

MEMO

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Re: **Resorts of the Canadian Rockies – Potential Resort Recommendation**

Resorts of the Canadian Rockies is a reputable company that is recognized for their ski resorts in BC, Alberta, and Quebec. They are interested in developing an additional ski resort in BC or Alberta that will provide visitors with excellent backcountry skiing. As requested, our team at Action OutRec BC has developed a recommendation for a resort that will satisfy RCR's expectations.

The following elements will be discussed in relation to our proposal:

- Industry Analysis
- Resort Recommendation
- Risk Management
- Implementation

Industry Analysis

The ski and snowboard resort industry is considerably prominent in Canada. It has the sixth largest market size in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Industry in Canada (IBISWorld, 2020). Ski resorts are notably profitable and have proven to generate large revenue streams through lodging, attractions, and other miscellaneous activities. The demographic of snow sport participants is approximately 60% male and 40% female (Canadian Ski Council, 2015). Skiing is a popular attraction for both genders spanning many ages. The majority of skiers in Canada are in the age range 12-54 (Canadian Ski Council, 2015). It is an activity that appeals to many and is a strong industry that will continue to grow.

Resort Recommendation

The resort our team recommends is the Pemberton Valley Lodge. This option was analyzed in comparison with the Carlyle Lodge in Nelson. Based on our thorough decision criteria, we determined that the Pemberton Valley lodge exceeded the Carlyle Lodge in the most significant areas. Our team defines these as: location, potential, amenities, attractions, backcountry skiing conditions, environmental responsibility, and demographic. We believe this resort meets the ideal requirements outlined by Resorts of the Canadian Rockies.

Figure 1 shows the ski and snowboard visitors to ski areas in different provinces from 2003-2015.

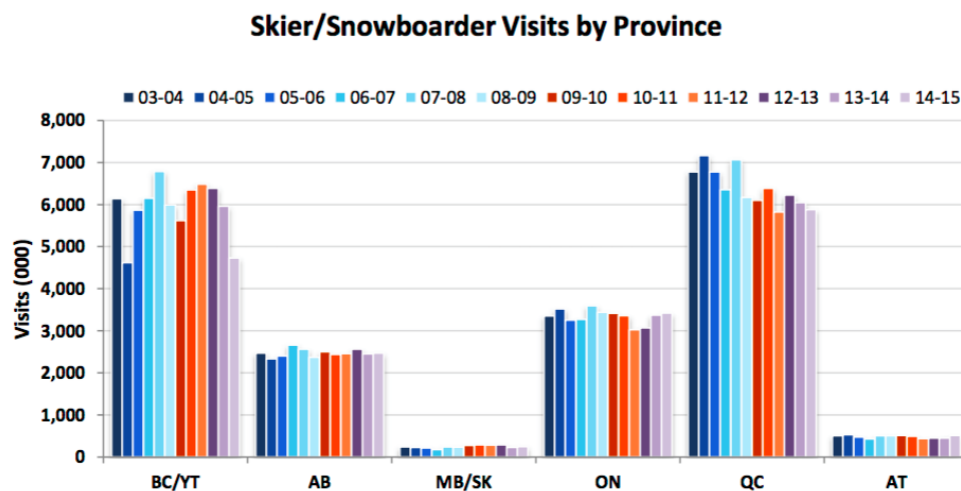


Figure 1. Skier and Snowboarder Visits by Province 2003-2015. <https://www.skicanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2014-15-Facts-and-Stats.pdf>

As seen in Figure 1, British Columbia has significantly more visitors than Alberta (Canadian Ski Council, 2015). This indicates that there is a greater demand for skiing in BC, and that BC has a larger number of recreational visitors. Therefore, a resort located in BC would have a larger potential consumer base for the resort. Pemberton Valley Lodge is located in Pemberton, BC. The location is accessible by car from Vancouver and Calgary, and is approximately 25 kilometers away from Whistler, BC. Whistler is home to the Blackcomb ski resort and is known for its many tourist attractions including restaurants, shopping centres, and spas. The close proximity of the Pemberton lodge and Whistler will prove to be significantly beneficial to the RCR for multiple reasons. Pemberton Valley Lodge will offer a high-quality backcountry skiing attraction. The target market will be experienced skiers that are looking for advanced skiing without the distraction of many tourists. The guests staying at Pemberton Valley Lodge will be able to conveniently visit Whistler and experience the many attractions it offers, while

maintaining their lodge in a quieter area. The proximity simultaneously creates the opportunity for guests in Whistler to expand their trip and potentially backcountry ski and lodge in Pemberton. The familiarity of Whistler has created comfort and loyalty with many consumers. With Pemberton and Whistler located nearby, consumers will feel motivated to try a new resort that is in a familiar location, as opposed to one located in a different area.

