

MOORE HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST

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Once held in high regard, Moore House Bed and Breakfast has seen its reputation and operational success diminish over recent years. This case observes how Owner and Innkeeper Wynne Moore faces the grim reality that he would likely have to sell his family business. Declining revenue and overall poor performance of this gem of a property have driven Wynne to the point of making a hard decision. Moore House Bed and Breakfast has been operating at a net loss for the past couple of years, and no longer was successfully leveraging its affiliation with a local university nearby.

GOODBYE PRECIOUS MEMORIES?

Wynne Moore stood in the lobby of Moore House Bed and Breakfast (B&B) with familiar memories of his childhood playing like a movie in his mind. This house had been in his family for generations. As a child, Wynne would stay every weekend with his grandmother, who was the B&B's Innkeeper at the time. Before the sun was up, Wynne and his cousin would crawl into her bed and listen to one of "Nanny's stories" every Sunday morning. The fond memories shared by Wynne and his grandmother on those special mornings will always hold a special place in his heart. His grandmother's bed still plays host to many visitors who frequent Moore House. Now, as its new owner, Wynne was about to decide the house's fate. Since taking ownership of the B&B, he had done nothing but review its problems and examine possible solutions. His anxious feelings stemmed from his knowledge of exactly how bad the situation was. Wynne had to decide whether he should put a price on his childhood, family heritage, and business and continue to operate as a Bed & Breakfast owner.

STEEPED IN HISTORY

Moore House has operated as a bed and breakfast near the campus of Harley State University in Provincetown, Wyoming, since fall 2007. Situated among thick pine-covered hills and perched on a bluff overlooking the Wyoming River, Provincetown is an ideal destination for recreation or establishing residential roots. The B&B offers a majestic natural beauty home to countless weddings, proposals, and university activities.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Moore House is a 10,000 square-foot 10-room Victorian mansion that began as a cottage built by the Moore family in 1876. During the Great Depression, the Moore family opened up their home to travelers because it was difficult for them to find lodging accommodations. This was also a way for the family to make some much-needed money. After the Depression, the Moore House became a “tourist home” that provided an overnight stop for low-income travelers or drifters.

Over the years, the mansion had various structural remodels and operated as an art gallery from 1993-2003. The most recent renovation restored the estate to its former majesty.

Wynne Moore, raised in Provincetown, moved away after obtaining his MBA from the local university. His family’s legacy brought him back to the area years later. Wynne inherited the B&B and became the owner after his grandmother passed away. She was also a graduate of Harley State University.

“The mansion has been in our family for more than 143 years. My grandmother’s last wish was to keep it in the family and to share its storied past,” Wynne reflected. Wynne could not fathom the thought of selling something that was an important part of his family’s history. Unfortunately, the business was really suffering and this was his only source of income.

OPERATIONAL AMENITIES

Moore House Bed and Breakfast operated with eight rooms available for rent. Each rented room within the Victorian Mansion had beautiful décor, elegance, and uniqueness that sought to make guests feel as if they were staying with the Queen herself. Beautiful chandeliers hung from the Victorian Mansion ceilings, which had a way of making guests forget they were in Wyoming.

Wynne provided Moore House guests with a variety of amenities. Guests enjoyed free parking, free Wi-Fi, access to two dining areas, and a lounge where guests could interact during the evening at Moore House. Guests received embroidered robes, each room had luxury linens, a television, a mini-bar, and the Moore House staff emphasized a customer-centric atmosphere around the grounds.

The B&B offered a diverse menu that had English and homestyle items, fresh fruit, and made-to-order items upon guest request for breakfast. Guests had options of fresh-squeezed juices, homemade brownies, snacks, and access to the Keurig for coffee and hot chocolate. While Wynne provided breakfasts and snacks for guests, lunch and dinner was not a part of the current Moore House's offerings. He iterated the customer-centric approach of the B&B: "Here at Moore House, the most important thing is to provide a wonderful customer experience. We realize that customers have other options, so we need to make sure that we give our customers an experience that leaves a lasting impression."

Norman (1988) suggests that one-to-one interactions and personalized touches are among the predominant factors persuading customers to stay in a bed and breakfast. Wu and Yang (2010) elaborate further, suggesting that these unique offerings and personalized touches attract customers to the B&B and the customer perception of these unique offerings impact customers' intentions to revisit.

