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August 2, 2022

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Subject: Website Feasibility Analysis for Piquant Gourmet Specialties

Dear David,

Please find attached my report that determines the feasibility of implementing a website for Piquant Gourmet Specialties. This report details the costs and benefits of websites used for small businesses.

The data gathered from the survey shows compelling results in support of small business websites. Further, in the 'Recommendations' section of this report, I offer a suggestion on which website developing service Piquant should use.

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions during our consultation. Your cooperation and support was vital to my research. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this report. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Nicole White

Nicole White

Enclosure

**Feasibility of Implementing
a Website for
Piquant Gourmet Specialties**

for
David Narod
Owner of Piquant Gourmet Foods
Surrey, BC

by
Nicole White
English 301 Student

August 2, 2022

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Abstract

With the increased accessibility of technology, businesses offer several of their services through online platforms. Currently, Piquant operates solely through in-person shopping. Implementing a website would benefit Piquant by attracting new customers, receiving online orders, and promoting products. After conducting the survey presented in appendix A, the general public has a positive attitude towards businesses with websites. Based on the consultation questions in appendix B, online research was conducted to discover the costs and benefits of owning a website. Comparing the costs between the available services, a website building service is feasible and beneficial for Piquant. With Piquant's budget and desired functionality for a website in consideration, using Squarespace as the website building platform is an excellent fit.

Introduction

Website Overview

Technology is an important component in everyday life. In today's world, the majority of businesses have operations through their online platforms. As of 2022, the majority of small businesses own a website (Ellice). Whether it's e-commerce, advertising, or customer service, a business website can serve several important purposes. Services like WordPress, Squarespace, and several others have made it simple and affordable for small business owners to develop their own website. Additionally, with the rapidly expanding technology sector, there are now many professional web developers available for contracted web development.

Statement of Problem

For the past 20 years, Piquant Gourmet Specialties has been an established business in the South Surrey community. Currently, Piquant has no digital presence. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven the importance of establishing digital services. More than ever, customers call-in to the store to ask for store hours, contact the owner, and pre-order items. With only one main worker, managing these inquiries as well as serving in-store customers is challenging. A business website can be used to cater to all of these needs. Furthermore, as a platform for marketing, a website can bring in new customers. Overall, a website for Piquant will improve the shopping experience of customers.

Overview of Methods

Forty-eight members of the Metro Vancouver community responded to a survey (appendix A) intended to investigate the public's attitudes towards websites. Additionally, this survey reports which website features are most frequently used by respondents. After the consultation (appendix B) to determine the necessary features for Piquant's website, an online investigation was conducted to evaluate the cost and benefits of implementing the website. Finally, with the

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specifications of the prospective website, the costs of hiring an independent web-developer were analyzed.

Purpose and Significance of Study

This study provides a cost-benefit analysis on developing and owning a business website for Piquant. This report will answer the following questions:

- Is a website for Piquant feasible?
- If so, what are the benefits and costs of owning a website?
- Additionally, which website service is best suited for Piquant?

To answer these questions, this report analyzes findings from online resources, as well as the data gathered from the survey and consultation. Finally, this report will offer a recommendation on whether Piquant should create a website.

Data Section

Data Limitations

As the survey was only distributed through an online platform, there may be biases in the responses towards website use. Further, the limited sample size may affect the accuracy of this study.

Website Use Survey

A survey was conducted among Metro Vancouver residents to gather information on the public's use of business websites. Figure 1 illustrates the results from the first three survey questions. From the 48 participants that responded to the survey, 83% of participants agree or strongly agree that it is important for a website to have an online presence (figure 1). Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents (63%) find it important to view a store's products online prior to

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shopping in the store. Additionally, over half of the respondents (54%) prefer shopping online compared to in-person shopping (figure 1).

