

**BUSINESS ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GREEN PAGES
DIRECTORY**

by

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Abstract

Green Pages Directory (GDP) is an online information provider and advocate for green/sustainability products and services. Business analysis is conducted to assure of successful business execution. External analysis indicates that the market is growing rapidly with incremental customer base, under favourable macro-environment, such as evolving technologies, environmental/social responsibilities, legislations, etc., while internal analysis advises that GDP's financial shortage and new entry threats have to be eluded in order to maximize its strengths and opportunities to penetrate the market.

The proposed strategic plan defines GDP's mission, vision and value, which creates a long-term destination for GDP and provides with a roadmap for winning together with partners. It also suggests focusing on LOHAS market primarily and utilizing online social media to promote itself and attract more consumers. Contingency plans are laid out carefully to mitigate competitions and technical risks, while partnership and exit strategies enhance competitive capability and increase long-term value for shareholders.

Keywords: Sustainability; Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS); Social Media

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1: Introduction

1.1 The Situation

Sustainability is a very simple concept, although it has serious implications for society. In 1987, the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations defined sustainable development in its report *Our Common Future*: “Sustainable development is developing that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” [21] Achieving sustainability will enable the Earth to continue supporting human life [1]. The following statistics are staggering and overwhelming [2]:

- In the past three decades, one-third of the planet’s natural resources base have been consumed;
- 40% of waterways in the US have become undrinkable;
- There are over 100,000 synthetic chemicals in commerce today;
- Each person in US makes 4.5 pounds of garbage a day, that is twice what we each made 30 years ago.

If everyone in the world consumed at these rates, we would require 3 to 5 planets in order to survive [2]. There is growing awareness and advocacy that we need to collectively change the habits of consumption and destruction to preserve the Earth’s natural resources, which would allow us to have healthy, productive and sustainable lives. “Buying green, going green, living green” is a motto quickly catching on with consumers around the world. The discussion focusing on a healthy and sustainable lifestyle has become a popular topic. It encompasses benefits such as health, wellness and individual indulgence, as well as wider concerns such as social responsibilities, ethical practices, fair trade and sustainability.

The mission of Green Pages Directory (GPD) is to promote awareness and actions that are in alignment with nature and sustainability. Through the directory, companies are encouraged to offer products and services that are healthier to consumers and the environment, as well as maintain its business competence and profit.

1.2 About GPD

GPD, incorporated in 2008, is a privately held Canadian company. Connie Linder, the founder of GPD, initially launched the website with a distinguished team of founding shareholders. Based in Vancouver, GPD targets at the entire North American market, and intends to expand internationally over time. Since the launch of the GPD website in spring 2009, the company has made steady growth. Currently GPD has established collaborations with 250 local and national business owners, and hundreds of members have registered in GPD website. Beside the founding shareholders, the company has 3 full-time employees, who are in charge of IT and social media relationship.

Being an online business information provider, GPD has a sophisticated search platform for consumers who seek for green products, services and information. Fostered by advanced IT technologies exclusively developed for GPD, not only can users search by parameters such as distance, rating and certifications, but they also are able to exchange information, rate the products and services. Companies, in turn, can follow and respond to comments about their organizations, products and services. GPD helps streamline and standardize information related to sustainability to allow at-a-glance comparisons.

1.3 Business Plan Status

When GPD was founded in 2008, extensive research has been conducted investigating green/sustainability online marketing, market trends, advertising pricing, and search functionality enhancements. Due to the rapid evolution of green/sustainability technologies and business practices since 2008, business strategies need to be re-evaluated for GPD in order to cope with and benefit from these changes.

This report will explore the current business overview in market, competition, product and service, and propose an elaborated marketing plan, social media plan, risk mitigation and exit plans for GPD business development.

2: Business Description

GPD's ultimate goal is to become a powerful and convenient portal, search tool, resource, and hub for green/sustainability information, products and services worldwide, while making it easy for public to buy "green", maintain "green" and improve "green". On the GPD website, users can search for green products and services by attributes such as location, certification, company and reputation. The high volumes of hits by green consumers with high standard demands benefit advertisers and companies for products and services promotions. Firstly, companies can access GPD's information and essential tools to find suppliers, which can help them reduce their environmental footprint. Secondly, green products/services could be listed on the site, establishing brand names and boosting sales. Finally, through communications with consumers companies can use the GPD site for valuable market intelligence on important consumer segments. GPD helps green companies access an immense quantity of customers, thereby increase their incentive to innovate and offer more green/sustainable items.

2.1 Motivation and Goals

Despite the increasing awareness of global issues like climate change, greenhouse gas, pollution and diminishing natural resources, substantial improvements are still needed for the services assisting consumers in searching for green/sustainability information, products and services conveniently. Due to lack of green/sustainability information, it is difficult for people to go for green products or services. As well, they have to pay surprisingly higher prices compared to traditional non-green products and services, or confront limited selections and availability. Inconsistent distribution and some scepticism over the legitimacy of green labelling are the additional barriers to adoption. In short, consumers are reluctant to purchase green/sustainability product because they lack the time, information or finances required.

Currently a few green directories have done ground-breaking works, but no online search directory has done an effective job in assisting consumers and companies who want to make better environmental choices. People often feel helpless while looking for green products, especially in their local area.

GPD's extensive review of existing online green directories revealed only low-quality databases with limited search tool: searching by specific city or region was nearly impossible. That is the key to reduce the travel distance of products, and thus the impact on the environment as shown in more detail in the analysis below. GPD is motivated to provide a premium search tool with a unique blend of functionality for sustainable products, aimed at the specific needs and interests of their users. To fulfil this mission, GPD's goals are to:

- Develop and implement a premiere search tool collecting all green/sustainability information on products, services and other activities;
- Provide convenient access to the information in order to close the gap between a willingness to buy and the difficulty in doing so;
- Create a friendly, trustful and educating online platform for organizations, users and companies;
- Decrease the negative impact of consumption on the environment through the efforts and contributions of the GPD website, members and companies;
- Offer value to their users while simultaneously increasing revenue and providing a strong financial return to green/sustainability investors;
- Become the leader of online search engines for green/sustainability information, products and services;
- Initially launch in North America, and then follow up with a global launch.

2.2 Ranking Systems

GPD believes green/sustainability products and services are those that genuinely and positively reduce environmental impacts. To promote them, GPD has positioned itself in the consumer-driven market by encouraging users to provide feedback to the listed sustainable product and services. To assure the quality and reliability of the feedback, GPD adopted a three-tier sustainability ranking formula on web portal. All three ranking schemes are working collaboratively as GPD's most prominent competitive advantage.



Figure 2.1 Three - Tier Ranking Systems

2.2.1 Company Ranking System

The purpose for the company ranking system is to allow companies to self-regulate and promote green/sustainability products and services on GPD website. The listed companies are prompted by website to detail the environmental benefits, awards and articulate attributes of their products or services. This ranking helps companies self-identify their commitments to sustainability with a great opportunity to differentiate and promote their own products.

2.2.2 Official Ranking System

The purpose of official ranking system is to assure GPD's customers of the quality of products and services through authorized certifications. The official ranking system encourages companies to be certified by authorized organizations, and GPD has an individual web section to introduce globally recognized environmental certifications (LEED, Canada Organic, USDA Organic, ISO14000, etc.). This system provides an educational platform to keep both users and companies informed on green/sustainability knowledge and activities.

2.2.3 User Ranking System

The purpose of user ranking system is to support communications among users, collect feedbacks for companies, and self-educate for both users and companies via GPD website. The user ranking enables consumers to review, comment and rank products and services, which may provide valuable feedback and insights that companies can use to improve their products and services.

2.3 Platform

GPD designed and built a platform using a variety of technologies in order to guarantee the three-tier ranking system has reliable and efficient performance without compromising convenience and simplicity.

2.3.1 Website

Simplicity, as the primary goal of GPD website layout, is used to make the navigation intuitive and easily accessible for all users regardless of computer skills or hardware/software. GPD stringently follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and W3C Web Standards to ensure the site is compatible with all operation systems, such as Windows, Macintosh and Linux, as well as major web browsers like Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, and Safari.

2.3.2 Search Engine and Directory

The search engine assists users in locating results quickly and accurately from the database via a keyword or a geographical designation search. An advanced search function helps users narrow down results by additional parameters. Users can also limit search to certified organic products or companies, and then create searches in terms of the number of user reviews, comments or geographical locations.

2.3.3 Advertising and Online Marketing

A specified amount of space on the website is designated for advertisements. Companies that are registered with GPD are able to modify their own listing and product information. To bolster and drive traffic to the site and build their community and web content, GPD is to implement an online pay-per-click campaign. Since it is a new website, GPD may have difficulties in achieving high rankings for general terms like sustainability on the major search engines. Nevertheless, pay-per-click ads for terms like “sustainability information” and “how to live a green life” are still available for GPD. Negotiations are underway with online advertising specialists to help manage the on-going GPD pay-per-click campaign. All resources and general contents on the website are processed via search engine optimization in order to maximize searching compatibility and frequency shown GPD website in search results.

To build their online community, GPD is reaching out to sustainability blog writers. Typically, ads space on blogs is significantly cheaper, as low as \$50-\$200/month compared to

other forms of advertising, while daily visits could be as high as up to 10,000 clicks. This advertising approach may benefit GPD by generating a large amount of relevant traffic.

An additional strategy for online marketing is used to social media optimization. There are a number of websites that simply link to other content webpages and allow people to vote on the quality of the articles. GPD will endeavour to get some of their resources listed on these sites in order to increase brand awareness. GPD's main goal for online advertising is to build their online community and increase the number of followers. This community will justify the advertising and listing costs for companies considering using the GPD website.

2.3.4 Community

The GPD community is an online social network, where members are able to comment, discuss and consult on any sustainability related topic. Reviews are visible to all members, under the supervision of GPD management team (see Appendix F for details) to avoid unethical or illegal issues. Moreover, individuals can follow up articles and information, as well as blog their own articles. Members are also able to send private messages to each other and make friends so they can develop their own sustainability networks.

The goal of the community is to help generate contents for the site through reviews and comments, also promote the site and build the brand. The growth of the GPD online community could lead to other revenue streams and justify the costs of advertising and listings for green companies. Having a large online community will help differentiate GPD from other sites. Future considerations for site development include discussion forums and message boards for community members, as well as personal blogs.

2.3.5 Resource Section

The resource section contains a number of online articles related to sustainability, categorized in a clear format for users to review and search. Advanced search capabilities are also available to refine search by author and/or title. This section aims to be a green/sustainability Wikipedia, where on-going contents for sustainability can be created and interaction with other sustainability blogs can occur.