STAFFING

A vital part of any B&B property is the participation of its owners, who mostly live onsite and deem themselves professional innkeepers. An innkeeper's presence and personal touch will add to the guest's experience and their personality and hospitality is a crucial part of the property's individuality (Kline et al., 2004). With owner Wynne Moore currently serving as the innkeeper and manager, he employed four other staff members to work at Moore House. The only other full-time employee was assistant manager Margaret Dooney. Margaret double majored in hospitality and tourism and business management from Harley State University. She gained full-time employment at the B&B after graduation. Having previously worked at the B&B as part-time help during her undergraduate studies, she demonstrated strong initiative and competency in her duties. Her work ethic prompted Wynne to give her the title of assistant manager.

Melanie Jones and Jack Bean served as the two part-time employees. Melanie and Jack were attending Harley State University and studying in hospitality and tourism fields. Melanie and Jack were in their junior year of college and had been working for the business for slightly over a year. John Smith served as the Moore House chef. John was the newest of the employees. He was in the process of receiving a degree from the university as well.

Despite his excitement with his staff, Wynne admitted that employee turnover had been quite high at the Moore House over the years. Finding part-time help was not difficult due to the close proximity of Harley State University, but workers typically did not stay long at the bed and breakfast. This was often due to difficulty of balancing employees' schedules with their studies and extracurricular activities. On several occurrences, Wynne noted that employees had to quit their jobs due to being overwhelmed. This caused Wynne to become more flexible in his demands for workers. Wynne admitted that finding the right balance was not always easy.

"I decided to become more flexible with workers' schedules in an attempt to combat some of the turnover we have been facing. This has resulted in less of a routine from week to week regarding scheduling, but we make sure that Melanie, Jack, and John get their hours as part-time workers. Sometimes we might be a little overstaffed during non-peak hours and understaffed during peak hours, but we make it work."

This may not be enough to satisfy Moore House Staff. According to AlBattat and Som (2013), an evaluation of employee performance, fair compensation, and effective training are essential within the hospitality industry to raise employee satisfaction and provide adequate services. AlBattat and Som (2013) also state that improvement to organizational commitment comes by implementing effective human resource systems. Moore House did not have formal procedures in place to offer employee evaluations or training to new employees.

Along with this, Wynne highlighted that other than John, everyone handled similar responsibilities from flipping rooms, helping guests, and daily cleaning duties.

"At Moore House, we try to create a family work environment and team-oriented approach. Everyone shares responsibilities related to the operations of the B&B,

aside from meal preparation. I'll admit, this might contribute to a lack of operational efficiency from time to time, but at least we can say that the work gets completed and the employees are well-rounded."

OCCUPANCY DILEMMA

Aside from considering employees' contributions to poor operations over the last few years, Wynne faced a harsh reality that occupancy rates were a shell of what they once were. In FY 2019, the Moore House saw its occupancy rate decline to 37%. Exhibit 1 shows occupancy rates by month for the 2018-2019 year of operation. Booking picked up in the warmer months as the business was able to capitalize on good weather, beautiful scenery, and a host of travelers flocking to nearby attractions. However, June was the only month where business was able to reach above 50% occupancy. Sadly, this had been a staggering trend over the last several years of operation, which had caused Wynne first to consider the thought of putting the Moore House up for sale. Wynne could remember the days when the B&B was booked full throughout the year. Current customers consist mostly of visitors to the University for Events such as ballgames or other occasions. Repeat customers are usually faculty or others associated with university events.

"I remember when people used to come stay for sporting events, graduations, book for weddings, have business meetings, rent a room for their travels to Yellowstone National Park, and even come for romantic weekend getaways. This place used to be a hidden gem of the Northwest. Now, we are lucky to see a week of full bookings."

PROBLEMS WITH PRICING & DISCOUNTS

The Moore House Bed and Breakfast also suffered from pricing issues regarding the rates charged for rooms. Wynne had raised the room rates when he assumed ownership, but he did not know if it was enough. Exhibit 2 shows the current and historical rates for rooms. He set the lowest rate available at \$95, a slight increase from its historical price of \$90. Wynne considered raising the rate for larger rooms even further moving forward. Margaret Dooney often made the comment that "The president's room is too nice for its current price; it's the only room that offers a balcony view." Wynne knew she was right and that he should carefully reexamine his rates. After brisk research, he learned of a nearby B&B that offered rooms starting at \$149, but he was not so sure he could increase prices that high.

