Public Relations:

The Importance of Community Relationships between Small-businesses and the Community

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Journalism Department

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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June 2011

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Abstract

With the downturn of the economy public relations has been one of the first departments to be discontinued in many businesses as an effort to save more money. This paper addresses the importance of community relationships, particularly in the small town of Cambria, California. The importance of the building relationships will be addressed from the prospective of successful Cambrian businesses currently involved in the community, as well as the perspective of one business not yet getting involved, The Tea Cozy.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The Tea Cozy restaurant in Cambria, California is not utilizing any public relations tactics to begin building relationships in the community. Today the economy is keeping budgets tight, making public relations usually one of the first items to be cut out in order to save money for other expenses that are seen to be of greater importance.

Background of the Problem

In 2008 an economic recession began for the United States. Although in 2011 the economy is beginning to expand again, many business owners budgets are still tight so they are trying to save money in whichever areas they can. Public relations is often not given credit because people are unaware of the many advantages it offers. Public relations is often cut out of the budget in order to save money because of business people being unaware of the important role it plays.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to conduct research on the importance of public relations, as well as, community relationships, and the effect they have on business. More specifically, this project is meant to apply research of other small-town businesses to the Tea Cozy in order to help

the owner make an informed decision on whether or not to continue ignoring the use of public relations.

Setting for the Study

This study is examining successful small-town businesses in order to research the importance of community relationships between a business and its community. This information will be applied to a small tea house, the Tea Cozy, located in Cambria, California. Cambria is a small town on the Central Coast with a population of 6,521 people ("Cambria", 2011). Cambria is located four miles south of Hearst Castle making it a popular tourist destination.

Research Questions

While there is much information available about the importance of public relations, there has not been a large amount of research conducted on the importance of public relations and community relationships for businesses in small towns.

1. Research question #1: What is the importance of public relations and community relationships for small businesses and why?
2. Research question #2: How are small businesses interacting with other businesses, locals, community leaders and community projects?
3. Research question #3: Why are successful businesses involved in their communities and other businesses are not?
4. Research question #4: What are the target demographics for the Tea Cozy?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader and provide context to the study.

Public Relations: the management function that uses two-way communication to receive information from and give information to an organization's various publics (Bobbitt, 2009, p.2).

Community Relations: social outreach programs corporations establish to build relations and credibility, as well as foster an understanding of the role and responsibility a company or business has to its neighbors and local community ("PR Blogger, 2011).

Exploratory Case Study: a study meant to investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, to generate hypothesis for further research, and to show relationships between events and the meaning those relationships have (Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B., 1999).

Sponsorships: providing a program directly or providing financial, personnel, or other resources the program requires (Smith, 2009).

Organization of Document

Contained in this first chapter is an introduction to the problem being researched, the background, purpose, and setting of the project. Also included are the research questions being studied, and a definition of important and frequently used terms. Chapter 2 contains the literature review documenting information that is already known about the subject of community

relationships and public relationships relating to business owners in small towns. Chapter 3 contains the methodology describing how the project was conducted and what research methods were used. Chapter 4 contains a discussion of new information found on the topic while Chapter 5 contains the a summary of the study, as well as, conclusions found from the literature and data.

Chapter 2

Review of Selected Literature

Importance of Public Relations & Community Relationships

Public relations is an often misunderstood and misused term that is generally thrown in the advertising category. While this is often the case, it is not true. According to Bobbit (2009), "Public relations is the management function that uses two-way communication to receive information from and give information to an organization's various publics" (p.2).

While online relationships through the use of social media are absolutely necessary in public relations today, one of the most important, and often overlooked, aspects of public relations is building and nurturing face-to-face community relationships. Community relationships are "social outreach programs corporations establish to build relations and credibility, as well as foster an understanding of the role and responsibility a company or business has to its neighbors and local community" ("PR Blogger", 2011).

According to L. C. Hillstrom & K. Hillstrom, "a comprehensive, ongoing community relations program can help virtually any organization achieve visibility as a good community citizen and gain the good will of the community in which it operates" (2002). This is important to a new business as the interaction between the business and the community are the most significant determinant of whether a business will continue to grow and become more successful in the community (Kilkenny, Nalbarte, & Besser, 1999). The following ways have been proven effective for businesses to get involved with their communities: "providing employee volunteers to work on community projects, sponsoring educational and literacy programs, staging open

houses and conducting plant tours, [and] celebrating anniversaries" (L. C. Hillstrom & K. Hillstrom, 2002).

Aside from partaking in certain local activities, part of building and maintaining community relationships is showing to the public that businesses do care about the surrounding community and remain responsible. As a business proceeds with socially responsible behavior, its public image is enhanced which inevitably leads to an increase in sales, fair supplier relationships, and opportunities for more attractive rates on loans. (Besser, 1999).

Interaction With Community

While the Tea Cozy is not currently interacting with the community beyond a partnership with Cambria's White Water Inn, it is prudent to their success to build relationships with those in the community. James Lukaszewski names seven basic strategies to help businesses gain lasting relationships with their respective communities (2010). While these strategies are more focused on community involvement for projects, it is still pertinent advice for business owners to follow in other aspects of their business as well.

1. Quickly commit to do what the community expects - offer public meetings and address important questions community members ask.
2. Base decision-making on realistic assumptions - community members are quick to get angry with bad decisions; personal beliefs and values are more important than economic advancements.
3. Ease up on the PR stuff - focus on face-to-face meetings; address concerns directly.

4. Be open with the community to a fault - when possible, talk about issues before they even come up.
5. Listen carefully - always communicate with community members, be flexible and value their input.
6. Engagement matters - get involved with the community by working on projects together.
7. Independent local oversight - allow community members to look over your shoulder; establish a plan early on that will allow this.

