



UNIVERSITAT
ROVIRA I VIRGILI



ISVV
INSTITUT DES SCIENCES
DE LA VIGNE ET DU VIN
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MASTER THESIS

"Fostering Collaborative Wine Tourism Initiatives: A Lean Canvas Business Model for Partnerships between Rustic Vines Tours and Family-Owned Wineries in Saint-Émilion"

Marina Credendio Eiras

Internship developed at Rustic Vines Tours

Bordeaux, France

Professional supervisor

Julie Sipos

Academic supervisor

Amélia Brandão

University of Porto

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the development of a collaborative business model aimed at enhancing wine tourism in the Saint-Émilion region of Bordeaux, France. By utilizing the Lean Canvas methodology, this research proposes an initial structured framework for fostering partnerships between Rustic Vines Tours, a leading wine tour operator, and small to medium-sized family-owned wineries in Saint-Émilion. Through qualitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews and content analysis, the study identifies key challenges and opportunities from the wineries' perspectives. The findings highlight the potential of strategic collaborations to address resource limitations, enhance visibility, and improve direct-to-consumer sales for the wineries. The proposed Lean Canvas framework offers a practical tool to leverage the strengths and resources, developing sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships, contributing to the overall growth and innovation in wine tourism.

Key words: Innovation tools, Lean Canvas Business Model, Collaborative Initiatives, Small and Medium-Sized Wineries, Tour Operators.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SMFW: Small/Medium Family Wineries

BMC : Business Model Canvas

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The travel industry underpins today's economy at large – contributing to 5% of the Global GDP and over 30% of the world service exports – a figure that spikes to 52% for the Least Developed Nations (LDCs) (UNTWO 2013). In most developing countries, tourism has remained a major earner of foreign exchange and an influential engine of social and economic transformation. Having become the third mass export specialization globally, tourism creates millions of occupations and inescapably influences cultures and geography. Done in the right way, tourism can contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals whereby through the increase in of employment chances it brings about a huge chance on the economy, reduction of inequalities, and especially the culture and the environment (UNTWO, 2023).

At the same time, there has been a shift in the wine industry in the past decades, characterized by an increasing globalization. In its more traditional notion the industry has been known for wine production which has transformed into a versatile and consumer-oriented sector where visitors can immerse themselves. In this respect, the strategies for enabling the guests to visit wineries are rather diverse and depend on establishing direct contacts and selling wines or partnering with intermediary companies, including travel agents. This shift from production centered to the experiential value creation is parallel to the move to the so called 'experience economy,' where the core product being delivered by the businesses is a memorable event which is created for the customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

As a result of the conclusion that offering added value through product experiences is beneficial in the wine consumption, early adapters including wine producers in Old world traditions started to realize the importance of providing consumers with more than the wine experience. These businesses have immensely succeeded at the task of branding and differentiating themselves by offering the visitors an insight into the winery's story and the process of winemaking, as well as exposing them to the desired brand identity (Getz & Brown, 2006). Tourism motivation for wine involves acquisition of knowledge, social activity, recreation and the usually perceived luxury, making the wineries produce products that carefully cater for these consumers' needs as identified by Bruwer and Alant (2009).

The Saint-Émilion region in Bordeaux, France, presents a rich case study for examining the potential and challenges of wine tourism. Known for its heritage and numerous small and medium-sized family-owned wineries, Saint-Émilion has seen a surge in wine tourism popularity. These wineries, while possessing unique narratives and rich traditions, often face limitations in resources and expertise necessary to leverage wine tourism effectively. This thesis explores the specific challenges faced by these smaller wineries and investigates the

potential for strategic alliances with tour agencies to overcome these hurdles and unlock new opportunities.

By focusing on the Saint-Émilion region, this research aims to develop a framework to propose partnerships between small and medium-sized wineries and Rustic Vines Tours, a tour agency in Bordeaux. Through this collaboration, the study seeks to enhance the visibility, brand awareness, and direct-to-consumer sales of these wineries, contributing to their sustainable growth and success.

1.1 ABOUT RUSTIC VINES COMPANY

Rustic Vines Tours was established in 2014 by Tim Cowley, a former New Zealand rugby player. The company's origins can be traced to a private Bordeaux wine tour with friends, during which the idea for a new style of tour emerged. The goal was to create a more intimate, casual, and engaging experience for tourists, many of whom were initially intimidated by the traditional approach to communicating about French wines.

Today, Rustic Vines Tours maintains offices in the city center of Bordeaux and in St. Émilion Village. The company employs a diverse workforce, which includes full-time, seasonal, and independent guides. The number of guides fluctuates seasonally; therefore, the company endeavors to maintain a multinational staff throughout the year.

The company's operation is dependent on the existence of key partners. Currently, the business counts with the following number of them: seventeen Châteaux in the Saint Emilion Grand Cru appellation, three Châteaux in the Pomerol appellation, one in the Lalande Pomerol appellation, 15 Châteaux in the Médoc region (with a particular focus on the Margaux and Pauillac appellations), three wine merchants, and one food supplier are all located in Saint Emilion village. Additionally, the company's collaboration with vehicle suppliers and bicycle maintenance suppliers is of significant importance.

Rustic Vines Tours offers a diverse range of experiences in the Médoc, Saint-Émilion, Graves, and Sauternes regions. These experiences are available in English and can be tailored to half-day or full-day durations. The company's primary objective is to facilitate intimate, educational, and enjoyable vineyards explorations. They accommodate both small groups of up to eight individuals and private requests. The following services are offered:

1. Electric bike group tours, departing from Bordeaux or Saint Emilion, full or half day. These tours represent the core product.
2. Right bank small group tour in van.

3. Right and Left Bank small group tour in van.

4. Private tours: Sauternes & Graves Region, Beach & Wine day (Arcachon Bay and Pessac-Léognan), The Wine Expert Wine Day Tour. It is thus possible to craft an itinerary according to the customer's requests.

Although the company provides services for tourists from a diversified range of countries, the target market, since its creation, was the wine enthusiasts, native English speakers. In addition, groups that aim to celebrate and enjoy an occasion together, feeling comfortable in knowing that their day is organized for them.

1.2. INTERNSHIP RESPONSABILITIES

In the initial month, I concentrated on acquiring an understanding of the operational aspects of the company and their partners, as well as insights into the company's culture and the different tours offered, and the profile of their multinational customers. I engaged in several preparatory activities, including producing folders related to the main services and an art banner. I familiarized myself with the market and tourism offerings in Saint Emilion and gained a thorough understanding of tour agency logistics.

In the subsequent months, following a period of training, I began to lead tours through the regions of Saint Emilion, Pomerol, Lalande-Pomerol, and Medoc. Each day, upon greeting clients at the Bordeaux office, I delivered comprehensive explanations throughout the tour regarding Bordeaux's status as a wine region. These explanations encompassed historical aspects of the region, its unique terroir, the concepts of appellations and the different Classifications, the evolution of wine culture, and the general industry and its organization. Furthermore, I fostered interactions between clients to promote camaraderie during our excursion to the regions.

