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SSPICE IT!

Sustainability Skills Program for International Catering
operators and Entrepreneurs through Integrated Training

SSPICE IT! – Sustainability Skills Program for International Catering operators and Entrepreneurs through Integrated Training

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CIPFP CAMINO DE SANTIAGO
ESCUOLA DE HOSTELERÍA & TURISMO DE LA RIBERA



Escola Profissional AMAR TERRA VERDE



Submodule n°15: How to Plan a Long-Term Sustainable Business Model

THEMATIC AREA	A Sustainable Business Model	
SUB AREA OF REFERENCE	<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	
HOURS	5	
LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify Needs and Challenges for a Sustainable Business Model: Conduct comprehensive market research and identify environmental and social needs to inform the development of a sustainable business model. 2. Develop Several Ideas and Opportunities to Create Value: Explore and experiment with innovative approaches to develop multiple ideas and opportunities for a sustainable business model that creates value for both the business and its stakeholders. 3. Explore and Experiment with Innovative Approaches: Embrace innovative approaches to tackle sustainability challenges and discover creative solutions for sustainable business practices. 4. Visualize Future Scenarios to Help Guide Effort and Action: Envision future scenarios that align with long-term social, cultural, and economic sustainability goals, and use scenario planning for decision-making in a sustainable business context. 5. Reflect on How Sustainable Long-term Social, Cultural, and Economic Goals and Actions Are: Reflect on their sustainable long-term social, cultural, and economic goals and actions, and adopt responsible behaviour to contribute to sustainability efforts. <p>By achieving these learning objectives, learners will develop the necessary skills to identify needs and challenges, envision innovative ideas, and design a sustainable business model that promotes environmental and social responsibility while creating long-term value for their organization and stakeholders.</p>		
LEARNING ACTIVITIES		
	Theoretical	Practical
	▪ Student's manual	▪ Group activity

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SUBMODULE 15: How to Plan a Long-Term Sustainable Business Model

1. Advantages of local food distribution chains

In this chapter, learners will comprehend the importance of conducting thorough market research to identify sustainable business opportunities. They will learn about various approaches to research and gathering relevant data on consumer preferences, market trends and emerging sustainability demands and necessities. By understanding the market better, learners will be better equipped to identify potential areas for setting up a sustainable business model.

1.1. Conducting Market Research

Setting up a business is similar to making new friends. You need to be able to **learn about the person** and in this scenario, **the customer**. Thus, to make those “friends” in the market, who will engage in transactions with your catering or restaurant business, you need to get to know them by studying them and **asking the right questions**.

1.2. What could these questions be?

The parameters about your customers that you should be interested in learning are the following ones (U.S. Small Business Administration, n.d.):

- a. First, you will need to gather **Demographic Information**, to be informed about the customers and specifically the **customer segment** that you are targeting. The point of interest in this segment is one of economics’ basics – **Demand**. Different products, services, or combinations of them create different **interactions with customers’ needs**. One should ask themselves, **how sustainability affects demand**. Is there currently more demand for green products?
- b. The second question to ask is regarding **Market Size**. Are there simply enough consumers around you to generate enough turnover?
- c. The **Economic Indicator** of the said market is also important to view. Income range and employment rate affect the purchasing power of the customer, which is important for deciding what kind of food you are offering.

- d. **Location** is the geographic aspect of Market Research. Particularly, even if the market is big, you should consider **where your customers live** and, consequently, **how to reach them**. For example, a highway restaurant will not rely on distribution through delivery and might attract customers with different food preferences if it is located far from urban centres.
- e. The logic displayed above leads to the assessment of the level of **Market Saturation**. You must consider how many **similar options** or **substitutes** there are and how **easily accessible, or more preferable** they are for customers.
- f. The reality check of any commercial transaction is **Pricing**. Calibrating the price affects the demand for a product, depending on the category it is being associated with. For example, luxury food follows a logic of its own when it comes to **pricing and its premium promise**.
- g. Finally, understanding the **Trends** is important to read the direction towards which the market is moving. Are, for example, competing catering businesses doing changes because they are forced so by regulations, or are they making moves to be innovative and capitalize on a first mover advantage?

