

Competitive Intelligence Dossier

For the competitive landscape of



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
Problem Identification.....	2
Target Market Analysis	
Industry Analysis.....	4
Company Analysis.....	6
Suppliers.....	7
Competitive Analysis.....	8
SWOT Analysis.....	
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	12
References	
Appendices	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This corporate analysis was commissioned to identify issues that our client, River Ranche Tourism, currently faces. River Ranche Tourism started operations in 2006 by Dion Red Gun and is located on Siksika Nation land. The lodge had seven successful seasons until the main lodge was destroyed by floods in 2013. Since then, River Ranche Tourism has been rebuilding and the company wants to increase market share and customer value. Currently, River Ranche Tourism has been having trouble generating new clientele and is not booking to capacity as it was in previous years.

An analysis of competitive landscape, suppliers, environmental trends, and risks has been conducted to further understand the position the River Ranche Lodge is in. The information gathered from primary and secondary research has been compiled and examined into internal and external analysis on River Ranche Tourism.

Based on the analysis, a four phase plan was developed to solve the issues, which are:

1. Restructuring
2. Rebranding
3. Online Promotion
4. Experiential Promotion

The corporate analysis has been concluded with final remarks based on our findings and a step by step plan on how River Ranche should implement the recommendations mentioned above.

INTRODUCTION/PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The River Ranche Lodge is located in the Siksika Nation near the Bow River in Alberta. The pristine and beautiful area where the ranch is located has many attractive qualities that showcased in any marketing assets. The lodge has experienced ups and downs with the recent economy and experienced devastation after the 2013 floods, but recent restructuring and repairs have given River Ranche the opportunity to breathe new life into their business. River Ranche has high competition for Alberta tourism, with the Stoney Nakoda Resort, camping in the Rockies, and Banff, Alberta. The purpose of this paper is to identify how River Ranche can increase market share and drive customer value by diversifying and expanding their target market. Extensive research and analysis has occurred in order to have a better understanding of the current trends and competitors, as well as creating specific recommendations.

TARGET MARKET ANALYSIS

We were interested in expanding the target market in order to rebrand River Ranche as a couples retreat. Using research from Environics Canada segments, the number of households within selected segments in the Calgary area were examined. Exurban Wonderland (2456 households) Exurban Homesteaders (251 households) (Appendix C) were chosen as potential target market for River Ranche Tourism. Exurban Wonderland households are comprised of middle-aged families working in mixed occupations with an average income of \$129,362 (Appendix C). With children between the ages of 5 and 20 years old, Wonderland households place a strong value on primacy of the family, and enjoy family-friendly activities such as zoos and national parks (Appendix C). Exurban Homesteaders are middle-aged couples and

families living in near-rural settings just outside of the city. They comprise of 1.17% of the total Canadian population and earn an average household income of \$93,936, categorizing them as middle income earners (Environics Canada, 2015). These blue-collar couples spend much of their leisure time fishing, camping, snowmobiling, skiing, and hiking (Environics, 2015). With their laid-back lifestyle, they tend to enjoy gardening, sewing, and crafts, but will often travel based on their first impulse, often to nearby campsites (Environics, 2015).

This target market was selected because exurban couples are a smaller market that are relatively easy to reach, and many of them live close to the Siksika Nation Reserve. There is greater appeal for exurban couples to travel to the River Rancho Lodge, as opposed to those living in urban areas because of the appeal for those living in Calgary to travel to Banff.

A secondary segment that has been targeted is Serenity Springs (Appendix D) couples. The Serenity Springs couples are lower-middle income earners, often above the age of 55 and retired. There are approximately 436 households around the Calgary area for River Rancho to utilize. They enjoy the smaller things in life such as boating, provincial parks, and bird-watching. River Rancho Lodge is appealing to this segment as they are a niche market with a mutual interest in the activities being offered for a couples retreat. They should also be relatively easy to reach at trade shows and in community newsletters.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

PORTER'S FIVE FORCES ANALYSIS

Buyer Power - Medium/High

The target market that regularly visits River Ranche is a relatively niche market. They are dependent on clients that travel from destinations internationally such as Germany. Aside from this, there is limited data available on how many guests travel from abroad. If the River Ranche does not expand their market and appeal to more clients domestically, they will be limited to an ever-changing market of foreign clients and a powerful buyer. To stay competitive, River Ranche should focus their efforts on expanding their target market to those that live in and around Calgary. If River Ranche can expand their client base of those that live in Alberta, they will become less dependent on international clients and decrease the power of the buyer. The low Canadian dollar valuation makes travelling outside of Alberta more expensive, which has led to the trend of 'staycationing'. "According to the Conference Board's latest Travel Markets Outlook, overnight travel within Canada increased nearly three per cent in 2015 and is expected to grow by two to three per cent this year" (Wallace, 2016). With the low dollar, the exurban couples have less spending power internationally, making travelling to a nearby lodge such as the River Ranche Lodge more appealing. Alberta resorts have an average daily rate of \$256.84 (Alberta Tourism Market Monitor), so River Ranche Lodge offers a better price option for consumer during peak times with a double-occupancy rate of \$240.

Supplier Power - Medium

Dion Red Gun and Tom Brooks continue to put a great deal of effort and commitment into building and upgrading River Ranche, saving the organization a great deal of money in construction and materials. The small labour force consists of Dion Red Gun, Cherylene Bullbear, Tom Brooks, one other guide, two cooks and housekeepers. Staff members at River Ranche purchase their own supplies for the betterment of the lodge, showing a strong loyalty and commitment to River Ranche to give them a competitive advantage. However, River Ranche is lacking economies of scale. Employees make many small purchases from many different suppliers, failing to take advantage of discounts by making large purchases from few suppliers. Food is purchased from various Calgary and Strathmore suppliers, and power is supplied by Enmax, with the teepee from Calgary Tent and Awning, and fishing supplies purchased elsewhere.

Along with missing the opportunity for discounts, the downside of having such a large supplier network is that River Ranche may be putting itself at more risk to economic fluctuations such as the dollar decreasing, and market fluctuations such as price changes. The suppliers currently hold a medium amount of power, but River Ranche can become less dependent on suppliers by streamlining into a smaller supplier network that offers large order discounts and cost savings.

Threat of New Entry - Low

The threat of new entry is very small to River Ranche. The organization gains a large competitive advantage with the geographic size of the Siksika Nation, and the uniqueness of their guides. The lodge is located in Canada's second largest First Nations reservation, in Siksika Nation, with an area spanning approximately 737 squared kilometers (See appendix

E). For a new competitor to enter the market in the same area, they would have to overcome high barriers to entry such as government regulations and a high investment on land.

