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**EVALUATION OF THE VALUE CHAIN OF STARWILD
GLAMPING IN THE UNITED STATES MARKET**

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DEDICATION

To my parents and my brother.

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To my mother for her patience, my father for his perseverance, and my brother for his
joy.

ABSTRACT

The growth of glamping as a modality of experiential tourism generates new opportunities and additional competitive challenges for companies seeking to position themselves in demanding markets such as the United States. In this context, Starwild Glamping faces the need to optimize its value chain to strengthen its competitiveness, differentiation, and sustainability. Therefore, it is pertinent to determine how value chain management contributes to optimizing the company's competitive performance in the U.S. market. Accordingly, the objective of this study was to propose a value chain improvement plan aimed at enhancing the company's competitiveness in that market.

A qualitative methodology with a descriptive and propositional scope was employed, including documentary review, sector analysis, benchmarking with companies and leading references in the U.S. glamping sector, and interviews with stakeholders linked to glamping and the target market. The results demonstrate that an effective integration of both primary and support activities within the value chain, combined with strategies of technical differentiation, sustainability, and strategic communication, positively impacts the organization's competitiveness. Based on these findings, an action plan was designed, accompanied by evaluation indicators and an implementation schedule. It is concluded that the strategic optimization of the value chain constitutes a key instrument for consolidating Starwild Glamping's value proposition, facilitating its positioning in the U.S. market, and promoting a sustainable and competitive business model within the glamping sector.

Keywords: Value chain, competitiveness, glamping, sustainability, U.S. market.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the tourism sector has undergone significant transformations driven by changes in consumer preferences, as travelers increasingly demand personalized, authentic, and sustainable experiences. In this context, glamping, as a tourism modality that combines direct contact with nature and the comfort characteristic of high-end accommodation, has gained growing international relevance, particularly in developed markets such as the United States. This type of tourism responds to global trends linked to experiential travel, sustainability, and the search for differentiated proposals beyond traditional hotel offerings.

The United States market has consolidated itself as one of the leading global references in glamping due to factors such as the high purchasing power of tourists, the appreciation for outdoor experiences, and a demanding regulatory infrastructure. However, this competitive environment presents significant challenges for companies seeking to enter or consolidate their presence in this market, particularly in terms of operational efficiency, strategic differentiation, and business model sustainability. In this scenario, effective value chain management becomes a key factor in generating sustainable competitive advantages and responding to market demands.

Starwild Glamping, as a company focused on developing innovative and sustainable lodging solutions, faces the challenge of strengthening its competitiveness in the U.S. market. Although it has a value proposition aligned with sector trends, opportunities for improvement have been identified in the articulation of internal activities, process optimization, and the strategic integration of sustainability throughout its value chain. These gaps justify the need to systematically analyze how the value chain influences competitive performance and what actions may be implemented to enhance it.

Accordingly, the research problem focuses on determining how Starwild Glamping's value chain can be optimized to improve its competitiveness in the U.S. market, considering both the specific characteristics of the glamping sector and the demands of that market. From this perspective, the study seeks to answer the question regarding the impact of value chain management on the organization's competitiveness and the strategies that should be implemented to strengthen it.

Based on this background, the objective of the research is to propose a value chain improvement plan that enhances Starwild Glamping's competitiveness in the U.S. market. To achieve this purpose, the study analyzes the company's value chain, evaluates its relationship with competitiveness, identifies best practices within the sector, and designs improvement strategies aligned with principles of differentiation and sustainability.

The research is structured into three chapters. Chapter I presents the theoretical and conceptual framework, addressing the main approaches related to the value chain, competitiveness, and sustainable tourism, as well as the context of the glamping sector. Chapter II develops competitor analysis, benchmarking, and interpretation of interviews conducted with sector stakeholders. Chapter III presents the value chain improvement proposal, including an action plan, evaluation and control indicators, and an implementation schedule aimed at strengthening the company's competitiveness.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Experiential Tourism and Glamping

The term "*glamping*" arises from the union of the words "*camping*" and "*glamour*," and it refers to accommodations in nature that incorporate amenities comparable to those found in boutique hotels. It was first coined in Great Britain in the early 2000s, and since then it has rapidly gained global interest as an increasing number of tourists have become willing to pay for lodging during nature-based vacations. In the early 2000s, "glamping" emerged in western Great Britain as a summer phenomenon that offered well-equipped camping tourism establishments; however, it went largely unnoticed internationally for more than ten years. The emergence of this new phenomenon is linked to the significant growth of the industry since the beginning of the millennium (Business Research, 2025).