Let's apply these basic questions to the market research of a sustainable food truck



Demographic Information

Who is more likely to buy from your food truck: Office workers looking for lunch or college students during evening and night? This affects menu pricing. Consider if the target customers care about sustainable packaging and local sourcing of ingredients.

Market Size

Count potential customers in your planned operating area. If, for example, your targets are business districts, how many office workers could there be within walking distance, so that they can have time to eat it during break? Is the traffic sufficient to sustain the business?

Economic Indicators

Research mean income levels in the relevant areas. Should you serve gourmet sandwiches at a higher price or go for simple, cheap but sustainable ones?

Location Analysis

Are there any high traffic areas with good pedestrian access and perhaps parking space? Check local regulations on where could the food truck operate

Market Saturation

Are there any existing food trucks around and are they sustainable? Are their cuisines diverse or are they jack-of-all-trades? If there are several vegan taco trucks for example, you can offer plant-based gyro instead.

Pricing Strategy

Compare competitors' prices and adjustments accordingly. You might want to be a bit cheaper to attract customers at first that will be the judges of your unique flavor.

Market Trends

What's popular around you? Are vegan options booming? What about mobile ordering? Such parameters affect your menu engineering and range of services.

While the sheer number of parameters to take into consideration can be overwhelming, it is feasible to manage them through the use of appropriate **research methods**. Through **desk research**, also known as **secondary research**, one can find cheap or freely available sources rapidly. Nevertheless, the content can also be too general in scope, especially in the context of sustainable catering for a certain location. For this reason, you may use the other approach, conducting field or primary research, using techniques, such as surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews. **If you wish to learn more through the comparison of primary and secondary sources, you may check the resource [here](#).**

Exercise 1: Assessment Questions (Sustainable practices and identification of needs)	
Pre-requisites	Reading chapters 1 and 2.
Time	1,5 hours
Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.

Instructions

Guidelines:

- This assessment consists of questions and tasks related to the learning objectives and skills addressed in the module.
- Point System with the highest score of 100 points.
- The minimum score to pass is 60 points.
- All questions must be completed.

Questions:

1. Explain the importance of adopting sustainable practices in the catering sector and give an example of a sustainable practice that you have implemented in your job role or from best practices (20 points).
2. List three practices for sustainable waste management in the catering sector and explain their importance (20 points).
3. Describe your process for conducting market research and identifying environmental and social needs in the catering sector (20 points).
4. Identify two key environmental needs and two key social needs in the catering sector based on your research (20 points).
5. Identify two key social needs in the catering sector based on your research (20 points).

2. Understanding The Link Between a Business Model and Strategy

In this chapter the learner will analyse the relationship between a business model and a strategy, identifying similarities and differences, resulting in a deeper understanding of the two crucial terms individually as well as in combination.

2.1. What are Objectives?

Objectives are the targets a company sets and tries to achieve. An objective can be abstract or well-defined (IBM Garage Methodology, n.d.). For example, the protection of the environment is an abstract objective, albeit still a valid one. However, the protection of a local forest is an example of a defined target. It has a defined scope of geography, it is quantifiable (how much of the flora and fauna can you protect?) and the means to protect it are easier to define. Moreover, people are usually more protective of the local ecosystem they interact with, which is regionally specific, due to an expression of solidarity towards their societies (Leonardsson H. and Habyarimana J.B., 2022).

2.2. What is Strategy?

Strategy is the **intelligent allocation of resources** towards the **achievement of a goal** (Horwath, 2020). It dictates how a goal will be achieved. This way, if the objective is **well defined**, it often narrows down the means you can use in order to achieve it. This raises the question: **why is setting objectives not synonymous with designing a strategy?** The answer lies in the fact that, for a given objective, **various strategies** can be implemented, allowing for creative and unconventional approaches during implementation. This means that an objective can be achieved **through the use of sustainable means**, making a business strategy sustainable (Long, 2019).

2.3. Business Strategies and Models

With all this information in mind, how does a **business model** compare to a **business strategy**? Does the **business model not define the strategy as well?** While **business models constitute an internal structure of elements**, links and dynamics, **the strategy is an external approach** to competition using the means developed through the **outputs of the business model**. In this regard, while the two are distinct, they are still linked and work together (Slavik and Branislav, 2016). In light of the observation above, a **Sustainable Business Model** creates the **right decisions** for the implementation of a **Sustainable Strategy**.



