



What Are The Characteristics of Agri-Food Marketing in Bottom of The Pyramid-Subsistence Markets In Developing Economies?

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the research was to identify agri-food marketing characteristics in bottom of the pyramid-subsistence markets in developing economies. The research was based on previous studies conducted on the subject matter by the author and was further augmented by an in-depth literature and sources of secondary data and information research and review, an online feedback meeting on the research findings and an online meeting to also further discuss the findings. The outcome of the research provided for 93 identified characteristics of agri-food marketing in such contexts as well as other pertinent factors to consider that were derived and highlighted from the online meeting. The 93 identified characteristics were provided to have a good degree of confidence, and hence could be of use to both practice and theory, but considerations need to be taken of the heterogeneity of BOP-SM contexts and hence agri-food marketing not only has to be adaptable, but also flexible, versatile, variable, agile and innovative. Interestingly in this regard, what also emerged was that agri-food marketing seemingly needs to take a 'BOP-SM perspective' and not an adaptive perspective. This calling for considering agri-food marketing from a new perspective both in terms of theory and practice. Clearly as a result of this, further research should be conducted on identifying other agri-food marketing characteristics, but also further research should be conducted on agri-food marketing from a specific BOP-SM perspective in terms of both theory and practice.

Keywords: marketing; agricultural marketing; food marketing; agri-food marketing; bottom of the pyramid; subsistence markets; developing economies

Introduction

Agricultural and food systems¹ 'play a critical role in the provision of food and ensuring better diets, especially in low- and middle-income countries' (FAO, 2022b). Agri-food systems are 'the backbone of many economies' (FAO, 2021a) and produce an estimated '11 billion tonnes of food each year'² (FAO, 2021a). But shocks 'ranging from droughts and floods to armed conflict and price instability, aggravated by longer-term stresses such as economic inequalities and climate variability, threaten both agricultural production and other vital segments of agri-food systems' (FAO, 2021a).

¹Food systems encompass the entire range of activities involved in the production, processing, marketing, consumption and disposal of goods that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, including the inputs needed and the outputs generated at each of these steps. Food systems also involve the people and institutions that initiate or inhibit change in the systems as well as the socio-political, economic and technological environment in which these activities take place' (World Bank & FAO, 2018).

² Estimates provided by IFAD (2021) consider the worth of the 'global agriculture, food and beverage sectors, with associated services, to be about US\$10 trillion'.

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In terms of climate change, for example, agri-food systems are estimated to ‘contribute more than a third³ of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions responsible for climate change’ (FAO, 2021a). There is in fact strong scientific evidence to support that ‘climate is highly affected by different forms of food production, transport and marketing’ (FAO *et al.*, 2019). Further, agri-food systems ‘are major contributors to environmental degradation beyond GHG emissions, including deterioration of water resources and loss of habitat and biodiversity, which compromise environmental services that support food production’ (Swinnen *et al.*, 2022). Indeed ‘industrialised agriculture managed to reach incredible yields but the environmental price paid has been very high and will be felt by generations to come in the form of impoverished and contaminated environments’ (Hainzelin, 2019). As such ‘food production, distribution, and consumption practices must be adapted to climate change in order to support rural livelihoods and provide healthy diets for all, even as population and income growth increase the demand for food’ (Swinnen *et al.*, 2022) and most interestingly, developing economies in 2019 ‘accounted for only 3.3 percent of global GHG emissions’ (Swinnen *et al.*, 2022).

Indeed such an array of ‘multiple risks and uncertainties can have a disproportionate effect on the world’s most vulnerable and food-insecure populations, who are on the front line facing multiple shocks and stresses’ (FAO, 2021a). For example, climate change ‘is a threat multiplier: resource scarcity and food insecurity can trigger grievances and conflict, and further disrupt value chains, especially amid widespread inequality’ (De Brauw & Pacillo, 2022). This can potentially provide that developing economies can become ‘breeding grounds for resentments that may turn violently against people everywhere’ (Witkowski, 2005) as food is not just needed for nutrition: food also means ‘social interaction through meal sharing, it is a creative and artistic activity that gives pleasure through cooking and gastronomy, and is a fundamental way of building and displaying one’s identity, which gives it a special symbolic status and is a way of connecting humans to their environment’ (Bricas, 2019). As such this implies that agri-food systems should become ‘far more nature-positive, deliver improved and more resilient livelihoods, empower disadvantaged groups, and produce a healthy mix of foods at affordable prices, all while making a substantial contribution to achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2050’ (Swinnen *et al.*, 2022). Further, it is also shifts in consumer demand for more greener and climate sensitive agri-food products that may ‘drive an increase in prices for these products and create incentives for producers and processors to shift toward more environmentally sustainable crops and technologies’ (De Brauw & Pacillo, 2022).

However, still in 2020, ‘an estimated 768 million people, or 9.9 percent of the global population, suffered from hunger, an increase of nearly 118 million compared to 2019 and 153 million compared to 2015’ (FAO, 2021a). Further during 2021 ‘domestic food price inflation in many low-income countries rose significantly, particularly those with weak currencies and a high reliance on food imports, in those where border closures, conflict or insecurity disrupted trade flows and where weather extremes severely curtailed food production/availability’ (GNAFC & FSIN, 2022). In 2021 it was estimated that circa ‘193 million people were acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 53 countries/territories, this representing an increase of nearly 40 million people compared to the previous high reached in 2020’ (GNAFC & FSIN, 2022).