The GPD resource section is syndicated into RSS feeds so that other users and websites can reference the content and direct users to the GPD website. This allows other sustainability communities easily link to GPD's resources and drive traffic to the website.

2.3.6 News

A ticker news bar is featured on the home page to highlight sustainability-related news and allow companies to post their own news and updates.

2.3.7 Eco-Flyers

The eco-flyer section allows listed companies to post their flyers for an additional fee. These flyers are shown next to default search results.

2.3.8 Web Hosting and Site Security

GPD has its own dedicated web server with dual hot-swappable hard drives in a RAID 1 configuration to maintain website availability. If one hard drive should fail, the other takes over without any downtime. The server has 2GB RAM with the capacity of 16GB for the future need.

Routine backup services are performed on a weekly basis, to ensure the integrity and safety of the data. A stand-alone, hardware-based Cisco firewall has secured the web server, preventing malicious attempts. GPD is Payment-Card-Industry-compliant to process credit card transactions in conjunction with a third party payment processor.

2.3.9 Newsletter/Mailing List

Being able to reach out to the GPD community with the latest news will help GPD retain community members. Monthly email notifications can be sent as reminders of return to GPD's site and participation in community activities. These regular emails and newsletter will also be valuable advertising media for their advertisers and a revenue stream for the site.

2.3.10 Product Sales

The ability to provide joint sales of products and services on the GPD website is under considerations. Direct sales from the GPD website could earn the company a share in the sales revenue, and highlight certain products for sale. Pricing models could be either a straight percentage of sales, flat-rate fees, or a combination of both.

2.4 Revenue

Most of GPD revenue is generated from four income streams – listing fees, advertising, eco-flyers, and the presentation of news and articles.

2.4.1 Listing Fees

Unlike other online directories, GPD does not provide preferential treatment in terms of payments for advertisement placement, but the same fee structure for any scale of business. Listing ads containing company name, address, description and any relevant information will be displayed to the public for a particular length of time. Payments for the ads will be automatically billed to the customer's account.

2.4.2 Advertising

Besides the listing ads, on-site advertising is another revenue generator. It will use a variety of advertising located on main and side banners.

2.4.3 Eco-Flyers

GPD will also earn revenue through a unique online flyer service. These Eco-Flyers will allow listing companies to highlight and promote specific products to consumers who search related keywords. For example, when a user searches for paint in Vancouver, the search results will display the many varieties of eco-friendly paints sold by Vancouver retailers, including the ones on sale.

2.4.4 Other Streams

Another revenue stream is available from the presentation of sustainability-related news articles on the GPD homepage. Companies can pay to present their article in a prominent location. In addition, a ticker bar moves across the main portal page highlighting noteworthy environmental news.

2.5 Process Mapping for End Users

The ability to search in directories using keywords, or advanced searches with refined categories, is available to all GPD website users. Registered members have access to premium services, such as email notifications, discussion forum, etc. Once a list of companies has been generated by a search, each company's detailed profile including brief background, products and services, and user comments, can be viewed. Users are provided with options to purchase any items they like, with references from reviews, comments, reputations and certifications. If they have any questions or concerns, members are welcome to post them for other users or companies to discuss. Below is a business process map from a regular user's perspective:

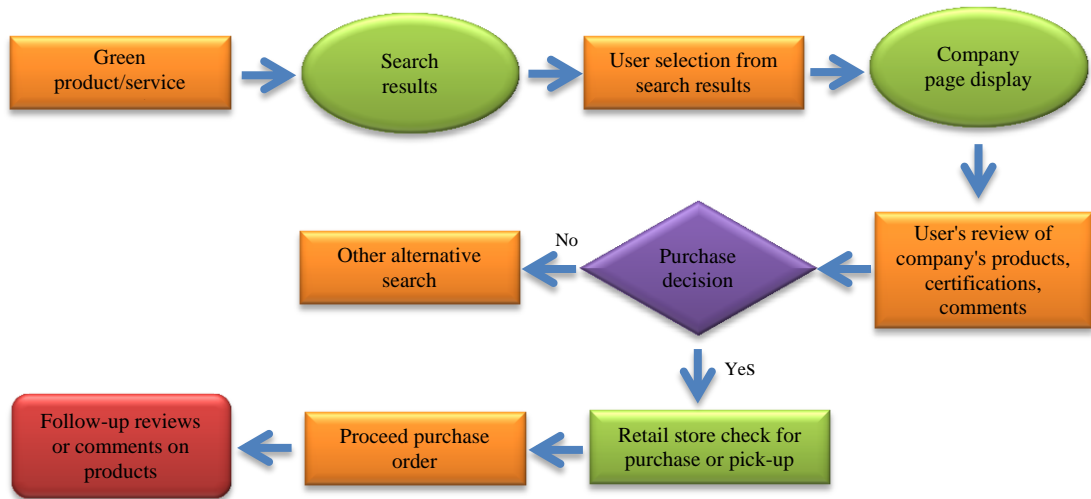


Figure 2.2 GPD User Mapping Process

3: External Analysis

In order to have a well-targeted and market-oriented strategic plan, a thorough and prudent business external analysis is vital. This chapter presents the analysis covering industrial background, marketing situation, existing and potential competition, and macro-environmental factors. It aims to provide a solid and sound business background on the current GPD situation.

3.1 Industry Analysis

In the 2008 United Nation Environmental Program Report, the green economy is defined as of the green jobs needed to reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors to a “sustainable level” in agriculture, industry, services and administration, which contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of environment. The report subdivided the green industry into eight segments of the economy, including energy supply, transportation, manufacturing, building, materials management, retail, agriculture, and forestry [11].

In this analysis, Porter’s five forces [12] are adopted to analyze the green industry where GPD is, in order to provide an objective evaluation of the business and strategic implementations. Each threat is translated into graphics to have a clear projection of GPD’s strength and weakness between now and future. The scale from 1 to 100 is adopted to illustrate the severity of each competitive force toward GPD. The number 50 is set as neutral. Any index below 50 is considered as high-level competitive pressure, with index 1 as the most serious one. Likewise, any number above 50 means low level of competitive force against GPD, with the number of 100 as non-threatening at all. For illustration purpose, the indexes in the diagrams are used to indicate the relative strengths between the factors in each force. Hence, all the diagrams and Figure 3.6 are not drawn to scale.

3.1.1 Threat of New Entrants

Profitable markets with high returns attract new entrants, which eventually leads to decreased profitability for all competitors in the industry. Under the threat of new entrants, the index of GDP’s position is rated as overall low. It establishes strong customer loyalty as a competitive advantage. Typically, most technology-based industries have barriers to deter the

entry of new firms. The entry barriers in this analysis refer to technical barriers, start-up cost, switching cost and customer loyalty.

- Technical barriers to entry for online business are very low. GPD does not have patents or proprietaries to protect it from new entrants. However, to develop expertise in the sustainability/green field requires a significant number of years of experience, which raises barriers to those who try to compete with GPD.
- Capital requirements are relatively low to start up an Internet website and business. Daily maintenance costs for websites are also low, unless system upgrades for expansion are required.
- Switching costs for customers are almost none. However, network effect strategy should be taken into account. Once a website has developed a positive reputation and won the loyalty of existing customers, it could gain momentum that would expand its user base. The concept of GPD's business model is new and has few competitors - perfect timing for GPD to set up business and establish customer base with loyalty.
- Customer loyalty could be a barrier for a new competitor. However, it depends on website's reputations in terms of quality, quantity and credibility of its contents. GPD needs to carry out suitable strategies in order to establish brand and customer loyalty.

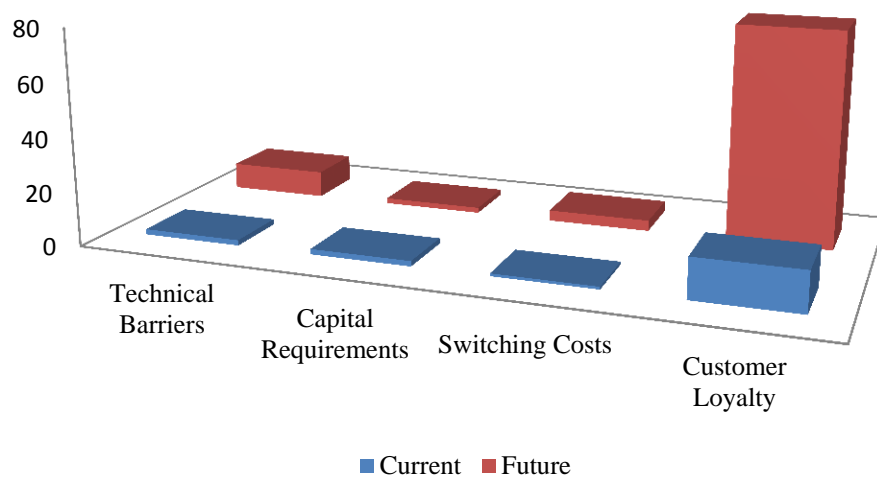


Figure 3.1 Level of Entry Barriers

3.1.2 Threat of Substitute Products or Services

There are information providers whose products and services are considered as close substitutes, but the overall threat is relatively low now because their search mechanisms are not yet catered for the community of green products and users.

- The number of potential substitute products or services available in the market is high. The business of providing information and advertisement has been in existence for a long time with products such as Yellow Book, Yellow Page, telephone sales, etc. Customers are able to obtain similar information from other channels.
- The propensity to substitute for customers, however, is low. Customers would have to make the effort to compare alternative products or services with the current ones that have established good reputations among their customers with reliable information, trustworthy services, high quality products, and intuitive and convenient search functions.
- The switching costs associated with customers are low because substitute produce/services are relatively uniform and hardly differentiated regardless of the delivery mediums. However, customers' propensity to substitute can be relatively low since online users have increasingly relied on internet purchase. Taken together, the level of threat is mitigated.

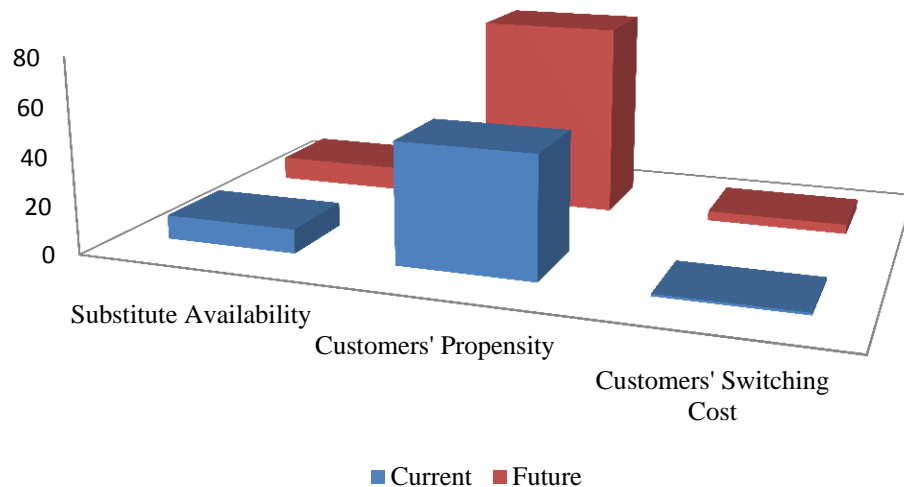


Figure 3.2 Threat of Substitute Products or Services

3.1.3 Intensity of Competitive Rivalry

The intensity of competitive rivalry for GPD is currently moderate.

