2022

Social Media Marketing Strategies for Improving Customer Relationships

Candel Cuffie
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Candel Cuffie

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Elisabeth Musil, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Franz Gottleib, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Mohamad Hammoud, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration
Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Social Media Marketing Strategies for Improving Customer Relationships

by

Candel Cuffie

MBA, Heriot-Watt University, 2015

BSc, Oxford Brookes University, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Despite the potential benefits of social media marketing (SMM) to improve customer

relationships, some small business leaders lack SMM strategies to improve customer

relationships. Small business leaders who fail to improve customer relationships may

observe a decline in their customer base, leading to decreased profitability. Grounded in

Berry's relationship marketing theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study

was to explore SMM strategies small business leaders used to improve customer

relationships. Data were collected via reviews of company documentation, participants'

social media pages, and online semistructured interviews with five small retail business

leaders who used SMM strategies to improve customer relationships. Data analysis was

conducted using thematic analysis and three major themes emerged: social media

engagement strategy, target audience strategy, and social customer relationship

management strategy. A key recommendation is for business owners to use social media

platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to communicate, interact, and obtain feedback

from customers. The implications for positive social change include the potential to

increase employment opportunities and the standards of living in the community.

Social Media Marketing Strategies for Improving Customer Relationships

by

Candel Cuffie

MBA, Heriot-Watt University, 2015

BSc, Oxford Brookes University, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2022

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my family for their consistent prayers and unwavering support throughout this journey. I thank my parents, Winston and Angela Cuffie, for being exemplary role models and instilling in me the importance of persistence, dedication, and faith in God to yield great success. I sincerely appreciate my sisters, Sherrose, Winsie-ann, and Victrina, for being phenomenal sources of motivation and encouragement during this process. Above all, I am eternally grateful to God for His everlasting grace, mercies, and divine favor upon me throughout this doctoral journey; without Him, none of this would be possible.

Acknowledgments

I am immensely grateful to my Chair, Dr. Elisabeth Musil, for her invaluable advice, patience, and constructive guidance during this DBA journey. Special thanks to my other committee members, Dr. Franz Gottleib and Dr. Mohamed Hammoud, and Program Director Dr. Freda Turner, for their vital input and assistance. I also appreciate Dr. Timothy Malone's tremendous support and encouragement at the beginning of this process. Heartfelt thanks to the Walden community, including my supportive peers, academic advisors, and the accommodating library staff – all of whom contributed significantly to making this experience pleasant. Many thanks to the wonderful participants of my study whose willingness, cooperation, and meaningful insight greatly facilitated the completion of my research. Once again, I wholeheartedly thank God, my family, and my loved ones for being pillars of strength, love, and support from beginning to completion.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

The emergence of social media has influenced the traditional model of marketing communications. Social media have led to a change in the tools and strategies available for business leaders to communicate and share information about their brands (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Several researchers have researched social media and customer behavior. However, the literature is still emerging, and more research is necessary, given the ever-changing nature of social media environments in which consumers are operating and interact with business leaders (Stephen, 2016). If business leaders do not react with greater efficiency and effectiveness than their competitors, their relationships with customers may considerably deteriorate (Hardwick & Anderson, 2019; Koponen et al., 2019; Murphy & Sashi, 2018).

Social media have become vital for businesses to survive, so business leaders need to manage them effectively. Despite social media being a potent tool, some business leaders are still hesitant to accept that marketing dynamics are changing because of social media marketing (SMM). These business leaders are unwilling to use SMM to improve customer relationships because of their lack of knowledge of how to implement and benefit from SMM (Stephen, 2016). Thus, I explored this applied business problem to increase the knowledge of business leaders about the benefits of implementing SMM strategies to improve customer relationships.

Problem Statement

Some business leaders are not prepared enough for the growing impact of social media and relationship marketing (Rasul, 2018). Although there is a massive potential audience available who spend many hours a day using various social media platforms (Appel et al., 2020), less than 25% of business leaders use SMM strategies (Cole et al., 2017). The general business problem is that some business leaders are not implementing SMM strategies that may improve customer relationships. The specific business problem is that some small business leaders lack SMM strategies to improve customer relationships.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships. The targeted sample population was five small business leaders in the retail industry in Central Trinidad who developed and implemented successful social media strategies that improved customer relationships. The implications for positive social change include the improved self-worth, self-dignity, and professionalism of business leaders who can effectively communicate with customers and build more loyal relationships. Society may experience social change through more effective and valuable consumer information shared via social media. The local community may benefit from additional employment opportunities.

Nature of the Study

The study was a qualitative multiple-case study. Qualitative research involves investigating a phenomenon and understanding real-world problems by collecting rich narrative materials (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Qualitative researchers rely on data from interviews, focus groups, observations, documents, and other written materials (Carr et al., 2019). Quantitative research involves objective scientific methods to generate numerical data and test hypotheses (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). I conducted an exploratory study to understand the issue via interviews of participants rather than test hypotheses about variables' characteristics or relationships. Hence, quantitative research was not appropriate for this study. A mixed methods approach involves integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, where the findings of one method corroborate the other (Frias & Popovich, 2020). The mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study because the study did not require examining variables' characteristics or relationships through hypotheses testing. Thus, the qualitative method was the best method for this study to identify and explore the SMM strategies that business leaders successfully used.

Three qualitative research designs include ethnography, phenomenology, and case study designs (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). Ethnography involves intensive observation of participants in their everyday environment, usually over an extended period, to understand their culture (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Ethnography was not suitable for this study, as this research did not focus on people's culture. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals experience, feel, and make sense of phenomena (Kocalar & Bilgili,

2020). I explored how participants experience social phenomena. Thus, I did not use phenomenology. Researchers use case studies to explore a contemporary phenomenon and answer what, how, and why phenomena exist (Anthony, 2018; Yin, 2018). Multiple case studies involve researchers analyzing within and across several similar cases to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the cases as a unit by comparing the individual cases' similarities and differences (Heale & Twycross, 2018). For this study, I used a multiple case study design as I explained the research topic phenomenon using multiple cases to identify and explore similarities and differences among participants' successful SMM strategies.

Research Question

What SMM strategies do some small business leaders use to improve customer relationships?

Interview Questions

1. What SMM strategies do you use to improve customer relationships?

2. What SMM strategies were most effective for improving customer relationships?

3. How did you assess the effectiveness of your SMM strategies in improving customer relationships?

4. What were the key barriers or challenges of implementing SMM strategies to improve customer relationships?

5. How did you overcome the key barriers or challenges of implementing SMM strategies to improve customer relationships?

6. What additional information would you like to share regarding SMM for improving customer relationships?

Conceptual Framework

Relationship marketing (RM) was first introduced in marketing literature by Berry (1983). Berry posited that RM involves attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships. Berry further emphasized that business leaders should view new customer attraction as an intermediate step of the marketing process only and focus on solidifying customer relationships, increasing customers' loyalty, and serving customers as clients as these factors constitute marketing.

Berry (1995) further ascertained that RM is marketing to existing customers to win their continuing patronage and loyalty. The concept of RM is becoming increasingly popular, and individuals integrate it into various marketing subdisciplines, including SMM. The five strategy elements that Berry (1983) suggested that business leaders use to implement RM include (a) developing a core service around which to build a customer relationship, (b) customizing relationships to individual customers, (c) augmenting the core service with extra benefits, (d) pricing services to encourage customer loyalty, and (e) marketing to employees so they may contribute to customer satisfaction.

Business leaders can realize greater benefits when incorporating RM within their SMM efforts, such as increased sales, increased profits, and increased competitiveness through improved customer loyalty and customer satisfaction (Richardson et al., 2016). The RM theory aligned with this study, as it provided a lens for me to understand the

successful SMM strategies that small business leaders use to improve customer relationships.

Operational Definitions

Brand awareness: Brand awareness involves potential customers becoming informed and acquainted with a brand name so they quickly identify and recall the brand when encountering a cue (Boonsiritomachai & Sud-On, 2020).

Customer engagement: Customer engagement (CE) occurs on social media when delighted or loyal customers share their positive feelings in interactions with others on their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand, or company (Steinhoff et al., 2019).

Electronic word-of-mouth: Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is any positive or negative comment made by previous, potential, or actual consumers about a product, company, or brand via the internet or social media, such as e-communication among social media users (Kim & Slotegraaf, 2015).

Influencers: Influencers are social media celebrities whom advertisers pay to promote products (Abidin, 2016).

Likes: Likes are one-click symbolic social cues on Facebook, which convey positively connoted user opinion and show user preference or interest for the liked item (Chang et al., 2020; Swani & Milne, 2017; Xu et al., 2019). Thus, *likes* are an indirect form of recommendation and act as a social influence (Lee et al., 2015; Sedera et al., 2017).

Social customer relationship management (SCRM): SCRM is a business strategy supported by systems and technologies, including social media applications, to engage customers in collaborative interactions that provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment (Chan et al., 2018).

Social media: Social media are a collection of software-based digital technologies, usually presented as apps and websites that provide users with digital environments where they can send and receive digital content or information over some online social networks (Appel et al., 2020).

Social media marketing (SMM): SMM is the use of social media as a tool for marketing to achieve enhanced brand awareness, improved communication, and increased promotion of products and services (Maria et al., 2019; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018).

Tweet: A tweet is a brief message via the Twitter social networking platform (Oh et al., 2017).

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is the second generation of web development and design that facilitates communication and secures information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration on the world wide web (Dhiman & Joshi, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are truths believed by researchers based on their beliefs that underlie their study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Although assumptions may be unverifiable, carry risks, and can cause inaccuracies in findings, they are necessary for researchers to

conduct their studies (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). Researchers must disclose all assumptions or risks in their findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). For this research, I assumed that the interview participants successfully used SMM strategies to improve customer relationships based on their feedback and published reports. As it would have taken considerable time and effort to validate participants' responses, I assumed that participants clearly understood the questions and responded accurately and honestly. I assumed that the semistructured interview questions and business documents led to enough data to answer the study's central research question. I also assumed that the participants I selected represented the study's target population. Finally, I assumed that this study's findings might contribute to business practice and positive social changes.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses or imposed restrictions out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). A small research sample may affect the generalizability of research findings (Wang, 2018). The research sample of five participants may affect the generalizability of the findings to other industries or other countries. I used a qualitative research method for this study. Qualitative research involves nonnumerical information that can be subjective and might affect the findings' reliability or validity (Farghaly, 2018; Leung, 2015). Participants' personal biases toward the research topic may influence their responses. This response bias arises from participants' tendency to provide the researcher with misleading or socially acceptable responses (Gronlund et al., 2014).

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries or limits that researchers consciously set for their research so their study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Thus, delimitations are in the researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I chose the geographical location, Central Trinidad, for this study because of convenience and accessibility. I limited this study to five small business leaders within this location who have successfully used SMM strategies to improve customer relationships within their organizations. I also selected business leaders who have been operational in business for at least 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Business leaders may create new communication lines, deepen relationships with customers, and present their brand to a new audience through SMM (Bauer, 2013). Business leaders may benefit from increased regularity in purchases and reduced expenses because keeping long-term customers costs far less than attracting new customers through advertising and marketing campaigns (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). As business leaders gain increased knowledge of SMM strategies and improve customer relationships, they may expand their businesses, enhance their long-term survival strategies, and increase their companies' sustainability through customers' support, involvement, and loyalty. Thus, this study may contribute to more effective practice of business.

Rasul (2018) concluded that many business leaders are not doing enough to apply SMM and ignore consumers' voices. Business leaders not using SMM may underperform compared to customer-oriented rivals who use social media (Rasul, 2018). Thus, this study may be of good value to business leaders by providing insights into developing and implementing effective SMM strategies to improve customer relationships.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the improved self-worth, self-dignity, and professionalism of business leaders who can effectively communicate with customers and build more loyal relationships. Society may experience social change through more effective and valuable information shared via social media. The local community may benefit from additional employment opportunities. Other potential contributions to general positive social change include implementing SMM strategies to improve customer trust. Relationships built on trust are more desirable for customers. Improved customer relationships may enhance the self-worth and self-dignity of customers through commitment and trust.

<center>**A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**</center>

A literature review is the most common way of acquiring knowledge and sets the direction for a study (Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017). Researchers conduct literature reviews to rationalize the significance of a topic, identify key research on a research problem, synthesize and gain new perspectives on an issue, and contribute to a topic (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016). This study's literature review involves critical analysis and literature synthesis relating to the conceptual framework and potential themes and

phenomena from the purpose statement. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships.

The study includes 268 references, of which 87% are peer-reviewed, and 86% are within 5 years from this study's expected approval by Walden's chief academic officer. This section begins with a review of the RM conceptual framework, followed by the RM theory's major components and other essential topics relating to the research problem. I obtained academic, peer-reviewed articles and journals for this study from Google Scholar and several Walden University Library databases, including ABI/INFORM Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, and ScienceDirect. I used keywords to narrow my searches on these databases, including *CE, cocreation, CRM, customer perceived value, customer relationships, RM, SMM, social media, social networks,* and *word-of-mouth (WOM)*.

Relationship Marketing

RM involves attracting and establishing relationships while enhancing, developing, keeping, or maintaining relationships (Berry, 1983; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Grönroos (1994) posited that leaders could achieve this goal through mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises. Individuals have previously focused more of their RM studies on improving, retaining, and sustaining relationships with current customers than on appealing to new customers (Gummerus et al., 2017). RM has led to a change in the marketing paradigm from a transactional to a relational perspective (Alharbi, 2020). This

perspective has resulted in a better understanding of customers, improved products, and closer relationships with customers.

SMM facilitates RM and influences customer relationship development. Hence, business leaders should include SMM in their marketing strategies to develop long-term customer relationships (Stojiljković, 2019). Business leaders who use SMM strategies properly can provide their firms with a long-lasting RM tool to increase sales and customer loyalty and build awareness (Gummerus et al., 2017). RM efforts generate stronger customer relationships that enhance seller performance outcomes, including sales growth, market share, and profits (Gummerus et al., 2017). Thus, if business leaders increase their understanding of RM, they can significantly increase the return on their firms' RM investments.

Business leaders can also use SMM to attract and enhance customer relationships, contributing to RM. Rasul (2018) posited that all business leaders who desire to survive the markets and their competitors would need to embrace RM through social media strategies, no matter how reluctant they may be to hand power over to the consumers. RM results in customer satisfaction and delight, customer retention, and loyalty (Jones et al., 2015). Other benefits of RM include decreased price sensitivity, opportunities for up-selling and cross-selling, special treatment, confidence, and social and time-savings (Jones et al., 2015). Hence, RM is an essential tool for business leaders to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

To implement RM and improve customer relationships, business leaders should shift their strategic focus from only sale-oriented to customer-oriented. Sheth (2017)

suggested that business leaders could revitalize RM by moving from marketing strategies and tactics designed for financial gain from customers to those that focus on winning customers' hearts. Business leaders should increase customer bonding to appeal to them emotionally rather than just economically or via the physical offering of goods and services (Alharbi, 2020). Sheth stated that the relationship between customers and business leaders should transcend from business to friendship, beyond trust and commitment, and from an explicit contractual relationship governed by contract laws to an implicit friendship governed by passion, purpose, and mutual respect. If business leaders maximize the effectiveness of SMM to understand and bond with customers, they could improve customer relationships.

Relationships between businesses and their customers should be mutually beneficial rather than one-sided. Customers often believe that traditional marketing involves bias, in that business leaders repeatedly intrude on customers' activities, but customers cannot access business leaders when they have an issue (Sheth et al., 2015). Berry (1995) suggested that business leaders who practice RM must ensure that they customize relationships according to individuals' needs and provide a core service that they must correctly price and enhance with extra benefits. To improve relationships, business leaders should determine what pleases and displeases customers rather than view them as file numbers (Alharbi, 2020). Business leaders should discover customers' views, thoughts, and biases about the organization's goods and services and accordingly change their approach to customers (Ahmmed et al., 2019). When customers believe that

business leaders consider and meet their needs adequately, they may be more willing to develop relationships with business leaders.

Moreover, business leaders should ensure they have adequate capabilities to maximize RM activities. Business leaders should direct marketing initiatives toward employees to ensure they provide excellent service to customers (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018). Successful RM depends on companies' technological capacity to build, improve, and maintain long-term relationships (Sheth, 2017). Internet-based technologies, including websites and social media, have emerged as viable catalysts, contributing to the birth of the concept of internet-based RM (Mahmoud et al., 2017). Thus, business leaders should continually improve their RM investments, such as training and technology, to improve customer relationships.

Internet Technologies

Business leaders can use internet technologies, including emails, blogging, podcasts, social media, and websites, to improve their RM. Enhancing relationships with customers through RM depends on customers' technological ability and willingness to learn and adapt to new technologies such as social media (Appel et al., 2020). Technologically savvy customers may opt to switch relationships with firms more often than technology-illiterate consumers (Steinhoff et al., 2019). The ability to navigate different products, offers, deals, product information, reviews, and promotions using various technological devices and methods enables customers to establish and improve relationships with firms (Steinhoff et al., 2019). Therefore, business leaders should

ensure that they are up-to-date with internet technologies and their relevant features to meet customers' needs.

Internet social interaction has led to the use of websites and social media for company-customer RM activities. Internet technologies are an alternative medium for social interactions, where business leaders and customers could establish and manage relationships, and business leaders can increase their customer base exponentially (Mahmoud et al., 2017). Users of social media platforms can indulge in both public and private interactions with business leaders to improve relationships (Mahmoud et al., 2017). Users can select and personalize information on social media, contributing to improved company-customer relationships (Chung et al., 2016). Technology has changed how business leaders deliver services, often replacing costly face-to-face interaction (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Comments, complaints, and questions from online customers provide feedback, which translates into greater knowledge about customers (Mahmoud et al., 2017). These internet and social media features help reduce costs, increase customer satisfaction, and sustain loyalty, contributing to improved relationships.

However, social-media-based RM may have unintended consequences. The speed of change in technology means that even new technology can become outdated quickly (Cluley et al., 2020). The increasing use of internet technologies such as websites and social media in business-to-customer relationships can hurt the development of long-term relationships because of customers' privacy concerns, erosion of emotional attachments developed from face-to-face interactions with customers, and the propensity of unsolicited communication through internet technologies (Mahmoud et al., 2017). Thus,

business leaders should mitigate these downsides of the internet and social media to gain customers' trust and improve customer relationships.

Security and confidentiality of customer data are the primary concerns of parties in online relationships. Using social media and websites increases vulnerability and potential encroachment from unauthorized personnel (Martin & Murphy, 2017). However, concerns about privacy in using social media for RM are fading as an issue, as customers are more interested in the internet-based services' convenience and speed (Mahmoud et al., 2017). Nevertheless, business leaders should assure customers that their interactions via social media would remain private and train employees to maintain confidentiality and be accountable for any breaches.

Online Interactions

Customers prefer human, personalized interactions rather than standard, automated interactions. Therefore, interaction with technology rather than with employees may affect business-to-customer relationships (Martin et al., 2017). The prolonged absence of contact with customers can erode the customers' emotional attachment to the business, thus decreasing loyalty and increasing the probability of switching (Martin et al., 2017). However, customers who receive excellent service remain loyal and provide free advertising by talking about the organization's products and services (Charo et al., 2015). Therefore, business leaders should implement measures to provide frequent, high-quality human communications with customers to maintain customer relationships.

Online interactions between business leaders and their customers are
multichannel. Initially, online business leaders nurtured customer relationships with a
single online channel, typically accessed through a desktop computer (Verhoef et al.,
2015). More recently, online channels have vastly diversified, and the number of
channels has grown substantially (Steinhoff et al., 2019). Business leaders use a wide
range of communication channels in online environments, including websites, emails,
social media profiles, and mobile apps, to interact with customers (Ho & Rezaei, 2018).
However, business leaders should limit or eliminate unsolicited communication to
customers, especially when using social media and subscribed feeds from websites.
(Mahmoud et al., 2017). These unsolicited communication channels may dilute customer
interest, even in personalized communications.

Social Exchange Theory

An alternate theory in support of this study is the social exchange theory (SET)
introduced by Homans (1958). SET involves exchanging social and material resources as
fundamental human interactions (Blau, 1964). Social costs and rewards influence
individuals' choices and behavior (Ouyang & Lee, 2020). SET focuses on relationships
that inherently involve exchanges between providers and consumers (Pattnaik, 2018).
According to SET, when individuals make choices, they will undergo subjective cost-
benefit analysis and weigh available alternatives before making their decision (Cortez &
Johnston, 2020). Under the SET principle, individuals will regularly interact with
providers to make their choices, contributing to building relationships.

The main assumption of SET is that individuals enter and maintain a relationship if the benefits from the relationship outweigh the costs. Individuals expect to obtain a net positive value from relationships, where rewards exceed costs (Homans, 1958). Other assumptions of SET include (a) interaction exchanges lead to economic or social results, (b) comparison of results help decide the exchange relationship dependence, (c) positive outcomes increase trust and commitment, and (d) consistent, favorable exchanges result in relational exchange norms that guide the relationship (Cortez & Johnston, 2020). SET is based on feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust (Pattnaik, 2018). These feelings increase when individuals believe that there is a net positive value from relationships with providers.

Business leaders can use social media when implementing the SET principle. For example, business leaders use SET to engage customers via social media by rewarding them through interaction, cost avoidance, and benefits maximization (Malik et al., 2016). Social media users pursue an unrestricted, diverse audience instead of defined individuals or groups (Ham et al., 2019). Business leaders target individuals they know within their network and the unknown audience across multiple social media platforms (Litt & Hargittai, 2016). These social media features help influence customers' perceptions of increased social benefits compared to costs.

SET explains the development and management of interpersonal relationships but focuses primarily on reciprocal exchanges and outcomes only from minimizing adverse effects and maximizing positive experiences. The advantage of RM theory is that it incorporates not only this aspect but also other marketing strategies to improve

relationships with customers. Thus, the RM theory was more appropriate for this study
and formed the conceptual framework.

Social Media

There has been a proliferation of user-driven web technologies such as blogs,
social networks, and media sharing platforms, which collectively are called social media.
Social media is a group of internet-based applications that use Web 2.0 technology and
facilitate user-generated content creation and exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
Social media have become a common platform for interaction for marketers, businesses,
and customers. Social media enable a virtual environment with easier interconnectivity
and participation, where users can create and share contents online (Appel et al., 2020).
Thus, social media have developed into an indispensable business tool for social and
commercial needs.

Billions of people around the world use social media. For example, as of
December 31, 2019, Facebook had 2.5 billion monthly active users (Clement, 2020a) and
1.66 billion daily active users (Clement, 2020b). Globally, the total number of social
media users is likely to grow to 3.29 billion users by 2022, which will be 42.3% of the
world population (eMarketer, 2018). Venciute (2018) postulated that social media
involve giving, receiving, and exchanging information with no territorial limitation.
Given the large number of social media users across various platforms, business leaders
can use social media as a marketing tool to promote their products, create brand
awareness, benefit from eWOM, and get feedback using interactive tools such as polls,
questions, and answers (Shoute, 2018). Hence, the effective utilization of social media

should be a priority for business leaders to take advantage of the extensive pool of potential customers.

Social media offer several networks relevant to many organizations, including Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Instagram, YouTube, and several mobile-based networks. Facebook and Twitter are more common social media platforms used by businesses for customer relationships (Ho & Rezaei, 2018). Business leaders can foster communication with customers and build and manage relationships with them more cost-effectively via social media than other domains (Akkaya et al., 2017; Scholz et al., 2018). Business leaders should actively join and use several appropriate social media platforms to meet their target customers and broaden their customer base.

Business leaders have access to boundless potential interactions with customers on social media. Customers consider the ease of access when deciding where, when, and how they undertake transactions, and therefore, appreciate doing so via social media, especially if the price is affordable (Alalwan, 2018). Customers can receive product pictures sent by salespersons, get information, read reviews, and ask questions through the company's social media, which can positively influence their purchasing behavior (Onarelly et al., 2018). Customers can acquire a wider variety of products within a shorter time via social media, which gives them more free time to carry out other activities (Alalwan, 2018). Social media provide convenient ways to make transactions, especially for busy customers and those who have limited time (Onarelly et al., 2018). Thus, business leaders who are not engaged in social media are making a mistake, given the many people who embrace and use social media.

