



## **Part A:**

### **Profile of the business.**

From 1700 to the present days, the agriturismo “*Duca di Castelmonte*” arises in the fields belonging to the Curatolo family; it can be found at the gates of Trapani, one of the nine Sicilian capitals, in an area that is well-known for the abundance of prime food products like bread, oil, cheese, cured meats and fish.

From the previous generation to the present one, with Salvatore Curatolo as senior member, the agriturismo was once a mere olive oil mill where the Curatolos used olives coming from their own production and the near farmers.

Twenty years ago, Salvatore and his siblings Laura and Gaetano thought about transforming the mill in an agriturismo; driven by the great hospitality culture existing in their family and more generally in the whole Sicilian region.

Nowadays, “*Duca di Castelmonte*” mainly offers to its guests catering and reception services; moreover, the wide fields just behind the building possess various crops, so that the kitchen will always have access to typical and fresh products and the agriturismo will enhance its earnings by selling various jams and marmalades to whom makes request of them.

For who thinks it is just a mere building in the middle of the nature, “*Duca di Castelmonte*” offers a well-equipped swimming pool and tour services upon request; there is also a small park, where guests and children can interact with the pets under the supervision of the personnel.

As the travel trends in Sicily in the last years suggest, the clientele mainly consist on German, Danish and Dutch people, with a low percentage of Italian customers; the former indeed desire go back to the origins and enjoy their holidays in the nature, after having tried all the different kind of trips that travel agency offer today.

### **Part B: The family dimension.**

As mentioned before, the Curatolos operate in what we define today as agricultural sector from the far 1700. From the previous generation to the present one, the family business was just represented by the olive oil mill; as the family member stated in the *Artisan Entrepreneurship project* interview, the mill was a seasonal activity, with just more or less three months of work.

About twenty years ago, Salvatore and his siblings were enlightened by the chance to transform the mill in an agriturismo: a seasonal activity that leads to a more dynamic business, since the work period is prolonged due the mild climate that Sicily offers from May to November.

The idea was successful and up to this day “*Duca di Castelmonte*” represents a focal point of the Trapani’s catering and reception service. Recently the business ownership passed to Marta Curatolo

and Silvia Stella, respectively Salvatore's daughter and Laura's daughter; both the women showed, since their young age, a unique interest and joy for the family business and decided to undertake this travel in the agritourist sector just after completing their formation at the university.

Because of their better and more deepened knowledge about the modern management and advertising instruments, the women are now in charge for the management, product and activity promotion and public relation as well; Salvatore and his siblings became senior members instead, and kept participating at the activities daily, due to their great experience.

However, this is not where the collaboration between the family members stops in "*Duca di Castelmonte*"; Salvatore's mother, Mrs. Giuseppina, is a well-appreciated cook not only by the family but also by the neighborhood, and actively collaborates in the catering activity; Melchiorre's father is a skilled user of traditional agricultural instrument and used one of the areas of the agritourism to create a museum with all these old agricultural instrument, drawing huge attention and consensus among all the coming tourists.

Once we examine one the most well-known weak points of family businesses, the collaboration between junior and senior members, "*Duca di Castelmonte*" stands out again and gains the spotlight for its excellence: based on the interviews, there is a very high harmony between the two generations, mostly thanks to the members flexibility and will to understand each other's point of view.

Thanks to the experience gained with the relationship with the previous generation, the senior members that wanted to establish a more open and respectful relationship with the future generation, granting them their own autonomy; on the other side we have the junior members that faced a free working environment, where they can express their point of view without imposing it; instead they support the seniors' initiatives both ethically and practically, using the skills and competencies acquired during the studies with the respect of the seniors' experience, that still represent the creator of all the innovation measures adopted within the firm.

For this reason, it can fair enough to highlight how, as Silvia Stella stated in the interview, "*Duca di Castelmonte*" is not experiencing a generational transfer but a "collaboration" between both generations, with the purpose to grant a meeting point and always care about the wealth of the business.

