From Subsistence Marketplaces to Sustainable Marketplaces? Synergies Between Research, Teaching, and Social Initiatives

Madhu Viswanathan

Subsistence Marketplaces Initiative (www.business.illinois.edu/subsistence)
Department of Bus. Admin. (Marketing), Coordinated Science Laboratory & Women and Gender In Global Perspectives Program
University of Illinois

Much of humanity lives at or near subsistence across resource and literacy barriers. This presentation will summarize a research program on low-literate, low income consumers in the United States and subsistence consumers, entrepreneurs and marketplaces in India. It will cover teaching and social initiatives that have developed from the program and challenges and opportunities this arena presents for researchers, educators, and students.

Madhu Viswanathan is Professor of Business Administration 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), and Enabling Consumer and Entrepreneurial Literacy in Subsistence Marketplaces (Springer, 2008, in alliance with UNESCO). He directs the Subsistence Marketplaces Initiative (www.business.illinois.edu/subsistence) and has created unique synergies between research, teaching, and social initiatives. He teaches courses on research methods and on subsistence and sustainability. 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 subsistence communities. He has received research, teaching, social entrepreneurship, humanitarian, and leadership awards.