The Pemberton Valley Lodge has taken an initiative to be environmentally responsible. Environmental responsibility is crucial to the RCR and their expectations have been exceeded by our recommended hotel. The Pemberton Valley Lodge has partnered with Bullfrog Power to use clean, renewable energy in their hotel (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020). In addition to this, the hotel composts, recycles, uses environmentally friendly products, and limits waste (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020). Green Key, an eco-rating program, has rewarded them the highest rating of 5 Key on their sustainable practices (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020).

Resorts of the Canadian Rockies has stated that they are interested in a small resort that has the potential to expand. Pemberton Valley Lodge is a small independent business that offers accommodation to skiers and other visitors. It possesses many amenities and features that would be of value to RCR. These include a pool, spa, and a fitness center (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020). There also are numerous restaurants nearby the lodge that are accessible from the hotel by car or on foot. The largest attraction for guests at the Pemberton Valley Lodge are the winter activities offered in Pemberton. As per the RCR's request, incredible backcountry skiing is offered on Duffey Lake Road, which is quite close to the lodge. It has over ten difficult and intense routes designed for experienced skiers, as well as highly rated snow and mountain conditions. Other winter activities offered in Pemberton include snowboarding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and winter fishing (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020). In addition to the abundance of winter activities, there are also many attractions offered in the off season. In the summer, visitors may partake in mountain biking, golfing, hiking, and horseback riding (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020).

Many of the attractions located in Pemberton are directed to an older consumer base. The tourist demographic trends to visitors who lead an active lifestyle. This demographic corresponds with those who partake in backcountry skiing, as the majority of skiers are over the age of 18 (Canadian Ski Council, 2015). There is a great opportunity to develop the Pemberton Valley Lodges as a place for mature skiers and visitors. The intensity of backcountry skiing leads to skiers that are more experienced and skilled. The Pemberton Valley Lodge possesses the ability to reach this specific consumer base. Their neighbouring community and competition, Whistler Blackcomb, is a tourist attraction built for families and skiers of all ages. Pemberton Valley Lodge has the opportunity to reach a different market composed of mature and experienced backcountry skiers.

Risk Management

As requested, we have conducted a thorough risk analysis of the proposed partnership with Pemberton Valley Lodge, and have prepared a detailed plan of how we will address them. After accurately assessing these risks, we have identified four main hazard and strategic risks (Government of Canada, 2020) that may pose a threat to the success of the new business venture. They are listed below and then explained in detail.

- COVID-19 (hazard risk)
- Accidents (hazard risk)
- Environmental Conditions (hazard risk)
- Competition (strategic risk)

The global COVID-19 pandemic is undeniably a major source of risk to the proposed partnership. The new skiing service must have a functional set of procedures and regulations in place to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19. Fortunately, RCR has managed to remain in business following COVID-19 and has a set of safety guidelines in place for their existing resorts. Our team has chosen to implement the procedures that are in place at RCR's *Fernie Alpine Resort*, as we feel they are thorough and, "align with [the] government's health and safety guidelines" (RCR, 2020). The procedures mandate the maintenance of six feet of physical distancing at all times which is to be "assisted by directional and suggested distancing signage placed around [the] resort [and skiing areas] as well as plexiglass and other barriers" (RCR, 2020). Additionally, masks will be required in all areas, and each person will be asked health screening questions to determine if they are deemed safe to be on the premises (RCR, 2020).