There were also other methods of pricing competitors used frequently, particularly B&B's. Wynne could offer the Best Available Rate (BAR) to Moore House's guests. Calculations to determine BAR for rooms come from the best rate available for any given day. Partitioned pricing is another available pricing strategy. With partitioned pricing, Wynne would charge guests for each service. He could reduce the room's price, but other amenities such as parking, Wi-Fi, or breakfast would become individually priced services. Mattila and Gao (2016) emphasize that this strategy works primarily because even though businesses charge customers for individual products, customers perceive these prices to be lower.

Room pricing was not the only issue, as Wynne offered most guests that booked rooms for the last fiscal year discounts. Exhibit 3 shows discount averages for each month of the previous fiscal year. As Wynne reviewed the discount policy, he noticed large discounts for guests associated with the local university. Hiring candidates received a substantial cut on the rates of their rooms. University guests, students, and faculty received a 15% discount as well. It was clear that the discount policies need revision. For the 2019 fiscal year, Moore House offered \$4,298.34 in recorded discounts. Beyond this, it was clear that the B&B had followed the current discount policy, but previous booking records indicated that Moore House had given larger discounts beyond what the policy allowed. There really was not rhyme or reason to the discounts offered to customers because employees ignored discount policies. Wynne was unsure how far he wanted to cut discount rates or what should be his new discount policy. Occupancy rates already suffered, and he feared that without discounts, they would drop further. Exhibit 4 shows a detailed list of the current discount policy.

It was also evident that Wynne needed to implement a standard pricing strategy for events and rentals for receptions. Until this point, managers of Moore House had negotiated rentals for events on a case-by-case basis. It was becoming increasingly clear that not only was this potentially losing revenue, but it also made renting space incredibly time-consuming. Wynne and Margaret worked together to reach a solution but disagreed on several issues. They both wanted to base prices on possible allotted times but could not agree on prices for the rental spaces.

EXPENSE ISSUES

As Wynne reviewed the expense report for the last fiscal year, he sighed heavily. The B&B was operating at a loss. Wynne had come into ownership of a business that was failing to make a profit. Expense reports indicated losses that are more considerable each year for the past five years, with no clear solution evident. Another significant issue is that like discount reports, expense reports did not match profit and loss statements. Wynne is realizing that business decisions made on the fly with no concern for profitability or sound financial management needs to change as well as discounts offered on a random basis where there is little regard given to proper management of expenses for the business.

Salaries at Moore House were either administrative salaries or classified salaries. Wynne and Margaret accounted for the two administrative salaries. Wynne had given himself an administrative wage once he became the owner and manager of the B&B. The compensation for Margaret, assistant manager, relates to her level of education, with opportunities for raises as she gains experience. Part-time staff and any hired extra help for events fell under the classified salary. Wynne based hourly wages on the role of the employee and previous experience. He paid all part-time staff who were current students the minimum wage except John. As the B&B chef, John made above minimum wage, but there is an expectation of a raise within completing one year of employment. Exhibit 5 shows employee salaries.

Wynne ordered supplies for Moore House three times a week. He knew this was an inefficient system. This method for ordering supplies is expensive, with each delivery that occurs incurring a fee. Looking forward, Wynne decided to purchase supplies in bulk. He expected that buying in bulk would reduce supply costs. Bulk purchases will provide less opportunity for event planning, but his assistant manager also suggested two weeks of notice for any event.

Another method considered by Wynne is to eliminate unnecessary costs. With a booked room, guests receive access to several services, including a modest mini-bar and linens for their space. Staff was also required to wear uniforms specific to the bed & breakfast, adding more expenses to hiring new employees. While considering reducing costs, Margaret stated, “This would detract from the experience the bed & breakfast offers guests. Removing these services from guests would also put Moore House at a significant competitive disadvantage.”