Social media content rapidly reaches many people. Social media allow leaders and customers to interact and network directly and easily across geographical boundaries (Lin, 2022). Therefore, social media catalyze and speed up the distribution and exchange of information among individuals and organizations (Charo et al., 2015). Social media's speed can help business leaders spread positive content, reach a wider audience, and provide feedback to customers in real-time (Bernard, 2016). However, this speed and increased customer power mean that individuals can swiftly share negative feedback or false information (Rasul, 2018). Business leaders must implement strategies, resources, and capabilities to mitigate any disaster and maximize the benefits of social media's speed feature.

Social media operate as a large WOM platform. WOM communication includes any information about a target object (e.g., company, brand) transferred from one individual to another either in person or via some communication medium (Taheri et al., 2021). Customers' recommendations on social media facilitate other customers' access to many sources of information and experiences (Rasul, 2018). Thus, individuals can be both consumers and producers of brand and company information via social media's interactive feature (Sheth, 2017). Hence, marketers refer to customers as *prosumers.*

Customers' reviews and comments about the brand or the company on social media impact their reputation. Some social interactions on social media, for example, the refer a friend feature in online communities, could positively affect important marketing outcomes, such as customer acquisition and sales (Venciute, 2018). Hence, business leaders should maintain excellent customer service and high engagement levels on social

media to improve customer relationships and increase customer satisfaction, contributing to positive WOM for the company and brand.

Business leaders should not ignore the importance of social media. Business leaders should incorporate social media as an integral part of their marketing strategy and business model (Hamilton et al., 2016). Business leaders should develop social media competence based on improved information technology, infrastructure capability, social competitor pressure, marketing management, and innovation management (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015). This increased competence can result in business leaders maximizing and benefiting from the social media's positive features, significantly influencing their firms' success.

Social Media Marketing

SMM involves using social media as a marketing tool. SMM is an internet and digital marketing technique using social media networks and applications to achieve enhanced brand awareness, improved communication, and increased promotion of products and services (Maria et al., 2019). Social media have become an essential marketing and communications channel. Social media are the primary domains in which many business leaders benefit from online WOM and receive and share vast amounts of marketing information, images, and videos (Husain et al., 2016). The vast amount of social media campaigns, e-commerce websites, sales emails, and forums indicate that several business leaders have been translating their marketing approaches to the internet because of its accessibility to their target audience and the cost required to do so (Hajli &

Sims, 2015). Business leaders can take advantage of SMM to improve their marketing strategies and develop customer relationships.

Business leaders can connect with customers directly via SMM. SMM represents a marketing opportunity for business leaders that transcends the traditional middleman (Shoute, 2018). With the fast-growing emergence and implementation of new technologies, including the integration of smartphones, social media has become an imperative tool for customers and business leaders to interact (Prodanova & Van Looy, 2019). Customers can ask questions, receive answers, share their opinions, vote on their preferences through business leaders' social media posts, stories, and private messages, leading to faster and direct interactions, increased engagement, and improved relationships with customers.

SMM elevates business leaders' probabilities to attract customers and increase brand awareness. Stojiljković (2019) posited that globally, individuals spend approximately 135 minutes daily browsing social networks. Business leaders have more opportunities to convert individuals to customers with increased visibility, as every blog post, image, video, or comment may lead viewers to the company's website and increase traffic (Shoute, 2018). Hence, by staying active on relevant social media platforms, business leaders can increase brand awareness, attract potential customers, and improve relationships with existing customers.

Business leaders should align their SMM efforts with users' needs, motivations, and preferences. Business leaders can achieve congruence of user-need satisfaction in SMM by aligning the marketing content, process, and goal with users' needs using social

media (So et al., 2016). Business leaders do not have to use all accessible social media tools but should pay attention to the most relevant aspects of their particular corporate goals and plans (Husain et al., 2016). Each social media application appeals to specific individuals (Maria et al., 2019). Business leaders should identify and understand the needs and motivations behind social media usage to develop their marketing strategy and design appropriate advertising appeals. This strategy will enable marketers to communicate with their target audiences on a personal, meaningful level via social media (Zhu & Chen, 2015). The congruence of SMM to customers' needs, motivations, and preferences will attract and maintain customers' attention and reduce their feelings of intrusiveness.

Business leaders can use the brand communities SMM strategy to improve customer relationships. Business leaders can create brand communities in the form of brand fan pages on social networking sites, where customers can interact with business leaders by creating by liking or commenting on brand posts (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Customers who become fans of these brand fan pages are loyal to the company and are more open to receiving information about the brand (Maria et al., 2019). Brand fans visit brand stores more, generate more positive WOM, and are more emotionally attached to the brand than nonbrand fans (Maria et al., 2019). Therefore, brand fan pages will improve customers' relationships with business leaders and their brands, increase brand awareness, and help business leaders grow their companies.

Increased engagement and communication via SMM result in increased customer satisfaction. Globally, 53% of marketers use social media as a two-way conversational

and engagement tool (Shoute, 2018). When business leaders interact with customers by sharing content, commenting, and posting statuses on social media, they personify their brand (Shoute, 2018). These actions result in business leaders spreading their message in a relaxed and conversational way, as people prefer to do business with other people rather than companies (Shoute, 2018). Business leaders can solve customers' problems and tailor their products to customers via engaging customers on posts, polls, and questionnaires (Ngai et al., 2015). Thus, business leaders can use SMM as a tool to improve customer communication and engagement.

Business leaders can use SMM to determine customers' perceptions and behavior. Social media have affected consumer behavior by attaining data on aftersales behavior, such as displeased comments or behaviors about a product, service, or company (Alalwan, 2018). Social media sites such as Facebook are more helpful than other advertising avenues as they accumulate data on all their users (Husain et al., 2016). Business leaders should know their customers' social network choice (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and analyze that network's data to determine the best social media tactics for that site and improve their company's marketing efforts (Husain et al., 2016). Business leaders can use these customer SMM insights to improve their SMM strategies, products, users' experiences, and customers' perceptions.

SMM is financially attractive for business leaders. Business leaders can collaborate and communicate effectively and directly with their current and potential customers via SMM at little to no cost (Onarelly et al., 2018). Social media produce almost double the marketing leads than any other marketing method (Shoute, 2018).

SMM plays an essential role in increasing sales to businesses, as 71% of social media users are more likely to purchase products from brands they connect to via social media websites (Shoute, 2018). Business leaders can receive precise insights regarding products, SMM campaigns, social media platforms, and target social media users on most social media platforms (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Business leaders can gain these insights by directly interacting with the customers, segmenting content syndication lists based on topics, and identifying which types of content generate the most impressions (Shoute, 2018). Increased marketing leads, reduced costs, and increased sales from SMM make SMM cost-effective for business leaders.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggested 10 pieces of advice business leaders should adhere to when engaging in SMM:

- choose the most suitable social media to advertise

- pick or make applications

- align all social media activities to create a cohesive brand image

- provide all relevant staff with access to the company's social media platforms

- stay active on all social networks

- develop and post content that business leaders tailor to attract the company's customers

- gain a necessary understanding of social networks before participating

- be relatable rather than overly professional

- be honest and respectful on social media platforms

SMM is essential for business leaders. Forty percent of today's business leaders implement social media as a fundamental part of their marketing-related strategies (Tan et al., 2018). Business leaders who actively implement SMM can increase customers' awareness of their brand and highlight their intentions to engage in interactive dialogue (Wang & Kim, 2017). SMM produces higher response rates and CE levels than traditional marketing methodologies that focus only on the company-customer relationship (Pauwels et al., 2016). Business leaders should establish social media accounts and implement SMM strategies to encourage customers to engage and communicate with them, contributing to the development and improvement of customer relationships.

Implementing to right SMM strategies can help business leaders succeed. Business leaders should conduct market research to use social media as a marketing tool (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). Business leaders should define their target customers by determining their demographic characteristics, specific location, desires, and what they buy (Husain et al., 2016). Business leaders must know which social media channels their target customers prefer, what blogs they regularly read, what articles interest them, and what videos they watch (Husain et al., 2016). Business leaders need to define their competition (Tajvidi et al., 2018). Business leaders must know the major players in the market who are buying ads and who have top rankings to create similar content (Tajvidi et al., 2018). The right SMM strategies could help business leaders strengthen and expand their brand, business, and market position.

Influencers

The effects of social media influencers are important aspects of SMM. Influencers are social media celebrities whom advertisers pay to promote products (Abidin, 2016). Social media influencers influence potential buyers of a brand or product to aid in its marketing activities (Himelboim & Golan, 2019). Zhu and Chen (2015) suggested that business leaders can leverage celebrities' power, which entails integrating their product or service into celebrities' lives to become part of celebrities' experience with their followers. Business leaders can use sponsored tweets to pay celebrities to broadcast their support of products or services on social media platforms (Abidin, 2016). Leveraging these social media celebrities' power can increase brand awareness and elevate the brand's and company's status.

The influencers' ranks across different topics can affect the effectiveness of the advertisement. Influencers' demographic qualifications vary, and they are not always celebrities or opinion leaders (Himelboim & Golan, 2019). Business leaders must use celebrities that people can believe are actual product users and design an authentic use scenario for generating buzz (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Business leaders and marketers should follow influencers through related topics and analyze strategic ways to benefit (De Veirman et al., 2017). Highly famous personalities hold significant influence (De Veirman et al., 2017). Hence, it may be more effective for business leaders to target appropriate top influencers for their marketing campaigns.

Customer Trust

Trust is one of the main constructs of RM. Trust is customers' confidence in business leaders' capability and willingness to adhere to relationship norms and keep promises (Hajli, Sims, et al., 2017). Improved customer relationships stem from intimacy and trust (Laksamana, 2020). A long-term relationship is inconceivable without trust (Laksamana, 2020). Poon and Albaum (2019) posited that customer trust is crucial for the relationship's ultimate success, whether personal or digital, such as in SMM. If trust is nonexistent, customers will not purchase from companies (Poon & Albaum, 2019). Increased interactions and relationships between customers and business leaders result in stronger bonding and trust.

Trust comprises cognitive and emotional elements. Cognitive trust is the customer's belief in and willingness of dependency on an exchange partner's ability and consistency (Hajli, Sims, et al., 2017). Affective trust is customers' emotional bonds or connections with business leaders based on the care and concern that customers believe business leaders demonstrate (Su & Mattila, 2020). Cognitive and affective trusts contain dimensions of credibility, which is one's belief that the exchange party is reliable, and benevolence, which is the belief that joint gain motivates the exchange partner (Hajli, Sims, et al., 2017). Therefore, customers base their trust on their perceptions of business leaders' competence and caring behaviors.

Trust is essential to social media platforms. Trust is more challenging to gain online than offline (Yahia et al., 2018). On social media, uncertainty is usually higher because of the high level of user-generated content and the lack of face-to-face

interactions (Hajli, Sims, et al., 2017). The lack of face-to-face interactions could cause customers' suspicion of truthfulness in online exchanges, and the lack of knowledge about business leaders could further heighten the adverse influence of social media engagement risk (Poon & Albaum, 2019). Enhancing customers' experience through personalized interactions, honest feedback, and open communication could help customers be more comfortable and reduce uncertainty, increasing trust.

Several factors influence customers' online trust. Beliefs in an exchange party's trustworthiness or the customer's perceptions of competence, benevolence, and integrity lead to online trust (Yahia et al., 2018). Yahia et al. (2018) found that business leaders' reputation and price advantage have the most substantial influence on trust on social media platforms. The features of business leaders' social media pages, including design, perceived security and privacy, perceived service quality, information quality, and quality of support, positively influence online trust (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Customers' interaction experiences with business leaders on social media platforms influence their trust (ter Huurne et al., 2017). Poon and Albaum (2019) suggested that business leaders undertake RM activities, enhance customer interaction, and design their social media effectively to increase customers' trust. If customer trust is low, business leaders need to change their relevant strategies to convince potential customers they are trustworthy and reliable.

Information availability on social media affects customers' trust. Customers can seek and find the information they need on social media platforms through posted ratings and reviews, recommendations, and referrals, promoting a higher level of trust between

the users (Hajli & Sims, 2015). Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter amass prospective visitors and create a sense of community where customers share experiences and evaluate businesses through reviews and recommendations of products and services (Ho & Rezaei, 2018). Social media content created by individuals who experienced a product or service strongly influences customers' experiences, as customers consider it more objective, reliable, and authentic (Arica et al., 2022). Individuals who use social media information to a greater extent (information seekers) are more likely to engage in online relationships with business leaders, dependent on their trust in that social media platform (Hajli, Sims, et al., 2017). Business leaders should identify information seekers by monitoring users' activities and targeting them differently from other customer groups.

User-generated content impacts customers' trust in social media. Users familiar with a social media platform are more likely to rely on their peers' generated content and less likely to rely on business leaders (Van Der Heide & Lim, 2016). This social support positively influences trust between customers and business leaders (Yahia et al., 2018). In virtual environments, user-generated content helps solve problems directly and indirectly because of information, experiences, advice, and emotional concerns such as care, encouragement, or empathy (Hajli & Sims, 2015). Social support enhances customers' trust in other users, encouraging people to be more open to business strategies and more likely to trust business leaders (Yahia et al., 2018). Connecting with others on social media platforms may reduce the risk of information asymmetry in social media (Yahia et al., 2018). Encouraging users to share their experiences and feedback on social media

may diminish customers' doubts and increase their trust in business leaders and their
offerings.

Active and open communication between business leaders and customers
promotes customers' trust online. Business leaders need to respond quickly through
social media channels and carry out SMM efforts on a real-time basis (Ho & Rezaei,
2018). When customers see business leaders are transparent, their trust increases even
with unfavorable information (Pramudya et al., 2018). According to Van Der Heide and
Lim (2016), trust relies on business leaders' efforts to create a feeling of appreciation.
Showing appreciation to customers can help business leaders improve customer
relationships (Amarnani et al., 2022). Trust in a social media platform motivates a
customer to follow the contents (Turcotte et al., 2015), and the lack of trust prevents
engagement (Wang et al., 2016). Transparent exchange of information, opinions, and
feedback increase customers' reliability on social media communication, resulting in
heightened trust.

Customers' trust will significantly influence their online behaviors. Mahmoud et
al. (2018) reported that customers' perceived risk, resources, subjective norms, business
leaders' service quality, product variety, and convenience affect customers' trust and
motivations to engage with business leaders on social media. Trust influences customers'
willingness to cooperate in codesign or cocreation activities with business leaders (Li et
al., 2017). When business leaders establish mutual trust with customers, this will improve
their perceptions of companies' social media content and reduce customers' reluctance to
interact with business leaders.

Customers' trust influence online purchase intentions. Trust in online transactions is the willingness of parties to exchange money and goods without having face-to-face interaction (Pramudya et al., 2018). Customers are keen to conduct business on social media sites run by reliable and trustworthy retailers (Ho & Rezaei, 2018). When customers feel satisfied and trust the quality of a company's products, it enhances their positive attitudes toward the brands, affects more substantial commitment, and positively influences the purchase decision-making process (Maria et al., 2019). Interactive internet customer relationships and services through discussion forums, emails, chats, and social networking sites make customers closer to and familiar with companies and their products (Maria et al., 2019). Maintaining these close relationships with customers to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and trust results in increased willingness to purchase and repurchase from companies.

Trust is necessary to maintain long-term customer relationships. Long-term relationships drive sustainable competitive advantage through customer loyalty and trusted network partnerships (Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Trust is essential for social exchanges with customers and will mitigate the uncertainties related to vulnerabilities between customers and business leaders, such as information sharing, imbalance of power, and conflicts (Alsaad et al., 2017). Business leaders and customers who share knowledge and experiences, perhaps via social media, conduct easier and smoother exchanges (Alsaad et al., 2017). Understanding customers' experiences to build and improve long-term relationships is crucial, as long-term relationships drive sustainable competitive advantage through customer loyalty and trusted network partnerships

(Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Business leaders must uphold their promises and commitment to maintain customer relationships and preserve customers' loyalty and trust.

Customer Commitment

Commitment is a willingness between parties to give up short-term benefits for long-term relationship profits. Izogo (2017) asserted that customer commitment relates to a lasting or enduring intention by customers to build and maintain an ongoing relationship with a company. Customers' commitment is critical to building strong relationships (Aziz et al., 2020). Business leaders should focus on strengthening their commitment to customers to develop and maintain customer relationships

Commitment impacts customer retention. Commitment is essential for customer retention as it is a hidden or obvious pledge of interactive connection between these partners (Aziz et al., 2020). When customers develop strong relationships with business leaders, they move to the involvement and commitment stage quickly and maintain a stable relationship with business leaders for a long time (Mohd-Ramly & Omar, 2017). Mahmoud et al. (2018) posited that the essence of RM is to build long-term relationships with customers to reduce customer switching behavior. Customer commitment decreases switching intentions as customers' positive feelings toward a brand can prevent them from searching for alternative brands (Sierra et al., 2017). Customers who have low switching intentions and do not search for alternative brands exhibit brand-loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2019). Thus, to maintain customer commitment, business leaders must keep their promises or commitments to customers.

Customer commitment comprises three components: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018). Affective commitment measures the feelings and emotional attachments customers may develop toward business leaders (Poushneh & Vasquez-Parraga, 2019). Business leaders can measure affective commitment by investigating how customers experience a sense of belonging and desire to remain customers (van Tonder & de Beer, 2018). This sense of identification, shared values, and belongingness that customers manifest in their involvement; results in long-term, robust, and trusted customer-company relationships (Poushneh & Vasquez-Parraga, 2019).

Affective commitment contributes to higher customer retention and advocacy (Poushneh & Vasquez-Parraga, 2019). The customer who appreciates the quotes, promotions, offers, and purchase guides provided by business leaders through new communication technologies will be more likely to commit because of the business leaders' efforts at customization (Poushneh & Vasquez-Parraga, 2019). Continuance or calculative commitment assesses customers' inclination to remain with the service firm, owing to a lack of more beneficial alternatives or because the sacrifice of ending the relationship would be too great (Shukla et al., 2016; van Tonder & de Beer, 2018). Normative commitment refers to the obligation customers may feel to continue their relationship with the company because of their perception that it would not be right to defect to another provider even if they received the opportunity (Shukla et al., 2016; van Tonder & de Beer, 2018).

Customer intimacy leads to customer commitment. Affective factors such as intimacy are the strongest predictors of customers' intention of sustainable use of online-based services (Nora, 2019). According to Echols and Shadily (2014), intimacy in business-customer relationships is the closeness, friendship, harmony, or communion that creates a bond and warmth. Building customer intimacy in the early stages of relationships leads to more substantial customer commitment (Nora, 2019). This commitment increases customers' loyalty and lifetime value.

Customers' perceptions about their relationship with business leaders affect their commitment (Shukla et al., 2016). Business leaders can build customer relationships through social interactions and influential personal relationships, which increase customer commitment (Poushneh & Vasquez-Parraga, 2019). Without a high perceived value and close and understanding relationship, business leaders cannot maintain customer commitment (Nora, 2019). Individuals' pride to be a customer, their sense of belonging, loyalty, and intention to preserve a boundless relationship influence their commitment to the company (Nora, 2019). Committed customers with high perceived value become more engaged with the organization and promote positive WOM (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018). Customers who perceive strong bonds with business leaders become committed to them and desire to work with them in the long-term.

Customer satisfaction positively influences customer commitment. Customer satisfaction with the organization will depend on business leaders' commitment toward the relationship (Sierra et al., 2017). Business leaders can increase customers' satisfaction and commitment by providing an excellent and memorable brand experience and

improving relationships with customers (Iglesias et al., 2019). According to Khan et al.

(2016), online brand experiences influence customers' satisfaction and commitment.

Satisfied consumers have positive experiences, emotional ties, and experience pleasure,

which results in customers' commitment to business leaders (Poushneh & Vasquez-

Parraga, 2019). Customer satisfaction represents the focal outcome of the buyer-seller

exchange relationship (Chahal & Dutta, 2015). Hence, customer satisfaction is unlikely to

lead to future purchase intention and long-term relationships without commitment.

Customer Engagement

CE is an expansion to the RM domain. CE refers to customers' psychological

state that leads to frequent interactions with the brand beyond the transactional motive of

immediate purchase intention (So et al., 2016; Thakur, 2019). CE denotes a customer's

satisfaction, delight, excitement, and interest in a brand and firm (Mkumbo et al., 2020).

CE transpires when customers experience intrinsic gratification, and customers entirely

focus, contend with, and immerse in the brand (So et al., 2016). CE encompasses all the

customers' activities with the firm, including participation and involvement of current or

potential customers (Mkumbo et al., 2020). CE results in increased customer trust, value,

commitment, satisfaction, WOM, and loyalty, contributing to improved customer

relationships.

Business leaders can use social media's various platforms to foster CE. Social

media contribute to CE as they enhance real-life and two-way communication between

business leaders and customers (Dessart et al., 2016). Unlike more traditional forms of

uni-directional, company-initiated communications, social media encourage bidirectional

communication between business leaders and customers (Steinhoff et al., 2019). Social

media bring together brand supporters into groups where they bond, communicate their

service experiences, and make recommendations that encourage and strengthen a brand

(Dessart et al., 2016). Brand communities are a fundamental medium for brand

enthusiasts to establish their relationships with brands (Merrilees, 2016).

Business leaders can incorporate livestreaming in their SMM strategy to increase

CE. Livestreaming involves influential persons showing products to customers by live

video so they can see the products intuitively (Cao et al., 2022). Customers can interact

with streamers or other customers through pop-up screens and have a real-user

experience through the streamers' trial, resulting in a more objective and comprehensive

understanding of the product (Cao et al., 2022). Thus, livestreaming enhances shopping

authenticity, visualization, and interaction (Woodcock & Johnson, 2019). The several

avenues for business leaders and customers to interact on social media, including

comments, messages, reviews, blogs, posts, pictures and videos, polls, questionnaires,

live interactive sessions, and community groups, have made it easier for business leaders

to increase CE.

CE results in lasting benefits to business leaders. Business leaders can use

customer-centric activities, such as advertising and loyalty programs, to engage with

customers (Mkumbo et al., 2020). Business leaders may want to encourage and reward

consumers for becoming more active on their sites to receive maximal relationship

benefits (Gummerus et al., 2017). These initiatives contribute to higher repurchases and

customer retention, providing opportunities for long-term relationships. Business leaders

could engage customers as active collaborators at various product development and marketing stages (So et al., 2016). These cocreators of companies' products and communications absorb more and devote additional time to learning about the brand (Thakur, 2019). Engagement with customers involves frequent communication sharing thoughts and feedback, whether positive or negative, about the brand (Harrigan et al., 2017). Higher interactivity levels lead to closer and more intimate relationships between business leaders and customers.

Business leaders should continuously create opportunities to enhance CE among existing and potential customers. Business leaders use various social media approaches to enter into a dialogue with customers, share information, collect customer feedback, and create a sense of community (Merrilees, 2016). For example, Nike's business leaders use hashtags to reinforce their prominent tagline, *Just do it*, with specific segments such as *#NikeWomen*, which regularly receive hundreds of thousands of likes and comments from targeted users (Banovic, n.d.). CE includes customers' comments, likes and reactions, number of views, and hashtags (Liu & Beldona, 2021; Tariq, 2022). Hashtags help increase content visibility, attract attention, and enhance interactions (Palazzo et al., 2021). Business leaders can foster CE on social media by considering online customers for offers, incentives, rebates, and discounts before making them available to the public via commercial media (Mkumbo et al., 2020). Customers value business leaders' efforts to engage information with them, as customers benefit from increased information and incorporation of their views in the organization.

CE contributes to positive eWOM. CE occurs on social media when delighted or loyal customers share their positive feelings in interactions with others on their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand, or company (Steinhoff et al., 2019). A customer's positive perception of a service or product leads to higher interest and CE (Mkumbo et al., 2020). Customers' enthusiasm for brands drives them to join brand communities and recommend brands to others (Mkumbo et al., 2020). Thus, business leaders should encourage customers' participation on their social media.

