

2023 PROGRAM REPORT



RIVERVIEW REWARDS



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ABOUT THE RELAUNCH OF THE RIVERVIEW REWARDS PROGRAM

The Riverview Rewards program was relaunched in November 2022. 32 businesses signed on to participate in the relaunch (30 were existing businesses from the initial launch in 2020, 2 were new to the program). For the relaunch, 50% of these businesses offered a new deal or changed up their existing offer.

A Riverview Rewards Facebook and Instagram page was created to promote the business offers and announce upcoming contests.

New seasonal ads were also created for roadside billboards and Facebook ads. Prizes were also purchased from these participating businesses for the relaunch.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

Our goal was to support local businesses by means of providing a tool to help promote their new or existing business. The secondary goal was to encourage our residents and visitors to support and buy local.

PROJECTS IN 2023

1. Cardholder Survey
2. Participating Businesses Survey
3. Cost Comparison of App Developers

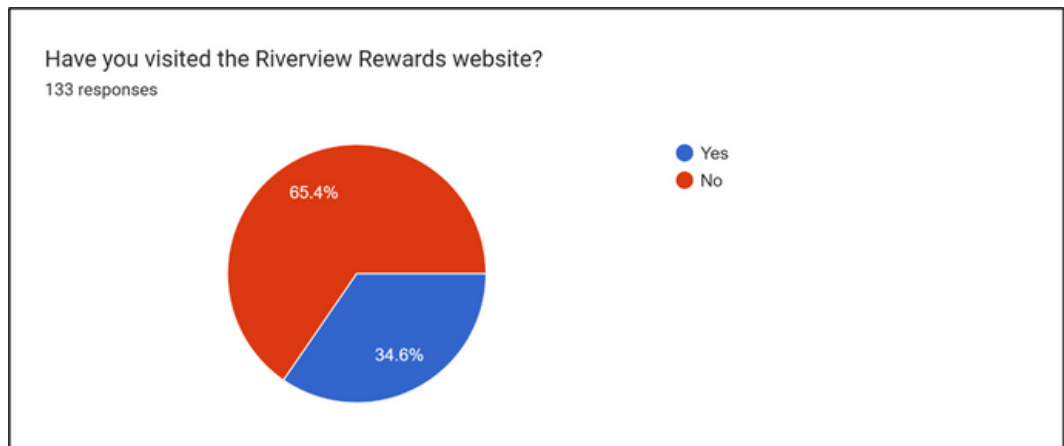
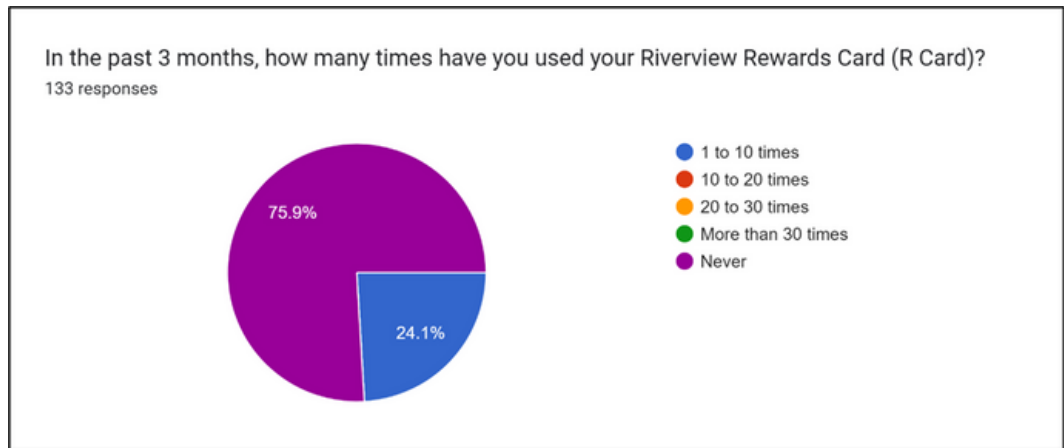
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PROJECT 1: CARDHOLDER SURVEY

Conducted between February until March 2023

A survey was sent out to 1,879 cardholders. 133 people responded to the survey. Which is a response rate of only 7% (below the average of 10%-20%).

The first set of questions measures the frequency of R Card use and visits to the homepage. As you can see from the graphs below. The frequency of usage and site visits are low.



In the next section, we wanted to know what they thought about our program. While we spent the time, effort and cost to make the website more user friendly, many found the website to be lacking in certain areas.

TELL US WHAT YOU LIKE, DISLIKE, OR HOW WE CAN IMPROVE OUR WEBSITE.

