

Cam's Curios Research Document

Brand Research

Cam's Curios is a small Lubbock-area business that sells miniature polymer clay trinkets and jewelry inspired by pop culture franchises (C. Martin, personal communication, September 7, 2024). Owned by Cameron Martin, a master's student in Technical Design at Texas Tech University, this business was created as a way for her to express her tastes creatively using a lesser-known medium. Coming from a family of artists, Cameron found joy in the use of clay to create in a way that the rest of her family were not experienced in. For the last ten years, Cameron has crafted figurines that look like cakes or other pastries and sold them at local art markets including First Friday, Second Saturday, and the J&B Coffee Artist Showcase (*806 Collective*, n.d.; *Art*, n.d.; "First Friday Art Trail," n.d.). Each pastry sculpture is based on a character from a video game or animated television show that she has or has had an interest in. Her artwork is primarily designed to function as standalone art pieces. However, she also produces more functional works including earrings, magnets, and pins. Cameron has a personal policy of never repeating designs, as she is morally opposed to the sale of mass-produced goods at local art markets.

Her work primarily targets an audience of 20-somethings, as the properties that she chooses to channel in her works are those that someone of a similar age to her would enjoy. Her primary stakeholders are the attendees of the First Friday Art Trail, which is where she makes most of her monthly income ("First Friday Art Trail," n.d.). She attempts to present her brand image as being synonymous with herself as a person, as she wants to emphasize that her handmade goods are the creation of an individual and not a corporation. This is equally important for maintaining relationships with other local artists in the Lubbock area, who have been able to provide invitations to sell at smaller art events. Despite profiting from her work, she

views her pursuits as sculptural art, which is what she believes provides her with a competitive edge. However, this handmade approach means that her works sometimes take months to complete. The franchises that she selects for her work also traditionally lack merchandising, which is why she believes that she has a strong group of regular customers at these events.

While she is the only miniature sculpture artist in Lubbock, she views the merchants who sell pre-made miniature objects from crafts stores and turn them into jewelry as her primary competitors. She admires many popular online miniature creators, including @_shistine on Instagram who are known for their crisp linework (@_shistine, 2024). This artist has over 102,000 followers but chose to follow Cameron after she sent them her art. Despite not selling art online, Cameron primarily markets her work through Instagram. Her messaging primarily consists of in-person event announcements made in Canva posted to her story and photographic posts of her work attached to her profile. However, because of her workflow, she often goes months without making a new post showcasing her art. She believes that the trend towards short-form content on social media platforms has impacted how artists like her promote themselves, but she has been unable to capitalize on it. Because of this industry trend, she views success as relating to likes and view counts.

