



Agri-Food Marketing in Bottom of the Pyramid-Subsistence Markets: Practical Considerations

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the research was to identify, ascertain and better understand the practices of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies. The research was based on previous researches conducted by the author on agri-food marketing in bottom of the pyramid- subsistence markets (BOP-SM) in developing economies; over two decades of knowledge, experiences, and lessons learnt gained in working in agri-food marketing in developing economies; and knowledge contributions of others, such as for example, academics and practitioners, ascertained via previous online meetings. This research was further enhanced by the organization of a two day on-line meeting that considered in specific agri-food marketing practices in BOP-SM in developing economies. For the on-line meeting 93 previously identified agri-food marketing characteristics were used as ‘facilitators’ for discussion on agri-food marketing practices. The outcomes of the research provided for the identification of a good number of agri-food marketing practices; the identification of a number of differing typologies of marketing that pervade agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM contexts; and to foster not only further research in identifying further agri-food marketing practices in BOP-SM contexts, but also, and yet again, to provide for consideration and research in terms of new thinking and theorizing for agri-food marketing taken from a BOP-SM perspective.

Keywords: Marketing, Agricultural marketing, Food marketing, Agri-food marketing, Bottom of the pyramid, Subsistence markets, Developing economies.

1. Introduction

Trade is at the heart of the global agricultural and food sector: it connects diverse agri-food systems across the globe; provides interactions between people from differing countries; attempts to facilitate access to sufficient, diverse and nutritious food; and generates income and employment for farmers, traders and others involved in diverse agricultural and food sectors across countries (FAO, 2022a). Since 1995 agri-food trade has double (FAO, 2022a) and globally in 2021 the agricultural, food and beverages sector was estimated to be valued at circa US\$10 trillion (IFAD, 2021). However, food insecurity is still rising in many countries as a result of numerous factors, for example, unequal economic recovery between countries following the pandemic; income inequality; increasing volatility and uncertainty; soaring food prices¹; higher energy costs and related transport costs; increasing natural environment degradation; more adverse climate conditions; and conflict (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO, 2022; WFP, 2022; CE2022).

As such, these challenges place considerable constraints on agri-food marketing systems that provide for the much needed distribution of agricultural and food products to populations in many developing economies. Further, such agri-food marketing systems become somewhat even more challenged within acuter poverty contexts within developing economies that are termed bottom of the

¹ The World Bank (2022) provides that for low- and middle-income countries food price inflation ranges from 88 to 91 percent

pyramid- subsistence markets (BOP-SM). The bottom of the pyramid (BOP) within the human economic pyramid refers to the poorest (Prahalad, 2005), while subsistence markets (SM) refer to 'consumer and entrepreneur communities living at a range of low-income levels' (Viswanathan & Rosa, 2007). The BOP-SM contexts in developing economies are commonly found to have high levels of informality; unequal distribution of wealth; high levels of uncertainty; a chronic lack of basic infrastructure; a lack of services; are resource constrained; face high levels of market volatility; have high seller responsiveness to consumer demand; are provided by secluded and insular exchange systems; face violence and forced displacement; and pay 'poverty premiums' on products (Viswanathan, 2020; Muthuri & Farhoud, 2020; Mason *et al.*, 2017; Viswanathan & Sreekumar, 2017; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2015; Benninger & Robson, 2015; Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2014; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012).

It is within this background that the research was set. The research was based on: the findings that resulted from previous researches² conducted by the author on agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies; over two decades of knowledge, experiences, and lessons learnt gained in working in agri-food marketing in developing economies; and knowledge contributions of others, such as for example, academics and practitioners, via online meetings. As such, the main aim of the research was to build further on such findings, knowledge, experiences and lesson learnt. The research used as a 'facilitator' the 93 characteristics of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies, found by Hilmi (2022a) (see Table 1 below), in hope of probing further into agri-food marketing practices.

The research took an engaged scholarship perspective via organizing and facilitating a two day online meeting³. This was provided for in terms of engaged scholarship⁴ that is participative in nature as it is based on including stakeholders, such as for example, researchers, academics, practitioners, etc., so as to facilitate and encourage their contributions of knowledge, experience and lessons learnt to the research process. Such an approach, as provided by Van de Ven (2007), produces knowledge that is more 'penetrating and insightful than when scholars or practitioners work on the problems alone and advances both a scientific discipline and enlightens practice in a professional domain.'

Such an approach to the research required reflexivity, and in particular practical reflexivity. Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith (2004) define reflexivity, and in specific practical reflexivity as 'learning in experience: practical reflexivity challenges the idea that learning is an internal, cognitive process, replacing it with the notion that learning is an embodied, dialogical, and existential activity, intimately tied to how we feel, what we say, and how we respond to others'. In fact as later defined, in an evolution of reflexivity, Cunliffe (2016), provides it involves 'questioning what we, and others, might be taking for granted—what is being said and not said—and examining the impact this has or might have.' It considers two levels, one being 'self-reflexive about our own beliefs, values, and so on, and the nature of our relationships with others, what we say, and how we treat them and the second being critically reflexive about practices, policies, social structures, and knowledge bases'. These two levels of reflexivity fit in very well with the research as well as with the approach taken of engaged scholarship as per Anderson *et al.*, (2015) and Van de Ven (2007). Indeed practical reflexivity is by its very nature actively dialogical and relational.

Hence 'a deeper form of research that engages both academics and practitioners so as to produce knowledge that meets the dual hurdles of relevance and rigor for theory as well as practice in a given domain' (Van de Ven, 2007) is provided for. In this specific research, engaged scholarship is seen as collaborative research that entails a much 'greater sharing among researchers and stakeholders, composed of insiders and outsiders who jointly share in order to co-produce knowledge about a complex problem or phenomenon' (Van de Ven, 2007) that is 'usable' in practice. In a sense, engaged scholarship within this research is more 'public scholarship, which aims to develop scholarly work that is distributed to, discussed among, and debated by a variety of public and non-academic audiences' (Tracy, 2020).

