopkeepers now speak and understand basic English to assist foreign customers. However, as an outcome of sellers understanding that tourists have more purchasing power than locals, a rising number of tourists is also resulting in higher prices.

At the same time, the market’s traditional character is under threat of redevelopment. The ongoing SBUT initiative aims to modernize the area by relocating vendors and their families to complexes. While this may provide better facilities like parking spaces to accommodate more tourists, many fear that it will take away the chaotic charm and historical experience that attract tourists in the first place.

Most tourists while exploring the streets of Mumbai definitely come across chor bazaar building curiosity in their minds. The market provides an authentic taste of Mumbai's history, irrespective of whether one is interested in antiques , a budget shopper, or just a curious tourist. Achieving a balance between modernity and maintaining the market's unique character will be challenging as tourism grows, but by accomplishing so, this will guarantee that future travellers may still enjoy the essence of this market.

Part 3: Search for Identity

The End.

Identity as we understand is a way of understanding the place through it's depth, culture, interlinks and soul. While many places and areas around the world might have a clear cut identity of what the place means and the soul that it holds, Chor Bazaar on the other hand due to it's complex anecdotal understandings and the multiple functionalities of the markets and it's different sides, makes it very difficult to understand what the market really is and what it's trying to be perceived as. One of the main indicators of complex identity of the market is in the *name* of the market. As mentioned earlier, while on field, many of the shop vendors and people around the market were hesitant to call the market "Chor-Bazaar" and even got defensive in the process when we called it that. And the stories of why the market was called "Shor-bazaar" as well is one we heard from almost all the people in the market. This raised questions as to why the market has 2 names and what does it actually mean to the people? And to answer this primary research concern of ours, we approached this concern through 2 ways.

The first one included us doing an open survey across the different sides of the market where we simply asked the question, "What do you call this market?". We surveyed 42 people in total, and the table below shows the results for the survey.

Name	Number of People
Chor	29
Shor	7
Mutton	4
Antique	2
Total	**42**

It however would've only made sense for us to make a comparison as to why people are still apprehensive in accepting the moniker Chor-Bazaar, and would rather embrace the title Shor Bazaar instead. This gave us an indication towards the market that in its totality, is widely known

as Chor Bazaar and not Shor Bazaar. This curiosity led us to conduct an auditory analysis of the place. And to do this, our group Calculated the decibels of the sound of 4 main locations of Chor Bazaar at different times in the day. These included Mutton street, the automobile street and the street work area. And the data for this is represented in the graphs and table below.

Name of the Area	Time of Day	Average Decibels
Mutton Street	4:01pm	80.5 dB
Mutton Street	5:01pm	83.0 dB
Mutton Street (During Azaan)	5:18pm	90.0 dB
Automobile Street	6:31pm	76.6 dB
Street Work Street	6:57pm	86.1 dB

