Skyview Los Alamos Winemaker Pool Party Series 2019:
Brand Reputation and Relationship Building through Special Events

A Senior Project
presented to
The Faculty of the Journalism Department
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Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The following study was performed to determine the effect of planned special events on brand reputation and how they can be used as a tool for relationship building. There is a focus on outlining goals within an organization and identifying key publics that will assist in reaching said goals. The campaign’s focus was to create and publicize a Rosé Pool Party series, an opportunity for the newly reopened Skyview Hotel in Los Alamos, CA to work with and promote the surrounding business community. With scholarly research, the design of the campaign attempts to strategize event marketing to benefit the organization through strategic outreach that leads to long-term relationships and increased brand reputation.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Skyview Los Alamos - a newly reopened hotel in the heart of Santa Barbara Wine Country - underwent a multi-million dollar renovation before it reopened its doors in April 2017. A property that once rented rooms by the hour now caters to a luxury clientele, with features like a heated pool, working vineyard, and fine dining restaurant, Norman. Its transition from motel to resort has been a success, but the property now finds itself in a position to re-introduce itself to the surrounding community.

“Effective organizations choose and achieve appropriate goals because they develop relationships with their constituencies. Ineffective organizations cannot achieve their goals, at least in part, because their publics do not support them and typically oppose efforts to achieve goals (Hon, 1999, p. 8).” Kimberly Walker, the owner of Skyview Los Alamos, sees working with and promoting the businesses of the surrounding area as essential to the operation of her business. “Public relations makes an organization more effective when it identifies the most strategic publics as part of strategic management processes and conducts communication programs to develop and maintain effective long-term relationships between management and those publics (Hon, 1998, p. 9).” Skyview Los Alamos is looking to create opportunities that will build positive relationships with the close-knit business community of Los Alamos and Santa Barbara County and boost positive brand reputation as well.
**Background of the Problem**

Skyview Los Alamos is situated on a hilltop overlooking the CA US-101 freeway, while the town of Los Alamos is across the freeway at the bottom of the hill. It’s physical location alone has branded the property as being an “outsider” and not part of the immediate community. This reality combined with high room rates, press features and high end clientele gives the property the reputation that they are out of reach to the locals. Skyview Los Alamos also houses the only pool in the town of Los Alamos, and the fact that it accessible only to hotel guests and not the public has attracted some criticism from community members. When an organization faces a negative image, challenge needs to be reinforced in the message, and the organization must create events that highlight their important differences from the stigma (Chetto, 2012, p. 2).

**Purpose of the Study**

The Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series provides a unique opportunity for local winemakers to showcase their wines, interact with the public, and increase revenue through direct wine sales. Within the organization the focus is to build relationships with neighboring businesses while increasing revenue through ticket, food, and beverage sales. The use of public relations will effectively implement an event series that builds relationships between businesses, brings together the local community and increases positive brand reputation.

When implementing an event centered around relationship building, it is essential to form initial partnerships and then create value for those partners. “The most productive relationships in the long run are those that benefit both parties in the relationship rather than those designed to benefit the organization only (Hon, 1998, p. 11).” By studying the use of events as a means to
form relationships, one can use the information gathered to strategize the proper method of utilizing public relations and event marketing tactics to build brand reputation as well.

**Setting for the Study**

This study will be completed with implementation of strategic marketing, event planning and the use of data collection at Skyview Los Alamos and California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo as a Senior Project. A monthly winemaker pool party series will be coordinated between Skyview Los Alamos and participating Santa Barbara County wineries over the course of six months (May-October 2019). Each event will feature a different winemaker and Skyview Los Alamos will purchase wines directly from the winemaker to pour and sell at the event. Ticket sales from each event will go to Skyview Los Alamos. Santa Barbara County winemakers are targeted to participate in this event and the Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series will attract a slightly different clientele each month with each strategic partnership. Winemaker participation for the series, attendance of the May 19th event, and the overall amount of ticket sales at the May 19th event will be able to measure the success of the program.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were created to strategize the proper method of utilizing public relations and event marketing tactics to build relationships and brand reputation.

1. How does one successfully strategize an event focused on relationship building?
2. How effective are events for increasing brand reputation?
3. How do you increase participation for an event using event marketing?
4. What is the outcome of the event and did it effectively cause behavior change in the community or reinforce it?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are presented to the reader to clarify repeating topics of the study and assist in further knowledge of public relations and event marketing.

**Brand experience:** is a concept that has grown in importance in recent times. Formally defined as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli” (Kazinik, 2018).

**Corporate reputation:** effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Jackson, 2013).

**Event marketing:** a communication tool whose purpose is to disseminate a company’s marketing messages by involving the target groups in experiential activity (Zarontonello, 2013).

