

Consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency: meeting consumption needs in community

Guided by a ‘logic of the situation’ approach our research investigated a problematic situation in community in order to identify and critically reflect on how consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency are ever-present and co-exist to actually meet consumption needs. In doing so, we reflect on how a situational understanding allowed the researchers to form a more complete view of how consumption needs were actually met in community through the coexistence of *enabler-led marketplaces*, *community-led marketplaces* and *self-sufficiency*. We also re-conceptualised our thinking as a more broadly conceived *hybrid consumer marketplace* to reflect our more complete understanding. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our more broadly conceived *hybrid consumer marketplace* and provide a foundation for further research into consumer marketplaces and meeting consumption needs.

How people attempt to actually meet consumption needs (and desires) is a central topic of interest within consumer affairs (Hill 2020). Indeed, it has formed the foundations of most consumer studies over the years. Moreover, an important complementary quest has been to examine the capacity of consumer marketplaces to adequately meet consumption needs and support consumer health and wellbeing (Martin and Hill 2012) - particularly amongst vulnerable or at-risk consumers who may lack access and control over certain resource-control combinations (Hill and Sharma 2020).

Essentially people attempt to meet consumption needs in two basic ways. They may participate in consumer marketplaces and engage in value exchange activities (Bagozzi 1975a; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). Or, they may be self-sufficient, and meet consumption needs through ‘absorbing’ resources from their immediate environments (Hill 2010, 604). While these two ways may seem to be distinct and clearly delineated, Layton (2019, 211) points out that people do not have perfect information and choice sets; and so attempt to meet their consumption needs from what may be possible in their immediate situation. Many eminent social scientists,

including Karl Popper, point out that individual people, on average, exhibit an incomplete or partially wrong understanding of their immediate situation or what social scientist refer to as the ‘logic of the situation’ (Clarke, Friese and Washburn, 2018; Palacio-Vera, 2020). For these reasons, many consumer scholars advocate for a broader approach to gain a more complete understanding of the consumers’ situation in the marketplace (Giesler and Fischer, 2017: 4). As such, an important starting point for researchers may be to first understand the ‘logic of the situation’ facing the consumer, and then to delve further into the specific consumption-related problem and how consumption needs are met through the access and control of different resource combinations (i.e., resource-control combinations). For example, Kennedy (2016), in a study on fast-fashion consumption, explains that it is vital to understand the macro- situation first when determining what policies and actions are required to promote sustainable consumption. Otherwise researchers run the risk of erroneously placing the specific consumption-related problem within a narrowly defined set of factors and/or individual people. The consequences of this error may be ‘ignorant’ policy decisions and ‘failed’ actions, which may ultimately result in ‘unintended repercussions’ for the consumer (Palacio-Vera, 2020).

In this paper we investigate a problematic situation in community in order to identify and critically reflect on how two consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency co-exist to meet consumption needs. In doing so, we reflect on how a ‘logic of the situation’ understanding allows the researchers to form a more complete view of how a broadly conceived *hybrid consumer marketplace* actually meets consumption needs.

To undertake our research, we engaged in a critical reflection of a participatory action research (PAR) project that investigated how water consumption needs were met within an informal settlement (also sometimes referred to as a slum or squatter settlement) community in Suva City, Fiji. PAR is an approach used by many consumer researchers to develop practical

understandings, policies and actions with the goal of furthering community health and wellbeing (Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008). Our critical reflection was further guided by situational analysis (Palacio-Vera, 2020) and the MacInnis (2011) framework for conceptual contributions. Central to our critical reflection was the creation of narratives to describe the situation (Bublitz et al., 2016) and situational maps to articulate its elements (Clarke, Friese and Washburn, 2018). Hence, we aimed to answer six broad situational research questions: (1) What was the overarching situation in community? (2) What were the various marketplaces used to meet water consumption needs? (3) Who were the dominant actors? (4) What were the dominant value exchange mechanisms, tangible water devices, rules and regulations, and resource-control constraints and restrictions? (5) What were the dominant resource-control combinations? and (6) Were the marketplaces ‘adequate’ in meeting all water consumption needs in community?

The paper is organised as follows. First, we discuss how consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency are currently conceptualised in the literature. Second, we share our PAR process and provide a brief history of Melanesia and its people. Third, we present our critical reflection and understanding that offers a ‘more complete’ view of the ‘logic of the situation’ by explaining how consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency coexisted to meet consumption needs. Fourth, we discuss these understandings and highlight our contribution to theory and practice. Finally, we offer some directions for future research - particularly during times of critical resource-control constraints and restrictions (Farrell and Hill 2018), and when consumers are most vulnerable (Baker et al. 2005; Hill and Sharma 2020).