INDUSTRY

According to a recent quarterly report conducted by First Research Industry Profiles (2020), a premier leader of industry intelligence data, the bed and breakfast industry is a unique sector within the tourism industry, which consists of roughly 17,000 bed and breakfast inns within the United States. A high proportion of weekend visitors characterizes the industry's visiting patterns. Chen et al. (2013) mentions, "studies conducted in many countries have suggested that typical B&B visitors include pre-middle aged families with children" (p. 279).

The B&B industry is diverse and ranges geographically. Hsieh and Lin (2010) suggests that the industry is a compelling alternative to more traditional types of accommodations and has become increasingly popular with travelers who do not want to stay in traditional hotels or motels. The B&B industry has expanded over the last half-decade, offering a variety of amenities. Customers typically had access to the internet, luxury linens, robes, beverages, television, and a variety of other offerings.

The industry has seen increases in average annual revenue growth, market size, as well as average sales consisting of roughly \$200,000 per annum. At this same time, operating expenses have seen increases on average over the last few years. The typical bed and breakfast averaged between 4 and 11 rooms, with the average being six rooms. The median occupancy rate was roughly 45%. The average size of a bed and breakfast was roughly 5,700 square feet, and the average room rate in 2020 was roughly \$150. A majority of bed and breakfast establishments was family-owned and operated; only approximately 17.65% of establishments employed workers other than the owners. (First Research Industry Profiles, 2020)

Wynne looked at the industry data, and he noticed that Moore House was well below the industry averages in several categories.

"We provide many of the same amenities and have a beautiful location and venue, but we still are well below the industry average in sales. Given that, we have a larger venue than the average bed and breakfast, so it requires our business to employ more staff. As far as our inferior pricing, I'm afraid that if we raise prices too much, we might continue to lower our already struggling occupancy rates."

According to Lanier and Berman (1993), the market segments offering the most potential for the bed and breakfast industry are the business traveler and the small corporate conference. Even though this report is somewhat dated, the data indicates a potentially untapped market for Moore House.

COMPETITION

Over the years, Wynne Moore developed an understanding of the competition facing the Moore House. He realized that competition in the bed and breakfast space was moderate to high. Moore House's main competitors were bed and breakfast locations around the state as well as hotel chains. Given Wyoming's beautiful scenery and plentiful tourist attractions, Wynne noticed more bed and breakfast and hotel chain locations had popped up in Wyoming over the last decade. Wynn also acknowledged that rentable cabins on sites such as Airbnb had begun gaining more prominence in recent years. He estimated that there were around 16 bed and breakfast inns in the state, with 10 being located within 100 miles of Moore House. Of these, his competitive analysis suggested that a majority of Wyoming's bed and breakfast locations had a cabin style or lodge layout, playing to northwestern scenery and outdoor living. The positioning of many bed and breakfast locations and hotels are along well-traveled highways and tourist hot spots, allowing customers to rent a room on their travels easily.

Comparatively, Wynne learned that most of the state's bed and breakfast locations were smaller than Moore House and employed less staff. Many of these locations, as well as hotels, offered similar amenities but commanded higher room rates. Exhibit 6 shows the room rate range of bed and breakfasts within a 100-mile radius. He determined that most room rates of many of these locations had increased roughly 15% - 20% over the last half-decade as businesses saw an opportunity to take advantage of growing midwestern tourism. Bed and breakfast sales in these locations have fluctuated over the years, with roughly half falling slightly below the industry average. Exhibit 7 portrays sales of bed and breakfast within the same geographic scope for 2019. Several competitors, including the Cowboy Bed & Breakfast and the Yellowstone Trail Lodge, had seen immense success due to being right off the highway, near one of Wyoming's more noticeable tourist attractions. Furthermore, Wynne concluded that these businesses had been early adopters of digital marketing, had larger marketing budgets, and began pairing with social media influencers as a cheap way to spread awareness and gain reach. Not only

this, but also these locations were some of the few that successfully leveraged its venue for events such as weddings and retreats.

A SHOT OF MARKETING MEDICINE

Conventionally, B&B innkeepers used various marketing vehicles to promote and advertise their properties. Moore House did not use effective search engine optimization or target specific market segments. Wynne realized that he needed to resolve his shortcomings in marketing. He told a colleague, “My business needs a serious shot in the arm with some marketing medicine.”

