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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**

SSPICE IT! project is co-funded by the European Commission within the Erasmus+ programme.

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## Submodule n°14: Introduction to Sustainable Business Models

THEMATIC AREA	A Sustainable Business Model	
SUB AREA OF REFERENCE	Entrepreneurship	
HOURS	5	
LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
<div><div><div>1. <b>Adopt Sustainable Practices in One's Job:</b></div><div>Understand the importance of adopting sustainable practices in their job roles and integrate sustainability principles into their professional activities.</div></div><div><div>2. <b>Identify Practices Coherent with Sustainable Waste Management:</b></div><div>Identify and implement practices that align with sustainable waste management to reduce waste and promote efficient resource use.</div></div><div><div>3. <b>Develop a Sustainable Menu and Offerings:</b></div><div>Create a menu focused on seasonal ingredients, produced locally, with smaller amounts of animal products, and expand plant-based dishes to align with sustainable food practices.</div></div><div><div>4. <b>Select Sustainable Production Systems:</b></div><div>Choose sustainable production systems for all food and consumables to reduce the ecological footprint of their business operations.</div></div><div><div>5. <b>Develop Several Ideas and Opportunities to Create Value:</b></div><div>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.</div></div><div><div>6. <b>Identify Needs and Challenges for a Sustainable Business Model:</b></div><div>Conduct comprehensive market research and identify environmental and social needs to inform the development of a sustainable business model.</div></div><div><div>7. <b>Act Responsibly:</b></div><div>Make ethical decisions and act responsibly in a sustainable business context, aligning actions with sustainability objectives.</div></div></div> <div>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.</div>		
LEARNING ACTIVITIES		
Theoretical	Practical	



▪ Student's manual	▪ Group activity
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## SUBMODULE 14: Introduction To Sustainable Business Models



## 1. What is a Sustainable Business Model?

**This section acts as an introduction for the learner to understand and consider the reasons behind the exploration of Business Model Design, based on the needs identified in a Market and within the context of Marketing and Sustainable Development.**

In an era marked by escalating environmental concerns and a growing awareness of our planet's finite resources, a transformative shift is currently ongoing in the landscape of **business** and the respective **communication of new needs and challenges**. In order to sufficiently address this challenge, one should explore the concepts behind **Sustainable Business Model design**, based on the principles of **marketing, strategic thought**, and **continuous assessments**.



Figure 1: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/wine-glasses-and-wine-bottles-on-top-of-brown-wooden-table-1243337/>

### 1.1. What is a Business Model?

According to Timmers (1998, p.4), a business model consists of three elements:

- An **architecture** for the **product, service, and information flows**, including a **description of the** various **business actors** and their **roles**.
- A description of the **potential benefits** for the various **business actors**
- A description of the **sources of revenues**

### 1.2. What makes a Business Model Sustainable?

As displayed by the definition above, the degree of commitment to business-driven sustainability is influenced by a rather large number of variables. The increasing **societal and environmental consciousness** has catalysed the inception of Sustainable



Business Models (SBMs). Of course, these models are based on the existing understanding of standard Business Models. If we were to adopt the definitions used earlier, a Sustainable Business Model comprises:

- a. An architecture for a **green** product, service, and **sustainable** information flows, including a description of the **diverse** stakeholders and their roles.
- b. A description of the potential benefits (to pursue)/ **adverse effects (to avoid)** for the various **business, social** and **environmental actors**.
- c. A description of **sustainable** sources of revenue

At the heart of business models lies **the orchestration of value**—the combination of product creation, distribution, and market presence. In contrast to their traditional counterparts, SBMs represent not only economic considerations but also **environmental stewardship and social integrity**. It's a holistic approach, an acknowledgement that the trajectory of business success extends beyond balance sheets, encompassing the realms of ecology and society.



You might be wondering **how marketing and communication are connected to the value a business model expresses**. As we will explore, value can be subjective, and it depends on your target audience. **Marketing is the bridge between the product/service value and the consumer's perception of value**. Interestingly, a Business Model can also be viewed as a [story](#) or even a [canvas](#). Both notions are compatible with the **storytelling nature of marketing**.

## 2. Sustainable Business Models in Practice

In this chapter, the learner will identify some of the popular business models and in what ways they can be more or less sustainable. Different models have varying processes, which makes the opportunities for a greener process also unique to each business model. Therefore, it is highly beneficial to review some of the more popular business models in the restaurant and catering industries.

### 2.1. Franchise Model

A franchise model is a way of conducting business, where a buyer, **the franchisee, buys the rights to use the name and branding of an existing company**. To a



larger or smaller degree, **the buyer also adopts the menu and the core procedures** of the original company.

Franchising has both advantages and disadvantages because **culture is one of the more difficult aspects to transfer to franchisees**. However, if a culture supporting **sustainable development is genuinely turned into one of the core aspects of a deal** with a franchisee and there are **appropriate monitoring mechanisms** to observe, whether all practices are correctly implemented, then the expansion of a franchise can help with **the horizontal adoption of successful business operations** (Ackerman, 2018). One way to implement a successful franchise deal is to hire mentors from the original company, as they will be able to transfer practices and habits more organically to the personnel (Yetim, 2021).