“I liked the list of participants”

“I think you should include an image of the participating companies logo. This will help to identify them and create more business. I will not remember the names of a place but I might recognize a logo when driving by, or now know what to look for as words are hard to read when driving. It would also liven up the page as all the writing feels like it's a school report not advertisement.”

*“Easy to navigate site and categories.
Can't recall if any links to business websites or Google maps for easy directions”*

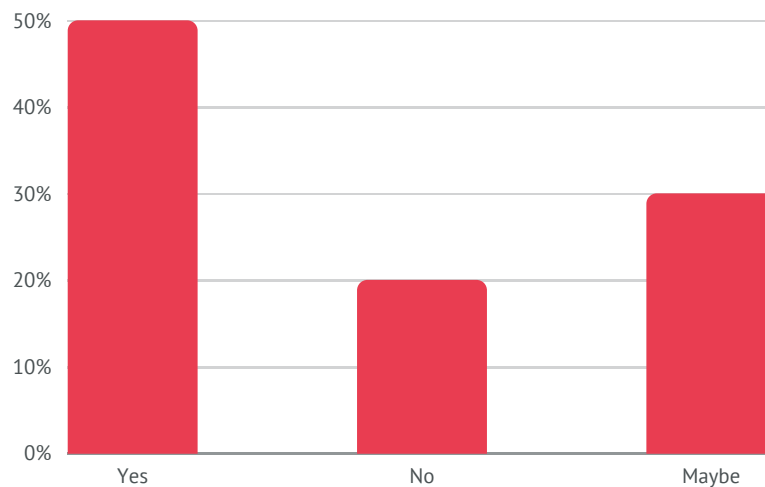
“I like that it shows the offers but I have found in the past that some of the offers are expired.”

“The website is good; I just never think of visiting the site.”

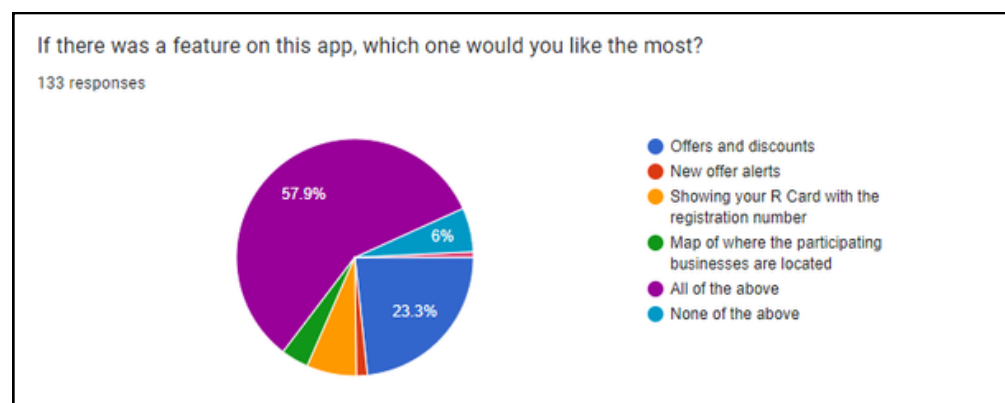
“There didn't seem to be a lot of local businesses participating, nor did quite a few of them have a much interest to me.”

“It’s a 50/50 chance that the app will be used.”

The second set of questions helped us gauge whether the cardholders would be interested in an application version of the program. From the bar graph below, we can see that half would download the app but the other half was unsure or would not download the app.