To address the risk of responsibility for accidents, we have decided upon a method of risk transfer, by acquiring accident insurance for the company. At the consumer level, each skier must sign a waiver stating that they acknowledge the potential risks of the activity. RCR has an existing waiver that is required to be signed before a ticket purchase is made (RCR, 2020). To mitigate the risk of an accident occurring, all rental equipment provided by RCR must be regularly checked to ensure that it is of a high standard and will unlikely defect and cause an accident.

The company must attempt to avoid the risk of damage or accidents due to harsh environmental and weather conditions. A simple way to handle this is to monitor the weather conditions and alert consumers of unsteady weather conditions. If the weather becomes extreme, there will be a temporary shutdown of the tracks in order to prevent any injuries.

An applicable strategic risk is that of competition. However, there are ways to mitigate these risks and rise above competing resorts. Pemberton Valley Lodge currently holds a major

advantage due to their proximity to Duffey Lake Road, which offers, “incredible backcountry skiing” (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020). Furthermore, the resort can be effectively promoted through extensive marketing and advertising on social media and television.

Implementation

The RCR is the largest private ski owner in all of North America (Sammel, 2015). They currently own a total of six successful resorts across Canada (RCR, 2020). Their new project is certain to garner the attention of their loyal consumers and the demographic of people interested in backcountry skiing. After a thorough analysis of many resorts, we have chosen the one that we believe will be the best fit for the proposed venture.

Our advisory team recommends for the RCR to partner with Pemberton Valley Lodge, a smaller firm full of potential that we believe is ideal for their proposed backcountry skiing project. In this proposal, the lodge would act as the place for the tourists to stay, and the RCR would provide ski rentals and other services to the guests which would take place at the neighbouring Duffey Lake Road. This road is known to provide the setting of the, “best backcountry [skiing] activities in BC,” (Pemberton Valley Lodge, 2020) and would therefore be an ideal place for the RCR’s new project. The RCR would market this lodge as one of their own and provide a specialized centre within the resort for the consumers to access their services.

The RCR provides many differentiated product options at their existing properties that could be implemented at their new resort. These options include seasonal passes for the summer, the winter, and a snow school providing ski lessons (RCR, 2020). The RCR would provide these designated services to the lodge and be the sole marketed ski service within the resort. The Pemberton Lodge does not currently provide any of these services themselves (Lodge, 2020), so this would be an exceptional addition.

Our recommendation is for the two companies to implement this project through a general partnership. This form of partnership would mean unlimited liability for both parties (Ward, 2020). Additionally, the profits would be shared (Ward, 2020) by the RCR and Pemberton Valley Lodge. This type was chosen to protect the best interests of both firms and prevent an exploitative situation where one firm was gaining at the expense of another.

Our firm has conducted thorough research and analysis in order to provide you with an optimal recommendation for the proposed business venture. Please reach out at 604-900-8765 to schedule a meeting where we can further discuss this matter and our team can answer any questions you may have.

Risk Analysis

Risk 1: COVID-19 (Hazard Risk)

- As of December 2, 2020, there are 9,835 active cases in BC and 17,144 active cases in Alberta (Government of Canada, 2020). Skiers may be apprehensive about visiting Pemberton Valley Lodge due to the possibility of contracting or spreading the virus.
- BC residents have been advised to avoid all non-essential travel for tourism, entertainment, or recreation within or outside the province until further notice (BC Centre for Disease Control, 2020). This current travel advisory will decrease the number of new visitors from outside Pemberton.

High Probability of COVID-19

- According to the BC COVID-19 Situation Report for November 15-21, 2020, COVID-19 incidence was about five times higher than data from mid-September, and the positive infection rate increased to 8.5 percent (BC Centre for Disease Control, 2020). Due to the increasing incidence and positive infection rate of COVID-19, we can conclude that contracting the virus is highly probable.
- Vail Resorts reported a 13.7 percent decrease in resort net revenue and a 28.8 percent decrease in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) for the 2020 fiscal year. This was primarily due to decreased visitation associated with COVID-19 closures and operational restrictions (Vail Resorts, 2020). The Pemberton Valley Lodge may experience a similar decline in visitation. A decrease in visitors will result in decreased profitability and will affect RCR's ability to cover costs of the new venture.