Within these poverty settings people work and live in what are termed bottom of the pyramid - subsistence markets (BOP-SM). The BOP refers to the poorest in the economic human pyramid (Prahalad, 2005) and SM consists of ‘consumer and entrepreneur communities living at a range of low-income levels’ (Viswanathan & Rosa, 2007a). Such contexts are characterized by: a lack of basic infrastructure; lack of services; resource scarcity for both supplier and buyer; high seller

³Swinnen *et al.*, (2022) provide that agri-food systems can ‘account for as much as 34 percent of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions stemming from agriculture and land use, storage, transport, packaging, processing, retail, and consumption’ and Tubiello *et al.*, (2021) provide that ‘after accounting for all food system activities, emissions may be as large as 20 to 40 percent of total anthropogenic emissions’

responsiveness to consumer demand; unequal distribution of wealth; informality; secluded and insular exchange systems; globally networked; violence; forced displacement; market volatility; chronic uncertainty; and poverty premium on products (Viswanathan, 2020; Muthuri & Farhoud, 2020; Mason *et al.*, 2017; and Viswanathan & Sreekumar, 2017; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2015; Benninger & Robson, 2015; Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2014; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012).

Central to such BOP-SM contexts is exchange. It has two main roles: the role it has in the livelihoods of poor consumers and entrepreneurs, and the expertise gained in providing for survival (Venugopal & Viswanathan, 2017; Viswanathan, 2016). Exchange within BOP-SM contexts though is 'governed by norms such as empathetic exchange, orality, and relational exchange' (Venugopal & Viswanathan, 2015). Such exchanges do not only focus on basic wants and needs, but also on aspirational wants and needs (Barki & Parente, 2010). Consequently in such BOP-SM exchange systems, marketing is central to any type of commercial exchange (Baker & Saren, 2010) as the true 'essence of marketing is the establishment of mutually satisfying exchange relationships, and as such markets and marketing are as old as exchange itself' (Baker, 2010). Hence, such marketing attempts to provide also for social and cultural needs over and above those of economic needs. In this perspective, marketing takes a more 'meso view' in terms of community marketing systems as well as a 'marco view' as when marketing is seen 'at the macro level, it is a process for maximizing society's overall satisfaction, of economic enrichment, from the consumption of scarce resources' (Varey, 2010). Thus marketing, in this triple role (micro, meso and macro) considers exchanges and markets in terms of individual exchanges (micro), community exchanges (meso) as well as national exchanges (macro) that contribute to individual, community and societal enhancement, cultural changes and economic development (see Hilmi, 2022b).

Clearly then, marketing, and more specially agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts is not only different from agri-food marketing in developed economies, but that 'marketing can serve as a pathway to a better world by improving the lives and livelihoods of subsistence consumers, many of whom live in extreme poverty and lack access to marketplaces (i.e., are among the world's most vulnerable consumers)' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021). This implies that agri-food marketing does not only have to adapt to BOP-SM contexts, but also be flexible, variable, versatile, agile and innovative in such contexts (Hilmi, 2022a). Within this background and context, and building on previous research conducted on the subject matter in terms of Hilmi (2022a); Hilmi (2022b); Hilmi (2021a); Hilmi (2021b); Hilmi (2021c); and Hilmi (2020), this research specifically focused on attempting to further assess, appraise and diagnose agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies.

Aim of the research

The main aim of the research was to further assess, appraise and diagnose agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies.

Methodology

This research was based and built on previous research conducted on the subject matter in terms of Hilmi (2022a); Hilmi (2022b); Hilmi (2021a); Hilmi (2021b); Hilmi (2021c); and Hilmi (2020). These researches covered mainly agri-food marketing in BOP-SM in developing economies, save for one (see Hilmi, 2021b) that focused on marketing of services in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. These researches were used as a basis to build on, and to further ascertain agri-food marketing characteristic in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies, an in-depth literature and sources of secondary data and information research and review was provided for, along with an online feedback meeting and an online meeting. The research was qualitative and abductive in nature and followed a systematic and primarily exploratory perspective in terms of the literature and secondary sources of data and information research.

The initial phase of the research was devoted to identifying key search terms⁴ specifically for the research at hand, but also taking into consideration the previous researches and related key search

⁴ This was conducted over a circa three month period between October and December 2020

terms⁵ that had been provided. The research for key search terms involved using six online databases: AgEcon search; AGRICOLA; AGRIS; FAO e-library; FAO Publications; and ResearchGate. This generated 47 key search terms: marketing in developing countries; marketing in developing economies; marketing in informal economies; marketing in the bottom of the pyramid; marketing in subsistence markets; marketing agricultural products; marketing food products; marketing agri-food products; agricultural marketing; food marketing; agri-food marketing; agro-food marketing; agricultural marketing in the bottom of the pyramid; food marketing in the bottom of the pyramid; agri-food marketing in the bottom of the pyramid; agro-food marketing in the bottom of the pyramid; agricultural marketing in subsistence markets; food marketing in subsistence markets; agri-food marketing in subsistence markets; agro-food marketing in subsistence markets; agricultural marketing in informal economies; food marketing in informal economies; agri-food marketing in informal economies; agro-food marketing in informal economies; agricultural marketing in developing countries; food marketing in developing countries; agri-food marketing in developing countries; agro-food marketing in developing countries; agricultural marketing in developing economies; food marketing in developing economies; agri-food marketing in developing economies; agro-food marketing in developing economies; marketing agricultural products in the bottom of the pyramid; marketing food products in the bottom of the pyramid; marketing agri-food products in the bottom of the pyramid; marketing agricultural products in subsistence markets; marketing food products in subsistence markets; marketing agri-food products in subsistence markets; marketing agricultural products in informal economies; marketing food products in informal economies; marketing agri-food products in informal economies; marketing agricultural products in developing countries; marketing food products in developing countries; marketing agri-food products in developing countries; marketing agricultural products in developing economies; marketing food products in developing economies; marketing agri-food products in developing economies.

In the in-depth literature and sources of secondary data and information research the selection of the literature and sources of secondary data and information was based on defined criteria: the direct and indirect relevance to the research subject matters; value (methodological rigour, quality of the reasoning or arguments, references, etc.); research evidence in terms of either or both primary source-based (credibility; reliability; ecological validity) and secondary source –based information; derived from an identified and reliable source (author(s), scientific journal publisher, reputation of publisher, etc.); date of publication (not older than 100 years); references used; and peer review conducted (Saunders *et al.*, 2016; Adams *et al.*, 2014; Fisher, 2010).

