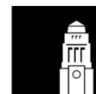

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Saunders, SG, Sridharan, S, Barrington, DJ et al. (4 more authors) (2021) Consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency: Meeting consumption needs in community. Journal of Consumer Affairs, 55 (4). pp. 1691-1711. ISSN 0022-0078

https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12403

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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 to identify and critically reflect on how consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency 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 met in community through 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.

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Keywords: Self-sufficiency, hybrid consumer marketplaces, situational analysis, water, consumption needs.

Funding information: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Development Research Awards Scheme. Project number: 201200898.

INTRODUCTION

How people attempt to 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 & Hill, 2012) - particularly amongst vulnerable or at-

risk consumers who may lack access and control over certain resource-control combinations (Hill & 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, p. 604). While these two ways may seem to be distinct and clearly delineated, Layton (2019) 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 (1994), 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, & 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 & Fischer, 2017, p. 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 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* 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 to further community health and wellbeing (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). Our critical reflection was further guided by situational analysis (Palacio-Vera, 2020) and the MacInnis (2011) framework for conceptual contributions (Chiu, 2006). 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 et al., 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 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 & Hill, 2018), and when consumers are most vulnerable (Baker, Gentry, & Rittenburg, 2005; Hill & 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 & Ruth, 2010; Viswanathan, Arias, & Sreekumar, 2021) 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 & 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 & Sharma, 2020). These distinct sets do not only determine adequacy (Hill & Sharma, 2020) and the achievement of consumer health and wellbeing (Webster & Lusch, 2013) but also reflect the historic, cultural, social, technological and economic situations within which consumption takes place (Layton & 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, p. 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 & 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 (United Nations Development Programme, 2019, p. 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 & Lusch, 2013; Hill & 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., 2021), non-monetary marketplaces (Godinho, Venugopal, Singh, & Russell, 2017), anti-consumption pathways (Balderjahn, Lee, Seegebarth, & Peyer, 2020), and ad-hoc marketplaces (Baker, Hill, Baker, & Mittelstaedt, 2015).

A commonality across these alternative marketplaces is that they reflect a distinct set of resource-control combinations (Hill & Sharma, 2020, p. 559) that rely (in part) on consumers

‘absorbing’ and exercising control over their immediate situation to self-sufficiently meet consumption needs (Hill, 2010). These 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 & Hill, 2012); as well as leveraging interpersonal social assets such as social capital and support networks (Hill & Sharma, 2020, p. 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 & Jurgenson, 2010), 'co-creators' (Xie, Bagozzi, & Troye, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2013) and 'citizen-consumers' (Webster & 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 & Sharma, 2020, p. 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, p. 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 & 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' (CAs), and everyone else who participated as 'enabling actors' (EAs), including key actors from government, non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies and civil society) and commercial businesses. 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 & 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, p. 444). Before presenting our critical reflection and understandings, a brief history of the region is provided to place the situation in a 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 that 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 & 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 & Hereniko, 1987; Halapua, 2001). These issues and problems seem to perpetuate today in Suva City, Fiji where there are approximately 22 informal settlements that accommodate 28 035 people - roughly one-third of the city's population (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE SITUATION IN COMMUNITY

From the beginning of the PAR process, it seemed fairly evident to the researchers that some of the enabling actors (EAs) held an 'incomplete' understanding of how consumption needs were met in community (Nov 2013:1). For instance, although EAs knew that community actors (CAs) were on-selling mains water and collecting rainwater, their understanding seemed to be limited to the consumption practices of CAs who lived in the most highly visible section of the informal settlement (i.e., households along the main road). In addition, it seemed that CAs lacked key information and awareness of their legal situation. For example, many CAs 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 on how water consumption needs were met. While many of these 'incomplete' understandings were shared amongst the EAs and CAs during the PAR workshops in the form of oral narratives, the researchers attempted to compile an overarching textual narrative during the critical reflection stage to guide their own (possibly incomplete) situational understandings (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 CAs 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 CAs were issued with 24-hour forced-removal 'vacate notices by the Suva City Council, but no CAs were ever evicted (Newspaper, 2 June 2008).

In 2007 the Suva City Council released a 'squatter survey report'. It reported that in 1987 there had been an estimated 7 houses and 38 CAs living in the informal settlement, growing to 34

structures and 145 CAs in 2007 (Suva City Council, 2007). In 2014 CAs (as part of the PAR process) estimated that there had been approximately 82 houses and 420 CAs in the informal settlement - three houses were occupied by Indo-Fijian CAs, while the rest were occupied by i-Taukei Fijian CAs (Sep. 2014).

In addition to developing a shared description of the informal settlement, it became apparent through the PAR transect walks that CAs 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, CAs 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 CAs (Sep. 2014:1).