Business leaders should promote CE with business leaders and other potential customers. As customers voluntarily leave social media reviews based on their experiences, others perceive them as less biased (Liu & Beldona, 2021). Therefore, business leaders can encourage customers to interact with one another by sharing experiences and reviewing and recommending products and services (Mkumbo et al., 2020). As these engaged customers develop new connections, they become advocates for the seller in interactions with other customers and even noncustomers on their social media networks (Merrilees, 2016). CE could lead to customers' conversion into fans who remain committed during enduring relationships and are more open to receiving information about the brand (Wang & Kim, 2017). This spread of product, brand, or company data by loyal customers can increase awareness, improve reputation, and expand the customer base.

Business leaders need to manage CE-related activities carefully. Online platforms are critical competitive channels to entice, network, convert, and maintain customers (Mkumbo et al., 2020). Customers should be able to engage with firms anywhere and

anytime, and solutions to customers' problems should be accessible and immediate, perhaps even pre-emptive, using predictive approaches (Appel et al., 2020). Business leaders can provide customer care in dedicated smartphone apps and via direct messaging on social media platforms to increase engagement and responsiveness (Appel et al., 2020). Business leaders can use indicators such as customers' purchases, customer referrals, customer feedback, or suggestions to determine the firm's CE levels (Wang & Kim, 2017). Business leaders can improve performance, service, and products based on the results of these indicators.

Customer Perceived Value

Customer perceived value is the trade-off between the costs and benefits. Customers assess a product's utility based on perceptions of what they receive and what business leaders give (Wang et al., 2020). Customer perceived value directly relates to customers' behavioral intentions or behaviors that benefit the organization, such as repurchase and WOM (Lee et al., 2016). Customer perceived value captures the extent to which a customer perceives more benefits than sacrifices in a business relationship (Wang & Yu, 2019). When customers perceive more value in a relationship, they are more willing to devote relationship-specific investment into the relationship (Chang et al., 2018). Thus, business leaders will benefit more from the relationship by reducing opportunistic behavior and increasing customer satisfaction (Wang & Yu, 2019).

Customer perceived value reflects the worth of a product in the customer's mind and increases when customers believe the benefits outweigh the costs (Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, Lee et al. (2016) posited that business leaders might deliver or enhance

value by manipulating customers' perceptions of costs (e.g., low price) and perceptions of benefits associated with obtaining, using, and disposing of the product or service (e.g., the valence of experience). Customers will base their decisions on product offerings that will maximize value and enable them to reap the highest payoff (Dootson et al., 2016). As customers are unaware of the production cost of the product they buy, they will only pay for the product when the customer perceived value for the product is higher than the product's selling price (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, customer perceived value affects the purchase cost of services and ultimately influences business leaders' profit (Wang et al., 2020).

Customer participation can enhance perceived value for the customer and reduce business leaders' transaction costs. When customers deeply participate in business leaders' product development, they provide business leaders with the most recent market information and offer feedback, resulting in transaction-specific assets for both business leaders and customers (Dong et al., 2015). When customers participate, they can get fundamental knowledge to understand the essential features of new products, for example, innovation used in the product, to be more confident when purchasing business leaders' products (Wang & Yu, 2019). With more transaction-specific assets, both parties in the relationship will benefit from lower opportunism, which ultimately results in enhanced performance outcomes for both parties (Wang & Yu, 2019). Hence, customers are more likely to perceive their participation as valuable and may recognize more benefits than costs.

Customers perceive value based on their belief that the company's price for a product or service is acceptable and low compared to other providers (Dong et al., 2015). Customers also perceive value based on whether they believe the company provided additional benefits and whether the product or service is flexible and sufficient to meet their needs (Dong et al., 2015). For business leaders to gain a sustained competitive advantage through social media, customers must perceive a favorable trade-off between the costs and benefits of adopting social media to interact with a company (Lee et al., 2016). Customers perceived value influences their choice of social media platforms (Dootson et al., 2016). Business leaders will need to consider customers' perceived value when using multiple communication channels.

Social media can influence customers' perceived value. Social media add value to customers as they can complement or substitute customers' other communication channels with an organization (Chung & Koo, 2015). When creating a social media presence, business leaders should only use social media platforms that meet their customers' demands (Eisingerich et al., 2014). Hence, business leaders need to understand customers' perceived value when interacting via social media.

Rewards and costs from social interactions between business leaders and customers create overall perceived value (Basaran & Buyukyilmaz, 2015). Perceived social value is the degree to which an individual expects that using interactive service innovations will enhance their social status, enable them to serve as role models for those who come later, and give them membership into a particular social class (Marbach et al., 2016). Customers may perceive that they will gain social approval from their peers by

meeting social norms related to visible, distinctive, and socially desirable consumption

behaviors. In these instances, they are more likely to perceive value and adopt the

consumption behavior (Marbach et al., 2016). Thus, when customers see social value in

interacting with a company using social media, it will affect their overall value

perception.

Online customers are more price-sensitive than offline customers, as customers

have less tangible characteristics to assess products or services online than offline (Chung

& Koo, 2015). Customers can touch, smell, and experience the product or service offline,

but online customers only get evidence of a product or service through descriptions and

photographs posted online (Lee et al., 2016). Purchasing a product or service online poses

higher risks to customers than offline because of online shopping's inherent risks (Chung

& Koo, 2015). The lack of sensory experience that often serves as a cue for product or

service value and helps customers make a quick decision means online customers have to

look for other attributes that are relatively easy to use and readily available to perceive

value (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, business leaders must find creative means to influence

customers' perceived value and influence purchases positively.

Cocreation

Cocreation occurs when customers collaborate in the new product development

process to develop new product ideas or design products. Customers play an active role

as participants in brand experiences and product creation in cocreation, rather than being

passive receivers of brand-related information and purchasers of the products (Cheung et

al., 2020). Customers are cocreators of products and brands when they engage in

interactive activities with brands (Thakur, 2019). Cocreation enables customers to be active partners working with business leaders, which increases CE, customer loyalty, purchase intentions, and contributes to a firm's competitive advantage.

Advanced technologies facilitate easier and faster cocreation processes. Technology has enabled customers to access vast amounts of information, and social media applications facilitate interpersonal communications and interactions between customers and business leaders (Bugshan, 2015). Technological advancements within online service environments are critical enablers of customer resource integration through customer interactions that increase cocreation and cobranding (Zadeh et al., 2019). On social media platforms, for example, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, online communities, mobile applications, such as Airbnb, Waze, and Line, and resource integration through customer-to-customer interactions comprise the bulk of value cocreation (Zadeh et al., 2019). Through these virtual platforms, customers combine their skills, knowledge, and relationships to cocreate products and create value for businesses, other customers, and themselves.

Business leaders can take advantage of social media to foster cocreation. Social media create an environment where business leaders can harness their brand to deliver incremental value and turn customers into brand ambassadors by leveraging collective, cocreation processes with other customers (Wang & Kim, 2017). Social media have led to customer participation and empowered them to cocreate, leading to a positive impact on developing trust, commitment, satisfaction, and long-term relationships (Hajli, Shanmugam, et al., 2017). Social media boost the dynamic exchanges within online

forums, making it possible for customers to share stories with others and cocreate goods and services, resulting in a successful brand (Tajvidi et al., 2018). These relationships and experiences strengthen customers' repurchase intentions, resulting in customer loyalty and increased value to firms.

Business leaders should implement relevant technologies and develop new skills to facilitate customer cocreation. Innovative design features, such as social content presentation, notifications, topic focus, and social ads and applications, could be catalysts for cocreation (Tajvidi et al., 2018). When customers dedicate their time to cocreating brands, it helps business leaders increase their social media investments and generate incremental revenues (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). Business leaders must understand customers' value-creating processes and support them by providing product and firm information (Wang & Yu, 2019). Provision of appropriate tools, information, and motivation from business leaders will encourage customers to partake in cocreation.

Business leaders benefit from promoting partnerships with their customers. Sheth (2017) posited that to improve customer relationships, business leaders should joint venture with customers, anchoring the foundation of their connections to mutual interdependence, mutual commitment, and a shared mission. Sheth stated that in joint venturing, both business leaders and customers must commit resources (time, money, and capabilities) and must accept interdependence instead of dependence in the relationship. Business leaders who manage this cocreation process effectively will ultimately achieve improved product quality, reduced risks, and increased market acceptance of new

products (Tajvidi et al., 2018). Hence, cocreation with customers can give business leaders a significant competitive advantage.

Business leaders benefit from customer knowledge through the cocreation process. Customers' involvement and participation on social media platforms with business leaders provide rich diversity and knowledge (Balaji & Roy, 2017). Business leaders can identify customers' needs and wants from their involvement in the cocreation process (Hajli, Shanmugam, et al., 2017). When online customers cocreate with business leaders, they provide details of their shopping experiences, information on their favorite brands, and encourage others to purchase (Tommasetti et al., 2017). Such involvement brings significant benefits, as any positive impact on branding increases the differentiation among competitors, strengthens trust, decreases search costs, minimizes perceived risks, and serves as a high-quality signal from the customer's viewpoint (Tommasetti et al., 2017). Therefore, cocreation creates value for business leaders.

Customers are cocreators of value. Customer interactions with business leaders and other customers, enabled by technology, cocreates value (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). As a fundamental part of value cocreation, customers contribute their competencies, and business leaders who implement proactive competitive strategies choose such customers (Zhang et al., 2020). Beyond their engagement with firms, customers integrate physical, social, and cultural resources when interacting with one another (Zadeh et al., 2019). Customers integrate resources when they interact with one another and, by so doing, cocreate exchange value during relationship development and use value during consumption (Whalen & Akaka, 2016). Hence, customers play a

significant role in shaping and reinforcing value with companies by participating in joint activities.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, are effective cocreation platforms. Customers use social media platforms to interact with others and participate in the value cocreation process (Zadeh et al., 2019). Customer interactions are the underlying mechanism of value cocreation across social networking sites and mobile applications (Whalen & Akaka, 2016). Social media comprise tools and design aspects that empower consumers to exchange data and increase their cooperation in consumer-generated information (Tajvidi et al., 2018). Social media foster partnership settings that enhance communication and relationship quality within the system through information sharing (Wang & Yu, 2019). Thus, social media applications transform customers' roles from passive customers to active participants in creating and sharing information.

Customer cocreation in social media comprises participation behaviors and citizenship behaviors. Customers cocreate value by seeking and sharing information, by completing tasks as expected of them by other entities (responsible behavior), and through personalized interactions with other customers (Zadeh et al., 2019). Customers cocreate value through their citizenship behaviors, including advocating for the firm, helping other customers, and tolerating less than satisfactory experiences with the firm or other customers (Zadeh et al., 2019). These behaviors can lead to positive WOM, brand awareness, CE, and improved customer relationships.

New ideas emerge, develop, and launch through open interactions and collaborations (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). The internet has favored the growth of such collaborative platforms, facilitating open and user-driven innovation (Bugshan, 2015). These increasingly popular emerging platforms, ranging from online discussion forums to virtual communities, design competitions, and online user innovation networks, provide a neutral and low-risk environment, which holds together diverse actors and enables their engagement in innovation and cocreation (Frow et al., 2015).

Customers can provide ideas for new goods or services that may fulfill needs that business leaders could not cater to or improve on companies' existing offerings (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Customers can easily communicate these ideas to business leaders through internet websites, email, and social networks (Hsieh & Chang, 2016). Business leaders can benefit from ideas generated through cocreation, as it will more closely mirror customer needs, increasing the likelihood of new product success (Tommasetti et al., 2017). For example, the *MyStarbucksIdea* crowd-sourced innovation contest resulted in online submissions of 190,000 new product ideas by customers and 300 innovative implementations (Skinny Mocha, K-Cups, cake pops, the continuation of the key chain card) (Geisel, 2015; Tolido, 2016). Lay's *Do us a flavor* campaign focused on millennial customers' desire for self-expression and brand engagement, resulting in 3.8 million submissions, 2.2 billion impressions on Facebook, and an 8.5% increase in sales (Capgemini, 2017).

Customers vary in their interest and ability to participate in cocreation tasks (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). Business leaders should identify and target customer

segments who might be most willing and able to join in cocreation activities, such as innovators, lead users, emergent consumers, and market mavens (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). Customers compare benefits to the costs of engaging in cocreation activities (Frow et al., 2015).

An interesting experience is critical in inspiring users to make creative contributions (Cova et al., 2015). Therefore, identifying the motivating factors is crucial to maximize the appeal to potential contributors and to create virtual innovative experience environments (Balaji & Roy, 2017). Business leaders primarily need to determine what consumers expect from cocreation and how customers' motivations influence those expectations (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). Firms such as Lay's have already implemented this strategy. Winners in the company's *Do us a flavor* contest received 1% of the turnover of the resulting new product (Steinhoff et al., 2019).

Financial rewards through assigning intellectual property rights or through the visibility customers might receive from participating in and winning cocreation competitions may act as motivating factors (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). Others may reveal ideas at no cost and freely share their cocreation efforts (Fernandes & Remelhe, 2016). Some may receive social benefits from titles or other forms of recognition that business leaders might present to valuable contributors, such as increased status, social esteem, good citizenship, and strengthening of ties with relevant others (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017). Cocreators might reap significant cognitive benefits through information acquisition and learning by participating in forums and development groups run by manufacturers (Kamboj et al., 2018).

Social Customer Relationship Management

SCRM is an extension of the traditional customer relationship management (CRM) concept. CRM focuses on integrating the emerging technologies within companies and using the technological revolution individually and uniquely to improve customer relationships (Rasul, 2018). Traditional CRM involves business leaders taking active roles in ensuring customer satisfaction, as they assume customers are passive receivers who exhibit loyal attitudes and behaviors (Chan et al., 2018). However, the proliferation of social media expanded this CRM concept to SCRM.

SCRM is a business strategy supported by systems and technologies, including social media applications, to engage customers in collaborative interactions that provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment (Chan et al., 2018). SCRM enables two-way interactive communication where business leaders can collaborate with customers to achieve value cocreation, product development, and conceptualization and implementation of new marketing strategies (Guha et al., 2018). Therefore, business leaders can use SCRM to nurture profitable customer relationships.

SCRM can strengthen customer and brand relationships. Business leaders who integrate social media applications into existing CRM systems improve customer experiences, increase customer satisfaction, and make CE accessible and straightforward to customers (Haenlein, 2017). Business leaders can use SCRM to construct a customer-engaging environment, which may improve relational information processes to access, integrate, and use customer information and firms' distinctive capabilities to satisfy

customers (Lu & Miller, 2019). This customer-oriented culture will enable customers to feel comfortable engaging with business leaders and improve customer relationships.

SCRM influences customers' and business leaders' relationships. Customers control the relationship through social media (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018). SCRM will play a significant role in gaining final customers, as their relationships with business leaders have a more long-ranged and personalized character than online interactions in communities (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018). Interactions between business leaders and customers facilitated by SCRM will enhance consumers' emotional attachment to the firm, affecting their relationship quality, including customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Hudson et al., 2016). SCRM increases customers' visits, purchases, loyalty, and WOM.

SCRM strategies include marketing activities, communication tactics, and service recovery. SCRM marketing strategies comprise making regular posts, responding to online customer comments, offering special promotions and coupons, posting entertaining content, and supporting the local community (Chan et al., 2018). Business leaders can use social media to inspire, inform, and engage customers (Chan et al., 2018). SCRM communication tactics include being more humorous, placing pictures, hyperlinks, customer reviews, and questions in posts, posting content that requests likes from customers, emphasizing environmental concerns, and offering discount information (Park et al., 2021; Su et al., 2015). Posting photos and videos enhance engagement more than status posts (Park et al., 2021). Business leaders should use online reviews as an

opportunity for problem-solving and improving customer service (Su et al., 2015). This strategy can encourage more profitable customer relationships.

SCRM involves all departments in an organization. Through SCRM, business leaders aim to build strong relationships with internet users by giving them a positive experience of the organization's brand, products, and services, instead of only contacting consumers with sales offers (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018). Customers can pose questions on social media relating to various factors. Thus, business leaders must empower social media agents with relevant knowledge, skills, and technological tools to solve customer problems in real-time on social media (Fan & Niu, 2016). Business leaders who implement SCRM have increased dialogue with customers, provide prompt responses, and deliver personalized services (Marolt et al., 2020). Agents could offer standardized responses to less severe issues and customized solutions for challenging problems.

SCRM platforms facilitate improved connections between customers and business leaders. Business leaders can use applications in existing platforms such as contact business features in Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp to interact with customers and address their concerns (Zerbino et al., 2018). Customers can use these SCRM platforms, such as virtual aids and chatbots, to make requests, send inquiries, and place orders (Appel et al., 2020). SCRM encourages business leaders to use social media messaging platforms that customers are already using to improve communication and provide enhanced service.

Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is a noncommercial voluntary form of face-to-face exchange of information, based on customers' direct experience with a product or service (Charo et al., 2015). WOM shapes customers' attitudes and perceptions about a brand, and it has a more significant influence on product adoption than any other form of traditional marketing (Charo et al., 2015). WOM also comparatively provides more accurate and reliable information from the first-hand experience of products or services. Customers consider WOM from other consumers more authentic, relevant, and unbiased than firm-generated communications (Allard et al., 2020).

WOM is a primary factor affecting consumers' buying behavior, influencing up to 50% of purchasing decisions (Consiglio et al., 2018). Consumers engage in everyday conversational WOM about brands around 60 times a week, with food and dining, media and entertainment, beverages, travel services, and retail being the most popular categories (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). Over 75% of these conversation partners are family members and close friends, and 95% of these conversations take place offline and 5% online (Baker et al., 2016). Thus, WOM can significantly affect firm outcomes, including the willingness to pay and product sales (Allard et al., 2020).

Positive WOM is one of a marketer's most valuable resources, as nothing persuades better than a recommendation from a trusted friend or family member (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). Hence, positive WOM leads to higher firm sales by enhancing positive attitudes and expectations, whereas negative WOM lowers firm sales, evaluations, and

customer intentions (Kupor & Tormala, 2018). Business leaders might believe that the higher the volume of WOM, the better the outcome would be for the firm (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). However, Kumar et al. (2017) suggested that there may be an optimal WOM level and that *the more, the better* rule does not apply. Positive and negative WOM have differing degrees of impact on consumer responses (Allard et al., 2020). Although positive WOM is more prevalent, negative WOM are better predictors of evaluations and sales because of the perception of negative information as diagnostic (McGraw et al., 2015).

The increasing potential influx of WOM is a challenge for business leaders who must deal with public expressions of customer disgruntlement that may or may not accurately reflect the quality of the firm's offerings (O'Brien & Hosany, 2016). The company's actual product or service quality sometimes does not warrant the negativity that customers convey via WOM (Chawdhary & Dall'Olmo, 2015). However, new firms can benefit from negative WOM because negative reviews can raise product awareness (Allard et al., 2020). Customers who are loyal to a brand are likely to counter-argue and discount negative brand information (McGraw et al., 2015). Positive emotionality can increase hedonic products' evaluations and lower utilitarian products' evaluations (Rocklage & Fazio, 2020).

Individuals consider WOM instrumental in fulfilling particular psychological needs, such as self-enhancement, social status, and emotion regulation (Consiglio et al., 2018). Individuals like to feel in control over their environments, as this feeling makes them perceive that they are the agents of their actions to self-enhance and facilitate the

restoration of a sense of self-worth (Consiglio et al., 2018). WOM can facilitate social

bonding, encouraging individuals to compensate for a sense of loneliness and address

social exclusion via information sharing (Berger, 2014). When customers have a negative

service or product experience (e.g., a delayed flight), they express the resulting negative

feelings (e.g., anger) by venting or sharing their experience with others (Consiglio et al.,

2018).

WOM about consumer experiences often emerges in everyday conversations

(Groeger & Buttle, 2016). Business leaders should aim to create authentic conversations

and recommendations about their brand, product, or service (Contagious Agency, 2020).

Authenticity implies that customers will embed brand-related talk truthfully and

legitimately into everyday interactions (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). Customers use text-

based channels to communicate about more exciting products and use voice-based (phone

and face-to-face) channels for less interesting ones (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). Business

leaders are increasingly shifting marketing communications budgets toward WOM

programs, and executives are demanding more accountability and rigorous demonstration

of return on investment (You et al., 2015).

Business leaders can use WOM to target influencers to increase overall brand

awareness, purchase intention, and sales (Nejad et al., 2014). However, business leaders

must take precautions when selecting campaign influencers (Buttle & Groeger, 2017).

The influencers' influencing power might decrease if customers perceive these

influencers' behavior as commercially motivated, and the WOM campaign would add

little or no value (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). If influencers share the campaign or brand-

related content with random members of their network or inappropriate channels, the

message might not reach the defined target audience, again creating little value for the

brand owner (Nejad et al., 2014). However, if business leaders carefully select and match

influencers with relevant content and select appropriate communication channels, they

will be more likely to create value for their companies (Buttle & Groeger, 2017).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The growing popularity of the internet and user-generated content has widened

the traditional WOM scope to an electronic version called eWOM. WOM mainly extends

to the inner circle of consumers, that is, friends and relatives. Due to advanced

technologies and social media, it is no longer necessary for two persons to share their

experiences face-to-face (Rosario et al., 2020). Individuals can now share their product

experiences via more transparent and ubiquitous social networks (Arenas-Márquez et al.,

2021). Ilhan et al. (2018) found that this form of exchange of knowledge on online and

public platforms is eWOM. Hence, eWOM has redefined traditional WOM networks.

The communication network in eWOM is more widespread than traditional WOM

due to the internet's considerable reach. EWOM eliminates the restrictions on time and

location, as business leaders keep asynchronous information online for some time

(Rosario et al., 2020). Individuals have access to any positive or negative comment made

by previous, potential, or actual customers about a product, company, or brand on the

internet or social media (Kim & Slotegraaf, 2015). Customers limit traditional WOM

communications to interpersonal communications. However, eWOM is more potent

because eWOM forums can immediately disperse messages to many people (Lu &

Miller, 2019). Thus, eWOM involves an extension of in-person exchanges to online customer-generated communication.

Customers' eWOM can influence other customers' behaviors. EWOM includes customers sharing, liking, or commenting on advertisements, which may cause others to share it further (Akpinar & Berger, 2017). EWOM involves customers observing peers' actions relating to the ownership, usage, or characteristics of goods and services or their sellers (Pauwels et al., 2016). EWOM comprises implicit recommendations and nontextual mentions of products and brands, for example, products featured in YouTube tutorials (Rosario et al., 2020). Approximately 50% of customers refer to online reviews before making purchases (PwC, 2016), and 76% trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations (Murphy, 2019). Business leaders can monitor customers' eWOM to predict customers' actions and purchases.

Customers use other customers' evaluations to collect relevant brand or product information and reduce their purchasing risks. Customers believe that their risks increase when their purchase effects are ambiguous, resulting in potential losses for business leaders (Sallam, 2015). For many customers, an unknown person's eWOM is crucial information that affects their decision-making and reduces these purchase uncertainties (Suwandee et al., 2019). When customers have a positive experience with brands, they become motivated to reward the brand and other customers in the community by referring these brands via their messages (Sozer, 2019). Unsatisfactory experiences with brands result in customers sharing their negative feedback online to warn others (Hudson

et al., 2016). Therefore, business leaders should extend all efforts to ensure customers have positive experiences with their brands.

Social media foster eWOM. With great collaborative platforms and significant community size, social media empower customers to disclose their experiences (positive or negative) about companies, their goods, and brands (Hudson et al., 2016). Customers could evangelize their own experiences with many more customers on social media (Alalwan et al., 2016). Social media websites rank as the second most important source for obtaining ideas, after the recommendations of family and friends (Statista Research Department, 2018). On Yelp, for example, 186 million people post nearly 150 million business reviews each month, of which 90% of customers rely on these reviews for buying decisions (Capoccia, 2018). Social media, which are global, transparent, interactive, and real-time, have led to consumer behavior changes and workplace expectations (Dutta & Omolayole, 2016). Customers can use social media to advocate for brands, express their opinions, share their experiences, seek assistance, and network with others.