Historically, glamping has been oriented toward strengthening rural tourism, socioeconomically linked to livestock, agritourism, agriculture, and fishing, and primarily to residential tourism. Nevertheless, it is necessary to evaluate the entry of new products associated with the term "nature tourism" (Eo Consultora Turística, 2025). The present research study focuses on contributing new lines of work and action in experiential tourism. Therefore, from the local sphere, it must be considered that nature tourism has constituted one of the most promising market niches, and the main source markets are the United States and Europe, driven by tourists who seek new experiences featuring contrasting landscapes and eco-sustainable accommodation modalities such as glamping, which is increasingly capturing consumer attention.

In this regard, experiential tourism is identified as a growing trend in the tourism industry, characterized by the search for unique and personalized experiences that go beyond traditional service offerings (Naranjo & Martínez, 2022). From the perspective of Aranibar et al. (2024), the concept combines luxury with camping and is positioned as a form of

experiential tourism in which people seek connections with nature without sacrificing the comforts typical of high-end accommodations.

For Sánchez-Rodríguez and Anzola-Morales (2021), the increase in glamping is associated with tourists' growing interest in experiences that foster connection with nature while maintaining exclusivity and luxury. That is, services such as internet access, gourmet gastronomy, and wellness activities are available. This personalized approach generates strong emotional connections with destinations, which motivates the desire to repeat the experience.

Glamping is not regular camping; rather, it is a modality that allows people to enjoy nature without giving up comfort. It offers a differentiated experience in which glamour and amenities—increasingly recommended by consumers—are integrated into rural or natural settings, without losing direct contact with the landscape. It can represent the ultimate adventure, since one option is to engage in “hard camping” without a bathroom or shower, far from urban centers in full nature; alternatively, with glamping, one can shower and sleep in a bed. Themed campsites—rural, coastal, and others—have been one of the fundamental accommodation segments in the tourism offerings of many destinations and in the economies of territories. Adaptation to new forms of tourism and leisure requires the accommodation sector to adapt as well. Thus, "glamping" emerges as an adaptation of the word "*camping*."

Likewise, the meaning of this anglicism should not be overlooked. Although English terms are not recognized as entries by the Royal Spanish Academy, tourism agencies, magazines, and leisure publications have defined "glamping" as a form of accommodation and even directly as an experience (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). In a literal search, it is currently defined as luxury camping, a combination of the words "*glamour*" and "*camping*." It is evident that it is a tourism trend, as shown by the following data: the English term was first mentioned on the internet in 2001 with 170 mentions; however, eleven years later it reached 2,720,000 mentions, driven by social media (Business Research, 2025).

1.2 Evolution of Experiential Tourism

Although it is not possible to trace the origin of glamping with complete precision, the main evidence places it in Africa, where safaris popularized various lodging options.

With the passage of time, globalization-related changes facilitated access to tourist destinations worldwide, and experiential tourism grew as a response to the saturation of the traditional market. Experience became a key asset for destinations, which compete to offer innovative proposals that attract tourists seeking unique and personalized experiences. This change is reflected in the evolution of destinations, which adopt diversified offerings, including cultural activities, participation in festivities, or immersion in nature-based activities (Jong-Hyeong et al., 2023).

According to Calle (2024), multiple advantages or benefits have been identified in using experiential marketing to offer an experience-based proposal grounded in authenticity and the relevance of the tourism product, both for backpackers and for families. Regarding the benefits of glamping experiences compared to conventional tourism, it is considered a form of low-impact sustainable tourism, where ecotourism promotion becomes attractive and safe for tourists who—due to their requirements—could not previously enjoy such simple destinations. Moreover, being in the middle of the forest, in direct contact with nature, and perceiving peace differs from city life, where there is a massive number of tourists and greater pollution. Continuing with the benefits, this segment is oriented toward sustainable tourism, which today responds to a new trend: tourists no longer seek only the tourism product itself, but go further and seek unique experiences in unique destinations.

Experiential tourism represents an opportunity for diversification, for expanding products and services, and for many stakeholders to benefit from this market niche. In addition, quality and sustainable tourism is a growing trend in segments where cultural, ecological, and rural tourism capture increasing market shares (Sebova et al., 2023).

In addition to what has been cited, another benefit is that these tourism products are characterized as new forms of leisure and entertainment; that is, there is no need to base these products on internationally renowned monuments capable of attracting tourists by

themselves, depending on the dominant trend in destination production. However, it is important to recognize that not everything is as positive as it seems, and experiential tourism also involves challenges, both external and internal.

1.2.1 Economic Benefits

Glamping generates measurable economic impacts through investment in infrastructure, job creation, and the activation of complementary services. This tourism modality contributes to local development, particularly in rural areas, where traditional tourism infrastructure may be limited.