The research was conducted⁶ using the 47 identified key search terms and used 15 online databases of: AgEcon search; AGRICOLA; AGRIS; Business source complete (EBSCO); CORE; Emerald full text; FAO e-library; FAO Publications; Google scholar; IFAD Knowledge; JSTOR business collection; Refseek; ResearchGate; Wiley online library; and World Bank documents & reports. The outcome of the research provided 79 publications, which were mainly journal articles, technical reports and books. The analysis of the literature and sources of secondary data and information, was provided via thematic analysis⁷ and this was then followed by searching for characteristics, their frequency and if a characteristic was found more than three times (triangulation) it was considered as valid and reliable. The draft results deriving from the analysis were shared with four reviewers⁸ for review and feedback.⁹ This was then followed by an online feedback meeting that also provided for a discussion on the findings¹⁰. The discussion was recorded and transcribed using software. The feedback received from the review as well as the results from the discussion were

⁵ See Hilmi (2022a); Hilmi (2022b); Hilmi (2021a); Hilmi (2021b); Hilmi (2021c); and Hilmi (2020)

⁶ The in-depth literature research and review was conducted over circa a ten month period between January and October 2021

⁷ In terms of assessing for reliability and validity, in a qualitative stance, the criteria used were trustworthiness, in terms of credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability as well as authenticity, in terms of fairness (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

⁸ The four reviewers were academics involved in agri-food marketing

⁹ The review and feedback was provided in December 2021 and January 2022

¹⁰ The online feedback meeting was held at the end of January 2022 and the participants were three academics involved in agri-food marketing and who had provided for the previous review and feedback on the draft findings

compared and triangulated to provide for a further layer of reliability and validity. The first draft article was then provided also for review and feedback to the same four reviewers.¹¹ Also here the feedback received was compared and triangulated so as to provide for yet a further layer of reliability and validity. Following this a second draft of the article was prepared and shared with 14 subject matter specialists¹² for discussion in an online meeting¹³. The online meeting was attended by six subject matter specialists and was recorded and transcribed using software. The results of the online meeting were also compared and triangulated to provide for a further layer of reliability and validity.

Findings

Results from literature and sources of secondary data and information

Agri-food marketing characteristics in the bottom of the pyramid-subsistence markets in developing economies

Many developing economies are considered to be vulnerable, especially the low income economies. Typically within developing countries' local economies, as those for example found in BOP-SM settings, have the following characteristics: the prevalent young age of populations; low incomes, cash flows and saving rates; market fragmentation, shortages and informality; lack of literacy and more in general consumer literacy; the social structure and its effects on purchasing; emigration to foreign countries and rural to urban migration; reliance on remittances; weak infrastructure; weak distribution systems; lack of access to and availability of the internet and ICTs; and underdeveloped legal frameworks (Sinha & Oburai, 2008). In fact such local economies are underlined by poverty and as per the recent pandemic and its propagation over time and space, poverty is 'forecast to further increase in the world's most vulnerable economies' (UNDESA, 2022). For example as a consequence of the pandemic, the World Bank provides this increase in poverty to be around 100 million (World Bank, 2021b; World Bank, 2021d; World Bank, 2020), while FAO (2021b) provides around 118 million more poor people in the world.

Within such local economies, informality¹⁴ is usually the norm and market exchanges within BOP-SM context are commonly informal (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012). Enterprises that operate in such contexts are typically 'unregistered, and such enterprises may choose to remain outside the formal economy because they do not have the capacity, know-how or will to deal with social contributions, compliances, or licensing requirements. This is why (usually) informal enterprises tend to be micro or small businesses' (ILO, 2022). Enterprises that operate in BOP-SM contexts are most often referred to as consumer-entrepreneur enterprises as per the 'duality of the consumer-entrepreneur' (Viswanathan, 2020): consumers can be sellers and sellers can be consumers. In such settings many people 'turn to entrepreneurship, prevalently subsistence entrepreneurship, and in particular family micro-scale enterprises as a major means of generating subsistence' (Webb *et al.*, 2015), in attempts to overcome daily hardships. Thus it seems that 'micro-entrepreneurship serves as a primary source of livelihood to meet consumption needs' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021) and that such enterprises are mostly micro-size enterprises that are family run enterprises as this is the most common form of enterprise found (Alderson, 2018). Venugopal *et al.*, (2015) estimate that globally there are circa one billion of these micro-sized family run enterprises. Such enterprises, even though in such poverty ridden contexts, do 'function in the marketplace, provide mutually beneficial exchanges, and are teeming with ingenuity, and innovation' (Viswanathan & Rosa, 2007a). But for many within BOP-SM contexts 'enterprise is

¹¹ This was provided during February 2022.

¹² The subject matter specialists were seven academics, six field development practitioners and two entrepreneurs operating their enterprises within BOP-SM contexts in developing economies.

¹³ The online meeting was held in April 2022 and was attended by six subject matter specialists: three academics, two entrepreneurs and one field development practitioner

¹⁴ Informality is defined as 'market-based and legal production of goods and services that is hidden from public authorities for monetary, regulatory, or institutional reasons' (World Bank, 2021a).

an abstraction as what they understand intuitively is exchange and are experts in survival' (Viswanathan, 2016).