CONSUMER MARKETPLACES AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Consumer marketplaces seem to be ubiquitous in every corner of the globe – from subsistence marketplaces in impoverished communities (Viswanathan, Rosa and Ruth 2010; Viswanathan et al. 2020) to online marketplaces in virtual communities. These marketplaces can involve many different forms of value exchange activities - from ‘silent trade’ barter to sophisticated currency transactions - and may even involve social exchange activities such as consumer sharing (Belk 2010) and gift-giving (Belk and Coon 1993). While consumption practices and value exchange activities may share similar situational characteristics (Bagozzi 1975b), they would carry distinct sets of tangible devices (i.e., physical infrastructure and facilities) and resource-control combinations (Hill and Sharma 2020). These distinct sets not determine adequacy (Hill and Sharma 2020) and the achievement of consumer health and wellbeing (Webster and Lusch 2013). They also reflect the historic, cultural, social, technological and economic situations within which consumption takes place (Layton and Duffy 2018).

Despite the omnipresence of consumer marketplaces, most people also rely on self-sufficiency to wholly or partly meet their consumption needs. These self-sufficient ways are analogous to ideas of ‘naturological’ exchange mechanisms wherein people ‘absorb’ resources from their immediate situations (Hill 2010, 604). Some of these self-sufficient ways may exhibit resource-control combinations that involve voluntary consumer choices such as choosing to grow backyard vegetables or sourcing recycled or second-hand products; while others may exhibit resource-control combinations that reflect present-day consumer scarcity, constraints and/or restrictions (Farrell and Hill 2018). For example, there are still approximately 1.3 billion people living in poverty (two-thirds of them living in middle-income countries) who rely on their immediate environments to obtain survival-oriented consumer assortments such as cooking fuel, food, drinking water and sanitation (UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2019, 3).

Not surprisingly, the consumer affairs literature has paid considerably more attention to consumer marketplaces than self-sufficiency. However, more recently, as the consumer research agenda has evolved and broadened (Webster and Lusch 2013; Hill and Martin 2014), ‘alternative’ consumer marketplaces, with many characteristics of self-sufficiency, have received increasing attention. These include informal marketplaces (Saunders et al. 2016), subsistence marketplaces (Viswanathan et al. 2020), non-monetary marketplaces (Godinho et al. 2017), anti-consumption pathways (Balderjahn et al. 2020), and ad-hoc marketplaces (Baker et al. 2015).

A commonality across these alternative marketplaces is that they reflect a distinct set of resource-control combinations (Hill and Sharma 2020, 559) that rely (in part) on consumers ‘absorbing’ and exercising control over their immediate situation to self-sufficiently meet consumption needs (Hill 2010). These obviously include accessing and controlling natural resources from the immediate environment such as land, water and food. But may also include utilising personal self-related assets and capabilities (i.e., a person’s power and ability to do something) by relying on their own physical and mental health, knowledge, self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-determination (Martin and Hill 2012); as well as leveraging interpersonal social assets such as social capital and support networks (Hill and Sharma 2020, 559). To illustrate the point, Baker et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between two ‘complementary’ consumer marketplaces - the commercial and ad-hoc market - during a period of critical constraints and adversity in community (i.e., tornado). They found that, even though both the commercial and ad-hoc marketplaces managed to adequately meet consumption needs through the ‘nearly identical’ assortment of consumption offerings, the two relied on very different sets of resource-control combinations. For instance, the commercial marketplace relied more heavily on recognised business resource-control combinations and transactional

‘commercial’ value exchange, whereas the ‘emergent’ ad hoc marketplace relied more heavily on self-sufficient resources and whatever ‘improvised’ value exchange means that were immediately available or accessible. Similarly, Viswanathan et al. (2010) investigated subsistence marketplaces. They also found that consumers were highly reliant on individual-level self-sufficient resources (such as self-help, self-selection and self-efficacy) together with community-level self-sufficient resources (such as social networks and ties, social identity and social capital) to meet their consumption needs.

In addition to the broadening literature on alternative consumer marketplaces, there is also a growing recognition in the consumer literature that consumers themselves ‘have the ability to meet their most important and generic needs’ by leveraging self-sufficiency - through being active ‘prosumers’ (Toffler 1980; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010), ‘co-creators’ (Xie, Bagozzi, and Sigurd 2008; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2013) and ‘citizen-consumers’ (Webster and Lusch 2013; Coskuner-Balli 2020). Hence it is not surprising that there are renewed calls to consumer researchers to ‘study how multiple resource–control combinations play out...[and] seek ways to support expanded consumer options’ (Hill and Sharma 2020, 568). This call seems especially urgent in recent times as consumer marketplaces and ‘entire societies’ seem to be struggling to adequately meet consumption needs during the current global COVID-19 pandemic (Hill 2020, 393).

THE CRITICAL REFLECTION PROCESS

Our critical reflection relied on a PAR dataset compiled by the research team from Nov. 2013 - Aug. 2016. The PAR dataset included records of participatory workshops, ceremonies, in-depth interviews, participatory mapping, storytelling, transect walks, community meetings,

public meetings, and site visits. In addition, the researchers and field workers made field notes, daily summaries and post-fieldwork reflections. Where possible the recorded data were translated, transcribed and electronically stored in NVivo. The research team who engaged in the critical reflection consisted of seven practitioners and/or academics and came from diverse working backgrounds (i.e., marketing, water and sanitation, public health, community education, and environmental science). See Table 1 for a concise description of the PAR dataset including key dates, activities, methods and data features. (Note: in-text descriptions are cross-referenced to the table and provided by date in parentheses).