According to recent industry reports, the growth of the glamping sector in the United States has had a direct impact on small and medium-sized enterprises, construction suppliers, transportation services, gastronomy, and local experience providers. The multiplier effect derived from experiential tourism strengthens regional economies and promotes diversification beyond conventional tourism models.

Furthermore, glamping contributes to reducing tourism seasonality, as many structures are designed for year-round operation due to their climate adaptability and structural durability. This continuity allows destinations to stabilize income flows and optimize resource utilization.

Economic indicators such as return on investment (ROI), occupancy rates, average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per available unit (RevPU) demonstrate the profitability potential of well-managed glamping operations. In this context, investment in differentiated and sustainable infrastructure becomes a strategic decision rather than merely an operational expense.

1.2.2 Environmental Impact and Sustainability

Environmental sustainability constitutes one of the central pillars of glamping. Unlike conventional hotel infrastructure, glamping structures are often modular, prefabricated, and designed to minimize permanent environmental intervention.

Durability of structures, partial replacement of components, and modular design reduce waste generation, optimize material use, and extend product life cycles. Studies indicate that U.S. glamping consumers increasingly evaluate verifiable and coherent sustainability practices, showing growing skepticism toward greenwashing (Grand View Research, 2025).

In this context, transparent communication regarding material traceability, life span of structures, and responsible resource management strengthens brand credibility. Sustainability must be measurable, verifiable, and integrated throughout the entire value chain.

Responsible water management, renewable energy integration, waste reduction strategies, and respect for biodiversity are essential practices that enhance legitimacy in the U.S. market.

1.2.3 Customer Experience

Customer experience represents the core element of experiential tourism. The perceived value of glamping depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on emotional engagement, service personalization, and authenticity.

Experiential tourism emphasizes immersion, storytelling, and meaningful interaction with the natural environment. The integration of comfort, exclusivity, and direct contact with nature generates emotional attachment and long-term brand loyalty.

In highly competitive markets such as the United States, the ability to create memorable and shareable experiences becomes a differentiating factor. Digital visibility and online reviews further amplify the importance of service excellence.

1.2.4 Types of Glamping

Glamping encompasses diverse structural typologies, including:

- Luxury tents
- Geodesic domes
- Yurts
- Treehouses
- Cabins and bungalows
- Safari-style lodges

Each typology integrates structural innovation, environmental adaptation, and aesthetic differentiation. Climate adaptability is particularly relevant in the U.S. market due to varied regional weather conditions. The durability of materials, modular assembly, and adaptability to regulatory standards determine long-term viability in international markets.

1.3 Global and United States Glamping Market Trends

The global glamping market has experienced sustained growth over the last decade, driven by increased demand for sustainable and differentiated tourism products.

In the United States, the sector has expanded significantly due to high purchasing power, the popularity of outdoor recreation, and the diversification of tourism offerings. Market growth projections estimate annual expansion rates exceeding 10% over the next five years.

Major destinations include areas near national parks, coastal regions, and mountainous territories, where experiential tourism aligns with environmental conservation initiatives.

1.3.1 Market Growth and Size

Recent market analyses indicate that the U.S. glamping industry reached approximately \$737.9 million in 2024 and is projected to surpass \$1.5 billion by 2030.

Millennials and Generation Z represent a substantial proportion of the demand, prioritizing sustainability, authenticity, and digital connectivity. The integration of Wi-Fi, smart energy systems, and environmentally responsible design has become a competitive requirement.

1.4 Value Chain Model

The value chain model, developed by Michael Porter, provides a structured framework for analyzing internal organizational activities that contribute to value creation.

The model distinguishes between:

Primary activities:

- Inbound logistics
- Operations
- Outbound logistics
- Marketing and sales
- Service

Support activities:

- Firm infrastructure
- Human resource management
- Technological development
- Procurement

The objective of value chain analysis is to identify competitive advantages by optimizing cost structures or implementing differentiation strategies.

1.4.1 Concept and Foundations of Porter's Value Chain

According to Porter, competitive advantage arises from the coordination and integration of value-generating activities rather than isolated improvements. The value chain serves as a diagnostic tool that enables organizations to detect inefficiencies, innovation opportunities, and strategic gaps.

In tourism, value creation is closely linked to service quality, experiential design, and sustainability integration.

1.4.2 Primary and Support Activities in the Value Chain

Primary activities directly contribute to the production and delivery of services. In glamping, these include procurement of sustainable materials, construction processes, marketing strategies, and post-sale service.

Support activities provide the necessary infrastructure for operational efficiency.

Technological innovation, human talent training, and supplier management play crucial roles in strengthening competitiveness.