If a competitor were to enter River Ranche's competitive market, they would also be heavily disadvantaged because of the brand loyalty and credibility that Dion Red Gun has helped them build over the years. Dion and Cherylene have over 25 years of experience hosting programs on and around the First Nations area, another difficult barrier of entry for a competitor to overcome. As overnight travel in Alberta is expected to grow by 2.4% in 2016 (Wallace, 2016), River Ranche may face issues of not being able to accommodate enough guests with an 8 guest capacity, thereby increasing the power of new entrants. New entrants could appeal to those looking to book weddings because of larger capacity. However, due to the high barriers to entry near the River Ranche lodge, the threat of new entry is fairly low.

Threat of Substitution - High

The threat of substitution is one of River Ranche's largest obstacles to overcome to gain a competitive advantage. An issue they face is that travellers tend to travel west of Calgary towards tourism hubs such as Kananaskis, Banff, and Canmore. The area west of Calgary is well-known for its tourism appeal. In 2014, the Canadian Rockies received 4.35 million total visits, of which 3.13 million (71.8%) were by Albertans (Tourism Alberta, 2014).

Rather than competing with tourism hubs such as Banff, River Ranche should focus their efforts in gaining a competitive advantage in their niche. The River Ranche Lodge provides invaluable history and cultural appeal that may not be appreciated by all tourists. In order to capture their niche market, River Ranche should look at demographics that are interested

in learning more about the Blackfoot Nation. A competitive advantage can be gained by appealing to their target segments. Exurban couples consist of families that enjoy “staycations”, and Serenity Springs couples are often retired and have more time to explore Alberta travel destinations such as River Ranche. The uniqueness of guides Dion and Cherylene Red Gun, and Tom Brooks give River Ranche a competitive edge to lessen the threat of substitution.

Competitive Rivalry - Medium/Low

There is no threat of new competitors entering that offer similar services in the same geographic region as River Ranche Lodge because of heavy regulations and high costs of investment on Siksika Nation land. River Ranche is not vulnerable to direct competition, but more so to indirect competitors and substitutes. The key issue and competitive threat that River Ranche faces is the disadvantage of being located to the east of Calgary, rather than the west. The threat of substitution when local travellers go west of Calgary is high because of the appeal and high concentration of travel destinations west of Calgary. River Ranche should utilize the niche market of retired couples, specifically those who want to know more about the history and culture of the Siksika Nation. They should also utilize the uniqueness of guides Dion, Cherylene, and Tom to appeal to the exurban couples and serenity springs segments to decrease the threat of substitutes.

Labour efforts and commitment shown by staff keep costs very low. River Ranche has the power to lower costs even more by streamlining their supply chain. Low costs create a high barrier of entry for competitors along with the advantage of using a large geographic land mass.

The lodge's small capacity poses limitations for certain markets, such as weddings.

Competitors such as the Prairie Creek Inn with a 15 room capacity are able to accommodate many more guests, making them more appealing for guests looking for a location to host a wedding. Competitive rivalry still poses a relatively small threat to River Ranche as the large geographic area of the Siksika Nation provides a safety net from competitors, spanning approximately 737 squared kilometers (Appendix F).

CRESTD Environmental Scan

Competitive Landscape:

As Mr. Red Gun has mentioned, the River Ranche is unique in numerous ways due to its location. The lodge sits on aboriginal land, and therefore has a unique set of rules and laws that govern it. Additionally, it differentiates itself from its competitors with its pristine river valleys, modern, full-service accommodations, as well as traditional teepee lodgings for those who wish to have a more traditional aboriginal experience. Despite its niche, the River Ranche faces competition from similar companies such as Southern Alberta Fly Fishing, Bow River Fly Fishing and Trout Tracker Guide Company. With the amount of direct competitors around, the River Ranche can capitalize on the fact that it differs from all of these companies by operating on the Bow River, being southeast of Calgary and offering onsite accommodations.

Regulatory Forces:

River Ranche faces several regulatory forces by operating out of the Siksika Nation. The Siksika land is governed by a Chief and a Council which means that any major changes to that land must first be discussed with this governing body. This presents a significant challenge to change policies and procedures. Additionally, guests at River Ranche who do not hold Aboriginal status will be required to have a valid Alberta Fishing Licence (Alberta Government, 2016). This poses a potential barrier for River Ranche as they must follow both Council and Provincial law. However, River Ranche is strictly a catch and release site. This is beneficial as it reduced the risk of laws being broken.

Economic:

Alberta is currently in an economic downturn. This means that Albertans are being extremely careful with their spending, and may not have the additional funds necessary to go on fly fishing excursions. Furthermore, as a result of these tough economic times, 8.5% of Albertans are currently unemployed (Statistics Canada, 2016) and have less disposable income to take part in activities such as the River Ranche tours. In response to this, River Ranche could consider a temporary price reduction to help spark more business during this economic downturn. Although the Canadian economy is slightly unstable, the low dollar can spark an increase in domestic travel.

Sociocultural:

Social trends do impact River Rancho very heavily. There has been a shift towards social media and the usage of smartphones heavily by a wide variety of demographics. Although people are more connected than ever through their devices, they are extremely disconnected in terms of interpersonal relations. Due to this, there is an equally large social trend that now focuses on taking time away from technology. In other words, there is now an increase in people looking to take advantage of recreational activities that involve nature. This provides an opportunity for River Rancho as they provide activities such as fly-fishing, birding, and area tours that encourage unplugging from technology. By exploiting this trend towards nature adventures, the River Rancho can capitalize on an incredibly booming market.

Technological:

Technological innovations have had an incredibly large impact on the world over the past decade. As previously mentioned in this analysis, smartphones can be found on people of every generation and background. Because people are now so inundated with technology, this provides a perfect opportunity for River Rancho to target customers. Social media provides a platform to search out potential customers by looking for a specific demographic to match the target market we have selected. Additionally, social media allows for paid advertising to actively inform and engage audiences. While the appeal of a quaint quiet getaway from the busy city gives River Rancho its unique quality, utilizing the capacity of technology can help market to the necessary demographics for River Rancho to increase sales.