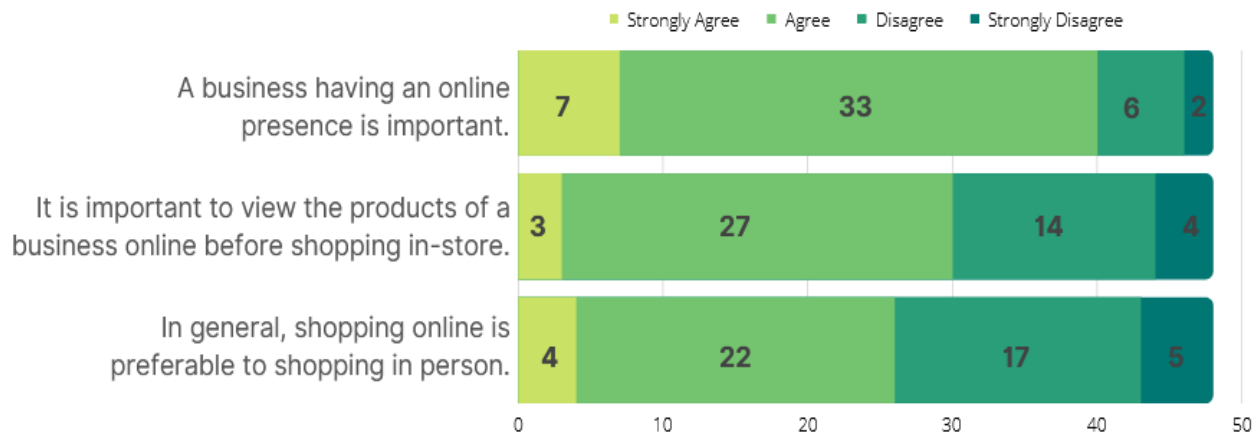


Figure 1. Attitudes towards business websites

Figure 2 shows the results from the next three questions of the survey. The majority of respondents (63%) at least sometimes sign up for newsletters (figure 2). Further, there is a significant portion of respondents (48%) that call stores in advance to ensure product availability (figure 2). Additionally, 25% of participants never visit businesses without a website (figure 2).

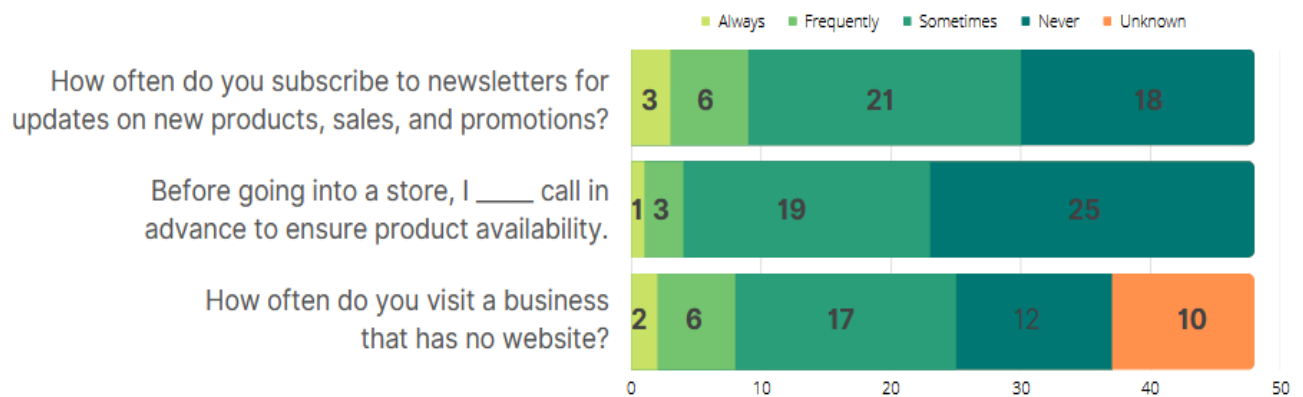


Figure 2. Website use survey data

Finally, figure 3 shows the last question of the survey that asks the respondents which features they use on business websites. Among the 48 respondents, 88% of respondents use websites to find new products and 65% of respondents use websites to purchase products online (figure

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3). Thirty-six respondents use websites to find the hours of operation of a business (figure 3). Further, 60% of respondents will use a website to get the contact information of the business (figure 3). Finally, 5% of respondents answered “other,” but did not specify what features they use (figure 3).