Table 1. PAR Dataset

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

In the PAR literature, participants are generally considered to be ‘co-researchers’ (Reason and Bradbury 2008), however, to remain consistent with our chosen nomenclature, we referred to the core research team as the ‘research team’ or ‘researchers’, the residents and leaders of the informal settlement as ‘community actors’ (CA), and everyone else who participated as ‘enabling actors’ (EA), including key actors from government, non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies and civil society). Throughout the research process, the research team took special care to protect the participants’ identities by disguising actor names when possible.

The validity of our critical reflection was pursued through two validity criteria. First, we attempted to ensure that our critical reflection was consistent with basic PAR principles (Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008) and the various forms of experiential and practical reflection that took place during the life of the project; and second, we attempted to ensure that the

research team were in a position to lay claim to a ‘more complete’ understanding of the ‘logic of the situation’ than that of an ‘outside observer’ (Palacio-Vera, 2020, 444). Before presenting our critical reflection and understandings, a brief history of the region is provided to place the situation in historic context.

BRIEF SITUATIONAL HISTORY

Melanesia is a regional group of island nations in the Pacific Ocean, which includes the Republic of Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea. Melanesian people are considered by anthropologists to be a distinct ethnic group who share common cultural and religious practices and speak inter-related indigenous languages - all part of the Austronesian or Papuan language groups (Spriggs 1997). In traditional Melanesian society, males are generally tribal leaders or headmen. The main function of the tribal leaders is to maintain social cohesion and custom and to ensure that everyone in the tribe has ‘adequate’ access to resources.

Before contact with Europeans, indigenous Melanesians were organized around self-contained island tribal units who were mainly self-sufficient in meeting their daily consumption needs. Some of their self-sufficient activities included fishing, hunting, gardening and fetching water from rivers and streams. Water was stored in bamboo, and other wooden containers, and shared amongst the tribe (Mason and Hereniko 1987; Halapua 2001).

When consumption needs could not be met through self-sufficiency, tribes would sometimes engage in value exchange activities with other tribes. For instance, tribes would sometimes barter stones, shells, tusks, mats, pigments, pottery, salt, and canoes. Traditional wealth was

sometimes displayed in the form of pigs and portable items of value (Thomas 2009). Besides, there were many non-material forms of wealth such as work potential, magical charms, specialist knowledge and the natural environment (Whiteman 2002).

When Europeans settled in Melanesia in the early 1800s (and later colonized much of the region) the exchange of western consumer products (such as knives, axes, guns and ammunition) for various land rights and property ownership became commonplace. Consumer marketplaces began to be established as places where value exchange activities and trade took place (Thomas 2009). Consequently, indigenous Melanesians and other migrant groups (such as indentured Indian labourers) began to settle around these marketplaces, however, due to a lack of town planning, informal settlements began to appear on low-lying flood-prone land and steep hillsides near to the marketplaces. With no formal or legal land title and an absence of traditional tribal leadership, the informal settlements quickly became places of dependency, poverty and social *mêlée* (Mason and Hereniko 1987; Halapua 2001). These issues and problems seem to perpetuate today in Suva City, Fiji where there are approximately 22 informal settlements which accommodate 28 035 people - roughly one-third of the city's population (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

CRITICAL REFLECTION OF THE SITUATION IN COMMUNITY

From the beginning of the PAR process, it seemed fairly evident to the researchers that some of the enabling actors (EA) held an 'incomplete' understanding of how consumption needs were met in community (Nov 2013:1). For instance, although EA knew that community actors (CA) were on-selling mains water and collecting rainwater, their understanding seemed to be limited to the consumption practices of CA who lived in the most highly visible section of the informal settlement (i.e., households along the main road). In addition, it seemed that CA

lacked key information and awareness of their legal situation. For example, many CA were not aware that they were legally entitled to household water meters at a subsidised rate and so continued to rely on self-sufficient water sources. So, an important realisation of the research team was the necessity to form a more complete understanding of the overarching situation in community, before narrowing our focus how water consumption needs were met. While many of these ‘incomplete’ understandings were shared amongst the enabling and CA during the PAR workshops in the form of oral narratives the researchers finally attempted to compile a ‘more complete’ textual narrative during the critical reflection stage (Aug. 2019). The textual narrative is presented next:

The informal settlement research site is located alongside a main arterial road within Suva City, Republic of Fiji (Nov. 2013:1). Its boundary spans an area of approximately 5.5 acres and is bordered by a private upmarket residential development on the one side, a large wealthy estate home on the other, and a cleared mangrove swamp ‘at the back’. Beyond the mangrove swamp is an industrial site, bus depot, and some vacant land zoned for industrial development (Aug. 2014:2). The land is owned by the state (i.e., Crown Land), and is under the direct management of the Suva City Council (Nov. 2013:1). According to the Suva City Council, the land cannot be developed for residential or industrial development as it lies below the annual flood line (Nov. 2013:1). Since at least the mid-1980s the land has been ‘illegally’ occupied by i-Taukei Fijians (who are predominantly Melanesian), a small group of Polynesians and Indo-Fijians (Fijian citizens who are fully or partially of Indian descent) - many of whom have relocated from regional areas in search of work and employment opportunities in Suva City (Nov. 2013:1).