Such micro-scale enterprises do though market their products, but their size, and not only, has an influence on how they market their products. Such enterprises provide more for marketing implementation than strategic marketing and planning, as implementation according to Bjerke & Hultman (2022) is more important for success. Further marketing is not perceived and practiced as a separate function from other business functions (Bjerke & Hultman, 2002) and in fact many micro and small-scale enterprises unconsciously do marketing. (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2015). Thus there is seemingly an interface between marketing, and how it is practiced in micro and small-scale enterprises and entrepreneurship. Consequently within such micro and small-scale enterprises, marketing and its characteristics are in reality entrepreneurial marketing. In this regard, Cacciolatti & Lee (2015) provide that entrepreneurial marketing 'entails the proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation'. In fact and typically 'entrepreneurial marketing, operates in an uncertain environment, where market conditions are discontinuous and the needs of the market are as yet unclear' (Hills & Hultman, 2013) and entrepreneurial marketing commonly is most apt for a fluctuating and changing environment (Collinson & Shaw, 2001). Some of the characteristics identified of entrepreneurial marketing in BOP-SM contexts are: networks, knowledge of market demand, risk-taking, self-confidence (calculated risk-taking), low production costs (resource constrained), customer relationships, and value creation (Hilmi, 2020).

Hilmi (2021c) found that marketing agri-food products in BOP-SM settings in developing economies also involved the following characteristics: 'choosing the products; starting production; managing production; harvesting; handling; sorting; packaging; storing; transporting; processing; financing; associating; deciding how to sell; where to sell; when to sell; and costing'. Moreover Hilmi (2022b) also found that agri-food marketing needed to consider three levels of marketing: agri-food micromarketing that is commonly provided as the marketing performed by the 'individual decision maker in the agri-food marketing system, for example a farmer and an agri-food enterprise manager, and uses the principles of marketing management' (Kohls & Uhl, 2015); agrifood macromarketing that refers to the 'big picture: how the food system is organized, its performance and social task and how the food system is changing over time (Kohls & Uhl, 2015); and agrifood mesomarketing as per Larson (1985), that refers to a rural marketing system that aggregates agri-food products and moves within and out of regional areas of a country and Viswanathan, (2020), Venugopal & Viswanathan (2015) and Viswanathan *et al.*, (2014) refer also to the community marketing system this being 'densely networked social communities and providing community social capital and as such these social exchanges help construct meso-level community exchange systems, which, in turn, contribute to developing and maintaining the informal economy' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2014).

However informality is 'highly context specific as there is a wide heterogeneity' (World Bank, 2021a) and the informal economy and the formal economy are both part of a 'continuum with backward linkages involving the flow of raw materials, equipment, finance and consumer goods from formal to informal sector enterprises and there are also limited forward linkages' (Chambwera *et al.*, 2011). As such many of those employed within the agricultural and food sectors work informally, but such 'informal employment also includes individuals who work in the formal sector but are not covered by social protection and are beyond the purview of most labour protections'(ILO, 2022). It is estimated that circa 'two billion people, or 60 per cent of the globally employed, were in informal employment in 2019' (ILO, 2022). In terms of the agricultural and food sectors in specific, it is considered to be the biggest employer for millions of people as Swinnen *et al.*, (2022) provide that 'food systems are the world's largest employer ' and further Bricas (2019) provides that the sectors are currently 'the world's largest economic sector in terms of employment, with more than 2 billion people employed' (Bricas, 2019). For example, FAO (2021a) provides that employment in agricultural production alone represents circa 'one-quarter of all employment globally'. Thus it seems that the informal economy provides 'employment to around 70 percent of people within an economy' (World Bank, 2021a), where the 'efficacy of labour market regulations is limited' (ILO, 2022) and 'employment is characterized by low productivity and low wages' (ILO, 2022).

As per consumers in BOP-SM contexts, they navigate there lack of 'consumer illiteracy' via 'leveraging their social networks to gather as well as interpret various significant symbolic cues in the

market' (Singh *et al.*, 2017) and have relational networks with other consumers, family and vendors (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2010). Consumers tend to be more sensitive, expect quality and reasonable prices, a better shopping experience, are attracted by discounts and gifts, and are supported by family and friends (Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Such environments, although resource-poor with respect to income and literacy, are typically 'network-rich, with social ties among people that facilitate information sharing and the consequent development of consumer and entrepreneurial skills' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2010). Many people in BOP-SM contexts are in fact 'proactive, entrepreneurial innovators who are constantly co-creating solutions to survive the struggles of their daily lives' (Fisk *et al.*, 2016).

In Asia and Africa, most of the BOP-SM context 'is dominated by rural markets, while urban areas are largely dominant in Eastern Europe and Latin America and in rural areas consumers tend to be very dispersed, while in urban areas consumers tend to be densely populated in defined urban areas' (Mathur *et al.*, 2018). But rural consumers are different from urban consumers (Kripanithi & Ramachander, 2018) and the needs and perspective of the customer is distinct from the Middle of the Pyramid (MoP) (Purohit *et al.*, 2021). 'What is not effective in rural markets is assuming the rural consumer is price sensitive enough such that they would purchase stripped down products with inadequate features. In fact, the rural customer has more specific requirements for features to suit their more challenging living conditions' (Naidu, 2017).

Urban BOP-SM tend to be easier to access and provide for a more concentrated and ready market of consumers (Mathur *et al.*, 2018), even though such contexts are inhabited by 'the economically and socially marginalized, commonly located on land over which the inhabitants do not hold legal title, the inhabitants, typically have migrated to the slums from rural areas in order to exploit actual or perceived economic opportunities and such slums have inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding; and insecure residential status' (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). Other characteristics that define urban BOP-SM are: many small urban settlements; rapid urban population growth; increasing inhabitant density; increasing rural to urban migration; urban to urban migration; linkages with rural areas; informal settlements; forced displacements; violence; isolation; insulation; social marginalization; slum seclusion; menial job employment; low income; growing youth population; increasing poverty; development of urban 'slum culture'; lack of sanitary, health, financial and educational services; urban consumption patterns; increasing food demand; multitude of formal and informal organizations and institutions involved in food distribution; inefficiency in agri-food distribution; informal food distribution networks; high numbers of informal food sellers; high numbers of informal food retailers; lack of specialization; highly competitive markets; poor quality goods; high agri-food prices; increasing localized urban and peri-urban agricultural activities; increasing local food consumer groups; high customization; high degrees of relational and social networks; lack of appropriate agri-food distribution infrastructure; lack of access to mobility; increasing informality; and increasing environmental hazards (UNEP, 2022; Purohit *et al.*, 2021; Selod & Shilpi, 2021; Hilmi, 2020; Mathur *et al.*, 2019; UN DESA, 2019; IFAD, 2019; Kripanithi & Ramachander, 2018; World Bank & FAO, 2018; IFAD, 2016; Brown *et al.*, 2014; Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2014; FAO, 2012; Krishnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan, 2011; Anderson *et al.*, 2010; FAO, 2008; FAO, 2007b).