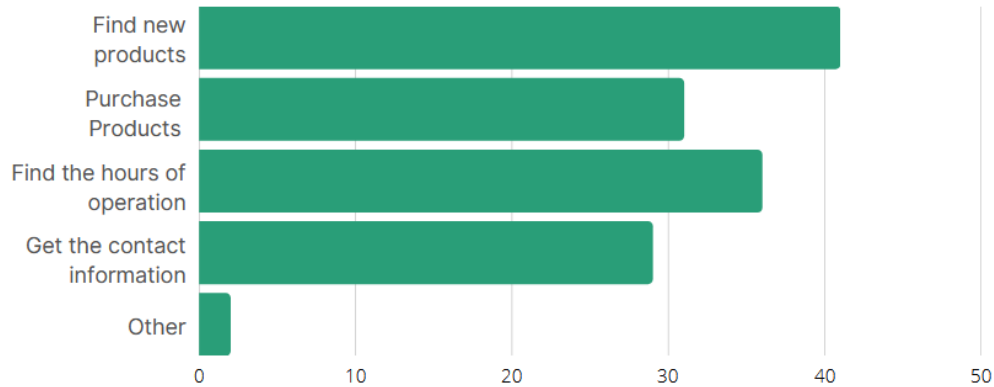


Figure 3. Website features used by survey respondents

Small Business Website Benefits

As technology becomes increasingly prominent in the modern world, more businesses use online platforms to have a further reach. According to Statista, 75% of Canadians have used an e-commerce platform to purchase items.

Purchasing items is just one feature that a website can provide. Piquant can use a website to develop an online presence and to advertise Piquant’s brand. As the location of Piquant is in a more secluded area of Surrey, a website will promote the business to non-locals. Further, developing a website provides the opportunity to market Piquant. When individuals use their search engine to find cuisine in the Metro Vancouver area, having a website will increase the chances of Piquant appearing on those queries (Ellice); thus, bringing in new customers (Ellice). Finally, a website can also be used to link people to other Piquant social media pages like Instagram, Facebook, etc.

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As shown in figure 3, the majority of respondents use a website to get the contact information of a business. This is an important feature to include on a website, as it can reduce the high call-in volume the store currently experiences.

In figure 3, 88% of respondents find new products through business websites. This is a significant opportunity to promote the items Piquant sells. With a website, customers can sign up for a newsletter service, which can be used as a tool to draw customers in with new products, sales, and other promotions.

Finally, a major feature of business websites is the use of analytics. The information gathered from analytics can be used to the benefit of Piquant, such as page views, average time spent on the website, and device usage (Vaičiūnaitė). These analytics also track the bounce rate, which is the rate at which users leave the website before taking action (Vaičiūnaitė).

Desired Features

As per the data collected from the consultation (appendix B), the budget to initially develop the website is \$350. The most important feature for the prospective website to include is a contact form. This form can be used directly by customers to conveniently contact the store, and their inquiries will be forwarded to the store's email. An 'About' page is another necessary element for this website. This page will have a brief section about the business, as well as the store hours and address. A page that lists the current products with photos and descriptions will also be included on the website. Customers will be able to pre-order these products, which will then be ready for in-store pickup. For this functionality, a payment processing system is not necessary to include. Website analytics are also essential to monitor the website's performance. Finally, it is necessary for the website to be easy for both the owner and the customer to use.

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Website building platform

There are plenty of website building platforms to choose from. These platforms are designed to make it easy to create a website without a background in web development. Squarespace, WordPress, GoDaddy, and Wix are among the popular options used to build professional and polished websites. Many of these platforms work similarly and provide affordable services. For example, WordPress is an online service that provides domain names, website hosting, and website building services. Thus, choosing a service will depend on the desired specifications, appearance, and the budget for the website.