During the whole time that I occupied the wine tour guide position, it was crucial to possess the ability to coordinate the pace, schedule, and expectations of the tour group. Additionally, the role required me the ability to problem-solve effectively in unanticipated situations, along with a high degree of adaptability, contingent upon the client and partner profiles (Châteaux).

Although the primary focus of my internship was conducting wine tours in the Bordeaux Wine Region, I also used the opportunity to collect information for a research project on partnerships between small/medium family wineries and tour agencies. The insights gained from the wine tours and the connections made with various Châteaux were of great value for this research, helping to shape it in a meaningful direction for the company.

1.3. PROBLEMATIZATION

The wine tourism industry has witnessed significant growth and evolution in recent years, with wineries recognizing the potential to enhance their brand experience, engage with consumers, and diversify their revenue streams. However, for small and medium-sized wineries, implementing successful wine tourism initiatives and forming strategic alliances can be particularly challenging due to limited resources, expertise, and market reach.

While previous research has explored various aspects of wine tourism (Kubát et al., n.d.; Nemethy et al., 2016), there is a gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by smaller wineries in this context. Additionally, the potential for collaboration between wineries and tour agencies as a means to overcome these challenges and unlock new opportunities has not been extensively studied.

Furthermore, the application of innovative business tools, such as the Lean Canvas, which is commonly used in startup environments for business model innovation, has not been widely explored in the context of wine tourism partnerships. This represents a gap in the literature, as such innovation tools, applied in the wine tourism context, could provide a structured and simplified framework for fostering successful collaborations between wineries and tour agencies.

The Saint Émilion wine region in France, known for its rich winemaking heritage and numerous small and medium-sized wineries (SMW), presents an ideal context for this research. By focusing on this specific geographical area, the study can provide insights tailored to the challenges and opportunities faced by wineries operating in this region.

1.4. PURPOSE

The present study is a master thesis developed under the Master of Wine Tourism Innovation (WINTOUR) program, as part of a professional internship from February to May 2024, in collaboration with Rustic Vines Tours, a tour agency located in Bordeaux, France.

The overarching propose of this research is to develop a Lean Canvas framework that facilitates effective partnerships and collaborations between small and medium-sized wineries in the Saint Émilion wine region and the referred tour agency. By addressing the challenges faced by these wineries in implementing wine tourism initiatives and leveraging the potential benefits of such partnerships, the study aims to contribute to the sustainable growth and success of both the wineries and the tour agency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Wine Tourism Development

Wine tourism is a form of rural tourism (Mitchell & Hall, 2004) that encompasses all tourism activities related to wine (Scherhag, 2016). Several definitions of wine tourism exist, however, one of the most widely accepted was provided by Hall (1996) as “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a wine region are the primary motivating factors for visitors”. Further, Bruwer and Alant (2009) specified that wine tourism is also related to the status of wine as a product and to the place where it is produced, creating a link between lifestyle and this sort of tourism.

Conversely, (Getz & Brown, 2006) examined wine tourism under different perspectives, such as a strategy for regional development and an opportunity for wineries to promote and sell their products directly to the final consumers. As part of the diversification and development of rural areas, wine tourism is becoming increasingly important and has the potential to generate significant revenue at both regional and individual levels (Hall et al., 2000a).

Internal and external factors may influence the development of wine tourism. The first depend upon the expertise and commitment of local stakeholders to engage in wine tourism activities, due to one or more key elements such as a lack of education, access to financial resources and relevant skills. External factors, in turn, are related to policies and macroeconomic conditions that foster an encouraging environment for wine tourism. Such conditions include regional infrastructure and environmental conservation. Additionally, other factors may act as obstacles to successful wine tourism development, among them an inadequate stakeholders’ networking, insufficient skills in tourism marketing and challenges in developing tourism products (Martin, E., & Williams, P., 2003 apud Del Chiappa et al., 2019)

Still, this dynamic sector continues to evolve, fostering innovation, job creation, and sustainable development across various economic landscapes. According to existing research, wineries are not the sole destination for visitors when traveling. Rather, they tend to visit other attractions or have other experiences not related to wine (Alebaki et al., 2015). This reinforces the role of wine tourism as a vehicle for destination promotion and tourism development. It also explains why current research agrees that for an effective wine tourism development, it is necessary to involve other stakeholders, rather than relying exclusively on wine producers (Brás et al., 2010).

2.1.1. Wine tourism in the context of Small/Medium wineries perspective

In a qualitative study conducted by (Del Chiappa et al., 2019) with Italian wineries, the primary motivation for winemakers and owners to adopt wine tourism was the potential to leverage tourism as an additional distribution and promotional channel for their wines. The desire to become a tourism attraction was identified as a less significant factor influencing their decisions. The willingness of wine producers to engage in hospitality services and the establishment of robust networking and cooperation initiatives between local stakeholders were identified in the same study as a pivotal factor in the development of wine tourism.

It is not uncommon, particularly in Old World wine regions, for numerous small and medium-sized wineries to be family businesses. A family enterprise is defined as a business that is controlled and managed by the same family over generations, where the business model extends beyond the economic aspect as the sole value acquisition. In these enterprises, the non-economic dimension is highly valued, with the objective of achieving what is referred to as socio-emotional wealth. This is defined as the will to not only create and pass on their stories and legacy, but also to establish deep connections with their final customers (Grechi et al., 2024).

Likewise, family businesses play an essential role in shaping the overall experience, by adding a personal touch to the interactions between tourists and the owners. Visitors often appreciate the warm and familial atmosphere created by these businesses, which enhances the sense of connection to the local culture and traditions (Grechi et al., 2024).

It is therefore crucial to gain an understanding of the perceptions of winery owners regarding the factors affecting wine tourism development. This knowledge is essential for crafting effective strategies and policies. These perceptions can guide for the development of collaborative business models that address the specific needs and challenges faced by small/medium entrepreneurs.

Definitely, wine tourism has evolved in the past decades from an afterthought to an innovative, legitimate and valuable business that requires conceptualization, strategic planning, and organized execution, like any other critical operational aspect vital to the running of a winery (Smyczek et al., 2020). Family-owned wineries, with their generational expertise passed through generations, contribute expressively to the authenticity of wine tourism experiences. And in this context, shifting the business orientation of wineries from a product-driven to an experience-driven, considering the particularities of small and medium sized family businesses, must be the first step towards the development.

2.2 Inter-sectorial collaborations in wine tourism

Collaborations in the tourism industry are of vital importance in order to enhance the quality of service provided to customers and to increase the appeal of value-added offerings. These partnerships may involve different stakeholders and have as scope to eventually produce consensus and harmony that will lead to new opportunities and innovative solutions (Graci, 2013).

The existing literature contains a vast material and theories that can be utilized to support collaborative initiatives between multiple stakeholders. Jamal and Getz (1995, p.188 apud McGregor, A., Robinson, R.N.S.,2019) defines collaboration in a tourism context as “a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain”.

