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The importance of human relationships within franchise chains in the social sector:

The case of Jibu providing drinking water in East African countries



The United Nations (UN) has adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), comprising of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. It is committed to achieving these goals by 2030. Included among these 17 SDGs are: “good health and well-being,” “clean water and sanitation,” “affordable and clean energy,” and “decent work and economic growth.” A few recent academic papers, as well as trade papers, have analysed the emergence, development and operation of franchise chains that attempt to meet, and often succeed in meeting, these goals. Our research, which focuses on Africa, aims to investigate a particular aspect of these franchise chains in the social sector: the importance of human relationships and internal communication within such chains. More specifically, the research question posed is, “How are human relationships and internal communication organized in such chains in the social sector, and how important is it for the different stakeholders?” To answer this research question, we focus on franchising and micro-franchising in one specific social sector: drinking water distribution. Indeed, access to drinking water is of great concern in many developing countries, above all in African countries (Pickering and Davis, 2012; Ofouémé-Berton, 2010). This empirical research deals with the case study of Jibu, a chain composed of 78 franchised units and 1,374 independent retailers, which has distributed about 100 million liters of drinking water so far in six African countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Keywords : Social franchising, micro-franchising, sustainable development goals, water access, East Africa

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When using a broker leads to a “bad deal” illusion: influence of brokerage usage on price satisfaction and recommendation intentions