- The first mover advantage through innovation by GPD is relative high. The search business in green/sustainable products and services is still in the early stage with substantial growth potential. Consumers' increasing demands for efficient and reliable search service are the main drive for GPD to adopt the most advanced IT technologies. It will differentiate GPD from other competitors by providing useful information for specific groups with special needs.
- Advertising expenses would also be a factor influencing rivalry competition. The market is still growing and far from saturation, so the advertisement expense contest is less intense compared to other mature online business.

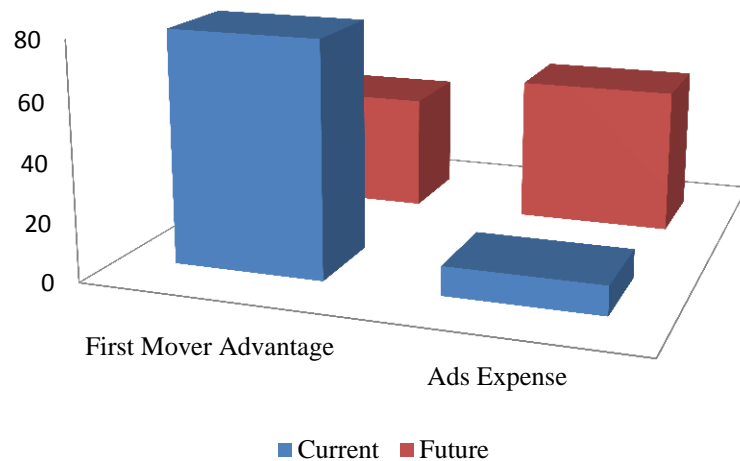


Figure 3.3 Threat of Competitive Rivalry

3.1.4 Bargaining Power of Customers

The customers discussed here refer to green customers who produce green products or services, and pay for advertisement on GPD website. The analysis below suggests customers' bargaining power is neutral.

- The concentration ratio between green customers and websites is quite low [11]. Thus green customers have more options to choose where to advertise. However, the websites dedicating to promote green products and services are only a few in the market. Normally green customers would like to choose green websites in order to differentiate their green/sustainable businesses, rather than advertise on non-green websites where they may need to compete with non-green products or services.

- The dependency upon existing channels of distribution for green customers is low, because green/sustainable technologies and business opportunities are still emerging and have not yet set up stable distribution channels. From this perspective, the bargaining power of customers would be relatively weak.
- The differential advantage of green customers' products/services is very high on average, so it raises their bargaining power in a higher level than non-green products. This is because most green/sustainable products/services are created by proprietary technologies, and the intellectual properties regain bargaining power for green customers over green websites.

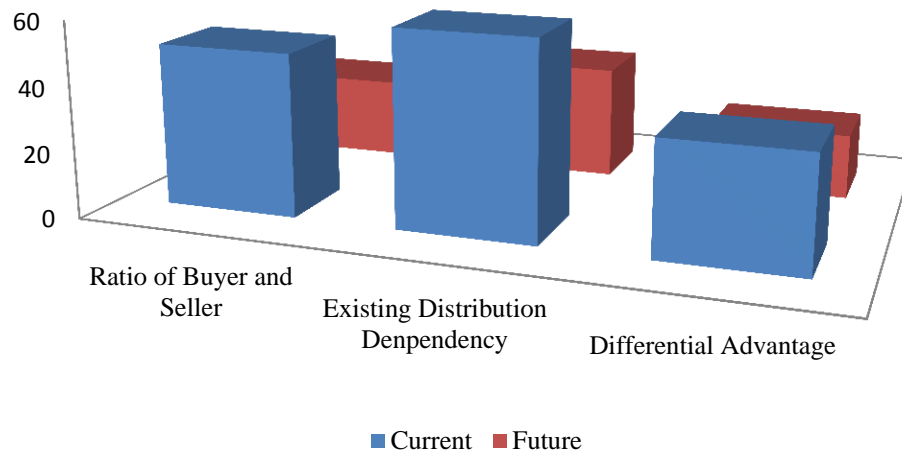


Figure 3.4 Bargaining Power of Customers

3.1.5 Bargaining Power of Suppliers

The suppliers discussed here refer to green suppliers who produce green products or services, and would like to become GPD members and list their company profiles as well as product/service information on GPD website. Strictly speaking, green customers in the preceding analysis would be part of green suppliers as well. All of the analysis for green customers' bargaining power would apply to green suppliers. Additional aspects have been considered for green suppliers in the following analysis. They indicate that green suppliers' bargaining power is neutral.

- The strength of the GPD website on green business promotions is at attractiveness to green suppliers. In order to differentiate their green businesses and raise awareness

among green consumers, business owners would prefer GPD or similar websites to receive maximum awareness among targeted customers.

- The presence of substitute green suppliers increases suppliers' bargaining power, since the green suppliers in the market are scarce. As green technologies evolve, the bargaining power would shift towards the information providers.

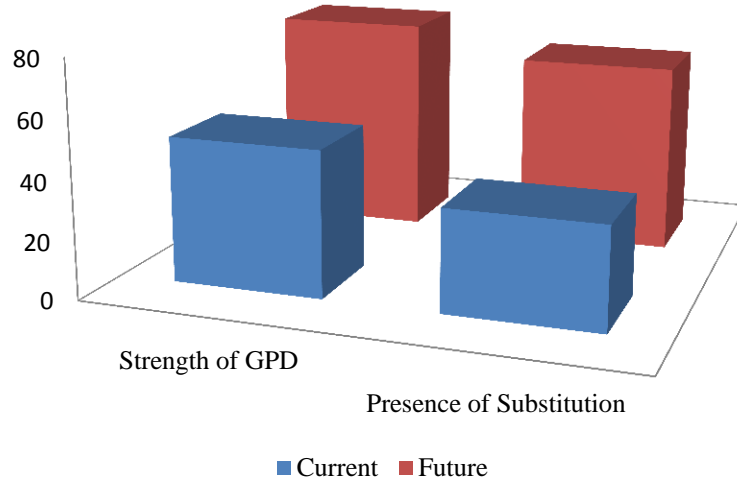


Figure 3.5 Bargaining Power of Suppliers

3.1.6 Summary

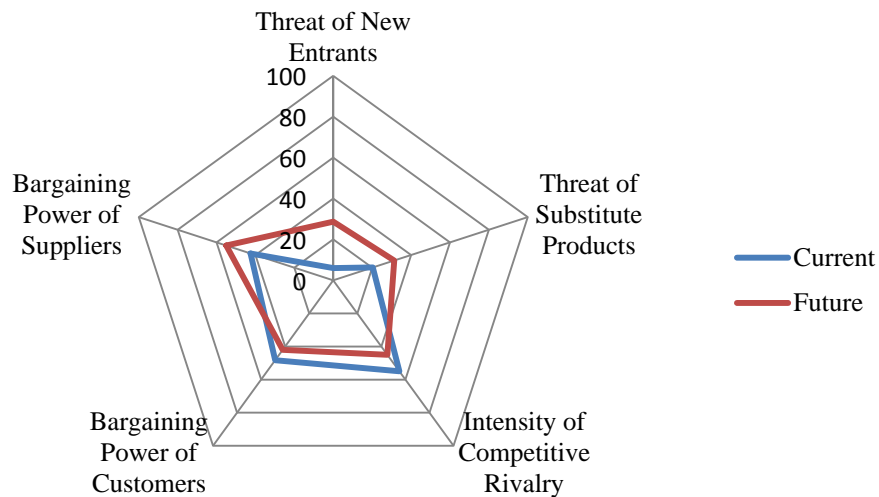


Figure 3.6 GPD Five Forces Radar Chart

Going through the industry analysis with Porter's five forces provides a general picture of the current industry situation and profiles as well as the opportunities and threats for GPD's business model. Figure 3.6, in which higher degrees represent lower threats towards GPD, shows that the business segment for GPD will be a highly competitive market. Hence, first mover advantage and continuous innovation to establish customer loyalty seem to be a dominant strategy for now. However, a prudent strategic plan for GPD would be vital to its future success over the competition.

3.2 Market Analysis

This section provides the analysis of the targeting market information including the size and trends of the total markets and by segments. Data on consumer needs, perceptions and behaviour are also analyzed.

3.2.1 Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability

LOHAS, as acronym for Lifestyles of Health & Sustainability, was introduced to the mainstream press in a 2003 New York Times article. As New York Times said, "LOHAS markets may be the biggest market you have never heard of, encompassing things like organic foods, energy-efficient appliances and solar panels as well as alternative medicine, yoga tapes and eco-tourism." [13]

LOHAS has been identified as an emerging market in North America, seeking solutions that match the way they want to live as well as being well-known and strong advocates for sustainable businesses, products and services. The markets that LOHAS represents continue to spread all over the world.

3.2.2 LOHAS – Consumption Patterns

The simplest definition of LOHAS consumers is a group of individuals who share a common set of individual, social and environmental values. These values, coupled with their view of how the world works, determine the type of lifestyle decisions and consumption choices they make.

Placing the two attributes of health and sustainability in the centre of their lives, LOHAS consumers follow a megatrend that has been growing during the last 20 years, mainly in developed industrial and service countries [5]. The LOHAS lifestyle has been titled a hybrid

lifestyle, as shown in Figure 2.9. LOHAS consumers have common patterns consistently crossing every sector where they buy. LOHAS research has shown that these traits are increasingly becoming mainstream rather than remaining on the fringe.