² For example see Hilmi (2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022d; 2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2020a; 2020b; 2005; 2003); Hilmi *et al.*, (2011a); Hilmi *et al.*, (2011b); Fellows & Hilmi (2011); Nichols & Hilmi (2009); Naika *et al.*, (2005)

³ The online meeting was held on the 10th and 11th September 2022

⁴ Engaged scholarship is defined as a 'participative form of research for obtaining the different perspectives of key stakeholders (researchers, users, clients, sponsors, and practitioners) in studying complex problems' (Van de Ven, 2007).

Aim of the research

The main aim of the research was to identify, ascertain and better understand the practices of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies.

Methodology

So as to further the research on the practicalities of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies, an online meeting was organized. It focused mainly on the practicalities of agri-food marketing in developing economies and used as a basis and ‘facilitator’ for discussions the 93 characteristics identified by Hilmi (2022a) in Table 1. Initially 26 ‘key informants’ were identified to attend the meeting, who had backgrounds and who worked in academia, development, the public and private sectors as well as international development organizations and international and national NGOs, and who had all worked directly and indirectly in agri-food marketing in developing economies. All 26 key informants were sent the article Hilmi (2022a) for consideration and review prior to the meeting. It was highlighted that the article sent would provide a ‘facilitating role’ for discussion, but was not confined to this and a high degree of consideration should be provided to sharing their own knowledge, experiences and lessons learnt on practicalities of agri-food marketing in developing economies. The first day of the online meeting was held with seven ‘key informants’ of which two were from academia, one was from the public sector, one from an international organization and three were from the private sector of which one was from a multinational enterprise and two were from enterprises working directly within BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. The online meeting was provided via each attendee providing a brief presentation devoted to agri-food marketing practice in developing economies and followed by a question and answer time. The later part of the online meeting was provided by a discussion on the outcomes of the various presentations. The online meeting was recorded, a transcription software was used and a note taker was also present. A brief summary of findings from the first day’s presentations and discussions was provided to each of the attendees for the following day’s online meeting.

The second day online meeting was attended by all the seven ‘key informants’ from the previous day’s meeting, but was joined by two further ‘key informants’ who derived from international development organizations. This brought the number of attendees on the second day to nine people. The meeting was devoted mainly to discussions on the practicalities of agri-food marketing in developing economies, based on the previous day’s meeting findings as well as on new ‘inputs’ to the online meeting provided by the two new attendees. The online meeting, as that of the first day was recorded, a transcription software was used and a note taker was also present.

The content derived from the online meeting was set in a draft meeting report and sent to the attendees via email for review and feedback so as to check for its authenticity and accuracy in its narrative and documentation. Once feedback was received the draft meeting report was then checked by the meeting note taker who compared notes taken with the software generated transcriptions and the feedback received. The second draft version of the meeting content was then shared again with the attendees for review and feedback. A final version of the meeting content was agreed upon following the final reviews of attendees.

The final version of the meeting report was then analysed qualitatively. This involved in particular content analysis which is a ‘careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings’ (Lune & Berg, 2017). It simply involves ‘ a technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text’ (Lune & Berg, 2017). Within this attendees’ inputs to the meeting were considered systematically and classified according to their meanings (Adams *et al.*, 2014). The categories⁵ for analysis used for classification were based on the characteristics found in Table 1 (see below). Each attendees’ input was then assigned to a category i.e. coding. This was done via considering the frequency of words and terms used as well as themes that emerged.

The findings from the analysis were then shared with the attendees for review and feedback. The feedback received was compared and triangulated to provide for reliability and validity. Further, the first draft of the article was also shared with the attendees for review and also here feedback received

⁵ The categories provided were set against the following criteria: relevant, mutually exhaustive, exhaustive and reliable

was compared and triangulated so as to provide for a further layer of reliability and validity on the research conducted.

Findings

Findings from previous research

In previous researches conducted, for example, see Hilmi (2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022d; 2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2020a; 2020b; 2005; 2003) what mainly emerged was that effectively agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economy contexts diverged, to a fairly good degree, from agri-food marketing as provided in developed economies. What also emerged, and this also from a previous online meeting (see Hilmi, 2022a), was that agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies should be considered from a specific BOP-SM perspective and 'not adaptive to such contexts i.e. a new way of thinking, theorizing and practicing marketing. This also implying to possibly consider if marketing was really apt for such BOP-SM contexts seeing that marketing, in its modern form, has derived from a well-defined evolutionary process that has economic, cultural, social, political and other distinct and specific contextual characteristics that derived from a particular geographical area of the world. Hence adaptation of marketing to such BOP-SM contexts was questioned and possibly new thinking, theory and practices of marketing may be required that could possibly not even be termed marketing, but something different' (Hilmi, 2022a).

However, and interestingly, some similarities were found between agri-food marketing in the BOP-SM and digital marketing (see Hilmi, 2021a). Digital marketing is commonly considered and perceived to be in the realm of developed economies and at the helm of the digital economy and hence apparently could have little to do with agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts. But 33 similar characteristics were found between agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies and digital marketing. This, indeed, provided that there was, and is, fertile ground on which the two marketing subject matter areas could amalgamate (Hilmi, 2021a).