Customers perceive social media platforms to be less risky than other communication networks. Customers believe social media to be more trustworthy and less intrusive than other brand touch points (Maria et al., 2019). EWOM websites enable direct observations, as positive and negative consumer reviews are publicly available and are easy to collect and analyze, including a general rating, specific scoring of some of the products' attributes, and the comments that the reviewer is willing to leave (Arenas-Márquez et al., 2021). Business leaders are no longer in the unique position of telling

consumers what to think and purchase. Customers now play roles in creating and disseminating a range of brand-relevant information (Lu & Miller, 2019). Ninety-one percent of customers believe unknown persons post online reviews as personal recommendations (BrightLocal, 2019). Thus, eWOM evaluations are a valuable reference point for customers, affecting their decision-making process.

Business leaders can target influencers to stimulate eWOM. eWOM influencers have a notable ability to communicate with other consumers about their product experience (Arenas-Márquez et al., 2021). Influencers can help increase overall brand awareness, purchase intention, and sales (Himelboim & Golan, 2019). From the customer's viewpoint, influencers reduce the risk associated with consumer buying decisions, as their reviews are a trusted source that provides helpful information (Arenas-Márquez et al., 2021). Influencers' impact also reaches many consumers, stimulates interest, and encourages interactions such as likes, posts, comments, and so forth (Park et al., 2018). However, business leaders must take precautions when selecting campaign influencers (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). The influencers' influencing power might decrease if customers perceive these influencers' behavior as commercially motivated, and the WOM campaign would add little or no value (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). However, if business leaders match influencers with appropriate content and network, they will be more likely to create value for their companies.

Business leaders should carefully monitor eWOM relating to their companies and brands. The growing number of technologies and applications enhances customers' capabilities to generate their content, which significantly reduces business leaders'

powers to control the direction of customers' content (Suwandee et al., 2019). Business

leaders should consider risk, uncertainty avoidance, and spread to assess the effectiveness

of eWOM on customer behavior (Maria et al., 2019). Customers thrive in user-controlled

mediums, as they prefer to manage the relationship (Sallam, 2015). Hence, explicitly

regulating online discussions can disappoint customers.

Business leaders can use tracking technology and monitor and analyze online

behavior and eWOM activities. Business leaders should rapidly respond to all comments

(Suwandee et al., 2019). Business leaders should apply solutions to problems when

negative comments arise and convey appreciation to positive feedback (Suwandee et al.,

2019). Ninety-seven percent of customers who read reviews also read businesses'

responses to feedback (BrightLocal, 2019). Business leaders should identify the most

influential online community members and carefully nurture them (Akpinar & Berger,

2017). When business leaders maintain the balance between these monitoring strategies

and allowing customers to voice their opinions and experiences freely, they can

maximize the benefits of eWOM.

Transition

In Section 1, I discussed the background of this study's problem and presented the

problem and purpose statements, nature of the study, research question, interview

questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the

study. I also detailed the significance of the study, comprising the contribution to

business practice and social change implications. The section ended with a review of the

professional and academic literature, including the importance of implementing RM,

maximizing the use of SM and SMM, gaining customers' trust and commitment, engaging and cocreating with customers, increasing customers' perceived value of the company and its products, and using SCRM to improve customer relationships.

Section 2 includes the purpose statement, the researcher's role, selection method for participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research procedure, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity. Section 3 contains the research findings, application to professional practice, social change implications, recommendations for action, areas for future research, reflections, conclusion, and appendices.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes a detailed plan for exploring SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships. The section comprises a restatement of the purpose statement, a discussion of the researcher's role, a description of the participants' eligibility criteria, a justification of the chosen research method and design, and an explanation of the ethical research measures. This section also includes the study's data collection instruments, data organization techniques, data analysis procedures, and strategies to enhance reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships. The targeted sample population was five small business leaders in the retail industry in Central Trinidad who developed and implemented successful social media strategies that improved customer relationships. The implications for positive social change include the improved self-worth, self-dignity, and professionalism of business leaders who can effectively communicate with customers and build more loyal relationships. Society may experience social change through more effective and valuable consumer information shared via social media. The local community may benefit from additional employment opportunities.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers are the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative studies. Interviewers' participation makes them part of the interaction, and

they play an influential role in those interactions (Karagiozis, 2018). Researchers participate actively, interact, and communicate with the participants of interview sessions to obtain data and understand the research topic (Fleet et al., 2016). The researcher facilitates communication flow, identifies cues, and sets respondents at ease (Chenail, 2011). Researchers' facilitative interaction creates a context where respondents share rich data regarding their experiences (Fleet et al., 2016). Thus, the researcher and participants' interrelationships influence qualitative research interviews.

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to inform readers of any assumptions, biases, and how they will mitigate these biases from affecting the research process and findings. I adhered to the ethical standards and guidelines in The Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), including respect of persons such as informed consent to participate, beneficence in the systematic risk assessment, and justice in selecting research participants. I informed participants of their rights, voluntary participation, the purpose of the study, and the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study.

Bias exists in all research, can occur at any phase of the research process, and is challenging to eliminate. However, researchers must be continually reflexive to avoid bias and be aware of the risk of prejudgments and assumptions influencing the analysis (Fleet et al., 2016). I avoided using my subjective opinions and put aside preconceived ideas regarding this study's outcomes during data collection and analysis. I remained prepared throughout every phase of the research process and anticipated any issues during interviews to address assumptions, biases, and attitudes in this doctoral study.

Case study researchers usually immerse themselves in their work. Researchers who do not recognize and address inherent biases and predispositions may prejudice their activities and interpretations of the study's findings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Member checking involves offering research participants the opportunity to examine the accuracy of, expand, modify, and remark on interpretations of their interview responses (Brear, 2019). I used member checking for this study. I emailed each participant a summary of my interpretations of their interview responses, and they confirmed the accuracy and clarified where necessary. This process helped me avoid viewing data from a personal perspective and mitigate bias.

Selection bias may arise if I choose participants based on familiarity rather than those who meet the study's aims. Therefore, I selected all participants for this study based on the criteria that they were business leaders from Central Trinidad who have successfully implemented SMM strategies to improve customer relationships in the retail industry. Researchers should avoid selecting participants with whom a personal or work relationship exists to mitigate biases and enhance the findings' trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I had no direct relationship with any of this study's participants.

The extent of my relationship with the topic is that I have been working in the marketing field for 7 years and have experience using SMM to assist business leaders and their brands, products, and services. I advocate for SMM use by business leaders as I have witnessed the multiple benefits and efficacy of SMM to customers and business leaders. Although there has been much literature on social media and SMM, there is a

need for more research on SMM use to enhance customer relationships. Thus, I desired to explore how small business leaders can use SMM to improve customer relationships.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that researchers use an interview protocol with each participant to ensure reliability and validity. Researchers can use interview protocol for data collection in qualitative inquiry to collect in-depth data and detailed descriptions from the participant's perspective and strengthen the research's reliability (Rossetto, 2014; Trotter, 2012). Therefore, I used an interview protocol to help me in the interview process. The interview protocol identified open-ended questions to ask each participant to gain insights into the study's research questions.

Participants

Selecting appropriate participants is a challenging but essential task. Participant selection involves choosing the optimal participant who can provide relevant, high-quality data (Yang et al., 2020). This study's participant eligibility criteria included (a) business leaders from Central Trinidad and (b) those who have successfully implemented SMM strategies to improve customer relationships.

Researchers must carefully plan their strategies for gaining access to participants. Gaining access to participants usually involves seeking approval from the top or higher-level managers and the initiation of contact through emails (because of the managers' demanding work schedules), followed by an information meeting to present the proposal to these managers (Hoyland et al., 2015). I confirmed with participants via phone if they met the selection criteria. Participants' email addresses and phone numbers were available on their social media platforms. Hence, I had direct access to the participants

via social media. After receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I sent an invitation letter to participate via email to the participants. An invitation letter includes the study's purpose and procedures (Alexander et al., 2017). I fully disclosed this study's intent, the interview questions, and the estimated time for the interview in the invitation letter to the participants.

Building good relationships with potential participants can enhance the data collection process. Strong relationships between researchers and participants can help build mutual trust and confidence (Flurey, 2015). I established rapport with participants by demonstrating flexibility to address their concerns and explaining in detail the purpose and expected benefits of this study. Transparency regarding the nature of the project and its findings also increases trust and fosters stronger bonds with participants (Hoyland et al., 2015). I was transparent and informed participants of the voluntary nature of participation in this study, their ability to opt-out using the consent form, and that I would maintain their confidentiality. Guaranteeing confidentiality positively affects relationships with participants and their response rates and data quality (Rice et al., 2017). When participants are confident that they can retain their confidentiality and individuals cannot trace their responses personally, their responses may be more transparent and honest.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method to explore the research topic. Three common approaches to conducting academic research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed

methods (Strijker et al., 2020). Qualitative studies are usually discovery-oriented, yield detailed descriptions, and reveal experiential data (Weil, 2017). Qualitative research can help researchers gain holistic insights into why people engage in particular actions or experience them (Bush et al., 2020). Researchers undertaking qualitative studies can examine papers or internet documents, media reports, medical documents (if released), court documents, or transcripts (Weil, 2017). Undertaking a qualitative study is usually suitable for researchers with limited resources or time to complete their studies (Turale, 2020). I used semistructured interviews and reviewed company documentation and participants' social media pages to explore SMM strategies that business leaders used to improve customer relationships. Thus, the qualitative research method was suitable for this study.

Quantitative methods involve examining a hypothesis using numerical information. Researchers can use quantitative methods to answer questions such as *how many* or *how much*, rather than the *what*, *how*, or *why* of a phenomenon (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Although quantitative research involves numbers and statistics, these methods can illuminate significant trends and patterns (Amos, 2016). Quantitative research can mitigate personal bias (Savela, 2018). However, quantitative approaches fall short in details and cannot provide in-depth understanding because of the inherently reductive nature of classification (Amos, 2016). I did not collect numerical data for the statistical testing of hypotheses. Hence, the quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study.

Mixed methods research involves integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a study. Researchers can use a mixed methods approach to overcome weaknesses in studies using a single methodological route (Abdalla et al., 2018). This research method enhances the credibility and relevance of study outcomes so researchers can address more complex research questions (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). However, the mixed methods approach requires significant resources and time compared to a single method study, as the mixed methods approach involves using qualitative and quantitative methods (Frias & Popovich, 2020). Therefore, I chose not to use the mixed methods approach for this study, as it is more time-consuming than the qualitative method. I used qualitative research methods only rather than a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research Design

This study was a qualitative multiple case study. Three qualitative research designs include phenomenology, ethnography, and case study (Yin, 2018). Researchers use the case study design to obtain in-depth descriptive analysis grounded in deep and numerous data sources, including questionnaires or interviews, observations, and documentation review (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

A case study design that relies on multiple data sources helps researchers comprehensively understand a research topic. Researchers can answer the *why, how*, and *what* questions of their study within real-life contexts using the multiple case study design (Anthony, 2018). Multiple case study designs enable researchers to uncover various facets of this phenomenon, taking a holistic approach via multiple data-collecting sources and techniques (Yin, 2015). I chose the multiple case study design as I used

various data collection sources to gain detailed and real-life knowledge about SMM strategies that business leaders use to improve customer relationships. I selected the case study design to explore a real-world phenomenon within a bounded, contextual setting.

Phenomenology research involves individuals' subjective meaning of the world. In phenomenology, researchers focus on how individuals experience, feel, and make sense of phenomena (Kocalar & Bilgili, 2020). Phenomenology is an interpretive approach involving individuals' sensuous experiences in everyday life (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017). Researchers aim to create a narrative from individuals' subjective lives in phenomenology (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). The phenomenological design was inappropriate for this study because I did not collect data on business leaders' lived experiences.

Ethnography involves researchers gaining an insight into research participants' life experiences. Ethnographic design involves direct social contact with participants to reflect the human experience (Marion et al., 2015). Ethnographic research produces knowledge about others and insights into researchers themselves and their relationships with others (Wijngaarden, 2017). Researchers use the ethnographic research design to interpret phenomena from a cultural perspective (Crandall et al., 2016). However, the ethnographic approach is time-intensive and can lack verifiability and transparency, and the rich data it produces is often difficult to organize, making systematic comparisons across groups or across time challenging (Wijngaarden, 2017). The ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study, as I did not study business leaders' culture or life experiences.

Researchers should collect data for qualitative research studies until they reach data saturation. Researchers achieve data saturation when there is adequate data to replicate the study and when gathering additional data or coding will not yield further information about the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Using multiple data collection sources helps researchers reach data saturation faster than only one data collection method (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). I collected data from semistructured interviews, reviewed participants' company documents and social media channels, and used member checking until no additional information or themes emerged to ensure methodological triangulation and reach data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative multiple case study comprised small business leaders from Central Trinidad who have effectively implemented SMM strategies to improve customer relationships. I used purposeful sampling to select the five participants. Purposeful sampling involves selecting participants for a specific purpose so the researcher and the community can learn deeply about the phenomena of interest (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). Researchers should select participants relevant to the phenomenon of interest. The selection of appropriate data-rich participants often requires purposeful sampling, as this approach provides more certainty that the exploration will yield relevant data (Patton, 2015). I chose participants who provided detailed descriptions and an in-depth understanding of the research topic rather than empirical generalizations.

Researchers should choose a suitable sample size to answer their study's research question. Selecting the appropriate sample size depends on researchers' ability to obtain

sufficient data to achieve their desired aim, the study's purpose, and the richness of data (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Yin, 2018). Hancock et al. (2016) recommended that researchers using a qualitative research method concentrate on participants' varying perspectives and opinions rather than the number of participants. Researchers typically use small sample sizes in qualitative case study research to yield large amounts of data (Baillie, 2015). Yin (2018) ascertained that a case study might consist of five or six replications if the study theory is straightforward and the researcher desires a higher degree of certainty. Using social media strategies to improve customer relationships is easy to understand. Hence, I chose five participants for this study to ensure a high degree of certainty.

The relationship between sampling and data saturation is reciprocal. Sampling fosters data saturation, and achieving data saturation determines the sample size and when to stop recruiting more participants (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). Researchers attain data saturation when there is no new information emerging from the additional data (Kline, 2017). I collected data from semistructured interviews, company documents, company social media pages, and member checking until no further information or themes emerged to ensure I reached data saturation.

Researchers should select participants who meet the study's criteria (Englander, 2016). This study's participant selection criteria comprised small business leaders from Central Trinidad who developed and implemented successful social media strategies that improved customer relationships. These criteria aligned with this study's research question. I reviewed company documents, including their sales reports, SMM materials,

customers' reviews, and activities on their social media pages to confirm participants' strategies' success.

Researchers should create a setting where participants could be transparent, honest, and comfortable sharing relevant information and experiences. When participants are in familiar and safe environments, they are more likely to share rich, detailed narratives (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). Scheibe et al. (2015) posited that interviews should be in a place free of distractions and conducive to uninterrupted dialog between the interviewer and the interviewee. I did not use in-person face-to-face interviews because of COVID-19. However, I chose a time and date that was convenient for participants and interviewed them via Skype and Zoom. I recorded participants' interviews after receiving their written consent using audio recording software. I encouraged them to select a location, such as a private conference room, that was neutral and comfortable for them to engage in virtual interviews. I requested that participants send their relevant company documents for the research via email to avoid in-person contact because of COVID-19.

Ethical Research

It is important to consider the ethical nature of research. Observing ethical principles and cultural norms in quantitative and qualitative research is essential (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). Informed consent involves providing a form in which a participant can explicitly consent to participate in the study (Rice et al., 2017). Researchers should provide thorough and precise information to prospective participants, indicating what is being requested of the client to get informed consent (Fleet et al.,

2016). Researchers should anticipate potential risks to participants in their research designs, inform subjects of these risks, and use precautionary measures to share data (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018). I emailed informed consent forms to participants before the semistructured interviews to notify them of the study's purpose and outcomes, the research risks, and how their participation will benefit the study's results. I notified participants that they could contact me via email or telephone for more information about the research or any concerns.

Researchers should inform participants that they can withdraw from the study at any time. Participants' disagreement with the informed consent information indicates their withdrawal of consent (Kunz et al., 2020). I emailed the informed consent form to participants for them to reply. I was transparent and informed participants that their participation was voluntary and with no incentives or compensation. I informed participants that they could have withdrawn from the study by contacting me via email and expressing their desire to withdraw from participation without penalty. However, no participant who accepted the invitation to participate chose to withdraw from the study.

Researchers must get approval from the IRB before beginning their research. Academic researchers must attain IRB authorization before contacting participants and collecting data (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018). Researchers need to receive ethics approval from universities or ethics committees from the relevant professional associations to conduct studies (Weil, 2017). Walden University's IRB provides ethical considerations to prevent researchers from exposing participants to unnecessary risk or harm. I obtained

IRB approval (#10-04-21-1005025) from Walden University before contacting participants or collecting any data for this study.

Researchers access highly personal information from research participants for their studies. Researchers should promise participants confidentiality in return for their cooperation and assure them that researchers will protect confidential information, and no harm will befall them (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018; Palys et al., 2019). Confidentiality and protecting participants' privacy are critical ethical concerns in case study research (Fleet et al., 2016). Researchers should carefully plan how to keep participants' data confidential and their identities secure.

Researchers can protect participants' identities through anonymization. Although I could not impose anonymity, I informed participants of my commitment to confidentiality and identity protection. I coded each participant's name as Participant 1 to 5 (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.) to protect their name and keep the participants confidential. I stored all paper documents from research in a locked file cabinet at my home. I stored electronic files on my password-protected computer and backed them up on a password-protected cloud drive. I will shred the documents and delete the digital files 5 years after this study's completion.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary instrument for data collection in qualitative studies is the researcher. Hence, I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. Data collection in qualitative studies involves discovering the *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why* of events or experiences via focus groups, interviews, observation, and documents or artifacts

examination (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). It is common for researchers to use multiple data collection methods in their qualitative research study to get comprehensive information for analysis (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I collected data from participants for this study using semistructured interviews, company documentation reviews, and reviews of the participants' SMM strategies through their companies' social media pages.

Researchers primarily use interviews for qualitative research data collection. Most researchers use semistructured interviews for qualitative research (Polit & Beck, 2017). Interviews provide in-depth information about participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Roberts, 2020). Interviews involve interactions between interviewers and participants, whether face-to-face or online (Johnson et al., 2020). Researchers can use new media for collecting qualitative data, for example, through online observations, online interviews, and analysis of online sources with video conferences or video calls (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers can use digital means to take advantage of the internet's unique characteristics and research capabilities (Salmons, 2015). Due to COVID-19, I conducted online semistructured interviews.

I followed a detailed interview protocol to ensure a credible and consistent interview process (see Appendix). An interview protocol is a set of rules and guidelines that researchers use to interview (Dikko, 2016). A reliable interview protocol is essential to achieve valuable, quality interview data (Yeong et al., 2018). An interview protocol facilitates the interview process systematically, comprehensively, and timely through prior delimitation of the issues researchers desire to explore (Patton, 2015).

I recorded participants' interviews after receiving their written consent using audio recording software. I asked participants open-ended interview questions regarding SMM strategies and social media platforms they used and the barriers they encountered to increase customer relationships. Open-ended questions allow for follow-up questions and prompts based on participants' answers, resulting in rich qualitative data (Dikko, 2016). Rich qualitative data help researchers better understand the participants' experience and identify essential elements relevant to the subject (Yeong et al., 2018). Thus, follow-up questions further enhanced the quality of information for my study.

I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of this study's data collection process by providing each participant with a summary of interpretations of their interview responses to confirm the accuracy. Researchers use member checking to allow participants to validate an interpreted summary of their responses to the interview questions (Yin, 2018). Participants can then expand, amend, and give comments (Harvey, 2015). Thus, member checking enhanced the validity and reliability of qualitative research results.

Data Collection Technique

Common qualitative data collection methods include interviews, direct observation, and document review and analysis. I conducted semistructured interviews with participants for this study. Semistructured interviews involve in-depth conversations between the researcher and participant, prompted by the research aims and strongly guided by the researcher's perceptions, opinions, and experiences (Cridland et al., 2015). I conducted online (Skype and Zoom) rather than in-person interviews because of

COVID-19. I recorded participants' interviews after receiving their written consent using audio recording software. I was flexible and scheduled the interview times based on participants' preferences, making them more comfortable and engaged in the interview process.

I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix) and began interviews by sharing this study's purpose and objectives with participants. I also informed participants that I would be recording the interviews, and they could withdraw from the research if they desired. An introductory statement before commencing the interview facilitates a clear and concise summary of the interview process (Cridland et al., 2015). I transcribed the interviews and allowed participants to member check my interpretations of their interview responses before coding and analysis. Researchers can further investigate emerging themes or interpretations and develop a deeper understanding of their data via member checking (Brear, 2019). Member checking enables the researcher to assess the extent to which their findings resonate with the research participants (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking increased the findings' validity as participants reviewed, verified, and confirmed the accuracy of their responses, thus increasing this study's validity.

I collected data from participants for this study using online semistructured interviews, company documentation reviews, and reviews of the participants' social media pages to triangulate data sources. Triangulation involves identifying convergence through multiple data sources and methods to avoid or minimize error or bias and optimize accuracy in data collection and analysis processes (Johnson et al., 2020). Researchers can use triangulation to confirm or refute interpretation, assertions, themes,

and study conclusions via multiple data sources (Guenzi & Storbacka, 2015). If researchers can arrive at a theme or theory and validate it using multiple data sources, the study's result has greater credibility and confirmability (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Triangulation of various sources offset bias from single measures, strengthening a study's validity.

Researchers can use highly structured, open-ended, or semistructured interview methods. Highly structured interviews increase dependability, and open-ended interviews allow interviewers to clarify a participant's response for increased credibility and confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). Semistructured interviews allow for considerable flexibility in sequencing questions and the extent to which researchers give each topic time and attention (Marshall et al., 2015). Semistructured interview questions stimulate participants' open responses, enabling conversation lines that researchers could not have expected when planning the interviews (Brown & Danaher, 2019). This data collection approach reduces the risk of bias relating to the researchers' preconceptions (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Semistructured interviews encourage creativity and thoughtful reflexivity (Thöne et al., 2020). These factors help researchers build trust, develop rapport, and increase interpersonal relationships with participants.

Researchers' social cues such as body language and voice intonation can negatively influence respondents' answering behavior. Researchers' presence, interviewing behaviors, and interactions during personal interviews can sway participants' responses (Kühne, 2020). Participants may make inferences about researchers based on visible characteristics and use these to tailor or edit their answers (socially desirable answering)

to elicit interviewer approval (West & Blom, 2017). Additionally, semistructured

interviews can be time-consuming to conduct, transcribe, and analyze (Leffler et al.,

2015). Researchers should weigh these disadvantages of semistructured interviews with

their advantages before deciding on their interview method of choice.

Documentary review and analysis is a straightforward and cost-effective qualitative

research method. This data collection method is efficient and manageable (Cardno,

2018). The availability of documents is usually at little or no cost to the researcher

(Hammarberg et al., 2016). The unobtrusive nature of documentary analysis makes it

nonreactive, as it does not draw attention to the researchers' presence (Cardno, 2018).

Documentary review and analysis is a supplementary qualitative data collection method

that increases the rigor of a study through a multimethod form of triangulation (Moser &

Korstjens, 2018; Yin, 2018). Researchers can corroborate findings across data sets by

examining collected information through different methods and reducing potential biases

in a study (Johnson et al., 2020). Hence, researchers can increase their understandings

and discover relevant insights via document review and analysis.

Conversely, documents are sometimes not retrievable. Some business leaders may

deliberately block documents from research or hesitate to provide requested documents if

they do not reflect what they aim to portray (Yin, 2018). Chosen documents may contain

insufficient detail (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although documents available on the

internet provide easy access, it is challenging to authenticate their age (Cardno, 2018). It

may be necessary to contact the organization to check that these are the most up-to-date

document versions (Cardno, 2018). The authenticity of documents may be questionable

as business leaders may select documents that are biased to the company's policies, procedures, and agenda rather than their existing practices (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Researchers should attempt to minimize these disadvantages before selecting this data collection method.