Community relationships between businesses and communities can be manifested through sponsorships, particularly of sports and other school related activities. The three levels of sponsorships, according to J. Terence Zinger and Norman J. O'Reilly, include patronage, semi-strong sponsorship and fully functioning sponsorship (2010). The levels begin with the benefit of community goodwill and moves on to public awareness of firm, employee morale, cultivate new brand image, forum for product or service demonstration, entertain key clients, reach new market segments, block competition, and ends with generating new sales (on-site and/or through normal channels) (p.5).

Successful Businesses Involved in Community

According to a study done by Nancy J. Miller, small, local business thrive when they "look for ways to become more involved in the local social network of the community in which business is located" and "work toward making local community a better place to live and work as well as a good place to shop" (1999).

Two years ago, Wal-Mart joined their surrounding respective communities by participating in The United Way's Day of Caring. Employees of Wal-Mart took the time to sort and stock food pantry shelves with food from the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive (PyTak, 2009). Tarah N. Dove, director of community relations for Schuylkill United Way, said, "United Way organizations across the nation participate in a Day of Caring each year to promote volunteerism, increase awareness of local human service agencies and demonstrate what people working for a community's good can accomplish." The community is now compelled to think of Wal-Mart as a generous business rather than staying to themselves and not interacting with the community at all.

Businesses' Lack of Involvement in Community

The problem with a lack of involvement of businesses in small communities is that they are often viewed under a closer microscope than they would be in a larger community because there are less businesses for locals to monitor. As stated by Terry L. Besser, "the socially responsive behavior of businesses operating in small towns will be more generally known by residents and then rewarded or sanctioned by local residents through changes in employee morale, performance, and turnover; customer loyalty; and positive interactions with business service professionals, suppliers, local government officials, and business colleagues" (1999).

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Case Study as a Research Method

As there is very little information available relating to community relationships in small towns, an exploratory case study will be utilized. Exploratory case studies are used to "build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature" (Marshall, & Rossman, 1999). This study examines the importance of relationships between businesses and the community, focusing on the Tea Cozy restaurant in Cambria, California. An examination of recently published literature on the subject of community relationships, as well as, information collected from interviews with other businesspeople in Cambria will provide data from which well researched conclusions may be drawn.

Data Sources

The sources used for data in this study included three Cambrian businesses owners and the Executive Director at the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. Two of the three businesses are actively involved in the community which provided the study with insight to the reasons behind their involvement. The business that is not involved, the Tea Cozy, provided insight to reasons behind not being involved in the community. The participants were asked a series of questions (Appendix A):

1. How do you interact with businesses in the Cambrian community?
    a. Please provide examples.

2. How do you interact with the Cambria community, or not?

    a. Please provide examples.

3. Are you a sponsor for the Cambia High School Broncos, or other local sports related teams?

    a. If so, what is the reason behind being a sponsor?

    b. If not, what is the reason behind not being a sponsor?

4. What are some reasons businesses, perhaps your business, would choose to be a member of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce, or not?

    a. Please provide examples.

5. What are your target demographics?

Data Collection

Most of the information collected is from the interviews of three businesses owners in Cambria, as well as, the Executive Director of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. The interviews were conducted in May of 2011. The average length of each interview was about twenty minutes. The process of an oral interview provides a situation in which questions may be asked of answers given by the respondent during the interview. In this way, it provides more information rather than a blanket survey sent out to various businesses owners. The interviews were all digitally recorded to insure full accuracy of respondents answers to the questions asked.

Delimitations

This study focused on the community relationships held between Cambrian businesses and the Cambrian community itself. This can not be generalized to any city as there are various variables that come into play in each town itself, but should be looked at for similar conclusions that may be drawn.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter begins by introducing the Cambrian business and tourism respondents interviewed for this report. The responses have been summarized for this section; full interviews may be found in the appendix. The discussion will match the respondents responses to the presented research questions, as well as looking back to the literature that has been reviewed.

Description of Cambrian Tourism and Commerce Businesspeople

Cambria is located on the Central Coast of California. The current population is approximately 6,500. The weather varies from 50-70 degrees on average year round. Business owners rely heavily on tourism whether they are involved in the restaurant, lodging, or merchandise business. With a small population it is also noticed which businesses are involved with the community and care about Cambria, and which businesses keep to themselves. This project is meant to research whether the way a business interacts with the community makes a difference on their business and the way they are viewed in the public's eyes.

Mary Ann Carson is the Executive Director of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce provides information for tourists and locals about Cambria's events, activities, lodging, restaurants, hikes, weddings, photography, videography, and anything else people would want to know about. As the Executive Director, Mary Ann has an incredible amount of knowledge about what the Chamber of Commerce does and how it interacts with the

community surrounding it. Mary Ann will bring insight from her area of business services to the subject of community relationships.

Shanny Covey is the owner of Robin's Restaurant in Cambria. She has overseen Robin's as it has been in businesses for the last 25 years. Shanny provided the point of view of an extremely successful Cambrian restaurant that is constantly involved with the community and other local business partners.

Ken Cooper and his wife own and run the Blue Bird Inn in Cambria. The popular hotel is located on the east side of the Cambria village and has become a familiar landmark in the Cambrian community. Ken has been known to be incredibly involved in the community and schools. As a key player in the hotel service industry, Ken will provide insight into the importance of community relationships through the lens of a hotel business that has been successful in Cambria for many years and is also incredibly involved in what is happening in the community.