Gray's Collaboration Theory, developed in 1989, provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of collaboration in various contexts. It outlines three phases of collaboration: problem setting, direction setting, and implementation. Problem setting involves diagnosing the problem and conducting a joint search for information. Direction setting focuses on achieving political consensus and developing mutually agreed-upon solutions. Implementation involves ratifying agreements and planning for execution. Gray's theory highlights the iterative nature of collaboration, where the implementation of strategies often leads to new problems that require further collaborative efforts (Gray, 1989 apud Graci, 2013).

Based on Gray's work, (Selin & Chavez, 1995)presents an evolutionary approach to tourism partnerships. This model outlines five key stages through which tourism partnerships typically progress: antecedents, problem setting, direction setting, structuring, and outcomes. Antecedents involve the initial conditions and factors that lead to the formation of a partnership, such as shared interests and previous relationships. Problem setting involves the identification and definition of the problems or opportunities that the partnership aims to address, including stakeholder analysis and goal setting. Direction setting focuses on the development of a shared vision and strategy for the partnership, involving strategic planning and consensus building. Structuring involves the formalization and structuring of the partnership to facilitate effective collaboration, including roles and responsibilities. Outcomes involve the implementation of the partnership's plans and evaluation of its outcomes, including monitoring and adaptation based on feedback.

(Wang & Xiang, 2007) developed an integrative theoretical framework to explore the nature and the dynamism of collaborative marketing in a destination level, environment that brings together and combine a diverse range of stakeholders, studying the tourism organizations'

behavior in forming marketing alliances and networks. The framework is composed by 4 blocks:

- 1- Precondition construct, which delineates the economic, social, and environmental conditions for alliance and network formation;
- 2- Motivation construct, which explains why organizations choose to enter into strategic alliances and networks to achieve their specific goals;
- 3- Process construct, which captures the dynamics of collaborative marketing processes, consisting of major issues such as stages, forms, governance mode, and conflict management;
- 4- Outcome construct, which describes the consequences of the collaborative marketing activities; (Wang & Xiang, 2007)

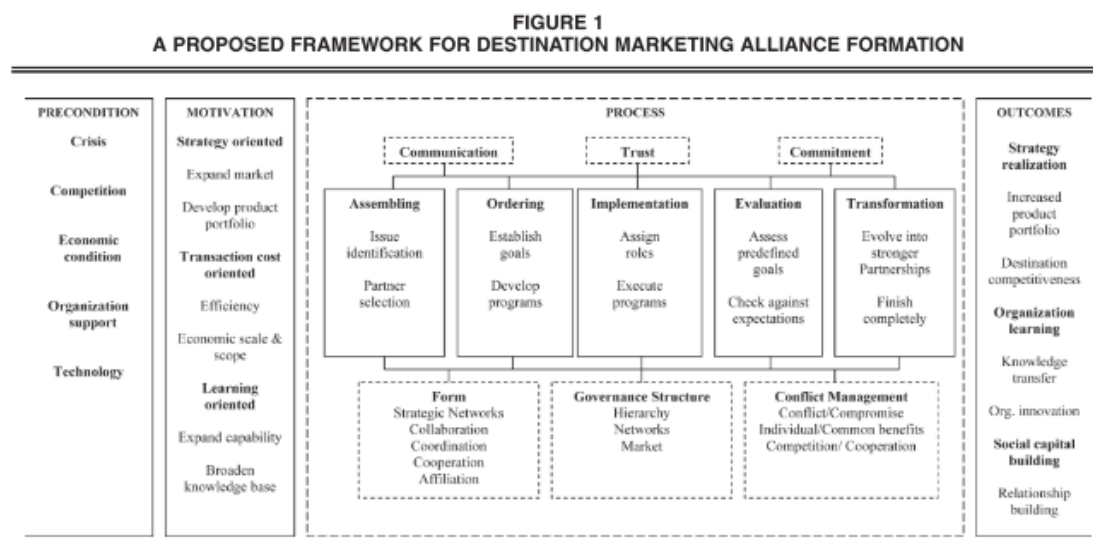


Figure 1 A proposed framework for destination marketing alliance (source: Wang & Xiang, 2007)

The author emphasize that collaborations inevitably results in outcomes that are typically multifaceted and dependent on the specific context in which the collaboration occurs. They are organized in three broad categories: the strategy realization, which reflects in the enhancement of tourism organization's competitive advantage; the organizational learning, that can reflect in knowledge share, such as people skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills; and the social capital building, which refers to personal and businesses resources, such as ideas, leads, good will and trust (Wang & Xiang, 2007).

It is crucial to mention that the collaboration process should not remain static. The development and evolution of a collaborative relationship should be monitored and revisited, ensuring that

the initial commitment and rules of action can be upheld throughout the relationship (Wang, 2008).

2.3. Business Model Innovation in Wine Tourism

In 2023, the UN Tourism scripted the GOA Roadmap for Tourism as a vehicle for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Among the identified key enablers observed in the Figure 2. below, the innovative approaches and mindsets were indicated, emphasizing that innovation is not always futuristic, reliant on advanced technology, or requiring entirely new ideas. Instead, it can take diverse forms, depend on the context and should be tailored to meet specific requirements of the local populations, regions and countries (UNTW, 2023) .



Figure 2 Top 5 SDGs related to G20 Tourism Working Group priority areas as per the G20 and guest countries survey, 2023 (source: UNTWO, 2023)

In the wine context, innovation strategies have emerged as one of the most crucial aspects of the wine industry and tourism industry, particularly for small/medium businesses. These strategies provide a means for companies to gain competitive advantages, foster long-term

growth, and ensure the success and survival of the enterprises along the years (Grechi et al., 2024).

2.4. Strategic Business Planning tools

2.4.1. The Business Model Canvas

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a strategic management tool developed by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur. It is designed to help businesses visualize, describe, and innovate their business models in a structured and straightforward manner. The visual model is divided in nine main blocks: Customer Segments, Value Propositions, Channels, Customer Relationships, Revenue streams, Key resources, Key activities, Key partnerships and Cost structure. Although there are important limitations regarding the abstract character of the value proposition and the lack of attention in the scheme to the competitive environment (Taipale-Erävala et al., 2020), the BMC has gained widespread adoption among entrepreneurs, startups, and established companies for its simplicity and effectiveness in mapping out business strategies.

As well emphasized (Nooh, 2024), the BMC may be used to perform an analysis of already-established business models and locate areas that could be enhanced or made more efficient. It is also helpful to communicate a business model to stakeholders, such as investors, partners, and costumers.

2.4.2. The Lean Canvas

Created by Ash Maurya in 2010, the Lean Canvas is an adaptation of Alexander Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas, tailored specifically for the needs of lean startups. This tool emphasizes rapid iteration, problem-solving, and customer-centric approaches, making it particularly useful in dynamic and uncertain market environments, such as the tourism industry.