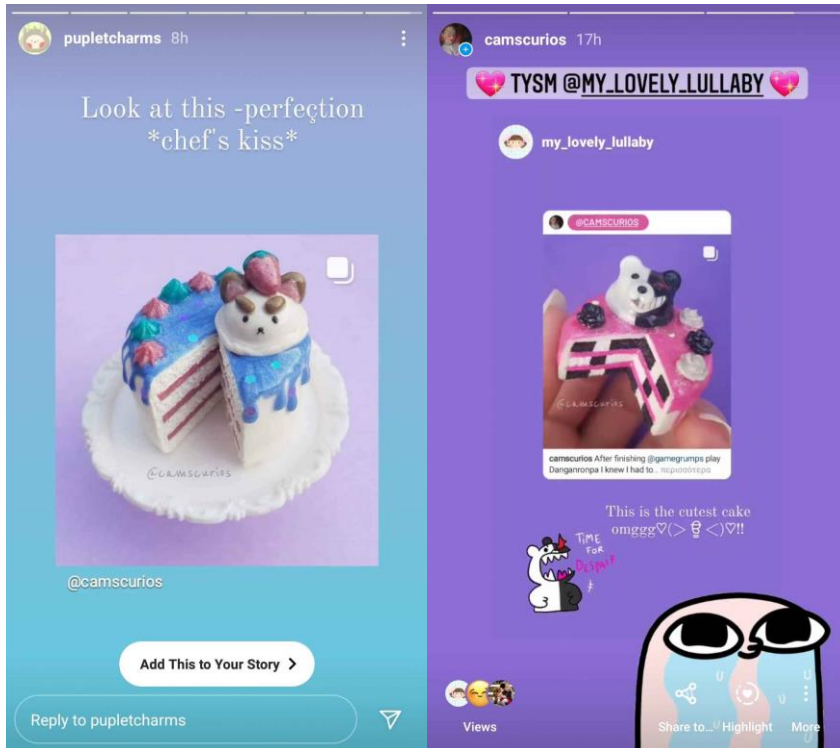
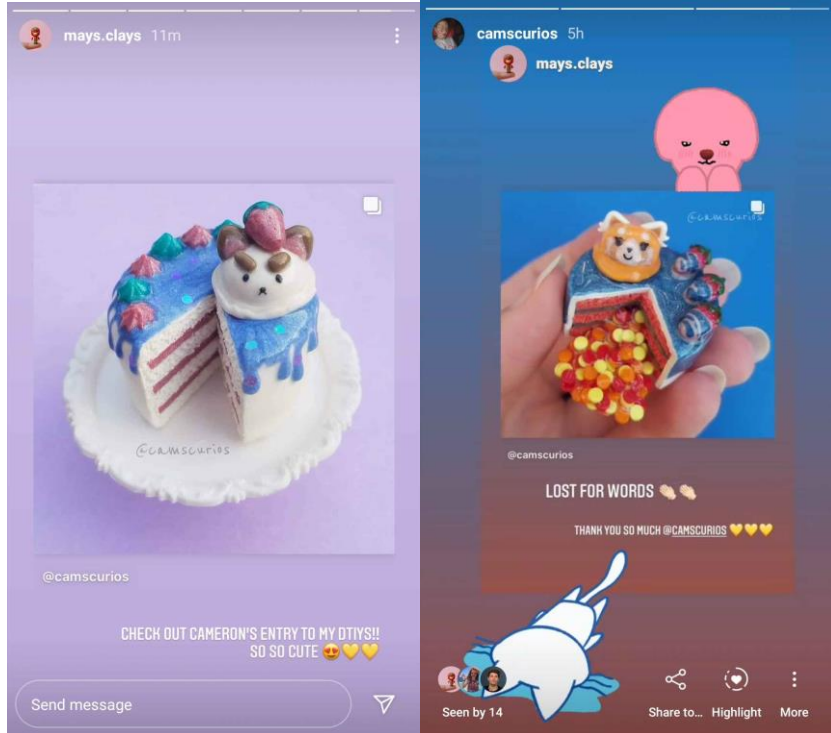
Despite having an inefficient work pipeline, Cameron remains committed to the personal mission of sharing artwork inspired by niche franchises. She believes in creating things that she wants to make, despite short-term trends. She believes that following that path to creation ensures that she stays true to herself as an artist and to her audience. In the next few years, she hopes to begin showcasing her work in larger cities where niche art markets are more common. Long term, she aspires to hold her own exhibition showcasing her art, receiving recognition

through social media, and going viral or being reposted on the page of someone that she admires. However, she doesn't foresee herself becoming a full-time artist at any point.