Despite the land being ‘illegally’ occupied, some i-Taukei Fijian CA claimed historic rights to the land as traditional owners: “*So everything along these shores belongs to me and my people...We know our rights...So if the SCC [Suva City Council] and government think they can take away that right of ownership from us then they should think again because what’s yours will always be yours – no one can take that away from you*” (Community Actor, Newspaper, 1 July 2008). In 2005 and 2008 CA were issued with 24-hour forced-removal ‘vacate-notices’ by the Suva City Council, but no CA were ever evicted (Newspaper, 2 June 2008).

In 2007 the Suva City Council released a ‘squatter survey report’. It reported that in 1987 there were an estimated 7 houses and 38 CA living in the informal settlement, growing to 34 structures and 145 CA in 2007 (Suva City Council 2007). In 2014 CA (as part of the PAR process) estimated that there were approximately 82 houses and 420 CA in the informal settlement - three houses were occupied by Indo-Fijian CA, while the rest were occupied by i-Taukei Fijian CA (Sep. 2014).

In addition to developing a shared description of the informal settlement it became apparent through the PAR transect walks that CA in different locations within the settlement had vastly different consumption experiences. For instance, along the main road, the houses were relatively well-built, with furnishings, outdoor plumbing, flush toilets, and electricity (Oct. 2014). However, further away from the main road the quality of the houses was relatively poorly built, with little or no furnishings, no direct access to water, no electricity, and only shared pit latrine toilets (Sep. 2014:1).

In addition to these location bound differences, across the entire informal settlement, there was no piped sewer or other 'safe' sanitation options. Instead, CA relied on rudimentary sanitation and drainage options such as open drains, unsealed pit latrines and pour-flush toilets, and open defecation - all of which led directly to the ground surrounding the house or to unsealed containers. These options were self-built, and self-managed by CA (Sep. 2014:1).

The lack of 'safe' sanitation options was compounded by critical environmental challenges facing CA, including tidal inundation, flooding and mangrove deforestation (Nov. 2013:3). These environmental challenges also meant that litter, debris, and industrial waste (contaminants) was deposited into the informal settlement from upstream locations after heavy rains or during tidal intervals (Nov. 2013:3). These environmental challenges also meant that CA (particularly children) were more susceptible to serious water-related health and well-being complications than other city residents (Nov. 2013:3).

Through the PAR process, it also became very clear that adequately meeting water consumption needs was essential to 'survival' in community. Hence, our research focus narrowed to developing a more complete situational understanding of how water consumption needs were specifically met in community (Nov. - Dec. 2014).

Through our conceptual thinking and critical reflection of the PAR dataset we were initially able to identify, delineate and conceptualise three ways in which water consumption needs were met in community, namely: *the enabler-led marketplace, the community-led marketplace and self-sufficiency*. It also became very apparent through our critical reflection that these three ways were ever-present and co-existed in community. Hence, we also spent time revising and re-conceptualising it as a more broadly conceived *hybrid consumer marketplace* to reflect our

more complete understanding. We chose to depict our emergent thinking in a situational map (Figure 1) and accompanying table (Table 2).