Demographics:

Exurban and Serenity Springs households are often located in towns east of Calgary. These towns include Blackie, Langdon, Milo and Cluny. Langdon has the largest population based at 3,403 residents (Statistics Canada, 2016) and may be strong area to promote River Ranche services in. With such small populations in each town, the River Ranche Lodge should look at more population dense centres such as Calgary and Brooks. The demographics that live in these towns are typically different demographics open an even wider market of possibilities for River Ranche. Rather than focusing on the majority, the River Ranche can now look at targeting the minorities who may previously have not had access to fly fishing material, and a place to do so. The River Ranche Lodge can also look at a market demographic outside of Canada. Mr. Redgun has mentioned that individuals from Germany have had a particular interest in coming to Canada to stay and fish at River Ranche. By analyzing and understanding the diverse demographics that may have an interest in the River Ranche, it opens up a wider market for the company.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

In order to fully understand River Ranche Lodge's competitors in Alberta, an extensive analysis was conducted to determine the advantages and disadvantages that the lodge has. Below is a summary of each competitor.

Competitor #1 - The Prairie Creek Inn

The Prairie Creek Inn was founded by Terri and Larry Cameron and is located in the Rocky Mountain House area in Central Alberta. The inn was created to give visitors a luxurious accommodation and getaway experience while feeling warmth, and genuine hospitality (Contact Us, 2016, para. 1). The Cameron's primary objective when starting The Prairie Creek Inn was to develop one of Canada's leading romantic getaway destinations in the middle of nowhere (About, 2016, para. 6). The lodge has 15 rooms, with an additional two studio cottages, and three self contained cottages. Everything is custom made with earth tone colours that bring in a romantic ambiance (Luxury Suite and Cottages, 2016, para. 1). The inn also offers many romantic getaway packages, such as breakfast in bed, helicopter, golf, and fly fishing packages. The website states that the inn is located near some of the best fly fishing in West Central Alberta and couples get their own dedicated fly fishing guide that has over 40 years experience. Fly fishing tours also include lunch, refreshment and insect repellent (Getaway Packages, 2016, para. 6). Last but not least, the Prairie Creek Inn has its own restaurant called the Heartstone Restaurant. The restaurant offers authentic Albertan cuisine and its menu changes regularly offering a variety of options for its guests (Heartstone Restaurant, 2016, para. 1).

The Prairie Creek Inn has a number of competitive advantages. Firstly, they specialize in romantic getaways and offer multiple amenities, such as personal fly fishing tours. Its bedrooms and common areas are very modern and romantic with wood burning fireplaces, jacuzzis, and rich landscapes (Luxury Suite and Cottages, 2016, para. 2). Secondly, the inn is only two hours away from Calgary, similar in distance compared to the River Ranch Lodge. In addition, the average cost per night is \$300 CAD (Book Online, 2016, para. 1) which is \$60 more than the River Ranch Lodge, however, this includes a decadent two course breakfast with coffee, yogurt, fruit and much more (Bed and Breakfast, 2016, para. 1).

The River Ranch Lodge could learn from the strategies that the Prairie Creek Inn has implemented in order to incorporate a more romantic couples weekend getaway. The Prairie Creek Inn does a good job in selling the ‘romance’ factor with its wording and imagery they have incorporated. Overall, the way they have marketed their lodge can help in us developing the marketing strategy decision making.

Competitor #2 - Emerald Lake Lodge

Emerald Lake Lodge was discovered over 100 years ago in Yoho National Park and since then has experienced excellence such as winning multiple awards, such as ‘Best Hotel Restaurants in the World’ and ‘Trip Advisor Service of Excellence’ (Emerald Lake Lodge, 2016). The lodge features massive stone fireplaces, elegant dining room, sauna, fitness room, outdoor hot tub, and a lounge that has an oak bar from the 1890’s era. The entire lodge is surrounded by the lake and mountainscapes and is one of the few destinations in Canada that offers a unique mix of luxury and nature (Emerald Lake Lodge, 2016).

Emerald Lake Lodge offers a wide range of activities perfect for couples for all seasons, including hiking, canoeing, horseback riding, ice skating, dog sledding and much more. The photo gallery shown on the website shows the landscape and romantic ambiance that the lodge offers, making most couples feel that this is a great location to spend their weekend getaway. The lodge does a good job in showcasing what it offers and making it appealing to couples. Lastly, the lodge has three different restaurants, offering a wide range of options that are likely to suite most couples needs while staying at the lodge.

Emerald Lake Lodge is nestled in the mountains right on a lake. This provides a significant advantage as people usually are already sold on the idea of going to the mountains for their couples weekend retreat. In addition, the lodge is in a secluded area away from other towns, such as Canmore, Banff, etc. which can be intriguing for those who are looking to get completely away from the city life. It also offers 24 cabin style buildings, which accommodates up to 200 guests. All of the rooms feature baths, balconies, and wood burning fires. Lastly, the lodge offers pet friendly accommodations (Accommodation, n.d.). A large disadvantage with the lodge is that it does not have cellphone service. This gives the River Ranche Lodge an advantage because people today have grown very accustomed to having their phones accessible at all times (Accommodation, n.d.).

Competitor # 3 - WineFred Lake Lodge

Winefred Lake Lodge is a fly fishing lodge that is situated in the heart of Alberta's Boreal Forest. Winefred lake is just 425 km northeast of Edmonton, Alberta and offers some of the finest trophy fish in the province of Alberta, mainly consisting of Northern Pike and Walleye. Winefred Lake Lodge is committed to responsible management of Alberta's fishing, and as such there is a catch and

release rule in place (Winefred Lake Lodge, n.d).

Winefred Lake Lodge can accommodate up to forty people. The main lodge has four themed rooms, with up to two beds, private bathrooms, satellite TV, and complimentary high-speed internet. They also offer light-housekeeping cabins that are fully-furnished and have three bedrooms in each (Accommodation, n.d). They can accommodate up to six people and feature amenities such as: bedding, towels, kitchen utensils, BBQ, and satellite TV. These cabins are best for guests who want to cook their own meals and stick to their own schedules. Lastly, Winefred offers *Eagle's Nest Suites*, which are ideally suited for guests looking for a luxurious option. These suites come with queen-size beds and all the amenities mentioned above (Accommodation, n.d.).

Winefred Lake Lodge package rates varies depending on which suites that are available. The main lodge starts off at \$539 per person/2 nights and gradually increases up to a maximum of \$1399 per person/6 nights. The light-housekeeping cabins (Lynx & Otter) are \$639 per night and it doesn't seem like there is a maximum of occupants inside the cabin. Lastly, the Eagle nest suites have a double occupancy rate at \$369 per night and a quad occupancy rate at \$469 per night. All accommodations are subject to a \$12 property maintenance fee per day (Package Rates, n.d, para. 1).

