Feasibility of Implementing
a Website for
Piquant Gourmet Specialties

for
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Introduction

Website Overview. Technology has become an important aspect in everyday life. In today's world, most businesses have operations through their online platforms. Whether it's e-commerce, advertising, or customer service, a business website can serve several important purposes. As of 2022, more than 63% of small businesses own a website (1). Services like WordPress, Squarespace, and several others have made it simple and affordable for small business owners to develop their own website. Additionally, as the technology sector rapidly expands, there are now many professional web developers available for contracted web development.

Statement of Problem. For 20 years, Piquant Gourmet Specialities 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 intended to investigate the public's behaviors towards websites. This survey also shows which website components are most frequently used by respondents. After the consultation to determine the necessary features to include in a website for Piquant, an online investigation was conducted to determine the cost and benefits of implementing the website. Finally, with the

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

Purpose and Significance of Study. This study is designed to provide 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 surveys, consultations, as well as online resources. Finally, this report will offer a recommendation on whether to develop a website for Piquant.

Data Section

Data Limitations. As the survey was solely conducted through an online platform, there may be biases in the responses towards website use. Further, it is a limited sample size which 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. The first three questions are represented in figure 1. From the Forty-eight 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). The majority of respondents (63%) find it important to view a store's products online prior to shopping in the store (figure1). Additionally, over half of respondents (54%) prefer shopping online compared to in-person shopping (figure 1).
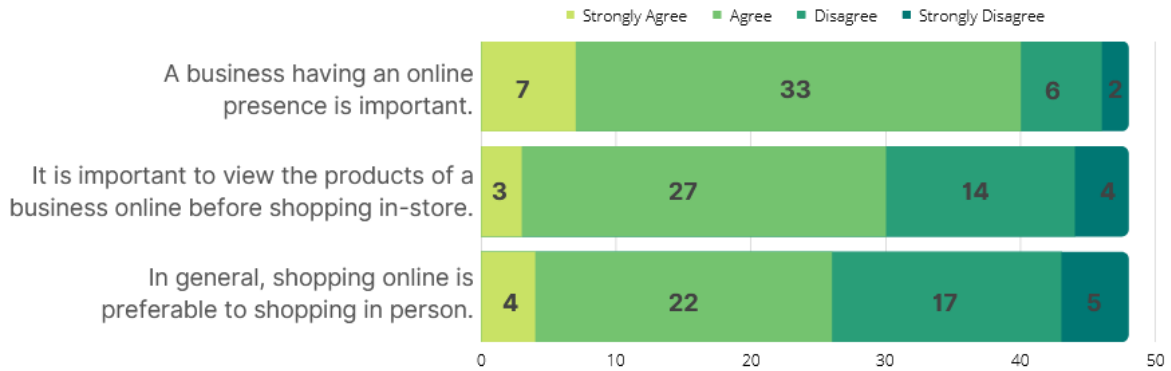
Figure 1. Website behaviour survey data

Figure 2 measures the frequency of behaviors related to website use. The majority of respondents (63%) at least sometimes sign up for newsletters (figure 2). While 52% of participants never call into a store to ensure product availability, there is still a significant portion that do (48%) (figure 2). Further, over 50% of participants said they visit stores that have no website, whereas 25% never do (figure 2).