**Demographic segmentation:** dividing the target market into sub-groups based on tangible characteristics such as age, gender, location, education, income, etc. (Dowson, 2015).

**Psychographic segmentation:** the division of the target market based on their attitudes, interests and values, or why the target audience chooses to attend a particular event (Dowson, 2015).

**Two-Way Symmetrical Model of Communication:** The two-way symmetrical model of public relations as described in Grunig’s Excellence Theory is focused primarily in making sure that decisions made by an organization are mutually beneficial between itself and its audiences (Dowson 2015).
Organization of Study

Chapter 1 includes a background of the study, the purpose of the study, and a definition of terms. Chapter 2 will outline how public relations and event marketing can build relationships and increase brand reputation by reviewing scholarly literature regarding the topic. Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will measure the outcome of the event with evaluating attendance, participation, and the ticket sales. This data will be analyzed and interpreted with the findings in the review literature. Chapter 5 will summarize the end of the study and include recommendations for future public relations consultants on the development of an event designed to build relationships and brand reputation.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

The review of the literature outlines how public relations and event marketing can build relationships and increase brand reputation.

Public Relations and Event Marketing

Events are both a tool of public relations and use public relations techniques to promote themselves. Indeed, in recent years events have increasingly recognized public relations added value (Jackson, 2013, p.115). Very few events can assume that their profile is such that target audiences will automatically know that they are happening, and be persuaded to attend. And even which might normally be able to gain attention, such as the Olympics, will still want to make sure that spectators buy tickets, companies sponsor the event and that television and radio stations will want to buy coverage. Rather it is the case that nearly all events have to reach and persuade some or all of their target audience (Jackson, 2013, p. 136). When considering the relationship between marketing and public relations, it is important to not get carried away with a sense of marketing versus public relations. In terms of an event, one might consider sending out a press release prior to a planned advertising campaign, and either educating the target audience or gaining attention. The different tactics support each other and add value to each (Jackson, 2013, p. 142). Marketing by focusing on markets is good at identifying what events may help meet the needs and wants of customers and dealing with suppliers and funders. Public relations provides a much wider perspective by considering the views and actions of other stakeholders, such as pressure groups, government and local communities (Jackson, 2013, p. 141).
Public Relations and Relationships

A growing number of public relations practitioners and scholars have come to believe that the fundamental goal of public relations is to build and then enhance on-going or long-term relationships with an organization’s key constituencies (Hon, 1999, p. 2). Effective organizations choose and achieve appropriate goals because they develop relationships with their constituencies, which public relations practitioners typically call publics. Ineffective organizations cannot achieve their goals, at least in part, because their publics do not support and typically oppose management efforts to achieve what publics consider illegitimate goals (Hon, 1999, p. 8).

The relational approach [of public relations] focuses on a small number of influential stakeholders, and as a consequence takes a long-term strategic view of public relations. As it seeks to build networks, it is likely to stress personal interaction such as meetings, lobbying, sponsorship and corporate hospitality (Jackson, 2013, p. 119). The event communicator identifies and engages with key decision makers and influencers such as the media, commentators, politicians, sponsors, and pressure groups. The relational approach is far less interested in the attendees of the event, rather the focus is on those who can influence the event (Jackson, 2013, p. 120).

When public relations helps the organization build relationships with key constituencies, it saves the organization money by reducing the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, pressure campaigns, boycotts, or lost revenue that result from bad relationships. Public relations also helps the organization make money by cultivating relationships with donors, consumers, shareholders, and legislators who are needed to support organizational goals (Hon, 1999, p. 11).
Events and Brand Reputation

According to CIPR, public relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. It is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Jackson, 2013, p. 117). Alan Greenspan (1999, cited in Jackson 2013, p. 179) recognized the importance of reputation, and stated, “In today’s world where ideas are increasingly displacing the physical in the production of economic value, competition for reputation becomes a significant driving force propelling our economy forward. Manufactured goods often can be evaluated before the completion of a transaction. Service providers, on the other hand, can usually offer only their reputations.”

There are five main reasons why corporate reputation is growing in importance:

1. The death of deference - people are far less accepting of the actions and views of those in power, politically, commercially, or socially, which creates new challenges for communicators.

2. More media channels and outlets - changes in the breadth and quality of media bring massive challenges to those who manage reputation.

3. Me, first and foremost - the role of the individual in society has grown, so that commercial and non-commercial organizations have increasingly to listen to the views of individuals.
4. Fast news - reputation managers now swim in a reputation fish bowl. Positive and negative views about an event or its hosts and sponsors can be circulated globally very quickly.