Tina Nickell owns and operates the Tea Cozy in Cambria. Tina recently bought the restaurant from previous owners in the summer of 2010. While never having worked in the restaurant business before, the Tea Cozy has continued to thrive. As a new owner and recently established Cambrian, Tina will provide a point of view on the importance of community service versus concentrating on the business solely.

Community Involvement

For this exploratory case study, the researcher is exploring the validity of the idea that community involvement is valuable for local businesses. The respondents were asked whether

their businesses or business establishment was involved in the community, and if so, how they were involved. Inquiries about community involvement elicited several responses: Mary Ann responded by saying the Chamber of Commerce was involved in the community through the use of local events, mixers, giving money to fix rundown parts of the town, and by attempting to connect all the Cambrian businesses together through their membership in the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. “The Cambria Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the general welfare and prosperity of and to encourage tourism and commerce to the Cambria area.” Shanny replied by saying, “We partner specifically with the Ollaliberry Inn, Jay Patrick House, White Water Inn. We also created a rewards referral program you know with a lot of different hotels so we show a lot of appreciation toward their referrals to Robin’s.” Tina is not currently holding involvement in the community as a high priority. While concentrating on her new business, she stated, “I would like to see more of that [community involvement] in the future.” According to Ken, “The Blue Bird property, interacts in terms of being involved in the community: giving to certain organizations, working with certain organizations in town.”

Reasons for Involvement in the Cambrian Community

If respondents replied they were very much involved in the Cambria Community, they were asked to respond in further detail of the importance of community involvement, or simply the reasoning they held behind becoming more involved. Mary Ann stated the involvement of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce in the community as a way for members to be advertised to tourists and increase profits since most of the economy is tourist based. “We pool our resources and we try to do some advertising. Other than that, the main function of our chamber is to

promote our own members which we've had very good support because since our main economy is tourism. Our members understand that you need to get yourself out there, get your name out." According to Shanny community relationships are very much needed. "I feel you know that because we're a business in a community, it's important that you know that we have good relationships with other business owners, are number one and also number two that is our community at large." Ken replied that aside from wanting to share his beautiful community with others, coming from a business standpoint, "You have to have your business involved in it. That's the insurance of keeping things alive in town and making sure that it becomes what it's supposed to be."

Businesses' Lack of Involvement in Community

Since the other respondents were all highly involved within the Cambria community, this section pertains only to the Tea Cozy business as they are not currently involved. Tina responded to the question of involvement in the community saying, "I haven't really, just because I'm still new."

Target Demographics in Cambria

Two of the respondents were asked for their observations of the target demographics relating generally to all of Cambria's tourists, as well as specifically, the demographics Robin's Restaurant tends to serve. For the overall demographics of audiences businesses are trying to target, Mary Ann responded with, "We promote ourselves as kind of a romantic getaway. So far, we've kind of um promoted ourselves to older people, not necessarily young families, which is

good for our type of shops and galleries and restaurants because these are the people with more disposable income." Relating to the restaurant service industry, Shanny stated it is a balance between both tourists and locals. "In the peak season of course, you have more tourists than locals, but probably it's about, it's about 50-50 for us." Ken and Tina were not asked to respond to demographical inquires.

Each respondent was asked in an oral interview to respond to questions found in Appendix A. A summary of the respondents responses are included in this chapter to provide the following data:

1. How do you interact with businesses in the Cambrian community?

Question #1 asked respondents to go into the details of their involvement or lack of involvement with businesses in the Cambrian community. Question #1 elicited several responses: Mary responded by saying the Chamber of Commerce was involved in the community through the use of local events, mixers, giving money to fix rundown parts of the town, and by attempting to connect all the Cambrian businesses together through their membership in the Cambria Chamber of Commerce. "The Cambria Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the general welfare and prosperity of and to encourage tourism and commerce to the Cambria area." According to Shanny, "We partner with businesses in the hospitality business since we have a common goal in regards to tourists, making sure they have a good experience in Cambria." Tina responded that the Tea Cozy is currently partnering with the White Water Inn but, "Right now that's the only business we're interacting with." Ken replied that the Blue Bird is

involved in a variety of ways relating to "giving to certain organizations, working with certain organizations in town."

2. How do you interact with the Cambria community?

Question #2 is asked respondents to give specific detailing of their involvements with the Cambria community, or the lack of involvement. Question #2 elicited several responses: Mary Ann stated that the Cambria Chamber of Commerce function aside from connecting businesses to each other "is to promote the community which in essence helps all our members. We sell tickets to all the community events, we contribute actual money to some community projects that need help like parking lots, things that will help tourism and help our members. And the website which brings visitors in and also answers questions for local people." Shanny stated that Robin's interacts with the community through business partnerships and school sponsorships. "It creates good will. And it's good for the community at large." Tina responded to the question of involvement in the community saying, "I haven't really, just because I'm still new." According to Ken, the Blue Bird is very involved with the Cambria Historical Society's Scarecrow contests and the Cambrian Pinedorado Labor Day celebration. "We've had a float in the parade any number of times and you know, won awards and all that kind of stuff doing that as well as some of the other projects in town: Camp Ocean Pines and that sort of thing."

3. Are you a sponsor for the Cambia High School Broncos, or other local sports related teams?

Question #3 asked respondents to elaborate on their community involvement in terms of sponsorships of the Cambrian schools, more specifically, Coast Union High School. Question #3

elicited several responses: Shanny responded that Robin's is a sponsor of the high school. "I think it's important for businesses to support the local schools you know it's important to give back to your community so that's just one way of giving back." Tina has not been approached by the school, aside from a donation letter, "Nobody's walked in and really talked to me to tell me what they have to offer me, you know, tell me how they can make me make money." Ken was more involved with the schools before his son graduated, but the Blue Bird still participates in sponsorships by sponsoring the Broncos and Little League. "We sponsor a team each year with the little guys." Mary Ann was not asked this question as it does not apply to the Chamber of Commerce.