Winefred Lake is 36 km long (North/South) and 23 km wide (East/West) and has long been known for its huge Walleye and monster Northern Pike (Fishing, n.d, para. 1). The lake has just the right makeup to consistently produce these behemoths; three rivers to continuously feed and drain the lake while at the same time providing a good spawning area, ample vegetation along the shoreline provides both a place to spawn and, a high quality food source (Fishing, n.d, para. 1). Guests at

Winefred Lake Lodge have access to 16' Lund boats with 20 hp Yamaha motors at a rental rate of \$50/hour or \$195/day plus the gas rate that day (Fishing, n.d).

Competitor # 4 - Gypsy Lake Lodge

Gypsy Lake Lodge is located 50 miles east of Fort McMurray, AB. It is currently the only lodge in the Gypsy Lake Wildland Park. The lodge was approved by the Alberta government as a special places park. The lodge is only accessible only by aircraft (About, n.d.).

The Gypsy Lake Lodge is a 2200 square foot main lodge with four cabins. They can accommodate up to four guests per cabin for a total capacity of 16 guests. All cabins rentals include: heat, electricity, bedding, housekeeping, boat, fuel and lifejackets. The cabins do not include fishing licenses, tackle, junk food, toiletries and liquid refreshments (Reservations & Rates, n.d.). The reservation rates at Gypsy Lake Lodge range depending on how many guests you have. If you have a group of less than 7 people the rates start at \$1200 per person/2 days and can go up to a maximum of \$1750 per person/ 6 days. Customers will start to see discounted rates if their group is larger than 7 up to a maximum of 16. The rate starts at \$950/person/2 days and can go up to a maximum \$1500 per person/6 days (Reservations & Rates, n.d). Fishing at Gypsy Lake Lodge is all catch and release, which was established 16 years ago. The lake is mostly inhabited by northern pike and they can grow up to 30 lbs in size (Fishing, n.d).

Competitor # 5 - Fairmont Banff Resort

The Fairmont Banff Resort was built and opened on June 1st, 1888 and was originally envisioned by William Cornelius Van Horne (Then and Now - Banff Springs History). The resort has over 764 guest rooms and a variety of different suites to choose from. From the most basic room called the

“Fairmont Room” to the “Signature Mountain View Room”, the more the customer decides to pay the more views and amenities they will receive. Common amenities include: manual alarm clock, cable television, coffee/tea maker, telephone, internet access and windows that can open for fresh mountain air (Guest Rooms, n.d). Additional amenities available upon request are air conditioning, connecting rooms and rollaway beds (Guest Rooms, n.d).

Fairmont Banff Resort room rates vary depending on season, demand, available rooms and the type of room requested. A standard room costs \$469/night and the rate goes down by 10% for each additional night. If the customer has a membership with Fairmont Resorts then additional discounts and amenities will be provided (Guest Rooms)

Activities and excursions are plentiful because the resort is centrally located in Banff. Guests have a variety to choose from: skiing/snowboarding hills nearby, European spas, high tea, hot springs, bowling, lounge, music entertainment centre and more (Activities and Services, n.d).

Competitive Matrix

After the competitors of River Ranche tourism have been identified and analyzed, the information is then assessed in a competitive matrix and given values from 0 to 5 based on the research and assessor's overall opinions towards that company.

Factors	River Ranche Tourism	Prairie Creek Lodge	Emerald Lake Lodge	Winefred Lake Lodge	Gypsy Lake Lodge	Fairmont Banff Resort
Price/	2	2	3	3	2	4

Value perception						
Accommodations	2	4	4	3	3	4
Social Media Usage	2	3	5	0	0	5
Excursions / Activities	3	4	4	2	2	4
Website User Experience	2	4	4	2	1	4
Total	11	17	20	10	8	21

Explanation

When deciding our factors we had to consider our target demographic, which was baby-boomer couples. With this in mind, we decided to find competitors that are within that same realm of lodges and fishing but also offered additional activities and services that couples could do. The five factors we chose tie into what most couples look for when deciding on staycations. The five factors are as follows: price / value perception, accommodations, social media usage, excursion / activities, website user experience.

Price / Value perception - The main components for this factor were price and whether or not the resort compensated enough to make the price worth it for the couples. In this category, the Fairmont Banff Resort had the highest rating because value perceived was worth the price. Fairmont offers many different services and has a lot of options for our couples to choose from. Also the hotel was in the heart of the mountains with breathtaking views. River Ranche Tourism fell behind from the Fairmont because there was a lack of information on what is included with the package, making it hard to distinguish if the price and services offered would be worth it.

Accommodations - There was a three way split for the top competitor in this factor because all three offered a variety of suites and accommodations for their guests to choose from, ranging from low affordable options to high-end couples suites. Part of the judging criteria for the accommodations was the free amenities included and these three went above and beyond with what they offered. River Ranche Tourism was the lowest in this category because the amenities were not mentioned and were vague on what they offered.

Social Media Usage - Two competitors scored full ratings because they went above and beyond social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter but they also had full blogs and newsletters that were available to clients interested in reading them. They also had video tours of their suites on youtube, which also gave them the competitive edge. River Ranche Tourism met the requirement of having a social media platform with videos of the land and helicopter views but it hasn't been updated since for some time and requires some maintenance.

Excursions / Activities - In order to get a high rating within this factor, we were looking for activities and excursions that were available year around and had variety. Again, we see the top three competitors scoring high ratings because they offered many different activities on site for all seasons and also other recommendations for nearby towns and cities, which I believe would be helpful for couples if they were deciding on what to do on or off site. River Ranche Tourism has a good score this factor because it lists a lot of activities within their land but it would be nice to see what other activities are available to customers off site as well. Also, it would be great to see what kinds of activities are available during various seasons.

Website / User Experience - Finally, the last factor we looked into was website design and user experience. This is important because navigating a resort or hotel website can be cumbersome because of the amount of information presented is overwhelming. Again, the three competitors scored high in this category because their sites were easy to navigate and presented their information in a pleasant way. A call to action was present on all pages especially the landing page and made it easy for couples to book their trips and see availability on rooms. River Ranche Tourism's website was simple but more work can be done to make it look up to date. An availability option or a call to action system would be nice for those couples who like to book online as opposed to calling.

COMPANY ANALYSIS

The River Ranche Lodge was founded in 2006 by Dion Red Gun and Tom Brooks. The unique spelling of ranche with an 'e' was decided because Dion wants to distinguish themselves from the rest of the lodges in Alberta (Red Gun, 2016). Dion and Tom met in 2005 and felt that this was something the Siksika reserve needed in order to show the true beauty, stunning landscape, and pristine river valleys that the lodge surrounds itself. The lodge operated for seven seasons until it was

devastated by the 2013 Alberta floods. However, a rebuild began in October 2015 and River Ranche was open for operations in summer 2016, which was a huge milestone for the organization and those involved (Red Gunn, personal communication, 2016). The River Ranche Lodge overlooks the Bow River, which has exceptional fly fishing opportunities as it is situated within one of the largest cottonwood riverine ecosystems in Western Canada (River Ranche Lodge, 2016, para. 2).