Indeed as the world 'becomes increasingly urban, what people in towns and cities eat and where and how they source their food, will have strong implications for rural, peri-urban and urban areas and a strong influence on the food system overall' (World Bank & FAO, 2018). Indeed the 'urbanizing world carries tremendous implications for food systems and for their evolution, management and performance' (World Bank & FAO, 2018). In this regard urban marketing tends to be 'highly competitive, sophisticated, and often focused and targeted at middle and high income consumers' (Krishnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan, 2011), while rural markets tend to be, as a segment, heterogeneous (Kripanithi & Ramachander, 2018). Rural areas¹⁵ commonly, but not always,

¹⁵ More than '44 percent of the global population lives in rural areas and in the least-developed parts of the world, the population remains predominantly rural (about two thirds of just over a billion people) (World Bank, 2021d)

provide for 'heterogeneity in culture, languages, dialects and social customs; underdeveloped markets; lack of access to services; dependence on agriculture; low population density and clustered demand scattered over large areas; fragmented markets; uneven development; irregular and seasonal demand, low consumption as well as a narrow consumption basket; purchasing on credit; a growing number of youth in the rural population; an ongoing trend of rural to urban migration as well as emigration to foreign countries; heterogeneity in lifestyles; lack of social mobility; low and non-regular income streams; reliance on remittances; low savings rate; lack of steady consumption; diversity of occupations; low literacy levels; limited accessibility; limited awareness and acceptance of products and services; differences in the macro and micro-environment of consumers; the creative use of products; and lack of marketing infrastructure.' (Dash *et al.*, 2020; Hakhroo, 2020; Das, 2018; Khaleel, 2018; Kripanithi & Ramachander, 2018; Nunna, 2018; Ahmed, 2017; Bhanot, 2017; Kashyap, 2016; Tutorial Point, 2016; Haldar, 2015; Ahmed, 2013; Modi, 2012; Krishnamacharyulu & Ramakrishnan, 2011; Modi, 2009; Ramkishen, 2009; Vachani & Smith, 2008; Velayudhan, 2007; Singh & Pandey, 2005; Rao & Tagat, 1985). Hence in rural areas, marketing is defined as 'the process of developing, pricing, promoting, distributing rural specific goods and services leading to exchanges between urban and rural markets which satisfies consumer demand and also achieves organisational objectives' (Singh & Pandey, 2005). However the focus is not just marketing in the rural and urban interface, i.e. urban to rural marketing, but also rural to rural marketing, as well as rural to urban marketing (Jha, 2012). Thus rural and urban marketing have separate disciplinary areas based not only on geographical location, but far more on 'variation in consumer behaviour and income levels as well as by the considerable differences in the macro- and micro-environment of consumers' (Velayudhan, 2007).

Marketing in BOP-SM contexts also needs to consider the 'chronic uncertainty, that gets exacerbated by transient shocks that may occur with untoward emergencies or calamities' (Viswanathan & Sreekumar, 2017) and hence cater for variability and flexibility (Pels & Sheth, 2021). Consumers in the BOP-SM contexts tend to have lack of access to clean drinking water, affordable energy, transport, 'have little in terms of material possessions and as per the limited income on top of this all tend to be value conscious, purchase decisions are made carefully and are complex, as for example habitual products, that are bought like food, are not bought in a routine manner, and reassurances on the reliability and worth of what is bought is a must' (Benninger & Robson, 2015). Typically also, such consumers pay what is termed the 'poverty premium' this commonly being due to factors like 'an inability to access retailers with lower prices, limited time to compare prices, or reduced or inefficient distribution to poorer neighbourhoods' (Benninger & Robson, 2015). However consumers in BOP-SM contexts will purchase and pay higher prices than commonly found in BOP-SM contexts 'if they are provided with a satisfactory solution to their needs and are reassured about the level of risk involved' (McGrath *et al.*, 2021). Some of the characteristics of BOP-SM consumers are: low and limited income; high illiteracy; consumer illiteracy; high and consistent uncertainty; high degrees of deprivation on basic needs; low quality of life; low self-esteem; lack of savings; role of consumer as both consumer and entrepreneur; value conscious; large cultural influence on consumption; multitude and diversity of cultural factors influencing consumers; local community influence on consumption; long term relational focus with sellers; relation networks used in buying; one-to-one relational and interactional behaviour between consumer and seller; interdependence between consumer and seller; interdependence between consumer and family, friends and others in the social and relational network; high degree of customization; high degree of orality; empathy; non-routine buying behaviour; consider purchases for long term purposes; high degree of reassurances provided on purchases made; and trust building (McGrath *et al.*, 2021; Viswanathan, 2020; Muthuri & Farhoud, 2020; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2019; Singh *et al.*, 2017; Figueiredo *et al.*, 2015; Benninger & Robson, 2015; Gau *et al.*, 2014; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2014; Usunier & Lee, 2013; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012; Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012).