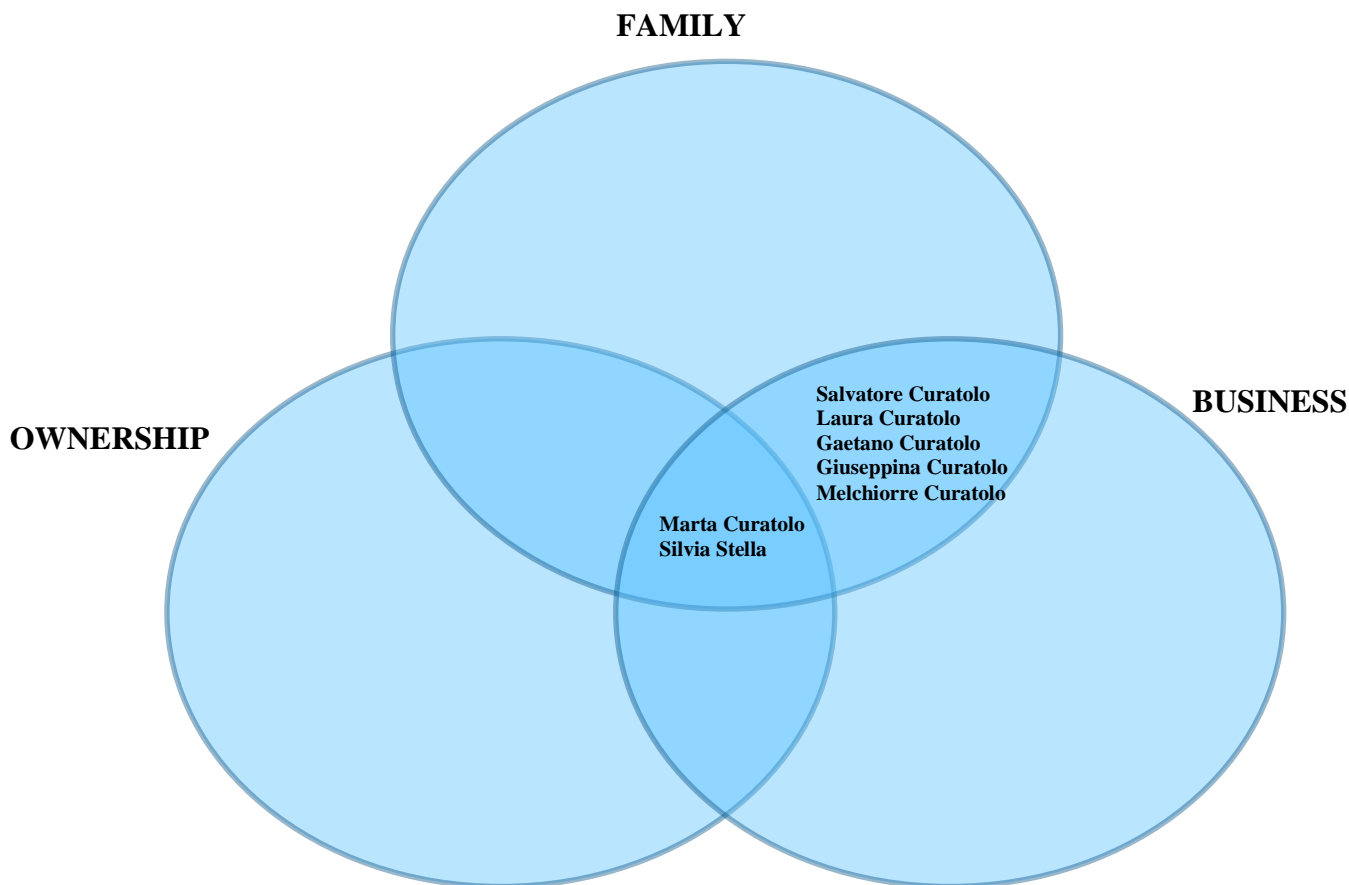


Figure 1 - Three Circles Diagram

### Part C: Challenges & Opportunities of business growth & succession.

The agritourist sector has always numerous challenges for the entrepreneurs that want to enter it; one of these can be the seasonality or, like it happens in Sicily most of the time, for the high competition with the other entities. The first big challenge that “*Duca di Castelmonte*” had to face was the renovation of the old “baglio” about twenty years ago; a harsh challenge because it is not that easy to convert a building used for olive milling into an accommodation facility with an adequate quality of reception services; moreover, Salvatore and his siblings faced the father’s disagreement to change deeply the multi-generational family business.

Last, the most difficult challenge that “*Duca di Castelmonte*” had to face so far was to draw a different customer target and satisfy a new genre of needs; however, the Curatolos managed to transform this challenge into an opportunity to develop and place itself in a different and superior position compared to its competitors.

The modern reality offers new traveling and stay possibilities that were unthinkable years ago; also, the usage of several channel of communication made more and more possible to share contents about holiday experiences. This made customers more careful and demanding and the Curatolos had to offer something new; that could be different from the traditional concept of agritourism but still related to the agritourist activity broadly speaking, and finally avoid sending a confusional message to their customers.

## Part D: The entrepreneurial dimension: outcomes & business model.

Among all the successful entrepreneurial initiatives adopted by the Curatolos, three of them stand out:

- Cooking Workshop;
- Museum of the agricultural antiques;
- Glamping.

The *Cooking workshop* was created with purpose to teach the tourists how to properly cook the typical meals of the Italian and Sicilian cuisine; that are well-known in the world, especially in North Europe, where the cuisine has been exported by Sicilian emigrants looking for fortune.

On Thursdays, along with the workshop, the typical “agro-pizzas” are produced. These pizzas are remembered for their oval shape, and they are usually prepared with unusual and fresh ingredients; both the initiatives were a great.