Risk Management Plan

- To mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19, we recommend RCR implements safety measures and guidelines. The measures will require all guests and staff to wear appropriate face coverings in public spaces, undergo health screenings, and practice social distancing procedures (RCR, 2020). By following government guidelines, RCR will be able to safely continue operations under the partnership at a reduced capacity until COVID-19 conditions improve.

Risk 2: Accidents (Hazard Risk)

- There is a large risk of accidents and injuries for backcountry skiers. The terrain is very challenging and the participants are often skiing in untracked snow. It is very common

for skiers to experience mild to severe injuries due to the nature of the sport. The risky environment may cause accidents for skiers as well.

Low Probability of Accidents

- From the 2007/2008 ski season to the 2017/2018 ski season, there were 83 total deaths involving skiers in BC. The majority of these deaths were avalanche-related incidents, falls from large heights, collisions with trees, and falls into tree wells (BC Coroners Service, 2018). Due to the low fatality rate of skiing accidents, we can conclude that the probability of fatal accidents are low.
- According to a study on winter sports related injuries, the major causes of non-fatal accidents were excessive speed and fatigue, faulty equipment and protective gear, and bad weather conditions (Gaudio et al., 2010). In cases of negligence or faulty equipment resulting in personal injury, customers can file lawsuits against RCR. RCR may need to provide compensation, which can be costly depending on the severity of the sustained injuries.

Risk Management Plan

- We recommend that RCR transfers the risk of liabilities for accidents through the use of waivers and insurance. RCR currently requires customers to complete a waiver in which they agree to assume all risk of personal injury, death, or property loss (RCR, 2020). In addition, RCR should mitigate the risks of non-fatal accidents by ensuring all equipment available from the resort is up to standards with intensive quality checks.

Risk 3: Competition (Strategic Risk)

- There are many other established ski resorts in BC with loyal customer bases. These resorts may attract more tourists and take away from potential customers as they already have good reputations within the skiing community. Resorts such as Whistler Blackcomb have gained attention from skiers around the world and may pose a threat to building a strong customer base.

High Probability of Competition

- Whistler Blackcomb is only 25 kilometers away from Pemberton. There is a high probability that existing competition will be a risk to RCR's proposed partnership. Whistler Blackcomb has a very loyal customer base and is known globally for having over 8,100 acres of snow-covered slopes, 16 alpine bowls, three glaciers, world-class

terrain parks, and over 200 marked trails included in their resort (Tourism Whistler, 2020).

- Less visitors due to competition may result in a decreased profitability, which could affect RCR's ability to cover the costs of the new venture.

Risk Management Plan

- We recommend that RCR mitigate the risks of competition through extensive marketing. RCR should use social media, local and provincial news, and advertisements to promote the new resort location to their desired customer base. RCR should also strive to offer competitive prices, provide deals on day passes, and promote their season passes to ensure customer commitment.
- We recommend that advertising be focused towards their target consumer base of experienced backcountry skiers. This will enable the resort to specifically reach skiers who are looking to escape from the busy mountains of Whistler Blackcomb. We advise RCR promotes a relaxed backcountry skiing opportunity that differs from other ski destinations crowded with tourists.

Risk 4: Environmental Conditions (Hazard risk)

- The winter season in BC often brings harsh and unpredictable weather. Snowstorms, avalanches, freezing rain, and high winds are all common weather forecasts in Pemberton. It is also very common for these extreme weathers to be a factor in severe road accidents and closures of backcountry skiing areas.

High Probability of Environmental Hazards

- There is a high probability that environmental hazards will affect the resort during ski seasons. Avalanches can prohibit skiers from accessing certain areas of the backcountry. Closures of certain areas in the backcountry or temporary closures of the resort due to any environmental hazards would result in some loss of profit.
- Harsh winter weather conditions often cause accidents that lead to road closures and may prevent customers from reaching the resort. Closures of the highway could leave customers stranded in Pemberton for longer than anticipated or prevent them from reaching the resort altogether. RCR should be prepared to provide refunds or credits to any customers who face environmental issues and provide extra accommodations at a discounted price to customers who may be stranded in Pemberton.

