

GASTRONOMAD – A TASTE OF THE WORLD

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

This paper explores the development and internationalization strategy of GastroNomad, a startup specializing in culinary tourism. Positioned at the intersection of travel, gastronomy, and sustainability, the project introduces a new model of immersive tourism. GastroNomad's concept combines cultural experience and food discovery through curated travel packages offered in Brittany (France), Cluj (Romania), and Emilia-Romagna (Italy). Through strategic planning and market analysis, this research evaluates the feasibility of scaling a sustainable culinary tourism product. Key findings emphasize the importance of differentiated offerings, local partnerships, adaptable communication strategies, and gradual scaling. Challenges include resource management, cross-cultural communication, and ensuring consistency across destinations. The paper contributes to the academic discussion on SME internationalization in tourism by presenting a concrete and innovative model aligned with evolving consumer preferences.

Keywords: Food tourism, Internationalization, Tradition, Culture, Travel

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, culinary tourism has gained prominence as a form of cultural exploration. Travelers are increasingly seeking not only to visit new places but to experience them through local food, traditions, and human interaction. This trend is reinforced by a broader shift toward sustainable, slow, and experience-based travel, especially among younger and more culturally curious demographics (Richards G, 2012).

GastroNomad is a young enterprise designed in response to these global shifts. It offers curated culinary journeys rooted in authenticity, connection with local producers, and immersive learning. The company aims to internationalize its model, starting with three pilot destinations that each reflect strong culinary identity and tourism potential: Brittany in France, Cluj in Romania, and Emilia-Romagna in Italy.

This paper presents the roadmap developed by the GastroNomad team to structure its internationalization strategy. The study is significant as it addresses the challenges and methods of growing a niche tourism business across borders, while preserving local authenticity and sustainable values. The aim of the paper is to examine the key strategic choices made by the company and

evaluate their coherence with market demands and operational realities.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study is based on a qualitative methodological approach, combining business planning, comparative destination analysis, and internal documentation. Research was conducted through review of planning documents (human resources, materials, communication) and examination of market studies on culinary tourism.

Strategic planning tools were used to assess the feasibility of the internationalization process. These included Business Model Canvas (figure 2), milestone tracking, and resource estimation. Specific focus was given to five critical areas: motivation and market fit, internal capacity, product differentiation, entry mode and consolidation strategy, and communication framework. Cost estimation, risk identification, and countermeasure proposals were also part of the analysis framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

GastroNomad's concept is built on the idea that food is a gateway to culture. The company's main motivation is to offer experiences that are educational, emotional, and sensorial. The choice of the three starting

regions reflects this ethos, as each destination presents a rich culinary heritage and existing tourism infrastructure. The motivation to scale is both market-driven and value-based.

The internal strategy emphasizes scalability through strategic partnerships. The team is composed of three core members with complementary skills in coordination, logistics, and marketing. The model prioritizes lean operation, outsourcing of legal and translation tasks, and use of freelancers and local guides. Key costs for human resource adaptation are estimated at €50,000 per year.

Product strategy is organized around two distinct formats. The familial package is designed for small groups and includes cooking classes, cultural tours, and local meals. The adventurous package is more dynamic and includes market foraging, regional product discovery, and producer immersion. This differentiation allows GastroNomad to appeal to a wider range of customers while keeping logistical coherence.

The company's mode of entry focuses on partnership with local actors, such as chefs,

CONCLUSIONS

GastroNomad represents an innovative model of sustainable, experience-driven culinary tourism. Its internationalization strategy is consistent with its mission to provide authentic food journeys that foster cultural understanding. The dual-offer approach allows for customer segmentation, while the partnership-based model ensures local anchoring.

The strategy appears feasible both operationally and financially. It demonstrates how small teams can structure internationalization in a lean, adaptable way, using local strengths and targeted communication. While risks remain, the company has outlined realistic countermeasures and contingency plans.

This research contributes to the understanding of how culinary tourism SMEs can expand internationally while remaining faithful to their values. Further studies could explore the long-term impact of such experiences on traveler behavior and destination development (Altinay L & Altinay E, 2006).

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farmers, and tourism agencies. Initial consolidation is planned through coworking facilities, local coordination, and scalable systems. The point of entrance is defined, but further expansion will depend on feedback and performance in the pilot regions.

Communication is one of the most challenging dimensions. The visual identity is already strong, but localization of messaging and cultural adaptation require external expertise. A multilingual digital platform is under development. Communication investments are estimated at €44,800 for the first year of internationalization. Key risks include poor market resonance, inconsistent branding, and platform delays (Craig C. S., & Douglas S. P., 2006).

The company has identified the importance of participating in international food and travel events to build reputation and acquire partnerships. Attendance at targeted trade shows and networking events is planned for 2026–2027. Estimated event participation costs are €15,000–€20,000 per year.

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ANNEXES



Figure 1: Logo of Gastronomad

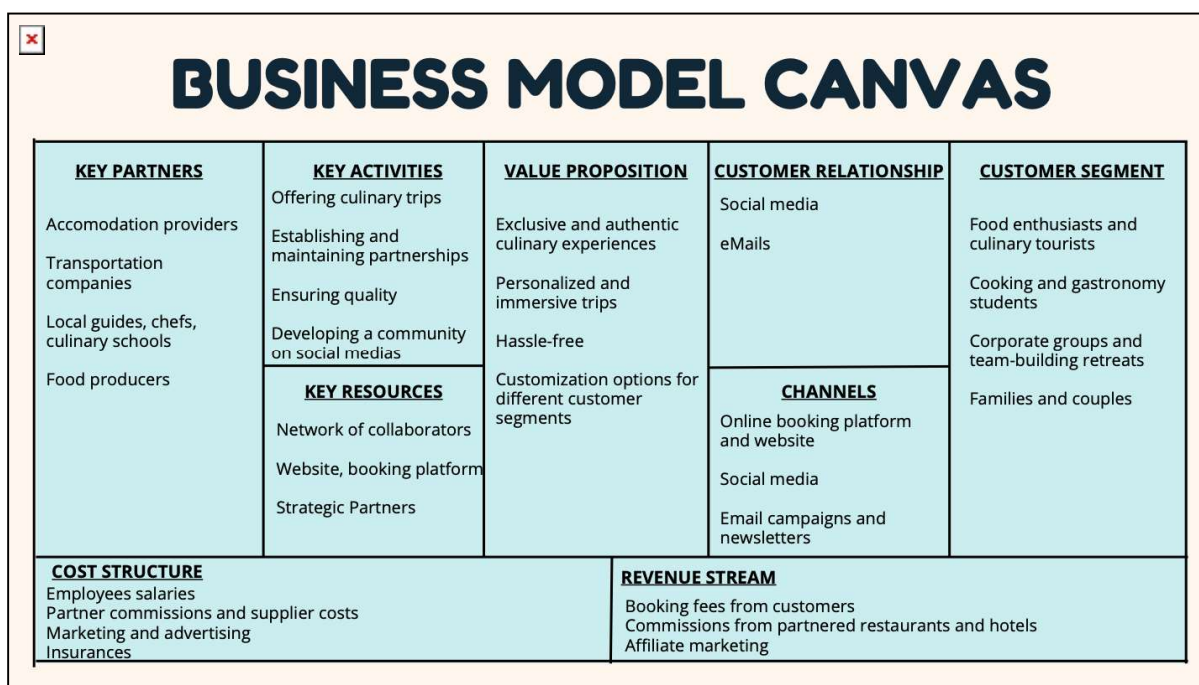


Figure 2: Business Model Canvas for Gastronomad