Mr. Melchiorre Curatolo, Salvatore’s father created the *Museum of the agricultural antiques* with the purpose to offer something different to his customer and that better represents the history of the Curatolos and the agritourism.

In a narrow corridor between the courtyard, behind the restaurant, and wide green space behind the agritourism, it is possible to see all the typical instruments that farmers once used like sickles and pitchforks but also some tools that are related to the olive oil production: corks, barrels and wicker baskets decorate the walls and the ceiling, with the attempt to send the customers back to the past and satisfy their need to enjoy a “old-fashioned holiday”.

From a chronological point of view, the last of the innovation were the “*Glamping*” tents.

Glamping is a new trend born in 2016, it consists on the usage of bigger and better-equipped tents, containing all the tools that meet the today comfort standards. The Curatolos benefitted from this trend by introducing three new glamping tents and remove the artichoke crops from its business; in this way, the customer can benefit all the essential comforts, like running water or electricity, and has the feeling to live amid nature, enjoying the marvelous view of the city of Erice, even though the facility is placed at 500 meters from the highway. The initiative was such a huge success that the tents were booked from May until the first days of November, as Salvatore stated.

It is important to highlight how the main communication channel used by the business is the internet; other than owning a website, the facility can be easily found through different platforms like:

- Facebook;
- Tripadvisor;
- Booking;
- Agriturismo.it
- Hotels.it

The contents of the website are translated in four languages: Italian, French, English, German; moreover, it has contents concerning the facility, the activities offered by the agritourism, the neighborhood and the rooms and it is possible to book one of them as well.

Facebook is mainly used as a customer relationship and engagement tool; it promotes the activity and the menus for particular events.

Last, the spread presence of the agritourism in different booking website allows to saturate the reception capacity of the facility.