Figure 2. Website behaviour survey data

Finally, figure 3 shows the last question. This question asks the respondents which services they use on business websites. Among the 48 respondents, 42 respondents use websites to find new products and 31 use websites to purchase products online (figure 3). Finding the hours of operation of a business is used by 36 of the respondents (figure 3). Further, 29 respondents will use a website to get the contact information of the business (figure 3). Two respondents answered "other," but did not specify what features they use (figure 3).
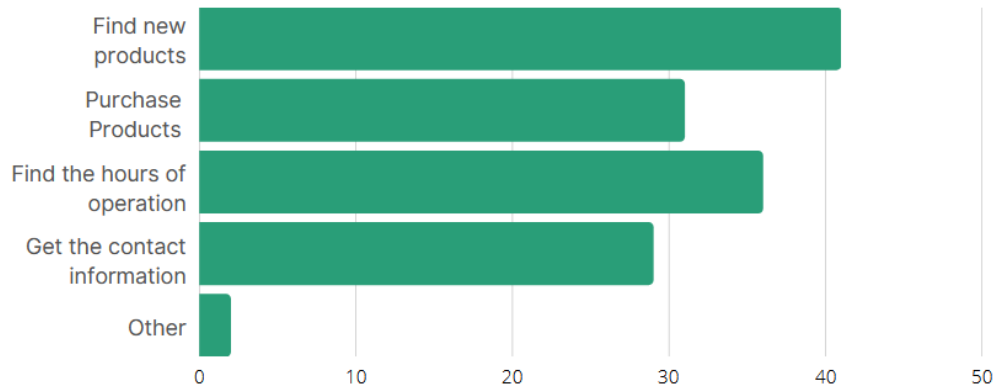
Figure 3. Website features that the survey respondents use

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 ("Ecommerce - United States: Statista Market Forecast").

Websites aren't solely used for purchasing items, however. A website can be used to develop an online presence and to advertise Piquant's brand. As shown in figure 3, over 60% of the respondents use a website to get the contact information of a business. This is an important feature of websites that can bring in new business.

As the location of Piquant is in a more secluded area of Surrey, a website will promote the business to non-locals. 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 for Piquant will increase the chances of appearing on those queries (Ellice). Thus, a website can bring in new customers and also save money on advertisements for the brand and products (Ellice).

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. Further, a website can also be used to link people to the other Piquant social media pages like Instagram, Facebook, etc.

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 website, bounce rate, and device usage (Vaičiūnaitė) .

Desired Features. As per the consultation, the most important feature for the website to include is a 'contact form. This form can be used directly by customers, and the response will be forwarded to the store's email. This allows the customers to conveniently contact the store. An 'about page' is an important element for the website. This page will have a brief section about the business, as well as the store hours and address. A page will be included that lists the current product with photos and descriptions. For the initial version of the website, e-commerce won't be the main focus. Rather, customers will be able to pre-order products to have them ready in-store for pickup. Because e-commerce isn't a focus, a payment system does not need to be included. Website analytics is also important to add 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.

Website building platform. In today's market, 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 popular options that assist in building professional and polished websites. Many of these platforms work in similarity and provide affordable services. WordPress is an online service that provides

domain names, website hosting, and website building services. Choosing one depending on the specifications, the appearance, and the budget for the desired website.

Independent Web Developer. Hiring a web developer is the most costly option. However, this service provides a hands-off approach that will save time. Furthermore, this option will produce a highly personalized website which caters to all the business's needs.

Costs

Domain registration cost. Domain registration is an important step in developing a website and there are several service providers. As a Canadian business, using a .CA domain name is not necessary, but preferred for Canadian businesses. Additionally, it is significantly cheaper to use a .CA domain compared to a .COM. Like website building platforms, there are numerous domain registrars. GoDaddy is a widely used domain registrar and for a 1-year registration, it costs $19.99 to purchase a domain name (Stevens). Squarespace also registers and manages domain names, but at a higher cost. The same name at Squarespace costs $25 per year to own (Benjamins). The most inexpensive domain register is Bluehost at $12.90 per year (Stevens).

Hiring a web developer. Web developers create personalized websites and charge based on the website specifications that are required for the business. For a brochure-style website, the cost 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, as it 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 comes with the basic features, but their plans can be upgraded at an additional cost to

provide additional features. The option to pre-order items requires e-commerce functionality, which 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 offers several 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.

		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).

Initial Development Cost. Overall, the initial development of a website for Piquant can range significantly depending on whether a web developer or website building platform is used. A web developer would cost between $400-$5000 plus yearly maintenance fees. The online self-services option would start as low as $6 and provide additional services with small increments of price.