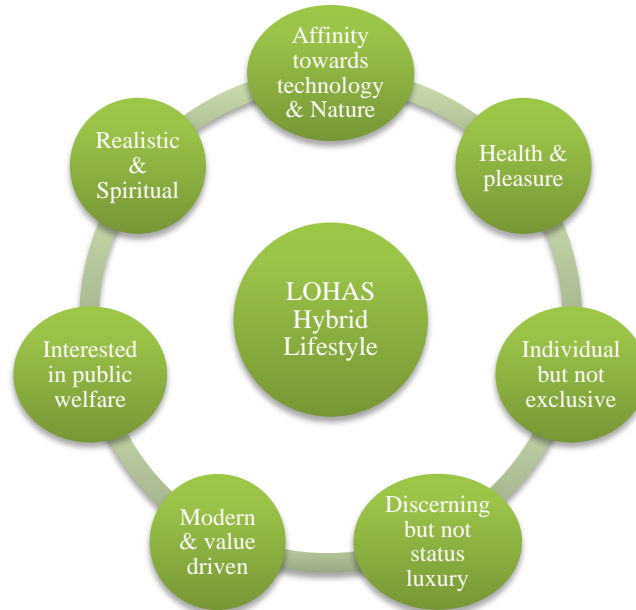


Figure 3.7 LOHAS Hybrid Lifestyle

LOHAS consumers are likely to research a product or services online prior to purchase, and more likely to read an internet web blog. They will trial products and services, and adopt them if certain criteria match their values. Most LOHAS consumers have strong loyalty to the products and services they adopt. This may be due to the significant research and time they invest in the products. Moreover, these consumers will educate others about products and services they support, and are regarded by their peer as trusted sources of information.

3.2.3 LOHAS Markets

In 2000, Natural Business Communication and The Natural Marketing Institute partnered in ground-breaking research, which identified a new and rapidly growing global LOHAS market, comprised of diverse markets, ranging from food to insurance and a specific set of consumers [6]. This global emerging market is worth over US \$500 billion each year, and includes organic and natural food and beverages, energy efficient appliance, eco-furnishing, non-toxic toys, lifestyle publications, clothing, self-help tapes, spiritual activities, health and fitness supplements, eco-tourism, spas, health and sustainability events, music and arts, green energy, clean-tech, carbon offsetting, public and alternative transport, hybrid and low-energy transport solutions, green

building, double glazing, low-allergy paints, socially responsible investment, green home loans, etc.

The LOHAS markets have been measured in selected countries around the world. It was estimated to be worth US \$209 billion annually (NMI) in the USA in 2007, US \$12 billion annually (Mobium Group) in Australia in 2007 and US \$645 billion annually in Japan (Jetro) in 2001. Based on the green market ratio relative to the overall economies of both Australia and USA it has been conservatively estimated at US \$542 billion for Western Europe. LOHAS markets are projected to grow rapidly in the coming years, with most researchers agreeing that the markets are expected to double in size in next 5 years [13]. Growth is being driven by a number of factors, such as increasing climate uncertainties, resource shortages and new product and service developments. As Gardner. G wrote, “Environmental problems are drastically rewriting the rules for business, investors and consumers, affecting over US \$100 billion in capital flows.”[7]



Figure 3.8 Global LOHAS Market Distribution

The German Association for Consumption Research published another LOHAS study of the importance of social and environmental standards in different market sectors for people’s shopping decisions. Figure 2.11 is made evident as percentage of people who find very important to buy green products [8]. The Ernst & Young study supports this trend and, in addition, shows that many people are willing to pay more for products that meet the standards of LOHAS [9]. For organic products, 77% to 84% of people were willing to pay up to 10% more.

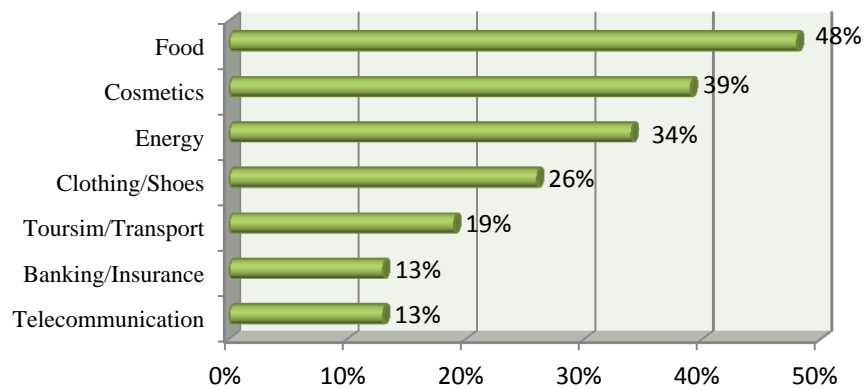


Figure 3.9 Different Market Segments for LOHAS

3.2.4 Summary of Market Analysis

Environmental and ethical performance is under increasing scrutiny by consumers, so business is responding with improvements in social and environmental accountability. LOHAS consumers may not be attracted to non-green business based on these changes and social programmes, but they will certainly choose to avoid non-green products/services over the competitors that do [16]. The substantially increasing populations of LOHAS consumers will become very prominent as the test bed market for proving new products and services and advocating for change.

3.3 Competitor Analysis

In this section, major competitors from direct and indirect competitions are identified and their postures in terms of size, reputation, and internet traffic data are described. A subsidiary company of Amazon.com - Alexa.com - was used to provide detailed competitor analysis based upon the same standards of measurement specializing in website traffic ranking, traffic data collecting and summarizing.

3.3.1 Direct Competitor Analysis

Direct competitors are identified by keywords containing green products services and sustainability via Google's search engine. The selected websites then were evaluated by Alexa.com. The top four competitors are presented below.

3.3.1.1 Greenpeople.org

Greenpeople is a directory of eco-friendly products including organic food, hemp, recycled products, natural beauty care, co-ops, baby products, gardening products, and chemical-free, non-toxic, and re-usable products.

Greenpeople.org is ranked #143,198 in the world according to the three-month Alexa traffic rankings. About 67% of its visitors are in the US, where it has attained a traffic rank of 58,470. This site is based in the US. Compared with the overall internet population, the site's audience tends to be female; it also appeals more to moderately educated users over the age of 35 who have incomes over \$30,000 and have more children. Roughly 49% of visits to Greenpeople.org are bounces (one page view only). Average load time for greenpeople.org is 1.124 seconds, which is faster than 65% of sites.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for greenpeople.org			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	02:03	-26%	
3 month	02:58	+33%	
Visitors by Country for Greenpeople.org			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	66.80%		
India	11.00%		

Figure 3.10 Greenpeople Traffic Data

3.3.1.2 Sustainlane.com

Sustainlane is a community-reviewed directory of environmentally friendly products and services, including news and how-to tips. Sustainlane's three-month global Alexa traffic rank is #128,468. The site is located in the US, and visitors to the site spend about 46 seconds on each page view and a total of three minutes on the site during each visit. Sustainlane.com has attained a traffic rank of 49,399 among users in the US, where approximately 58% of its audience is located. Average load time for sustainlane.com is 0.514 seconds, which is faster than 93% of sites.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for sustainlan.com.org			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	02:48	+1%	
3 month	02:60	+23%	
Visitors by Country for Sustainlan.com			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	57.70%		
India	15.60%		

Figure 3.11 Sustainlane Traffic Data

3.3.1.3 Ecobusinesslinks.com

Ecobusinesslink is a directory of eco-friendly products, services and resources, including organic food, seeds, hemp, housewares, recycled products, body care, baby products, vegetarian recipes, free solar panel price surveys, and news sites.

Ecobusinesslinks.com has a three-month global Alexa traffic rank of #168,709. The time spent in a typical visit is roughly two minutes, with 50 seconds spent on each page view. This site is located in the US. Ecobusinesslinks.com has been online for more than eleven years. It is relatively popular among users in the cities of Mississauga (where it is ranked #2,936) and Ahmadabad (#16,980). Average load time for ecobusinesslinks.com is 2.641 seconds, which is faster than 47% of sites.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for ecobusinesslinks.com			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	01:42	-11%	
3 month	02:10	+28%	
Visitors by Country for Ecobusinesslinks.com			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	30.20%		
India	20.70%		

Figure 3.12 Ecobusinesslinks Traffic Data

3.3.1.4 Ecomall.com

The mission of Ecomall is “a place to help save the earth”. It provides information on renewable energy, eco-investments, eco news, many eco-links, green shopping and resources for environmental activists.

There are 285,569 sites with a better three-month global Alexa traffic rank than Ecomall. Search engines refer approximately 15% of visits to the site. Relative to the overall population of internet users, the site's users are disproportionately female, and they are disproportionately moderately educated users over the age of 45 who browse from home and have incomes between \$30,000 and \$100,000. Ecomall has been online since 1994. It is based in the US.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for ecomall.com			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	01:57	-1%	
3 month	02:10	+19%	
Visitors by Country for Ecomall.com			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	41.70%		
India	34.10%		

Figure 3.13 Ecomall Traffic Data

3.3.2 Indirect Competitor Analysis

In this analysis, indirect competitors refer to those who have potential capabilities of penetrating green/sustainability markets with strong technical and financial supports as well as immense user bases. Google.com and Facebook were included in the analysis presented below.

3.3.2.1 Google.com

Google is ranked #1 in the world according to the three-month Alexa traffic rankings. The site's visitors view 11.4 unique pages each day on average. Compared with internet averages, Google's audience tends to be users who browse from school and home. Average load time for google.com is 1.562 seconds, which is faster than 46% of sites.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for google.com			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	11:03	-3%	
3 month	11:21	-3%	
Visitors by Country for Google.com			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	29.60%		
India	8.30%		

Figure 3.14 Google Traffic Data

3.3.2.2 Facebook.com

Facebook is the second most popular site in the world according to the three-month Alexa traffic rankings. Search engines refer approximately 4% of visits to it. This site has been online since 1997, and the time spent in a typical visit to Facebook is roughly 24 minutes, with 56 seconds spent on each page view. Relative to the overall population of internet users, this site's audience tends to be users who browse from school and home; they are also disproportionately women. Average load time for facebook.com is 2.341 seconds, which is faster than 24% of sites.



Estimate daily time on site (mm:ss) for facebook.com			
	Time on Site	Change	
1 month	23:50	+2%	
3 month	23:40	-3%	
Visitors by Country for Facebook.com			
Country	Percent of Visitors		
United States	22.10%		
India	7.50%		

Figure 3.15 Facebook Traffic Data

3.4 Macro-Environment Overview

The purpose of the macro-environmental overview is to analyze some outside influences that may have an effect on the industry and, therefore, GDP. It examines the general business climate as it relates to the green/sustainability industry. The analysis involves five aspects of interest: social culture and demographics; technology; economic conditions; ecology and physical environment; and politics and legislation.

3.4.1 Socio-Cultural Dimension

Sociologist Paul H. Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson described in their book that nearly 25% of the US population is identified as being cultural creative. This means they identified with the concepts of health, sustainability and social justice being prime issues that affected how they lived their lives [10]. Ray further described this group as innovators and leaders of cultural change. They were major drivers of consumption, while being disenchanted with materialism and hedonism. They were defined as educated consumers, who made conscientious purchasing and investing decisions based on social and cultural values.