5. The importance of money - organizations need to gain the trust of consumers (Gensai 2002, cited in Jackson 2013, p. 178).

Very often we cannot construct a divide between short term publicity and longer term reputation building. If used well the former can lead to the latter (Jackson, 2013, p. 139). Sponsorship is important for events, as a means of securing additional revenue streams and attaining access to new marketing communication opportunities. In return, event sponsorship provides a cost effective alternative to traditional advertising (Jackson, 2013, p. 144). In his text, Jackson (2013) identifies two main motivations for event sponsors: to promote or sell the sponsor’s specific products/services/brands and to enhance the corporate reputation of the sponsor (p. 147).
Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter will be used to discuss the methods of data collection containing data sources, collection and presentation of the information, and delimitations of the outreach program. Due to weather conditions the planned special event was cancelled and the following methodology will be implemented at a later date, after the publication of the study.

Data Sources

For this study, interested parties will be recorded for their reaction and inquiry about the pool party and the series as a whole. Eventbrite analytics and various social media analytics will provide insight on audience demographics and marketing strategy. Immediately following the events, winemakers, musicians, and other vendors outreach efforts will be analyzed to discover who is successful in attracting community buzz and resulting ticket sales. Wine and food sales will be recorded to prove event profitability.

Participants

The key participants in these events are Santa Barbara County winemakers. The attendees of the event will be composed of a majority of Generation X through Baby Boomers, from ages 24 to 60 years old. With Liquid Farm associated with the first event, the outreach efforts will be focused towards their wine club members specifically, followed by the Santa Barbara County community. The greater areas of San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles counties will be the last
target audience for participants; this will provide a random attendance of various ages and income groups.

**Social Media Data Collection**

Facebook and Instagram were used as tools to record the social interaction the event brought to the community. These sites were used to interface with potential participants in a two way symmetrical communications platform where their information was received and responded to by the researcher.

**Data Presentation**

Social media analytics reports quantitative information such as the location, age and overall reach of communication efforts. Facebook specifically also allowed analytical research on a timeline to measure the level of the targeted public who favored the event. Eventbrite analytics report page traffic on a timeline as well, so dates of outreach can be compared with corresponding event page views. Skyview Los Alamos point of sale system will be used to report wine and food sales, showing what menu items and times of day were most profitable.

**Limitations**

There are limitations to this study based on the amount of time available to conduct this project. The project timeline is assigned to follow the California Polytechnic State University quarter system, which is ten weeks long for each trimester. Extensive research on the event series as a whole was limited due by the time constraints. Additionally, a late season rain event
postponed the event until the end of the academic quarter of the research institution of the senior project and modifications were made to complete the data collection and complete the research based on outside contingencies.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations present in this study are primarily due to company preferences. Attendees of the event will not be prompted for feedback on the event with a survey. The only feedback from attendees to the organization will be via word of mouth. The timing of the event (3pm-6pm) was chosen to coincide with hotel guests check out and arrival as well as the operating hours of the restaurant. The desire to work exclusively with neighboring Santa Barbara County limited our ability to work with a wider range of Central Coast winemakers. While the event is open to the public, it is not a free event, which was set in place to control the amount and quality of guests that arrived on property.
This chapter will provide explanations to how the strategy was implemented for the public relations plan for the Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series, as well as interested parties reaction to the event. The data will summarize the outline of the public relations campaign and measure the amount of awareness reached in the community through social media promotion. The results will be compared to each other, as well as the research findings in the review of the literature in Chapter 2.

Public Relations Action Plan

The main strategy of the Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series is to build strategic business relationships with neighboring winemakers and fostering a positive brand reputation among the community as a whole. The event series is scheduled to begin in May and end in October with one pool party scheduled per month. Each pool party will feature a different winery and showcase their wines. Skyview will purchase wines directly from the winemaker before the event which will benefit both parties as it eliminates third party vendor costs. Each event is open to the public and will run from 3pm-6pm on a Sunday afternoon. Attendees’ $30 ticket includes pool access, live music, a glass of rosé, and appetizers from the Skyview Los Alamos restaurant, Norman. The restaurant and bar is accessible from the pool area and will remain open during the duration of the event, which allows for a boost in revenue for the restaurant during what is typically a slow period of sales. Additionally, a “Sunset Barbecue” will be offered as a ticket
add-on for $20/plate, served from 6pm-7pm immediately following the pool party, providing another opportunity for increased sales and revenue.