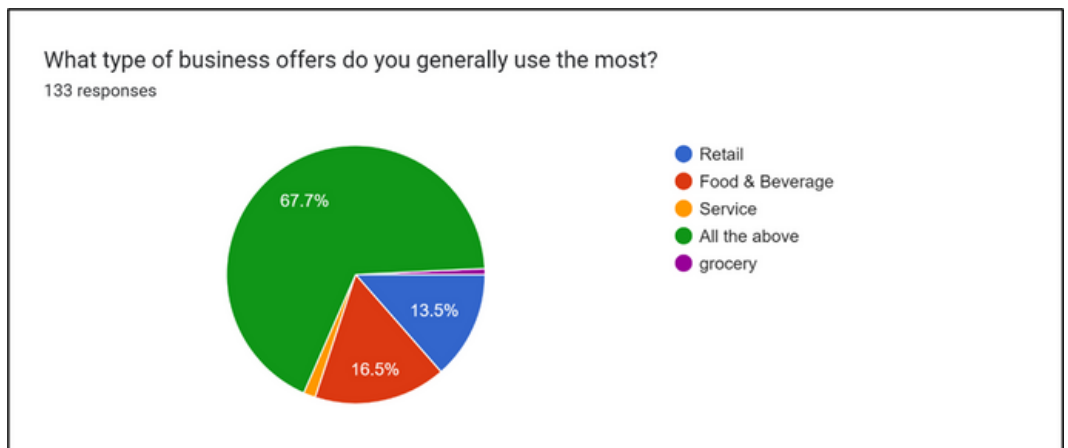
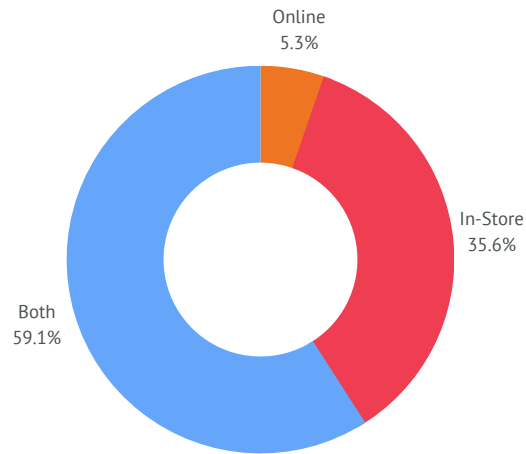
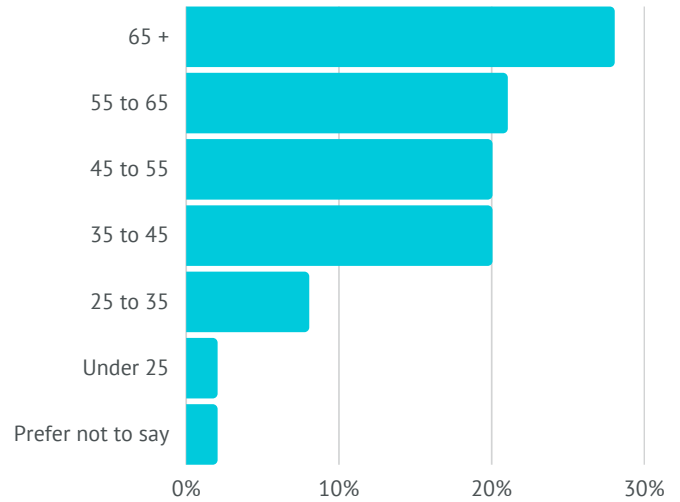
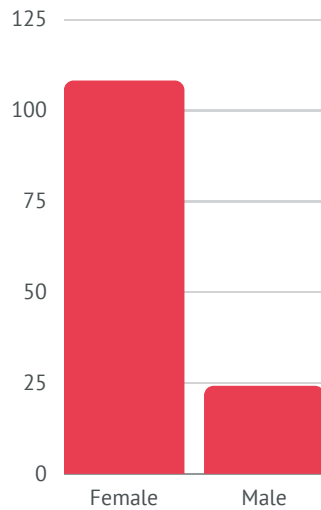
For app features, the graph below shows that “Offers and Discounts” was a desired feature. A majority would like to have everything else such a map showing the location of the business, a digitized R Card, and new offer alerts.



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The third set of questions gave us information on the demographics of our cardholders and their shopping preferences.

The data shows that the majority of our cardholders are women, a high percentage being 65+ years old but also between 35 to 65 years old. A high percentage prefer in-store shopping versus online and use offers that are mainly for retail or food & beverage, but not so much for services or groceries.



Lastly, we wanted to know their overall experience with our program.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OUR PROGRAM?

“Need more businesses involved with the program”

“Better/more frequent communication”

“Get more businesses to advertise their rewards.”

“Convince more businesses to participate, and if possible, get businesses to make the acceptance of the program card more noticeable. Often times, one doesn't see the fact that the business participates until after a purchase is made.”

“More day to day type offers instead of once or twice a year type of service.”

“I've never been asked for my R card anywhere I shop so maybe making it more obvious to customers where they can use their card would be really great.”

“I don't know which businesses honor the card or what they offer. I don't see businesses post the card or ask for the card. It is not easy to use. I have not received any benefit for it.”

“Points program would be wonderful!”

“In the original launch, I found participating businesses didn't actively ask for cards or promote, only a small sign by cash, sometimes seen only after paying. Perhaps suggest apart from discounts from businesses, have some sort of rewards or chance to win a prize of x amount of purchases from a collection of businesses

Have a app as well as make sure signs for registered businesses display them for all to see. They should also add it to there own website to let people know they are a participating member.”

PROJECT 2: PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES SURVEY

Conducted in the summer of 2023

The purpose of this survey was to get the feedback from our participating businesses.

At the time of the survey, there were 33 businesses that were participating in the program. We had 7 businesses respond to our survey which was a rate of 21%.

The following businesses answered our survey. 2 are at-home businesses, 2 are retail, and the other 3 are service businesses. 6 of them have been involved with the program since it launched in 2020.