4. What are some reasons businesses, perhaps your business, would choose to be a member of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce, or not?

Question #4 asked respondents to comment on their involvement or lack of involvement with the Chamber of Commerce and the reason behind that choice. Question #4 elicited several responses: Mary Ann speculated that there are many businesses that don't believe they need to be a member of the Chamber of Commerce because they don't see the value. Secondly, Mary Ann stated, "We actually have people who benefit from everything we do and they don't need to join. And that's kind of a selfish reason why." The multitude of reasons behind why joining the Chamber has it's benefits can be found in the full interview transcript (Appendix C). Robin's Restaurant is a member of the Chamber of Commerce but the reason behind this was not stated. Tina has not chosen to renew the Tea Cozy's membership with the Chamber of Commerce because she feels the fee schedule for her restaurant is too high. "Restaurant fees with the

Chamber are based on like seating of up to 100 chairs or something and you know, I have 20 something. So I'd like to pay a portion of the fee because of the size of my establishment." Ken has been a member of the Chamber of Commerce for some time, as well as on the board of directors for a while. "It's very important to be involved in those kind of activities because, again, that's what makes it grow and what reaches outside of the community to other areas and across the world."

5. What are your target demographics?

Question #5 asked two of the respondents for their observations of the target demographics relating generally to all of Cambria's tourists, and then specifically, the demographics of the guests of Robin's Restaurant. Ken and Tina were not asked to respond to demographical inquires. Question #5 elicited these responses: For the overall demographics of audiences businesses are trying to target, Mary Ann responded with, "We promote ourselves as kind of a romantic getaway. So far, we've kind of um promoted ourselves to older people, not necessarily young families, which is good for our type of shops and galleries and restaurants because these are the people with more disposable income." Relating to the restaurant service industry, Shanny stated it is a balance between both tourists and locals. "In the peak season of course, you have more tourists than locals, but probably it's about, it's about 50-50 for us."

The four research questions studied are as follows:

Community Involvement

Research question #1: Why are community relationships important, or not important?

According to L. C. Hillstrom & K. Hillstrom, "a comprehensive, ongoing community relations program can help virtually any organization achieve visibility as a good community citizen and gain the good will of the community in which it operates" (2002).This is important to a new business as the interaction between the business and the community are the most significant determinant of whether a business will continue to grow and become more successful in the community (Kilkenny, Nalbarte, & Besser, 1999).

Determining the importance or lack of importance that community relationships hold in regards to having a successful businesses is essential to the purpose of this study. This study is focused on researching the importance of relationships in communities between businesses and the people. Without this knowledge it is impossible to make a conclusion.

Table 1

Involved in Cambrian community, by respondent

Respondent	Involvement
Mary Ann	Yes
Shanny	Yes
Ken	Yes
Tina	No

Summary of Table 1:

The businesses that have been established in Cambria for an extensive amount of years, the Blue Bird Inn and Robin's Restaurant, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, responded that

they were very much involved in the Cambrian community. The Tea Cozy is not currently involved in the community since Tina was focused on the business as it was new to her. While the Tea Cozy is not involved as of now, Tina hopes to become more connected in the near future.

The Extent to Which Businesses Are Involved in Their Communities

Research question #2: How are other businesses interacting with local businesses, locals, and community leaders or projects?

According to a study done by Nancy J. Miller, small, local business thrive when they "look for ways to become more involved in the local social network of the community in which business is located" and "work toward making local community a better place to live and work as well as a good place to shop" (1999).

Exploring how other businesses are involved in their own communities provides insight to the benefits of community involvement, as well as providing ideas for business owners to get involved themselves if they are not currently.

Table 2

Involved with Cambrian Businesses, by respondent

Respondent	Involvement
Mary Ann	Yes
Shanny	Yes
Ken	Yes
Tina	Yes

Summary of Table 2:

All the respondents replied that they were in fact in involved with businesses through sponsorships, partnerships, and/or membership in the Cambria Chamber of Commerce.

Problems with Businesses Lack of Involvement with Community

Research question #3: Why are some businesses not currently involved in the community?

Businesses in small communities are often viewed under a closer microscope than they would be in a larger community because there are less businesses for locals to keep tabs on. As stated by Terry L. Besser, "the socially responsive behavior of businesses operating in small towns will be more generally known by residents and then rewarded or sanctioned by local residents through changes in employee morale, performance, and turnover; customer loyalty; and positive interactions with business service professionals, suppliers, local government officials, and business colleagues" (1999).

Researching the reasons behind why some businesses are not involved in their community will help provide insight to that area. It will also give public relation professionals a chance to combat the ideas of not wanting to be involved if the reasons are known.

Table 3

Businesses With a Lack of Involvement in Cambrian Community, by respondent

Respondent	Not Involved
Mary Ann	No
Shanny	No
Ken	No

Tina	Yes

Summary of Table 3:

Tina was the only respondent who stated her business was not involved in the community at this time, due to the fact that she is a new business owner and has been concentrating on only the business.

Cambrian Demographics

Research question #4: What are the target demographics for Cambrian businesses?

Cambria is a small town on the Central Coast with a population of 6,521 people ("Cambria", 2011). Cambria is located four miles south of Hearst Castle making it a popular tourist destination.

The demographics of visitors to Cambria are important to this study because that is a large part of the businesses that the Tea Cozy is attempting to attract. It also has to do with how the Cambrian community is viewed and marketed.