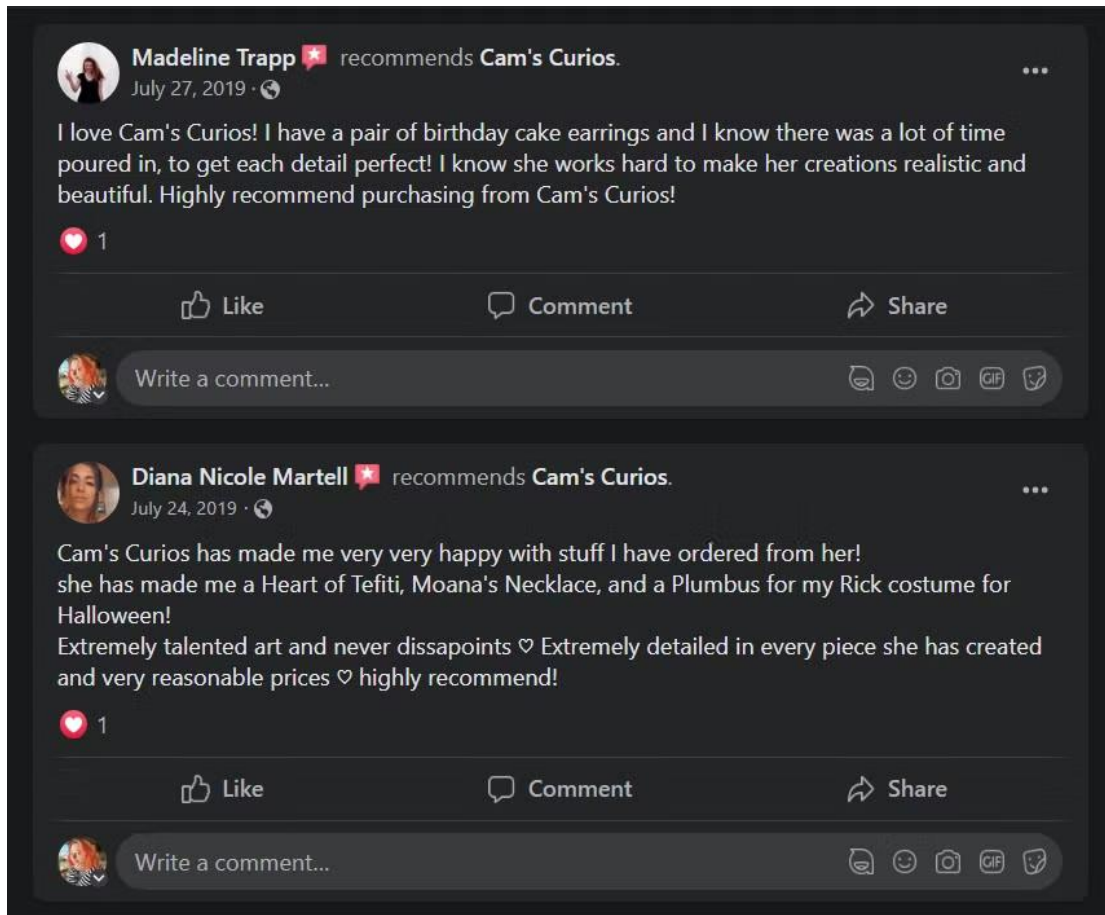
This does bother her, as it eats her up seeing other artists of the same medium be more successful online. However, she believes that she does not have the chops to produce regular online content. She will sometimes also encounter visitors to Lubbock's art markets who will publicly scoff at her work. However, she is unable to sell her work in a larger, more arts-oriented city. Despite this, she wants to continue to stand up for her personal artistic vision and promote herself more widely. She dreams of one day sharing her art with the creators of the franchises that inspired them or receiving recognition through a press outlet. Despite her struggles, she wants to communicate through her work that art takes time.