Data Organization Technique

I recorded the audio of interviews to assist with transcription and the creation of a database for all collected data. Audio recording minimizes the possibility of interviewer bias, as researchers are less likely to omit comments or neglect writing controversial statements (Andrewartha et al., 2020). Researchers should ensure that they organize and categorize their data collection and make them available for later access (Yin, 2018). I created a separate and orderly compilation database of all the data I collected for this case study, representing all the evidence sources.

Researchers can use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) or word-processing tools to organize data. Researchers use these tools to store, index, and manage narrative and numeric data (Chowdhury, 2015). I used Microsoft Word to organize the interview transcripts and Microsoft Excel to create a database. A case study database markedly increases the reliability of a researcher's case study (Yin, 2018). I used the data analysis software, NVivo, to help categorize, code, and sort the collected data during the data analysis process. NVivo is a software program that helps researchers analyze large amounts of data within a reasonable timeframe (Robins & Eisen, 2017). I stored all paper documents from this research in a locked draw at my home, stored electronic files on my password-protected computer, and backed up the files

on a password-protected cloud drive. I will shred the documents and delete the digital files 5 years after this study's completion.

Data Analysis

I used methodological triangulation to gather data for the analysis phase of this study. Methodological triangulation entails using different data collection methods to study a specific phenomenon (Nwanna-Nzewunwa et al., 2019). This process can increase the internal validity of a case study's findings and contribute to trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, and credibility (Farquhar et al., 2020). I used data from participants' interviews, document review and analysis, and reviews of participants' social media pages for triangulation in this study.

The data analysis process usually includes preparing and organizing data, transcribing data, coding the data, generating themes, and forming conclusions. Qualitative data analysis usually involves three steps. These stages include (a) data reduction, which includes selecting, analyzing, simplifying, summarizing, and transforming the data from research; (b) data representation, which involves creating an organized version of the data collected to deliver results; and (c) inference or verification, which comprises revealing causal relationships, patterns, possible structures between events and objects, and testing the validity of results (Miles & Huberman, 2016).

This study's data analysis process involved gathering all the audio recorded interview files into one location and then transcribing the data from interviews via an electronic format (Microsoft Word) to prepare for further analysis. Verbatim transcripts aim to capture every participant's utterance and serve as an accurate record of the

conversation (Lester et al., 2020). Transcription provides an opportunity for researchers to become familiar with a data set, which deepens their understanding of the participants' perspectives and supports them in understanding the data set in a way that speeds up analysis later (Lester et al., 2020). I used Microsoft Word to organize the interview transcripts and used Microsoft Excel to create a database.

I analyzed the data I collected from document review (participants' sales reports, SMM materials, and customers' reviews) and participants' social media pages to support interview data. NVivo is a qualitative analysis software for creating codes and analyzing interviews and observations (Celik et al., 2020). I used the data analysis software NVivo during the data analysis process to assist with categorizing, coding, and sorting the collected data from interviews, documents, and social media pages. I uploaded interview transcripts, audio recordings, relevant data from document review, and participants' social media pages in Nvivo.

After uploading to Nvivo, I coded and categorized the data accordingly. A code is a short, descriptive word or phrase that assigns meaning to the data related to the researcher's analytic interests (Saldana, 2016). Coding involves identifying important statements, experiences, and reflections from research participants and connecting them to the study's conceptual or theoretical framework (Lester et al., 2020). I then conducted a thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns across qualitative datasets. This process entails applying codes, developing categories, and producing themes (Lester et al., 2020). Researchers should use a logical coding process to maintain data order and not

mix themes and patterns (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). I used a consistent coding process, rechecked the codes, and ensured proper grouping of key themes and patterns. I aligned and correlated the key themes with this study's conceptual framework and existing literature.

After generating themes, I interpreted the data from the relationship between the codes, the themes, and the findings. Interpreting the data is a process that researchers undertake to explore the groupings and patterns to discern the emergent key themes and subthemes (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). Researchers should draw firm conclusions from the interpreted data and not their subjective views (Yin, 2018). I ended the data analysis process by drawing objective conclusions from the interpreted data.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability relates to consistency. If a researcher can replicate an earlier research design and achieve the same findings, then that research would be reliable (Saunders et al., 2015). The dependability of research contributes to a study's reliability (Farquhar et al., 2020). Dependability in qualitative research involves evaluating the quality of data collection, data analysis, theory generation, and data stability over time and conditions (Ellis, 2019). Researchers should describe the study process in sufficient detail so others can repeat the work to increase dependability (Johnson et al., 2020). Hence, a dependable study needs to be accurate and consistent.

Member checking increases the reliability of findings. Reliability includes accounting for personal and research method biases that may have influenced the findings

(Noble & Smith, 2015). Member checking helps researchers mitigate personal biases by allowing participants to validate an interpreted summary of their interview responses (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I enabled participants to member check my interpretations of their interview responses to increase this study's dependability and reliability.

Triangulation helps address the reliability and validity of findings. Methodological triangulation involves using multiple data collection methods to enhance data analysis's validity and reliability (Fusch et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation by collecting data from participants' interviews and reviewing the participants' company documents and social media pages to increase this study's dependability and reliability.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure. Saunders et al. (2015) postulated that validity refers to the appropriateness of the measures used, the accuracy of the analysis of the results, and the findings' generalizability. A study's credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation reflect its validity (Yin, 2015). Credibility involves readers determining whether the findings are really what the researchers found (Ellis, 2019). Johnson et al. (2020) posited that credibility implies that the researchers ensure and impart supporting evidence to the reader that the results accurately represent what they studied. Thus, credibility refers to the reader's amount of confidence that the study's findings are truthful and accurate (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Two main approaches to improve qualitative research credibility is triangulation and member checking (Ellis, 2019). Researchers use triangulation to check and establish the credibility of qualitative findings by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives (Amin et al., 2020). Triangulation involves various methods (e.g., observation and interviews), data sources (e.g., people and written records), data collectors, and theories to create a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, phenomenon, or people (Ellis, 2019). These four types of triangulation include methodological, data, investigator, and theory.

I used methodological triangulation for this study. Methodological triangulation entails using different data collection methods to study a specific phenomenon (Nwanna-Nzewunwa et al., 2019). The researcher uses more than one method with the methodological triangulation approach to compensate for the limitations of one approach with another's strengths, improving the findings' credibility (Amin et al., 2020). Methodological triangulation increases the findings' credibility and provides a richer and more detailed understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Morse, 2015). I used methodological triangulation by collecting data from participants' interviews and reviewing participants' company documents and social media pages.

Member checking requires researchers to provide their interpretations to participants to ensure they represent what the participant meant to say. Member checking allows participants to comment on any errors in the data records and interpretation and provide additional or clarifying information that they desire (Birt et al., 2016). I permitted participants to member check my interpretations of their interview responses and provide

their feedback to confirm the accuracy and identify any unrecognized biases or factual errors, thus increasing this study's validity.

Transferability implies that users can transfer a study's results to different contexts beyond those which the researchers study directly. Transferability refers to whether the researcher provides detailed contextual information so readers can determine whether researchers can apply the results to other situations (Johnson et al., 2020). Researchers should give a clear description of the context, selection, and characteristics of participants; data collection and process of analysis; a rich and vigorous presentation of the findings; and appropriate quotations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). These factors will enhance transferability to the reader.

Readers decide whether a study's findings are transferable to another context. Researchers need to provide enough information about meanings, contexts, and processes in their study so readers can adequately judge the likelihood that researchers' findings would apply to a different setting, group, or population (Maxwell, 2020). Thick and rich descriptions, where researchers use robust descriptive language to provide sufficient contextual information, enable readers to determine transferability (Johnson et al., 2020). I enhanced this study's transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the processes that I applied. I also gave detailed descriptions of the study's various cases, context, participants' selection, data collection and analysis, interview protocol and process, and findings.

Researchers should maintain a trail of how they collected their data and what interpretations they made in qualitative studies to achieve confirmability. Confirmability

is the extent to which individuals can confirm if the data analysis was coherent and whether the interpretations based on that data were fair (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Confirmability involves record-keeping of data sources, decisions, sampling, data collection, and data analysis processes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). When researchers ensure and communicate to readers that their results reflect the information they gathered from participants and not their interpretations or bias, they increase confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). Therefore, I kept a clear, logical, and organized audit trail during each phase of the research to ensure the confirmability of this study's findings. This process helps readers to confirm that, given the same data, they might arrive at the same conclusions.

Data saturation is the collection of relevant data until no new information or themes emerge. Data saturation is the gold standard for quality research (Hancock et al., 2016). Data saturation affects the quality of research and increases validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I continued data collection until no new themes or patterns emerged to reach data saturation and enhance the validity of this study's findings.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships. In Section 2, I discussed the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, research method and design, population characteristics, sampling method, and ethical research process for this study. I detailed the data collection instruments, data collection techniques, and data organization techniques for this study. I described the strategies I will use to enhance the

reliability and validity of this study. Section 3 includes the research findings, application to professional practice, social change implications, recommendations for action, areas for future research, reflections, conclusion, and appendices.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore SMM strategies that some small business leaders have used to improve customer relationships. The participants for this study were five small retail business leaders from five different organizations. I collected data from semistructured interviews, company documentation reviews, and reviews of the participants' SMM strategies through their companies' social media pages and applied methodological triangulation. The findings revealed three major themes, including (a) social media engagement strategy, (b) target audience strategy, and (c) SCRM strategy.

Presentation of Findings

The central research question for this qualitative multiple case study was as follows: What SMM strategies do some small business leaders use to improve customer relationships? I analyzed the collected data using NVivo to categorize and code the information and generate themes. The findings highlighted various strategies business leaders used to engage, target, and gain customers' trust and commitment to improving relationships. Table 1 includes the emergent themes and the percentage of use by participants.

Table 1

Participants' Percentage Use of Themes

Major themes	Percentage use by participants
Social media engagement strategy	100%
Target audience strategy	80%
SCRM strategy	100%

Theme 1 – Social Media Engagement Strategy

The first theme to emerge from the data analysis was the social media engagement strategy. A growing trend among marketers is using social media to drive CE (Hanson et al., 2019; Sheng, 2019). CE is an expansion to the RM domain as it contributes to establishing and enhancing customer relationships (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018). Engaged customers exhibit RM indicators such as enhanced satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Islam & Rahman, 2016). So et al. (2016) further postulated that CE results in customer loyalty or retaining customer relationships, a key aspect of Berry's (1983) RM framework. According to P4, interacting and engaging with customers by answering customers' questions, asking and obtaining their feedback, and clarifying any product concerns help to increase customer satisfaction and retain customer relationships.

CE initiatives involve organizational initiatives that facilitate firm–customer interactions to foster emotional or psychological bonds between customers and firms (Gill et al., 2017; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Customers who engage with businesses on social media have stronger relationships with those businesses than customers who do not interact via social media (Hudson et al., 2016). All the business owners who participated

in this study used social media engagement strategies to improve customer relationships

(see Table 2). The business owners used the features of social media platforms such as

Facebook and Instagram to communicate, interact, and obtain feedback from customers.

All participants use Facebook and Instagram, two of the participants use Tik Tok, and

two use YouTube to engage with customers (see Table 3).

Table 2

Participants' Responses Referencing Social Media Engagement Strategy

Participants	References
Participant 1	8
Participant 2	7
Participant 3	6
Participant 4	10
Participant 5	8

Table 3

Participants' Social Media Platform Presence

	Social media platform			
Participant	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Tik Tok
Participant 1	X	X		
Participant 2	X	X	X	
Participant 3	X	X	X	X
Participant 4	X	X		X
Participant 5	X	X		

The study's findings revealed that the content of SMM posts could influence CE. Directly engaging customers with posts is one advantage of social media (Schultz, 2017). Thus, business leaders should adjust the content of their social media posts based on experiential events (Meire et al., 2019). P4 indicated that they sometimes tailor their posts or content based on trending topics:

Our social media team aims to stay on top of the current trends, whether in our country or globally and try to produce content based on that, as we realize most people gravitate to those posts and they receive a lot of shares.

P4 gave the following example:

We did a post about a popular recent Netflix series, where we promoted items we sell, that persons can use to make some of the items shown on the show. These items were a major part of the movie, so that post got a lot of attention.

P4 presented their analytical reports from their social media pages on this post and other similar content on trending topics, which reflected a significant increase in CE, especially an upsurge in post shares compared to their other content. This finding aligns with the study of Swenson and Olsen (2018), who posited that content based on prevalent topics engages audiences, influences brand relationships, and builds interest in issues.

Business leaders can use social media to reach new target markets and strengthen their relationship with their existing audience (Arica et al., 2022). P4's comments were consistent with Arica et al.'s (2022) research, as P4 shared that "this strategy keeps our content creative and exciting," captures their current customers' attention, and they benefit from external or new customer interest due to their posts receiving numerous shares and "going viral." However, Pogorevich (2020) advised that although newsbreaks and memes within the community primarily cause a positive reaction from followers, it is necessary to use this strategy wisely without crossing certain boundaries. P4 confirmed that they ensure that their posts are not offensive before posting.

Participants explained that the timing and volume of their posts affect their CE levels. P3 disclosed,

> We realized that engagement is higher when we do not overload customers with content; which is why we started spreading out our content and scheduling them according to the analytical feedback from our social pages that indicate the most appropriate times to post.

P3's strategy corresponds with Pogorevich's findings that business leaders should develop a schedule that displays the hours of highest activity and plan publications according to it, as this helps increase loyalty.

As social media activities are affected by time frame (weekdays, weekends, morning, or afternoon), business leaders must plan carefully to create content that boosts engagement at different times and to post such content at specific, appropriate times (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Park et al., 2021). P4 and P5 incorporated these authors' approaches in their SMM strategies. P5's social media reports included spreadsheet analyses of the best times, days, and content to post on each social media page based on past activity performance. According to P5, "We look at which of our strategies – regular content, creative posts, giveaways, sharing customers reviews, or influencers – provide the most engagement and what times and days prove to be the best." P4 presented their weekly SMM schedules, which included deadlines to complete various types of content and planned times and days to post. P4 relayed, "We schedule our content in advance, so they are posted automatically at the timeframes we set out in our rosters, and we do not have to worry about forgetting to post and missing out on peak engagement."

Understanding how different activities affect engagement in different time frames directly ties to social media analytics (Wittwer et al., 2016). Business leaders should analyze consumer engagement activities with brand posts, taking into account post characteristics, such as vividness, interactivity, content, and publication timing, and controlling for post length, number of fans, and industry differences (Schultz, 2017). P2 highlighted, "The right time to post on social media and the type of content that gets the

best reactions, differ for different businesses, so companies should do their own analyses

to determine what is best for them." Wozniak et al. (2017) also found that business

leaders must investigate the individual performance of each organization to develop

effective digital marketing strategies for engagement. P4 and P5 explained that they

determined the optimal time to post content based on their analyses of correlations

between peaks or dips in post engagement.

Participants assess the effectiveness of SMM strategies based on CE levels. Liu

and Beldona (2021) posited that CE includes customers' consumption (number of views),

contribution (number of thumbs-up), and creation (customer comments). P1 revealed,

"We look at the reviews from customers on our page, comments they leave, messages

they send, whether they share and like our posts, to determine our level of engagement."

P3 also disclosed, "We view the clicks, reactions, comments, reshares on each post, page

reviews, recommendations, page followers, et cetera, to give us a guide on our

engagement levels."

The more involved people are on businesses' social media pages (likes,

comments, reposts, and saves), the more successful it is (Pogorevich, 2020). P3's

marketing reports and documents on social media pages' analyses highlighted how they

carefully examine their insights to determine their content's and strategies' success,

including top-performing content vs. content that did not meet their targets, paid reach vs.

nonpaid reach, follower growth on each social media platform, and the demographic

(gender, location, and ages) of those who engaged on their pages. P2's company

documents also included audience reports for each of their social media pages, indicating

their current followers, comparisons to their potential audience, and goal trackers to meet their target impressions, reach, growth, and engagement. P4 added that in addition to the above features, they look at the number of persons who tag others, as this increases the number of persons who saw and engaged on their posts.

Hashtags are interactive measures that business leaders use to encourage and measure CE. Hashtags are short and spontaneous communication tags that act as digital information trackers (Tariq, 2022). Business leaders could measure their popularity and engagement on social media by searching certain words or hashtags (Wittwer et al., 2016). P1 disclosed,

> We like to use hashtags on our posts because it makes them easier to find, and helps us get more post engagement, such as tagging and reshares because most people want their friends to see the post too, especially if a certain hashtag is trending; so we usually get new followers as well from using hashtags.

P1's outcomes aligned with the findings of Zhang et al. (2019) and Palazzo et al. (2021). Zhang et al. found that posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6% more engagement than those without hashtags. Palazzo et al. ascertained that hashtags represent a great help to stand out from the enormous mass of information available on social media, making specific posts quickly discoverable. Effective social media content strategies strengthen relationships between marketers and customers and encourage engagement activities such as likes, shares, or comments that expose community content to their social media friends (Swani & Milne, 2017). Thus, hashtags have helped the participants quickly assess their CE levels and the reach of their posts, brands, and business.

Business leaders can use social media analytics to monitor engagement trends on their pages. Social media analytics is an emerging research approach for investigating communication patterns, trending social media topics, or big data from social media (Park et al., 2021). P1's company sales, marketing, and profitability reports and notes indicated that they monitor the cost per engagement and the correlation to their sales in products to help assess the effectiveness of their engagement strategies. P3 presented marketing and financial reports and social media pages analyses, reflecting how they examined the demographic information and other insights from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube analytics to determine how, when, and where to increase SMM spend on ads. P3 noted, "One of the things we look for based on our results is the geographical areas where our content have not yet reached, and allocate spending to that audience if we assess that they are part of our target market."

Business leaders can also use engagement strategies with customers who have had negative experiences to improve customer relationships. Business leaders who reinforce positive experiences or enhance customers' knowledge about a brand by questioning poor experiences through their social media activities enhance the sentiment of digital engagement (Meire et al., 2019). P5 revealed,

> We choose not to hide or delete negative comments or reviews, but prefer to communicate with customers openly and use this as opportunities for other followers to see for themselves that we genuinely try to resolve concerns as best as we can, and hopefully they appreciate that – our commitment to providing the best service and experience.

According to P5, this strategy has helped increase customers' trust in them and improved

customer relationships. This finding aligns with the research of Schultz (2017), who

found that social media engagement and interaction contribute to increased customer trust

and commitment, which are the core aspects of RM.

Within the CE strategy theme, three subthemes emerged: (a) customer feedback,

(b) communication, and (c) influencer marketing (see Table 4).

Table 4

Participants' Responses Referencing Customer Engagement Subthemes

Participants	References
Customer Feedback	26
Communication	16
Influencer Marketing	10

Customer Feedback

Customer feedback on social media encourages engagement with business leaders

and other customers and contributes to relationship development and improvement.

Customer feedback leads to CE (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Customers express input on

social media content through comments, reactions, reviews, sharing, and tagging.

Customer responses to business leaders' posts on companies' social media pages reflect

business leaders' efforts to facilitate business-customer interactions (Gill et al., 2017).

The participants implemented strategies to encourage customer feedback on their social

media pages and posts.

Study participants used various means to encourage customer feedback, including live streaming. Live streaming results in real-time social interaction, and it can enrich the consumers' shopping experience to boost sales (Cao et al., 2022). P1 relayed,

We use the live streaming feature on both platforms, so followers can interact with us in real-time, view our installation processes, look at our product ranges, see our journeys with customers, we can ask for suggestions, customers can provide their input, and we can answer any questions they have.

Reviews of P1's social media page revealed that they offer special deals and discount codes exclusive to the livestream viewers, which seemed to encourage more sales based on customers' comments highlighting their purchases. An assessment of P1's sales reports corroborated these findings.

The participants' disclosures corresponded with the findings of Woodcock and Johnson (2019), who affirmed that live streams provide the opportunity for customers to participate and interact with business leaders and build informal, impromptu relationships with each other through shared viewing. P5 also conveyed, "We take them along during our livestreams when preparing customers' orders, so they can see and appreciate the process from start to finish." According to the participants, they bond and form relationships with their customers through these interactive sessions. P5 stated, "This helps them feel like a part of the business."

Business leaders can obtain valuable ideas from customers via their feedback. Customers can create value for and with business leaders through social media, referred to as consumer engagement value, by directly engaging in transactions, initiating

recommendations, affecting purchase decisions, and providing data for market research (Schultz, 2017). P4 relayed, "We love to take polls to get customers' opinions and votes on which products, colors, designers, and styles they favor. It's very simple and effective as we get a lot of customers' feedback in less than 24 hours." P5 shared that when they interact with customers, either live or via posts or stories, "we ask them for feedback on what they think about our products and services, how they think we can improve, and we often receive fresh, creative input." In this way, customers become cocreators of the businesses. Customers become cocreators of products and brands when they interact with companies and share their experiences, knowledge, and opinions (Sotiriadis, 2017; Thakur, 2019). P1 revealed that this strategy "allows customers to feel like they are internal stakeholders" of their company and helps their business "develop and improve" their ideas and product range, making it "a win-win situation" for customers and business leaders.

Customer input helps business leaders increase customers' satisfaction. Social media encourage customer participation and empower customers to contribute to businesses, leading to a positive impact on developing trust, commitment, satisfaction, and long-term relationships (Hajli, Shanmugam, et al., 2017). Participants presented their customers' insight reports from their social media pages. P1 and P4 shared responses from their questions and answer segments, comments, and polls. P5 also disclosed some of the input they receive from customers when they use suggestion boxes and voting. P5 noted that their marketing department uses this information to "focus on areas they need to improve," and P1 revealed that based on these insights, "we tweak our ads, product

offerings, or customer service when necessary." Tailoring the customer experience to match customers' tastes and preferences increases customers' trust, satisfaction, and engagement as customers are motivated to continue to share their input. Thus, this strategy has helped study participants foster customer relationships and create value for their business.

Communication

Study participants use SMM to increase communication with customers. Social media allow leaders and customers to interact and network directly and easily across geographical boundaries (Lin, 2022). The goal of marketer-generated content on social media is to spread information about products, services, and brands to increase awareness, attract more users to their social media pages, and facilitate social relationships among users (Park et al., 2021). Study participants disclosed how communicating with customers regularly and promptly helped improve customer relationships.

The advantages of social media facilitate improved communication with customers. Social media transmit information about products, services, and events in real-time at a low cost (Park et al., 2021). These unique features speed up business leaders' delivery of relevant information and customer feedback. Study participants shared that quickly responding to their customers is a SMM strategy that improves customers relationships. P2 noted, "Customers really appreciate when we respond to them right away." Increased responsiveness of business leaders on social media leads to enhanced customer satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2016). P3 revealed, "Some of our customers

openly express appreciation in our comments and review sections when we respond to them right away," which acts as positive WOM and encourages other customers to interact with them.

Study participants use various strategies to increase customer communication responsiveness. Social media provide a means to communicate to customers to enable greater responsiveness (Marolt et al., 2020). As Facebook publicly reveals how responsive business leaders are on their social media pages, it is best to minimize their lead times in responding to customers. P2 disclosed, "Our social media team keeps all alerts and notifications on at all times to maintain our standard for swift responses." When purchasing a complex product or solution, customers may need business leaders' knowledge, so speedily communicating this information may expedite customer purchases and improve satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2016). P3 relayed that although they "try to respond to most, if not all, messages and comments during working hours," they "keep our contact information on our pages up-to-date so that customers can reach us outside of social media if they need to."

Communicating with customers on social media can help improve their experience with the company. Business leaders can increase customers' satisfaction and commitment by providing an excellent and memorable brand experience and enhancing customer relationships (Iglesias et al., 2019). For example, posting on social media about an unexpected change in closing times due to weather conditions can prevent customers from being displeased if they visit the business, especially from long distances, to find the store closed with no prior knowledge. Customers' experiences with businesses influence

their satisfaction and commitment (Khan et al., 2016). P3 conveyed that communication with customers was vital during the unprecedented period of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the mode of operations often changed due to varying government guidelines.