The organization specializes in cultural and fly fishing adventures in the Bow River. As well, it offers kayaking and cross country skiing packages (River Ranche Lodge, 2016, para. 4). This wide range of activities makes the River Ranche Lodge a great weekend getaway for those who are interested in immersing themselves into the culture and partaking in thrilling activities in Alberta's landscape. The opportunities that the River Ranche Lodge has is endless with its immaculate landscape and range of activities. They have opportunities to expand its target market to not only fly fishing lovers but couples who are looking for a weekend getaway.. Visitors are able to enjoy three home cooked meals by Maureen and after are able to get away from the busy city life and escape to a place with fresh air, a hot tub and a fire pit overlooking the Bow River (River Ranche Lodge, 2016, para. 2).

Most importantly, the River Ranche Lodge allows visitors to experience a cultural adventure like no other. Visitors are able to interact with the First Nation's elders, see wagon trails, buffalo wallows and tour the reserve and surrounding area to hear the history of the Siksika Reserve. In addition, visitors will be able to hear the Blackfoot history and culture surrounding a campfire and be able to receive the best experience at the River Ranche Lodge (River Ranche Lodge, 2016, para. 4). A weekend at the River Ranche Lodge is truly an experience like no other.

SUPPLIERS

The River Ranche Lodge is mainly an experience business, as the material items are not a large part of the business model or marketing of the River Ranche Lodge. The Siksika Nation Reserve and the knowledge of any tour guides and other employees of the business is the most important part, yet there are still a few key suppliers worth mentioning that will impact the business.

Tom, Dion, and Dion's family stress the importance of cooking traditional food to bring the entire experience together. Fresh food is needed for this and Costco is the best option for River Ranche to do the majority of their grocery shopping, as bulk purchases can be made at a cheaper cost. Alberta's poor economy has resulted in shifts in the cost of some food items (Strauss, 2016, para 2). By creating a partnership with one grocer, whether it be Costco or a different food supplier, River Ranche may be able to get certain deals on bulk purchases. Creating these partnerships will also reduce the amount of time spent going store to store making these purchases.

Dion had mentioned that River Ranche does provide cellular service. This is an extremely important aspect of the business. Cellular service does not relate directly to the experience that one would be exposed to at River Ranche, although in this day and age, it is expected to be provided. Being able to provide a cellular service and wifi will reassure some of the younger couples to spend their time at River Ranche. It would be beneficial for them to partner with a local provider to get lower costs and to maybe do cross-promotion.

The teepee was purchased through Calgary Tent and Awning (Calgary Tent & Awning Ltd., n.d). Clearly this is an important purchase that River Ranche had to make, as it strongly connects any experience, whether it be fly fishing or a couples retreat, to the Indigenous culture. Utilizing the Blackfoot community may be useful in purchasing items such as this. Rather than using a Calgary based retailer focused on tents, management should use their network within the Blackfoot community to seek inexpensive alternatives.

STRATEGIC SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Factor Rating: 1 - Very low, 2 - Low, 3 - Moderate, 4 - High, 5 - Very High

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Niche market (4) • History of the land (4) • Physical features of the property (5) • Dion and his family, their background and history (3)	• Area is not easy to access (4) • Lack of online presence (5) • Limited guest capacity (3)
Opportunities	Threats
• Large population of retirees (5) • Low CDN dollar - locals likely to staycation (5) • Increasing popularity of “catch-and-release” fishing (4)	• Environmental: 2013 flood (4) • Regulations around fishing (3) • Greater ‘brand recognition’ for destinations west of Calgary (5) • Rising unemployment rate (3)

Strengths

The primary competitive advantage of River Ranche Lodge lies in the inimitable history of the land. The historic area of Siksika Nation Reserve is an iconic symbol of Blackfoot culture. Alberta is well known for its history and relations to Indigenous culture, River Ranche proves to be the perfect place for tourists and locals to learn about these cultural practices and beliefs. This, in combination with the legacy of the family running the business, makes the River Ranche extremely credible. It would be difficult to find a true Indigenous learning experience comparable to this one. With the lack of direct competitors in close proximity, River Ranche provides a unique weekend getaway for travellers who want to combine their love of fly-fishing with the chance to learn about the rich history of the Blackfoot nation. The experience and unique style of management by Dion Red Gun, Tom Brooks and Cherylene Bullbear is also a valuable asset to the River Ranche brand and a unique selling proposition.

Weaknesses

While the history and features of the land present a unique advantage, River Ranche's physical location is one of its weaknesses. Located off of the AB-1 highway, the ranch is not as accessible as some of its competitors, making it difficult to benefit from drive-through traffic the way that Banff or Canmore can. Additionally, the current facility has limited capacity and can only house a maximum of 8 guests at a time. Low guest capacity prevents River Ranche from hosting larger events, such as weddings or group trips with multiple couples.

In addition to being difficult to find in person, information about the company is difficult to find online as well. Search-engine optimization has not been effectively utilized. If a prospective guest were looking for 'river ranche tourism' on Google, River Ranche would not be the first result (Appendix F). Upon further investigation, prospective guests will find a Google business that page does not show pictures of the area and has no reviews posted (Appendix F).

Their website requires a number of improvements. The design appears out-dated, it lacks updated information about their space, there are little to no professional, enticing photographs, detailed information about their menu is not available, and there is no option to

complete online booking. The only form of social media that River Ranche uses is their Facebook page which currently only features pictures of the location with no additional content, such as captions or information about the lodge.

Opportunities

The target market that we have selected falls into the category of baby boomers. Globally, boomers are the largest age demographic (CITE). The size of this particular psychographic segment is approximately 2297, and they are approaching the age of retirement (CITE). As they leave the workforce, this key age segment will be looking for new experiences to occupy their free time. There is an opportunity here to advertise River Ranche as a retirement destination to these older couples, not only in the Calgary area, but globally as well.

Social media is a simple, low cost opportunity for River Ranche to capitalize on. Facebook is the top social networking site amongst adults aged 35+ (CITE). Many companies within the hospitality industry utilize Facebook as a platform to give their organization a voice, engage with guests, and post up-to-date information. New developments such as FacebookLive allow users to interact with brands in real-time through video streaming. A recent study showed that Boomers were the largest sharers of content on the social media platform (Chang, 2016).