Further marketing in BOP-SM contexts also needs to address the 'multitude and diversity of cultural factors as well as have a social function of educating consumers' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, there is pervasive interdependence not only between buyers and sellers, but also with family, friends and others in the social and relational network (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012). There is also the dominance of orality, interactional empathy, and a focus on long term relationships as well as seller responsiveness to buyer demand, based on the typically high customization of one to one

relational interactions and thus constant customization (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012). Further 'despite resource constraints, people do not make decisions based solely on the immediate and the economically beneficial, but consider conflicting motivations at different spatial distances. But they are often only able to act at the immediate level due to bare survival necessities and lack of control over further distances' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2014). Consumers in subsistence marketplaces 'understand the importance of their relationships with others and the environment in order to bolster their survival both in the short- and long-term and they also grasp the importance of growth to improve quality of life for themselves and the next generation. However, given imminent threats to survival, they often make trade-offs among survival, relatedness, and growth, engaging in behaviours that erode community and employ resources unsustainably' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2014). Consequently in BOP-SM marketing there is an inherent 'high customization, focused on one-to-one relational and interactional nature of markets, and which goes beyond the market context alone. This further leads to a far more social, relational and community focused nature of marketing' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2008; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2007). Typically marketers provide for focusing on and knowing 'specific local markets, offline and non-traditional marketing, the use of pictorials, word of mouth, interactivity, educative messaging and building trust' (Benninger & Robson, 2015).

Within such BOP-SM contexts Chee Seng *et al.*, (2015) define marketing as 'the process of developing, pricing, promoting and distribution of specific goods and services to the poor which satisfies the poor demand, while also achieving organizational objectives'. Within this and per the particular nature and context of BOP-SM, marketing needs to consider social, economic, political, physical, technology, cultural, psychological as well as ethical factors (Chee Seng *et al.*, 2015), including the high levels of uncertainties faced in terms of economic, social, environmental and technological (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2019), for example. It is the 'community marketing systems that arise out of micro-level interactions between subsistence entrepreneurs and their customers that form the glue holding the informal economy together in subsistence economies' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2014) as well as the implied macro marketing aspects of improving social well-being and quality of life. Consequently marketing is a 'potent and effective instrument to further social welfare and poverty alleviation, playing a far more central role in the development discourse' (Viswanathan & Sreekumar, 2017) as a well-defined 'marketing system is essential for economic development and the prevention of poverty' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2012). However, and commonly, marketing practice has mainly been focused on serving the medium to high income segments (Purohit *et al.*, 2021; Beninger & Robson, 2015) and as such classic marketing approaches are hard to establish and implement in BOP-SM contexts (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). As provided by Hosley & Hou Wee (1988) marketing concepts and practices are culturally-bound and as such need to be adapted to local circumstances and contexts, hence marketing needs to evolve to accommodate such contexts. In such contexts marketing needs to focus on ensuring individuals' and societal wellbeing (Pizzagalli *et al.*, 2018).

Interestingly in the post-world war II period there was a prevalence, as per state directed economic development, in many developing economies for 'government officials and international aid specialists to not consider marketing as a catalyst in development and marketing was sometimes considered potentially detrimental because of parasitic, predatory intermediaries who often came from ethnic minorities' (Witkowski, 2005). This was followed by an era of fast paced liberalization and globalization where marketing was seen to create a single global market under the assumption that developing economies would adopt 'the institutions and values of Western society' (Witkowski, 2005). In fact in developing economies the changing 'political environments and ideological trends have greatly influenced marketing' (Witkowski, 2005) as have 'inefficient distribution caused, in large part, by breakdowns in law and order' (Witkowski, 2005), but this all has still provide for BOP-SM to be the 'fastest growing markets in the world with nearly US\$5 trillion of consumption spending annually' (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021).

Thus as per the above agri-food marketing needs to consider the nature of marketing agri-food products per se, the size of enterprises commonly found, i.e. consumer-entrepreneur micro-scale family enterprises, the specific characteristics of BOP-SM contexts in both rural and urban areas as well as the need to take a micro, meso and macromarketing perspective. Thus and by default agri-food marketing should cater for such characteristics and hence provide marketing that adapts, is versatile, variable, flexible, agile and innovative. In this regard and as per Hilmi (2022a) 69 characteristics of agri-food marketing were identified. Here and as a result of the in-depth literature and sources of

secondary data and information research and review the agri-food marketing characteristics identified were 93. These can be seen in Table 1.

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
Cultural 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, 2022; Hilmi, 2021b; Dash *et al.*, 2020; Hakhroo, 2020; Hilmi, 2020; 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; Tutorial Point, 2016; Wiskereke, 2015; Moustier & Renting, 2015; Brown *et al.*, 2014; Ahmed, 2013; FAO, 2012; 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)

Results from the online meeting

Agri-food marketing characteristics in bottom of the pyramid-subsistence markets in developing economies

Prior to the online meeting, a second draft article was shared with 14 subject matter specialists for discussion in the online meeting. The online meeting was attended by six subject matter specialists and many matters were discussed on the findings from the research. The main outcomes i.e. findings, from the online meeting are provided here.

In terms of the agri-food marketing characteristics identified from the literature and sources of secondary data and information there was a general agreement on them and how these in fact

reflected, to a degree though, ground realities¹⁶. However, what was provided was the need to considered carefully the highly heterogeneous nature of BOP-SM settings and hence the importance of 'localized' agri-food marketing, specific to the diverse BOP-SM contexts found. For example agri-food marketing provided in some urban centres was diverse pending on the neighbourhood in which such marketing was implemented. This was a result of, for example linguistic diversity, cultural norms, the closed and secluded nature of such agri-food marketing systems, the informal barriers that existed, and the seclusion and isolation of both consumers and street food sellers in such neighbourhoods. This high diversity of BOP-SM contexts and the related 'localized' agri-food marketing was also provided to be pertinent in peri-urban areas as well as in rural areas.

