

Chapter 5

Case Study:

“ChoKoj–Laté” Cafeteria in the Mayan Community of José María Morelos, Quintana Roo, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights the possibility of doing business in vulnerable communities. The “Chokoj-Laté” case presents an entrepreneurial experience in the Mayan community of José María Morelos, Quintana Roo, Mexico. It shows a business model developed by three young Mayas, university-level students, who identified a commercial opportunity in their community, the “Chokoj-Laté” Cafeteria. This space has become a promoter of various local products, among which are organic ones that are grown by people from various communities in the Maya area, providing a space to offer their products to consumers in a direct way. The key factors that led to this successful entrepreneurship were: family motivation or family history of having a business, vision of the future, identity, leadership in the community, vision of economic independence, attitude of helping other members of the environment, ease of interaction in other contexts and ease of practical learning.

INTRODUCTION

Given the notorious social and economic differences that have developed within Western societies, several governments and multiple multilateral agencies have been developing institutional and budgetary efforts to reduce the gap between various social groups. Thus, state and government policies have been promoted to favor the population located in the lower part of the social pyramid.

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For that, it has been promoted and stimulated the implementation of so-called inclusive businesses that according to the UNDP (2014) “...are those that include poor as clients, on the demand side and; as employees, producers and business owners in different parts of the value chain, on the supply side...”

By the nature of its participants and the dynamics that are created, “...these models tend to reduce the gap between business and the poor for their mutual benefit...” (UNDP, 2014) In other words, they have become social mechanisms for adjusting the evident differences between the richest populations and the immense social strata living in life deplorable conditions. This attempt to improve the population majority welfare has become more complex since many of the socially and economically marginalized communities have also been ethnically and culturally excluded.

In order to understand complexities involved in this process of including the poorest in the social and productive chains that benefit them, an investigation has been developed, applying the case method in the city of José María Morelos (JMM). This city is the head of the municipality of the same name in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico. It is one of the 10 municipalities of the State; it is located in the center of the Yucatan peninsula and it is the only one that no has coastal zones. This geographic condition has distanced it from the tourism sector, which it is an economic driver of the state, and has generated considerable socioeconomic backwardness, reflected mainly in the average household income of \$ 104,397.47 Mexican pesos per year (about USD 4971.3) (Reyes Maya & Barrera Rojas, 2014). The majority of its inhabitants are of Mayan origin; the rest of, the minority, are migrants from various states of the Mexican Republic and they work in the public and educational service (Plan Municipal de Desarrollo de José María Morelos, 2011). The most important economic activity is seasonal agriculture, especially citrus and tropical fruits (Cuevas Albarrán, Brito Estrella, & Ravelo Aguilar, 2015).

The Cafeteria Chokoj-late began as a business idea proposed by three students of the Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo). In order to start an independent business, they decided to set up a cafeteria at José María Morelos. They identified as market segment the university community and began operations on September 30, 2015. In its beginnings, the main product sold was organic coffee in different presentations, adding then local products exhibited in a stand. He currently employs five people. The original investment was recovered in six months.

Responsibilities associated with their dual status as entrepreneurs and students at the same time, caused the desertion of one of them within a few months of the start-up of the business. This fact imposes a serious reflection on the capacity of leadership and decision making ability that these two young people have developed to maintain the business and the challenges that they have had to face throughout the process.

Business philosophy has been focused on promoting social responsibility and its sustainability with the environment, essential pillars in the planning and implementation of the strategy as reflected in both its organizational mission (“We are a company that offers the best coffee of Maya Zone with an efficient and personalized service, directed to the satisfaction of our host, with affordable prices and a youthful, comfortable and pleasant environment. We seek recognition through the continuous training of our collaborators and community suppliers...”) and in its vision (“To achieve a business consolidation of the cafeteria in the city of José María Morelos, Quintana Roo by 2020, as well as the better communication among employees, customers and suppliers, arousing interest in the taste and coffee consumption culture. On the other hand, to strengthen and expand social support with local producers, artists and artisans who carry the same company ideology, granting them a space to offer their products or services within the company...”).

Organizational values have been crucial to its consolidation. They have become a guide for employee and owner behaviors and have contributed to the creation and maintenance of Chokoj-late identity.

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