The Lean Canvas methodology facilitates rapid business model recapitulation and validation based on customer feedback (Hidayati et al., 2023). The framework Lean Canvas modifies four components of the Business Model Canvas focusing on the following areas:

Problem: Identifying the primary problems faced by customer segments.

Solution: Proposing solutions to the identified problems.

Key Metrics: Measuring the success of these solutions.

Unfair Advantage: Highlighting unique strengths that cannot be easily copied or bought.

These modifications underscore the necessity for the startup to rapidly achieve product-market fit, to pivot based on new insights, and to leverage its unique strengths in order to establish a competitive edge.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the perceptions, key issues and willingness of family-owned wineries towards wine tourism and collaborations. Subsequently, the scope is to create an initial collaborative business model strategy for Rustic Vines Tours, by employing the Lean Canvas methodology, addressing the solutions for specific needs and challenges faced by these wineries in implementing wine tourism initiatives.

3.1. Research Context

Saint-Emilion is a famous wine region located in the Libournais area on the Right Bank of the Bordeaux wine region in France. Its winemaking traditions dates back to the Roman times, over 2.000 years ago. The region has a diversity of terroirs including limestone plateau, clay-limestone hillsides and sand flats near the Dordogne river. It is renowned for producing high quality red wines, primarily from the Merlot and Cabernet Franc grape varieties.

Saint-Emilion medieval village and its vineyards were listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for their cultural landscape since 1999, which attracts thousands of visitors along the year.

There are approximately 800 wineries in the region. This research only includes the wineries in Saint Emilion jurisdiction, specifically the geographical area of the AOP Saint Emilion Grand Cru. Samples were collected between April and May, 2024. The communes included in the jurisdiction are: Saint Emilion, Saint Etienne de Lisse, Saint Laurent des Combes, Saint Christophe des Bardes, Saint Hippolyte, Saint Pey d'Armens, Saint Sulpice de Faleyrens and Vignonet.

3.2. Data Collection

A two-stage methodology was adopted. The initial phase was an exploratory approach consisting in desk-based research in public online data in the official web page of the Saint Emilion AOP. Firstly, were selected the wineries located in the Saint Emilion Grand Cru AOP. The second selection criteria adopted was the Classification of Saint Emilion. To optimize the search and once that Chateaux classified often have well developed wine tourism offers, it was an excluding criterion. Official wineries' websites (when existing) were also used, aimed to identify its family run character. The following stage was to cross obtained data with printed

material available in the Saint Emilion's Tourism Office (Annex 1.) to identify which properties were small to medium size family-owned, considering the established criteria “generational ownership” and “preservation of viticulture traditions”.

3.2.1. Semi- Structured Interviews

Based on the refined data collected in the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with this family wineries in order to gain insights under the role of wine tourism and the key issues and barriers for implement collaborations and alliances. The use of open-ended questions in the interview allowed for a deeper exploration of participants' perspective. The initial sample comprised wineries already partnered with Rustic Vines Tours, leveraging the existing networking relationship to facilitate access and participation. To expand the sample size and enhance the representativeness of the data, a snowball sampling approach was also employed. Due to this, the total sample reached 7 semi-structured interviews. The following table represents this phase.

Table 1. Sample selection process

Selection of Châteaux		
Networking Rustic Vines	Contact	Status
Chateau Bernateau	Karine	Ok
Chateau Palais Cardinal	Maxime	Ok
Chateau Gaubert	Juliette	Ok
Chateau Clos des Abbesses	Clément	Ok
Snowball sampling	Contact	Status
Chateau Coutet	Adrien	Ok
Chateau Grangey	Franck	Ok
Chateau Mauvinon	Brigitte	Denied/Lack availability
Chateau Champignon	Véronique	Denied/Lack availability
Chateau Haute Mauve	Marienne	No answer
Chateau Vieux Larmande	Guillaume	No answer
Chateau Pannet	Pierre Luc	Ok
Chateau Cantenac	Johan	Time incompatibility

The sample questions (Annex 2) were generated based on (Wang & Xiang, 2007) destination marketing alliance framework, in order to understand the pre-condition and motivation stages of this wineries towards wine tourism and collaborations. Questions were also included to explore the supply side of cellar door sales, direct-to-consumer strategies, and the measurement of customer loyalty and brand awareness, based on the previous referred in the literature review section (Tommasetti & Festa, 2014) (Del Chiappa et al., 2019; Smyczek et al., 2020). The 7 interviews were conducted face-to-face, digitally recorded, transcribed using

Phyton, amounting 76 single-spaced A4 pages and subjected to manual content analysis and interpretation.

3.3. Company Analysis

The last phase of the methodological approach involves SWOT analysis and building a Business Model Canvas for Rustic Vines Tours, providing an overview of the company's existing business model. This strategic tool will enrich the research and is crucial as it facilitates the integration of the insights gained from the previous phases and enables the formulation of a tailored Lean Canvas for the collaborations, the overall objective of this study.

3.4. Limitations

It is crucial to acknowledge the limitations faced during the first phase of the data collection, given that the list of chateaux included on the website of the appellation is not exhaustive. Furthermore, the Tourism Office provides data pertaining to their winery-partners, located in the whole wine region of Libournais, with its Appellations.

Besides, the interview period was limited to April and May, when the sample size reached 7 participants. Even though 7 participants resulted in a large amount of descriptive data, a longer research period could have resulted in more participants and a deeper understanding about the subject.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

4.1. Key challenges from wineries' perspective in Saint Émilion

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the owners or tourism managers of the following wineries: Chateau Bernateau (Karine Lavau), Chateau Ponnet (Pierre-luc Alla), Chateau Clos des Abbesses (Clemant Fanara), Chateau Coutet (Adrien David Beaulieu), Chateau Gaubert (Juliette Granet), Chateau Grangey (Franck Mio), and Chateau Palais Cardinal (Maxime Vilquin). As the quantity of material is considerable, a manual content analysis was conducted to evaluate and identify the key problems that were common to all the interviews. In addition, the researcher attempted to highlight other relevant aspects that emerged from the interviews. The key challenges can be categorized into the several overlapping themes.

Financial constraints are a significant challenge for many wineries in Saint-Émilion. The initial investment required to develop and maintain wine tourism infrastructure, such as tasting

rooms, cellars, and visitor facilities, is substantial. For instance, Chateau Bernateau encountered significant financial constraints in hiring staff and upgrading facilities to meet public building standards. Similarly, Chateau Ponnet discovered that the costs of hosting visitors often exceeded the revenue generated from these visits. Chateau Gaubert also highlighted the difficulty of managing all aspects of the business alone, which is further compounded by financial limitations. Chateau Palais Cardinal also noted financial constraints, particularly in investing in tourism infrastructure and marketing efforts.