Risk Management Plan

- We highly recommend that the resort mitigates the risks of hazardous environmental conditions by monitoring road and weather conditions as well as avalanche warnings. We also recommend that they check all conditions, predictions, and warnings for avalanches, snowstorms, or any other environmental hazards before the mountain is open to skiers. It is very important that the resort informs its customers and staff of these factors to ensure their safety.

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SWOT Analysis

Strengths (RCR):

- Resorts of the Canadian Rockies is a company that has succeeded in establishing themselves as a prominent firm in the industry. Their brand name holds market power, and they have a loyal consumer base who would be interested in any new projects that they would undertake.
- RCR has managed to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and remain in business. They have put in place strict safety guidelines to combat the risk of the spread of COVID. Their policies are adaptable, and they have made amendments to their return policy in the wake of the pandemic. This is a strong advantage as it accommodates their consumers and keeps them satisfied.
- The firm has an abundance of diversified product options for their consumers. They have season passes, event tickets, summer camps, and more available at their various locations. This is a considerable strength for the company as it means that there are many different revenue streams. This also demonstrates that the firm has been able to successfully place themselves in several markets.
- A significant strength for the company is their knowledge of the resort industry. They are already equipped with the service and management skills needed to operate a profitable resort. Additionally, they have the knowledge needed to train employees.
- The company is already established in British Columbia as well as Alberta. They have managed to advance as prominent competitors in both regions, which will equip them with the experiential knowledge needed in their new venture.

Weaknesses (RCR):

- Seasonal operations mean profit loss during off seasons. RCR's profitability relies heavily on the purchases of passes during ski season in Canada, which generally runs from November to April. Beyond the ski season months, profits may significantly decrease. RCR needs alternative attractions in order to continue profiting year-round.
- Partnerships have unlimited liability, which means partners are jointly liable for all debts incurred by the new venture. By forming a partnership, the owners of RCR and its partners must share in the operation of the new venture and in financial responsibility for the venture's debts.

Opportunities:

Pemberton Valley Lodge:

- Make the destination more well known to experienced skiers and snowboarders who have stayed at an RCR resort before. Not many people know that there are good backcountry skiing spots in Pemberton.
- There is room for tourism to grow in Pemberton. Pemberton is a small town so having a resort for experienced backcountry skiers would entice more people to stay in Pemberton instead of at a resort in Whistler for skiing.
- Create a specialized resort for backcountry skiers in Pemberton. With the popular ski resorts in Whistler already, creating a specific resort for backcountry skiing nearby would attract many experienced skiers visiting the area for a different skiing experience compared to in Whistler.
- Partnering with Pemberton Lodge would build a backcountry skiing resort for experienced skiers looking to escape the lineups at the mountain in Whistler. Many locals complain about the long lineups so having another resort nearby that offers experienced skiing opportunities for people with enough experience and confidence to ski in the backcountry.

Carlyle Lodge in Nelson:

- Opportunity to make Carlyle Lodge more popular to experienced backcountry skiers from the west coast of BC who would normally look no further than going to Whistler. Tourists often stick to the coast of BC when visiting but this resort could entice them to travel to the interior for skiing instead.
- There is room for growth and additions of new experiences or expansions of current ones offered at the backcountry lodge. There are many experiences already offered at Carlyle lodge but most of them are for the summer months so there is lots of room for growing at the lodge.
- It would be beneficial to create another popular ski area in the interior of BC other than Big White ski resort in Kelowna. Kelowna is often the most popular place in the interior for skiing as the resort located there is very well known to skiers so expanding Carlyle would add another lodge specific to backcountry skiing for skiers looking to get away from the main groups of tourists in the winter.
- The chance to grow tourism in the Nelson and Kootenay lake region. This region is not very well known to tourists in general so creating more winter activities and resorts in the region would help increase the tourism.
- The current lodge space could be expanded to create more space for more guests to stay at the lodge. If RCR wishes to grow the business, they will also want to look into building another lodge house or expanding the current one to accommodate more visitors.