Independent Web Developer

Hiring a web developer is the most expensive option. This option produces a highly personalized website that will meet Piquant's website specifications. Hiring a web developer provides a hands-off approach that is cost-inclusive and will ultimately save time (Burley). The web developer covers website design, maintenance, and domain registration. To avoid the design and technical aspect of website building, contracting a web developer is the ideal choice.

Costs

Domain registration cost

Domain registration is an important step in developing a website, and there are several service providers to choose from. Website building platforms often offer their own domain registration, but external domain registrars (e.g. Bluehost) can also be used. Further, like website building platforms, there are numerous domain registrars available. GoDaddy is an example of a widely used domain registrar. For a 1-year registration at GoDaddy, it costs \$19.99 to purchase a standard domain name (Stevens). Squarespace also registers and manages domain names, but at a slightly higher cost. The same name at Squarespace costs \$25 per year to own (Benjamins). The most inexpensive domain registrar is Bluehost at \$12.90 per year (Stevens).

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There are several domain names currently available, including PiquantGourmetSpecialties.ca. As a Canadian business, using a .CA domain name is not necessary, but preferred for Canadian businesses. Furthermore, it is significantly cheaper to use a .CA domain compared to a .COM domain, as the .COM is considered a premium web address.

Hiring a web developer

Web developers create personalized websites and charge based on the website specifications that are required for the business. A brochure-style website is the most affordable option, but customers will be unable to pre-order products. The cost of a brochure-style website ranges between \$400-\$1000 (Burley). Another \$225 is required for the annual costs associated with updates, domain name renewal, and other hosting fees (Burley). Building an e-commerce website costs more due to the more complex functionality. An e-commerce website ranges between \$1000-\$5000 plus an additional \$680 yearly maintenance costs (Burley).

Online Self Services

Website hosting platforms are the more economical option. Each platform offers a plan with the basic features, including customizable templates, website metrics, domain registration, etc. Premium features are provided when the plan is upgraded. The option to pre-order items requires e-commerce functionality, which typically costs an additional fee. WordPress Pro offers WooCommerce, a product-selling platform. Among other additional features provided in this option, it requires upgrading the plan to \$20/month (3). Squarespace is another platform that offers numerous plans. The business plan costs \$14 per month and the basic commerce plan costs \$27 per month. The main difference between these two plans is that the business plan includes a 3% transaction fee on purchases (2). Table 1 shows the costs and benefits of various website building platforms.

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| | | Free trial? | Starting price* |
|--|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Best overall website builder (and best for free) | Wix | "unlimited" w/ ads | \$16 a month |
| Best prepackaged design | Squarespace | 14 days | \$14 a month |
| Easiest to use | Weebly | "unlimited" w/ ads | \$6 a month |
| Most customizable | Duda | 30 days | \$14 a month |
| Best no-frills option | GoDaddy | 30 days | \$12 a month |
| Best for writers and bloggers | WordPress | "unlimited" w/ ads | \$15 a month |
| Best for basic e-commerce | Shopify | 14 days | \$29 a month |
| Best for bigger stores | BigCommerce | 15 days | \$30 a month |

Table 1. Costs and benefits for website building platforms in USD (Brussel).

Based on table 1, Squarespace is the best prepackaged service, which is the most optimal for those who are new to the website building process. Compared to other services, Squarespace offers competitive pricing (table 1). Further, Squarespace's plans offer additional bonuses, such as a one-year free domain registration, 30 minutes' worth of video storage, 24/7 customer support, and advanced website analytics (Benjamins).

Design Options

Choosing a theme that represents Piquant's brand is important. Website building platforms offer several free themes, which are included in the cost when signing up to the standard service. Some services provide premium themes at an additional cost. For example, WordPress offers the Astra theme starting at \$41 per year (WordPress). The main benefit to premium themes is the appearance, as they are optimized for businesses. Figure 4 shows an example of a free WordPress theme that will complement the current brand image at Piquant.