One of the most common challenges faced by wineries is the difficulty of finding and retaining skilled staff who can provide high-quality tours and tastings. Wineries such as Clos des Abbesses place great importance on the role of knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff in effectively communicating the winery's story and values. Château Grangey also observed the challenge of recruiting staff willing to work during peak tourist seasons and perform other tasks during off-peak times. Furthermore, the language barrier represents a significant challenge, as providing tours in multiple languages is essential to cater to the diverse international visitor base. Chateau Palais Cardinal also encounters difficulties in staffing, particularly in ensuring that staff are able to provide a high-quality visitor experience.

For smaller and less well-known wineries, the challenge of building a reputation and attracting visitors is particularly significant. Chateau Bernateau initially encountered challenges in attracting visitors and relied heavily on partnerships and word-of-mouth to establish a reputation. Château Ponnet underscored the competitive nature of the industry as a barrier to forming alliances with other wineries. Château Gaubert highlighted the challenge of meeting visitors' expectations, noting that many tourists have preconceived notions of what a Saint-Émilion winery should look like. Château Palais Cardinal also encounters difficulties in marketing and visibility, particularly in differentiating itself from other wineries in the region.

It is of the utmost importance to ensure that visitors receive a high-quality experience, as this will lead to repeat business and positive reviews. This encompasses not only the quality of the wine but also the overall experience, from the tour to the tasting. Wineries such as Clos des Abbesses and Chateau Bernateau place a premium on the provision of a memorable and educational experience. For instance, Chateau Coutet has increased the price of visits in order to manage the number of visitors and ensure that they attract serious buyers. Nevertheless, numerous wineries encounter difficulties in striking a balance between offering an authentic experience and achieving commercial objectives. Similarly, Chateau Palais Cardinal also prioritizes the provision of a superior visitor experience. However, it encounters difficulties in maintaining this standard consistently.

A significant proportion of wineries in Saint-Émilion continue to adopt a product-centric approach, prioritizing the sales of their wines over the overall visitor experience. This can restrict the potential for creating memorable and engaging experiences that attract repeat visitors and positive word-of-mouth. For instance, Chateau Gaubert has indicated that while they do offer wine blending workshops, the primary objective remains the sale of wine. In contrast, Chateau Coutet endeavors to provide a superior experience that reflects their family heritage and organic practices, even if it necessitates a reduction in the number of visitors. Chateau Palais Cardinal also acknowledges the significance of an experience-driven approach, yet encounters obstacles in its full implementation due to financial and staffing limitations.

In sum, the analysis reveals that there are several issues affecting wineries regarding wine tourism maintenance and development in Saint-Émilion. Financial constraints, staffing issues, marketing difficulties, and the need for high-quality visitor experiences are common themes in small and medium-size businesses. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of an experience-driven approach, many wineries remain production-oriented. Overcoming these challenges will require strategic investments, effective collaborations, and a commitment to enhancing the overall visitor experience.

4.2. Current situation of collaborative initiatives from the perspective of SMFW

Through the semi-structured interviews' analysis, the researcher also aims to understand the motivations and the critical factors for collaborations among these small/medium family wineries. The analysis is framed using Wang and Xiang's model (Wang & Xiang, 2007), and takes in account just the referred aspects.

The primary motivation for collaboration is economic sustainability. Direct-to-consumer (D2C) sales represent a significant motivation for engaging in wine tourism and collaboration. Direct-to-consumer sales of wine yield a higher profit margin than wholesale sales, as evidenced by Chateau Coutet and Chateau Grangey. Such direct interaction with consumers facilitates the development of brand loyalty and the generation of increased profit margins. Collaborations can enhance these efforts by pooling resources and sharing customer bases.

The field of marketing and visibility played an important role in the motivation. Wine tourism and collaboration represent effective marketing tools for enhancing the visibility and reputation of wineries. Wine tourism is employed by Chateau Bernateau, Chateau Gaubert and Chateau Coutet as a means of developing their brand and attracting a more diverse audience, as

pointed by Karine, Juliette and Adrien. The distinctive histories and legacies of these wineries are used to build a compelling narrative for visitors. Collaborations with other wineries and local businesses can serve to amplify the aforementioned marketing efforts.

For numerous wineries, wine tourism and collaboration represent effective means of preserving and disseminating their cultural and historical heritage. For instance, Chateau Coutet employs its tours to educate visitors about its long-standing organic practices and historical significance, being the 14th generation in charge of the winery. This not only attracts tourists but also helps to maintain the cultural landscape of Saint-Émilion. Collaborations with other heritage-focused entities can serve to reinforce these efforts.

Furthermore, there is a growing emphasis on sustainability, both in wine production and tourism. Wineries such as Chateau Coutet, Bernateau and Clos des Abbesses have identified organic practices and biodiversity as key attractions. This focus on sustainability aligns with the increasing consumer demand for environmentally friendly and authentic experiences.

Regarding to the critical factors in the process stage for collaborations, communication is essential. Wineries like Chateau Grangey and Chateau Coutet emphasized the importance of clear and consistent communication with partners, especially the tourism agencies and commercial partners.

Building trust and commitment is also crucial for long-term collaboration. Chateau Ponnet and Chateau Coutet noted the challenges in forming alliances with neighboring wineries due to competition and differing business models. However, except Chateau Ponnet, all the interviewed Châteaux are partners of Saint Emilion's Tourism Office or, in some cases, the platform Rue des Vignerons also. Partnerships based on mutual trust and respect, such as those with local guides and tourism agencies, have been successful for all the interviewed Châteaux.

Successful collaborations are often based on shared goals and values. For example, Chateau Coutet's partnerships with other organic and family-run wineries in Entre-deux-Mers and Lussac region are based on a common commitment to sustainability and heritage preservation. Recommendations from other wineries are also common. Chateau Palais Cardinal also collaborates with local tourism agencies and other stakeholders, but faces challenges in forming deeper partnerships with wineries due to competition and differing business models.

In resume, the current situation of collaborative initiatives among small to medium-sized family wineries in Saint-Émilion is characterized by a mix of informal partnerships and significant challenges. While there is a strong motivation to engage in wine tourism and collaboration for

economic sustainability, marketing, and heritage preservation, horizontal collaborations are limited by competition. Overcoming these challenges will require strategic investments, effective communication, and a commitment to building trust and shared values.

It is imperative to mention though, the sample in this study cannot be considered as being representative of the overall population of wineries operating in Saint Emilion and takes in account only the reality of the small to medium wineries in the Appellation. All that said, the results cannot be generalized.

4.3. SWOT Analysis

“A SWOT analysis is the method to evaluate the internal weaknesses and strengths of an organization as well as evaluating the threats and opportunities of its external environment. This is considered as an effective framework to plan and manage the organizational resources to achieve certain goals in a specific period of time” (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2021).

The SWOT analysis was a complementary step before developing the Business Model Canvas for Rustic Vines Tours. The aim is to have a macro-vision and to enhance the company's self-awareness, once encourages it to take a reflective approach at the operations and management practices. Consequently, leads to a better understanding of the company's core competencies and areas requiring improvement.

The construction of the SWOT analysis was conducted by the researcher, who balanced the external and the internal visions observed during the internship practices. The results of the analysis can be seen in the Table 2 below.