Figure 1. Hybrid Consumer Marketplace

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

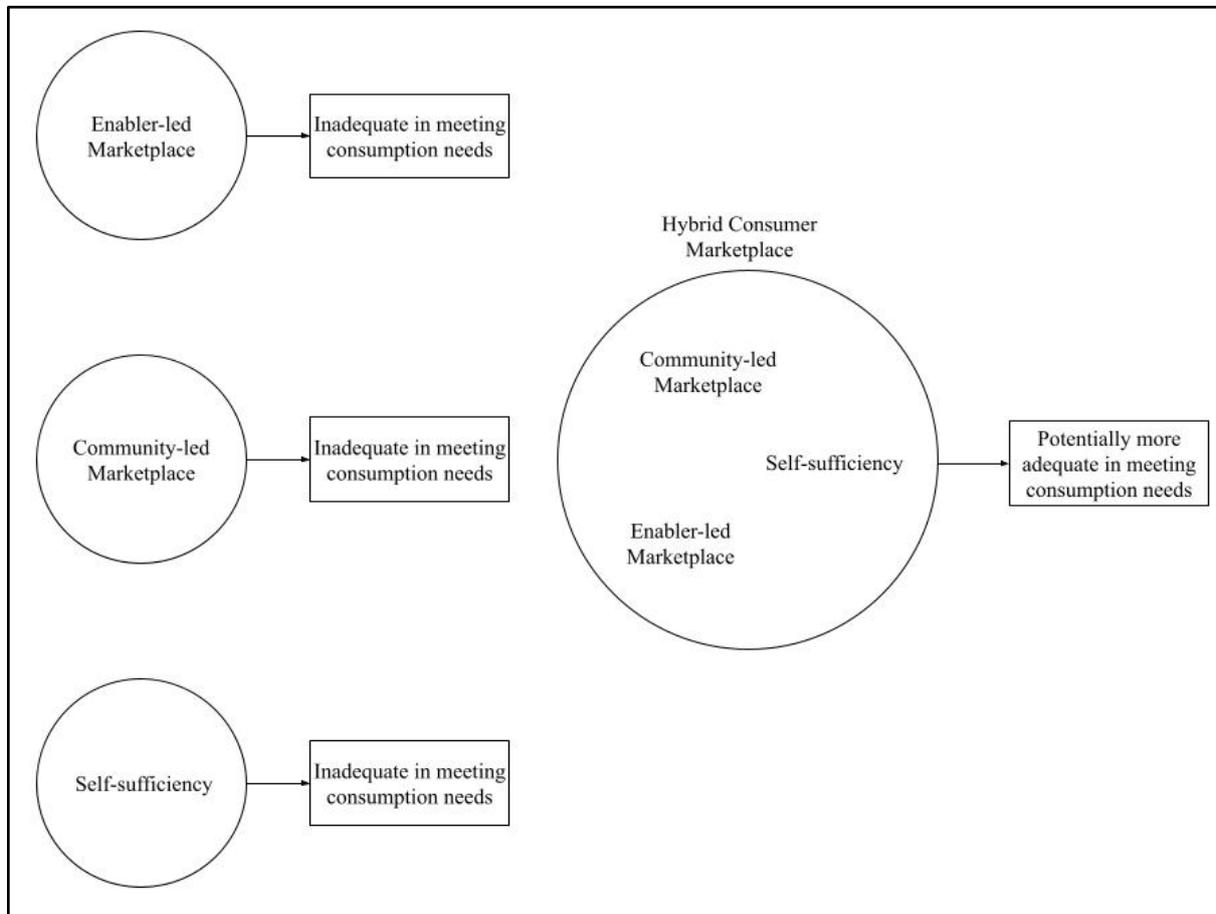


Table 2. Hybrid Consumer Marketplace

INSERT Table 2 HERE

Enabler-led marketplace

The first marketplace that we conceptualised through our critical reflection of the situation was the enabler-led marketplace. We delineated it as a consumer marketplace because the dominant

value exchange mechanism involved the selling of water from EA to CA in exchange for money. While there were numerous EA who indirectly participated in this marketplace as ‘catalytic institutions’ (Shultz, Rahtz, and Sirgy 2016) - including the government health department, the tax office, the national consumer council, funding agencies, and various businesses - the dominant actors were the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) and Suva City Council (SCC), together with CA.

WAF was established as a private water provider in 2010 when it took over responsibility for the national provision of water and related services from the government-operated Water & Sewerage Department. WAF operated as a Commercial Statutory Authority (CSA) and was regulated under the ambit of the Public Enterprise Act of Fiji (Nov. 2013:1). Furthermore, it aligned with Section 36 of the 2013 Constitution of Fiji, guaranteeing citizens the ‘right to clean safe water in adequate quantities’. According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (2019) it is estimated that 94% of the country’s population has access to ‘at least basic’ water in 2017. The SCC was the legal owner of the informal settlement property.

In order to receive WAF water, CA had to apply to WAF for access to a water meter. If the application was successful, CA paid the relevant fees and charges, and gained access. CA with access to a water meter paid WAF for water consumption.

In 2013 there were only 12 water meters (i.e., individually billed water connections) servicing the informal settlement - all of which were located at one connection to the mains water grid, along the main road (and not within the informal settlement itself). These water meters were connected to 12 houses within the informal settlement. As it was illegal for WAF to install ‘infrastructure’ on ‘illegally occupied’ land without the permission of the landowner, the

connection from the water meter to the house was the responsibility of the household. To achieve this, CA had to install water piping and a water tap. As the water piping was expensive and needed to transverse open-drains and pathways, only houses relatively close to the water meters could afford it (Nov. 2013:2). This effectively meant that only a small number of CA living in the 12 connected houses (of the approximately 82 houses) could directly gain access to a water meter and participate in the enabler-led marketplace. The dominant tangible water devices at these houses were typically bought from plumbing suppliers and retail stores and consisted of water piping, water tap, and modern plumbing devices (Dec. 2014).

The only other alternative to those CA who did not have direct access to the limited number of water meters, was to initiate a ‘service request’ with WAF and apply for a new water meter. To have the application approved the community actor was required to enter into an approved ‘legal agreement’ with the SCC (i.e. the property owner) to allow WAF to install a new connection to the mains water grid. The signatories to the agreement needed to include the SCC Director of Engineering, SCC Chief Executive Officer, SCC Lawyer and representatives from the community. In 2014 the community initiated a service request for a new connection to the mains water grid intended for a new community-run kindergarten in the informal settlement (funded by an international church group). Approval of the ‘legal agreement’ was reached with the SCC, and 8 additional water meters were installed at the new mains grid connection point. Community applications for the water meters were approved by WAF and connected to the kindergarten and 7 other houses by the relevant CA (Aug. 2016:1).