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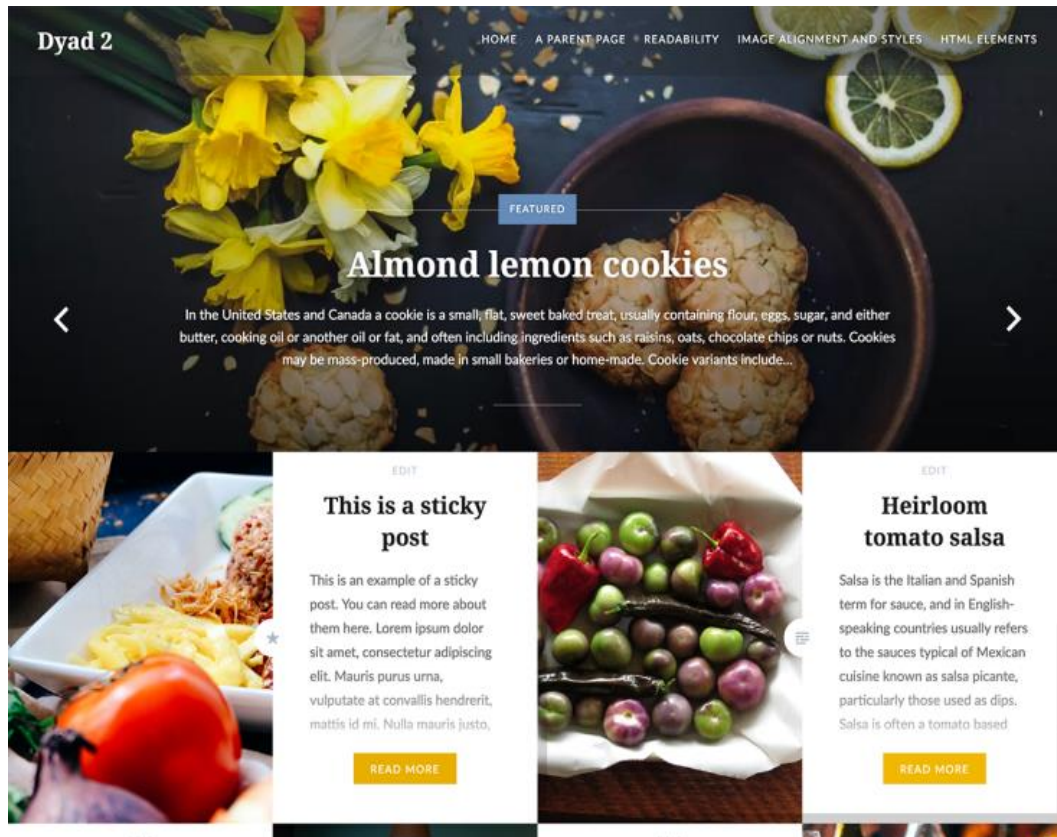


Figure 4. Home page of the WordPress theme in Dyad 2 (WordPress)

Similar to WordPress, Squarespace offers over 100 templates. Most themes are free, but there are some premium options that are included in the upgraded plans. Figure 5 shows Squarespace's Maca template, which fits Piquant's contact form requirement; the Maca theme comes free with Squarespace's most basic plan.

Say hello!

The beauty of your story is that it's going to continue to evolve and your site can evolve with it.

email@example.com
(555) 555-5555

Name *

First Name Last Name

Email *

Subject *

Message *

Send

Figure 5. The contact form on Squarespace's Maca template (Squarespace, "Make any template yours with ease.")

The themes provided by website building platforms allow for extensive customization. Each theme can be adjusted to represent Piquant's brand, such as the color scheme, headings, images, etc. Additionally, features can be added and removed to meet the desired functionality for the website. The customizable header can include different pages; for example, this header can include a link to the 'About' page. Furthermore, these platforms provide themes that are optimized for desktop, mobile, and tablet users.