- Argus Audiology
- Aidex Pest Management
- Dayzees Fashions
- Ergon Inc/ Ergon Thrift
- Just Fit Fitness Centre
- Simply for Life–Riverview
- SMART Human Resource Solutions Inc

Here is what they told us:

TELL US WHAT YOU VALUE ABOUT THE PROGRAM

“Getting our name and store out to the community. Feeling like a part of the community. Welcoming new customers to our business using the R card.”

“It’s nice to bring focus to shopping local and giving people an incentive to do so.”

“Encourages residents to shop local, and increases visibility for businesses.”

“Encourages shopping local, is of financial benefit to users, boosts business promotion.”

TELL US WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGED

“Uptake, awareness, and use.”

“More showcasing. More social media on Town of Riverview Facebook page. New R card promotions on busier times.”

“More advertisements for the program and the businesses using it.”

“The program doesn’t really cater to businesses that don’t have a store-front.”

“Ease of use, maybe a points system?”

Do you feel this program has helped create more awareness for your business?

Yes: 38% No: 62%

Do you have your R Card displayed in a highly visible area?

Yes: 50% No: 50%

Are your staff well informed about this program?

Yes: 75% No: 25%

Does your staff ask for the R Card at checkout?

Yes: 38% No: 62%

Have customers/clients/patients asked about the program or shown their R Card unprompted?

Yes: 50% No: 50%

Would you like this program to have an app on a smartphone?

Yes: 63% No: 37%

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PROJECT 3: APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

Cost comparison took place in the summer of 2023

In this exercise, I wanted to see if we could get a simple app for \$20K or under and learn about the process of creating an app.

I met with 4 application developers:

- **14 Oranges from Vancouver, BC**
- **Blaze Studios from Moncton, NB**
- **Essential Designs from Calgary, AB**
- **JWA Group from London, ON**

My findings:

Both JWA Group and 14 Oranges would be able to build a simple app for under \$20K. Their course of action would be to build a new website and the app would mirror the website.

Essential Designs and Blaze Studios starting cost was \$30,000+. This amount was well over my budget and no further discussions happened with Essential Designs. Blaze Studios, who developed our town website, advised me not to do the app due to major flaws with our program; the biggest one being that our program is not trackable.



After analyzing the data from both surveys, several conclusions can be drawn.

- The majority of cardholders are not using the card due to a lack of interest in the offers. The offers are not readily available through an app and visiting our website is not a priority.
- Our program is not a true loyalty program because we don't offer a "points system" or rewards. The name Riverview Rewards is confusing and deceiving to the cardholder.
- Businesses are not doing as much to promote the program and not instructing their staff to ask for the R Card. Their buy-in for our program is low.
- The service businesses feel that this program does not benefit them. It would be unfair to run a program that only benefits retail and the food & beverage businesses.
- The feedback gathered suggests that to increase usership of the Riverview Rewards program, it is necessary to ensure that the public is generally aware of the program, how it works, and its overall benefits. To that effect, the responses yielded in the survey recommended more resources towards a social media campaign to advertise the program. Yet, we have already put more time, effort and funds into this area and it doesn't seem to be enough to attract more businesses to join nor are we able to track the usage.



13 KEY OBSERVATIONS:

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

"Data suggests that this program needs more resources or a complete revamp to make it a success"

- Without a way to track who is using the R Card, we will never know the actual number of who is using it. Our successes cannot be measured.
- With the ubiquity of smartphones nowadays, we know that these business offers should be on an app but our data shows that it's a 50/50 chance someone would download it. It would be high risk to develop an app for the program in it's current state.
- With the rising cost of everything, we cannot justify spending more resources on an app or have a dedicated person work solely on this program when it's clear the program is not meeting our goals.
- Having only 7 out of the 33 businesses respond to our survey tells us that it's a low priority to the participating businesses.
- Most of these R Card businesses participate in our annual festivals (Winter Carnival, Maplefest, Sunfest, and HarvestFest) where we promote their business specials. Their specials are identical to their R Card offers which devalues our program. I am also doubling on promoting their identical offers.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

WE ALREADY HAVE A TOOL THAT DOES THE SAME THING BUT BETTER.

One of our biggest success stories of 2023 were the 50th Anniversary Business Spotlights where we shined a light on our local businesses (one a week) from January to December. These spotlights provided the opportunity for local businesses to have their story heard and increase their visibility. In turn, this garnered significant attention on social media and contributed to an increase in customers for these businesses.

While the Riverview Rewards Program works similarly in terms of promoting the businesses and adding visibility, it did not have the same success rate and was much more expensive to run. That said, with the rising cost of just about everything, we have to carefully consider our next steps.

My recommendation is to end the Riverview Rewards Program starting January 2024 while continuing with our business spotlights and getting them engaged with our festivals and events.