Table 2 SWOT Analysis - Rustic Vines Tours



4.4. Rustic Vines Business Model Canvas

Following the SWOT analysis, the objective was to expand the company's vision in a holistic manner. To this end, the Canvas Business Model method was employed. The framework was constructed in collaboration between the author and the assistant tourism manager, Mr. Taylor Bergman, who possesses a deeper understanding of the business.

The Canva Business Model enhances communication processes throughout the organization's functions. Through the framework, it becomes easier to convey the business model that the company operates on, which assists in conveying the strategic plan for growth to the stakeholders. It is achievable when everyone has a clear understanding of what needs to be done, and when, to ensure the whole organization is on board and ready to support the need for change.

The tool created in this phase of the study aim to be useful for all Rustic's stakeholders, such as current partners and collaborators, since it is feasible to understand how the company creates, captures and delivers value. The goal is also to be used effectively when presenting Rustic Vines Tours as a commercial opportunity to new B2B partners. It will help them visualize

the general aspects about the company regarding the value propositions, customer segments and key resources.

That said, given that Rustic is already a structured and established company, the development of a Canva Business Model for Rustic Vines Tours is a strategic initiative to enhance the company's operational efficiency, market reach, and collaborative potential. The result of the analysis was the framework below (Figure 3).

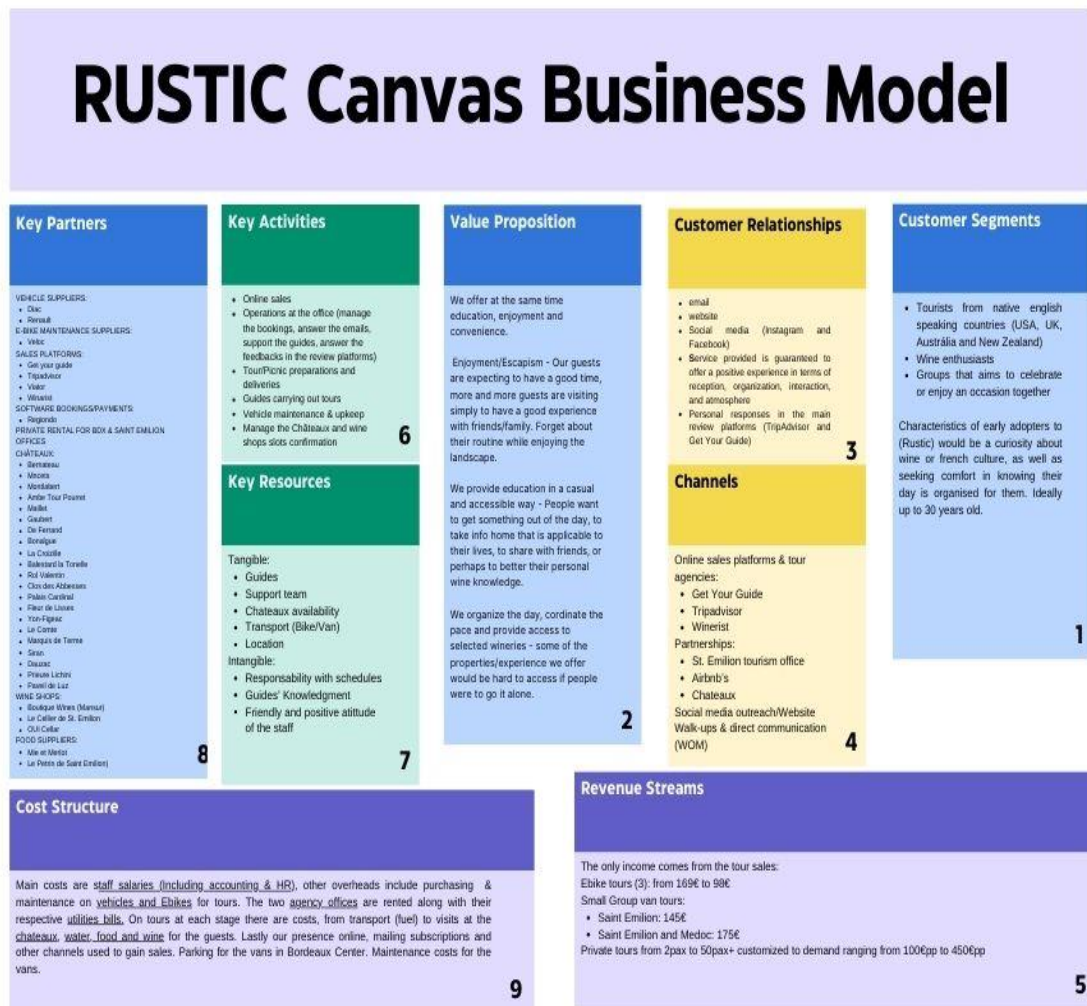


Figure 3 Business Model Canvas Rustic Vines Tours

4.5. THE LEAN CANVAS – Deconstructing the idea for partnerships

Based on the challenges and needs expressed by all the participants during the information gathering phase, and in alignment with the expectations of new forms of partnership sought by

the Rustic Vines Tour company, an initial framework for implementing a B2B partnership between the company and small/medium family Chateaux located in Saint- Émilion region is proposed by the author of this study.

The Lean Canvas model developed in this study provides a structured framework for Rustic Vines Tours to test and validate the idea of partnerships with selected wineries. By focusing on key areas such as problem identification, solution development, key metrics, and unique strengths, the tool adopted facilitate iteration and validation.