Ethical consumers are another kind of group that exist and expand all over the world. This group identifies with buying things that are made ethically. Generally this means without harms to or exploitation of humans, animals, or the natural environment.

Using traditional demographic approaches to analyze these people does not work because they are found throughout the world.

3.4.2 Technology

Huge improvements in sustainable/clean technology have been influencing most industries. For example, clean energy technology such as wind and solar power has developed as alternative energy sources. As well, electrical or hybrid technology in vehicles has widely been adopted and recognized as a major direction in future transportation.

3.4.3 Economic Dimension

Sustainability has been a rapidly increasing trend over the past few years that has outgrown the rest of industry. Now industry is slowing down there is some decline in volume due to ongoing recession, but this does not affect sustainability in particular, and indeed in certain areas it's still rising. One reason for this is a desire for companies to make themselves distinct from their competitors in a tough market.

In the post-recession economy, changes in public policy and consumer preferences could work together to boost sustainable development. Government officials are trying to maximize the cost-effectiveness of existing resources, in infrastructure such as utilities and public transit. These efforts are especially strong in communities where less consumer spending and slow growth have reduced government revenue. Consumer spending has dropped along with household resources, due to falling home values, shrinking retirement funds, and sometimes lower incomes. Consumers are buying fewer luxuries and focusing on practical purchases. Under personal

pressure to be frugal and social pressure to consider the consequences of lifestyle choices on the environment, consumers will tend to make a virtue of “responsible” choices in housing, vehicles, and other major purchases. Businesspersons feel this social pressure as well, and must respond to both changing consumer views on the true value of goods, and sensitivity to environmental impacts of business activities [18].

3.4.4 Ecology and Physical Environment

Recent ecological and environmental problems are becoming greater concerns for the public. The largest source of pollution on our planet is the fossil fuels. It is the time to prevent ecological disasters, endangering of animal species and to entire development of ecosystem by invoking green/sustainable business and lifestyle.

3.4.5 Politics and Legislation

All levels of government in most countries have positive influence and supports in green/sustainability industry. Regulations and protocols agreed to by countries, such as the Montreal Protocol (1987) for Ozone Layer, the Bali Roadmap (2007) on climate change and new greenhouse gas emission targets, have been well established as guidelines for many nations. Additionally, most industry associations and professional associations in North America have set up more specific regulations and acts to foster environmental sustainability.

These approaches are still far from satisfactory ways of achieving sustainability goals, but they are still positive indications from nations to the green/sustainability industry, to continue reducing the negative impacts of our lives on the environment.

3.5 Summary of External Analysis

In this chapter, the business overview for GPD has been studied from industry, market and competition, and macro-environment perspectives. The analysis indicates that the green/sustainability industry has immense potential for growth in all aspects of people’s lives. GPD is in a growing market with few competitors and many uncertainties. Nevertheless, under current economic conditions and with support from governments, many opportunities are presented to GPD. A well-established strategic plan should be laid out for GPD in order to mitigate risks and allow for their rapid penetration into the green/sustainability market in North America.

4: Internal Analysis

The analysis of external marketing situation provides the basis of data for a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, which examines the internal factors that GPD should identify. The SWOT analysis will help GPD formulate its business strategies.

4.1 Strengths

		STRENGTH			WEAKNESS		
		High	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	High
PEOPLE	Adequate						
	Skilled						
MONEY	Loyal						
	Service Minded						
FACILITIES	Adequate						
	Flexible						
SYSTEMS	Location						
	Information						
MARKET ASSETS	Planning						
	Control						
MARKET ASSETS	Client Base						
	General Reputation						

Table 4-1 GPD's Resource Audit Table

Based on an internal discussion with the founder of GPD and its chief technology officer, the strengths and weaknesses of GPD are depicted accordingly in Table 3-1. GPD's greatest strength falls into the "people", such as technics, loyalty and management skill. The founder's recent award of Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 winners and her financial industry background provide GPD with additional advantage. The founder's previous business success gives GPD a great reputation boost and provides extra leverage when engaging other local or multinational businesses to become potential partners. Furthermore, as stated in the external competitive analysis, the nature of the Internet business allows GPD to operate with relatively low capital and marginal costs. GPD also maintains great relationships with its current partners who are already listed on its website. Finally, the competitor analysis in the previous sections

shows that GPD's website is built with the latest technologies than its competitors - even those that have been established longer in the LOHAS market.

4.2 Weaknesses

The limited financial resource is GPD's major weakness. GPD is at the early start-up stage and unable to attract sufficient investment without proving the success of its business. Meanwhile, GPD does not own valuable assets that can be leveraged for finance. Although the current cost of operating is low, there is no additional funding for extensive sales and marketing campaigns for GPD. Moreover, GPD's business relies on its IT system to operate, therefore fits into the strategic section on the McFarlane's strategic grid analysis. This suggests that GPD needs to be scrutinized while using consultants to develop its IT system.

The lack of staff for support and implementation is also a weakness. The founder was able to find UBC and SFU business school students to volunteer for internships. However, their knowledge is generally not well retained by the company once the internship is over. GPD also has to confront buyers with high bargaining power since businesses advertisement hardly has switching costs. The biggest challenge GPD faces is how to capitalize on its current assets and translate that into stable and sustainable revenue that can be used for growth. These issues should be considered when GPD formulates its strategic plans.

4.3 Opportunities

The opportunities are identified here in accordance with the external analysis. The green industry, especially the LOHAS consumer segments, is growing exponentially. The online search and advertisement industry is also mature and well developed. Therefore, the market opportunity for GPD's business carried by online platform is promising. However, several factors that govern GPD's success should be considered carefully. First, GPD needs to come up with a service model that creates value for customers and buyers as well as differentiates itself from competitors. Once GPD's service is more differentiated and better tuned to meet the consumer's needs, GPD will be able to charge premium process for services. Furthermore, the competitor analysis in the previous section also showed that GPD's competitors are recognizing the potential power of social media. If social media is utilized appropriately, GPD will be positioned itself to massive online user groups to gain maximum attentions without high marketing expense.

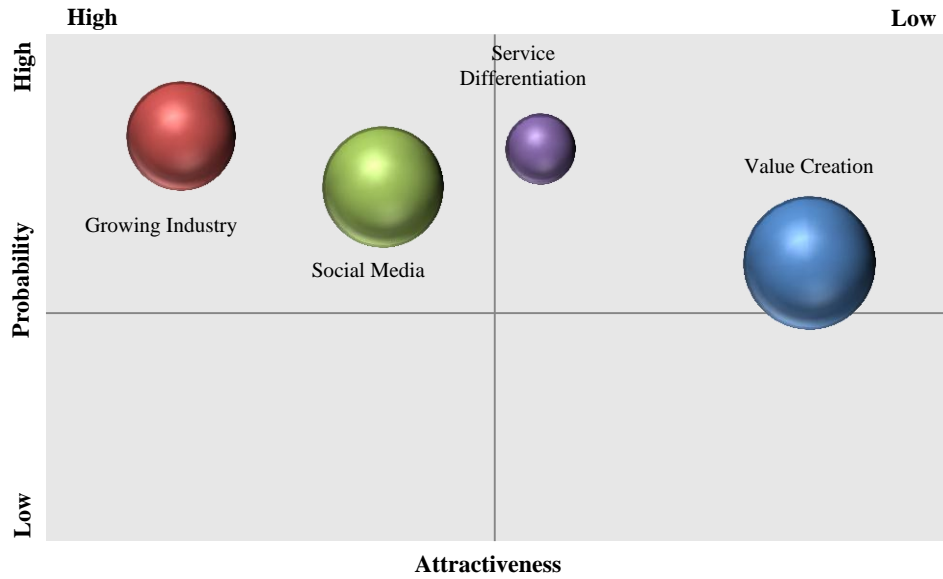


Figure 4.1 GPD's Opportunity Matrix

4.4 Threats

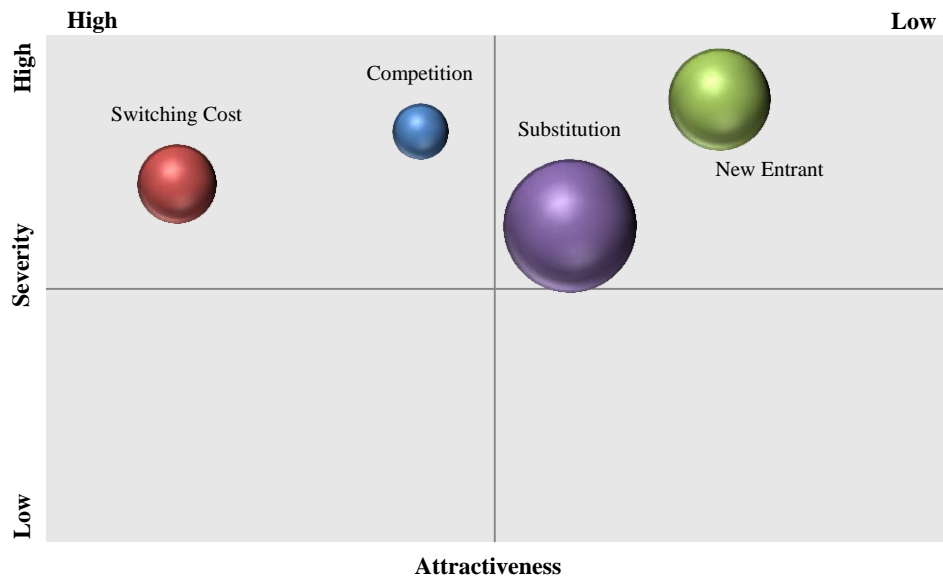


Figure 4.2 GPD's Threat Matrix

The threats to GPD's business were analyzed in preceding chapter. The threat of entry due to low entry barriers is demonstrated by the industry's low upfront cost and marginal cost. The inability for market incumbents to punish or retaliate against new entrants also contributes to this threat. Even though the new entrants will need to accumulate data and information over time

in order to compete, there also exists the threat from search industry giants such as Google and Yahoo. Their entry would intensify the competition with their enormous resources and online search expertise.

4.5 Summary of Internal Analysis

In this chapter, the SWOT analysis was conducted in assessing GPD's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as exploring associated opportunities and threats that can affect the future of business. The strong management team and good reputations are advantageous for GPD to start up. The financial shortage for GPD is a major issue, which is rooted from the investors' low confidence due to GPD's uncertainties. Since online information search for green/sustainability products and services has substantial growing space, GPD should continue to enhance its strengths to boost investor's confidence. At the same time, the threats due to nature of IT business are co-existing. The analysis provides a good sense of what GPD should capitalise on and meanwhile what GPD should correct or avoid. All these factors are considered in the strategic plan for GPD.