Market Research

Analyzing online responses to Cam's Curios were solely secondary qualitative social listening responses. Cameron reposts all customer mentions to her profile story, which made the process of locating comments about her business simple (Martin, 2024). Comments on this platform appear to be oriented toward the appearance of the art itself. Additionally, most of the accounts responding to her art are also polymer clay creators with followings ranging from 1-2,000 followers, including the following examples:



Cam's Curios also has a business Facebook page where users can leave customer reviews (Martin, 2024). Responses on this platform appear to be mostly based on her work ethic and attention to detail:



While Cameron does not typically post her work outside of her social media channels, she has posted one of her creations to Reddit in the past (peachyqueen, 2020). This piece was a pin themed after the Nintendo video game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. She made a post to the subreddit dedicated to the game, [/r/ac_newhorizons](#), and received 3,200 upvotes and 72 comments. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, and several commenters asked for her to make an online storefront. Some of the comments on this post are as follows:

- “OMG I LOVE ITTTTT” -/u/oofer-gang_
- “severely underrated” -/u/anniegirlx
- “This is so perfect!! Are you planning on making more little villager pins? These would do soo well on Etsy!!” -/u/LittleAmbitions
- “I WANT IT.” -/u/ironpiy
- “Those lines are like REALLY crisp. Love the gloss too. Nice work!” -/u/ethereal_eden
- “This is so tastefully done. Do you have an etsy?” -/u/pewpadewk

Insight

The strength of Cam’s Curios is being able to cater to niche but dedicated fandoms.

Customers and creators alike have taken note of her artistic talents and appear to be wanting more. Her audience of regular customers at local art markets exemplifies both her loyalty and her ability to garner the attention of her target audience of 20-something pop culture fanboys. Her online following of polymer clay artists and fans of media franchises on Instagram and Reddit demonstrates her potential to reach a wider audience through the internet. Many of these individuals have even asked for opportunities to purchase her work online! However, because Cameron limits her business to art markets in Lubbock area, she is unable to capitalize on any potential online popularity. Though Cameron views online notoriety as being equivalent to success, she is not putting forth enough effort in her online presence to attain it. Thus, Cam’s Curios should rework their business model to address this untapped market of online content creation.

Usability Testing

Cam’s Curios is currently the only polymer clay artist in Lubbock. However, this doesn’t mean that she’s cornered the market for pop culture-based creations. To discover how Cam’s Curios can offer her creations to a wider audience, an analysis of Cameron’s current in-person fans will be used. At the next in-person art market, Cameron will leave a whiteboard next to her stand along with a stack of dry erase markers. At the top of the board, the following question will

be written: “what is your favorite franchise that has barely any merchandise?”. Any attendees of the market will be invited to write their response on the board as they pass. The qualitative responses to these questions will be used to determine which properties would make possible subjects for future artwork.

Cameron also wishes to expand her online following but is unsure of where to start. Thus, she will use her current social media presence to create a guideline. Using Instagram’s “questions” feature, Cameron will post a series of questions to her story. These questions will include “what kind of slice of life content do you watch?”, “what kind of art creation content do you find satisfying”, “what do you wish that I posted more of?”, and “where do you buy art online?”. The qualitative responses will help guide what kind of vlog and art creation content that her current following views as determine what art storefronts they use. This will allow her to create a roadmap for her rebranding without alienating her current audience.

Marketing Audit

In 2022, I created a logo for Cam’s Curios. Using sketches of a logo concept that she provided to me, I produced the current logo used by the business in Adobe Illustrator. This logo features a pastel-colored pigeon and is printed on a two-meter-long banner which is hung on the front of her art booth. Cameron has since expressed disdain for this logo, saying that while she enjoyed the pastel color scheme, the pigeon does not correlate to what she sells. Furthermore, she does not use this logo in her social media presence, instead opting for a selfie.



Cameron has also previously attempted to expand her content to cater to an online market but was unhappy with the result. In 2023, I made a website to showcase her work along with a webstore hosted through Big Cartel, an online shopping storefront (Alfonsin, 2023). However, she did not like the appearance of the website and was apprehensive to post anything to her storefront because she was unsure of how to work out the logistics of shipping her art.