As a result of the heterogeneity of BOP-SM contexts, agri-food marketing has to be not just be adaptable, but also flexible, versatile, variable, agile and innovative in its practice. As a result of this, the identified characteristics can be useful for marketing practice within BOP-SM contexts to, for example, the public sector, non- autochthonous enterprises as well as development agencies, international organizations, NGOs, etc., that seek to further develop agri-food marketing within such BOP-SM contexts. It was also provided that the identified characteristics could possibly be of use also to the micro-scale family enterprises that operated in BOP-SM contexts, so as to support better agri-food marketing practice and hence support enterprise development. Further it was also provided that possibly such characteristics identified could be of use to educational organizations, such as for example, universities, ministries, training centres, etc., that provide capacity building and development on agri-food marketing. Moreover it was provided that agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies needed to consider and be aware of the 'three level' view of micromarketing, mesomarketing and macromarketing. This provided primarily for development matters, as for example of use to the public sector, international and national development agencies, etc. But such an approach could also be useful in terms of marketing practice by multinational companies marketing agri-food products in BOP-SM contexts.

Another matter that emerged as important for agri-food marketing characteristics was marginalization. Agri-food marketing systems in BOP-SM are usually, but not always, informal, as in some cases agri-food products deriving from formal enterprises are marketed along with informal agri-food products. Hence there is an informal-formal interface to be contended with, which, in fact, increases agri-food marketing marginalization within BOP-SM contexts. Most micro-scale family enterprises are secluded from 'reaching' other markets, are insular and as such are outside the purview, for example of public authorities, NGOs and others. This creates a 'mindset' of being marginalized from the larger agri-food marketing system and hence with all related consequences of 'feeling' and 'being' secluded.

Related to the above points of high localization, marginalization and isolation of agri-food marketing systems is that of violence, both physical and psychological found within. This for example, is provided so as to obtain monopolies or oligopolies within defined stages of agri-food marketing systems, where a trader, for example, will become dominant or a group of food processors will become dominant and thus dictate informal norms both upstream and downstream in the agri-food marketing system. Such dominant positions may also collude with, for example, public authorities, NGOs as well as consumers. Such collusive partnerships make such agri-food marketing systems far more insular, secluded and marginalized. Informal payments either in kind and /or money also provide for further isolation and marginalization and thus do not enable, for example micro-sized family enterprises to extend their marketing networks. Further such marginalization not only limits agri-food product choice for consumers, but also raises issues on food safety, hygiene and prominently much higher prices comparatively. Poverty 'premiums' seemingly are most diffused in BOP-SM markets, one of the main causes being owed to violence.

Another matter that arose was the fundamental emphasis on agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts to be process and functionally oriented that could effectively provide for food availability

¹⁶ As provided within the online meeting there are overlaps between some of the characteristics and some are seemingly the same. However this was deemed as normal as per the very nature of the research and the subject matter in question and it was commonly agreed not to provide a 'summarised' version of the characteristics.

and affordability. These two components of the 4 A's 'marketing mix'¹⁷ were provided to be the most important. In other words, the food is there for consumers to buy at a relatively affordable price, considering the poverty premium. Hence agri-food marketing takes on a far more systems perspective of operations and processes at low cost and hence providing for relatively lower prices. This primary distribution focus for agri-food marketing was seen as paramount in BOP-SM settings, as per the very nature of such contexts and the poverty found within. However this should not undermine the acceptability and awareness components of the 4 A's marketing mix. Consumers in the BOP-SM do not only have immediate consumption needs, but also have aspirational consumption needs. For example eating foods that are not within their cultural and social habits of food consumption, including high priced 'imported' foods. Hence also the awareness and acceptability have a role to play, but to a lesser degree than availability and affordability.

Interestingly what also emerged was that in some BOP-SM contexts, mainly in urban and peri-urban BOP-SM contexts, 'spills overs' from more 'developed markets' targeted at higher income consumer markets would occur. For example food that was not consumed in such markets, was marketed in such BOP-SM contexts as 'high value foods' as per their organoleptic characteristics, packaging, and so forth. Thus in terms of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts there was seemingly a parallel 'secondary market' for such high value foods. This providing, to some degree, for the consumer demand devoted to 'aspirational demands and needs' related to food products. This in turn made awareness and acceptability of such products more important, to a degree, then availability and affordability.

Another aspect that emerged was that related to freshness of agri-food products. Consumers in BOP-SM contexts, seemingly put a premium on product freshness as per, for example taste, reduced risk of food poisoning, better quality and so forth. This was also tied to another factor of family and/or social networks that provided for agri-food marketing to be provided within such networks. For example families in rural areas would network food products to family in urban areas and in turn, the urban family would network food products to rural areas. These tended to be a closed agri-food marketing system, but with the duality of the consumer-entrepreneur commonly found in BOP-SM contexts, some of the food products, for example, could also be sold to other non-family members, within the context of such social networks. This was a prominent point, as networks, provided in terms of the marketing of agri-food products which entailed, for example, relations, high degrees of customization, empathy, credit and importantly trust as well as, and importantly, 'locally produced' value creation. This last point of locally produced value creation within agri-food products was also important for both sellers and buyers and was and is inevitably connected to freshness.

Other two aspects that emerged also were trust and sales on credit. Trust in the buyer and seller relationship were seen to be most important as well as, and tied to this, sales on credit. The extension of credit was also seen as an essential element of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts as per the poverty ridden setting this implies. These two aspects of trust and sales on credit along with the networked nature of such agri-food marketing provided for a form of partnerships among customers and sellers that effectively insulated such agri-food marketing systems and made them reliable and safe as it 'shielded' such agri-food marketing systems from the many uncertainties and risks provided by BOP-SM contexts. In other words an 'insurance' and 'assurance' based agri-food marketing system. This in turn moving agri-food marketing away, to a degree, from being only focused on commercial matters, to a quasi-commercial to a social to a developmental typology of agri-food marketing.

What also emerged was that marketing agri-food products in BOP-SM was instinctive, based on experience, intuition and the interdependence between seller and buyer, and hence was mainly focused on implementation of marketing and not, to a degree, on planning. For example in BOP-SM contexts that are usually, uncertain and volatile, planning is more than challenging and hence only very approximate marketing plans can be provided and hence marketing implementation takes the helm. This is in line with entrepreneurial marketing and also implies that marketing in such BOP-SM contexts needs to be adaptable, flexible, variable, versatile, agile and innovative.