The lack of 'safe' sanitation options was compounded by critical environmental challenges facing CAs, including tidal inundation and flooding (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 CAs (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 Situational Map

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

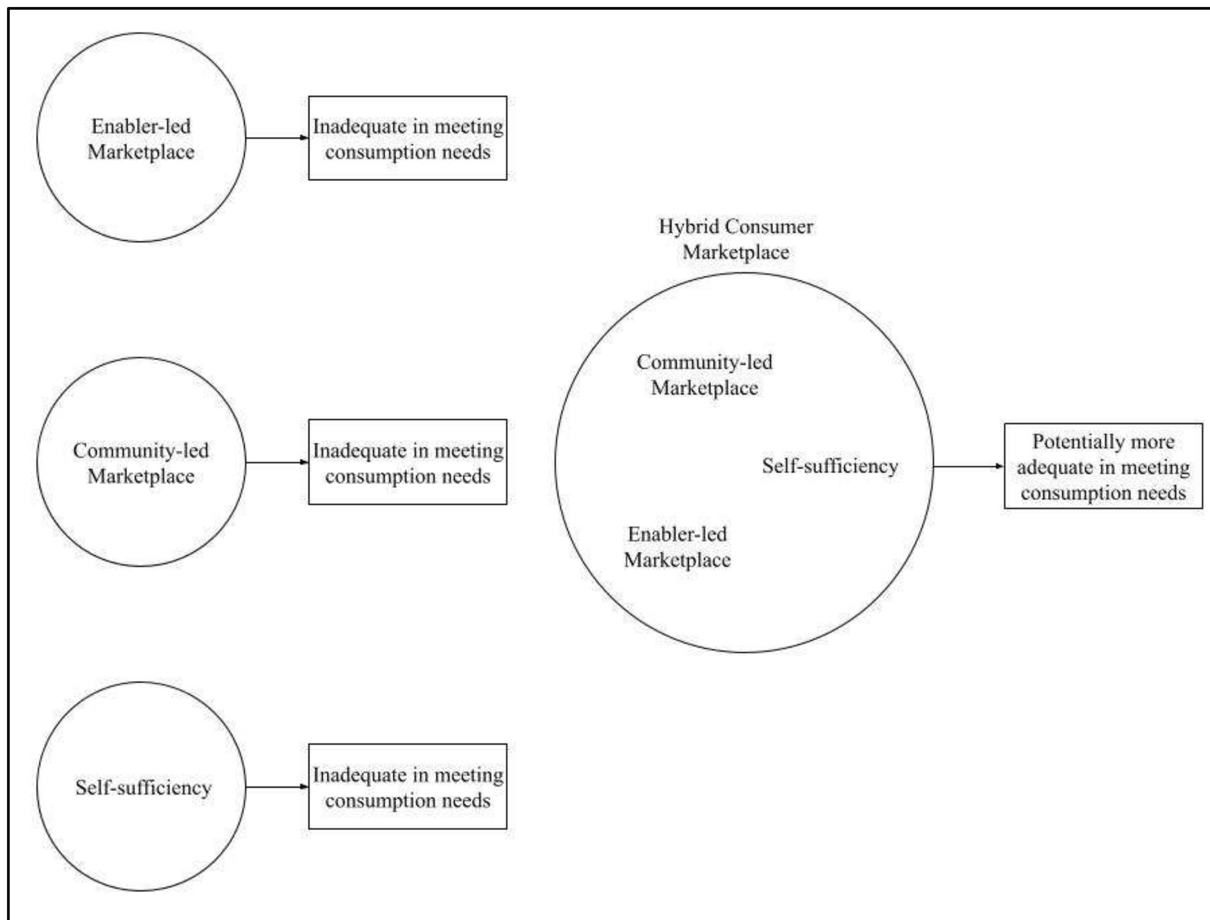

Table 2. Hybrid Consumer Marketplace

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 EAs to CAs in exchange for money. While there were numerous EAs who indirectly participated in this marketplace as 'catalytic institutions' (Shultz, Rahtz, & Sirgy, 2016) - including the government health department, the tax office, the national consumer council, funding agencies, and various

commercial businesses - the dominant actors were the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) and Suva City Council (SCC), together with CAs.

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. Water Authority of Fiji (WAF, 2016) 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 World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program [JMP] (2019), it is estimated that 94% of the country's population has access to 'at least basic' water in 2017. The Suva City Council was the legal owner of the informal settlement property.

To receive WAF water, CAs had to apply to WAF for access to a water meter. If the application was successful, CAs paid the relevant fees and charges and gained access. CAs 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, CAs 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 CAs 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 CAs 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 CAs (Aug. 2016:1).