1.4.3 Application of the Value Chain in the Tourism Sector

The application of the value chain in tourism enables companies to evaluate how each operational component contributes to customer satisfaction and competitive positioning.

In glamping, differentiation often emerges from sustainable procurement practices, structural innovation, service personalization, and strategic communication.

A holistic approach ensures coherence between strategic planning and operational execution.

1.5 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage refers to the capacity of an organization to outperform competitors through cost leadership, differentiation, or focused strategies.

In the glamping sector, differentiation strategies are particularly relevant, as consumers prioritize authenticity, sustainability, and emotional engagement over purely price-based decisions.

1.5.1 Differentiation and Cost Strategies

Differentiation may be achieved through:

- Sustainable structural design
- Personalized customer experiences
- Transparent communication
- Technological integration

Cost strategies focus on operational efficiency, supply chain optimization, and resource management.

1.5.2 Shared Value Strategies

Shared value strategies integrate economic performance with social and environmental responsibility. In glamping, this includes collaboration with local communities, responsible resource use, and territorial development.

The integration of shared value enhances long-term sustainability and strengthens stakeholder relationships.

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION OF COMPETITIVENESS IN THE UNITED STATES MARKET

2.1 Factors Influencing the Competitiveness of Glamping Companies

The competitiveness of glamping companies in the United States market is influenced by a combination of external and internal factors that directly affect strategic positioning, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

2.1.1 External Factors

External factors include regulatory requirements, environmental standards, consumer behavior trends, technological development, and competitive intensity.

The United States market is characterized by strict construction regulations, environmental compliance standards, zoning laws, and safety requirements that directly impact the feasibility of glamping projects. Climate conditions also vary significantly by region, requiring structural adaptability and technical customization.

Additionally, U.S. consumers increasingly demand transparency in sustainability practices. Verified environmental certifications, responsible sourcing of materials, and lifecycle accountability are becoming determinants in purchasing decisions.

Digital positioning also plays a fundamental role. Online visibility, reputation management, and customer reviews influence brand perception and competitiveness.

2.1.2 Internal Factors

Internal factors include:

- Operational efficiency

- Supplier management
- Human talent development
- Technological integration
- Financial capacity
- Innovation capability

A company's ability to coordinate its primary and support activities within the value chain determines its capacity to create sustainable competitive advantages.

In the case of Starwild Glamping, internal optimization of procurement processes, structural innovation, talent training, and strategic communication are essential to strengthening competitiveness in the U.S. market.

2.2 Data Collection Through Interviews

2.2.1 Methodological Approach

The research adopted a qualitative methodological approach with descriptive and propositional scope. The objective was to analyze the value chain of Starwild Glamping and determine its impact on competitiveness in the United States market.

The qualitative design allowed in-depth exploration of perceptions, experiences, and strategic insights from key stakeholders linked to the glamping sector and international market dynamics.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection instrument, enabling flexibility while maintaining thematic consistency aligned with the research objectives.

2.2.2 Profile of Interviewees

The interviewees included:

- Industry specialists in experiential tourism
- Glamping operators
- Sustainability consultants
- Business strategy advisors

- Representatives linked to Starwild Glamping

The selection criteria were based on expertise, professional experience in tourism or international markets, and knowledge of sustainable business models.

2.2.3 Data Collection Instrument

The semi-structured interview instrument was designed to explore:

- Perceptions of competitiveness in the U.S. glamping market
- Key differentiation factors
- Sustainability integration strategies
- Operational challenges
- Strategic communication practices
- Value chain optimization opportunities

Questions were organized according to primary and support activities within Porter's value chain framework.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied through the following stages:

1. Transcription of interviews
2. Open coding
3. Categorization of themes
4. Alignment with value chain components
5. Interpretation and triangulation with theoretical framework

The analysis identified recurring themes related to sustainability, personalization, technological integration, regulatory adaptation, and storytelling as core elements of competitiveness.

2.3 Competitor Analysis and Benchmarking in the Sector

Benchmarking was conducted to identify best practices among leading glamping operators in the United States.

The analysis focused on:

- Structural durability and climate adaptability
- Sustainable material sourcing
- Customer experience design
- Pricing strategies
- Digital marketing approaches
- Brand storytelling

The findings revealed that successful operators integrate technical excellence with strong emotional branding. Sustainability is not presented as an isolated feature but as a core component of the value proposition.

Moreover, benchmarking highlighted the importance of modular construction systems, lifecycle transparency, and transparent communication to build trust among U.S. consumers.