Influencer Marketing

Study participants use influencer marketing as part of their SMM strategy to improve customer relationships. Business leaders and marketers should analyze strategic ways to benefit from influencer marketing (De Veirman et al., 2017). Influencers are independent third-party endorsers who spread information, inspiration, and ideas and shape an audience's perceptions and attitudes through social media (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). P1, P2, and P5 use celebrities, including social media personalities and local celebrities, to promote their products, hoping that the influencers' followers will convert to their long-term customers. P5 shared, "We see it as a way of outsourcing our marketing to increase our exposure and following and customer base."

Individuals can now share their product experiences via more transparent and ubiquitous social networks (Arenas-Márquez et al., 2021). Honesty and transparency of reviews increase customers' trust in the company and brand. Business leaders must use influencers who people can believe are actual product users and design an authentic use scenario for generating interest (Zhu & Chen, 2015). P5 emphasized, "we encourage influencers to be real with their followers - give them honest feedback, including what aspects they may not really like about the products, and also inform them when posts are sponsored." P5 disclosed that this strategy helps strengthen their relationships with customers, as "customers value honesty."

Customers can also be influencers via eWOM. P3 and P4 confirmed this strategy as they rely on their customers' reviews to influence others via real-life experiences and positive eWOM. P4 shared, "In some of our livestreams, we try to have previous customers or customers who are in store at the moment share their reviews and try on the items live." P4 elaborated, "Customers enjoy these sessions because they value the honest reviews and feedback from customers who they see as being just like them." P3 revealed that they have a few loyal customers who "we consider family" who are willing to chat or video call with customers who may be uncertain of the quality or experience of some of their items. According to P3, "this helps a great deal with reassuring new customers and clarifying their concerns." This transparency and willingness to go the extra mile help participants build relationships with customers and reflect their commitment to service and trustworthiness.

The reputation of influencers can affect customers' perceived value. When business leaders carefully select and match influencers with relevant content and select appropriate communication channels, it is more likely that they will create value for brand owners (Buttle & Groeger, 2017). P5 suggested that business leaders do adequate research on influencers before selecting them to ensure that their following matches the company's target audience and that their reputation aligns with its image. Influencers are *brand lawyers* for companies and are responsible for maintaining the company's image on behalf of the owner (Pogorevich, 2020).

Business leaders should assess the feasibility of influencers before selecting them. Influencers are also suitable for small and medium-sized businesses as business leaders can obtain greater brand awareness and a reasonable cost (Pogorevich, 2020). P5 advised,

> Before choosing influencers, what we do, and I think other companies should do as well, is look at the engagement on influencers' posts and pages – the number of likes, comments, reshares, and also how they respond and interact and engage with their followers.

P5's suggestion aligned with the study of Palazzo et al. (2021), who recommended that business leaders select influencers based on their engagement activities and details of their profiles, and analyze the interplay between the influencers and the company's target audiences. P2 examines the cost feasibility of using influencers in their spreadsheet analysis by verifying their increased followers and purchases from influencers' posts. Therefore, participants ensure their return on investment is satisfactory when deciding to use influencer marketing.

Theme 2 – Target Audience Strategy

The second theme to emerge from the data analysis was the target audience strategy. The main marketing task of any company is to be where its customers are. Identifying a target audience and their needs is a vital aspect of the conceptual framework. Offering services that consistently meet the quality requirements of the target markets is essential to building strong customer relationships (Berry, 1983). Berry (1995) suggested that business leaders who practice RM must customize relationships according to individuals' needs. By learning about individual customers' specific characteristics and

requirements, business leaders can tailor their products and services more precisely and provide their customers with an incentive to remain rather than start over with other suppliers (Berry, 2002). P3 stated, "It's very important and helpful to know your audience; know whose attention you are trying to capture."

Business leaders usually research their customers' preferences to tailor their content and RM strategies accordingly (Kumar et al., 2016). Business leaders should not ignore determining their target audience, as it is such a powerful resource for their organization to succeed (Akhmedov, 2017). Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter provide advertisers with information about their consumers' likes and dislikes, which is crucial, as it helps business leaders determine their target audience (Oyza & Edwin, 2015). Most participants implemented the target audience strategy (see Table 5), highlighted how they established their target audience, and used the information to improve customer relationships. Effective marketers implement customer-targeting strategies to engage existing consumers, reach potential customers, and solidify their customer base (Camilleri, 2018).

Table 5

Participants' Responses Referencing Target Audience Strategy

Participants	References
Participant 1	6
Participant 2	5
Participant 3	5
Participant 4	6
Participant 5	0

Business leaders use analytical information to determine their target audience. Participants shared that they look at their post engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares, messages, queries) and the demographic of their purchasers to determine their target audience. Business leaders should inspect and then identify target groups to employ different strategies to diverse target groups (Arhammar & Staunstrup, 2016). P2 disclosed that they did further analysis to identify various segments of their target audience and broke them into more helpful and identifiable groups. P2 elaborated,

> For instance, we use our information from our social media pages' insights and reports to split our target audience and tailor our SMM content to different genders, different types of customers - active or passive, different age groups, et cetera – all who may form part of our target market but may need customized attention.

Participants also identified which target audience members share their content and engage in cocreation activities. Customers who repost business leaders' content are an essential part of a target audience (Luo et al., 2019).

Business leaders should tailor their content to their target audience to encourage responsiveness. For example, darker, masculine colors may appeal to men, but women may respond to lighter and brighter artwork. Brand post content types that address most of the target audience positively affect post engagement (Schultz, 2017). P3 and P5 offer products for both genders and revealed that specific genders favor specific posts that relate to them. For example, P3 shared, "It is not surprising that men react more to our posts on tools, garage items, car repair kits, et cetera." Reviews of their social media pages and analytical reports confirmed this finding, including similar reactions for posts tailored to women, such as content on home décor and kitchen items. Participants who offer solely masculine or feminine items shared that their target audience comprises various age groups, which is another factor business leaders should consider when tailoring their content. For example, a review of P5's social media page reflected a younger female audience towards casual clothing and accessories; and a more mature female audience towards working garments and footwear.

Interviews from business leaders indicated they could use their engagement analyses to get the best return on their marketing outlays. Time, money, and energy spent on identifying a company's target audience is a wise investment for any company (Pogorevich, 2020). Participants revealed that they use engagement information to tailor their sponsored posts on Facebook and Instagram to ensure they spend their funds

effectively. P2 shared their insights from their social media pages, and their reports and spreadsheet analyses based on these insights, mapping out which location, time, and gender are more feasible when boosting their ads. P5 also disclosed their analyses and breakdown on how they chose their goal for their sponsored posts (more engagement, views, or messages), their audience (location, age, interests, gender), duration (days, months), and then monitor different ads based on cost per engagement.

Business leaders' target audience also changes over time (Luo et al., 2019). P5's responses corresponded to Luo et al.'s (2019) study, as P5 stated, "We closely monitor the cost per engagement and alter the specifics accordingly if the ads no longer become feasible." P1 disclosed, "We use the feedback from the performance of previous ads as a guide when planning the details of future ads." P1 shared an example from their company's social media reports where a sponsored ad was not producing results, and they changed each detail at a time to determine which aspect of their tailoring needed adjusting. P1 revealed, "It was only on our third adjustment we found that narrowing the location of our ad, while keeping the other details like age group and so on constant, resolved the problem we were having with our ad response." Thus, participants continuously research and assess their target market to remain competitive and cater to changes over time.

Identifying a target audience can also assist business leaders in knowing the best time intervals for posting content (Pogorevich, 2020). Participants' responses aligned with Pogorevich's (2020) study. A participant who sells items primarily for parents related that they receive their highest social media engagements on late evenings (perhaps

when their kids are at bed) and during the weekends (probably as they are not on their jobs). Another participant with a different target audience relayed, "we have the highest engagements during the first three days of the week." Therefore, participants conduct detailed research and analyses to determine their target audience's engagement activities and schedules to get the best results from their SMM efforts.

Targeting a specific audience also entails competitor analysis. Competitor analysis is crucial as one business' target audience may also be the target audience of another business, especially in the same sector. Therefore, investing effort into knowing how competitors' are targeting customers is necessary to adjust strategies to do a better job. P2 shared that they have two employees solely dedicated to looking at their competitors' activities and adjusting their strategies accordingly. Modifying strategies may include providing faster responses, friendlier feedback, more attentive customer service, posting at different times, or designing more appealing and creative content. Due to the competitive nature of SMM, participants give careful attention to accurately identifying their target audience, analyzing their preferences and dislikes, and designing strategies accordingly.

Theme 3 – Social Customer Relationship Management Strategy

The third theme to emerge from the data analysis was the SCRM strategy. SCRM is an evolution of the conceptual framework, as it involves using social media services, techniques, and technology to engage customers in collaborative interactions that provide mutually beneficial value and trust (Chan et al., 2018). Berry (1983) ascertained that CRM solidify customer relationships and increase customers' loyalty. Integrating social

media with CRM is one of the crucial RM tactics business leaders implement to facilitate

customer relationships and retention (Kang & Kim, 2017). Interactions between business

leaders and customers facilitated by SCRM will enhance customers' emotional

attachment to the firm, affecting their relationship quality, including customer

satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Hudson et al., 2016). P5 shared that their SCRM

strategies "help increase customers' trust in us, which have led to their continued

loyalty." All participants implement SCRM strategies to improve customer relationships

(see Table 6).

Table 6

*Participants' Responses Referencing Social Customer Relationship Management
Strategy*

Participants	References
Participant 1	13
Participant 2	13
Participant 3	10
Participant 4	15
Participant 5	12

Reviews of participants' social media pages and interviews revealed that they

offer rewards to customers to encourage engagement and customer loyalty and improve

relationships. P1 and P2 offer discounts and giveaways for customers who engage with

them online through contests and quizzes. SCRM elements include links to a different

website, voting, calls to action, contests, and questions (Schultz, 2017). P2 shared that

they also have special coupons and free items for top fans and followers with high

engagement on their page. Reviews of P1's social media page revealed that they offer

special deals and discount codes exclusive to the livestream viewers. P3's company

documents (SMM plans and strategies report) showed that they have planned giveaways

and deals every month but on different days on different months to "keep customers

engaged and following every day." P5 revealed, "We also plan giveaways for new and

loyal customers to attract customers and also encourage customer loyalty." The

participants' strategies increase customers' perceived value of their relationships with the

companies and thus, increase customer retention.

Showing appreciation to customers can help business leaders improve customer

relationships (Amarnani et al., 2022). P2 and P5 revealed that they have customer

appreciation giveaways, where they recognize their loyal followers and supporters on

their social media pages. P2 added, "we host in-person promotional events, like customer

appreciation day and many Christmas events, for some of our most loyal customers to get

a chance to put faces to the names and encourage camaraderie and build closer

relationships." P2 disclosed, "we try as much as possible to remember these customers'

names and refer to them by their names at in-person events," as this helps to express their

commitment further and reinforce a community bond with customers. Study participants

shared that these retention strategies result in customer loyalty, repeat sales, positive

WOM advertising to others, greater engagement, resharing of their content, and increased

brand and company awareness. Customer appreciation increases customers' perceptions

of what they receive from business leaders, resulting in increased customer perceived

value (Wang et al., 2020). P5's statement reaffirmed Wang et al. (2020)'s findings, as P5 revealed, "Customers appreciate and compliment us for recognizing those who support us."

Business leaders should have adequate resources and capabilities to monitor SCRM activities. SCRM capabilities include acquiring and disseminating information and responding to customer information with satisfactory reliability (Kang & Kim, 2017). P5 revealed that they hired employees who specialized in SMM. However, P2 shared that they paid for their existing marketing staff to complete SMM courses and have SMM professionals come in to speak with and train staff three times a year. It is reasonable for business leaders to rely on specialists of large analytics and marketing services in the digital sphere, as well as specialists of training centers and online courses of digital professions and digital agencies to help implement and monitor SMM (Pogorevich, 2020). P1 and P4 revealed that they hold regular training and refresher sessions with SMM consultants and professionals for employees.

SCRM strategies can improve customers' experience and satisfaction. Business leaders who implement SCRM experience increased customer dialogue, provide prompt responses, and deliver personalized services (Marolt et al., 2020). P4 revealed that they train their staff to use social media, and most have access to their social media pages. Therefore, staff can respond to customers faster, which increases customer dialogue, engagement, satisfaction, and perceived value of customer service. Through SCRM, business leaders aim to build strong relationships with internet users by giving them a

positive experience of their brand, products, and services, instead of contacting consumers with sales offers only (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018).

SCRM includes improving the work on content quality. According to Pogorevich (2020), business leaders should ensure that their content appeals to the reader to increase engagement. P1 relayed, "we have brainstorming sessions where the marketing team comes up with new, creative, and innovative ways to engage customers on these platforms." The quality of content can influence customers' attraction and engagement on social media platforms. The content on social media pages, including design, perceived security and privacy, perceived service quality, information quality, and quality of support, positively influence online trust (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Participants' SMM reports and strategy reports highlighted that they consider the graphics, quality of images and videos, the colors, timing, and the suitability of the content for their audience when posting. P2's competitor analysis documents also revealed that they look at these aspects of competitors' content and "try to improve ours, if necessary, to better target or attract customers." Additionally, as the news feed on social media gives greater reach to posts with more activities (likes, reposts, comments), post content must provoke activity from followers.

Effective SCRM involves obtaining relevant data and drawing valuable insights from customer data on social media. Although social media provide easily accessible customer data for strategic marketing decisions, it is real-time and challenging to analyze and quantify (Kantorová & Bachmann, 2018). Study participants heavily rely on social media platforms' insights and analytical tools to guide their SMM strategies. Participants

emphasized that tailoring their content and strategies based on the feedback from these tools was more important than collecting the data itself. For example, P2 shared documents to show how they transfer data from social media analytics to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to determine marketing spend feasibility, customers' tastes and preferences, and how they can improve. Business leaders must continuously use customer data to update their content and strategies to meet their customers' needs, improve relationships, and increase engagement, satisfaction, and positive WOM.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study highlighted SMM strategies used by small business leaders to improve customer relationships. This study's findings may help small business owners understand the most effective SMM strategies, the importance of developing and maintaining customer relationships, and the challenges they may face when implementing SMM strategies. The attractiveness of SMM due to its cost-effective and accessible means of communication and engagement with customers makes it possible for small businesses to be competitive (Pogorevich, 2020). Study participants used social media to communicate with customers, obtain their input, provide helpful and swift feedback, effectively reach their target audience, tailor content to them, and generate positive WOM.

Business leaders should conduct market research to determine their target audience and devise strategies accordingly. Social media have created the potential for better customer insight and better accuracy of market intelligence (Gould & Nazarian, 2018). Leaders should use research to choose platforms, content, influencers, and

interactions that are suitable to their target audience. Business leaders use social media to find new customers and to maintain and retain their existing customers by targeting advertisements to people who meet the required criteria (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). Competitor analysis within a target market is also vital for business leaders to remain competitive and maintain customer relationships.

Business leaders should take advantage of the analytical results available on social media platforms when conducting market research. Based on analytical results, leaders should adjust their content timing, volume, creativity, and design to achieve the most engagement and highest reach. Business leaders can use market research to assess what appeals to their customers and adjust their strategies accordingly. These leaders can then evaluate their performance based on customers' reactions and feedback, including their level of engagement (likes, comments, shares), reviews, and positive WOM.

Business leaders should strive to increase customers' trust and commitment to improving customers' relationships. Leaders can use SMM to increase customers' commitment via cocreation activities and showing appreciation to customers' loyalty (customer appreciation giveaways to customers who have high engagement and spread positive WOM). Allowing customers to express their honest reviews, using their input and suggestions, and having transparent company representation (influencers) may increase customer trust.

The findings confirmed that business leaders should pay close attention to retaining and maintaining customer relationships. Business leaders should continuously communicate with customers as their tastes and preferences can change over time.

Additionally, these leaders should ensure customers feel appreciated and valued. Business leaders can use SMM, including discounts and coupons, to show appreciation to supportive and new customers to encourage customer loyalty and improve relationships. Participants advised that business leaders should also ensure the image and reputation of the company remain consistent with their vision and customers' perceived vision via continuous monitoring, assessing, adjustment, and upgrading of strategies, regular staff training and evaluations, and overall quality control.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the improved self-worth, self-dignity, and professionalism of business leaders who can effectively communicate with customers and build more loyal relationships. Society may experience social change through more effective and valuable information shared via social media. Other potential contributions to general positive social change include implementing SMM strategies to improve customer trust. Relationships built on trust are more desirable for customers. Improved customer relationships may enhance the self-worth and self-dignity of customers through commitment and trust. The findings of this study could also lead to better informed consumers, who could provide knowledgeable feedback to business leaders on social media. Customer input could improve products and services, benefiting customers, families, and communities.

Improved customer relationships may result in the growth of businesses. Business leaders may benefit from increased brand and company awareness, increased customers and sales, increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, improved brand reputation, and

increased profitability, thus leading to expansion. Successful and growing companies usually require more employees. Hence, the findings of this study can result in increased job creation, which leads to reduced unemployment levels in communities and countries. Through more employment, community members may benefit from higher disposable incomes, increased homeownership, and lower home foreclosure rates, which may contribute to a better standard of living for the community, a reduction in local poverty, and less dependency on the government for social welfare.

More working citizens and additional successful companies can lead to higher tax revenues for governments. Governments can utilize this extra income on infrastructural repairs, building new or maintaining existing schools, investing in small businesses or start-ups, and improving other public services. These government activities may raise the standard of living for citizens, stimulate the economy, and strengthen community and country development. An increase in successful businesses can also result in increased company donations and contributions to charities and other positive initiatives in the community and society.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore how small business leaders use SMM strategies to improve customer relationships. I recommend that small business leaders remain open to continuously evolve and improve as the social media environment is fast-paced and ever-changing. Customers are quickly adapting to new platforms and features every day, so business leaders should be willing to do the same if they desire to remain competitive and maintain customer relationships. Business

leaders who want to survive the markets and their competitors need to embrace RM through social media strategies, no matter how reluctant they may be to hand power over to the consumers (Rasul, 2018).

Business leaders should do adequate market research to determine their target customers, competitors, and the suitable platforms for their company. Business leaders should put great effort into continuously monitoring these target customers' preferences and revising their strategies accordingly. Business leaders should ensure their post content, design, graphics, captions, timing, and volume are suitable for their target audience to avoid unnecessary negative feedback from customers. Business leaders should use analytical tools and various promotional tools available on social media to engage target customers, obtain their input, encourage positive eWOM, increase brand awareness, and build and maintain customer relationships.

Business leaders should ensure that there is two-way communication with customers. Social media have increased transparency where customers can learn of other customers' experiences, and business leaders learn about customers' feelings towards their company (Gould & Nazarian, 2018). Customers want business leaders to listen to and address their requests, concerns, and queries. Business leaders should provide timely customer feedback to avoid customers seeking that information and obtaining answers from competitors. Business leaders can increase customers' loyalty by sharing more appealing information and responding to positive and negative responses to show that they listen to their customers' wants and needs (Zwick & Bradshaw, 2016). Business leaders should also be open to incorporating customers' ideas into their strategies and

learn from them as customers are more inclined to support what they contributed to creating.

Small business leaders could consider hiring social media professionals to assist with their SMM strategies, whether full-time or part-time. Leaders can also outsource their SMM to professional social media companies to benefit from their experience and knowledge. Small business leaders can also hire SMM consultants to train staff or send existing marketing staff to do relevant SMM courses to develop their skillset adequately. Regardless of the route business leaders choose, they should ensure their SMM team is well-equipped to produce effective, high-quality, target customer-oriented content to get the best results.

Business leaders should consider overall assessments of their SMM strategies to ensure they are effective and generate a return. Although significant investments in SMM are necessary to improve customer relationships, they are only worthwhile if they produce a return on investment (ROI). Social media return on investment (SROI) involves assessing if time, energy, or money investments in social media activities increased value (Gould & Nazarian, 2018). Business leaders can conduct these assessments manually via spreadsheets, reports, or analytical tools on social media platforms. Leaders can also use paid professional services via marketing software such as Hootsuite, Salesforce, and Hubspot, to help measure their SROI. These analyses will help business leaders decide on the campaigns or strategies they should keep, those that may need adjustments, and those they should discontinue.

Current and future small business retailers could use the emergent themes from this study to better understand how SMM strategies can improve their relationships with customers. Small business leaders and marketers across different industries and marketing research students may benefit from the results and recommendations of this study. I intend to deliver a final copy of my approved study to each study participant. I also plan to contribute to existing scholarly literature by publishing this study's findings in peer-reviewed academic and business journals. I hope to present these findings at SMM training sessions, conferences, and seminars locally and internationally.

Recommendations for Further Research

A limitation to qualitative research is that it involves nonnumerical information that can be subjective and might affect the findings' reliability or validity (Farghaly, 2018; Leung, 2015). Participants' personal biases toward the research topic may influence their interview responses. Thus, future researchers can conduct a quantitative study to examine the significance of the relationship of variables, such as social media platform mix, customer complaints, customer traffic, SMM spend, and sales. Researchers may identify more objective trends and patterns from numbers and statistics and mitigate personal bias using the quantitative research method (Amos, 2016; Savela, 2018). Future researchers can consider using a mixed method research approach to mitigate the weaknesses of a single research method and enhance the credibility and relevance of their findings.

Another limitation of this study is the small sample of five small business leaders. A small research sample may affect the generalizability of research findings (Wang,

2018). Future researchers could also conduct multiple case studies using a larger selection of participants from different business sizes, such as medium and large businesses, to compare and contrast how they use SMM strategies to improve customer relationships. The research was also limited to the retail industry in Central Trinidad. Therefore, researchers can conduct further studies on this study's research topic in different industries, such as service industries, or different geographical areas, such as other areas in Trinidad or other countries. Research in these additional areas may help build on this study's findings and improve the generalizability of the results. Additionally, individuals can conduct further research on SROI to provide more detailed information on assessing and managing the value of SMM output to ensure cost-effectiveness and efficient decision-making.

Reflections

My doctoral journey has been a challenging but rewarding experience. I gained a wealth of knowledge from extensive research and courses in this program. I greatly appreciate the recommendations and advice from my committee members, residency mentors, and the library and writing faculty, all of whom have helped me develop and reach this stage. I am also thankful for the supportive colleagues I met along the way and the wonderful friendships that blossomed from these interactions. My self-discipline and self-motivation have significantly enhanced throughout this journey to meet deadlines, conduct rigorous research, find appropriate data to address specific changes, and complete all my doctoral study components satisfactorily.

I enjoyed conducting interviews and learning from participants' experiences. Remaining objective throughout the research was not very difficult as I genuinely intended from the early stages of research to remain open-minded to learn as much new information as possible. This approach was beneficial as I obtained insight from analyzing and interpreting data into several practical SMM strategies that I can implement in my profession. I relied on the participant's responses and data from their social media reports and pages to guide the study's findings. I am truly grateful that I embarked on this doctoral journey at Walden University, as it has allowed me to develop personally, academically, and professionally.

Conclusion

Small business leaders can use this study's findings to prepare for the growing impact of social media and RM and expand their knowledge on implementing SMM strategies to improve customer relationships. After data collection, methodological triangulation, and data analysis, the three emergent themes were social media engagement strategy, target audience strategy, and SCRM strategy. According to this research, successful implementation of these SMM strategies can result in improved customer service and satisfaction, positive WOM, increased customer trust, commitment, and loyalty, and enhanced customer relationships. Business leaders can benefit from cost-effective advertising without geographical limitation, vital customer insights, boosted company and brand awareness, increased profitability, and long-term business sustainability. Implementation of this study's findings by small business leaders can result in positive social change through increased employment opportunities and higher

standards of living. Thus, social media and SMM strategies are powerful RM tools that

small business leaders can use to improve customer relationships and obtain remarkable

results.