5: Strategic Plan

From previous chapter the SWOT of what GPD faces has been identified and evaluated. The next step is to determine where GPD should go and what enables GPD to accomplish goals, which involves a process of goal formulation and strategy formulation. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a comprehensive, straightforward, and usable strategic plan for GPD.

5.1 GPD's Goal Formulation

In this section, the GPD's goal formulation includes mission statement, vision, goals and corporate values.

5.1.1 GPD's Mission Statement

GPD aims to help the world achieve a more sustainable economy, environmentally and socially, by making it the mainstream to purchase and source sustainable products, services and information. By doing so, GPD will inspire a shift awareness to sustainable lifestyle, encourage innovation on green/sustainability technologies and empower positive individual choices affecting the environment.

5.1.2 GPD's Vision

The vision of GPD is to become a global leader in green directories and help people search for green products, services and information within an unparalleled database and a sophisticated online search platform. For companies that are pursuing green/sustainable businesses, GPD will also help them align the economy with values: maintaining and improving the health of our planet.

5.1.3 GPD's Goals

- Close the gap between consumers' increasing willingness to buy sustainable and the difficulty of doing so;
- Educate and support businesses in their sustainability efforts;
- Continue to build and develop GPD community;

- Successfully build GPD's brand name on the international stage.

All goals lead to a shift towards an increasing population living in the natural parameters of sustainable resource consumption as well as towards well-balanced ecosystems and social justice supports.

5.1.4 GPD's Corporate Values

The health of the planet for future generations is the main reason GPD was founded; it is at the forefront of every decision made. Therefore, GPD is not only concerned with the traditional financial bottom lines, but also with its environmental and social impacts.

GPD management has strived to establish a strong culture based on four core values:

- **Education:** commit to educating both businesses and consumers on sustainability, and spreading awareness about the environmental and social effects due to human beings' consumption.
- **Service:** offer the best customer service and ensure GPD representatives are competent to serve clients' needs.
- **Quality:** commit to providing customers and users with the most thorough and updated information on the advanced platform and search engine tool.
- **Integrity:** conduct GPD's business with the highest degree of responsibility, honesty and accountability.

5.2 GPD's Strategy Formulation

GPD is still in its early stage. Since the initial launch of GPD website in 2009, it has partnered with 250 business owners with limited active users, and has not generated profits. Currently there are 4 people working in the management team, including CEO, Chief Technical Officer, Social Media Consultant and Sustainability Consultant. The purpose of strategy formulation is to have an appropriate plan for GPD to attract people's attention as well as investors. In this section, the strategy formulation is consisting of six phases: marketing, social media campaign, risk mitigation, strategic partnership, financial highlights, and exit strategy.

5.2.1 Target Market

5.2.1.1 Business to Consumers (B2C)

LOHAS consumers are a global driver for sustainability and a transition to a sustainable economy. They are a measurable and growing consumer group, defined by attributes and values, not demographic profiles [13]. In the last few years, GPD tried to become the most convenient place for green consumers to locate desirable products and services. In the next 2 years, GPD will create a portal that encourages and facilitates green/sustainable lifestyle decisions for all consumers, not just for those already inclined to purchase sustainably.

5.2.1.2 Business to Business (B2B)

In North America, business continues to show a trend towards “green” purchasing despite an economic downturn. Many organizations have already established a formal or informal organization sustainability policy, and more organizations are planning to implement one in the near future [22].

As purchasers are increasingly seeking trusted information to identify sustainable products and services, they recognize eco-labels contribute to better purchasing decisions. The increase in product labelling and purchasers’ awareness and knowledge of eco-labels represents an opportunity for GPD to provide a consolidated database of information, via search functions, which will aid buyers in sustainable product and service selection.

5.2.1.3 Recommendations

- **Target LOHAS as early adopters** – They are the early adopters of sustainable products and services. By targeting and allowing them to engage, they will become GPD brand ambassadors.
- **Create personal premium solutions** – In environmentally aware nations, corporate social responsibility, ethical principles and environmental efficiency is no longer a point of difference but an expectation. In future, there will be greater demands for solutions that empower LOHAS consumers to engage in the sustainability of the world. The future of green premiums lie in sustainable innovation that put LOHAS consumers in control and feeling better about the decisions they are making.
- **Reinforce current perceptions through contributions** – LOHAS consumers see social environmental health connected to their own personal health and wellbeing. It is

increasingly important for green/sustainability organizations to speak about their own contributions in protecting sustainable culture and environment. This reinforces current perceptions and allows others to participate in the protection of brand.

- **Communicate corporate responsibility** – The perceived environmental friendliness of companies increases the likelihood of purchase by consumers. With the general population interested in learning more about how to protect the environment, there is a real opportunity to connect sustainable business practices with the market demand for greater knowledge.
- **Learn and advance** – Information about new ideas, new ways of living and sustainable solutions is proliferating globally. To bring together a number of best practice approaches and implement them simultaneously will potentially advance GPD over the competitions.
- **Build brand transparency** – With concerns over the authenticity of green claims, consumers are increasingly checking the credibility of products and services, resulting in greater trust of small accessible brands over large global competitors. Independent accreditation, supply chain traceability and online communities will become increasingly paramount in telling and delivering authenticity with consumers in the future.
- **Build consumer trust** – Consumers may not necessarily differentiate between the producer' and retailer's roles and responsibilities. What counts to consumers at the point-of-sale is the price, value and benefits of products. Winning, building and maintaining consumer trust is crucial for all members and players in the value chain. Consumers require a form of guarantee where they can place their trust. All efforts invested into providing consumers with organic, fair trade and environmentally friendly products would only bring few benefits if consumers in general lost trust and confidence in the undertaking of the LOHAS industry.

5.2.2 Social Media Strategy

GPD should design a comprehensive and progressive social media campaign to support the re-launch and development, which combines social messaging, interactive and traditional social media.

5.2.2.1 Social Messaging

GPD recognizes the power of word-of-mouth advertising and is committed to creating a buzz about the business through various strategies.

- **Call for interviews** - GPD team members will give interviews. Founder Connie Linder was already featured in a few interviews from magazines to newspaper to promote GPD.
- **Join in tradeshow and events** - GPD is committed to participating in international tradeshow and events. The first campaign was in 2009. Currently GPD is in the process of another campaign.
- **Give presentations** - GPD develops a series of presentations covering broad topics in green/sustainability, which will be made to various educational, business and conference audiences, including Board of Trade and Chambers of Commerce.
- **Participate in green contests** - GPD will contribute annually to high school and university scholarships and green-inspired contests, such as:
 - Best Community Blog Award
 - University Scholarships
 - High School Scholarships
 - Green Home Renovations Contest
 - Green Innovation Essay Contest

GPD will have a presence at significant sustainability trade shows, such as EPIC: Vancouver Sun Sustainable Living Expo. Through a variety of speaking engagements, Connie Linder on behalf of GPD will access to business and university audiences. GPD also plans strategic alliances with green organizations and events.

5.2.2.2 Interactive Social Media

Interactive social media is essentially the use of IT to turn communication into interactive dialogue among users and service providers. Currently, the most influential social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. All three platforms show that customers are like to have their voices heard. Besides expressing their concerns, people also tend to compare experiences and products with their group of friends. When the majority of people are discussing

products and services, they are comparing prices and talking about sales and specials with their social network friends and followers.

- **Continue community development** - GPD's in-depth, interactive community and membership section is a major feature. Here individuals and company representatives can contribute to the blog, provide product reviews, create customized profiles, and exchange information.
- **Create GPD blog** - GPD will create an interactive blog updating current sustainability information and technology. In addition, GPD will participate in other popular blogs and provide links to these locations.
- **Produce GPD own electronic magazine** - The magazine will be sent out to subscribers monthly, providing convenience for smart phone and tablet users.
- **Set up social networking** - GPD's Facebook integration will allow visitors to sign up through their Facebook account and participate in the GPD community through blogging, commenting on publications, or rating companies, products and services. By tying the social media platform, the GPD webpage will be exposed to Facebook network. This maturing perspective on interactive channels coupled with technology advances, will lead to a customer-centric future in which interactive technologies actually infuse all marketing efforts. Therefore, given the nature of GPD to encourage users to decide for themselves whether a company is true and good in their green initiatives, the blogging component will allow people to express their opinions in a broad way. The blog can be posted to individual Facebook account for further reach new users. GPD is planning to launch a "Be part of the Solutions Campaign" using a combination all three most popular social media: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. A Facebook profile page and a GPD/Connie Linder Twitter account will be created and maintained as part of the campaign and used as the channel to open bidirectional communication with their online green sustainability community. GPD is also considering the use of YouTube video to create a viral message that can help promote the awareness of green economy and sustainability.

5.2.2.3 Traditional Social Media

Traditional social media mainly includes television, radio, audio/video, etc. Because LOHAS consumers have a wide range of ages from 20 to 60 the launch of traditional social

media is to target LOHAS consumers who do not use online social network quite frequent, as well as small/medium business owners who are too busy to stay on Internet. GPD will continue heavily focusing on interactive social media campaign, associated with traditional social media campaign for users who do not use Internet often.

- Audio/Video - GPD will create a video campaign that profiles the company. This video will be uploaded on YouTube with links on GPD Facebook and Twitter accounts, which enables people to comment and distribution widely.
- Cross Promotional Advertising - GPD is a firm believer in aligning itself with its advertising partners and is a proponent and participant in numerous cross-promotional advertising campaigns.
- Print Advertising - This will be minimal and will only be done on sustainable or recycled materials.
- Television - Television advertising will be developed and launched where and when appropriate.
- Radio - Radio ads will be created.

5.2.3 Risk Mitigation Strategy

5.2.3.1 Risk Identification

- **GPD is a newcomer** – The website is going to re-launch in September 2012. The services have not yet been proven or marketed by GPD team while direct competitors exist with certain followers.
- **There are competitors on the horizon** – The gap between sustainable values and actual sustainable purchasing has attracted many websites to attempt to connect consumers with green products and services.
- **GPD needs to deal with technical and Internet-based risks** – The main risks involves running a website containing viruses, unauthorized access and lack of security updates. Other potential risks, despite being extremely rare, include complete hardware failure or loss of connectivity to the server's datacentre.

5.2.3.2 Mitigation Recommendation

- **Enhance GPD core business strength** – GPD needs to consider how to create and maintain the quantity and quality of the website content to strengthen its core business. GPD will stay in this market by having content and design superior to direct competitors, by differentiating itself from indirect competitors by using GPD’s expertise in the area of sustainability and by using its superior three-tier ranking system for the green attributes of the company listings.
- **Protect servers and data with strict security precautions** – GPD will run daily updates to the server and install the latest security patches and updates to ensure that any software vulnerabilities are patched as soon as they are available. With daily update procedures, it will enable GPD to recover back to the most recent backup within 24 hours if hardware failure or loss happens. Therefore, the downtime will approximately be 2-4 hours only. A Linux web server will be deployed, which would greatly reduce the number of potential threats and viruses that are aimed solely at Windows-based web servers. A separate hardware firewall device will also eliminate the number of threats, and malicious requests. Physical access to the server will be limited only to authorized data centre staff. In addition, back-up servers in separate datacentre in different locations will be employed, in order to remove the potential down time associated with a natural disaster.