2.4 Differentiation and Sustainability Strategies for the U.S. Market

The differentiation and sustainability strategies proposed for Starwild Glamping are based on four key pillars:

1. Technical personalization adapted to U.S. regulatory and climatic conditions
2. Lifecycle-oriented sustainability and structural durability
3. Transparent communication and traceability of materials
4. Social responsibility and territorial integration

The durability of structures, the possibility of partial component replacement, and modular design reduce waste, optimize resources, and extend product lifespan.

Research indicates that U.S. glamping consumers increasingly evaluate verifiable sustainability practices and demonstrate skepticism toward greenwashing. Therefore, transparent reporting and measurable sustainability indicators are essential.

Strategic communication, particularly through storytelling, strengthens emotional connection with customers. Leading operators integrate narratives that connect user experience, natural surroundings, and environmental responsibility.

For Starwild Glamping, translating technical and sustainable attributes into a clear and compelling narrative enhances brand differentiation and perceived value in a highly competitive market.

CHAPTER 3

VALUE CHAIN IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN COMPETITIVENESS IN THE UNITED STATES MARKET OF STARWILD GLAMPING

3.1 Value Chain Action Plan

This chapter proposes a value chain strengthening plan for Starwild Glamping with the objective of enhancing competitiveness in the United States market. The proposal is based on the qualitative analysis of interviews, sector benchmarking, and the theoretical framework of competitiveness and Porter's value chain model.

The action plan is structured according to the primary and support activities of the value chain, identifying improvement opportunities that generate sustainable competitive advantages aligned with the technical, regulatory, and sustainability requirements of the U.S. market.

3.1.1 Strategic Approach of the Action Plan

The strategic approach of the action plan is based on three transversal pillars:

1. **Personalized technical differentiation**, as a response to regulatory and climatic conditions in the U.S. market.
2. **Integral sustainability**, encompassing lifecycle perspective, durability, modularity, and environmental and social impact.

3. **Strategic communication and transparency**, aimed at strengthening customer trust and brand positioning.

These pillars ensure coherence between strategic vision and operational execution across all value chain activities.

Primary Activities Improvement Plan

Inbound Logistics and Procurement

- Consolidation of strategic suppliers aligned with sustainability standards.
- Verification of material traceability and environmental certifications.
- Establishment of long-term agreements to ensure quality consistency and cost optimization.

The objective is to reduce supply risk while reinforcing sustainable positioning.

Operations

- Standardization of modular construction processes.
- Integration of climate-adaptable structural designs.
- Implementation of quality control protocols.
- Continuous evaluation of durability and lifecycle performance.

Operational efficiency enhances cost control and technical differentiation.

Marketing and Sales

- Development of storytelling strategies that integrate sustainability, durability, and experiential value.
- Transparent communication of environmental practices.
- Strengthening digital positioning in U.S. platforms.
- Emphasis on personalization and premium experience.

Marketing efforts must convert technical attributes into perceived customer value.

Service

- Post-installation follow-up and maintenance guidance.
- Customer satisfaction monitoring.
- Implementation of feedback systems to improve continuous service quality.

Service excellence reinforces long-term competitive advantage.

Support Activities Improvement Plan

Human Resource Management

- Continuous training in sustainability standards and international regulations.
- Technical training in modular systems and innovation practices.
- Alignment of organizational culture with sustainability values.

Human capital development ensures strategic coherence and operational excellence.

Technological Development

- Implementation of digital project management tools.
- Integration of sustainability monitoring systems.
- Adoption of innovation processes for structural improvement.

Technology enhances efficiency and strengthens differentiation.

Infrastructure

- Strengthening administrative processes.
- Financial planning aligned with international expansion.
- Risk management strategies for U.S. market entry.

Organizational infrastructure must support long-term competitiveness.

Procurement Strategy

- Strategic consolidation of responsible suppliers.
- Evaluation of supplier performance indicators.
- Periodic auditing of sustainability compliance.

Evaluation and Control Indicators

To ensure effective implementation of the action plan, the following indicators are proposed:

- Supplier sustainability compliance rate
- Structural durability performance index
- Customer satisfaction score
- Operational cost efficiency ratio
- Market positioning growth rate
- Sustainability transparency index

Periodic monitoring allows early identification of deviations and strategic adjustments.

Implementation Timeline

The implementation schedule is divided into:

Short-term (0–6 months):

- Supplier consolidation
- Development of communication strategy
- Definition of evaluation indicators

Medium-term (6–18 months):

- Technological implementation
- Structural optimization
- Training programs

Long-term (18–36 months):

- Market expansion consolidation
- Performance evaluation and strategic refinement
- Continuous innovation development

The timeline facilitates resource allocation, prioritization of critical activities, and strategic monitoring.

CONCLUSIONS

The research enabled a comprehensive evaluation of Starwild Glamping's value chain within the United States market. The analysis confirms that the value chain structure constitutes a strategic determinant of competitiveness in an environment characterized by high demand, increasing consumer sophistication, and strong competitive pressure.