Table 4

Target Demographics for Cambrian Businesses, by respondent

Respondent	Demographics
Mary Ann	Couples, traveling business people
Shanny	Locals and tourists
Ken	N/A
Tina	N/A

Summary of Table 4:

Mary Ann responded that the target demographics of tourists were couples on a romantic weekend away, or traveling businesspeople. Shanny claimed that Robin's clientele tends to be split between both locals and visiting tourists. She also mentioned that many of their visiting tourists are European. Ken and Tina were not asked to respond to a question regarding demographics.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Summary

The Tea Cozy is not utilizing any public relations tactics to begin building relationships in the community. This study has conducted research on the importance of public relations, as well as, community relationships, and the effect they have on business. More specifically, this project is meant to apply research of other small-town businesses to the Tea Cozy in order to help the owner make an informed decision on whether or not to continue ignoring the use of public relations. Using the data collected from the interviewees and existing literature, this study aims to find why community relationships are important to a business.

Conclusions

According to interviewees, Mary Ann Carson, Shanny Covey, and Ken Cooper, community relationships are essential to the continuation and growth of a business and the town the business is located in. Although Tina Nickell, the Tea Cozy owner, says the Tea Cozy is doing well without being involved in the community, the lack of involvement may show a lack of concern for the community that the restaurant is apart of. Tina hopes to get involved later this year, since she has become more comfortable with her newly bought businesses. By becoming an active voice in the Cambrian community, the Tea Cozy will gain the respect of community members and other business owners.

Recommendations

The Tea Cozy is currently partnering with the White Water Inn in Cambria with gift certificates to come dine at the restaurant, but the Tea Cozy could be doing much more. To further develop business relationships with the hotels, restaurants, and coffee shops would implant the Tea Cozy into the Cambrian community, as well as, entice locals and tourists to visit the Tea Cozy for themselves. Recommended relationships include partnering with these agencies so that they are serving the locally blended Tea Cozy tea to their guests. Having samples of Tea Cozy tea available to tourists would encourage them to come visit the restaurant to try more flavors of tea. It would also boost local commerce since hotels and restaurants could buy tea locally.

It is also recommended that the Tea Cozy become a sponsor for local school activities and/or sports to show support for the children of Cambria. It may not bring in extra money for the restaurant, but it shows people that the Tea Cozy wants to give back to its community. This creates a feeling of goodwill with locals who may be more likely to support the Tea Cozy since they are donating to the young people.

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Appendix A

Business Owner Interview Questions

1. How do you interact with businesses in the Cambrian community?
    a. Please provide examples.
2. How do you interact with the Cambria community, or not?
    a. Please provide examples.
3. Are you a sponsor for the Cambia High School Broncos, or other local sports related teams?
    a. If so, what is the reason behind being a sponsor?
    b. If not, what is the reason behind not being a sponsor?
4. What are some reasons businesses, perhaps your business, would choose to be a member of the Cambria Chamber of Commerce, or not?
    a. Please provide examples.
5. What are your target demographics?

Appendix B

Interview Order of Cambrian Businesspersons

The order of the interviews conducted with the respondents was based on each interviewee's available schedule over a two week period of time.

- Cambria Chamber of Commerce Executive Director ("Mary Ann")
- Robin's Restaurant owner ("Shanny")
- Tea Cozy owner ("Tina")
- Blue Bird Inn owner ("Ken")

Appendix C

Interview: Cambria Chamber of Commerce Executive Director (Mary Ann)

The following interview is part of a case study conducted to research the importance, or lack of importance, of businesses being involved in its surrounding community.

Interviewer: Jayne Crabtree

Respondent: Cambria Chamber of Commerce Executive Director (Mary Ann)

Date of Interview: 05/12/11

Opening Comments:

1. Interviewer: "Thank you for meeting with me today."

Respondent: "Oh, I'm happy to. Let me start by telling you a little about the Chamber. Well the first thing you know, that uh the chamber of commerce is a business organization. I have a lot of business people that get together for various reasons to promote the community, but the actual function of our chamber here, we have a little tagline, the Cambria Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the general welfare and prosperity of and to encourage tourism and commerce to the Cambria area. Of course our commerce, our whole economy is tourist based.

So, what we do here is we pool our resources and we try to do some advertising. Other than that, the main function of our chamber is to promote our own members...which we've had very good support because since our main economy is tourism, our members understand that you need to get yourself out there, get your name out. What we do is we have a website, a very well

visited website, 2200 thousand initial visits a month, and like hundreds of thousands of pages viewed every month.

We have 1000 visitors that come in the visitor center a month, a 1000 phone calls. So the visitor center is a big big part for our members so you can, only members, can put their brochures there and we have handouts that we give to people that are the list of a complete list of lodging and a complete list of restaurants and a complete list of shopping for instance, and uh...then we have it staffed seven days a week with volunteers. Anybody who calls in or anybody who comes in say, "Where, what should I do while I'm here in Cambria?" Well we like to always steer them to - they have to see the castle, the elephant seals, uh Moonstone Beach, possibly if they're interested in hiking, you might talk to them and it really is individualized attention.

However, one of the things we always say is, "The shops and galleries would be fun and particularly like you said, when the Tea Cozy was a member. It's a fun place and especially when..if a mother and daughter came in and that's what I say, when people come in and say " Where should we eat?" I say "Well what kind of food are you looking for?" So we can steer them individually to what they need and that's the beauty of that.