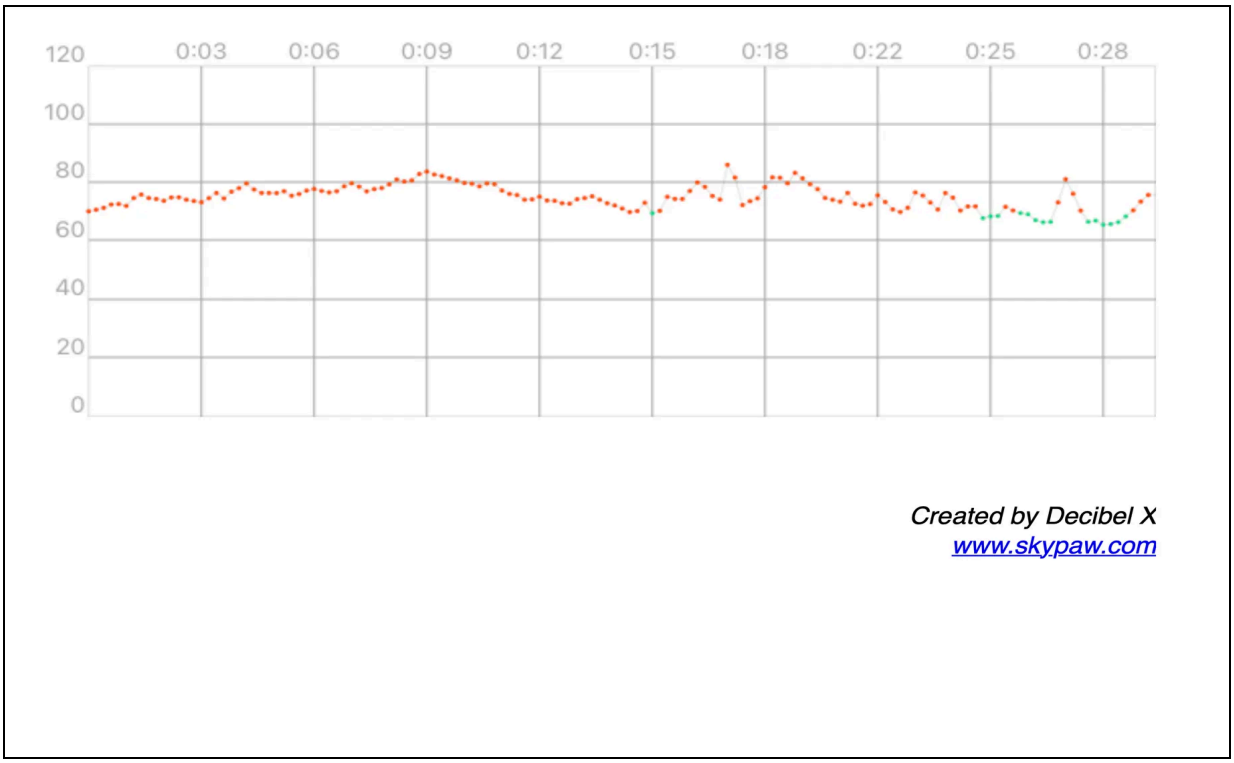


Fig.16: Automobile Street at 6:31pm

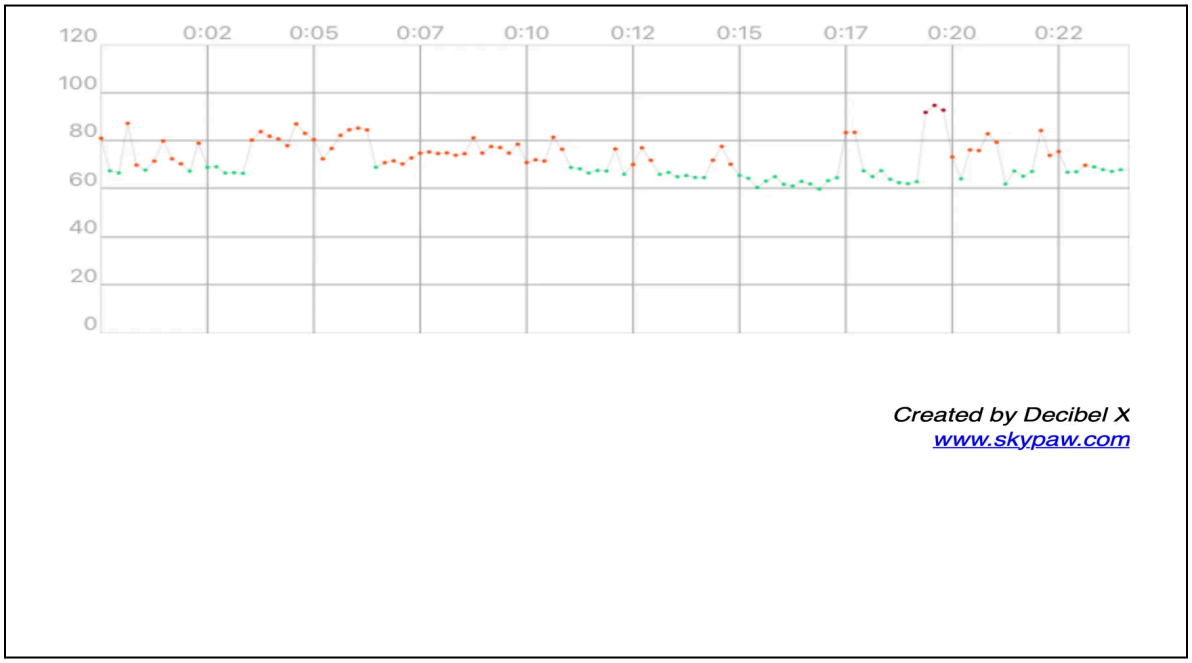


Fig.17 : Mutton Street at 4:01pm

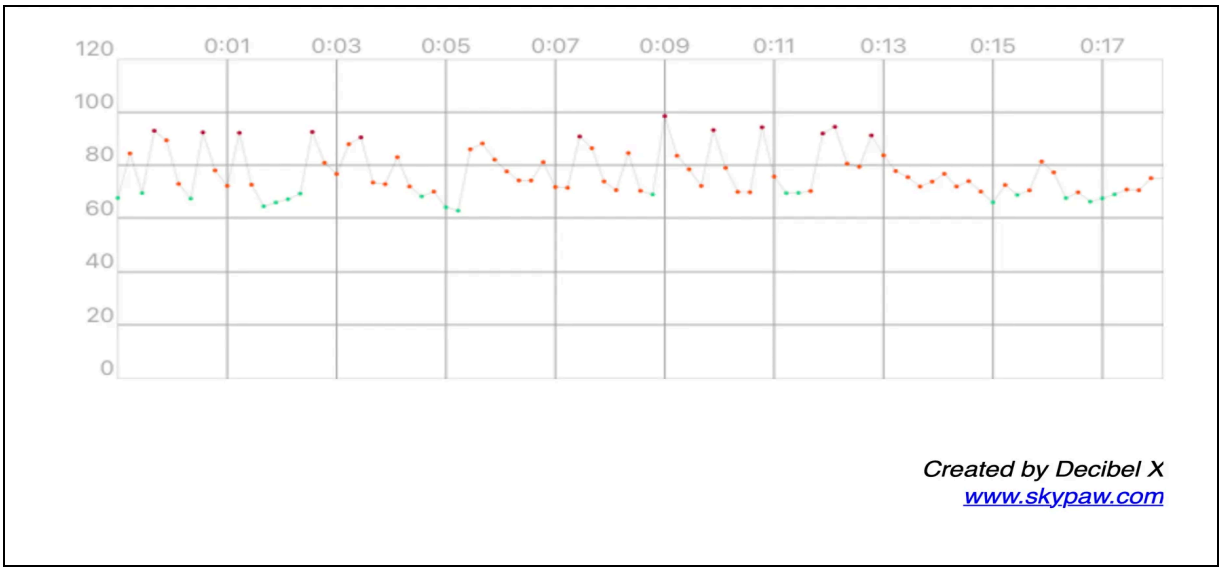


Fig.18 : Mutton Street at 6:57pm

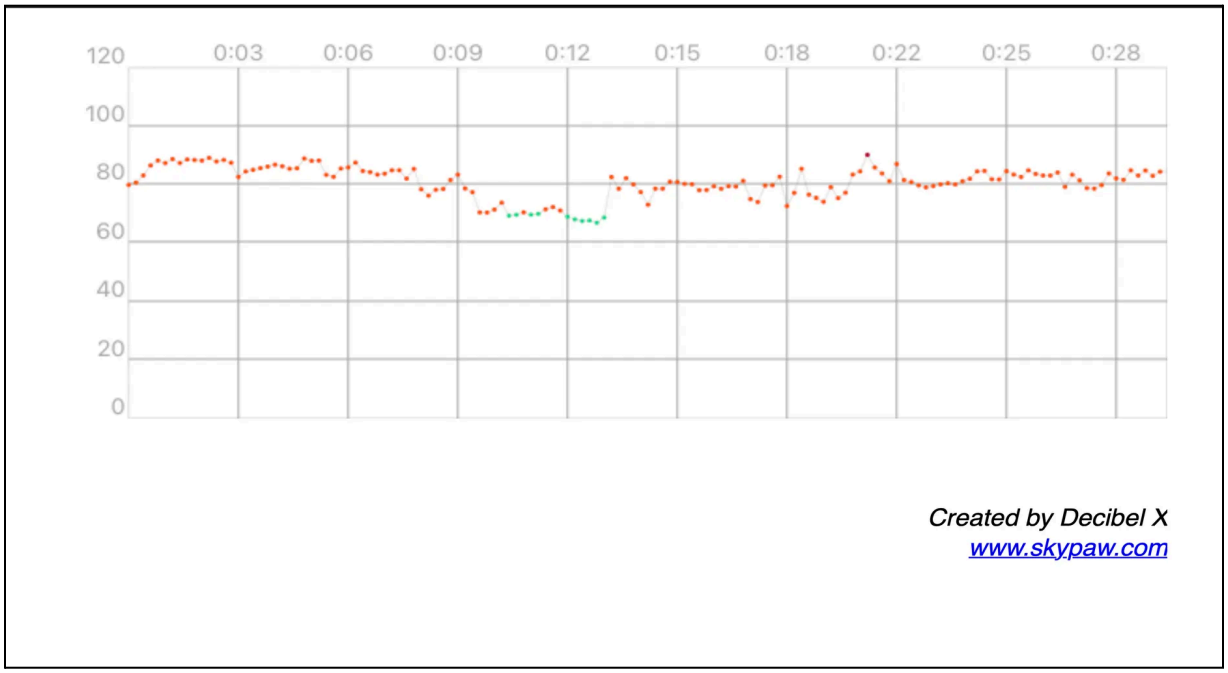


Fig. 19 : Mutton Street at 5:01pm

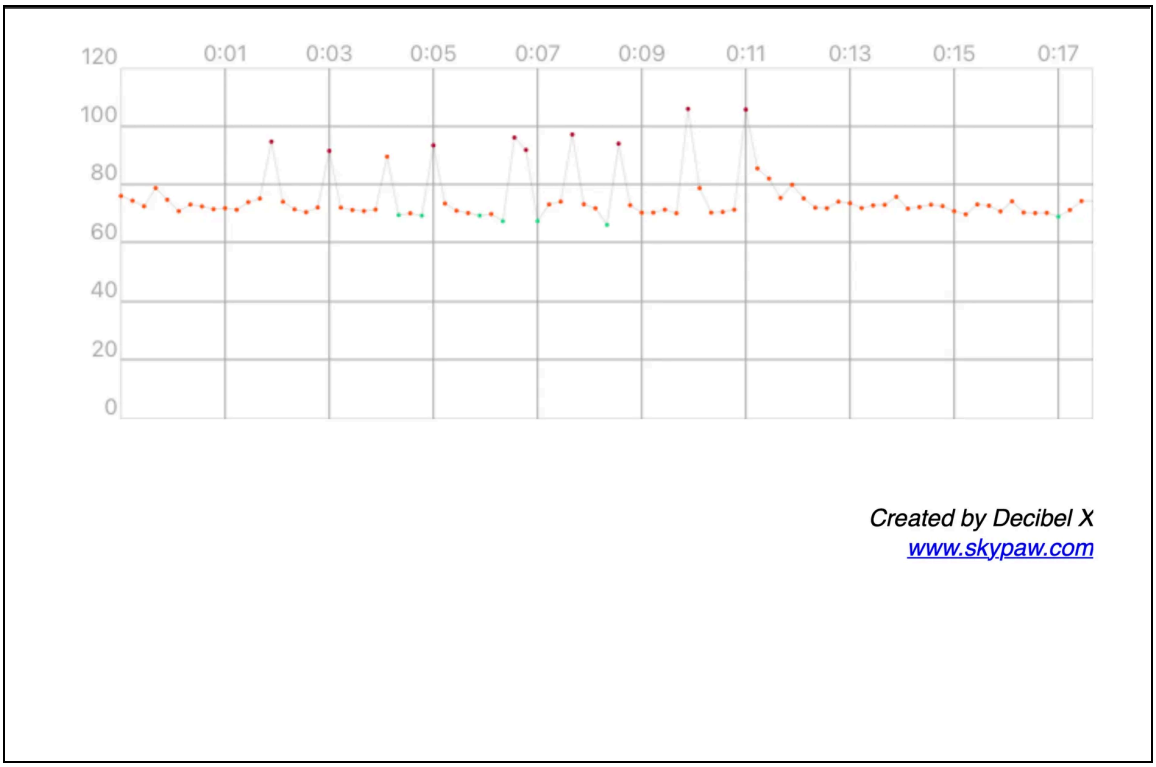


Fig. 20 : Mutton Street (During Azaan) at 5:18pm

This interpretation gives us an understanding that Chor Bazaar is not really an anecdotal name for the market. It is the actual name of the market because the people of the market say it themselves. The only leading question up to this is understanding the Friday morning market where expensive goods such as electronics, expensive clothes, watches are sold for cheap enough for people from all income brackets to purchase. So is this Friday market the one where the real Chor Bazaar lies?

Has Chor Bazaar lost its identity?

