

A Bottom-Up Approach to Understanding and Designing Solutions for Subsistence Marketplaces

Abstract: The Subsistence Marketplaces Initiative (www.business.illinois.edu/subsistence) at the University of Illinois and has pioneered the area of enquiry and practice entitled subsistence marketplaces which adopts a unique bottom-up approach to understanding and designing solutions at the intersection of poverty and marketplaces. This initiative has created unique synergies between research, teaching, and social initiatives - including courses on subsistence and sustainability reaching almost a thousand students a year at the University of Illinois, and tens of thousands of students around the world through Coursera. Among these courses is a yearlong sequence with international immersion rated on of the top entrepreneurship courses by Inc magazine and involving students from across campus in projects that bring together technology, design, and business. Madhu Viswanathan founded and directs the *Marketplace Literacy Project* (www.marketplaceliteracy.org), a non-profit organization, pioneering the design and delivery of marketplace literacy education to low-income consumers and subsistence marketplaces. Through his organization and partners, almost 20,000 women have received marketplace literacy education – with ongoing programs or pilots in India, Tanzania, Uganda, Illinois, and Argentina. This talk will focus on these initiatives and their implications for technology.

Bio: Madhu Viswanathan is the Diane and Steven N. Miller Professor in Business at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where he has been on the faculty since 1990. He earned a B. Tech in Mechanical Engineering (Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India, 1985), and a PhD in Marketing (University of Minnesota, 1990). His research programs are in two areas; measurement and research methodology, and literacy, poverty, and subsistence marketplace behaviors. He has authored books in both areas: *Measurement Error and Research Design* (Sage, 2005), *Enabling Consumer and Entrepreneurial Literacy in Subsistence Marketplaces* (Springer, 2008, in alliance with UNESCO), and *Subsistence Marketplaces* (etext and ebookpartnerships, 2013). He directs the Subsistence Marketplaces Initiative (www.business.illinois.edu/subsistence) and has pioneered the area of enquiry and practice entitled subsistence marketplaces with unique synergies between research, teaching, and social initiatives. He teaches courses on research methods and on subsistence and sustainability, educational experiences on the latter, reaching almost a thousand students a year at the University of Illinois, and tens of thousands of students around the world through Coursera. Educational materials on subsistence marketplaces for educators and students is disseminated through a unique web portal, and innovations include a one-of-a-kind international immersion experience. He founded and directs the *Marketplace Literacy Project* (www.marketplaceliteracy.org), a non-profit organization, pioneering the design and delivery of marketplace literacy education to low-income consumers and subsistence marketplaces. Through his organization and partners, almost 20,000 women have received marketplace literacy education – with ongoing programs or pilots in India, Tanzania, Illinois, and Argentina. He has received research, teaching, curriculum development, social entrepreneurship, humanitarian, leadership, public engagement, international achievement, and career achievement awards and his course on subsistence marketplaces was ranked one of the top entrepreneurship courses by Inc. magazine. He serves on the Advisory Board of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and is currently designing marketplace literacy education for a refugee camp in Uganda and a course for UNHCR staff on subsistence marketplaces.