## 2.2. Casual Dining

Perhaps the most common picture that comes to mind when the word restaurant is mentioned is casual dining. It is a model which offers a casual, relaxed atmosphere. However, it should **not be confused** with **fast food**, as the service and the quality of ingredients used are of a high standard.

## 2.3. Fine Dining

Fine Dining aims at delivering a **luxurious** experience, with an emphasis on **delicate flavours, technique and atmosphere**. Due to the high prices and smaller portions, the **food waste produced by consumers is minimal**. However, as chefs put a huge emphasis on **high food standards** and especially **aesthetic elements, trimming foods and discarding** parts of fruits, vegetables or meat that do not paint the “canvas” in the right way, there is a significant amount of **food waste produced in the kitchen** (Bronte, 2017). Therefore, one must consider proper waste management or incorporation.

## 2.4. Buffet Model

The Buffet business model is **notorious** for the production of food waste. Instead of ordering by menu, meaning that a portion of meal preparation only starts when an order is made by a client, **the preparation of food volume is estimated on average**. In addition, a successful buffet communicates that there is enough food for everyone, even if every person tries every type of food (Kundamal, 2022).

## 2.5. Delivery Only



Many consumers **prefer to eat within their personal spaces or workspaces** or simply do not have **the time to cook**. Delivery is a simple solution to this category of problems consumers face. This means that sustainable **processes are related to delivery** (such as the use of bikes, e-bikes or EVs), **sustainable packaging** and **sustainable advertising**, through the use of **digital or online ads** rather than distributing brochures.

While some time ago delivery was **associated** mostly with **fast food or fast dining**, the **COVID-19 pandemic forced numerous businesses to change and rely solely on delivery**, which effectively changed their business models, at least temporarily. However, even after Covid-19, delivery has stayed and **is accepted by a wider range of establishments** (Gavilan et al., 2021).

## 2.6. Ghost Kitchen

Some restaurants, mostly fine dining ones, still **do not want to be associated with delivery**, as it is often linked to fast food or **budget brands**. After all, the atmospheric table at a well-designed restaurant is an important part of what a restaurant can offer but is unable to deliver home. However, **delivery keeps being a great source of revenue**, making it a compelling option to consider. So how can fine dining restaurants offer delivery, without altering their brand? The answer is **ghost kitchens**.

Ghost Kitchens are **virtual kitchens** that allow the delivery of food online or by telephone, without offering a place where you can eat or **take food away from**. This means that even a fine dining restaurant can create a **second distinct brand**, offering delivery.

Establishing a ghost kitchen in the first place signals that **the capacity of the restaurant is not used to the fullest** for the given equipment, space and number of employees. The Ghost Kitchen can result in **improved sustainability**, as **the equipment is used at a bigger capacity** while the food in storage circulates more, **minimizing storage-related food waste**. At the same time, what would be seen as food waste at a fine dining restaurant may be **perfectly edible food ingredients**, which can be used for more casual dishes.

### Exercise: Assessment Questions



<b>Pre-requisites</b>	/
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Tools</b>	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
<b>Objectives</b>	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.
<b>Instructions</b>	
<p>Most of the time, the actual business model will be a combination of the characteristics described in each distinct type mentioned.</p> <p>In this activity, you will find a description of a restaurant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families frequently dine there</li> <li>• You have seen the same brand in three other cities</li> <li>• The restaurant claims it offers no delivery</li> <li>• You open your favourite delivery app and discover a brand that offers a similar menu with the same secret sauce.</li> </ul> <p>Describe the combination of business model elements used.</p>	

**Solution:** Casual Dining Franchise with a Ghost Kitchen

### 3. Implementing Sustainable Operations

In this chapter, the learner will analyze the implementation of certain sustainable business operations processes or approaches, which can make a difference in the output of a restaurant or catering establishment. While elements of them have already been explored from the point of view of a business model as a whole, the learner will focus on the ones, which are the most effective in terms of sustainability and carbon footprint.

Have you noticed that using simple examples can make you remember complex concepts? This is what we will do here! After each process, we will refer to an example of just how simply these concepts can be analyzed.

#### 3.1 Resource efficiency



Resource efficiency, defined as **the ratio between a given benefit or result and the natural resource use required for it**, is paramount for businesses seeking both economic success and environmental responsibility (NITI Aayog, 2017). In the context of a restaurant or catering establishment, resource efficiency can be achieved by optimizing processes to **use fewer ingredients, reduce energy consumption, and minimize waste generation**. For instance, efficient kitchen management can lead to the **production of meals with fewer ingredients**, ultimately **reducing costs and environmental impact**.