Let's take a closer look at the concept of sustainable strategy with the example of the food truck. **A strategy is sustainable when it respects the environment and its social responsibility** while **performing its core operations** and at the same time maintaining **long-term financial viability**.

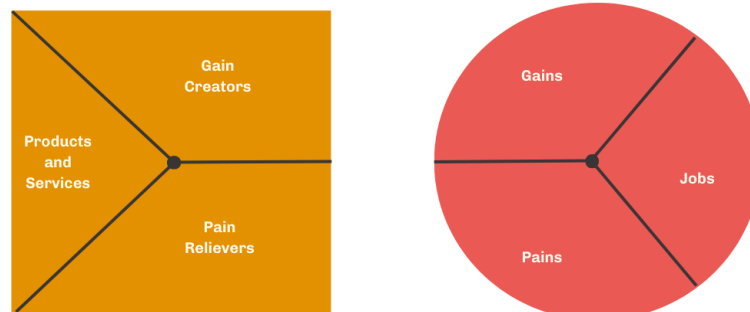
The food truck is a very interesting case, because **'local communities'** is a relative term; if you are close to it it's local – if you are far, it's 'distant'. **A usual restaurant has a defined local community around it and local farms** from which it can source ingredients. **The truck**, on the other hand, **moves**. This means that the food truck business can, theoretically, **choose among a variety of regional communities**.

Let's take it a step further. What if the truck could **move across regions depending on which ingredients are best to be sold at that time?** That would mean that the truck can provide the best possible seasonal dishes in different areas and during the time period it is best for local producers to sell due to storage concerns. This is an example where a business designs its sustainable strategy around a core feature of its business model.

2.4. Developing a Sustainable Value Proposition

When launching a product in the market, one of the most important aspects is the development of a successful value proposition. A value proposition is a statement which summarizes **what a sustainable business brand does** and in what way it is different from its competitors (Harvard Business Review, 2020). Similarly, a Sustainable Value Proposition describes what benefits a company can provide to the environment and the state as a whole (Laukkanen and Tura, 2022).

For some **Value** may be confusing to compose, due to its **abstract simplicity**. That being said, it might be easier to visualize it, using, what we call, a Value Proposition Canvas.



The structure of the model is found at: <https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas/value-proposition-canvas>.

The Value Proposition Canvas is a visual framework which consists of the **Value Map (Square)** and the **Customer Profile (Circle)**.

Let's see what each of these elements represent with a short example. Let's get back to our food truck business!



Customer Profile (Circle)

- **Customer Jobs:**

The tasks or goals customers want to achieve:

- Grab convenient, high-quality meals during busy workdays or events.
- Support local and sustainable businesses to align with their values.
- Enjoy delicious food that doesn't compromise on quality or environmental health.

- **Pains:**

The challenges or problems customers may face:

- Limited options for fast food that are genuinely sustainable.
- Environmental guilt from using single-use plastics and wasteful practices.
- Struggling to find healthy, affordable, and satisfying food on the go.

- **Gains:**

The benefits customers seek:

- Affordable, eco-conscious meals that fit their busy lifestyle.
- Confidence in eco-friendly practices through certifications or visible efforts.
- A unique and enjoyable food experience that feels good to eat and supports their values.

Value Map (Square)

- **Products & Services:**

What the business offers:

- Seasonal, locally sourced menu items that can guarantee freshness and support local farms.
- Compostable or reusable food containers to reduce waste.
- Mobile app for pre-ordering, sustainable meal subscriptions, and rewards.

- **Pain Relievers:**

How the business solves customer challenges:

- Transparent communication about sustainability efforts, like signage or app updates.
- Competitive pricing by optimizing food usage and minimizing waste.

- Offering diverse menu options to cater to all dietary preferences, including vegan and gluten-free.
- **Gain Creators:**
How the business creates extra value:
 - A vibrant, eco-branded food truck attracts attention and reinforces sustainability messaging.
 - Partnering with local suppliers ensures community support and high-quality ingredients.
 - Hosting events or workshops on sustainability builds community engagement and customer loyalty.