Regarding the first specific objective, the study identified the primary and support activities of the value chain. Sustainable supplier management, customer experience, service innovation, technological integration, and human talent management were determined to be critical links influencing the value proposition offered to the U.S. market.

Concerning the second specific objective, findings demonstrate that efficiency and integration of the value chain directly impact brand competitiveness and differentiation. A well-articulated value chain positions Starwild Glamping as a differentiated proposal beyond price-based competition.

With respect to the third specific objective, optimization strategies were formulated to improve operational efficiency and sustainability. These strategies were structured within an action plan accompanied by performance indicators and an implementation schedule.

Strategic optimization of the value chain consolidates Starwild Glamping's value proposition, facilitates its positioning in the U.S. market, and promotes a sustainable and competitive business model within the glamping sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Starwild Glamping should institutionalize the value chain model as a permanent strategic analysis tool. Continuous evaluation of each link enables identification of improvement opportunities and maintenance of competitive advantage in a dynamic environment.

It is recommended to reinforce sustainability as a transversal axis of business strategy from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. Sustainable practices must be measurable, verifiable, and transparently communicated to avoid perceptions of greenwashing.

Systematic implementation of the proposed action plan, accompanied by evaluation and control indicators, will allow periodic performance monitoring, timely identification of deviations, and continuous strategic adaptation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Semi-Structured Interview

For the purpose of obtaining primary information to develop the topic “**Evaluation of the Value Chain of Starwild Glamping in the United States Market**,” whose objective is to evaluate Starwild Glamping’s value chain to determine its efficiency and competitiveness in the U.S. glamping market, you are kindly asked to answer the following questions. Your responses will be used exclusively for academic purposes:

1. **Competitive context**

- How would you describe the current situation of the glamping market in the United States?
- What emerging trends do you observe among consumers?

2. **Differentiation factors**

- What elements do you consider key to achieving competitive advantage?
- What role do innovation, sustainability, and customer experience play?

3. **Regulatory and territorial environment**

- What opportunities or restrictions do local and state regulations present?
- How do location and access to natural resources influence the business model?

4. **Marketing and communication**

- What digital strategies or promotions are most effective?
- How important are online platforms and social media?

5. **Sustainability and impact**

- What sustainable practices are implemented in your project or in those you are familiar with?
- How is profitability balanced with environmental/social responsibility?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEW 1

Interview with Pedro Alvarado

Position: Restaurant Manager in the U.S.; background in Hospitality and Tourism (Ecuador)

Language: English

Interviewer: Good. As you know, we are Starwild Glamping. We wanted to speak with U.S. residents who are close to the hospitality industry. First, we will begin with questions about your background. Could you briefly describe your experience with glamping, tourism, or the hospitality industry?

Pedro Alvarado: Yes. I have been in the hospitality industry for about 10 years. I studied Tourism in Ecuador, specifically Hospitality Management, and I moved to the United States about eight and a half years ago. I started working in a restaurant—basically in every position involved in the restaurant industry—and at the moment, I am a restaurant manager.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your background—almost a decade in the industry. It is valuable to speak with someone from Cuenca who knows the city and also has extensive experience in the U.S. When was the first time you heard about glamping, and how did you hear about it?

Pedro Alvarado: The first time was probably through you, when you started sharing it several years ago. I saw it on Facebook and on social media, so I started learning about it. I studied hospitality too, and I remember there was a small section about glamping in my degree, but I was never very familiar with it. Once I was here in the States, I noticed it was developing more than in Ecuador, and you could see glamping in different places—interesting structures that catch your attention. The first time I experienced it in Ecuador, I stayed at a glamping site in Maca. I would say I first heard about it about eight years ago, and I started seeing it in the U.S. around seven or eight years ago, when it was beginning to grow.

Interviewer: Great. Now, considering your knowledge of Starwild Glamping and having seen our structures, what aspects of the Starwild Glamping experience do you find most appealing?

Pedro Alvarado: First, the uniqueness of the structures—they catch your eye. Second, the location is very important as well. Starwild's hotel is in a great spot with nice views. And one of the most important parts is customer service. I have seen Tomás being directly involved, with strong knowledge, always trying to connect with customers and providing that extra touch that many companies are missing. I think that makes a difference because there are many glamping options around the world now, but what makes it different is the personal or human touch—the service component.

Interviewer: Thank you. What were your expectations when you first saw Starwild's structures? What were your first impressions compared to other structures you saw at the Glamping Show—regarding price and quality?