*To make our carrot soup, consider slow-cooking methods or incorporating vegetable scraps for added depth, minimizing the need for excessive ingredients.*

### 3.2 Waste Reduction

Waste reduction is a direct outcome of improved resource efficiency. By using **fewer resources** per output, **the generation of waste is inherently minimized**. In a restaurant, this could involve careful **inventory management, portion control, and implementing practices that repurpose or reuse certain ingredients**. Additionally, waste management strategies, including recycling, play a crucial role. Recycling acts as a buffer for waste that cannot be entirely prevented, contributing to a more sustainable waste disposal system.

*You discover that some of the carrot waste is perfectly suitable for this Friday's carrot cake!*

### 3.3 Sustainable Energy Sources

Energy consumption is a significant aspect of restaurant and catering operations, with **electricity and heating** being essential for food production. **Transitioning to sustainable energy sources**, such as solar energy and other renewables, is a key strategy for reducing the environmental footprint of these establishments. Implementing **energy-efficient appliances** and technologies can further enhance the **overall sustainability of energy usage** (Energy Star, n.d.). Sustainable energy should also be taken into account in distribution and delivery.

*Instead of using natural gas, you prepare the soup on an electric stove, which uses electricity from a renewable energy source. One client ordered a tasty carrot soup to be delivered. The delivery will be done on a bicycle, creating zero carbon emissions related to transport.*

## 4. Developing a Sustainable Menu and Offerings



In this chapter, learners will analyze the importance of creating a sustainable menu, as well as sourcing seasonal and locally produced ingredients. They will identify the benefits of supporting local producers and reducing the carbon footprint of their food offerings.

## 4.1 Seasonal and Local Ingredient Sourcing

The initial element that forms the menu is the **sourcing itself**. What comes on the **plate**, must come first to the **kitchen**. Consider for a minute, **which dishes would be available on the menu**, if you were only able to **use ingredients just outside your prefecture and only during specific seasons**. Undeniably, under such circumstances, there would be much less variety. For example, it would not be easily possible to run a traditional **Mediterranean restaurant in a Scandinavian country**. For these reasons, **other strong points of the menu should promoted**, such as the freshness of ingredients, while variations can be made to **foreign dishes** with **alternative local ingredients**.

Of course, there also remains a **positive social impact on the local communities through support to local suppliers**. Unfortunately, taste does not always inform of the farm's or garden's brand. Can you think of effective ways of communicating the **involvement of local suppliers**? Do you think that **good marketing and storytelling skills** are relevant to this?

## 4.2 Adopt the Concept of Food Miles

Food miles serve as a method **to gauge the distance that food travels** before reaching the end consumer. This approach provides valuable insights into the **environmental footprint** of foods and their components. It encompasses **not only the transportation of food** to consumers but also **the process of managing waste foods, transporting them away from consumers, and eventually to landfills** (FoodMiles, n.d.).

Due to the phenomenon of **globalization**, people often forget the geographies where ingredients originate. To have the learners discover just **how much distance** a single ingredient can travel, you can have them use a simple [\*\*Food Miles Calculator\*\*](#).

## 4.3 Promoting Plant-Based and Animal-Friendly Dishes

A restaurant or catering business should **respond to the growing demand for eco-friendly and health-conscious options** by expanding its plant-based offerings. **Reducing reliance on animal products** not only aligns with ethical principles but also addresses environmental concerns. Therefore, you can craft a menu that speaks to **diverse dietary preferences** while promoting sustainability. **Did you know that**



**people who follow a plant-based diet account for 75% less in greenhouse gases** (Buckley, 2023)?

#### 4.4 Size of Enterprise

**The notion that small establishments have a negligible impact on the environment must be challenged.** Even within confined spaces, innovative ideas can thrive. By fostering creativity and implementing sustainable practices, **small establishments can play a pivotal role** in the broader movement towards eco-friendly culinary experiences. Not only is the **collective action** of small business considerable but one should keep in mind that **any small business may become big one day**. By having more businesses grow sustainably, more surrounding businesses will be inspired to follow the same path. However, if the ingredients and materials are locally sourced, **a local supplier may not be able to keep up with the demand**. In this case, **the growing business should continue finding local suppliers**, contrary to the easier solution of switching to an international one.

#### 4.5 Educating Chefs on Sustainable Practices

**What, do you believe, is the role of the chef in the implementation of sustainable practices? Would you put their activity in managerial processes or main operations and why?**

Empower your kitchen staff with the knowledge and skills to minimize food waste and embrace sustainable practices. From **reusing leftovers** to **managing overstock**, cultivating sustainable habits in the kitchen enhances efficiency and aligns with a responsible culinary moral compass (Sengupta, 2022).

#### 4.6 Eliminating Mistakes

Of course, **making mistakes is great for learning processes**. Ideally, however, it is desired to **eliminate mistakes that repeat themselves, as a result of their incorporation into their people's behaviour and thus do not provide learning value**. In this case, the correction of the mistake results in the **general improvement of processes**. (Klein, 2023).

### Extras



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