Interested to learn more about this creative canvas? Check the [video resource here!](#)

3. Visualizing Future For Sustainable Business

This chapter focuses on envisioning future scenarios that align with sustainable long-term social, cultural, and economic goals. Learners will comprehend the importance of foresight in guiding efforts and actions toward a sustainable future. By visualizing future scenarios, learners will be able to set long-term sustainability objectives and make informed decisions that support these ambitions.

Scenario Planning for Decision-Making:

Scenario planning serves as a **valuable tool** designed to aid in **anticipating and preparing** for diverse future outcomes. A significant number of professionals and scientists would support that there is **no point in making forecasts** when it is truly challenging to guess what the future holds. However, rather than predictions, scenarios are more like **stories**, which describe how a situation may evolve in **alternative ways**. (Ekinici, n.d.) The **best-case scenario** is the profitable success of the business with the concurrent **increase of positive environmental impact**. The **worst-case scenario** is for a company to fail with the financial management of the green business.

Note that scenarios can apply to any level or scope. Some events draw the attention of decision-makers to the point that they may only take into account a certain number of **immediate factors** and thus create only a limited range of possible scenarios. This is the result of the so-called **availability bias**, and you can read more about it [here!](#)



Let's see how the scenarios could work for our favourite food truck! The best scenario would be to successfully become a zero-waste model. The business thrives by selling locally sourced plant-based comfort food in compostable packaging. The strong partnerships it has cultivated with local organic farms help with establishing seamless flow and there is a local customer base that incorporates the truck's dishes in their meals on a frequent basis. This inspires competition with more food businesses desiring to adopt this sustainable model.

The middle-ground scenario would be for the food truck to periodically face supply chain disruptions due to seasonal availability of local ingredients and the activity of local suppliers. Occasionally, the food truck bypasses the zero-waste principle by sourcing ingredients from distant areas with a better climate during winter months. As new competitors enter the market, growth slows down.

In the worst-case scenario, rising food costs and regulations strain the business model. Despite the existence of environmental values, the necessarily higher prices to maintain sustainable practices drives away price-sensitive customers. The other food trucks that have spawned as competitors are facing the same problems and gradually compromise on environmental principles.

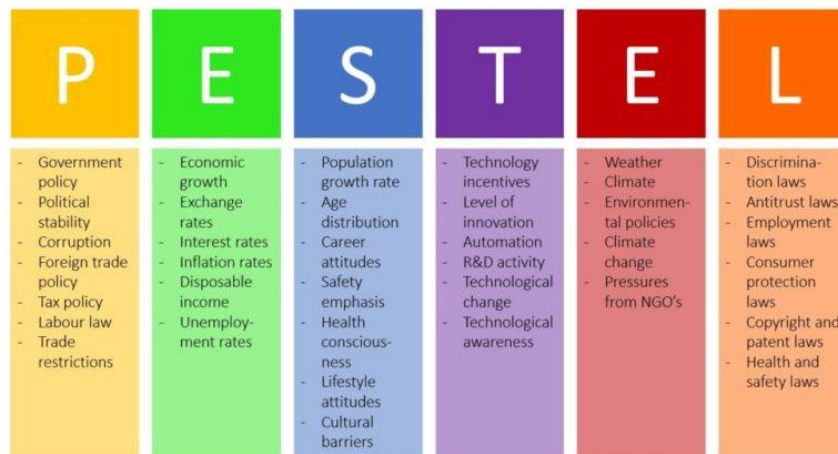
Did you notice that in all three scenarios competition looks more like a gradual evolution of what could go wrong? This is an important thing to keep in mind - that even if you are experiencing a good scenario now, there is always room for something to go wrong.

What would you do to avoid the worst-case scenario? Would you concentrate more on the supply chain or consumer behaviour?

Now let's talk about something relevant to memory. The **availability bias** highlights the importance of **brainstorming, lists, protocols, and procedures**, as they bring forward the **collective and institutional factors of decision-making**. The above also creates a **bridge of expertise** and a general understanding of the business' whole picture for any **technical matters**.

To tie everything together, **awareness of socio-political and economic systemic dynamics, industry trends, and competitor behaviour** are equally important and necessary for successful **information utilization and processing** in scenarios. The planning's result must be **plausible, consistent within the organization, and persuasive**, as well as **enough unique** to be useful in strategy.