In this regard, and furthering such research in agri-food marketing in the BOP-SM in developing economies it was found that the identification of characteristics within the subject matter area was and is important. For example, agri-food marketing in BOP-SM rural, urban and rural contexts found distinctiveness between rural and urban agri-food marketing characteristics (see Hilmi, 2022c); the micro, meso and macro agri-food marketing levels also found distinctiveness in characteristics among such levels (see Hilmi, 2022d); and the overall identification of 93 characteristics of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts brought together the previous characteristics found as well as furthering research on such characteristics (see Hilmi, 2022a). The 93 characteristics identified in Hilmi (2022a) are provided below in Table 1. Such characteristics were reviewed by four academics in a previous online meeting and 'there was a general agreement on them and how these in fact reflected, to a degree though, ground realities' (Hilmi, 2022a). This thus provided that such characteristics have a good degree of confidence.

Table 1: Agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM in developing economies

Micro level sensitive
Meso level sensitive
Macro level sensitive
Informal
Formal
Formal-informal interface
Resource scarce
Collective
Networked
Social networks
Adaptive by local context and location
Heterogeneity
Suitability
Innovative

Flexible
Variable
Versatile
Agile
Relational
Trust
Market demand knowledgeable
Consumer critical needs research
Customer relational
Consumer-entrepreneur duality
Brand loyalty
High level of customization
Social interdependence for consumption
Loyalty development focused
Partnership focused
Partnerships with customers, NGOs, Public sector
Exchange focused
Non-economic exchange
Quasi-commercial
Commercial
Developmental
Holistic
Elastic
Public interventions
Subsidized
Empathy sensitive
Culturally sensitive
Societal sensitive
Traditional norms sensitive
Religious sensitive
Community sensitive
Language and dialect sensitive
Visual sensitive
Oral sensitive
Information and communication technology focused
Communication for awareness development
Communication for educating
Two-way communication and interactivity
Needs value based
Value creation
Aspirational value based
Co-creation of value
Locally produced value creation
Services
Acceptability
Affordability
Availability
Awareness

Win-Win outcome focused
Entrepreneurial
Risk-taking
Self-confidence (calculated risk taking)
Uncertain
Low production costs (resource constrained)
Distribution focused
Intensive
Frequent
Insular
Closed system
Process focused
Operations focused
Product choice
Production
Managing production
Harvesting
Handling
Sorting
Packaging
Storing
Transporting
Processing
Financing
Associating
Deciding how to sell
Where to sell
When to sell
Costing
Sales on credit
Rural, urban and rurban

(Source: Hilmi, 2022c; Hilmi, 2022d; Hilmi, 2021b; Dash *et al.*, 2020; Hakhroo, 2020; Hilmi, 2020a; Mathur *et al.*, 2020; MOE, 2020; Ngqangweni *et al.*, 2020; Mathur *et al.*, 2019; Das, 2018; Khaleel, 2018; Nunna, 2018; World Bank & FAO, 2018; Kripanithi & Ramachander, 2018; Achrol & Kotler, 2017; Ahmed, 2017; Bhanot, 2017; Gosavi & Samudre, 2016; Kashyap, 2016; Tutorials Point, 2016; Wiskereke, 2015; Moustier & Renting, 2015; Brown *et al.*, 2014; Ahmed, 2013; Fellows & Hilmi, 2011; Jha, 2012; Modi, 2012; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012; Krishnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan, 2011; Mulky, 2010; Weidner *et al.*, 2010; Modi, 2009; Ramkishen, 2009; FAO, 2008; Velayudhan, 2007; FAO, 2005; Singh & Pandey, 2005; Vaswani *et al.*, 2005; FAO, 2003; FAO, 1999)

What was also found in previous research was that:

- Agri-food marketing was instinctive and as such agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies was and is prevalently entrepreneurial marketing (see Hilmi, 2022a; 2020a) as is carried out by agri-food micro-sized family run enterprises commonly found within such contexts;
- Interestingly from a previous online meeting held on the subject matter (see Hilmi, 2022a) what emerged was the heterogeneity of such BOP-SM contexts and hence agri-food marketing needed to consider such and thus focus on what may be termed ‘localization agri-food marketing’;
- What also emerged was the marginalization and violence within such agri-food marketing systems;
- The relevance of taking a systems approach in terms of accessibility and affordability, but also to acceptability and awareness (the 4 As marketing mix [see Sheth & Sisodia, 2012]);
- Consideration of ‘spill-over’ effects from more higher income targeted agri-food marketing systems, which provide what may be termed ‘parallel’ agri-food marketing systems.;

- The primacy on product freshness;
- Locally based value creation;
- The importance of family and social networks, implying also trust;
- The possibility of sales on credit;
- The two previous points above all providing for an ‘insurance and assurance’ agri-food marketing system and that agri-food marketing is not only based on commercial aspects in such BOP-SM contexts, but also on quasi-commercial to a social to a developmental typology of agri-food marketing;
- Agri-food marketing needed to adapt to BOP-contexts and be flexible, variable, versatile, agile and innovative;
- Taking consideration for thinking and practice that was sensitive to the natural environmental and climate change matters.

Thus and in summary what was found was that agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies was: entrepreneurial; localized; marginalized; socially and family networked; not fully commercially oriented; commonly credit-based; focused on processes and operations; tended to use the 4 A’s marketing mix (affordability, acceptability, awareness, availability); had a primacy on freshness; had also ‘spill over’ parallel agri-food marketing systems; tended to be conducted in violent contexts to a degree; and required to be adaptable, flexible, versatile, variable, agile and innovative.

Findings from the online meeting⁶

The preamble and overarching matters to the meeting were mainly three. The first related to consider primarily marketing by organizations from within the BOP-SM context i.e. autochthonous to such settings and those who market to BOP-SM i.e. from outside the BOP-SM context. Clearly the main focus was on private enterprises marketing on both sides of the matter within and from outside BOP-SM contexts, but this did not exclude, for example, public organizations and NGOs, for such marketing. The second matter was that agri-food marketing practice needed to be considered not only from an enterprise to consumer marketing practice, but also as marketing practice between enterprises along the agri-food supply chain. The third matter was the consideration of the high degree of heterogeneity found within BOP-SM contexts i.e. high diversity between BOP-SM contexts and within.