5.2.4 Strategic Partnership

Existing online businesses offer increasing levels of convenience that are becoming difficult for new entrants to match. As consumers and business owners have become accustomed to the level of convenience available online, the use of destination websites is increasing. With more eyes and ears being directed online, advertising dollars follow. GPD can leverage these trends in the online marketplace.

Through strategic partnerships with other companies, GPD aspires to ensure the use and profitability of the site. By offering selections of sustainable products and services, GPD can leverage alliances with many large manufacturers who are going green. Companies in alliance with GPD may not only be approached through GPD’s site, but also leverage their relationship with GPD to promote their green efforts and even advertise their sustainability efforts.

GPD also facilitates a valuable, revenue generating service for listing companies by providing market intelligence and analysis. By studying ad hit rates and users’ comments and

feedbacks, listing companies would gain valuable insights to the perceived sustainability and popularity of their products and services.

With comments and feedbacks from users, GPD can leverage relationships with market research firms. However, GPD does not rent, sell or share personally identifiable information for marketing purposes or without explicit consent. Because GPD believes in transparency, all users will be noted exactly what GPD does and does not do with their data.

There are other green service provision sites for GPD to leverage and widen service offer. To establish green job search sites is in GPD's consideration for future developments.

5.2.5 Financial Highlights

A forecast model from 2012 to 2016 was developed for GPD operation forecasts in North America. The following analysis outlines the expected operating results. The detailed calculations are in appendix A. The following estimates are based on management projections and are dependent upon the successful implementation of the corporate strategy as outlines in this chapter.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Revenues	\$5,675	\$15,000	\$45,000	\$135,000	\$270,000	\$470,675
Direct Costs ¹	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$24,000	\$72,000	\$144,000	\$253,000
Gross Margin	\$675	\$7,000	\$21,000	\$63,000	\$126,000	\$217,675
Gross Margin %	11.89%	46.67%	46.67%	46.67%	46.67%	46.25%
Indirect Costs ²	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$15,000
EBITDA³	(\$2,325)	\$4,000	\$18,000	\$60,000	\$123,000	\$202,675
EBITDA %	-40.97%	26.67%	40.00%	44.44%	45.56%	43.06%

¹Direct Costs - represent the costs of the website and vary directly with the level of subscribers.

²Indirect Costs - represent the general and administrative expense, mainly fixed cost.

³EBITDA - Earning before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization.

Table 5-1 Summary of Operating Results

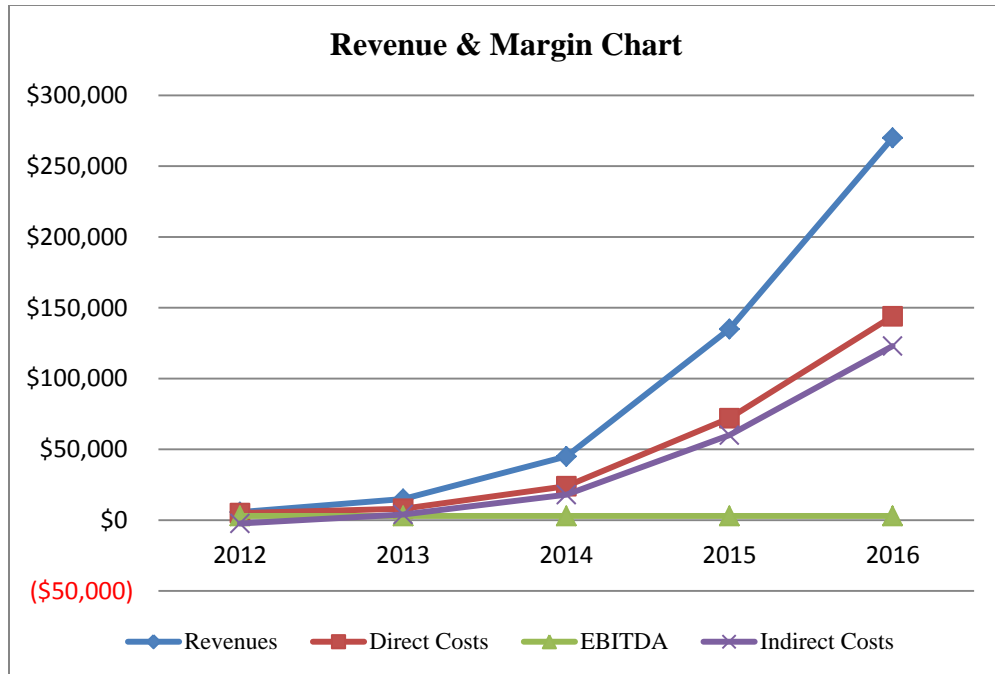


Figure 5.1 Summary of GPD Operating Results

The key driver for revenues will be the number of corporations subscribed to GPD. GPD webpage was initially launched in North America in 2009 and is currently in its beta stage. Subscribers will be required to pay an annual subscription fee from \$200 to \$1000 based on services. Several advertising options will be provided to subscribers, pricing from \$150/month to \$500/month depending on locations on webpage. For Eco-flyer revenue projections, it is assumed that a flyer will be listed for an average of 5 days at \$25.

Direct costs represent the costs of developing, hosting and maintaining the website. In addition, there are sales commissions that will be tied to sales volumes for advertising on the site. Indirect costs represent the general and administrative expenses of operating the corporate offices and management teams. These costs are fixed costs and do not fluctuate with sales.

GPD believes that with the anticipated re-launch data and volumes, the above-noted results can reasonably be attained. Although GPD anticipates developing an extensive business-to-business portal simultaneously with the re-launch, these results do not yet includes fees collected from such activity. This will enable more widespread consumer interaction with the site and enable consumers to purchase greener products that may not be available locally.

5.2.6 Exit Strategy

GPD management is committed to creating value for shareholders, for which a number of future exit strategies should be considered and included in the strategic plan. GPD's exit strategy will be based on market value at the time of assessment, the benefit to shareholders, and the future projections for creating long-term value and revenue. Proposed future options, but not limited to, are indicated below.

- Initial Public Offering (IPO) – An advantage of being public is to access to a wider array of financing options for GPD, and therefore use them for expanding and diversifying GPD business.
- Acquisition/Merger – Sometimes the synergies and economies of scale by merging with other companies can create more value than each company on its own. After acquisition/merger, GPD's shareholders would receive share value presumably worth more than what they hold in each independent company in a long term.

5.3 Summary of Strategic Plan

In this chapter, a corporate strategic plan for GPD was proposed. Initially clearly defined mission, vision and goals for GPD were presented. In order to accomplish them, target market was identified and recommendations were mentioned, followed by social media campaign strategy to assist GPD in maximizing exposure among consumers and companies as well as educating and supporting sustainability. Meanwhile, the risks that GPD could encounter were studied and a list of mitigation strategies was considered carefully. Strategic partnership plan would enhance GPD's position in the market while financial highlights, as management team's projections to shareholders, will be regarded as profit goals. At the end, an exit strategy was developed to provide a contingent plan to protect shareholders' investment as well as maintain GPD's competition.

The proposed strategy demands that the GPD needs to be designed in such a way that the strategy can be successfully implemented. A corporate structure, capable people, and congruent culture must be established at GPD, if goal attainment through the chosen strategy is to be realized. GPD is in the early stage, and has not generated profits. The above-mentioned recommendation would help GPD increase user base and attract investment. Also, organization and management is important to align with the strategy. The GPD president, Connie Linder, works extensively with other 3 managers who are also passionate in promoting sustainable

lifestyles. They are dedicating themselves into advocating sustainability. The success of Connie's last project in steel recycling system in 2011 has won attentions and gained sponsorship from several Canadian organizations. These organizations will likely support GPD to launch a social media campaign, including interview and online video. The business plan is being prepared by the management team, which Connie will present in California in September 2012 to potential investors.

To implement this strategy, GPD will have to either hire a consultant for social media marketing or dedicate one of management team members to help with the creation and implementation of the plan. GPD will need an assessment to understand what kind of message GPD must convey to the target audience, which media should be used, and how to interact with potential green buyers and suppliers. Finally, GPD needs to have a clear goal and performance criteria to measure the degree of the success of social media strategy.

6: Conclusion

The motivation in this thesis is to develop a congruent strategic plan for GPD to re-launch its website and expand its user base as soon as possible. More specifically, GPD is to use a series of strategies as leverage to attract more LOHAS customers and small/medium business owners. This has been studied through the business analysis.

At the start of the thesis, the urgency and advocacy of promoting sustainability to protect the planet is described. GPD website was established under this background with the motivation to support and educate people to pursue green/sustainability products and services.

In order to accomplish the mission, a well-defined business analysis and strategic plan is contemplated for GPD. Given green/sustainability industry situation, trends, growth potential, market size, LOHAS customer characteristics, the GPD business is attractive to both LOHAS consumers and green/sustainability investors to build a platform for information exchanges and communications for users. As the platform provider who is targeting particular customers and small/medium business owners in North America, the potential revenue opportunities for GPD are substantial.

The evaluation of strengths and competitions shows that GPD has a superior ranking system along with advanced IT technologies and expertise. GPD team is able to develop competitive advantages over direct rivals and differentiate itself from other general search directories. However, the existing and potential threats should also be analyzed. Strategic plans should be developed and carried out to prevent and mitigate threats.

The assessment of macro-environment in green/sustainability industry reveals that the emerging socio-culture and current global economy demands healthier and more sustainable lifestyles and business. In the meantime, massive green technologies and innovations funded by green investment have entered into a rapid development pace. More and more nations and local governments are recognizing the importance of sustainability for human beings and societies, and policies, regulations and legislations are being proposed to foster green/sustainability actions. Based on these findings, GPD should take this opportunity and play a leading role to echo it.

Therefore, GPD should target the LOHAS market in the B2C and B2B areas by approaching the majority via online social media platforms, and encourage feedbacks and

comments from them. By the leverage of social media, GPD should attempt to build a substantial user base in a short time to gain network effect advantage.

GPD can use the risk mitigation plan to deter imitation from competitors and prevent technical crisis. Forming partnerships with companies will strengthen GPD market position and bring mutual benefits for all parties.