Pedro Alvarado: Based only on pictures and the price, I initially thought the quality would be lower compared to other glamping structures in the U.S. But when I saw them in person, I realized it was different. Starwild's structures are excellent in quality—comparable to those coming from Norway or other parts of the world. I have seen structures from Australia and South Africa as well, and they meet similar quality levels to Starwild. So it exceeded my expectations. And the price point compared to quality is very strong. I was surprised by the value.

Interviewer: Now we will discuss sustainability, which is very important for glamping travelers. Glamping structures usually have low environmental impact because they are removable and do not generate construction waste like traditional building. Did you notice sustainability efforts during your experience at the Glamping Show? How important is sustainability when choosing a glamping destination? Would you say Starwild aligns with eco-conscious travelers?

Pedro Alvarado: At the fair itself, you don't see everything, but you can see where most operators work and how they operate—usually in natural environments. I think sustainability is definitely the future, not only thinking about ourselves but also the environment. That is one reason glamping is growing worldwide. From what I observed at the fair, most companies seem aligned with sustainability, and visitors are also looking for sustainable options. I would say Starwild aligns with that—especially seeing how the hotel in Cuenca operates. Compared to other hotels, it makes an effort to affect the ecosystem as little as possible.

Interviewer: Now, regarding market fit for the U.S. audience: do you think Starwild Glamping would appeal to U.S. customers? Why or why not? What elements would resonate most? Are there aspects you would improve or adapt for the U.S. market?

Pedro Alvarado: I think it is a great product for the U.S. market, again because of the price versus quality. Compared to other products in the U.S., Starwild's value is very competitive, and it meets the standards. There is a lot of competition, so marketing in the U.S. would be key, but in terms of product quality, Starwild has what it takes.

Interviewer: Thank you. Final thought: what do you think about Starwild's future in the U.S., and what would help the company grow?

Pedro Alvarado: I think Starwild is on the right track to become a strong product. It takes patience, perseverance, and consistency. The quality is there, the standards are there, and customer service is a major factor U.S. customers look for. Starwild has that clearly. It is about continuing to push—attending fairs helps a lot. The more presence you have, the more recognition you build, and people will see the quality and service. I believe Starwild has a future, and in five to ten years it could become a recognized name in the U.S. glamping market.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Pedro. I appreciate your time.

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW 2

Interview with Joanna Reinmann

Position: Representative at Flat Spot

Language: English

Interviewer: Thank you. Could you briefly describe the service that Flat Spot Rental provides?

Joanna Reinmann: Flat Spot provides modular decking services in both wood and composite for glamping, camping, RV, residential, and event use.

Interviewer: How does Flat Spot position itself within the U.S. rental accommodation market?

Joanna Reinmann: At the moment, Flat Spot is a leader in modular decking systems for several reasons. First, the price versus quality is strong. Because it is modular, the cost is lower than hiring a general contractor. Second, lead times are short—production is about four weeks—and it is manufactured in North Carolina, so it is U.S.-based production, which influences customer perception. The pricing also includes transportation and installation, so it removes operational complexity for clients. They order it, it is manufactured, delivered, installed, and if desired, serviced. There is also maintenance service. This positioning makes it a leading option.

Interviewer: That is a one-stop solution, and after-sales service is a strong advantage. You follow up with the customer.

Joanna Reinmann: Yes. Also, many clients purchase accommodations from Europe, China, or the U.S., but they lack resources to build them. Flat Spot introduced a service where, if you order a deck, you can also order accommodation assembly. The team sets up the deck and can also set up your tent, dome, or other accommodation.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what trends are shaping the rental and hospitality industry in the U.S. right now?

Joanna Reinmann: Many reports show that Millennials and Gen Z are traveling more for camping and glamping. Camping and glamping are increasingly popular. RVs are decreasing, but domestic travel and camping across the U.S. is rising. This benefits companies in camping, glamping, and short-term rentals. Clients are price-sensitive, and financing is increasingly important when launching a business. Tents can be cheaper, but higher-level projects require more resources, and accommodation is usually the final investment after infrastructure.

Interviewer: Exactly. Financing is critical. What challenges do international businesses face when entering the U.S. market?

Joanna Reinmann: Tariffs are currently the biggest issue. There is uncertainty, so clients prefer buying from local companies because they know the tax burden. As tariffs change, customers do not know the final cost. This uncertainty slows importing. Timing is another issue—ship delays, port problems, containers on hold. The manufacturer cannot control that, but the client may blame them because they do not understand logistics.

Interviewer: How important is sustainability for U.S. travelers when choosing accommodation?

Joanna Reinmann: It is becoming increasingly important and is one of the main advantages when promoting a resort. People ask about materials and sustainability. From a manufacturer standpoint, promoting products as sustainable and eco-friendly is increasingly effective because customers are actively looking for it.