A combination of growing concern for the environment and government regulations have led to an increase in popularity for ‘catch-and-release’ fishing (Statistics Canada, 2009).

Research demonstrates that there was a 10% decrease in the number of fish kept from 1995 to 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2009). This is a fantastic opportunity to build on an authentic and time-honoured tradition, while maintaining environmental protection standards.

Current economic conditions have boosted the “staycation” trend, as many studies have shown that 70-80% of Canadian travellers tend to stay in their home province (Wallace, 2016). The report projects that Calgary, and other consistently popular Canadian tourist draws, will experience a tourism boost, in large part due to staycationing Canadians (Wallace, 2016). The low dollar may also appeal to travellers outside of the country, particularly those in the United States who will get more value for their money.

Threats

The 2013 flood caused a great deal of damage to the area. Damage from this storm cost a significant amount of time and money for River Rancho to repair. Future storms are difficult to predict, and although the new location of the lodge is further inland from the Bow River, there is still the risk of more damage.

Adventuring off to Banff or Canmore is a common thing to do in Alberta for both tourists and residents. Destinations within the Canadian Rockies are extremely popular, widely publicized, and heavily promoted through reputable sources, such as Travel Alberta. Southern Alberta receives far less attention, with most marketing directed towards places such as Drumheller. River Rancho does not currently have the immediate brand recognition that these destinations have, nor is it marketed or discussed as frequently as its competition.

Alberta's unemployment rate has increased to 8.5%. This is the highest unemployment rate Alberta has had in 22 years and it has been steadily rising (Stats Canada, 2016). With an unstable economy and such a high unemployment rate, guests have less disposable income to use for travelling and leisure, posing a threat to River Rancho Lodge.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, River Rancho Tourism is experiencing problems with its business structure. Three primary problems were identified: lack of diversity in their target market, lack of awareness of the area, and high competition from other local destinations. It was determined that River Rancho needed to expand its target market and begin diversifying its marketing strategy in order to increase profits and remain competitive. In order to do this, a new target demographic was defined. Throughout this analysis we conclude that rebranding to target couples would be feasible and offer great returns for River Rancho. This will be achieved through the following recommendations.

Phase 1: Restructuring - Design services and packages geared specifically toward couples.

Why: With the newly defined target market in mind, the team at River Ranche must develop an intimate understanding of the buying behaviour of Exurban couples and design services that suit their needs. They currently offer several packages, but many of them are offered on a per person basis. All of the competitors listed above offer at least one ‘romance’ package on their website, often including special pricing for two, specialty spa products, and wine.

How: We propose that River Ranche offer a couples package:

- Special pricing for two
- Two-nights accomodation in the unique and intimate teepee
- Option of cultural activity, birding, or kayaking
- Dinner for two by candlelight

We recommend that River Ranche adapt elements that their competitors do really well, while also maintaining the authentic and historical setting of the ranche. Utilizing the hospitality appeal by promoting the graciousness of hosts Dion Red Gun and Tom Brook would be beneficial. Lastly, doing cross-promotion with Blackfoot Museum, which is two kilometers away would be appealing to couples.

Ease of implementation: Easy

Cost: Medium

Timeline: 1 month to design

Phase 2: Rebranding - Present these new services and packages to the public.

Why: The objective of rebranding their company is to reposition River Ranche competitively against Banff, Canmore and other Alberta tourist destinations.

How: This begins with updating their homepage. We recommend that River Ranche make their website more modern, professional, and visually appealing. They should utilize the website to add more detailed information (such as their updated packages, pricing, and history), and utilize Facebook to engage with guests, and provide updated information.

Professional photographs and an online booking feature should be included in this update.

The new River Ranche should market based on an emotional appeal, focussing on the elements of adventure and discovery. It is a place where couples can discover themselves, discover each other, and discover a culture and its history different to their own. This brand voice should extend through all marketing materials, inclusive of the website and Facebook page.

It is also recommended that River Ranche also improve their search engine optimization in order for people to find the website easier, and integrate the websites riverranchetourism.com and theriverranche.com as it is confusing that they are different and makes it difficult to find information when having to go back and forth. Lastly, they should create a feedback form for Google Reviews.

Ease of implementation: Medium/high

Cost: Low-med, social media is free, hiring web designers is costly

Timeline: 3-6 months/ongoing

Phase 3: Online promotion - Utilize online services to create more awareness.

Why: Once products/services have been redesigned and made available to the public, River Ranche should increase online visibility. Trip reviews are important to attract first time visitors and it will increase the overall impression of the visitors.

How: Have a follow up email to all guests that encourage them to review their experience on Yelp and TripAdvisor. Dion may also look into contacting local publications such as Avenue or Date Night YYC that love to feature local businesses.

Ease of implementation: High

Cost: Low-medium

Timeline: 1-3 months/ongoing

Phase 4: Experiential promotion - Try new tactics to gain awareness of River Ranche and reach customers directly.

Why: Digital presence is important, but older generations are not as tech-savvy and traditional forms of marketing are still effective. Rather than relying solely on internal promotion, leverage support from customers, have people refer guests, utilize the credibility of outside sources.

How: Attend trade shows and form partnerships with fishing shops and social clubs/groups, We also propose that River Ranche hold open house weekends where guests have no obligation to stay, but can tour all of the features the facility has to offer as a trial. An experiential event where a select few influential media members visit the ranch for a weekend then write about it for their respective publication/blog/post on social feed.

Ease of implementation: Medium

Cost: Medium

Timeline: Ongoing

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interview with Dion

1. Who is furnishing this project? Beds?

Tom and Dion. Dion will be making peeled pole beds,

2. Where do you find clients from? Do you get referrals?

Clients have been from the major fly shops in major US cities. We have reached out to

fly

shops in Calgary with limited bookings. Yes we get referrals and repeat customers.

3. Is there anything we have to abide by when it comes to your lands?

Dion manages our relationship with the band. We have committed to being proper stewards of our activities and have maintained an excellent relationship with the band and residents since 2006.

4. Do you have any future expansion plans?

Opportunities are always considered on a case by case basis.

5. Differences between cottages and lodge reservations? And german clientele which ones do they prefer?

We have the lodge with accommodations for eight guest and 2 staff rooms. Also we have tipi

accommodations at multiple sites. Both are suitable for german clientele.

6. Where do you get funding from? Is it from the community?

The funding for the original facilities was from Tom Brooks. ADR has funded the rebuild

based on the destroyed facility.