But I think most people who of our members join to get on our well visited website because tourists are now doing their shopping and their..planning before they ever get to where they are going because of this whole new....beautiful form of information that we've got. And it is, it is amazing. Ten years ago it was happening. Ten years ago we ....we have a visitor guide that...we have 50,000 of those magazines go into the hands of the people that are visiting. And we distribute it through the Castle, through the restaurants, through the lodging, and anywhere

we can get it out we do. And it, we ran out this year. We're down to the last few, so we really do that.

What I have for you here is the top ten reasons to join the Chamber, and that does include the website, uh the visitor center, referrals that our ladies in our office will give to people, um.. now advertising opportunities, we have co-op ads, we have uh web site listings, uh special upgrades that you can get a photo on there or something that would attract people to your site, your site, and of course, every, all chamber members get a free listing on the website with their link to their website. Uh..we have social networking. We have a monthly mixer. We have a newsletter, we have a monthly newsletter where we're, we distribute flyers. We had nearly 400 members we have lost members because of the economy so we do have you know 325 or so but that's a lot of distribution within the business community. So that's a good way to get your name out. And then we have tourist events.

And we have eight major events a year that the Chamber puts on, and for that we get um...raffle baskets with your name on which we announce at the affair. We have banners, and we have posters, and we have sponsorship, uh...opportunities. When you can give money, you can give things, you can donate your person for help, but in any of those capacities you put your name on it and we try to get your name out."

2. Interviewer: "What are some of those events?"

Respondent: "We have, starting in January, we have a 3-day art and wine festival, um...actually I'm going to give you this magazine and it will be in there. And then we have a western dance, we have a chili cook-off and car show, lots of fun. Uh...in June we're having our business showcase that's a fun one where each business sets up their own table.

This is great marketing and it's particularly important for people who don't have a store-front. Say for instance you have a catering business. You go there and people funnel through, you have a table showing...give them a little trinket or a card and talk to them and get your name out. So about 200 people file through, 2 or 300. 300 on a good year. Uh from, it's in conjunction with our Farmer's Market so we just get the people from Farmer's Market to walk through the Vet's Hall and see our members. So...what else do I have here?

I have the networking opportunities, well the mixers. And we just had a lovely mixer last night at Moonstone Beach Bar and Grill. It was nice out there. Lot of people, we introduce ourselves, give our cards out, and then you're meeting other business people who then, they can refer you and...and the Cambria magazine as I said. That's a tourist-oriented, like if you were... a plumber you probably wouldn't buy an ad in here.

But, uh...you know, it's it's, well since we're mostly tourism. The other thing that the community does, or the Chamber does is to promote the community which in essence helps all our members. We sell tickets to all the community events, we contribute actual money to some community projects that need help like parking lots, things that will help tourism and help our members. And the website which brings visitors in and also answers questions for local people.

We actually function as kind of an information booth for local people too. We get a lot of calls. Uh.. when's this meetings, when's that happening. We read the paper! Well it's in the paper, it's in the phone book, you know, but we give out any information that we can help either the community or our members. And we're here as a resource too.

If, if a member needed to know where to get a hold of something. And now we've been here, we have huge phone lists, and resources that we can help members. So there's a lot of good reasons. 150 dollars a year for...all those functions."

3. Interviewer: "Do you know why people might not want to join?"

Respondent: "Honestly, they...some people don't think they need it and they don't see the value. But if you are in any kind of journalism or business you know that the main function is to get that name out there so that everybody sees you. Uh...but there's people who aren't good business people and they don't realize that, one.

Two, we actually have people who benefit from everything we do and they don't need to join. And that's kind of a selfish reason why. 'Okay, I'm next door and I, they people come in and they're throwing the events and I don't have to give money, I don't have to.....any prizes, I don't have to participate.'

You know, and that's okay we like to help the whole community, but to me it's kind of like uh the Chamber could use your support for helping you because we do help everybody. And then the other thing is, that people feel poor. Right now. You heard that!"

Interviewer: "Yes."

Respondent: "And that's why we've lost a few members because they're feeling like, which is weird, because 150 dollars a year is 12 dollars a month. Less than you spend on your coffee at Starbucks, you know. But um, they just are pulling back on everything. And they have to pay the rent, and they have to pay their electricity bill and it's too bad. I hate to see that happen because what they're doing is shooting their selves in the foot. They don't have business and now...nobody knows they're there. And here at the Chamber we actually, we do have the

policy that you have to be a member to have anything in here, to be in any of the events, or to be in the visitor guide, and to be on the referral list. If people come ask us specifically, "Where is this nonmember located?" We'll tell them. Of course we'll tell them. But we just don't refer that as a top priority because you know, we have to support, support our members."

4. Interviewer: "Do you know the demographics of people who come to Cambria? The people that businesses would mostly be trying to attract business from? It seems like mostly tourists."

Respondent: "Oh yes, it is all tourists. Yes. Tourism is our economy. Now, we like to have local business. And from time to time, some of the local merchants will give a discount to local people, but even that's kind of stopped. It's just such a sad situation in general that in the economy people are pulling back and wanting every penny they can get.

But yes, it's tourists, and there's certain like you said, certain demographics ages of tourists, now as you know, we're not, we don't uh have a uh water slide. So we're not as family oriented as some places. We promote ourselves as kind of a romantic getaway. Um... relax, renew your spirt, so yeah.

So far, we've kind of um promoted ourselves to older people, not necessarily young families, which is good for our type of shops and galleries and restaurants because these are the people with more disposable income. And...they come not -- the summer's full, busy, lots of tourists that do go through during the summer, but they're not the people that will buy the expensive artwork. You see those people during the spring, fall, and winter. And we get a surprising number of people here for, during the winter holidays. Christmas.