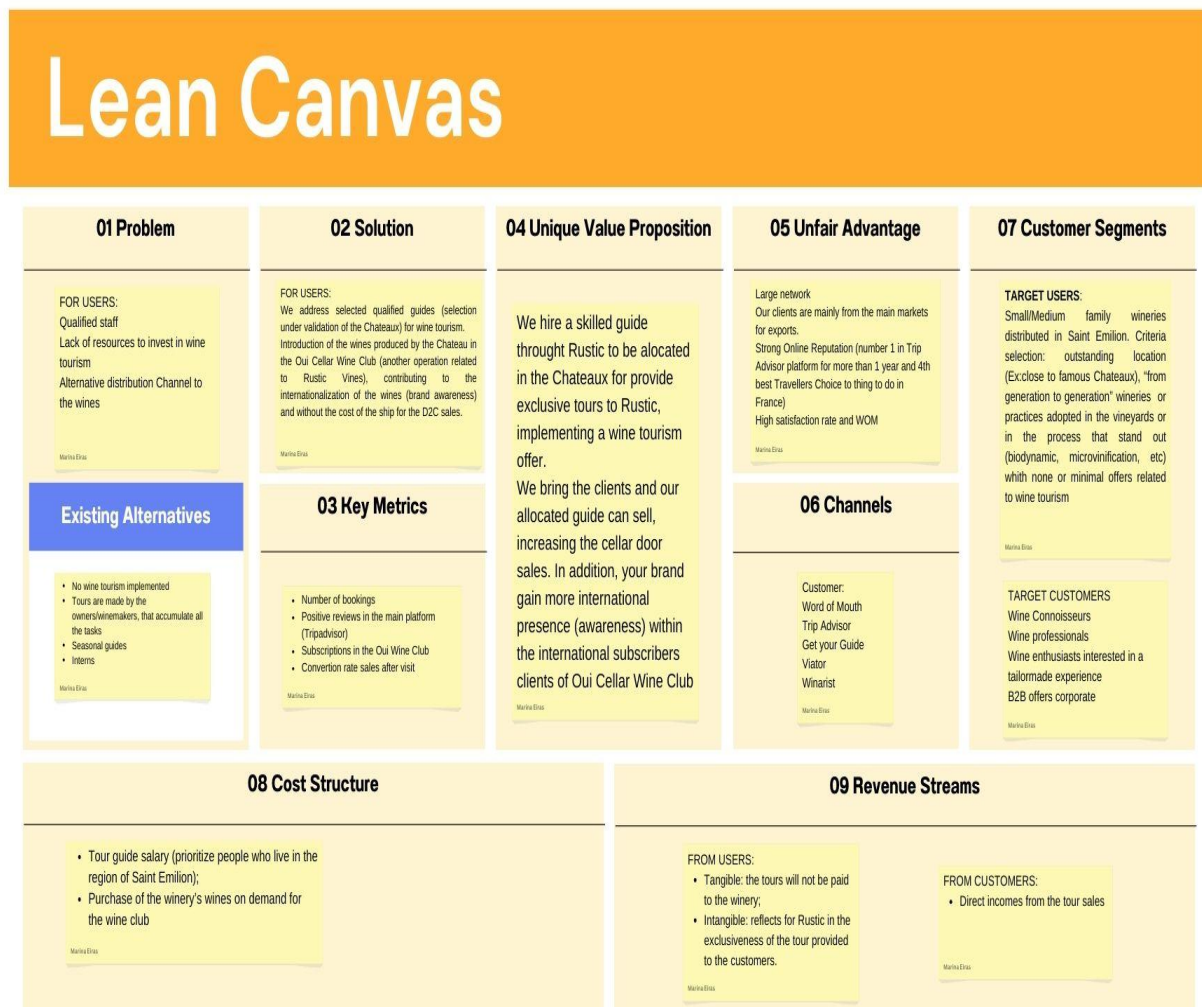


Figure 4 Lean Canvas Partnerships

The figure 4 above illustrates the preliminary concept for the establishment of partnerships. The Saint-Émilion wine region is still predominantly comprised of numerous family-owned wineries, some of which lack a structured wine tourism offering. The long-term objective is to establish a network of partnerships with selected wineries based on criteria such as

exceptional location, family history, and sustainable practices over generations. This network will then implement and promote exclusive wine tourism offerings.

One of the factors that has been identified and confirmed through semi-structured interviews is that financial constraints prevent many small wineries from investing in wine tourism experiences, even though it constitutes a way for diversification of their income. Another crucial factor is the need for wineries to ensure that their staff are welcoming, technically competent and able to convey the distinctive nature of their family businesses in a way that is both passionate and authentic.

Furthermore, there is a vast body of literature that demonstrates how family wineries, especially small/medium ones, are essential for the perpetuation and conservation of a wine region's cultural heritage, fostering sustainability in all its pillars.

That said, the scope is to provide an alternative for implementing or developing tourism experiences in these properties. Rustic Vines Tours will be responsible for hiring a guide and assigning him to the selected partner. The selection, training and onboarding will be conducted in a coordinated and joint manner in order to ensure effective onboarding. In return, the hired guide will be responsible for running the private and B2B tours to be co-created and developed by the operator, utilizing the Chateau's facilities. Likewise, this guide will be in charge to promote and facilitate the after visits sales, collecting customer data for the winery.

In parallel, the wines of the partner will be included in the selection of Oui Cellar, the wine club partially related to Rustic Vines operations, which will be in charge of the purchase and ship the wines to its subscribers, mostly international clients from the agency. This action will not require any investment from the wineries, on the contrary, they will gain another distribution channel and enhance the internationalization (awareness) of their brand. This could even lead to an increase in the winery's D2C sales, expand its international networking and find new commercial partners for export.

The framework presented places significant emphasis on the importance of effective communication, cooperation, and creativity in order to ensure the success of the partnership. This approach ensures that Rustic Vines Tours can effectively address the specific problems of its partner wineries, fostering mutually beneficial with the collaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Recommendations

Based on the time constraints faced by the researcher (duration of the internship), it is suggested some recommendations for an action plan that Rustic Vines Tours can adopt in the next phase to further validate and refine the proposed collaborative business model with small and medium-sized wineries in Saint-Émilion.

1. Desirability: gathering information with the users (Chateaux) if they want the proposed partnership;
2. Viability: build a detailed financial model that incorporate various scenarios for pricing, costs, and revenue streams associated with the collaborative business model. Analyze the account and legal constraints.
3. Feasibility: implement small-scale pilot tests of the proposed collaborative business model with a limited number of partner wineries. Gather feedback (from the wineries and the customers), identify challenges, and refine the operational processes based on the learnings.

Additionally, aiming the future partnerships between Rustic Vines and selected wineries, a recommendation guideline framework was crafted and is presented in Figure 5. The establishment of a structured plan for the implementation of actions facilitates the visualization of their development.

Action framework for implementing partnerships with wineries



Figure 5 Action framework for partnerships with Rustic

5.2. Theoretical implications

This research introduces the Lean Canvas methodology into the field of tourism studies, offering a structured and simplified tool for business model innovation. This integration expands the theoretical landscape of tourism management and provides a new lens through which business strategies in the tourism industry can be examined. The proposed business model framework addresses the unique challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the wine industry, thereby contributing to the theoretical discourse on SME management and offering a practical tool that can be adapted to various contexts.

Furthermore, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of wine tourism in the Saint-Émilion region, enhancing the theoretical knowledge of regional tourism development and the factors influencing successful tourism initiatives. It underscores the importance of sustainable practices in wine tourism, highlighting how strategic collaborations and innovative

business models can contribute to the sustainable growth of the industry. This alignment with broader goals of environmental conservation and social responsibility is particularly relevant in the current global context, where sustainability is a critical concern.

5.3. Practical implications

The practical implications of this research are significant for managers of tour companies operating in the wine tourism industry. Collaborating with established tour operators like Rustic Vines enables wineries to access a broader customer base and leverage marketing expertise, thus enhancing their market presence, increasing their visibility and brand awareness. The emphasis on creating personalized experiences for tourists is another practical implication, as understanding and catering to visitor preferences can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

This research also introduces an innovative approach to business model development in wine tourism through the application of the Lean Canvas methodology. This can inspire other regions and sectors within the wine industry to adopt similar innovation tools for fostering collaborations and driving growth. By promoting strategic and operational efficiency, this approach can help wine tour operators and wineries to differentiate themselves in a competitive market, enhance brand identity, and improve customer engagement.