In BOP-SM contexts marketing is not sufficient only at the micromarketing level for agri-food products to individual customers, as is the norm, but consideration has to be given also to the mesomarketing and macromarketing practices. In BOP-SM most micro-scale family run agri-food enterprises are highly customer focused, in other words customer centric, as inherently both depend on each other for their survival. However, in BOP-SM contexts, usually, for example, agri-food marketing also needs to consider the community level mesomarketing aspects. Consumption in many BOP-SM contexts is heavily influenced by community and the relations individuals have at large. This means that, although being customer centric is important, community level matters have to be considered as both consumer and micro-scale enterprise also depend on the community for their survival. Thus, for example, agri-food products must not only be acceptable to individual consumers, but also to their families and the wider community and how this can affect overall local societal matters. This leads to the higher level of macromarketing where in fact societal outcomes are also considered in agri-food marketing and how this needs to be considered in practice. Commonly, such macromarketing, is thought to be in the purview of the public sector, NGOs and international development organizations. However, and interestingly, even micro-sized enterprises working within BOP-SM contexts were, to a degree, aware of having to tender with macromarketing matters in their agri-food marketing operations. This not only from a societal point of view, but also, for example, from an infrastructural point of view, were issues of regular electrical energy and potable water supply, were seen as being important for the appropriate functioning of agri-food marketing.

Hence in practical terms in BOP-SM contexts agri-food marketing needs to be customer centric, but also needs to consider community marketing as well as marketing aspects related to macro aspects,

⁶ The findings provided here are integral to what was provided in the final report of the two-day online meeting following analysis. However for practical reasons of length, such findings that resulted from the analysis have been ‘summarized’ in this section of the article.

such as, for example, overall societal benefits and welfare, infrastructure matters and so forth. This thus clearly defines that agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM contexts needs to take a ‘three pronged’ approach.

Most often than not, agri-food marketing within BOP-SM contexts occurs in informal settings. This basically means being outside of the reach of formal laws and regulations that commonly govern agri-food marketing. However, this is not an absolute, as there are also plenty of cases where the generally informal nature of BOP-SM contexts interfaces with the formal. This creates what may be termed a ‘grey area’ for agri-food marketing to tender with. For example, in some BOP-SM contexts, food products sold may derive from informal enterprises as well as formal enterprises. This grey area of agri-food marketing though does not signify that there are no rules and laws, far from it: it is often the case that most often such rules and laws can be a mix of both formal and informal rules. For example, informal rules may be set by market retailers, but make some reference to formal laws with regard to trade within such markets. However, there are also many cases where overall rules and norms are prevalently informal and guided by monopolies or oligopolies of dominant stakeholders in agri-food marketing systems, which dictate outright the ‘rules of the game’. Commonly these are seen as being mainly provided by traders, found in rural, peri-urban and urban areas, but this is not necessarily the norm, as for example, there can also be dominant stakeholders within agri-food marketing systems that are farmers, transporters, public officials, etc., and who may form ‘coalitions of interest’ that may run along the entire agri-food marketing system and not just relegated to a particular stage of the agri-food marketing system. Such coalitions can be permeant or seasonal and can develop and wither pending on interests and the convergence of these within such locations. Thus, such coalitions can be volatile, but are commonly good at adapting to changing agri-food marketing conditions and can be very agile in their responses to such market changes.

Clearly agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts thus has to cater for such informal-formal settings and thus requires a good degree of, for example, innovation, flexibility, variability and agility to face up to such challenges. Agri-food enterprises within BOP-SM contexts which are autochthonous to such settings, cater for these via, for example, their networks, be they family, friends and community typologies of networks. Agri-food enterprises that are not autochthonous from a BOP-SM context, for example, may use partnerships with traders and /or retailers to market their produce, which over time, usually, develop into relational and social networks. However and overall, the informal-formal settings require agri-food marketing to be innovative, flexible, variable, versatile, agile and also relational. This clearly constraints agri-food marketing planning as such volatile contexts inevitably impedes this. However strategies can be provided for: some can be long term, for example those provided for customer centricity, but others cannot be, for example providing credit on purchasing, and thus such strategies may have to be modified on a day by day basis, also meaning that much of the agri-food marketing provided in such contexts is instinctive to a good degree.

Resource scarcity in agri-food marketing is usually the norm in such contexts. Most autochthonous micro-sized family run agri-food enterprises do not have the resources to devote to agri-food marketing as simply they have little in terms of resources to devote to the enterprise anyway as such enterprises are commonly the livelihood for such families and thus family matters intermingle with those of the enterprise. This places such agri-food marketing to be practiced with what scant resources are available, what may be termed agri-food marketing ‘boot-strapping’. For example, family and social networks are used for agri-food marketing as is word of mouth and mobile phone technology and social media. This characteristic of resource scarcity, all place a high degree of local specificity on such agri-food marketing as well as ingenuity and innovation. All such practices are thus set within a social and cultural context that is familiar to intended target customers and communities and thus gain acceptability.