Wynne has continued to miss opportunities to promote the B&B profitably with his current marketing strategies. However, he was starting to become a little hesitant with making marketing decisions because of the lack of immediate returns. L.-C. Chen et al. (2013) explain, “B&B operations typically generate relatively low levels of income during the off-season, making marketing expenditures a challenge for many operators” (p.279).

It has not been clear to Wynne which marketing strategy returns the best results. At his request, Margaret has looked into this issue and found that they might be better employing strategies other than online marketing. According to Lubetkin (1999), “among B&B guests, the most useful forms of advertising and promotion for finding B&Bs are word of mouth, B&B guidebooks, Mobil and AAA guidebooks, the internet, chambers of commerce, travel agencies, and magazines and newspapers” (p. 3).

Wynne knew that print advertising had always been a popular marketing tool but assumed the internet plays a much more prominent role now. Advertising and promotion within the B&B industry is a critical piece of the marketing strategy he considered.

Online marketing can be simple and rather inexpensive. Moore House had a marketing budget of \$1,000-\$1,600 per year. Wynne did not have a well-defined and constant marketing strategy that included details and goals for online and general marketing efforts. As said by L.-C. Chen et al. (2013), “defining appropriate target markets and developing effective marketing strategies for those markets are critical issues for legal B&B operators (p. 279).

Kline et al. (2004) posited the internet “represents an affordable and efficient channel for B&B establishments to appeal to target markets on a national and even international level” (p. 4). The Moore House’s online marketing activities consisted of two different web pages, a Facebook page, and listings on Google, Airbnb, and Trip Advisor. Since the Moore family had ties to the university and offered it a great deal of financial support, Harley State University featured the B&B on its website. The business hosted a variety of university activities and provided discounts to faculty and students. Unfortunately, the webpage on the university's website had minimal content.

"We were very limited on what we could feature on the website due to certain guidelines, so I managed to create a functional website during my free time," Moore said. "I will admit that we didn't professionally maintain the website."

Wynne believed it was not necessary to hire a professional marketing team to work daily on advertising and promotion tasks due to Moore House’s small size and limited budget. One of Wynne’s former staff members operated the Facebook page, but updates are not consistent and not tailored to a specific target audience. Carrol and Lanier (2006) suggested that every page a bed and breakfast uses for marketing be updated consistently to maintain an effective online presence.

The business website also lacked visuals, detailed pricing, and useful content. The current webpages did not offer an opportunity to track visitors or retrieve analytics, such as how long visitors remained on the site or where these potential customers are located. Both webpages did not allow an opportunity for online bookings and desperately needed an upgrade. Innkeepers need to establish and promote their property online due to guests using the internet to view and book their lodging arrangements (Kline et al., 2004). According to Carrol and Lanier (2006), an efficient layout and design are essential to attracting customers to a bed and breakfast. It is important to catch a potential customer's attention within eight seconds of visiting a website with clearly defined information that includes the Moore House’s contact information. Kline et al. (2004) say that “many small lodging property websites continue to frustrate web users who are expecting to book online but are unable to make reservations because of a lack of availability of contact information via email, fax or telephone” (p. 4-6). This aggravation gives chain hotels a well-defined competitive advantage of brand identity due to their

efficient market attentiveness and ongoing strategy to attract guests, despite them not being as unique as B&B's.

For booking, Wynne used a software package, but it did not offer customer-relationship management services. Levins (1998) claims that customer-relationship management enhances relationships by delivering personalized communication systems. Chien and Moutinho (2000) suggest that owners can use customer-relationship management as a tool to build customer loyalty and trust while enhancing the frequency of a customer's interaction with an organization. In doing so, customer-relationship management cultivates employees' understanding of customers, providing success financially and operationally.

Wynne also wanted to do a better job of taking advantage of more local listing opportunities. Currently, he paid \$396 per year for an annual subscription through the Yellow Pages that the business had since day one.

MOVING FORWARD

Wynne Moore stood in one of the guest rooms of Moore House Bed & Breakfast and thought, "Is this something I really want to give up?" Revitalizing this failing business would be an extensive effort. The severity of issues with staff turnover, occupancy, pricing, expenses, and marketing loomed heavily. High competition would continue to make these problems worse as well. The offers to purchase his business floated in his mind, but his family heritage did too. The uncertainty of the future left him uneasy. Wynne knew he needed to make a decision soon, but which would be the right one?