Enhancing the **process of scenario planning** becomes more practical through the utilization of various **tools and techniques**. Among these valuable aids, we find **PESTEL analysis**, a framework designed to facilitate the examination of the **political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors** that have the potential to impact both the business and the central question or issue at hand.



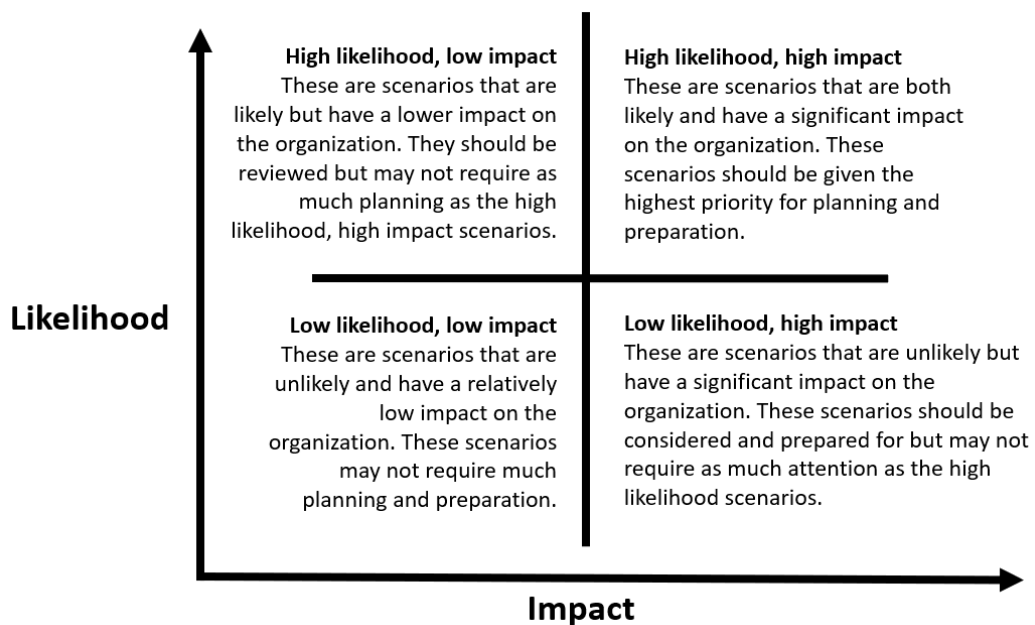
Source: <https://www.business-to-you.com/scanning-the-environment-pestel-analysis/>

Another influential framework to consider is **SWOT analysis**, which offers a structured approach to evaluating the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats** that a business may encounter within each scenario.



Source: <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/12/20/swot-analysis>

To generate and visualize scenarios, the **scenario matrix** emerges as an additional useful tool. This tool allows for the plotting of two of the most crucial and uncertain **drivers or uncertainties** on a **two-by-two matrix**, aiding in the creation of a clearer picture.



Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/using-2x2-matrix-plan-your-future-jeff-roth/>

The aforementioned techniques require **significant time and human resources** to execute effectively. Furthermore, the integration of scenario planning software into the process proves highly advantageous by drastically **reducing the planning cycle** while maintaining the **accuracy of the data**. Any plan should be supported by evidence rather than just gut instinct or wild guesses.

Exercise 2: Assessment Questions (Added Value and responsible behaviour)	
Pre-requisites	Reading chapters 3, 4 and 5.
Time	1,5 hours
Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.
Instructions	
<p>Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assessment consists of questions and tasks related to the learning objectives and skills addressed in the module. • Point System with the highest score of 100 points. • The minimum score to pass is 60 points. • All questions must be completed. <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an example of a real or hypothetical challenge or obstacle you might encounter when implementing one of your innovative business model ideas in the catering sector and explain how you would address this challenge responsibly and sustainably (20 points). 2. Present two innovative ideas for a sustainable business model in the catering sector and explain how they generate added value for the business and its stakeholders (20 points). 3. Describe how you intend to experiment with one of these ideas to assess its feasibility (20 points). 4. Envision a future scenario for the focus area that aligns with long-term sustainability goals (20 points). 5. Explain the role of scenario planning in decision-making in a sustainable business context (20 points). 	

Extras

1. Further Readings

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