Threats:**Pemberton Valley Lodge:**

- There are established ski resorts in close proximity to the Pemberton Valley Lodge. These resorts have developed a strong reputation over many years. They have created relationships with their consumers and have a consumer base that will continuously visit their resorts. These resorts have also been around for longer and are well-known by tourists.
- The current pandemic is a large threat to the hospitality and travel industry. COVID-19 has greatly restricted travel all over the world due to new regulations and laws. These factors significantly decrease the amount of people able and wishing to travel and stay in Pemberton. Therefore, there may not be enough backcountry skiers and guests to support the lodge's costs.

Carlyle Lodge in Nelson:

- The locals might be unhappy with more tourism, and this may affect operations of the resort. The neighbourhood around the resort may file complaints for noise, or other unwanted activities around the area. This might interfere with the management, and may result in legal issues.
- Given current circumstances, COVID-19 will affect the financial success of the resort. Many people choose not to travel or engage in activities during the pandemic, and this will significantly result in a loss in business. With decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, the resort can expect to see more profit, while an unexpected rise of cases from the virus may result in a loss again.

PESTLE Analysis

Political

- The new skiing activities will attract more tourists to Pemberton, and the government must be willing to have more tourism in the local area.
- RCR must be careful and abide by the tax policies on skiing activities and tourism.
- The company must be careful to ensure that their employees represent the company well and avoid creating controversies for the firm.

Economic

- The economy is going through a rough time because of COVID-19. Skiers may not be able to afford a ski pass. It might also be costly for the firm to run the resort with potentially less tourists.
- The resort may consider lowering their prices in order to increase the number of people able to afford to stay there.
- The resort would attract more tourism, and it would benefit local businesses such as restaurants and shops.
- Seasonal stays will make off seasons unprofitable for backcountry skiing. RCR might have to come up with an alternative plan to continue to profit during off seasons.
- The resort may have increased costs in order to enforce new COVID-19 guidelines.

Socio-cultural

- More tourism to Pemberton might disrupt the everyday lives of the locals, so the community must be willing to allow more tourism during the ski season.
- The trend towards skiing activities might vary due to external factors such as COVID-19. Some people may still choose to enjoy the ski season, while others might stand against it. Additionally, the number of guests may fluctuate due to public attitudes towards skiing as opposed to other winter sports.
- Reviews about the resort on websites like Tripadvisor will affect how the public view the business and may influence their choice to stay there.

Technological

- The resort will require tech support for functioning daily management such as computers for book-keeping of consumers, resort wi-fi, helplines, room keys, elevators, and more.
- The resort must hire professionals who would be fast and innovative when it comes to uninvited technological needs such as installing new equipment.

- The resort must match or compete with other nearby resorts and hotels that might be more technologically advanced. Being behind may result in a loss of consumers.
- The company must have the latest skiing technology in order to remain competitive with other skiing resorts.

Legal

- There may be laws against expansion of backcountry or prohibited access to certain areas. This might lead to RCR modifying its plans and designs.
- Legal contracts for partnership will require time to process officially. RCR would have to wait till the official documents are ready to start on the project.
- As skiing activities can be dangerous, there might be laws for consumer protection, such as signing waivers or certain agreements between the resort and the skier.
- The company must be prepared in the case of consumer lawsuits concerning ski accidents and injuries.
- The resort must be up to legal standards for cleanliness and safety for hotel guests.

Environmental

- COVID-19 will have a significant effect on tourism. Currently, because of social distancing, the number of people must be limited in the resort. If there comes a vaccine, the restrictions will be lighter, and the resort will be able to occupy more tourists.
- Pemberton has popular wildlife such as most of BC. Tourists can expect to see owls, goats, black bears, and grizzly bears. The wildlife carries hazards and dangers to the skiers, and this might cause interruptions during their experience in the resort.
- Weather conditions are one of the big factors when it comes to snow activities. The resort can expect to see a higher number of skiers during late fall and spring, and therefore more profit, and a significant financial loss from skiing activities in summer.
- The snow quality would affect the experience of an individual skier. The land would have to be regularly maintained by experts to give skiers the best experience and attract more consumers.
- Due to COVID-19, there are several restrictions in place regarding travel. Non-essential travel has been recommended against by public health leaders. Additionally, there are several border restrictions on international travel. This will affect the number of people who are travelling from overseas to stay at the resort.