Interviewer: Regarding partnerships: how do you manage partnerships with property owners or service providers?

Joanna Reinmann: We have partners and distributors. Some shed companies sell their sheds and upsell our decks to create a turnkey solution. Another path is partnerships with accommodation providers—domes and tent companies—that recommend us because they cannot provide decking. They direct clients to us as a suggested provider.

Interviewer: What role does customer experience play in maintaining competitiveness in the U.S.?

Joanna Reinmann: It is crucial. Client relationships can be more important than the product. If you build trust, clients believe you will provide a good solution. Flat Spot values are trust, respect, and loyalty. If our solution is not appropriate, we tell the client. We focus on advising and helping rather than simply selling.

Interviewer: Based on your experience, what would be key recommendations for a new international glamping company entering the U.S. market?

Joanna Reinmann: Be transparent—do not pretend to be a U.S. company. Explain clearly where you are from and where you manufacture. Learn about customs, taxes, and tariffs. Understand permissions: for example, Florida and California have strict restrictions for domes. You need not only a product but engineering support. Customers need advice on engineering, decking, infrastructure, sewage, and more. The more information and support you provide, the better.

Interviewer: Thank you, Joanna. I appreciate your time.

Joanna Reinmann: Thank you. See you at the Glamping Show.

APPENDIX 4. INTERVIEW 3

Interview with Samantha Montezuma

Position: Hotel Manager; Sustainability Specialist (Guatemala & Galápagos)

Language: English

Interviewer: We will begin this interview regarding Starwild Glamping's value chain analysis for the U.S. market. Could you briefly describe your experience with glamping tourism or eco-lodging, and what you are currently doing?

Samantha Montezuma: I am currently managing a hotel/hostel in Guatemala, located next to Lake Atitlán. We work in a highly sustainable way because there is no wastewater management and limited access to tap water. We have to manage everything ourselves, and it must be sustainable because it ultimately impacts the lake. Water is a primary issue. The hotel accommodates about 70 people, and we run a restaurant and a bar. We also work with the indigenous community: most of our staff is indigenous, and we support community programs and donations. I also have a strong hospitality background. My parents own a hotel, and I worked in the Galápagos Islands on a sustainability project, where I led sustainability planning and communication with guests.

Interviewer: How did you first hear about glamping, and what were your first impressions?

Samantha Montezuma: I cannot remember exactly when, but I have been close to hospitality my whole life. People were used to hotels and hostels, and then they started looking for something different—nature-based experiences that are not necessarily camping, since many people find camping uncomfortable. Glamping offers connection with nature while remaining comfortable, which is what many people seek on vacation. I think after the pandemic, demand increased, and people wanted more nature.

Interviewer: Regarding Starwild's value proposition and customer experience, what aspects of our structures do you find most appealing?

Samantha Montezuma: One of the most appealing aspects is that they are easy to transport and install. I have been working with indigenous communities, and sometimes they have strong ideas but limited resources. In remote areas, community tourism can work, but building is difficult. With these structures, it becomes more feasible.

Interviewer: When you first saw or heard about glamping, did sustainability come to mind immediately?

Samantha Montezuma: Actually, no. I thought more about accessibility and ease of installation. Sustainability was not the first thing I considered.

Interviewer: How important is sustainability for you when choosing a glamping destination?

Samantha Montezuma: It is very important. People who choose glamping are often willing to spend more money for comfort and a better experience. I believe they would also be willing to pay more if they know their stay supports sustainability.

Interviewer: Would you say Starwild aligns with eco-conscious travelers?

Samantha Montezuma: Yes, definitely. It also depends on what happens after—the full cycle of the product. But in general, the structures are more environmentally friendly than traditional construction.

Interviewer: Do you think it is important for Starwild to communicate sustainability more clearly?

Samantha Montezuma: Yes, 100%. Communication is key for sustainable projects because people look for these values, but they may not recognize sustainability unless it is clearly explained.

Interviewer: Do you think Starwild would appeal to a U.S. audience?

Samantha Montezuma: Yes. Many U.S. clients seek comfort. Although U.S. politics can be polarized, many people make sustainability a visible priority. There is a strong market for these experiences, especially when you communicate well and tell a story.

Interviewer: Finally, what recommendations would you give for reaching U.S. travelers and building trust?

Samantha Montezuma: U.S. clients value transparency. There is a lot of greenwashing, so they want evidence. It is important to show the full cycle—how sustainable claims are real and what happens at the end of the product's life. People may assume accessible products are disposable, so you should communicate durability and lifecycle management clearly.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Samantha.

Samantha Montezuma: Thank you. Bye.