On critical reflection, it became evident that the enabler-led marketplace potentially met two WHO/UNICEF JMP evaluation ladder criteria for an ‘improved safely managed water source’ as it seemed to be ‘accessible on the household premises’, and ‘available when needed’

(WHO/UNICEF JMP 2019). However, throughout the PAR process, the enabling and CA repeatedly raised serious concerns about the water pressure, water quality and the possibility that the water was contaminated. They suspected that it was contaminated by faecal and chemical waste through holes and cracks in the water piping, especially in locations where it traversed the contaminated open drains and footpaths. Therefore, there were serious doubts amongst enabling and CA that the enabler-led marketplace delivered water that was free from faecal and chemical contamination; and had serious doubts that their constitutional ‘right to clean safe water in adequate quantities’ were being upheld (Nov. 2015:2). In addition to these critical issues and concerns, there were a number of other critical resource-control constraints and restrictions that inhibited the majority of CA (living in the 62 houses without a water meter) from participating in the enabler-led marketplace. Central to these was the inability to afford a water meter (i.e., individually billed water connection) because of a lack of adequate financial and economic assets (i.e., cash and liquid assets) (Feb. 2015:1).

So as only CA living in the 20 houses (who had direct access to a water meter) participated in the enabler-led marketplace (Aug. 2016:2), the logic of the situation at the time indicated that the enabler-led marketplace was inadequate in meeting all water consumption needs in community.

Community-led marketplace

The second marketplace that we conceptualised was the community-led marketplace. We delineated it as a marketplace because the dominant value exchange mechanism involved the ‘on-selling’ of water (Mudege and Zulu 2011) from one community actor (who had direct access to a water meter) to another community actor who did not have direct access to a water

meter in exchange for money or in-kind ; and/or the ‘sharing’ or ‘giving’ of water between CA in exchange for social reciprocity. While there were also numerous enabling actors who indirectly participated - including NGOs, charities, funding agencies, and various businesses - the dominant actors were CA themselves.

In order to access ‘on-sold’ water, CA living in the 62 households (which did not have direct access to a water meter) had to approach a water ‘on-seller’ (community actor who had direct access to a water meter) to request and negotiate access to the water tap (see Saunders et al. 2016). The exchange parties would negotiate the basic rules and regulations for access (e.g., access times, water quantities) and agree on the relevant fees and charges (e.g., bill-splitting arrangements, agreed-upon price). The payment was either in the form of cash, meals or labour, or through social reciprocity practices such as socialising, playing guitar for entertainment and family reciprocities. Sometimes it was also aligned to indigenous customs and traditions (Nov. 2013:2). For instance, in indigenous Fijian culture (or *vanua*), water (or *wai*) holds a special force or spiritual power (or *mana*), and *vanua* affairs associated with water typically involve ceremonial presentations or giving *mana* (Nabobo-Baba 2006, 52).

In 2014 we estimated that all CA living in the 62 houses (who did not have direct access to a water meter) participated in the community-led marketplace to some extent or another. Typically, these CA collected water (in buckets or water containers) from the water on-seller to take back to their house. Alternatively, CA ‘showered’ at the water tap if a bathing facility was provided by the water on-seller. In some cases, makeshift water pipes or hoses were also connected from the on-seller’s water tap to the consumers’ houses. Typically, the dominant tangible water devices at these houses were ‘makeshift’ devices that were sourced from the

immediate environment and consisted of water storage containers (e.g., ice-cream or biscuit ‘buckets’) and hose pipes (Sep. 2014).

On critical reflection, it became evident that the community-led water marketplace potentially met the WHO/UNICEF JMP (2019) evaluation ladder criteria for an ‘improved basic’ water source as CA seemed to be able to collect water in ‘not more than 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing’. Nevertheless, it became evident through the PAR process that many of the water on-sellers restricted access to some CA, particularly at night (10:00 pm-5:00 am), which meant that the water source at best seemed to be an ‘improved limited’ (‘collection time exceeds 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing’) water source. Furthermore, as the water source originated from the potentially contaminated enabler-led marketplace, there were serious doubts amongst enabling and CA that the community-led marketplace delivered water that was free from faecal and chemical contamination (Nov. 2015:2).

In addition to these issues and concerns, there were a number of other critical resource-control constraints and restrictions inherent to the community-led marketplace. Central to these constraints and restrictions was the difficulty to pay for on-sold water because of a lack of adequate financial and economic assets (i.e., cash and liquid assets), particularly amongst the most vulnerable in community (e.g., elderly widows). However, as noted above, through the PAR process it also became apparent that in instances when affordability was a major constraint, some water on-sellers (but not all) were prepared to ‘share’ water with vulnerable CA, even if they were not part of their extended support networks (i.e., friends and family). Many of these social practices seemed to mirror what occurs in subsistence marketplaces (Viswanathan, Rosa and Ruth 2010; Venugopal and Viswanathan 2017). Nevertheless, access to these sharing networks was not universal as there were many instances whereby CA, who

were not part of the established support networks, were not granted the same privileges (e.g., discounts, ‘after-hours’ access, ‘queue jumping’). There also seemed to be a lack of social integration between the i-Taukei Fijian and the Indo-Fijian CA that prevented water on-selling between the groupings from occurring more regularly (Sep. 2014).