References

Abdalla, M. M., Oliveira, L. G. L., Azevedo, C. E. F., & Gonzalez, R. K. (2018). Quality in qualitative organizational research: Types of triangulation as a methodological alternative. *Administração: Ensino e Pesquisa, 19*(1), 66-98. https://doi.org/10.13058/raep.2018.v19n1.578

Abidin, C. (2016). Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online?: Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity. *Social Media+ Society, 2*(2), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641342

Agnihotri, R., Dingus, R., Hu, M. Y., & Krush, M. T. (2016). Social media: Influencing customer satisfaction in B2B sales. *Industrial Marketing Management, 53*, 172-180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.09.003

Ahmmed, K., Islam, S., Noor, N. A. M., Rahman, K. M., & Ahmed, F. (2019). Toward a theoretical framework of relationship marketing in the business context. *Market-Trziste, 31*(2), 209-226. https://doi.org/10.22598/mt/2019.31.2.209

Akhmedov, R. (2017). Strategies of SMM management, comparison of Instagram and Facebook social networks. *Nile Journal of Business and Economics, 3*(51), 51-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.20321/nilejbe.v3i5.90

Akkaya, D. T., Akyol, A., & Simsek, G. G. (2017). The effect of consumer perceptions on their attitude, behavior and purchase intention in social media advertising. *Marmara University Journal of Economic & Administrative Sciences, 39*(2), 361-388. https://doi.org/10.14780/muiibd.384073

Akpinar, E., & Berger, J. (2017). Valuable virality. *Journal of Marketing Research,*

54(2), 318-330. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.13.0350

Alalwan, A. A. (2018). Investigating the impact of social media advertising features on customer purchase intention. *International Journal of Information Management, 42,* 65-77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.06.001

Alalwan, A. A., Dwivedi, Y., Rana, N. P., & Williams, M. D. (2016). Consumer adoption of mobile banking in Jordan: Examining the role of usefulness, ease of use, perceived risk and self-efficacy. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 29*(1), 118-139. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-04-2015-0035

Aldiabat, K. M., & Le Navenec, C. L. (2018). Data saturation: The mysterious step in grounded theory methodology. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(1), 245-261.

Alexander, G. L., Dixit-Joshi, S., Kushi, L. H., Coleman, L. A., Sundaram, M. E., Clancy, H. A., Groesbeck, M., Potischman, N. A., Kirkpatrick, S. I., Zimmerman, T. P., George, S. M., Subar, A. F., & Thompson, F. E. (2017). Comparison of recruitment and retention among demographic subgroups in a large diverse population study of diet. *Contemporary Clinical Trials Communications, 6*, 140-146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conctc.2017.04.002

Alharbi, M. A. (2020, March 12-14). *The changing dynamics of relationship marketing in the era of digitalization* [Paper presentation]. 2020 7th International Conference on Computing for Sustainable Global Development (INDIACom), New Delhi, India. http://doi.org/10.23919/INDIACom49435.2020.9083715

Allard, T., Dunn, L. H., & White, K. (2020). Negative reviews, positive impact: Consumer empathetic responding to unfair word of mouth. *Journal of Marketing,*

84(4), 86-108. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242920924389

Alsaad, A., Mohamad, R., & Ismail, N. A. (2017). The moderating role of trust in business to business electronic commerce (B2B EC) adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior, 68*, 157-169. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.040

Alter, G., & Gonzalez, R. (2018). Responsible practices for data sharing. *American Psychologist, 73*(2), 146-156. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000258

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2017). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research.* SAGE.

Amarnani, R. K., Restubog, S. L. D., Shao, R., Cheng, D. C., & Bordia, P. (2022). A self-verification perspective on customer mistreatment and customer-directed organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 1-20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/job.2610

Amin, M. E. K., Nørgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., & Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 16*(10), 1472-1482. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.02.005

Amos, H. W. (2016). Chinatown by numbers: Defining an ethnic space by empirical linguistic landscape. *Linguistic Landscape, 2*(2), 127-156. https://doi.org/10.1075/ll.2.2.02amo

Andersson, S., & Evers, N. (2015). International opportunity recognition in international new ventures: A dynamic managerial capabilities perspective. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship, 13*(3), 260-276. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-

015-0149-5

Andrewartha, J., Allen, P., Hemmings, L., Dodds, B., & Shires, L. (2020). Escape to the country: Lessons from interviews with rural general practice interns. *Australian Journal of General Practice, 49*(9), 606-611. https://doi.org/10.31128/AJGP-03-20-5274

Anthony, B., Jr. (2018). Using green IT governance as a catalyst to improve sustainable practices adoption: A contingency theory perspective. *International Journal of Business Continuity and Risk Management, 8*(2), 124-157. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBCRM.2018.10013910

Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 48*(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1

Arenas-Márquez, F. J., Martínez-Torres, M. R., & Toral, S. L. (2021). How can trustworthy influencers be identified in electronic word-of-mouth communities? *Technological Forecasting & Social Change, 166,* 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120596

Arhammar, J., & Staunstrup, P. (2016). *Content marketing för alla* (1st ed.). AP- förlaget.

Arica, R., Cobanoglu, C., Cakir, O., Corbaci, A., Hsu, M. J., & Della Corte, V. (2022). Travel experience sharing on social media: Effects of the importance attached to content sharing and what factors inhibit and facilitate it. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *1*(1), 1-21. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2021-0046

Aziz, S., Ghani, U., & Niazi, M. A. K. (2020). Effect of functional and psychological attributes of retail store on retail equity: The mediating role of customer involvement and commitment with the retail store. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences, 14*(1), 120-135.

Baillie, L. (2015). Promoting and evaluating scientific rigour in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard, 29*(46), 36-42. https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.29.46.36.e8830

Baker, A. M., Donthu, N., & Kumar, V. (2016). Investigating how word-of-mouth conversations about brands influence purchase and retransmission intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research, 53*(2), 225-239. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.14.0099

Balaji, M. S., & Roy, S. K. (2017). Value co-creation with internet of things technology in the retail industry. *Journal of Marketing Management, 33*(1-2), 7-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2016.1217914

Banovic, J. (n.d.). *How Nike use social media* [Case study]. http://jovanabanovic.com/2011/12/16/nike-use-social-media-case-study/

Basaran, U., & Buyukyilmaz, O. (2015). The effects of utilitarian and hedonic values on young consumers' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics, 8*(16), 1-18. http://doi.org/10.17015/ejbe.2015.016.01

Bauer, I. (2013). *Digital marketing*. Institute for Textbooks Belgrade.

Berger, J. (2014). Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 24*(4), 586-607. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.05.002

Bernard, M. (2016). The impact of social media on the B2B CMO. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 31*(8), 955-960. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-10-2016-268

Berry, L. L. (1983). *Emerging perspectives on services marketing*. American Marketing Association.

Berry, L. L. (1995). Relationship marketing of services: Growing interest, emerging perspectives. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23*(4), 236-245. https://doi.org/10.1177/009207039502300402

Berry, L. L. (2002). Relationship marketing of services- Perspectives from 1983 and 2000. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 1*(1), 59-77. http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J366v01n01_05

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation*? Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802-1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Blaikie, N., & Priest, J. (2017). *Social research: Paradigms in action*. Polity Press.

Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life.* Wiley.

Bloomfield, J., & Fisher, M. J. (2019). Quantitative research design. *Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses' Association (JARNA), 22*(2), 27-30. https://doi.org/10.33235/jarna.22.2.27-30

Boonsiritomachai, W., & Sud-On, P. (2020). Increasing purchase intention and word-of-mouth through hotel brand awareness. *Tourism & Hospitality Management, 26*(2), 265-289. https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.26.2.1

Braojos-Gomez, J., Benitez-Amado, J., & Llorens-Montes, F. J. (2015). How do small

firms learn to develop a social media competence? *International Journal of Information Management, 35*(4), 443-458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.04.003.

Brear, M. (2019). Process and outcomes of a recursive, dialogic member checking approach: A project ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research, 29*(7), 944-957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318812448

BrightLocal. (2019, February 22). Local consumer review survey [Blog post]. www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Brown, A., & Danaher, P. A. (2019). CHE principles: Facilitating authentic and dialogical semi-structured interviews in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 42*(1), 76-90. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2017.1379987

Bugshan, H. (2015). Co-innovation: The role of online communities. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 23*(2), 175-186. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2014.920905

Bush, A. A., Amechi, M., & Persky, A. (2020). An exploration of pharmacy education researchers' perceptions and experiences conducting qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84*(3), 334-344. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7129

Buttle, F., & Groeger, L. (2017). Who says what to whom in what channel? A rules theoretic perspective on word-of-mouth marketing. *Journal of Marketing*

Management, 33(13-14), 1035-1059.

https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2017.1325390

Camilleri, M. A. (2018). Integrated marketing communications. In *Travel Marketing,*

Tourism Economics and the Airline Product, 5, 85-103. Springer Nature.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49849-2_5

Cao, J., Li, J., Wang, Y., & Ai, M. (2022). The impact of self-efficacy and perceived

value on customer engagement under live streaming commerce environment.

Security & Communication Networks, 1-13.

https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/2904447

Capgemini. (2017, December 5). *Loyalty deciphered – How emotions drive genuine*

engagement. Capgemini. https://www.capgemini.com/resources/loyalty-

deciphered/

Capoccia, C. (2018, April 11). *Online reviews are the best thing that ever happened to*

small businesses. Forbes.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/04/11/online-reviews-are-

the-best-thing-that-ever-happened-to-small-businesses/?sh=4e911e41740a

Cardno, C. (2018). Policy document analysis: A practical educational leadership tool and

a qualitative research method. *Educational Administration: Theory & Practice*,

24(4), 623-640. https://doi.org/10.14527/kuey.2018.016

Caretta, M. A., & Pérez, M. A. (2019). When participants do not agree: Member

checking and challenges to epistemic authority in participatory research. *Field*

Methods, 31(4), 359-374. https://doi.org/10. 1177/1525822X19866578

Carr, E. M., Zhang, G. D., Ming, J. Y., & Siddiqui, Z. S. (2019). Qualitative research: An overview of emerging approaches for data collection. *Australasian Psychiatry*, *27*(3), 307-309. https://doi.org/10.1177/1039856219828164

Celik, H., Baykal, N. B., & Memur, H. N. K. (2020). Qualitative data analysis and fundamental principles. *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırmalar Dergisi, 8*(1), 379-406. https://doi.org/10.14689/issn.2148-2624.1.8c.1s.16m

Chahal, H., & Dutta, K. (2015). Measurement and impact of customer experience in banking sector. *Decision, 42*(1), 57-70. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40622-014-0069-6

Chan, I. C. C., Fong, D. K. C., Law, R., & Fong, L. H. N. (2018). State-of-the-art social customer relationship management. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 23*(5), 423-436. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2018.1466813

Chang, H. H., Lu, Y. Y., & Lin, S. C. (2020). An elaboration likelihood model of consumer respond action to Facebook second-hand marketplace: Impulsiveness as a moderator. *Information & Management, 57*(2), 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2019.103171

Chang, Y., Wang, X., & Arnett, D. B. (2018). Enhancing firm performance: The role of brand orientation in business-to-business marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management, 72*, 17-25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2018.01.031

Charo, N., Sharma, P., Shaikh, S., Haseeb, A., & Sufya, M. Z. (2015). Determining the impact of e-WOM on brand image and purchase intention through adoption of online opinions. *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences,*

3(1), 41-46.

Chawdhary, R., & Dall'Olmo, R. F. (2015). Investigating the consequences of word-of-mouth from a WOM sender's perspective in the services context. *Journal of Marketing Management, 31*(9–10), 1018-1039. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1033443

Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 16*(1), 255-202.

Cheung, M. L., Pires, G. D., Rosenberger, P. J., & Oliveira, M. J. D. (2020). Driving consumer–brand engagement and co-creation by brand interactivity. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 38*(4), 523-541. https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-12-2018-0587

Chowdhury, M. F. (2015). Coding, sorting and sifting of qualitative data analysis: Debates and discussion. *Quality & Quantity, 49*(3), 1135-1143. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-014-0039-2

Chung, N., & Koo, C. (2015). The use of social media in travel information search. *Telematics and Informatics, 32*(2), 215-229. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2014.08.005

Chung, T. S., Wedel, M., & Rust, R. T. (2016). Adaptive personalization using social networks. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 44*(1), 66-87. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0441-x

Clement, J. (2020a, August 10). *Number of daily active Facebook users worldwide as of*

4th quarter 2019. https://www.statista.com/statistics/346167/facebook-global-dau/

Clement, J. (2020b, August 10). *Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 4th quarter 2019.* https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/

Cluley, R., Green, W., & Owen, R. (2020). The changing role of the marketing researcher in the age of digital technology: Practitioner perspectives on the digitization of marketing research. *International Journal of Market Research, 62*(1), 27-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785319865129

Cole, H. S., DeNardin, T., & Clow, K. E. (2017). Small service businesses: Advertising attitudes and the use of digital and social media marketing. *Services Marketing Quarterly, 38*(4), 203-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332969.2017.1394026

Colorafi, K. J., & Evans, B. (2016). Qualitative descriptive methods in health science research. *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal, 9*(4), 16-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1937586715614171

Consiglio, I., De Angelis, M., & Costabile, M. (2018). The effect of social density on word of mouth. *Journal of Consumer Research, 45*(3), 511-528. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy009

Contagious Agency. (2020). *Why word-of-mouth marketing?* http://www.contagiousagency.com.au/

Cortez, R. M., & Johnston, W. J. (2020). The coronavirus crisis in B2B settings: Crisis uniqueness and managerial implications based on social exchange theory.

Industrial Marketing Management, 88, 125-135.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.05.004

Cova, B., Pace, S., & Skålén, P. (2015). Brand volunteering: Value co-creation with

unpaid consumers. *Marketing Theory, 15*(4), 465-485.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593115568919

Crandall, P. G., O'Bryan, C. A., Grinstead, D. A., Das, K., Rose, C., & Shabatura, J. J.

(2016). Role of ethnographic research for assessing behavior of employees during

cleaning and sanitation in food preparation areas. *Food Control, 59*, 849-853.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2015.07.008

Cridland, E. K., Jones, S. C., Caputi, P., & Magee, C. A. (2015). Qualitative research

with families living with autism spectrum disorder: Recommendations for

conducting semistructured interviews. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental

Disability, 40*(1), 78-91. https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2014.964191

Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2016). Capturing consumer

engagement: Duality, dimensionality and measurement. *Journal of Marketing

Management, 32*(5-6), 399-426. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1130738

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram

influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand

attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5), 798-828.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Dhiman, A. K., & Joshi, S. (2020). Use of social networking sites/web 2.0 tools: A study

of central universities of Delhi. *Library of Progress-Library Science, Information

Technology & Computer, 40(1), 65-72. https://doi.org/10.5958/2320-
317X.2020.00008.2

Dikko, M. (2016). Establishing construct validity and reliability: Pilot testing of a
qualitative interview for research in takaful (Islamic insurance). *The Qualitative
Report, 21*(3), 521-528.

Dong, B., Sivakumar, K., Evans, K. R., & Zou, S. (2015). Effect of customer
participation on service outcomes: The moderating role of participation readiness.
Journal of Service, 18(2), 160-176. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670514551727

Dootson, P., Beatson, A., & Drennan, J. (2016). Financial institutions using social media
– Do consumers perceive value? *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 34*(1),
9-36. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-06-2014-0079

Dutta, S., & Omolayole, O. (2016). Are there differences between men and women in
information technology adoption behaviors: A theoretical study. *Journal of
Business Diversity, 16*(1), 106-114.

Echols, J. M., & Shadily, H. (2014). *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia*. PT Gramedia Pustaka
Utama.

Eisingerich, A. B., Auh, S., & Merlo, O. (2014). Acta non verba? The role of customer
participation and word of mouth in the relationship between service firms'
customer satisfaction and sales performance. *Journal of Service Research, 17*(1),
40-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670513490836

Ellis, P. (2019). The language of research (part 20): Understanding the quality of a
qualitative paper (2). *Wounds UK, 15*(1), 110-111.

eMarketer. (2018). *Social network users and penetration in worldwide*.

https://tinyurl.com/ycr2d3v9

Englander, M. (2016). The phenomenological method in qualitative psychology and

psychiatry. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-

being, 11*(1), 30682-30693. https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v11.30682

Fan, Y., & Niu, R. H. (2016). To tweet or not to tweet? Exploring the effectiveness of

service recovery strategies using social media. *International Journal of

Operations & Production Management, 36*(9), 1014-1036.

https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-10-2013-0461

Farghaly, A. (2018). Comparing and contrasting quantitative and qualitative research

approaches in education: The peculiar situation of medical education. *Education

in Medicine Journal, 10*(1), 3-11. http://doi.org/10.21315/eimj2018.10.1.2

Farquhar, J., Michels, N., & Robson, J. (2020). Triangulation in industrial qualitative

case study research: Widening the scope. *Industrial Marketing Management,

87,*160-170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.02.001

Fernandes, T., & Remelhe, P. (2016). How to engage customers in cocreation:

Customers' motivations for collaborative innovation. *Journal of Strategic

Marketing, 24*(3-4), 311-326. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2015.1095220

Fleet, D., Burton, A., Reeves, A., & DasGupta, M. P. (2016). A case for taking the dual

role of counsellor-researcher in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in

Psychology, 13*(4), 328-346. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2016.1205694

Flurey, C. A. (2015). Me, myself, and my participant: Rigour and reflexivity in

qualitative research. *Rheumatology, 54*(1), i9-i9.

https://doi.org/10.1093/rheumatology/kev051.002

Frias, K. M., & Popovich, D. (2020). An experiential approach to teaching mixed

methods research. *Journal of Education for Business, 95*(3), 193-205.

https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2019.1627995

Frow, P., Nenonen, S., Payne, A., & Storbacka, K. (2015). Managing co-creation design:

A strategic approach to innovation. *British Journal of Management, 26*(3), 463-

483. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12087

Fusch, P., Fusch, G. E., & Ness, L. R. (2018). Denzin's paradigm shift: Revisiting

triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Social Change, 10*(1), 19-32.

https://doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2018.10.1.02

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative

research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1408-1416.

Geisel, T. (2015, February 12). *My Starbucks idea: The Starbucks crowdsourcing success

story*. SMBP Waterloo. http://smbp.uwaterloo.ca/2015/02/my-starbucks-idea-the-

starbucks-crowdsourcing-success-story/

Gill, M., Sridhar, S., & Grewal, R. (2017). Return on engagement initiatives: A study of a

business-to-business mobile app. *Journal of Marketing, 81*(4), 45-66.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.16.0149

Gould, D. J., & Nazarian, S. (2018). Social media return on investment: How much is it

worth to my practice?. *Aesthetic surgery journal, 38*(5), 565-574.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/asj/sjx152

Groeger, L., & Buttle, F. (2016). Deciphering word-of-mouth marketing campaign reach: Everyday conversation versus institutionalized word of mouth. *Journal of Advertising Research, 56*(4), 368-384. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2016-043

Gronlund, S. D., Wixted, J. T., & Mickes, L. (2014). Evaluating eyewitness identification procedures using receiver operating characteristic analysis. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*(1), 3-10. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413498891 https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214134988

Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision, 32*(2), 4-20. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251749410054774

Guenzi, P., & Storbacka, K. (2015). The organizational implications of implementing key account management: A case-based examination. *Industrial Marketing Management, 45*, 84-97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.02.020

Guha, S., Harrigan, P., & Soutar, G. (2018). Linking social media to customer relationship management (CRM): A qualitative study on SMEs. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship, 30*(3), 193-214. https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2017.1399628

Gummerus, J., von Koskull, C., & Kowalkowski, C. (2017). Guest editorial: Relationship marketing – past, present and future. *Journal of Services Marketing, 31*(1), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-12-2016-0424

Haenlein, M. (2017). How to date your clients in the 21st century: Challenges in managing customer relationships in today's world. *Business Horizons, 60*(5), 577-

586. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2017.06.002

Hajli, N., Shanmugam, M., Papagiannidis, S., Zahay, D., & Richard, M. -O. (2017). Branding co-creation with members of online brand communities. *Journal of Business Research, 70*, 136-144. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.08.026.

Hajli, N., & Sims, J. (2015). Social commerce: The transfer of power from sellers to buyers. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 94*, 350-358. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2015.01.012

Hajli, N., Sims, J., Zadeh, A. H., & Richard, M. O. (2017). A social commerce investigation of the role of trust in a social networking site on purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research, 71*, 133-141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.10.004

Ham, C.-D., Lee, J., Hayes, J. L., & Bae, Y. H. (2019). Exploring sharing behaviors across social media platforms. *International Journal of Market Research, 61*(2), 157-177. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785318782790

Hamilton, M., Kaltcheva, V. D., & Rohm, A. J. (2016). Social media and value creation: The role of interaction satisfaction and interaction immersion. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 36*, 121-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.07.001

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction, 31*(3), 498-501, https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Hancock, M. E., Amankwaa, L., Revell, M. A., & Mueller, D. (2016). Focus group data

    saturation: A new approach to data analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(11),

    2124-2130.

Hanson, S., Jiang, L., & Dahl, D. (2019). Enhancing consumer engagement in an online

    brand community via user reputation signals: A multi-method analysis. *Journal of*

    the Academy of Marketing Science, 47 (2), 349-367.

    http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11747-018-0617-2

Hardwick, J., & Anderson, A. R. (2019). Supplier-customer engagement for collaborative

innovation using video conferencing: A study of SMEs. *Industrial Marketing*

Management, 80, 43-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.02.013

Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M., & Daly, T. (2017). Customer engagement with

    tourism social media brands. *Tourism Management, 59*, 597-609.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.09.015

Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member-checking: A dialogic approach to the research

    interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 38*(1), 23-

    38. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487

Haven, L. T., & Van Grootel, L. (2019). Preregistering qualitative research.

    Accountability in Research, 26(3), 229-244.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2019.1580147

Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2018). What is a case study? *Evidence-Based Nursing, 21*(1),

    7-8. http://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2017-102845

Himelboim, I., & Golan, G. J. (2019). A social networks approach to viral advertising:

The role of primary, contextual, and low influencers. *Social Media + Society, 5*(3), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119847516

Ho, R. C., & Rezaei, S. (2018). Social media communication and consumers decisions: Analysis of the antecedents for intended apps purchase. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 17*(3), 204-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2018.1492322

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 63,* 597-606. https://doi.org/10.1086/222355

Hong, J., & Cross Francis, D. (2020). Unpacking complex phenomena through qualitative inquiry: The case of teacher identity research. *Educational Psychologist*, *55*(4), 208-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2020.1783265

Hoyland, S., Hollund, J. G., & Olsen, O. E. (2015). Gaining access to a research site and participants in medical and nursing research: A synthesis of accounts. *Medical Education, 49*(2), 224-232. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12622

Hsieh, S. H., & Chang, A. (2016). The psychological mechanism of brand co-creation engagement. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 33*, 13-26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2015.10.001

Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M. S., & Madden, T. J. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33*(1), 27-41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2015.06.004

Husain, S., Ghufran, A., & Chaubey, D. S. (2016). Relevance of social media in marketing and advertising. *Splint International Journal of Professionals, 3*(7), 21-

28.

Ibrahim, N. F., Wang, X., & Bourne, H. (2017). Exploring the effect of user engagement in online brand communities: Evidence from Twitter. *Computers in Human Behavior, 72,* 321-338. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.03.005

Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., & Rialp, J. (2019). How does sensory brand experience influence brand equity? Considering the roles of customer satisfaction, customer affective commitment, and employee empathy. *Journal of Business Research*, *96*, 343-354. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.05.043

Ilhan, B. E., Kübler, R. V., & Pauwels, K. H. (2018). Battle of the brand fans: Impact of brand attack and defense on social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 43,* 33-51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.01.003

Ingham-Broomfield, R. (2015). A nurses' guide to qualitative research. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 32*(3), 34-40.

Islam, J. U., & Rahman, Z. (2016). The transpiring journey of customer engagement research in marketing: A systematic review of the past decade. *Management Decision, 54*(8), 2008-2034. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/MD-01-2016-0028

Ivankova, N., & Wingo, N. (2018). Applying mixed methods in action research: Methodological potentials and advantages. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(7), 978-997. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218772673

Izogo, E. E. (2017). Customer loyalty in telecom service sector: The role of service quality and customer commitment. *The TQM Journal 29*(1), 19-36. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-10-2014-0089

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2020). A review of the quality indicators of

 rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education,*

 84(1), 138-146. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Johnstone, L., & Lindh, C. (2018). The sustainability-age dilemma: A theory of

 (un)planned behaviour via influencers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 17*(1),

 127-139. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/cb.1693

Jones, M. A., Reynolds, K. E., Arnold, M. J., Gabler, C. B., Gillison, S. T., & Landers, V.