EXHIBIT 1

OCCUPANCY RATES PER MONTH

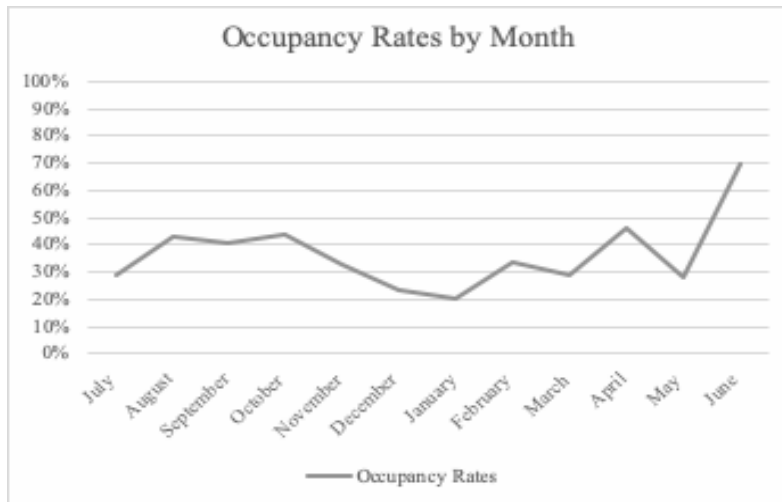


EXHIBIT 2

CURRENT AND HISTORICAL ROOM RATES

Room	Historical Pricing	Current Pricing
2 Small Suite	\$90	\$95
4 Midsize Suites	\$100	\$105
2 Large Suites	\$115	\$125

EXHIBIT 3

2019 AVERAGE DISCOUNTS PER MONTH

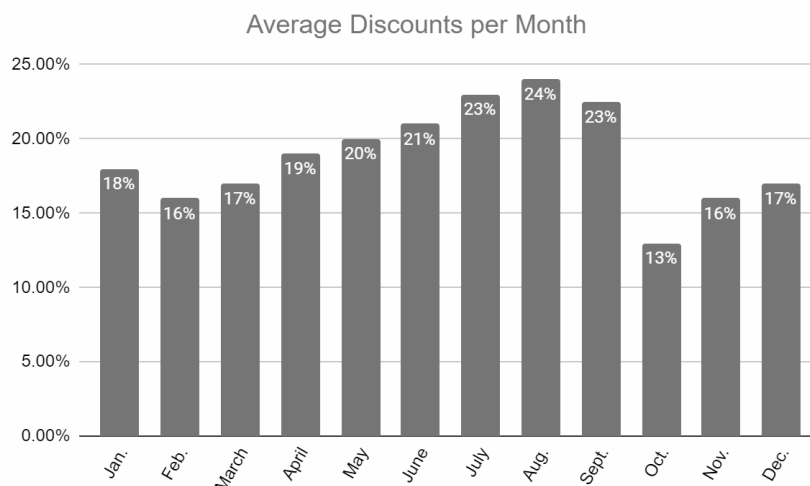


EXHIBIT 4

MOORE HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST DISCOUNT POLICY

Moore House Bed & Breakfast shall offer discounts to any guest that meet the following criteria:

- Hiring candidates for the University of Wyoming will be offered a flat 90\$ booking rate.
- The president, vice president, members of the board of trustees, and any high-ranking administrative University of Wyoming faculty are offered a flat \$60 booking rate.
- University of Wyoming staff/faculty will be offered a 15% discount.
- Senior citizens/government officials will be offered a 15% discount.

The amount of the discount offered is dependent on which category guests meet. If guests fall under two or more categories, they will be offered whichever discount provides them the best rate.