Even though agri-food micro-sized family enterprises market their products individually, effectively it is as if they are marketing collectively. This collectivistic marketing approach derives from a number of factors, for example: selling similar products; selling to similar typologies of customers; selling in defined cultural, social and economic contexts, etc. This, to a degree, provides that collective marketing practices need to be considered in BOP-SM contexts, where for example, there is competition among sellers, but it is highly moderated by such collectivistic marketing. As per this collectivism there are networks and social networks: networked marketing relies. Such networks facilitate marketing practice and are also commonly found among agri-food micro-sized family enterprises, hence the

collectivist nature of such marketing. Such networks develop commonly over time and can be based on numerous factors, such as for example, survival, need, necessity, family, friends, local community, common language and/or dialect. These networks represent one of the primary marketing 'tools' that are used in such contexts. In fact such networks are suitable to BOP-SM contexts as they fit with the characteristics of such contexts, and hence it could be termed 'suitability marketing' that is also adaptive to the local context and location. Indeed as per the large diversity of BOP-SM contexts marketing needs to be, de facto, heterogeneous, where it is suitable and adaptive to such BOP-SM contexts. For example, in some BOP-SM contexts affordability and accessibility are the main concerns for many, and thus marketing revolves around such; in other BOP-SM contexts acceptability and awareness may be the consumer emphasis, with a minor degree of affordability and accessibility and thus marketing revolves around such. Indeed agri-food marketing thus in practice in BOP-SM contexts needs to be collective, networked, suitable, adaptive and thus requires to a good degree in being heterogeneous.

The need for heterogeneity of agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM, requires it to be innovative, flexible, variable, versatile, agile, relational and provide for trust. In BOP-SM contexts being innovative in marketing practice is a must, this is because of the high degree of uncertainties that such contexts provide and thus the need to come up with innovative marketing solutions. For example, selling on credit is nothing innovative, but as per the dire uncertainties the BOP-SM context provides to consumers, does require innovative ways of providing such consumer credit. These can take various and innovative forms, for example, small assets are required from the consumer to enable the sale on credit, these small assets, can range from a simple spade to a ring. Flexibility within agri-food marketing is also another practice that is a must as, yet again, the uncertainties of such contexts do require a great degree of flexibility. This, as per the example provided previously on selling on credit, can be a good example of flexibility. This flexibility implies that agri-food marketing also is variable, it has to change regularly to a high degree: for example on one day affordability may be the primer marketing practice, while on another day accessibility and so forth. This means also that marketing practice must be versatile and consequently agile, so such marketing 'agility' fits well into such varying and uncertain BOP-SM contexts.

Clearly agri-food marketing in such contexts is highly relational as this is also a must: in part this is provided by the necessity of survival and its needs, but also by strong senses of community, friendship and family, which play critical roles in the daily quest of survival for both consumers, but also for agri-food micro-sized family enterprises. This relational approach to marketing, relationship marketing, is especially focused on trust and critically trust building. For example, consumers that may only be able to afford one meal per day, need to ensure that the meal is not only affordable, but good, satisfying, nutritious and does not have adverse side effects, such as food poisoning, for example. Agri-food micro-sized family enterprises also have the same marketing prerogative to provide and build trust as they rely on consumer purchases, however meagre these may be, for survival. Thus there is a vested interest not only to provide what customers' desire, but instil trust in customers so they keep on returning. Thus agri-food marketing practice is not only collectivist among agri-food micro-sized family enterprises, but also collectivist with consumers, and hence a form of agri-food social marketing.

Such collectivist agri-food marketing, a form of agri-food social marketing, implies per se a good knowledge of market demand. Agri-food micro-sized family enterprises, for example, need to know how much supplies are needed on a daily basis to provide to customers, for example. Since supplies are bought in small quantities and frequently and can vary in their perishability, agri-food micro-sized family enterprises need to carefully plan such buys as per the direct outlay of cash and/or credit. A wrong buying decision, for example, can have serious consequences not only for the enterprise, but also for the family members of the enterprise. This implies that there is a duality of roles for the agri-food micro-sized family enterprises: the enterprise buys for business reasons, but also for family consumption reasons and as such the enterprise is both a consumer for personal family reasons for example, and also a buyer for business reasons.

Hence as per this dual role, there is an implied necessity to be 'well-informed' about overall market demand and more in specific on the critical needs consumers have. However agri-food micro-sized family enterprises are at a vantage point in gaining information on market demand and the critical needs of consumers as not only to their embeddedness in BOP-SM, but in their relational 'vicinity' to customers over an extended time period. This enables agri-food micro-sized family enterprises to gain considerable market knowledge, but also specific customer knowledge that enables agri-food micro-

sized family enterprises to provide for highly targeted and customized marketing. For example agri-food micro-sized family enterprises may know the preferences, tastes and likes and dislikes of their regular customers, which are de facto considered clients. But this market and customer 'sensing' also enables them to develop what may be termed a 'sixth sense' intuitive understanding of customers who such enterprises are not so familiar with and thus enable such enterprises to provide for a good degree of customized marketing. However this 'market and customer sensing' also enables a good degree of information to be obtained on the local community, hence it is in a sense also a form of meso-market research, where clients and customers from that community are well known in their consumption preferences that enables, for example, the agri-food micro-sized family enterprise to have considerable community-market knowledge.

This all provides that overall there is a high degree of customer, client and community relationship management, but also and importantly a high degree of marketing customization. This also provided for, as stated previously, a social interdependence for consumption and which is focused on loyalty. This loyalty is not only provide though by the customer to the agri-food micro-sized family enterprises, but also by the agri-food micro-sized family enterprises to customers and the community at large. This loyalty is also provided by, and interestingly what may be termed 'brand loyalty'. The brand does not only signify a particular product brand, for example, which has both consumer and enterprise trust, but in the fact that the agri-food micro-sized family enterprise becomes a brand itself in the eyes of the customer or client as it represents what mostly trust worthy branded products represent in such BOP-SM. Thus there is a clear indication that on both enterprise and customer sides of marketing within BOP-SM contexts there is a focus on loyalty development.