**Tactics and Tools**

The public relations plan for the Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series implements multiple strategic communication tactics. Smith explains there are four categories of tactics that build a public relations plan to successfully reach audiences. (Egan, 2011). Egan states that Smith’s tactic categories composed of interpersonal communication, organizational media, news media, and advertising/promotional media. (Egan, 2011). The Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series public relations tools include social media channels, print media, email communication and marketing, as well as word of mouth.

The beginning stages of the public relations plan for this event series focused on direct email communication to Santa Barbara wineries. Their participation and involvement is at the core of each event. Ownership provided the events and marketing team with an initial list of preferred Santa Barbara County winemakers (Figure 4). Once a winemaker has committed to a date, the event is posted on both Eventbrite and Facebook. Eventbrite offers a trusted and streamlined outlet for ticket sales, while the Facebook event page offers targeted exposure to Skyview’s social media following. Furthermore, Eventbrite ticket sales are then linked through the Facebook event page, adding another point of sale for the event. An eblast is then sent to Skyview’s 1,300 email subscribers notifying them of the event date, time, featured winemaker, and musician (Figure 3). Further event sharing and primary communications with publics will take place through Instagram through static posts and stories (Figures 8, 8a, 9, 9a), as well as
shared through participating vendors Instagram profiles. Printed materials, specifically postcards, are utilized to market the series as a whole with the dates of each event listed. The postcard is distributed in the restaurant guest checks, in the hotel lobby, and given to participating winemakers to present in their tasting rooms (Figure 2).

**Communication with Publics**

The relational approach of public relations was a strategy used to build strategic relationships with local businesses, specifically winemakers. As stated in Chapter 2 of the literary review, “the relational approach [of public relations] focuses on a small number of influential stakeholders, and as a consequence takes a long-term strategic view of public relations. (Jackson, 2013, p. 119).” Chapter 2 also states, “Public relations helps the organization make money by cultivating relationships with donors, consumers, shareholders, and legislators who are needed to support organizational goals (Hon, 1999, p. 11).” The event series is centered around a two-way symmetrical model of communication and in our initial email correspondence with winemakers we want to emphasize the value that participating in one of the pool parties holds (Figure 5).

The importance of branding the event series to align with Skyview Los Alamos was achieved by having a photo of the iconic yellow roadside motel sign incorporated in the event collateral (Figure 1, 2, 3). The image is filtered over in gray to allow for rose pink and white text to stand out. The Skyview Los Alamos logo is also included on the event collateral in the efforts of public brand recognition. This brand recognition will become more important as the series continues.
The response the campaign receives during and after the event will gauge how to improve future events in the series. The analytics provided by the Facebook event page record the amount of visits each page had reached, and the number of comments supporters/followers participated in. The analytics provided by Instagram posts and stories show demographics reached. See Table at the end of Chapter 4 for a table comparing the reach of Instagram Story and Static Post. The analytics provided by the Eventbrite page show the effectiveness of our outreach in terms of page views with the dates of corresponding marketing efforts.

Table 1:

Comparison of reach between Instagram Post and Instagram Story

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<th>Post</th>
<th>Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Profile Visits</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Clicks</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Directions</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>@djmangig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follows</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5  

Discussions and Recommendations  

Summary

The newly reopened Skyview Hotel is looking to form strategic relationships with the surrounding business community and develop a positive brand reputation. The Skyview Rose Pool Party Series was created to do just that. From May-October 2019, Skyview will open its pool to the public one afternoon a month and invite a local winemaker to showcase their wines, interact with their target demographics and increase revenue through direct wine sales. The owner of Skyview Los Alamos, Kimberly Walker, sees working with and promoting these winemakers as essential to the success of the property. Modeled after a two-way symmetrical communication model, the Rosé Pool Party series will also boost sales for Skyview through ticket, food and beverage sales. The public relations plan implemented for the event involves multiple strategic communications tactics including social media channels, print media, email marketing, and word of mouth.

Study of the event was performed to determine the effect of planned special events on brand reputation and how they can be used as a tool for relationship building. To build upon our findings throughout the event process, the following research questions frame the study:

1. How does one successfully strategize an event focused on relationship building?
2. How effective are events for increasing brand reputation?
3. How do you increase participation for an event using event marketing?
4. What is the outcome of the event and did it effectively cause behavior change in the community or reinforce it?
Findings

Although the first event of the series was postponed due to the rainy weather, there are many findings that can be drawn through initial outreach and promotion. This will be used to improve upon communication for upcoming events in the series.

Through viewing the data provided by Facebook, it can be shown that a campaign such as the Skyview Rosé Pool Party Series is most appealing to women between the ages of 35 and 44 and the most views of the May 19th event page occurred at its initial posting. Strategizing an outreach program plan that actively reaches out and appeals to the male population would be beneficial to the expansion of community involvement. It would also be beneficial to re-share the post closer to the event date to boost page views and create a visual reminder of the upcoming party. However, not everyone has, or is an active participant on Facebook, which can be a limitation on our findings for this particular channel.