Circling back to the original understanding of the identity of Chor Bazaar, the market the way we understand it, is polarising in nature. Gentrification and the displacement of people in the market has caused the market to shrink in the process and lose it's original identity of the antique market where the good old antique shops are now moved to glass buildings and air conditioned stores, and the only part of the vintage antique market that still remains till today is Mutton Street. Chor Bazaar through this narrative is trying to be something it is not. The movements of the shops and

people to Bhendi Bazaar led the market to lose a huge part of its original identity, as it started shrinking. The market due to gentrification had started losing its essence in 2009 due to the introduction of the SBUT project. So, is what Chor Bazaar once was lost?

Chor Bazaar has not died because its boundaries have changed. Nor is it the case that the changing times have made it into something that is far from resembling what it used to be. From what we know, the market has had a cloud over its head carrying the stigma associated with the name. In its essence, Chor Bazaar is the people who make it, and their resilience and long standing loyalty to the market is what makes it certain to always have its effortless charm and intrinsic identity. Chor Bazaar presents a polarising nature due to the perceptions its subject to and what it really is. The complexity in understanding Chor Bazaar despite how it seems from the outside is what brings you to its true nature. The market has faced its own hardships, gentrification acting as a meddler in the once settled area, but once again the people have persevered. The Vaghri community still proceeds to remain there, the Friday market still proceeds to operate every Friday morning, and Mutton street too will never go. The vintage and antique shops have made their home there, for home in their context, is not the place, not the exact spot they reside in, but the people who have stuck to it. Time has tried its best to change Chor Bazaar in ways that would leave it unrecognizable and maybe it succeeded on the surface, but the soul of Chor Bazaar has never failed to thrive

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