Such loyalty, brings within it, as per other agri-food marketing practices discussed previously, partnerships. Loyalty, in part, implies building partnerships in agri-food marketing practice. Such partnerships are not only implied in the interface between agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and its clients and customers, but also with its suppliers along the agri-food supply chain. This agri-food marketing partnership practise can go, in some, instances also towards the public sector and NGOs, for example. Local public administrations and their related services, for example, in terms of extension, can become an integral part of marketing practice within BOP-SM contexts and thus become a partner, directly and/or indirectly with agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and customers. Very much the same, for example, can be provided for NGOs, which may be local, national and international, and who also provide services within BOP-SM contexts. Thus, also such NGOs become directly and/or indirectly partners. Agri-food marketing partnership practice can also be provided with enterprises that are not directly from a particular BOP-SM context and who sell their products to agri-food micro-sized family enterprises. Such enterprises may be, for example, simply from other BOP-SM contexts within the same locality, from differing parts of the region, country as well as from international origin. In fact, for example, it is well known that many global enterprises sell their agri-food products within BOP-SM contexts, via partnerships, either directly or indirectly with agri-food micro-sized family enterprises. Thus agri-food marketing within BOP-SM contexts there is a high degree of partnership practice.

Agri-food marketing partnership practice within BOP-SM contexts does focus mainly on exchange per se and can be considered to a much lesser degree transactional. Indeed agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and customers are 'exchange experts' as it is a fundamental part of survival. However, even though, exchange is focused on commercial aspects in agri-food marketing practice, such practice within BOP-SM is not always a commercial exchange. In many cases, for example, exchange can be 'quasi-commercial', where exchange is intermingled also with social, cultural and religious practices. For example, during religious festivities, commercial aspects of agri-food marketing exchange are 'diluted' with gifts on purchases made or simply providing gifts with no money exchange involved. This can be considered not only a non-economic exchange practice within agri-food marketing, but also has developmental connotations, where a private enterprise, for example, an agri-food micro-sized family enterprise, takes on a public role of delivering a so called 'public benefit' free of charge. Thus this implies that in agri-food marketing practice moves away from the micromarketing perspective only and moves into the more community level mesomarketing practice of providing also for community benefits and welfare as well as contributing to macromarketing practice via providing for wider social benefits. This to a degree, making private enterprise agri-food marketing practice tinge with public service types of practice and thus providing for the marketing of services. This also

providing for that such agri-food marketing practice is holistic in nature, considering both private and public aspects of exchange.

This leads back to partnerships practice in agri-food marketing where effectively there is a commonality of actions by both the private as well as the public sector. Indeed the public sector does provide directly and/or indirectly for partnerships with private lead agri-food marketing as provided before. Previously it was done mainly via subsidies, for example, but now with the demise of many subsidies has taken on more varying roles, for example, those of providing a more conducive agri-food marketing environment. This not only by promulgating facilitating policies for agri-food marketing, but also with interventions such as rural wholesale market restructurings, urban retail market constructions, etc. In some cases, many of such projects being done in public and private partnerships. Thus, and yet again, agri-food marketing practice takes on a far more social marketing practice in BOP-SM.

Indeed such agri-food marketing practice being social marketing in nature has thus a strong focus also on being empathy sensitive. In other words an agri-food marketing practice that is understanding of the uncertainties that pervade dire BOP-SM contexts. This also provides that agri-food marketing is also sensitive to the community, traditions, religions, society and cultures of BOP-SM contexts. This not only due to BOP-SM heterogeneity, but for considering within agri-food marketing practice the need to adapt to the local, as provided previously, to 'localization' agri-food marketing practice. This 'localization' is further enhanced by the sensitivity of agri-food marketing practice to local languages and dialects as well as visual and oral aspects.

In many BOP-SM contexts local languages and dialects are the main medium of communication and in particular marketing communication. This is enhanced by visual and oral sensitivities in agri-food marketing practice that caters for the lack of literacy in BOP-SM contexts and as such relies to a good degree on verbal and importantly visual sensitivities as 'substitutes' to written marketing communications. Orality and visuality are in fact critical to agri-food marketing practice in many BOP-SM contexts. However this agri-food marketing practice via orality and visuality is not a one way communication process, but a two-way interactive communication process, where for example, agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and customers interact orally, but also visually on a regular basis. These interactions are not only providing for agri-food marketing practice that develops awareness via its communications, for example, about product attributes, but also, and to a degree, such communications are 'educating': agri-food micro-sized family enterprises learn more and more about their customers and customers learn more and more about not only the enterprise and its products, but also what it means to be a consumer. In a sense it is agri-food marketing practice that entails 'communication for education'. This agri-food marketing practice of communicating orally and visually and in local languages and dialect is becoming more and more facilitated and enhanced by information and communication technologies (ICTs). For example, mobile phones are reaching deep also into rural and remote BOP-SM contexts. This enables for numerous opportunities to enhance agri-food marketing practice with mobile communications, for example.

Such orality and visuality in agri-food marketing practice can enhance value, for example. In BOP-SM contexts agri-food marketing practice does not only attempt to satisfy what may be termed 'basic needs' value, but also seeks to provide for aspirational value of customers, that is also value provided locally, and most often such value is delivered between the agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and customers i.e. there is co-creation of value. For example, prepared street foods that provide for the basic needs value posed on nutrition for survival, but also adds to this local value, as the prepared street foods are locally produced and thus with recognizable local recipes and flavours, and are also aspirational in value as they are customized to the tastes of each customer on specific order, and thus such value is also co-created. Thus the various values that are required for BOP-SM contexts provide an added 'service' component to such agri-food marketing practice i.e. a customer centric value based agri-food marketing practice. Hence, and to a degree, agri-food marketing practice also provides for services marketing within BOP-SM contexts.

Agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts does indeed also provide for services, as mentioned previously. In terms of agri-food products it enables availability in BOP-SM contexts i.e. distribution that enables customers to access such products. This is an important service as many who live and work in BOP-SM settings are curtailed in terms of their mobility and hence their access to food. Thus agri-food marketing provides a service practice to make such food available. For example, such food is made available not only by stationary street food vendors, but also by itinerant vendors and street hawkers,

who also make door to door sales and deliveries of food. Such an availability practice is also part of the agri-food 'marketing mix' and is supported by awareness creation for agri-food products as provided also previously in terms of the marketing communication practice based, for example, on orality and visuality. Such a marketing communication practice also facilitates acceptability of agri-food products as it 'educates' consumers on what the agri-food products are, their attributes and what benefits these can provide, for example. It also informs consumers of the affordability of agri-food products, in terms of price, for example and what terms of payments may be available for consumers. Thus in agri-food marketing practice there is availability (distribution), awareness (communication/educating), acceptability (knowledge on products and services), and affordability (price/cost/method of payment).

The '4 As' marketing mix (availability, awareness, acceptability and affordability) and its usage within BOP-SM contexts is a common practice found. However adaptability is also another agri-food marketing mix practice found, as also provided previously, in that agri-food marketing needs to adapt to specific BOP-SM contexts and thus also be flexible. There is also the practice of relational networking and partnerships which can be termed 'associating' so as to better agri-food marketing mix practice. Further in interactions between agri-food micro-sized family enterprises and consumers support (assistance) is provided to consumers by enterprises. This assistance, for example is provided in terms on sales on credit, explaining product features and so forth. However and in turn consumers are also providing for assistance to agri-food micro-sized family enterprises via enabling sales and thus supporting such businesses. Thus in BOP-SM contexts agri-food marketing practice is also about adaptability, association, and assistance. Indeed the agri-food marketing practice of providing assistance provides for a form of 'win-win model' that is in fact the outcome of most agri-food marketing practice i.e. a strong social affinity and outcome between enterprise and customer. This provides, yet again, that agri-food marketing practice is not just micromarketing, interactions between enterprise and customer, but also mesomarketing, the community level and the macromarketing, societal welfare. Thus there is a strong emphasis in agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts on social marketing, as also provided previously.

Such a social marketing practice is provided as a form of 'insurance', 'assurance' and trust building practice to navigate the myriad of risks and uncertainties that are provided by the BOP-SM context on a daily basis and related agri-food marketing practice. In this regard agri-food marketing thus provides for risk-taking practice and dealing with uncertainties. This in turn provides that as such agri-food marketing practice needs to be 'calculating' in terms of dealing with such risks and uncertainties. This requires that agri-food micro-sized family enterprises in their agri-food marketing practice have a good degree of confidence in their practice as per the need to be constantly calculating for risks, for example. Further as per the lack of resources to devote to agri-food marketing, such marketing is resource constraint. This implies, along with the risks and uncertainties that agri-food marketing in practice in BOP-SM contexts is to a good degree entrepreneurial and as such can be provided as being also entrepreneurial marketing.

Such an entrepreneurial marketing stance is not only required as per the risks, uncertainties and resource constraints in agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM contexts, but also as per the intensiveness and frequency that agri-food marketing practice requires. It is frequent as per, for example, the selling of small quantities of products daily and intensive as how such small quantities are distributed, for example, in a door to door manner. Indeed a good deal of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts is mainly focused on accessibility, this both by geographical locations as well as facilitating consumer access to agri-food products. For example, the number of street food vendors who are mobile is a good example of this agri-food marketing practice, where it is the agri-food micro-sized family enterprise that goes to the customer. This leads to the fact that agri-food marketing practice is process and operations focused as per its accessibility primer and the intended frequency and intensity. Thus, agri-food marketing practice, for example considers distributional logistics and functions, in a marketing systems perspective. Indeed a good deal of agri-food marketing practice within BOP-SM contexts is considered as taking a systems approach, for example: handling agri-food products; sorting agri-food products into defined categories; providing some form of packaging; storing; transporting; deciding how to sell, where to sell and when to sell; costing; associating; financing via buying supplies on credit; selling providing credit; and so forth. Thus agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM takes a systems perspective.

However, such marketing systems are commonly insular and closed systems. As per the network and relational nature of agri-food marketing practice and the implied social and cultural norms attached such agri-food marketing practice is 'shielded' from possible competition and highly 'locked-in'. This provides that, in some cases, agri-food marketing practice can be seen as a form of 'oligopoly' in its practice and this, may for example, hamper product choices and more market-based prices.

Such an accessibility focus of agri-food marketing practice is, as provided previously, intensive and frequent and covers BOP-SM contexts in rural, urban and peri-urban (rurban) areas. However agri-food marketing practice in rural areas, for example, differs from that in urban areas. In urban areas, for example, agri-food marketing practice is 'mobile' and takes agri-food products to the customer, possibly door to door within urban slums. In rural areas marketing practice, for example, tends to be more traditional and less intensive: for example farmers may market directly to consumers and/or to local traders and/or to stationary retail enterprises located in a small urban setting, such as a village and it is customers that access agri-food products at the enterprise premises.

This accessibility practice of agri-food marketing is also, as provided previously, enhanced by ICT and digitalization. With the diffusion of ICTs even within rural and remote areas, for example, has provided for a form of e-marketing and digital marketing in agri-food marketing practice. For example within agri-food supply chains buyers can communicate on orders via sms and/or on WhatsApp like applications. Ease of access to various kinds of social media, can also provide a viable marketing practice within BOP-SM contexts. Such use of e-marketing and digital marketing supports not only the orality and visuality of agri-food marketing practice, but also enhances agri-food marketing capacity, for example, via ease of price discovery, interactivity with customers and clients and so forth.