7. What kind of food do you serve with occupancy? Any food programs?

Three meals per day. The food is home style cooking. No

8. Is there significant differences between summer and winter clients? Such as behaviours? Or spending habits?

The old facility was seasonal. The new facility is suitable for all year occupancy. Yes there will be a difference in activities.

9. Do you offer dog sledding? If not, do you think you can incorporate dog sledding?

Dog sledding could be an option.

10. Have you ever consider implementing search engine optimization?

We have a web site but have not used search engine optimization.

Appendix B - Primary market segments

17 EXURBAN WONDERLAND

Middle-aged, upscale exurban families

Population	555,065 (1.55% of Canada)
Households	198,022 (1.35% of Canada)
Average Household Income	\$129,362
Housing Tenure	Own
Education	College/Trade
Occupation	Mixed
Diversity	Low
Sample Social Value	Propriety



An upscale **exurban** segment, Exurban Wonderland is home to middle-aged families who have settled in the emerging sprawl beyond the nation's largest cities. With incomes nearing \$130,000, residents of these new communities tend to be prosperous professionals who like their toys: boats, RVs, snowmobiles, computers, home theatre systems and impressive collections of sporting equipment. Many enjoy outdoor activities like baseball, football, fishing and camping. Their idea of entertainment is going to a dinner theatre, rock concert or RV show. With a majority still raising children at home—most kids are between 5 and 20 years old—the segment scores high for family-friendly activities like visiting a theme park, zoo, video arcade or national park. But in these exurban areas known for affordable housing and open country, many adults confront the trade-off of long commutes and a harried lifestyle. One of their strongest values is Primacy of the Family.

36 EXURBAN HOMESTEADERS

Exurban, middle-aged and middle-income homeowners

Population	421,476 (1.17% of Canada)
Households	165,037 (1.13% of Canada)
Average Household Income	\$93,396
Housing Tenure	Own
Education	Mixed
Occupation	Service Sector/Blue Collar
Diversity	Low
Sample Social Value	Primacy of the Family



Concentrated in small towns that comprise Toronto's outermost ring, Exurban Homesteaders consists of middle-aged families and couples living in tidy homes nestled in near-rural settings. Most of the couples earn average incomes from solid, blue-collar jobs in primary industries, manufacturing, transportation and the trades. With 85 percent owning single-family homes, many have settled in these communities for the affordable housing and laid-back lifestyle. The members of Exurban Homesteaders spend a lot of their leisure time outdoors: fishing, hunting, camping, skiing and snowmobiling. In this DIY-friendly segment, residents tend to work on their cars, patronize big-box hardware chains, tend their gardens and enjoy sewing and crafts. Occasionally they check out the latest trends in outdoor living by attending craft, cottage and RV shows. For excitement, they bet on a horse race or buy lottery tickets—especially sports and hospital or charity lotteries. When they travel, their first impulse is to investigate local campgrounds and trailer parks near their destinations.

Source: http://libguides.mtroyal.ca/ld.php?content_id=6468706

Appendix C - Secondary Segment

54 SERENITY SPRINGS

Mature, lower-middle-income town singles and couples

Population	738,867 (2.06% of Canada)
Households	315,660 (2.16% of Canada)
Average Household Income	\$75,412
Housing Tenure	Own & Rent
Education	Mixed
Occupation	Blue Collar/Service Sector
Diversity	Low
Sample Social Value	Culture Sampling



Serenity Springs is mostly a retirement lifestyle, a collection of small town and sleepy city neighbourhoods where more than half the household maintainers are over 55 years old and a third are over 65. Unlike upscale, tidy retirement communities, however, the rustic towns in Serenity Springs are filled with lower-middle-income seniors who are aging in place and watching their wallets. In these traditional households, the men fish and go boating, the women garden and bake, and everyone enjoys going to craft and home shows. Living in far-flung communities means they have few entertainment options, and they often must travel distances to go to a dinner theatre, attend a figure skating event or shop at stores like Mark's Work Wearhouse and Giant Tiger. They're less interested in travelling any further, as reflected in their low rates for visiting other countries. For these Canadians, a vacation means driving to a provincial park to go boating or bird watching.