The best response received were through our Instagram postings. Analytics show that beyond the likes and views, the posts were shared and tagged with others; an unpaid third-party endorsement from our following. Through Instagram, we were contacted by other wineries who were interested in being a part of the series, proving that our outreach efforts through this platform effectively reached our target market of Santa Barbara County winemakers.
Conclusion

Events are unique in the sense that they are both a tool of public relations and rely on public relations to promote themselves (Jackson, 2013). By studying the use of events as a means to form relationships, one can use the information gathered to strategize the proper method of utilizing public relations and event marketing to build brand reputation as well. Through the creation of a special event, Skyview Los Alamos is working to achieve the goals it has set as an organization: building relationships with surrounding businesses through key partnerships and fostering positive brand reputation with the local community. Overall, the study presented the collective results of several event marketing tactics and a review of literature on the topic. However, the study and overall recommendations for the strategy and outreach of events cannot be applied to all organizations. The study does however serve as an educational tool for marketing, public relations, and hospitality industry professionals who are interested in building relationships and corporate reputation.
References


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[https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu/10.1080/10496490902892580](https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu/10.1080/10496490902892580)

Figures

Figure 1: May 19th Event Header Artwork

Figure 2: Series Promotional Postcard
Bring your suit, enjoy the sunshine, and drink rosé!

We're at it again. Sunday, May 19th 3-6pm. Wine from Liquid Farm. Music by DJ Mano Gil.

Dine- Sunset Barbecue from 6-7pm. Plates $20 per person. Vegetarian options available.

Stay- Event attendees receive a 20% discount on their hotel stay 5.19.19. Discount code sent with your ticket confirmation email.

Figure 3: E-blast
- Skyview Winemaker Pool Parties
  - May thru October
  - Local Winemakers- 1st choice
  Jeff Fisher & Ernst Storm & Lofí
  Angela Osborne
  Casa Dumetz - kimberly
  Presquile
  Stolpman
  Liquid Farm
  Rajat Parr (please!!)

*Figure 4:* List of preferred winemakers from Ownership pulled from meeting agenda on 4.2.19

Hi from Skyview Los Alamos!

It’s our second summer in Los Alamos. We’re putting together a series of rose pool parties and would love to partner with you for one of the events. Think of it like a winemaker dinner, but with appetizers and live music by the pool. We would purchase wines directly from you and make them available for sale at the event by the glass and bottle. Guest tickets would include a glass of your rosé!

Let us know if you are interested, we look forward to hearing from you!

--

*Jessica McLin*

Events and Outreach Coordinator
c: 805.602.0132

*Granada Bistro | Nourish Catering | Skyview Hotel*

*Figure 5:* Outreach email
Figure 6: Facebook Event Page Details and Schedule

Skyview’s Rosé fueled pool party series.

Join us at our next event Sunday May 19th from 3-6pm featuring Liquid Farm.

Listen to live vinyl from Mano Gil while taking in the views from our iconic hilltop property. Bring your suit, enjoy the sunshine, and drink rosé!

Ticket includes pool access, a glass of Liquid Farm Rosé, and paired appetizer from Norman. Newly released Liquid Farm wines will be available by the glass and bottle for your poolside sipping enjoyment.

Dine- Sunset Barbecue from 6-7pm. Plates are $20 per person. Vegetarian options available.

See More →

Party Wine

Schedule - Sunday, May 19, 2019

- 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM
  Pool Party
- 5:00 PM
  Sunset Barbecue

Figure 6a: Facebook Event Page Reach
Figure 6b: Facebook Event Page Reach by Age and Gender

Figure 6c: Facebook Event Page Reach by Location
Figure 7: Facebook Event Page Cancellation Update

Figure 7a: Facebook Event Page Cancellation Response

Figure 8: Instagram Post with Cancellation update
Figure 8a: Instagram Post Insights

Figure 9: Instagram Story
Figure 9a: Instagram Story Insights

Figure 10: Partnership inquiry as a result of Social Media
Great to E-meet you also! Yes please keep us posted on next month's pool party date so we can make this happen. And thank you so much for your support of the Richvale cans. We appreciate the partnership on these with you guys and would love to help keep the fun times rolling!

Cheers,

DANIELLE TABER
CA Sales Manager
Field Recordings, Sans Liege & Fableist Wineries
805.749.9637
www.berlandier.wine

Figure 11: Partnership inquiry as a result of Social Media