So while all CA living in the 62 houses (who did not have direct access to a water meter) participated in the community-led marketplace to some extent or another, the logic of the situation at the time indicated that the community-led marketplace was inadequate in meeting all water consumption needs in community (Aug. 2014:2).

Self-sufficiency

The third way that we conceptualised was self-sufficiency. We delineated it as a ‘natural-marketplace’ because the dominant ‘naturological’ value exchange mechanism involved CA ‘absorbing’ water from the immediate environment (Hill 2010, 604). While it was not a consumer marketplace *per se*, since it did not involve an exchange between two or more people (Houston and Gassenheimer 1987), it was judged to be a marketplace as it involved human creations, communications and distributions, albeit individualised. Once again, numerous EA indirectly supported self-sufficiency - including the WSD, NGOs, charities, funding agencies, and various businesses - the dominant actors were CA themselves, together with the immediate environment.

Through self-sufficiency CA relied on two main water-related activities. First, CA would connect their roofing structure via guttering and other conduits to a rainwater tank (or other vessel) to collect rainwater (Aug. 2014:2) - a practice that is more commonly known as

‘rainwater harvesting’ (Pacey and Cullis 1986). In 2013 it was estimated that almost all CA living in community used rainwater harvesting devices of some sort or another. Some of these devices were commercially bought or donated rainwater tanks (e.g., 3000L or 5000L plastic tanks), while others were makeshift devices (e.g., old 44-gallon oil drum, old fridges, old baths) that were sourced onsite or from the city rubbish dump sites. In addition to the need for rainwater harvesting devices, the building and maintenance of the tanks required a level of personal agency (e.g., ingenuity, physical health, self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-determination) to ensure that the rainwater was ‘accessible on-premises, available when needed, and free from contamination’ (WHO/UNICEF JMP 2019). However, regardless of these required capabilities, rainfall in the area fluctuated according to the seasons or time-of-year, which meant that CA could not always rely on rainwater alone to adequately meet water consumption needs in community.

Second, some CA, particularly the most vulnerable in community (e.g., elderly widows) would collect water from the immediate environment (i.e., river and streams) - despite it being widely known and understood in community that it was in all likelihood highly contaminated (e.g., chemical, faecal, carcasses, and other waste). Typically, these CA would collect water (in buckets or water containers) to take back to their house for the purposes of flushing latrines, bathing, and washing clothes (not drinking or cooking uses). Sometimes CA would also bathe and wash clothes at the water source, particularly if it was inconvenient to carry or if they were physically incapable of transporting water (Aug. 2014:2).

So while all CA participated in self-sufficiency to some extent or another, the logic of the situation at the time indicated that self-sufficiency was also inadequate in meeting all water consumption needs in community.

Hybrid consumer marketplace

Consistent with Layton's (2007) recommendation to conceptualise consumer marketplaces at more than one level of aggregation, we revised and re-conceptualised our understandings as an aggregated higher-level marketplace, namely: the *hybrid consumer marketplace*. We undertook the revision as our emergent understandings evolved to recognise that the lower-level conceptualisations were not stand-alone 'marketplaces' but were ever-present and coexisted to meet water consumption needs in community.

Consequently, late in the PAR process and on critical reflection, it was no longer seen as productive to ask which lower-level 'marketplace' should act as a 'stand-alone' solution to meet water consumption needs. Instead, it was seen as more productive to ask how different resource-control combinations could be leveraged through appropriate policies and actions to support the entire *hybrid consumer marketplace* in more adequately meeting consumption needs. For instance, the community lacked safe pathways to access water - a critical resource-control constraint that affected the whole *hybrid consumer marketplace*. An important community-led practical action occurred during the PAR process to install concrete pathways in the informal settlement. The result of which was easier and more efficient access to water, regardless of which marketplace was used. The actions involved community-led fundraising events (e.g., curry nights), collecting free building materials from the immediate environment (waste materials from a building site), and procuring cement and securing transport with the help of EA. The paths were built by CA with support provided by EA (Nov. 2015-). At the time these actions seemed to demonstrate the importance of leveraging the enabler-led marketplace to offer a partial solution to adequately meet water consumption needs. However,

upon critical reflection it also seemed to demonstrate the potential of the entire hybrid consumer marketplace wherein CA played a more active role in adequately meeting consumption needs, not only as enabler-led or community-led marketplace actors but also as self-sufficient actors who took collective control of their consumption needs. In addition, the progress reported through the joint forum meetings and private social media communications seem to also provide the research team with some assurance that the community and EA had subsequently negotiated more informed decisions and actions based on a shared understanding of the *hybrid consumer marketplace* (Feb. 2015:5).