¹⁷ See Sheth & Sisodia (2012)

What also emerged was the natural environment and climate change being important factors for BOP-SM agri-food marketing. Both sellers and consumers, for example are mostly aware of natural environment degradation and climate change impacts of agri-food marketing and on agri-food marketing, even though, to a degree agri-food marketing in such BOP-SM contexts tends to be less natural resource intensive, quite simply as per the lack of resource availability and as per lack of accessibility to such resources as per the inherent poverty of such agri-food marketing systems. There was an emphasis on this point of making agri-food marketing in BOP-SM greener and climate smarter as there was already 'fertile ground' on which to build on, seeing both seller and consumer sensitivities on both matters and per the lack of resources implied by such poverty driven agri-food marketing systems.

Lastly what emerged from the discussion was to see agri-food marketing from a differing perspective altogether. This implying that agri-food marketing should be considered from a specific BOP-SM perspective and not adaptive to such contexts i.e. a new way of thinking and practicing marketing. This also implied to possibly consider if marketing was really apt for such contexts seeing that marketing, in its modern form, 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. For example seeing the prevalence of networks found within BOP-SM, could the distribution of agri-food products be termed agri-food networking?

Discussion

The previous researches conducted on the BOP-SM context, see Hilmi (2022a); Hilmi (2022b); Hilmi (2021a); Hilmi (2021b); Hilmi (2021c); and Hilmi (2020), and this current research provides a good degree of confidence on what the BOP-SM context actually is. In these researches, common and frequent characteristics were found in regard to the BOP-SM context and hence BOP-SM contextual characteristic 'influences' on agri-food marketing can be provided with a good degree of confidence, but keeping in mind the heterogeneity of such contexts.

In this regard the same can be provided for agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts. Hilmi (2022a); Hilmi (2022b); Hilmi (2021a); Hilmi (2021b); Hilmi (2021c); and Hilmi (2020) all provided for 'contributions' to the characteristics of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies, their specific particularities, and, for example, based on: enterprise-size; rural, urban and 'rurban' areas; the differing marketing levels of micro, meso and macro; and in this last research in merit, further findings were provided via yet another in-depth literature and sources of secondary data and information research and review as well as inputs from a feedback meeting and an online meeting. This online meeting enabled and facilitated discussions to take place on the subject matter of agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies and also provided for other relevant matters. Consequently and overall there is a good degree of confidence on what are the agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. Hence, the agri-food marketing characteristics identified have a good degree of confidence as per this research on the subject matter, the previous researches conducted as well as from the online feedback meeting and the online meeting. Thus the 93 characteristics identified have a good degree of confidence, validity and reliability and also applicability and adaptability to agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies, but, as mentioned previously, still keeping in mind the heterogeneity of BOP-SM contexts and the influence this can have on agri-food marketing. The 93 identified characteristics can be found, as provided previously, in Table 1.

Interestingly from the online meeting what emerged where salient matters in terms of agri-food marketing characteristics in BOP-SM contexts. What emerged was the importance of 'localization agri-food marketing' as per the heterogeneity within BOP-SM contexts in differing developing economies. 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 and 'spill-over' effects from more higher income targeted agri-food marketing systems, which provide what may be termed 'parallel agri-food marketing systems. Further the primacy of

freshness, locally based value creation and the importance of family and social networks, implying trust as well as the possibility of sales on credit. This all providing for an ‘insurance and assurance’ agri-food marketing system. This also signifying 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. Also the focus of agri-food marketing being instinctive and inherently tied to entrepreneurship i.e. entrepreneurial marketing, as well as agri-food marketing adapting to such contexts and being flexible, variable, versatile, agile and innovative. There was also consideration of thinking and practice that was sensitive to the natural environmental and climate change matters. Moreover there is also the fact of not to take at ‘face value’ the agri-food marketing derived from a ‘Eurocentric’ perspective, but more aptly from a BOP-SM perspective and this possibly requiring new thinking, theory and practices for agri-food marketing.

Conclusions

From the research findings what emerges is a good degree of confidence in the 93 identified characteristics of agri-food marketing (see Table 1). These characterises can thus be considered as having both practical as well as theoretical implications for agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. But such characteristics need to be considered in light of the findings from the online meeting, in that they must be considered to a degree as per the heterogeneity of BOP-SM contexts and hence the need to adapt specific agri-food marketing practices to the specificity of each BOP-SM context. This providing for a typology of agri-food marketing that may be termed ‘localization agri-food marketing’. Also other considerations need to be taken account of such as: the primacy of freshness of agri-food products; the focus on locally-based value creation; the marginalization; the violence; the operations and process focus; the three levels of marketing (micro, meso, macro); the usage of the 4 A’s marketing mix; the parallel agri-food marketing systems; the family and social networks; the non-commercial aims of agri-food marketing; the risk reduction implied; and the much needed adaptability; flexibility, versatility; variability, agility and innovation of such agri-food marketing.

Thus and overall it is clear that further and more research is still required on agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies as per its innate ‘heterogeny’, ‘localization’ and ‘specificity’. Indeed the possible identification of other characteristics can only but contribute further to the practice as well as to the theory of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. There is also a need to further research on the inherent and implied natural environmental and climate change aspects of agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. This possibly seen on the one side from the impacts of agri-food marketing on climate change and the natural environment and from the other side on how agri-food marketing can be made more ‘greener’ and ‘climate smarter’ so as to attempt to mitigate such impacts and how it can adapt. Further, and importantly, research should be provided on a specific BOP-SM perspective to agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies. Lastly, further research should be conducted on developing capacity building and capacity development materials on agri-food marketing in BOP-SM contexts in developing economies.

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