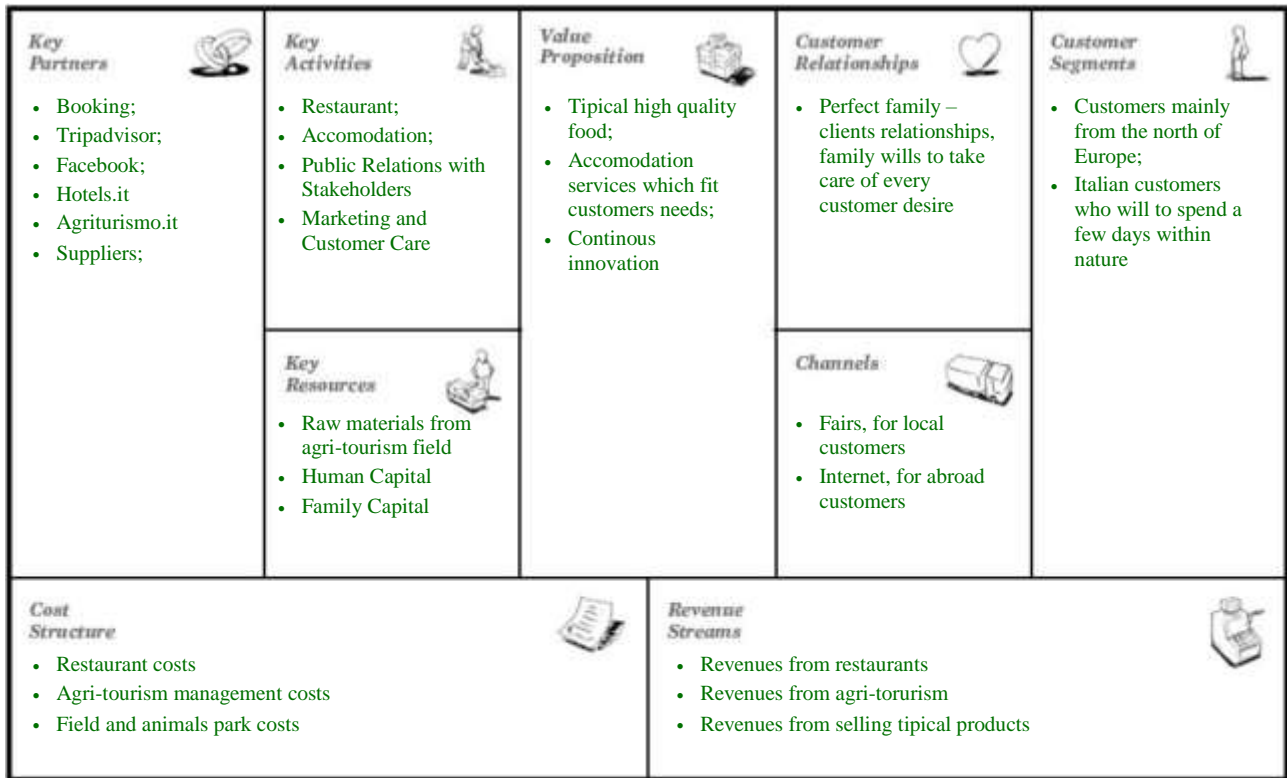


Figure 2 - Business Model Canvas

**Part E: Family entrepreneurialism: lessons and conclusions.**

“Duca di Castelmonte” is certainly a great example of a well-managed family business:

- The great relationship between the members of the different generations and the almost total absence of clashes due mainly to an open dialog, based on mutual respect and high listening ability, allowed the business to develop and enhance, gaining a decisive spot between all the agritourist business of Trapani;
- Even though the need of setting rules within a family business is a very important feature to not underestimate, this case study demonstrates the harmony within a family may be even more important since it leads to a better efficacy and efficiency of the business itself;
- The collaboration described by Silvia Stella teaches us that new members are not the only one to produce the innovation. New ideas can be created by experienced and wise minds of older members; however, it is the junior members’ duty to bring on the table these proposals, discuss about them and support them with their better knowledge about the communication and managerial channels of our days.
- The differentiation and the presence of the facility in different platforms, allows the business to begin a good relationship with the customers, make them come back to the agritourism, and saturate the reception capability of the facility during all its working period.