Discussion

From the findings what emerges is that agri-food marketing practices overlap, are all interconnected and there is a common thread throughout such practices. For example, the relational nature of agri-food marketing, provides for networks that are mainly consumer centric, but also consider the community to a good degree, are collective and associative, are based on trust or are trust fostering and also loyalty focused, and as a result are fundamentally insular marketing systems. As such agri-food marketing practice within BOP-SM contexts in developing economies is based on 'locality'. In other words agri-food marketing practice is highly specific, and as such needs not only to be adaptable, but innovative, flexible, variable, versatile, agile and relational. As such it is also clear that agri-food marketing is highly localized and as such may be referred to as 'localization marketing'.

What also emerges from the findings is that agri-food marketing practice is focused not only on the micro level, but also the meso and macro level i.e. micromarketing, mesomarketing and macromarketing as per the implied community and social welfare implications of such agri-food marketing practice, for example. Agri-food marketing practice also is formal-informal in nature as per the interface between formality and informality within BOP-SM contexts and contends with rules and regulations that may well be set by contexts more than the public sector, for example. Agri-food marketing practice is also networked, collectivist and focused on partnerships. Further, agri-food marketing practice cannot really take a planning approach as per the volatility, risks and uncertainties of BOP-SM contexts and thus is more tactical on a day by day basis, even though, for example, there can be some planning devoted to the customer and community centricity nature of such marketing. This 'planning' over time is enabled by the high level of market, customer and community knowledge that is gained via the marketing practice of what may be termed 'sensing' and in certain cases 'sixth sensing' of the market, customers and community. Thus it can be provided that such agri-food marketing practice is 'instinctive', based on day to day learning, but as per the knowledge accumulation over time, can also enable some form of planning to take place. Consequently such agri-food marketing practice can be seen as being entrepreneurial oriented: in other words entrepreneurial marketing.

As provided previously agri-food marketing practice is also collective and associative and is interdependent as each player in the agri-food supply chain depends on the other for daily survival. Agri-food marketing lacks resources that can be devoted to marketing, hence such collective, associating and partnering practice to agri-food marketing is also born out of the need to survive such dire BOP-SM contexts as well as the cultural and social aspects that are commonly found within such contexts. This survival marketing focus also implies that agri-food marketing practice is also 'socially' oriented, in that agri-food micro-sized family enterprises provide also 'social services', such as for

example community welfare, within their marketing practice. This seemingly taking on the role of public sector and NGO typology of marketing practice, for example, where effectively products are tied into also services, that are social in nature. Further this social marketing practice provides that there are relationships over time between, for example customers and enterprises and also between different enterprises along the agri-food supply chain, which in turn provides for trust and loyalty. This, yet again, providing for what may be termed 'survival marketing'.

Consequently, agri-food marketing practice is 'developmental' by nature as it not only tends to cater for market-based matters, but also to community and wider social aspects. Agri-food marketing is also highly adaptive to local conditions making such marketing practice, as provided previously, 'localized' marketing. Further value is based on local co-creation by the enterprise and the customers together. This practice making the agri-food micro-sized family enterprise a 'brand' in itself for many customers within BOP-SM contexts. Also such agri-food marketing practice is localized by the high degree of reliance on orality and visuality that is commonly provided, for example via local languages, dialects and culturally-oriented visual forms of, not only products displays, but also in pictographs and other artifacts common to such contexts, for example. This also provides that agri-food marketing is 'educational' and as such supports both the enterprise and consumer learning about each other, for example, and also supports consumers to become such.

Interestingly agri-food marketing practice provides also for an extended marketing mix, within its realm of being, for example, customer centric, via availability, awareness, acceptability, affordability plus also adaptability, association, and assistance. However, agri-food marketing practice is also system based as it considers processes, functions and operations and thus focused on availability and accessibility i.e. distributional practice. This taking on still in agri-food marketing practice the required frequency and intensity of such marketing practice that needs to cover geographical areas, for example, in 'width' and in 'depth' as well as with small quantities being sold frequently. Such coverage and frequency taking full consideration of urban and rural areas and the peculiarities that such geographical areas have on agri-food marketing practice. Moreover and interestingly agri-food marketing practice also concerns, to a fairly good degree, ICTs and digitalization, in other words e-marketing and digital marketing practices.

Conclusions

As per the findings of the research it is clear that agri-food marketing practice in BOP-SM in developing economies traverses differing typologies of marketing. Agri-food marketing practice is seemingly a 'mix' of entrepreneurial marketing; social marketing; relationship marketing; service marketing and 'systems-oriented' marketing. However what also emerged from the research is that agri-food marketing is highly specific to each BOP-SM context and hence includes also what may be termed 'localization marketing'. This localization marketing practice also considers the rural, urban and rural nature of such and thus agri-food marketing takes on various and differing forms based on urban and rural areas, for example.

Further, the many agri-food marketing practices that have emerged from the research also provide that there is a good degree of overlap between many of the practices and that the practices are also interlinked. Also at times, the agri-food marketing practices may appear to be contradictory, for example, having a high degree of entrepreneurial orientation, but at the same time delivering private sector led typologies of social services. This, however, also deriving from the high degrees of interdependence in such BOP-SM contexts and as such providing for an interactive form of 'survival marketing' practice, where each 'actor' in the agri-food supply chain is dependent on the other in their daily struggle to navigate such dire and meagre BOP-SM contexts. Thus agri-food marketing practice needs to be: localized, entrepreneurial, social, relational, service, system, localized and survival oriented. All this thus implying that agri-food marketing practice needs to be overall: adaptable, innovative, flexible, variable, versatile, agile and relational.

Overall, even though a good number of agri-food marketing practices have been identified, there is still need for further research on the subject matter as other practices are undoubtedly there to be found and to be identified. This can only but add to the current number of agri-food marketing practices found and enhance further understanding and knowledge on the subject matter. Further, and what also emerged within this research, yet again, was to consider agri-food marketing practice from a BOP-SM

‘perspective’. In other words giving consideration to new thinking, theory and practice on agri-food marketing that diverges from the common ‘Eurocentric’ view of modern marketing commonly found.

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