Source: Source: http://libguides.mtroyal.ca/ld.php?content_id=6468706

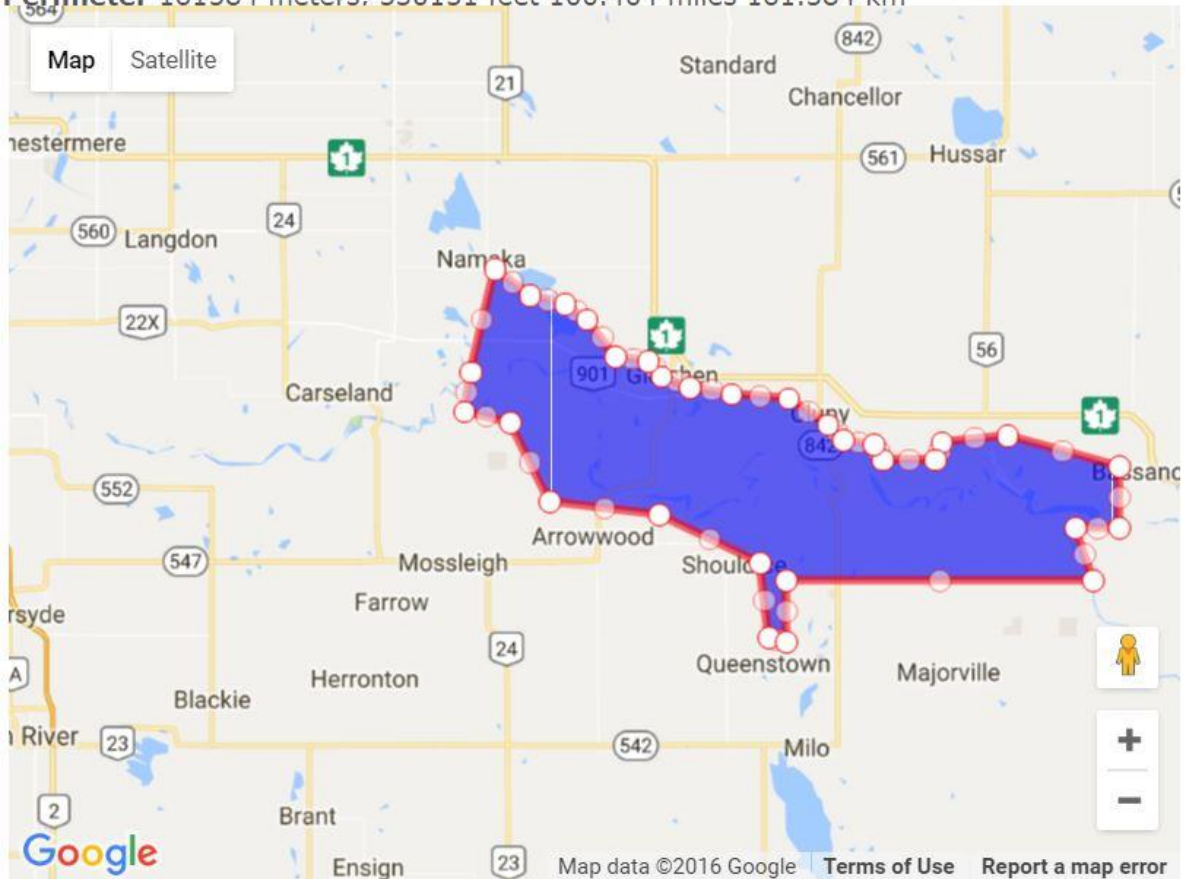
Appendix D - Siksika Nation Map



Source: <http://www.telusplanet.net/public/snems/siksikareserve.jpg>

Appendix E - Siksika Nation Area Map

Area 737860831 meters², 7942267874 feet² 182329.38 acres 284.890 miles² 737.861 km²
Perimeter 161584 meters, 530131 feet 100.404 miles 161.584 km



Source: https://www.mapdevelopers.com/area_finder.php

Appendix F: Google Search results

Google

[All](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) [Images](#) [Videos](#) [More ▾](#) [Search tools](#)

About 418,000 results (0.97 seconds)

Showing results for **river *ranche* tourism alberta**
Search instead for **river ranche tourism alberta**

Come for the fun. Stay for the experience. |
[www.northbaseranch.com/ ▾](http://www.northbaseranch.com/)
Within 5 minutes of the Town of Peace River, AB, Northbase is a fun, ... Northbase Ranch, Peace River AB - Women's Programs, Youth Programs, Team Building ...

Peace Valley Guest Ranch | Mighty Peace Tourism
[mightypeace.com/places/things-to-do/peace-valley-guest-ranch/ ▾](http://mightypeace.com/places/things-to-do/peace-valley-guest-ranch/)
Experience the Peace Valley Guest Ranch. ... climb aboard our jet boat for a pleasure cruise up the Mighty Peace River, following the path once ... Travel-Alberta.

Guest Ranch | Alberta Country Vacations
[www.albertacountryvacation.com/guest-ranch/ ▾](http://www.albertacountryvacation.com/guest-ranch/)
Travel by Air & Land · Regions. ABOUT US ... Guest Ranch. During your REAL guest ranch vacation, you will observe and enjoy the western ambiance, cuisine and atmosphere of Alberta through these warm and welcoming venues.

Google

[All](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) [Images](#) [Videos](#) [More ▾](#) [Search tools](#)

About 13,900 results (0.92 seconds)

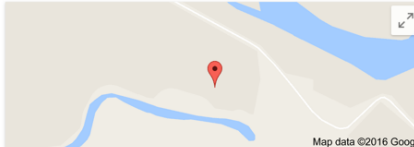
Did you mean: **river *ranche* tourism alberta**

River Ranche Tourism | Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/> Places · Calgary, Alberta · Tour Guide ▾
★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 3 votes
Siksika Nation, Calgary, AB.

River Ranche Tourism - Timeline | Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/> Places · Calgary, Alberta · Tour Guide ▾
★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 3 votes
Siksika Nation, Calgary, AB.

Restart for Siksika's River Ranche | CTV Calgary News
[calgary.ctvnews.ca/restart-for-siksika-s-river-ranche-1.2665041 ▾](http://calgary.ctvnews.ca/restart-for-siksika-s-river-ranche-1.2665041)
Nov 18, 2015 - River Ranche is just 30 miles from Calgary and for many outdoor enthusiasts is a fly fishing paradise. ... Photos. Siksika Nation, River Ranche, fly fishing, Bow Ri ... 5. Alberta government investing in more child-care spaces. 6.

Town of High River | Visit Calgary - Tourism Calgary
www.visitcalgary.com Things To Do · Beyond Calgary · Regional Alberta ▾
High River, AB ... In addition to being Home of Heartland, High River is a popular location for the film



Map data ©2016 Google

River Ranche Tourism ★

Tour Agency

[Website](#) [Directions](#)

Address: Hwy 547 E, Siksika, AB T0J 3W0
Phone: (403) 921-3972
Province: Alberta

Reviews
[Review this hotel](#) [Write a review](#) [Add a photo](#)

GRADING GUIDELINES

Competitor Intelligence Dossier – 25% of final course grade

Quality of Research contributed /20 marks

- Min 8 unique entries per team
- summary, source, quality of the research
- correct citations and referencing

Company analysis (**JENNA AND JACKY**) /10 marks

- overview of company
- growth, history, and milestones of organization
- thorough, thoughtful and pertinent information of company milestones
- shows effective critical analysis of research materials

Industry analysis (**KYLE AND CAIDEN**) /15marks

- clearly identifies industry structure: major companies, competitors, and suppliers
- effectively applies 5 Forces Analysis and summarizes industry effectiveness
- thorough, thoughtful and pertinent information of industry trends
- shows effective critical analysis of research materials

CRESTD - (**CAIDEN AND KYLE**)

Competitive Analysis (**JENNA AND JACKY**) /15 marks

- identifies and appropriately categorizes significant advantages
- considers industry trends in choice of factors
- identifies and profiles 5 key (significant) competitors
- competitive matrix supported by research findings
- information provided is useful for marketing strategy decision making

Identify and profile its 3 key suppliers (**EMILY**) /5 marks

- identifies and profiles 3 key (significant) suppliers
- information provided is useful for marketing strategy decision making
- Any changes or shifts?

SWOT analysis on Marketing (**CHANTAL AND EMILY**) /20 marks

- table format, ranking of Strategic swot, summary paragraph, correct understanding of terms
- demonstrates sufficient scope and detail in research materials utilized
- summarize findings and make recommendations

Conclusion/Recommendations (**CHANTEL**) / 10 marks

Appendices /5marks

- any relevant secondary research sources

TOTAL: /100 marks

Marks Deducted:

Late? (-10% per day)

Introduction and Conclusion?

- -5 each if missing

APA style/ Appendices?

- Citations done correctly with none missing
- Reference bibliography of research complete/ Appendices labelled correctly

Correctness?

- Meets or surpasses Mount Royal University standard of correctness for grammar, spelling, punctuation + page numbers, etc.