I'm always surprised by that. I think of that as a home holiday, but say your kids are all grown and gone and eh its the two of you, and you're real bored. You've put the Christmas tree up for 30 years and you say let's go somewhere else. Let's enjoy someone else's... and the Castle is something else at Christmas time. It's beautiful.

So yeah we see people and then we started this art and wine festival in January to bring people in. In a time when there wasn't much going on and we did. We sell out months before the event for the food and wine pairing, big dinner with uh..yeah. It's, it's great. So we bring in like 5 or 600 hundred people for that. All from out of town. Those people come from LA as a rule.

And now you're probably wondering where do we market? And that is mostly Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley area. Fresno, Sacramento, that sort of thing. We have, the San Francisco people tend to go down to Carmel, which is a lot like here only not, it's getting ruined of course."

5. Interviewer: "Are all the SLO County Chambers connected? Or is it, if you join through Cambria you are just promoted through Cambria?"

Respondent: "Each one of the Chambers wants you to join their own membership. And in fact, uh yeah. They have the same policies. They don't promote people except their own members. So that's kind of hard for publications who want to be a member of all the Chambers. They have to pick and choose sometimes. Now, we work together. We're in constant contact, the chamber executives. I have a meeting once a month with all the other Chambers. But, no I have found them, the other Chambers sometimes to be.....egocentric in the sense that, for instance, we don't bring event posters to our meetings and say "Will you hand these out?" Because that's saying um...um... we all want our tourists in our area.

And I'm, I'm not so much that way, but especially if they struggle more, like Cayucous, or um Atascadaro, which is trying to be known as a tourist area and wants to attract tourism. So they, they do not like to carry my posters for my events 'cause that would take their people over to me. However we have, this is interesting because we have now at least two different entities that are county based tourism organizations that are promoting the whole county. Because they feel, and rightly so that you can spend a day in Cambria, a day in Pismo, and we can keep them in the county. The whole county is tourism oriented, yes?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Big business for the whole county, so, uh, that the county visitor and conference bureau, and this new um, County Businesses Improvement District Groups both, are promoting the whole county. A county stay. For days! So if you come from Oregon, we do get people, a lot of people from Oregon. We get a lot of people from Europe! But anyway, we want them to stay and if they go see us or Pismo or what, it's great! And that's what these, so yeah.

So! Each Chamber does promote its own mostly, but then we all do work with the county, and in that way we all work together. But no, membership is in each chamber. Because the Chambers need income. The member ship dues are part of their income.

Some chambers have cities that give them money for tourism. Say that the city of Morro Bay sees that a Chamber can promote tourism and that tourism is good for the city of Morro Bay, so the city council gives the chamber a certain amount of money. To which they attach some specifications about what they are expecting. There's some expectations attached there that they have to live up to and I don't know if there's contracts. Now we don't have a city. We get no money. We get dues and event fundraising. So it's important for us to keep our membership up."

Appendix D

Interview: Robin's Restaurant owner (Shanny)

The following interview is part of a case study conducted to research the importance, or lack of importance, of businesses being involved in its surrounding community.

Interviewer: Jayne Crabtree

Respondent: Robin's Restaurant owner (Shanny)

Date of Interview: 05/17/11

Opening Comments:

1. Interviewer: "Thank you for taking the time to talk with me tonight. How does Robin's interact with other Cambrian businesses, locals and the community?"

Respondent: "Well, um...you know that, I feel you know that because we're a business in a community its important that you know that we have good relationships with other business owners, our number one and also number two that our community at large. So um, so for Robin's we partner with businesses in the hospitality business since we have a common goal in regards to tourists, making sure they have a good experience in Cambria."

a. Interviewer: "Can you provide some examples of your interactions?"

Respondent: "Yeah we do, we partner specifically with the Ollaliberry Inn, Jay Patrick House, White Water Inn. Um... those three in particular. And then, we also created a rewards referral program you know with a lot of different hotels so we show a lot of appreciation toward their referrals to Robin's."

2. Interviewer: “Are community relationships important to Robin’s, and why or why not?”

Respondent: “They are because, well, they uh. It creates good will. It helps both of us to build our business. Um, for Robin’s it helps us to build our business. And it’s good for the community at large, you know.”

3. Interviewer: “I know that Robin’s is a Bronco sponsor. What is the reason behind choosing to be a sponsor for the high school?”

Respondent: “Coast Union? Well, they are our local school. So I think it’s important for businesses to support the local schools you know it’s important to give back to your community so that’s just one way of giving back.”

Interviewer: “As a Cambrian restaurant do you feel like you cater more toward tourists or locals more?”

Respondent: “You definitely have to find a balance between both. I would -- in the peak season of course, you have more tourists than locals, but probably it’s about, it’s about 50-50 for us. In the summer time it’s leaning more towards tourists for sure, um and that, the locals, I’ve included in the locals category, people who visit Cambria often and are repeat customers of Robin’s. They may not be local, local but they come to Robin’s whenever they are in town.”

Appendix E

Interview: Tea Cozy owner (Tina)

The following interview is part of a case study conducted to research the importance, or lack of importance, of businesses being involved in its surrounding community.

Interviewer: Jayne Crabtree

Respondent: Tea Cozy owner (Tina)

Date of Interview: 05/22/11

Opening Comments:

1. Interviewer: "Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. How does the Tea Cozy interact or partner with local businesses, if at all?"

Respondent: "We have a business relationship with the White Water Inn. During the winter season they offer a dining certificate to be used at the local restaurants and the Tea Cozy is one of them. So we get customers referred by the White Water Inn. And right now that's the only business we're interacting with. And I would like to see more of that in the future."