Design Options. WordPress offers plenty of free themes, however some services provide premium themes at an additional cost. For example, it costs an additional $68 for a premium theme at WordPress. As shown in Figure 4, an example of a free WordPress theme that will complement the current brand image at Piquant.
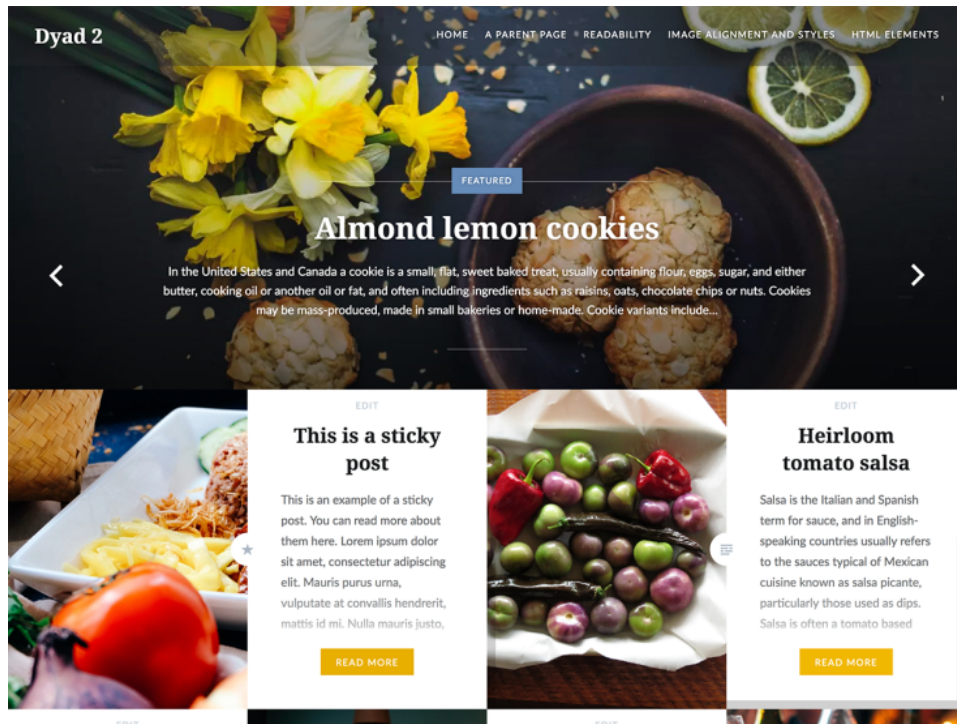

Figure 4. Home page of WordPress theme in Dyad 2 ("Blog Tool, Publishing Platform, and CMS.")

Similar to WordPress, Squarespace offers over 100 templates. Most themes are free, but there are some premium options as well. Figure 5 shows the Squarespace free Maca template, which is appropriate for Piquant's contact form requirement.

Figure 5. Squarespace Maca template showing the contact form (Squarespace, "Make any template yours with ease.")

The themes provided by WordPress, Squarespace and many other services allow for considerable customization. Each theme can be adjusted to Piquant's needs, such as the color scheme, headings, images, etc. A header can include the pages which are specified in the desired features section of the report. Furthermore, the themes these platforms provide 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. The majority of people surveyed use websites to interact with businesses. As technology and services advance, several website developing platforms provide competitive pricing and easy to use websites. Piquant has been successful in the Ocean Park community, but a website would improve the shopping experience at Piquant. Building a website

with the services offered online is simple and affordable. 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. 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.

Recommendations. Based on the data gathered from this study, it is feasible and beneficial for Piquant to develop a website. Of the services listed in this report, Squarespace will be the most beneficial to Piquant, as the service is cost-effective and user-friendly. However, there are several other website developing options to pursue, consider the following when finalizing which service will be used:

1. **Evaluating the benefits and costs** each service brings is important when determining which website building platform to use.
2. **Representing the Piquant brand** can be done by choosing a strategic theme. Each website developing 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 maintenance and customer satisfaction. Different platforms are more user-friendly than others.

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