There is no such thing as a perfect corporate plan. Most plans are developed, re-developed, altered, and then changed again over a planning period. By far the most important thing is that management team gets together and talks about the future of GPD, and where GPD was, where GPD will grow in time. Planning is as much about the past as it is about the future, and is also about learning from the mistakes made in the past.

Appendices

Appendix A Statement of Profit and Loss

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
REVENUES					
NORTH AMERICA					
Directory Listings	\$3,075	\$9,000	\$27,000	\$81,000	\$162,000
Advertising	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$7,500	\$22,500	\$45,000
EcoFlyer	\$100	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$18,000	\$36,000
Streaming Newsreel	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$4,500	\$13,500	\$27,000
TOTAL REVENUES	\$5,675	\$15,000	\$45,000	\$135,000	\$270,000
DIRECT COST	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$24,000	\$72,000	\$144,000
GROSS MARGIN	\$675	\$7,000	\$21,000	\$63,000	\$126,000
<i>% Gross Margin</i>	<i>11.89%</i>	<i>46.67%</i>	<i>46.67%</i>	<i>46.67%</i>	<i>46.67%</i>
SELLING, GENERAL & ADMIN					
Insurance	\$350	\$350	\$350	\$350	\$350
Marketing	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Office Lease	-	-	-	-	-
Office Supply & Maintenance	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Fees	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$450
Seminars & Tradeshows	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
Telephone & Fax	-	-	-	-	-
Mail & Courier	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
Travel	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
Financing Fees	-	-	-	-	-
Wages & Benefits	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
EBITDA¹	(\$2,325)	\$4,000	\$18,000	\$60,000	\$123,000
<i>% EBITDA Margin</i>	<i>-40.97%</i>	<i>26.67%</i>	<i>40.00%</i>	<i>44.44%</i>	<i>45.56%</i>
Less:					
Interest Expense	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation and Amortization	-	-	-	-	-
EBIT²	(\$2,325)	\$4,000	\$18,000	\$60,000	\$123,000
Income Tax	-	\$100	\$450	\$1,500	\$3,075
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$2,325)	\$3,900	\$17,550	\$58,500	\$119,925

Notes

¹ Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization

² Earnings Before Interest and Taxes

Appendix B GPD's Social - Progressive Rating Criteria

Fair Treatment

Fair wages

- Meets or exceeds local applicable Fair Wage Guide minimum standards, is subject to fair wage guidelines.

Fair labour practices

- Employees are not working under “sweatshop” conditions (e.g. no forced labour, no child labour, weekly hours of work do not exceed local standards, no reduction in wages as disciplinary measures).

Safe and habitable physical working environment

- Safe working conditions, free from physical abuse or threats of abuse with adequate heat, air, light, and access to toilet facilities.

Equitable employment opportunities

- no discrimination on the basis of gender, race or religious affiliation.

Respect for basic human rights

Fair Trade

Fair price for product/service

- Producers receive a fair price for their labour.

Fair share of revenues generated

- Producers receive a fair share of the revenue generated at the retail price.

Enterprise is a local, independent business

Enterprise is a small business

Enterprise is an employee-owned cooperative

- Employees have opportunities to provide input and some degree of control over decision-making.
- Goods and services are provided at a fair price (purchasing policies).

Goods and services locally made or purchased

The producer receives 50% pre-payment

- Before the product is shipped and/or service is provided, the seller pays least 50 percent to the producer in advance. This payment helps cover materials and labour.

Improving the Human Condition

Fights poverty/supports local food programs

Employs disadvantaged persons

Supports/provides employment or economic opportunities for women

Provides opportunities for marginalized and/or economically disadvantaged persons

Improving the Community

Supports health care initiatives

Supports improved community infrastructure (e.g. water supply, child care, etc.)

Supports education and/or training

Supports or enhances local arts and culture

Conserves preservation of knowledge of local/traditional materials, techniques and production

Supports employee community involvement

Philanthropy

Appendix C GPD's Eco - Progressive Rating Criteria

Low Energy Consumption

Production facilities are certified low energy users

Production facilities have an energy efficiency program

Renewable Energy/Clean Energy

Renewable energy makes up 50% or more of required energy

Low or no carbon emissions associated with production (or through purchase of off sets)

Low or offset carbon or carbon-neutral shipping

Low Resource Consumption

Reduction or elimination of waste

- 50% of product inputs from post-consumer waste.
- 50% of product inputs from biodegradable materials (e.g. untreated seashells, bamboo, sustainably-harvested wood, fibres).
- no release of toxic substances to nature.
- re-use, reclamation or recycling of waste extraneous to manufacturing process.
- Reduced Packaging.

Ecosystem and Environmental Conservation

100% sustainably harvested materials

- All materials in the products were harvested such that the rate of use is no greater than the rate of regeneration.

No toxic materials used

Prevents ecological destruction

Protects endangered habitats and/or destruction of endangered habitats

Independent certification (e.g. FSC)

Environmentally responsible Agricultural Practices

Materials grown without of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or chemical fertilizers

No genetically modified organism (GMO) ingredients

Humane Farming and Production Practices

Humane treatment of farm animals raised for food and/or clothing

No animal ingredients and no animal testing

Habitat Restoration And Species Preservation

Protection of native species or responsible conservation of traditionally harvested species

Appendix D GPD Free Campaign 2009

Empowering People to Make Better Choices.



www.greenpagesdirectory.net

JOIN FOR FREE

Our contribution to the marketplace revolution

List in our GreenPages Directory and access our innovative and unparalleled search engine and business platform that makes it easy for consumers to find your products and services.

GreenPages Directory is the next step in the evolution of the online green community marketplace, offering listings that can be sorted by proximity, environmental certifications and customer feedback and reviews.

Your listing gives you a variety of marketing options. You can generate an online Eco-Flyer, enhance your sustainability profile and communicate the contributions your company, products and services make to the community and the environment, all while extending your reach beyond geographical borders.

To celebrate the launch of GreenPages Directory we're giving away **free one-year business listings** ranging in value from \$200 to \$1000 each.



TO GET STARTED

1. Visit www.greenpagesdirectory.net and check out our corporate video
2. Click on the "Create a Listing" link
3. Sign up for the one package that best suits your business needs: Basic, Standard or Enterprise
4. Follow the sign up process and input the promo code "free" for 100% off the listing fees. The credit card is a required field but you will receive a 100% discount showing "\$0.00 billed."

For more information, please give us a call: **1.866.898.2665**
Or Email: services@greenpagesdirectory.net

Appendix E GPD's Founder Profile

Connie Linder

MBA 1993, Founder, Green Pages Directory

Never underestimate the power of good



CARMEN SCHMID

Connie Linder, an entrepreneur, former stock broker and founder of the recently launched online Green Pages Directory (www.greenpagesdirectory.net), believes in the inherent good of people and has learned that rather than fighting against things we don't agree with, we should invest our energy in moving towards positive solutions. With those beliefs in hand and a strong educational background, including a BA and MBA from UBC, Connie has devoted the past eight years to endeavours which are good for the world and in promoting ethical and sustainable methods of advancing the economy.

Why do you think working "green" or taking a sustainable approach to business is so important?

Working in alignment with nature is the only way business will sustain itself; there will be a huge paradigm shift that we can already see beginning. Sustainability is about using our resources wisely and taking responsibility; when there is a critical mass of intention that exists to align with nature it can be pretty powerful.

Sometimes it's hard to think of making grand corporate efforts to sustain our world. What are some things individuals can do?

Things evolve gradually; there is still a disconnect between the "change the world" mantra and what happens in our daily lives. Living with positive intent is important for guiding decisions regardless of our financial situation. For example, when I was building my business as a single mom, I was shopping for canned tomatoes—organic were \$3.99 and regular were 99 cents. With my limited funds, I could not purchase all organic but wanted to support my values so bought one can of organic and four of the regular tomatoes. Now I can buy all organic, but it took time to get there. This is what I refer to as an incremental change. En masse, this represents 20 per cent of the marketplace.

As people transition to making ethical decisions with intent to live a certain way, the prices of what are traditionally called alternative products come down and the world slowly moves to becoming more sustainable. Two things happen as a result; companies begin to change due to evolving customer sentiment and those products become more accessible.



What can people learn from companies that are finding innovative ways to be environmentally responsible while remaining economically viable?

The traditional approach to business has been that you can either "do good" OR you can make money. What those traditional companies need to realize is that you can actually make more money in the long run by being responsible to the environment and respectful of people; not doing so is not only a moral issue but also a business risk.

How does GreenPages fit into this?

At GreenPages we are committed to supporting the proliferation of a sustainable economy. It is a sophisticated directory and search tool to link information seekers with companies offering products and services that are more ecologically and socially progressive. We live our values in how we do our business and the type of information we are making more accessible.

As a single mom building a business, Connie Linder began an incremental shift to align her grocery shopping with her values. At four times the cost of regular tomatoes, the organic ones were a splurge.

What are you most hopeful about with regard to sustainability?

I think current world situations will force us to be better people and work together. There will be so much change in the next five to ten years and, as we move beyond the digital age and enter a new world paradigm, there will be incredible opportunities for people to embrace; there will be an imperative to aim for a higher standard of personal responsibility and accountability. ■

Appendix F GPD's Management Team

Founder & President Connie Linder, an entrepreneur who has participated in many successful start-up companies, began focussing on the clean energy and technology sector in 2001. She has been a financial advisor, worked at the board and executive levels in the business and non-profit sectors, and co-founded Churchill Armoured Car, an established BC company and winner of the Royal Bank's Top New Service Supplier award. Connie also serves as a mentoring through UBC, the Women's Enterprise Center and Minerva Foundation for BC Women, and frequently speaks at UBC conferences and business meeting on finance, social entrepreneurship and venture capital. She has an MBA, licenses for securities and insurance and is trained as a personal development counsellor.

Chief Technology Officer Jarrod Goddard is responsible for the development, maintenance and online promotion of GPD. He has been developing web sites and web application for over 10 years, focussing on usability, accessibility, streamlining processes for clients, and is an expert in search engine optimization and online marketing. He graduated from Thompson River University in 2002 and made the Dean's List. Jarrod is the recipient of the 2010 Young Entrepreneur Award (Kamloops Chamber of Commerce) and the 2004 EDDY Award for Innovation and Technology.

Sustainability Consultant David Waldron is a trained municipal engineer who has spent the past 15 years directing and advising award-winning sustainability leadership initiatives for businesses, local communities and NGOs. Most recently, David served as Dr. David Suzuki's sustainability manager.

Media Consultant Nora Weber is president and founder of the strategic planning and media relations company TerraCom Communication Group. She has more than 20 years media experience at the local, national and international all levels, working on the production side of video, radio, and television. Nora is also Canadian Director for Walas Concepts, and Earth Charter Cities (a United Nations initiative that grew from the Earth Charter).

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