Conclusion

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

Websites for small businesses are affordable and important in today's market. From the survey data, the majority of respondents use websites to interact with businesses. As technology and services advance, several website development platforms provide easy-to-use platforms with competitive pricing. Piquant is successful in the Ocean Park community, but a website would improve the shopping experience for new and current customers. Building a website with the services offered online is simple and reasonably priced. While a website designed for the specific needs of Piquant is preferred, the cost-benefit analysis shows that this option is not ideal. Compared to services like Squarespace and WordPress, the costs associated with an independent web developer are difficult to justify with Piquant's current business model and budget restraints. Therefore, after evaluating the available services, Squarespace appears to be the best option for Piquant. Notability, this service offers the complete package in terms of website hosting, domain ownership, and website design. Thus, this service is the easiest to use for website building. Further, the plans offered by Squarespace are within Piquant's budget.

Recommendations

Based on the data gathered from this study, it is feasible and beneficial for Piquant to develop a website. From the services listed in this report, Squarespace will be the most beneficial to Piquant. Squarespace provides all the services required to build a website, and the service is cost-effective and user-friendly. It also offers templates with all the desired features, and provides a domain registration service allowing for easy website title customization.

Since there are several website building services to choose from, consider the following when finalizing which option will be used:

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1. **Evaluating the costs and benefits** each service brings is important when determining which website building service to use.
2. **Representing the Piquant brand** can be done by choosing a suitable theme. Each website building platform has their own unique themes to choose from.
3. **Using a platform** that suits the needs of Piquant is the most important.
4. **Considering the ease of use** for the website is necessary for both development, maintenance, and customer satisfaction. Different platforms are more user-friendly than others.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Survey for Use of Business Websites

I am an undergraduate student at UBC conducting a survey for my technical writing project. The purpose of this survey is to gather information from individuals on their use of business websites. The data gathered from this survey will be presented in a formal report to the Owner of Piquant Gourmet Specialties, David Narod, and shared with the members of my technical writing class. The final formal report will provide recommendations on the feasibility and benefits of creating a business website, and it aims to improve the overall shopping experience at Piquant. This survey contains 7 questions and will take approximately 3 minutes to complete. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you for your time and participation in this survey.

- 1 A business having an online presence is important.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- 2 It is important to view the products of a business online before shopping in-store.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

- 3 In general, shopping online is preferable to shopping in person.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

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- 4 How often do you subscribe to newsletters for updates on new products, sales, and promotions?
- Always
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- 5 Before going into a store, I _ call in advance to ensure product availability.
- Always
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- 6 How often do you visit a business that has no website?
- Always
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Unknown
- 7 I use a business' website to (select multiple):
- Find new products
 - Purchase products
 - Find the hours of operation
 - Get the contact information
 - See store locations
 - Read about the business
 - N/A
 - Other (please specify): _____

Appendix B: Consultation Questions

Interview Questions to Determine the Website Specifications for Piquant Gourmet Foods

As an undergraduate student at UBC, I am working on a technical writing project. The purpose of this project is to determine the feasibility of developing a website for Piquant. This interview will provide insight into the desired functionality for the prospective website and guide my further research. The answers gathered from this interview will be presented in a formal report and shared with the members of this technical writing class. This interview is composed of 8 questions and will take approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you for your time and participation in this interview.

The following questions will be used as a guide for the interview:

1. What audience would you like the website to appeal to?
2. Which website features are necessary for Piquant? (e.g. e-commerce, advertisements, etc.)
3. Would you like to receive tracking and analytics of customers website activity?
4. After visiting the website, how would you like customers to communicate with you? (eg. email, phone, etc.)
5. What is the budget for this project?
6. Would you be interested in hiring a professional web developer?
7. How would you like your brand represented on a website?
8. What types of website designs do you find most appealing? (*i.e.* Website appearance)