

Preface

This book is about strategic challenges in the Base of the Pyramid (BoP). The Base of the Pyramid is an overarching term we use to study the poorest people in the world. We have both been fascinated by the idea of business and poverty alleviation. With the limited results of classic aid initiatives to alleviate poverty, the role of business in poverty alleviation has been propagated. The late C.K. Prahalad claimed that we should not treat the poor as victims, but as potential entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers. His work with Stu Hart has been a source of inspiration for both of us. Together they have set the agenda for an emerging field of research and for a range of companies to explore opportunities at the BoP. We are grateful to have been given the opportunity to listen and talk to these two visionary scholars.

The examples in this book are derived from a variety of distinct research projects. An important part has been conducted as part of a PhD project, the other empirical chapters have originally been conducted as a series of master's-thesis projects. A special note goes out to our co-authors in some of the chapters: Michel Bachmann, Petru Curşeu, Jac Geurts, Peter Grootveld and Bob Soers. Working with you all has been a great experience and we would like to express our gratitude in your contributions to this book. We would also like to show our appreciation to the companies who gave generously of their time and patience while the data on which this book is based were collected. And what would a preface be without thanking those that matter the most. Patrick would like to thank Afke, Hugo and Simon for their enduring love and support when finishing this book. Edgar would like to thank his wife Shantala and son Milan, who encouraged him to rediscover the valuable insights on poverty and business gained during his doctoral studies.

Nijmegen/Brussels, April 2014
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