5.4. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the development of a collaborative business model for Rustic Vines Tours and small to medium-sized family-owned wineries in the Saint-Émilion region, several limitations must be acknowledged.

The use of the Lean Canvas methodology, while effective for identifying key problems and solutions, has inherent limitations. The Lean Canvas is designed for rapid iteration and validation of business models, which may not fully capture the complexity and long-term strategic considerations required for sustainable partnerships, including the ones in the tourism field. Additionally, the Lean Canvas focuses on internal aspects of the idea and may overlook broader external factors such as regulatory labor laws.

It is important to emphasize that the sketching of the Lean Canvas is just the first phase of the business model design process. The Lean Canvas provides a preliminary framework for understanding the key components of the business model, but it requires further development and validation through subsequent phases. An illustration of the Business Design Playbook

(Figure 6), illustrate the following essential phases for a comprehensive business model design:

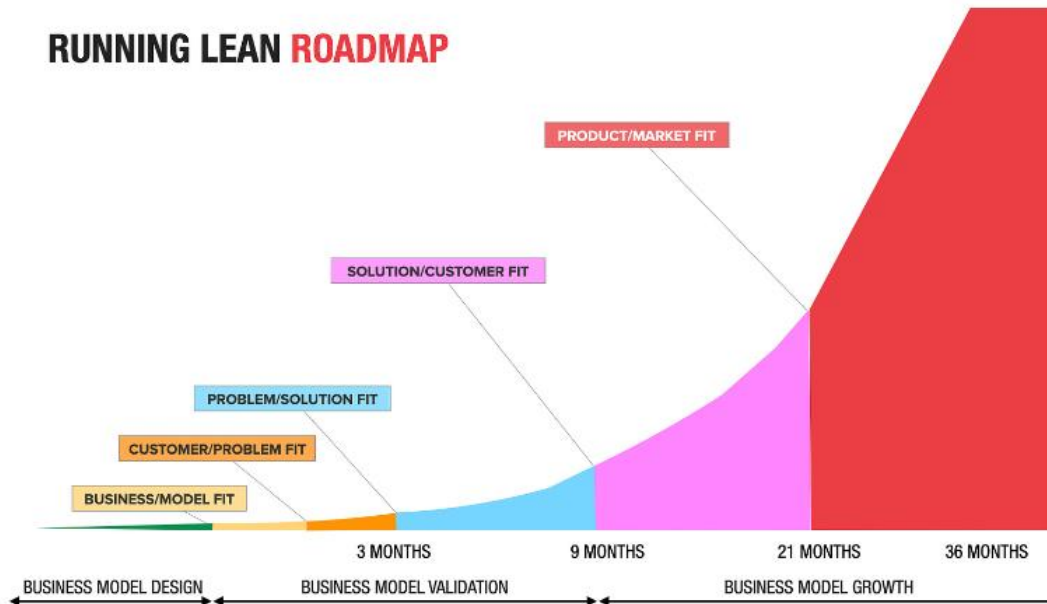


Figure 6 The Business Model Design Playbook (source: Internet)

Likewise, the sample size of seven semi-structured interviews, although providing rich qualitative data, is relatively small and may not fully represent the diverse perspectives of all small and medium-sized wineries in the Saint-Émilion region. The findings are based on the experiences and views of a limited number of participants, which may not capture the full spectrum of challenges and opportunities faced by other wineries in the area.

The study focuses specifically on the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru AOP and the unique context of its small and medium-sized family-owned wineries. As such, the results and proposed business model framework may not be directly applicable to other closer Appellations with different characteristics and market conditions.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Printed material from St.Émilion's Tourism Office



Scanned with CamScanner

Annex 2. Development of interview blocks and questions

Block	Interview Question	Aim
Introduction	Can you provide an overview of your winery's history and its current operations?	Break the ice and identify the family relation with the operations
Challenges in implementing wine tourism	a. For your personal experience, what are the key challenges your winery faces in implementing wine tourism initiatives? b. Have you encountered any obstacle in implementing or expanding sustainable wine tourism initiatives? Lack of financial resources, human capital, infrastructure, information... c. Do you believe that these challenges impact your winery's ability to diversify its income streams?	Identify the key problems from a supply-side perspective
Perceived benefits in wine tourism	a. In your opinion, what are the potential benefits of wine tourism for the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru region as a whole (cultural, socio-economic, environmental)? b. How do you perceive wine tourism contributing to economic profitability for family-run estates?	Gather information about product-oriented attitude towards wine tourism
Collaborations	a. Have you considered forming alliances or collaborations with other wineries or tourism entities/operators in the region? b. What potential benefits or obstacles do you see in collaborating with other stakeholders in the wine industry and tourism sector?	Gather information concerning collaborative histories and their attitude towards it
D2C sales and metrics	a. Have you observed any impact of wine tourism on D2C sales at your Château? (e.g., increased conversion rates after visits) b. Do you measure the success of your wine tourism activities in terms of visitor engagement (loyalty) and revenue generation?	Gather information about product-oriented attitude towards wine tourism
Future Outlooking	a. Looking ahead, what are your aspirations and goals for the development of wine tourism at your estate?	Identify long-term goals towards wine tourism development

Annex 3. Interview script

Bordeaux, April 2024
WINTOUR Master Thesis
Student: Marina Credendio Eiras

1. Introduction:

- Can you provide an overview of your winery's history and its current operations?

2. Challenges in Implementing Wine Tourism:

- For your personal experience, what are the key challenges your winery faces in implementing wine tourism initiatives?
- Have you encountered any obstacle in implementing or expanding sustainable wine tourism initiatives? E.g. Lack of financial resources, human capital, infrastructure, information. If yes, could you discuss, please?
- Do you believe that these challenges impact your winery's ability to diversify its income streams?

3. Perspectives on the Benefits of Wine Tourism:

- In your opinion, what are the potential benefits of wine tourism for the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru region as a whole (cultural, socio-economic, environmental)?
- How do you perceive wine tourism contributing to economic profitability for family-run estates?

4. Strategies for Collaboration:

- Have you considered forming alliances or collaborations with other wineries or tourism entities/operators in the region? If so, explain this performed collaboration.
- What potential benefits or obstacles do you see in collaborating with other stakeholders in the wine industry and tourism sector?

5. Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) Sales and Economic Sustainability:

- Have you observed any impact of wine tourism on D2C sales at your Château? (e.g., increased conversion rates after visits)
- Do you measure the success of your wine tourism activities in terms of visitor engagement (loyalty) and revenue generation?

6. Future Outlook:

- Looking ahead, what are your aspirations and goals for the development of wine tourism at your estate?

7. Snowball Sampling:

- Are you aware of any other family-run estates in the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru wine region that are facing similar challenges or opportunities in implementing wine tourism initiatives? If so, could you kindly provide the names or contacts of these estates that might be interested in participating in further research on this topic?

The interview will be recorded for academic purposes.