2. Interviewer: "Do you interact with the community outside of the Tea Cozy's customers?"

Respondent: "I haven't really, just because I'm still new. Um, I donated scones and jam for the Christmas Tree Auction, so you know, we had a little sign up with our scones during that and I guess that draws quite a few people but I wasn't able to go."

3. Interviewer: "Are you a member of the Chamber of Commerce?"

Respondent: "I'm not a member of the Chamber of Commerce."

a. Interviewer: “What’s your reason behind not being a member?”

Respondent: “The Tea Cozy has a really good reputation. They’ve been here for twenty years and the prior owner gave me his insight on the Chamber. So I listened and I haven’t gone down to seek membership with them. I may at some point. I wish the fee schedule was a little bit different. Uh, restaurant fees with the Chamber are based on like seating of up to 100 chairs or something and you know, I have 20 something. So I’d like to pay a portion of the fee because of the size of my establishment. So if the fee is a little more understanding and forgiving for such a tiny place, I would probably be more likely. But a restaurant that has 100 chairs you know, they can pay a bigger fee. I only have 20 something so you know.”

4. Interviewer: “Have you thought about becoming a Bronco sponsor to increase brand recognition?”

Respondent: “Not really. That’s with the school right?”

Interviewer: “Yes, the high school.”

Respondent: “I haven’t really been approached. Obviously I’ve gotten a letter in the mail saying ‘donate money’ but nobody’s walked in and really talked to me to tell me what they have to offer me, you know, tell me how they can make me make money.”

5. Interviewer: “Have you thought about partnering with hotels to serve Tea Cozy blended tea?”

Respondent: “Maybe in the future. This year obviously I’m brand new with restaurants period. And I just wanted to pick up the flow and roll with it exactly and not make a lot of changes. Just because I really don’t know how to make those changes. So I wasn’t really expecting a lot through the first year, but when the fall gets here, I’ll probably be rolling into

talking to more people. Getting out there. Now I feel comfortable with my staff so if I need to leave, I feel comfortable that I can go for an hour or two and the place won't burn down. Hopefully! This fall there will definitely, hopefully, be some eye opening ideas coming my way. How can I become better known in the community and make sure the community itself knows we're here and what we do. You know we've talked about, in the kitchen, making dessert samplers and taking them to the hotels just so they can know what we do. So I plan on getting some flyers, some really just inexpensive do it myself flyers in hotels in the next week before summer gets here, but other than that I haven't done a whole lot of advertising and the 'welcome map', I'm advertising in the welcome map, however, I don't feel it has brought me any money yet, but I'm going to continue through the summer and then at the end of the summer I'll probably drop advertising because so far we're not hearing any customers saying, 'We found you in the welcome map.' It's a nice little brochure but I think at the end of the summer I won't do it again. I do have an advertisement with Cambria Pines Lodge. There is a one page ad in their rooms so, I just renewed that and we do get customers from that as well."

Appendix F

Interview: Blue Bird Inn owner (Ken)

The following interview is part of a case study conducted to research the importance, or lack of importance, of businesses being involved in its surrounding community.

Interviewer: Jayne Crabtree

Respondent: Blue Bird Inn owner (Ken)

Date of Interview: 05/23/11

Opening Comments:

1. Interviewer: "Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Does the Blue Bird interact with local businesses?"

Respondent: "Absolutely. All the time."

a. Interviewer: "Do you have any examples?"

Respondent: "Well we, the Blue Bird property, interacts in terms of being involved in the community: giving to certain organizations, working with certain organizations in town. Personally I do the same thing, so it's kind of a two pronged approach to get the business involved in the community as well as -- I like to be personally involved because this is where you live and you want to make it as you good as you can, you know, so yeah we do both. We are very involved with the newest thing now is Cambria's Historical Society, the Scarecrow thing. I don't know if you saw the scarecrows last year?"

Interviewer: "I did."

Respondent: “So we’re very involved in that right now, but we’ve been involved in the Pinedorado parade. We’ve had a float in the parade any number of times and you know, won awards and all that kind of stuff doing that as well as some of the other projects in town: Camp Ocean Pines and that sort of thing.”

2. Interviewer: “So you believe that community involvement is very important?”

Respondent: “Absolutely. Critical. Keep a community alive. Uh, you have to have your business involved in it. That’s the insurance of keeping things alive in town and making sure that it becomes what it’s supposed to be. Besides that, you want to share what we have here...with as many people as you can because the physical assets of this area are just tremendous. So, you want to grow that as much as you can -- businesses-wise or just personally, I’d like to share the world with it, you know. Because it is so great.”

3. Interviewer: “Are you a member of the Chamber of Commerce?”

Respondent: “Yes.”

a. Interviewer: “Do you feel that’s important?”

Respondent: “Absolutely I do. I was on the Board at the Chamber for a while. So I got involved in that. It’s very important to be involved in those kind of activities because, again, that’s what makes it grow and what reaches outside of the community to other areas and across the world, you know.”

4. Interviewer: “Are you involved in the schools at all through sponsorships?”

Respondent: “Yes, through the Broncos and the Little League. We sponsor a team each year with the little guys. We do that every year and of course, when my son -- my son went to school here. So when my son was in school we were very involved in the activities that the kids

were involved in: in baseball, basketball, and all of that stuff. We were very involved with it. But he's graduated and so we don't have that kind of level of participation other than supporting various things from the school."

5. Interviewer: "Do you partner with any local businesses for serving locally roasted coffee, tea, or locally baked pastries?"

Respondent: "We already have coffee and pastries here so we don't see the need to do that. But our big thing is referrals for breakfast to local business. So we make a big effort when people come in and say 'where should I eat breakfast?' Then of course we send them to various places in town."