EXHIBIT 5

CURRENT EMPLOYEE SALARIES

Employees	Salaries & Wages
Manager	\$45,000
Assistant Manager	\$26,375
Chef	\$13.50/hour
Part-Time Help	\$7.50-\$9.00/hour (minimum wage)

EXHIBIT 6

MINIMUM VS. MAXIMUM PRICE RANGE

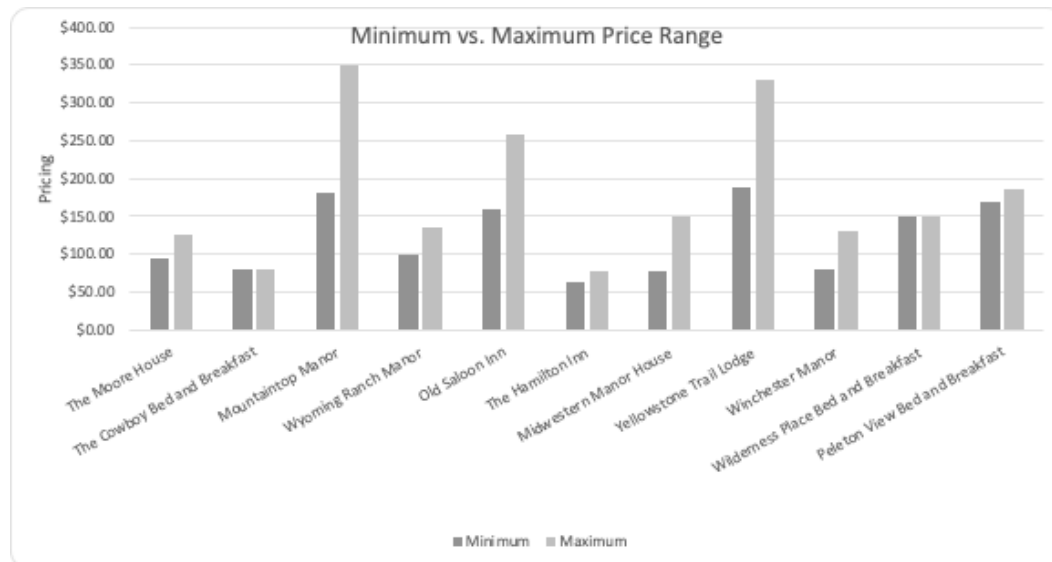
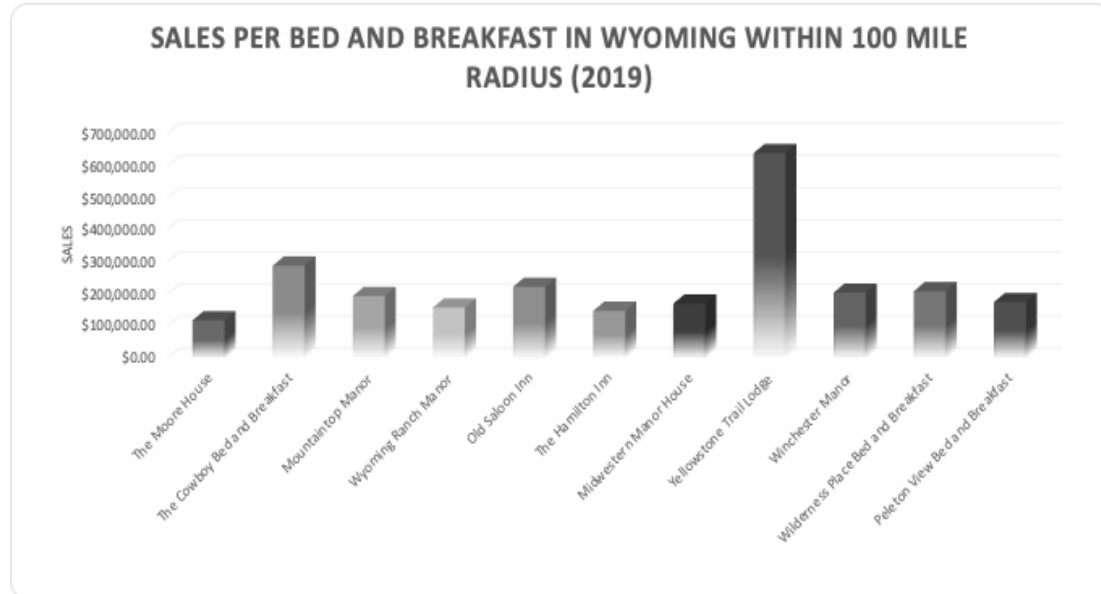


EXHIBIT 7

SALES PER BED AND BREAKFAST IN WYOMING WITHIN 100 MILE RADIUS (2019)



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