On critical reflection, it became evident that the enabler-led marketplace met the WHO/UNICEF JMP evaluation criteria for a '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 EAs and CAs 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 EAs and CAs 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, several other constraints inhibited the majority of CAs (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 CAs 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 & 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 CAs in exchange for social reciprocity. The dominant actors were CAs themselves.

To access 'on-sold' water, CAs 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 the 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 (*vanua*), water (*wai*) holds a special force or spiritual power (*mana*), and *vanua* affairs associated with water typically involve ceremonial presentations or giving *mana* (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 52).

In 2014 we estimated that all CAs 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 CAs collected water (in buckets or water containers) from the water on-seller to take back to their house. Alternatively, CAs '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 met the WHO/UNICEF JMP (2019) evaluation criteria for a basic water source as CAs 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 CAs, particularly at night (10:00 pm-5:00 am). Furthermore, as the water source originated from the potentially contaminated enabler-led marketplace, there were serious doubts amongst EAs and CAs 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 several 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 CAs, 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 et al., 2010; Venugopal & Viswanathan, 2017). Nevertheless, access to these sharing networks was not universal as there were many instances whereby CAs, who was 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 CAs that prevented water on-selling between the groupings from occurring more regularly (Sep. 2014).

So while all CAs 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 CAs 'absorbing' water from the immediate environment (Hill, 2010, p. 604). While it was not a consumer marketplace *per se,* since it did not involve an exchange between two or more people (Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987), it was judged to be a marketplace as it involved human creations, communications and distributions, albeit individualised. The dominant actors were CAs themselves, together with the immediate environment.

Through self-sufficiency, CAs relied on two main water-related activities. First, CAs would connect their roofing structure via guttering and other conduits to a rainwater tank (or other vessels) to collect rainwater (Aug. 2014:2) - a practice that is more commonly known as rainwater harvesting (Pacey & Cullis, 1986). In 2013 it was estimated that almost all CAs 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 CAs could not always rely on rainwater alone to adequately meet water consumption needs in community.

Second, some CAs, 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 CAs would collect water (in buckets or water containers) to take back to their house for the purposes of flushing latrines, bathing, and washing clothes. Sometimes CAs 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 CAs 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 revised as our emergent understandings evolved to recognise that the lower-level conceptualisations were not stand-alone 'marketplaces' but were ever-present in meeting 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 EAs. The paths were built by CAs with support provided by EAs (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 CAs 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 seems to also provide the research team with some assurance that the community and EAs had subsequently negotiated more informed decisions and actions based on a better 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 EAs 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). 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 one solution (Head & Alford, 2015). Nevertheless, the decisions and actions taken by the CAs and EAs seemed to at least offer a partial or provisional response to the situation, which seemed to amount to a better understanding of the *hybrid consumer marketplace*, and ways of dealing with it.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we investigated a problematic situation in community to identify and critically reflect on how two consumer marketplaces and self-sufficiency met 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* meets consumption needs. We also reflected on how a situational understanding of the *hybrid consumer marketplace* supported the CAs and EAs 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.

Concerning 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 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, policymakers 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 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 it 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 the world today. Nevertheless, there are some clothing manufacturers and brands, such as Patagonia, that already seem to recognise the value of a hybrid marketplace 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. 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 crises but to thrive over time. The focus on this education should encompass an understanding of the broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplace. For instance, 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 were rather more broadly concerned with supporting consumer wellbeing through any means possible (i.e., hybrid consumer marketplace). We, therefore, see an important opportunity for local consumer affairs

organisations and consumer advocacy groups in promoting, restructuring, supporting and/or advocating for the entire hybrid consumer marketplace. Perhaps this is what was meant by Donna Meadows when she advised that truly 'wicked' situations 'will yield only as we reclaim our intuition, stop casting blame, see the system as the source of its own problems, and find the courage and wisdom to restructure it' (Meadows, 2008, p. 4).

Our critical reflection and understanding also provide some scope for future research in the consumer affairs discipline. First, our research highlights the need for a more complete understanding of how consumption needs that are essential to human survival are met (e.g., water consumption needs). Nevertheless, consumer research into 'survival' 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, & Dietvorst, 1977). More nuanced theorising is needed to gain further insights into how post-consumption and disposal value exchange mechanisms function (particularly those that are 'unseen') within these broadly conceived hybrid consumer marketplaces.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Development Research Awards Scheme (project number: 201200898) and managed by the International WaterCentre. We wish to thank Maciu Nokelevu and Keasi Delana from Live & Learn Environmental Education, and Asenaca Vakatalai from The University of the South Pacific for all their kind assistance and help. We also wish to thank the local community for making the research project possible.

We received ethical approval and all relevant research permits or exemptions from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (approval, project CF13/2672 – 2013001430), University of North Carolina Office of Human Research Ethics (exemption, project 13-3694), and The University of the South Pacific Human Ethics Committee (approval by email, no number provided).

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