Competitive Audit

The leading competitors in the online polymer clay space don't appear to be solely artists, but rather artists who also promote their creations as content creators. Tammy Dinh is an artist from Boulder, Colorado who has boasted about having made over six figures in sales from her polymer clay miniatures under the moniker Uncomfy Co (Dinh, 2024). With 235,000 followers on Instagram and 432,000 subscribers on YouTube, Dinh has been creating clay artwork since 2020. She documents her creation process in the form of Instagram Reels and the process of running her business in YouTube vlogs. Her work also most resembles that of Cam's Curios, as several of her pieces are themed after foods. Bunniwinkle is a creator from Pulilan in the Philippines who follows a similar business model but specializes in miniature clay keychains and charms that look like cute animal mascots (@bunniwinkle, 2024). This creator boasts 27,800 followers on Instagram and 29,300 subscribers on YouTube, and posts art creation on Instagram Reels and vlog content on YouTube. Nancy Nguyen is another competitor from London, Ontario

who follows the miniature clay charm character model using the name Oh, That's Neat (Nguyen, 2024). They post art creation and vlog content via their Instagram to their 34,400 followers. All three of these competitors have online storefronts hosted through Shopify. Furthermore, all three of these competitors indirectly compete with Cameron, as they are unaware of her business and because their popularity far exceeds hers.

Language Audit

The tone and visual presentation of the information present on her online profiles is consistent with the bright, colorful visuals of the art that she creates. However, much of her profile contains mentions of her personal life irrelevant to her art, such as videos of concerts that she has attended. Her content appears to be based on what she knows about her customers and their interests in niche franchises, although she admits to having missed the mark with several of her works such as one which references the Nintendo franchise Pikmin; a series which has received only one new entry in the last decade. She believes that there is such a thing as getting too niche.

However, she tries to invite her customers to interact with her online by posting polls asking what kind of artwork they would like to see. However, the online response appears to be disconnected from her in-person audience, meaning that her attempts at promoting her in-person appearances are not effective. When discussing her artwork at the local art markets, she explains what her art is to every customer. She also specifies that it is not edible, despite resembling food. Thus, the presentation of her work is not self-explanatory enough. However, she does a good job of supporting loyal customers and communicating to them by handwriting thank-you notes and by providing free stickers from a dollar store with every purchase. Cameron is also interested in

expanding her skillset with content creation skills including editing and 3D sculpting using tools such as Blender but is apprehensive to immerse herself in it.

References

806 Collective. (n.d.). Facebook. Retrieved September 15, 2024, from

<https://www.facebook.com/806collective/>

Alfonsin, B. (2023). *Cam's Curios*. <https://www.camscurios.com/>

Art. (n.d.). J&B Coffee. Retrieved September 15, 2024, from <https://jandbcoffee.com/pages/art>

@bunniwinkle. (2024). Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/bunniwinkle/>

Dinh, T. (2024). *Uncomfy*. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQuRK-](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQuRK-VFyCjf3VCqZkCDveA)

[VFyCjf3VCqZkCDveA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQuRK-VFyCjf3VCqZkCDveA)

First Friday Art Trail. (n.d.). *The Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts*. Retrieved

September 15, 2024, from <https://lhuca.org/ffat/>

Martin, C. (2024). *Cam's Curios*. Facebook. <http://facebook.com/camscurios>

Martin, C. (2024). @camscurios. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/camscurios/>

Martin, C. (2024, September 7). *Brand Audit Interview* [Personal communication].

Nguyen, N. (2024). @oh.thats.neat. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/oh.thats.neat/>

peachyqueen. (2020, July 2). *I made a Bob pin out of polymer clay and wanted to share it. :)*

[Reddit Post]. R/Ac_newhorizons.

www.reddit.com/r/ac_newhorizons/comments/hjmfvf/i_made_a_bob_pin_out_of_polymer

[r_clay_and_wanted/](http://www.reddit.com/r/ac_newhorizons/comments/hjmfvf/i_made_a_bob_pin_out_of_polymer)

@_shistine. (2024). Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/_shistine/