Nevertheless, it is also important to point out that even though the logic of the situation at the time allowed the community and EA to ‘see’ the potential in leveraging the entire hybrid consumer marketplace to meet survival consumption needs, the overarching nature of the resource-control constraints and restrictions facing each lower-level marketplace meant that it was extremely difficult for the researchers to envisage how the hybrid consumer marketplace could ever ‘thrive’ (Feb. 2015:5). In fact, it was so deeply rooted in historic inequalities, power imbalances, resource scarcity, and extreme consumer vulnerabilities that it seemed to be a truly ‘wicked’ situation with no definitive solution (Head and Alford 2015). Nevertheless the decisions and actions taken by the CA and EA seemed to at least offer a partial or provisional response to the situation, which amounted to a shared understanding about the *hybrid consumer marketplace*, and about ways of dealing with it.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we investigated a problematic situation in community in order to identify and critically reflect on how two consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency co-existed to meet consumption needs. In doing so, we reflected on how a ‘logic of the situation’ understanding

allowed the researchers to form a more complete view of how a broadly conceived *hybrid consumer marketplace* actually meets consumption needs. We also reflected on how a situational understanding of the *hybrid consumer marketplace* supported the community and enabling actors in developing practical understandings and actions that offered a partial or provisional response to the problematic situation. Consequently, we advocate for a ‘logic of the situation’ approach to understanding consumer marketplaces - particularly when consumption needs are met through a range of expanded consumer options that include community-led marketplaces and self-sufficiency.

With reference to the MacInnis (2011) framework for conceptual contributions, our ‘logic of the situation’ approach and hybrid consumer marketplace understanding contributes to the consumer affairs literature by: (1) providing an approach for identifying how consumer needs are actually met, (2) delineating the dominant value exchange mechanisms, tangible water devices, rules and regulations, and resource-control constraints and restrictions, and (3) articulating and advocating for a more broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplace understanding to guide policy and actions.

Our situational approach is therefore broad, encompassing a complete set of consumer marketplaces, wherein each involves different dominant value exchange mechanisms, tangible water devices, rules and regulations, and resource-control constraints and restrictions. Hence, we envisage a broader consumer research agenda wherein consumer researchers, policy makers and communities, aiming to support consumers in meeting consumption needs, rely on broader, more inclusive, multivocal approaches and methods (such as PAR) to gain a more complete understanding of hybrid consumer marketplaces.

While our situational focus was on a vulnerable or at-risk community, the theoretical and practical implications derived from our research are broadly applicable to any context wherein consumers rely on more than one marketplace to meet consumption needs. For example, researchers could apply our ‘logic of the situation’ approach to other consumption contexts such as the fast-fashion sector to understand how consumption needs are actually met through consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency. For instance, fast-fashion consumers not only buy clothing from the many fast-fashion retailers (and then dispose of accordingly) but also rely on consumer-led initiatives and a level of self-sufficiency to re-purchase, re-design, repair, reuse and recycle fast-fashion clothing to meet consumption needs in community. Without a complete understanding of the ‘logic of the situation’ through a broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplace conceptualisation, ‘ignorant’ policy decisions and ‘failed’ actions will persist (Kennedy, 2016) and thus, leave unaddressed many of the unintended environmental consequences that fast-fashion consumption may be having on world today. Nevertheless, there are some clothing manufacturers and brands, such as Patagonia, that already seem to recognise the ‘logic of the situation’, and are guiding and advising consumers on how to extend the life of their clothing through community-led marketplaces (e.g., ‘Keep-your-gear-in-play’ and ‘Worn-wear’) and self-sufficiency (e.g., ‘Do-it-yourself Repair Tutorials’).

Moreover, a ‘logic of the situation’ understanding seems to become increasingly important to consumers themselves, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many people have been pushed into situations where community-led and self-sufficient marketplaces became the only viable options available to meet consumption needs. For example, lockdown, isolation and travel bans in most parts of the world, severely restricted consumer access to enabler-led marketplaces. During these times it seemed that many consumers were scrambling to form a more complete understanding of how community-led and self-sufficient marketplaces could be

leveraged to meet consumption needs. Clearly, more broadly construed consumer education is needed to support consumers in conceptualising the broader set of marketplace options available to them to not only survive during crisis situations, but to thrive over time. The focus on this education should encompass an understanding of the broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplace. In our research, we found that local consumer affairs organisations such as the Consumer Council of Fiji were well placed to offer such educational support (Aug. 2016:1) as they were not wedded to one consumer marketplace but are rather more broadly concerned with supporting consumer well being through any means possible (i.e., hybrid consumer marketplace). We therefore see an important role for local consumer affairs organisations and consumer advocacy groups in possibly promoting, supporting and advocating for the entire hybrid consumer marketplace.

Our critical reflection and understanding also provides some scope for future research in the consumer affairs discipline. First, our research highlights the need for more complete understanding of how basic non-substitutable consumer offerings that are absolutely essential to human survival are met (e.g., water). Nevertheless, consumer research into basic non-substitutable consumer offerings is surprisingly scarce. Second, we also did not specifically conceptualise how post-consumption needs (and desires) are met during the disposal or disposition stage of the consumption process (Jacoby, Berning and Dietvorst 1977). Clearly more nuanced theorising is needed to gain further insights into how post-consumption and disposal value exchange mechanisms (particularly those that are ‘unseen’) function within these broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplaces.

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