 M. (2015). Exploring consumers' attitude towards relationship marketing. *Journal*

 of Services Marketing, 29(3), 188-199. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2014-

 0134

Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z. (2017). Measuring customer social participation in online

 travel communities: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Hospitality and*

 Tourism Technology, 8(3), 432-464. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-08-2016-0041

Kamboj, S., Sarmah, B., Gupta, S., & Dwivedi, Y. (2018). Examining branding co-

 creation in brand communities on social media: Applying the paradigm of

 stimulus-organism-response. *International Journal of Information Management,*

 39(1), 169-185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.12.001

Kang, M. J.-Y., & Kim, J. (2017). Online customer relationship marketing tactics through

 social media and perceived customer retention orientation of the green retailer.

 Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 21(3),

 298-316. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-08-2016-0071

Kantorová, K., & Bachmann, P. (2018). Social customer relationship management and

organizational characteristics. *Information, 9*(12), 306-314.

https://doi.org/10.3390/info9120306

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and

opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 53*(1), 59-68.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Karagiozis, N. (2018). The complexities of the researcher's role in qualitative research:

The power of reflexivity. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational

Studies, 13*(1), 19-31. https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-011X/CGP/v13i01/19-31

Khan, I., Rahman, Z., & Fatma, M. (2016). The role of customer brand engagement and

brand experience in online banking. *The International Journal of Bank Marketing,

34*(7), 1025-1041. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-07-2015-0110

Kim, A. J., & Johnson, K. K. (2016). Power of consumers using social media: Examining

the influences of brand-related user-generated content on Facebook. *Computers in

Human Behavior, 58*(1), 98-108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.047

Kim, Y., & Peterson, R. A. (2017). A meta-analysis of online trust relationships in e-

commerce. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 38*, 44-54.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2017.01.001

Kim, Y., & Slotegraaf, R. J. (2015). Brand-embedded interaction: A dynamic and

personalized interaction for co-creation. *Marketing Letters, 27*(1), 183-193.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-015-9361-2

Kline, T. J. B. (2017). Sample issues, methodological implications, and best practices.

Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 49(2), 71-77.

https://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000054

Kocalar, A. O., & Bilgili, M. (2020). Opinions of geography teacher candidates about energy resources: A critical phenomenological approach. *Review of International Geographical Education Online, 1*0(1), 159-170. https://doi.org/10.33403/rigeo.641546

Koponen, J., Julkunen, S., & Asai, A. (2019). Sales communication competence in international B2B solution selling. *Industrial Marketing Management, 82*, 238-252. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.01.009

Kühne, S. (2020). Interpersonal perceptions and interviewer effects in face-to-face surveys. *Sociological Methods & Research.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124120926215

Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Janakiraman, R., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). Social to sale: The effects of firm-generated content in social media on customer behavior. *Journal of Marketing, 80*(1), 7-25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.14.0249

Kumar, V., Choi, J. B., & Greene, M. (2017). Synergistic effects of social media and traditional marketing on brand sales: Capturing the time-varying effects. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *45*(2), 268-288. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0484-7

Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. (2016). Competitive advantage through engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research, 53*(4), 497-514. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmr.15.0044

Kumar, V., & Reinartz, W. (2016). Creating enduring customer value. *Journal of Marketing, 80*(6), 36-68. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0414

Kunz, T., Landesvatter, C., & Gummer, T. (2020). Informed consent for paradata use in

web surveys. *International Journal of Market Research, 62*(4), 396-408.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785320931669

Kupor, D., & Tormala, Z. (2018). When moderation fosters persuasion: The persuasive

power of deviatory reviews. *Journal of Consumer Research, 45*(3), 490-510.

https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy021

Laksamana, P. (2020). I will always follow you: Exploring the role of customer

relationship in social media marketing. *International Review of Management and

Marketing, 10*(3), 22-28. https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.9662

Lee, K., Lee, B., & Oh, W. (2015). Thumbs up, sales up? The contingent effect of

Facebook likes on sales performance in social commerce. *Journal of Management

Information Systems, 32*(4), 109-143.

https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2015.1138372

Lee, Y. -K., Kim, S. Y., Chung, N., Ahn, K., & Lee, J. -W. (2016). When social media

met commerce: A model of perceived customer value in group-buying. *Journal of

Services Marketing, 30*(4), 398-410. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2014-0129

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2019). *Practical research: Planning and design* (12th

ed.). Pearson.

Leffler, J. M., Riebel, J., & Hughes, H. M. (2015). A review of child and adolescent

diagnostic interviews for clinical practitioners. *Assessment 22*(6), 690-703.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191114561253

Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to do qualitative data

analysis: A starting point. *Human Resource Development Review, 19*(1), 94-106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 4*(3), 324-327. https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.161306

Li, E. L. –Y., Liu, B. S. –C., & Luk, S. T. K. (2017). Customer participation behavior in high- versus low-contact services: The multiple roles of customer trust. *Journal of Global Marketing, 30*(5), 322-341. https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2017.1343886

Lin, Y. (2022). Social media for collaborative planning: A typology of support functions and challenges. *Cities, 125,* 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103641

Lips-Wiersma, M., & Mills, A. J. (2014). Understanding the basic assumptions about human nature in workplace spirituality: Beyond the critical versus positive divide. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 23*(2), 148-161. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492613501227

Litt, E., & Hargittai, E. (2016). The imagined audience on social network sites. *Social Media + Society, 2*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116633482

Liu, Y., & Beldona, S. (2021). Extracting revisit intentions from social media big data: A rule-based classification model. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 33*(6), 2176-2193. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2020-0592

Lu, Q. S., & Miller, R. (2019). How social media communications combine with

customer loyalty management to boost green retail sales. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 46*, 87-100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.12.005

Luo, J., Pan, X., Wang, S., & Huang, Y. (2019). Identifying target audience on enterprise social network. *Industrial Management & Data Systems, 119*(1), 111-128. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-01-2018-0007

Mahmoud, M. A., Hinson, R. E., & Adika, M. K. (2018). The effect of trust, commitment, and conflict handling on customer retention: The mediating role of customer satisfaction. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 17*(4), 257-276. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2018.1440146

Mahmoud, M. A., Kastner, A. N. A., & Lartey, J. O. (2017). Internet-based relationship marketing: A sub-Saharan African perspective. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 16*(3), 179-196. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2017.1349555

Malik, F., Asif, M., & Wali, S. (2016). Role of social media on consumer preferences. *City University Research Journal, 6*, 256-268.

Marbach, J., Lages, C. R., & Nunan, D. (2016). Who are you and what do you value? Investigating the role of personality traits and customer-perceived value in online customer engagement. *Journal of Marketing Management, 32*(5–6), 502-525. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1128472

Maria, S., Pusriadi, T., Hakim, Y. P., & Darma, D. C. (2019). The effect of social media marketing, word of mouth, and effectiveness of advertising on brand awareness and intention to buy. *Jurnal Manajemen Indonesia*, *19*(2), 107-122. https://doi.org/10.25124/jmi.v19i2.2234

Marion, T. J., Eddleston, K. A., Friar, J. H., & Deeds, D. (2015). The evolution of interorganizational relationships in emerging ventures: An ethnographic study within the new product development process. *Journal of Business Venturing, 30*(1), 167-184. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.003

Marolt, M., Zimmermann, H. -D., Žnidaršič, A., & Pucihar, A. (2020). Exploring social customer relationship management adoption in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. *Journal of Theoretical & Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 15*(2), 38-58. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-18762020000200104

Marshall, C., Brereton, P., & Kitchenham, B. (2015, April 27-29). *Tools to support systematic reviews in software engineering: A cross-domain survey using semi-structured interviews* [Paper presentation]. International Conference on Evaluation and Assessment in Software Engineering, Nanjing, China. https://doi.org/10.1145/2745802.2745827

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.

Martin, K. D., Borah, A., & Palmatier, R. W. (2017). Data privacy: Effects on customer and firm performance. *Journal of Marketing, 81*(1), 36-58. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0497

Martin, K. D., & Murphy, P. E. (2017). The role of data privacy in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 45*(2), 135-155. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0495-4

Maxwell, J. A. (2020). Why qualitative methods are necessary for generalization. *Qualitative Psychology.* Advance online publication.

https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000173

McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S. (2015). Research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and choice based on the research. *Perfusion, 30*(7), 537-542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267659114559116

McGraw, A. P., Warren, C., & Kan, C. (2015). Humorous complaining. *Journal of Consumer Research, 41*(5), 1153-1171. https://doi.org/10.1086/678904

Meire, M., Hewett, K., Ballings, M., Kumar, V., & Van den Poel, D. (2019). The role of marketer-generated content in customer engagement marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 83*(6), 21-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919873903

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Merrilees, B. (2016). Interactive brand experience pathways to customer-brand engagement and value co-creation. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 25*(5), 402-408. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-04-2016-1151

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2016). *An expanded source book: Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Mkumbo, P. J., Ukpabi, D. C., & Karjaluoto, H. (2020). Adapting and validating scale of customer engagement in online travel communities. *European Journal of Tourism Research, 25*, 1-33.

Mohd-Ramly, S., & Omar, N. A. (2017). Exploring the influence of store attributes on customer experience and customer engagement. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 45*(11), 1138-1158. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-04-

2016-0049

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship

marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 20-38.

https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302

Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative

inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*(9), 1212-1222.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part

1: Introduction. *European Journal of General Practice, 23*(1), 271-273.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375093

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part

3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice,

24*(1), 9-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091

Murphy, M., & Sashi, C. M. (2018). Communication, interactivity, and satisfaction in

B2B relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management, 68*, 1-12.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.08.020

Murphy, R. (2019, December 11). *Local consumer review survey*. Bright Local.

https://www.brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey

Nejad, M. G., Sherrell, D. L., & Babakus, E. (2014). Influentials and influence

mechanisms in new product diffusion: An integrative review. *Journal of

Marketing Theory & Practice, 22*(2), 185-208. https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-

6679220212

Ngai, E. W. T., Tao, S. S. C., & Moon, K. K. L. (2015). Social media research: Theories, constructs, and conceptual frameworks. *International Journal of Information Management, 35*(1), 33-44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.09.004

Nisar, T. M., & Whitehead, C. (2016). Brand interactions and social media: Enhancing user loyalty through social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior, 62*(1), 743-753. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.04.042

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 18*(2), 34-35. https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054

Nora, L. (2019). Trust, commitment, and customer knowledge: Clarifying relational commitments and linking them to repurchasing intentions. *Management Decision, 57*(11), 3134-3158. https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-10-2017-0923

Nwanna-Nzewunwa, O. C., Ajiko, M. M., Motwani, G., Kabagenyi, F., Carvalho, M., Feldhaus, I., Kirya, F., Epodoi, J., Dicker, R., & Juillard, C. (2019). Identifying information gaps in a surgical capacity assessment tool for developing countries: A methodological triangulation approach. *World Journal of Surgery, 43*(5), 1185-1192. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00268-019-04911-5

O'Brien, J., & Hosany, S. (2016, September 6). *Companies wrestle with new era of negative online reviews and spiky consumers.* The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/companies-wrestle-with-new-era-of-negative-online-reviews-and-spiky-consumers-64083

Oh, C., Roumani, Y., Nwankpa, J. K., & Hu, H. -F. (2017). Beyond likes and tweets: Consumer engagement behavior and movie box office in social media.

Information & Management, 54(1), 25-37.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2016.03.004

Onarelly, K. A., Tantuah, N., & Satria, H. W. (2018). The effect of social media e-marketing towards consumers shopping behavior. *Jurnal Vokasi Indonesia*, *6*(2), 1-7. http://dx.doi.org/10.7454/jvi.v6i2

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Frels, R. (2016). *Seven steps to a comprehensive literature review: A multimodal and cultural approac*h. Sage.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Weinbaum, R. (2017). A framework for using qualitative comparative analysis for the review of the literature. *The Qualitative Report, 22*(2), 359-372.

Ouyang, Y., & Lee, T.-L. (2020). A study on local identity of low carbon tourism based on social exchange theory - A case study of Taiwan's characteristic hot spring area. *International Journal of Organizational Innovation, 12*(3), 355-366.

Oyza, I., & Edwin, A. (2015). Effectiveness of social media networks as a strategic tool for organizational marketing management. *The Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce, 1*(2), 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/1204-5357.S2-006

Palazzo, M., Vollero, A., Vitale, P., & Siano, A. (2021). Urban and rural destinations on Instagram: Exploring the influencers' role in# sustainabletourism. *Land use policy, 100*, 1-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2020.104915

Palys, T., Turk, J. L., & Lowman, J. (2019). Statute-based protections for research participant confidentiality: Implications of the US experience for Canada. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society, 33*(3), 381-400.

https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2018.24

Park, S. -J., Lee, Y.-R., & Borle, S. (2018). The shape of word-of-mouth response

function. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change, 127*, 304-309.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.10.006

Park, S., Park, K., Park, J. -Y., & Back, R. M. (2021). Social media analytics in event

marketing: Engaging marathon fans in facebook communities. *Event*

Management, 25(4), 329-345.

https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259856309

Parsons, A. L., & Lepkowska-White, E. (2018). Social media marketing management: A

conceptual framework. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, *17*(2), 81-95.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2018.1433910

Pattnaik, A. (2018). Social exchange theory: Revisiting the scaffolding of psychological

contract. *Vidwat: The Indian Journal of Management, 11,* 9-12.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory*

and practice (4th ed.). Sage.

Pauwels, K., Aksehirli, Z., & Lackman, A. (2016). Like the ad or the brand? Marketing

stimulates different electronic word-of-mouth content to drive online and offline

performance. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33*(3), 639-655.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.01.005

Pogorevich, A. V. (2020). Research of tools influencing the engagement of potential

customers in social media as one of the ways to improve the effectiveness of

SMM in organisations through the example of the Instagram community

@mebel_rummix. *Economic Consultant, 32*(4), 28–40.

http://dx.doi.org/10.46224/ecoc.2020.4.4

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice* (10th ed.). Wolters Kluwer Health.

Poon, P., & Albaum, G. (2019). Consumer trust in internet marketing and direct selling in China. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 18*(3), 216-232.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2019.1589244

Poushneh, A., & Vasquez-Parraga, A. Z. (2019). Emotional bonds with technology: The impact of customer readiness on upgrade intention, brand loyalty, and affective commitment through mediation impact of customer value. *Journal of Theoretical & Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 14*(2), 90-95.

https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-18762019000200108

Pramudya, A. K., Sudiro, A., & Sunaryo, S. (2018). The role of customer trust in mediating influence of brand image and brand awareness of the purchase intention in airline tickets online. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen, 16*(2), 224-233.

https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jam.2018.016.02.05

Prodanova, J., & Van Looy, A. (2019). How beneficial is social media for business process management? A systematic literature review. *IEEE Access*, *7*, 39583-39600. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2019.2903983

PwC. (2016, February). They say they want a revolution: Total retail 2016.

https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/retail-consumer/publications/assets/total-retail-global-report.pdf

Ramaswamy, V., & Ozcan, K. (2016). Brand value co-creation in a digitalized world: An integrative framework and research implications. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33*(1), 93-106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2015.07.001

Rasul, T. (2018). Relationship marketing's importance in modern corporate culture. *The Journal of Developing Areas, 52*(1), 261-268. https://doi.org/10.1353/jda.2018.0016

Rice, S., Winter, S. R., Doherty, S., & Milner, M. (2017). Advantages and disadvantages of using internet-based survey methods in aviation-related research. *Journal of Aviation Technology & Engineering, 7*(1), 58-65. https://doi.org/10.7771/2159-6670.1160

Richardson, P. S., Choong, P., & Parker, M. (2016). Social media marketing strategy: Theory and research propositions. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness, 10*(2), 24-34.

Roberts, R. E. (2020). Qualitative interview questions: Guidance for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 25*(9), 3185-3203.

Robins, C. S., & Eisen, K. (2017). Strategies for the effective use of NVivo in a large-scale study: Qualitative analysis and the repeal of *don't ask, don't tell*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *23*(10), 768-778. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417731089

Rocklage, M. D., & Fazio, R. H. (2020). The enhancing versus backfiring effects of positive emotion in consumer reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research, 57*(2), 332-352. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243719892594

Rosario, A. B., de Valck, K., & Sotgiu, F. (2020). Conceptualizing the electronic word-of-mouth process: What we know and need to know about eWOM creation, exposure, and evaluation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 48*(3), 422-448. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00706-1

Rossetto, K. R. (2014). Qualitative research interviews: Assessing the therapeutic value and challenges. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 31*(4), 482-489. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514522892

Rugova, B., & Prenaj, B. (2016). Social media as marketing tool for SMEs: Opportunities and challenges. *Academic Journal of Business, Administration, Law and Social Sciences, 2*(3). 85-97.

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sallam, M. A. A. (2015). The effect of corporate image on WOM: The role of customer satisfaction and trust proposing a conceptual framework. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, 3*(12), 331-340.

Salmons, J. (2015). *Qualitative online interviews* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2015). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Savela, T. (2018). The advantages and disadvantages of quantitative methods in schoolscape research. *Linguistics and Education, 44*, 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2017.09.004

Scheibe, M., Reichelt, J., Bellmann, M., & Kirch, W. (2015). Acceptance factors of mobile apps for diabetes by patients aged 50 or older: A qualitative study.

Medicine 2.0, 4(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.2196/med20.3912

Scholz, M., Schnurbus, J., Haupt, H., Dorner, V., Landherr, A., & Probst, F. (2018). Dynamic effects of user- and marketer-generated content on consumer purchase behavior: Modeling the hierarchical structure of social media websites. *Decision Support Systems, 113*, 43-55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2018.07.001

Schultz, C. D. (2017). Proposing to your fans: Which brand post characteristics drive consumer engagement activities on social media brand pages? *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 26*(1), 23-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2017.09.005

Sedera, D., Lokuge, S., Atapattu, M., & Gretzel, U. (2017). Likes - The key to my happiness: The moderating effect of social influence on travel experience. *Information & Management, 54*(6), 825-836. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2017.04.003

Sheng, J. (2019). Being active in online communications: Firm responsiveness and customer engagement behaviour. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 46*(1), 40-51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.11.004

Sheth, J. (2017). Revitalizing relationship marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing, 31*(1), 6-10. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-11-2016-0397

Sheth, J. N., Parvatiyar, A., & Sinha, M. (2015). The conceptual foundations of relationship marketing: Review and synthesis. *Journal of Economic Sociology, 16*(2), 119-149.

Shoute, L. (2018). Social media as marketing tool. *International Journal of Advance*

Research, Ideas and Innovations in Technology, *4*(3), 750-753.

Shukla, P., Banerjee, M., & Singh, J. (2016). Customer commitment to luxury brands: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Business Research, 69*(1), 323-331. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.08.004

Sierra, V., Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., & Singh, J. J. (2017). Does ethical image build equity in corporate services brands? The influence of customer perceived ethicality on affect, perceived quality, and equity. *Journal of Business Ethics, 144*(3), 661-676. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2855-2

So, K. K. F., King, C., Sparks, B. A., & Wang, Y. (2016). Enhancing customer relationships with retail service brands: The role of customer engagement. *Journal of Service Management, 27*(2), 170-193. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2015-0176

Sotiriadis, M. D. (2017). Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A literature review and a set of suggested business strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 29*(1), 179-225. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2016-0300

Sozer, E. G. (2019). The effect of message valence on e-WOM spread: A moderated mediation analysis. *Business & Economics Research Journal, 10*(2), 541-555. http://doi.org/10.20409/berj.2019.184

Statista Research Department. (2018, January 27). *Sources used for travel ideas among social media users in the United States as of January 2015*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/381863/sources-for-travel-ideas-among-social-

media-users-us/

Steinhoff, L., Arli, D., Weaven, S., & Kozlenkova, I. V. (2019). Online relationship marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 47*(3), 369-393. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-018-0621-6

Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 10*, 17-21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.10.016

Stojiljković, A. (2019). The impact of social media marketing on customer relationship development. *Journal of Process Management - New Technologies*, *7*(3), 41-48. https://doi.org/10.5937/jouproman7-22586

Strijker, D., Bosworth, G., & Bouter, G. (2020). Research methods in rural studies: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. *Journal of Rural Studies, 78*, 262-270. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.06.007

Su, N., & Mattila, A. S. (2020). Does gender bias exist? The impact of gender congruity on consumer's Airbnb booking intention and the mediating role of trust. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 89,* 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102405

Su, N., Reynolds, D., & Sun, B. (2015). How to make your Facebook posts attractive: A case study of a leading budget hotel brand fan page. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 27*(8), 1772-1790. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2014-0302

Suwandee, S., Surachartkumtonkun, J., & Lertwannawit, A. (2019). EWOM firestorm:

Young consumers and online community. *Young Consumers, 21*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-03-2019-0982

Swani, K., & Milne, G. R. (2017). Evaluating Facebook brand content popularity for service versus goods offerings. *Journal of Business Research, 79*, 123-133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.06.003

Swenson, R., & Olsen, N. (2018). Food for thought: Audience engagement with sustainability messages in branded content. *Environmental Communication, 12*(7), 973-988. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2017.1279202

Taheri, B., Chalmers, D., Wilson, J., & Arshed, N. (2021). Would you really recommend it? Antecedents of word-of-mouth in medical tourism. *Tourism Management, 83,* 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104209

Tajvidi, M., Richard, M. -O., Wang, Y., & Hajli, N. (2018). Brand co-creation through social commerce information sharing: The role of social media. *Journal of Business Research*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.06.008

Tan, G. W. -H., Lee, V. -H., Hew, J. -J., Ooi, K. -B., & Wong, L. -W. (2018). The interactive mobile social media advertising: An imminent approach to advertise tourism products and services? *Telematics and Informatics, 35*(8), 2270-2288. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.09.005

Tariq, U. (2022). Language analysis and the role of Facebook hashtags in Pakistan. *Social Science Computer Review, 1*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393211065866

ter Huurne, M., Ronteltap, A., Corten, R., & Buskens, V. (2017). Antecedents of trust in

the sharing economy: A systematic review. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour,*

16(6), 485-498. https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1667

Thakur, R. (2019). The moderating role of customer engagement experiences in customer

satisfaction–loyalty relationship. *European Journal of Marketing*, *53*(7), 1278-

1310. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2017-0895

Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research

process. *Perioperative Nursing, 7*(3), 155-163.

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2552022

Thöne, A. -K., Görtz-Dorten, A., Altenberger, P., Dose, C., Geldermann, N., Hautmann,

C., Jendreizik, L. T., Treier, A. -K., von Wirth, E., Banaschewski, T., Brandeis,

D., Millenet, S., Hohmann, S., Becker, K., Ketter, J., Hebebrand, J., Wenning, J.,

Holtmann, M., Legenbauer, T., Huss, M., …Dopfner, M. (2020). Toward a

dimensional assessment of externalizing disorders in children: Reliability and

validity of a semi-structured parent interview. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1-16.

https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01840

Tolido, R. (2016, January 11). *TechnoVision 2016 – No work*.

https://www.capgemini.com/2016/01/technovision-2016-no-work/

Tommasetti, A., Troisi, O., & Vesci, M. (2017). Measuring customer value co-creation

behavior: Developing a conceptual model based on service-dominant logic.

Journal of Service Theory and Practice, 27(5), 930-950.

https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-10-2015-0215

Trotter, R. T. (2012). Qualitative research sample design and sample size: Resolving and

    unresolved issues and inferential imperatives. *Preventive Medicine, 55*(5), 398-

    400. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2012.07.003

Turale, S. (2020). A brief introduction to qualitative description: A research design worth

    using. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research, 24*(3), 289-291.

Turcotte, J., York, C., Irving, J., Scholl, R. M., & Pingree, R. J. (2015). News

    recommendations from social media opinion leaders: Effects on media trust and

    information seeking. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20*(5), 520-

    535. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12127

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1979, April 18). *The Belmont Report.*

    Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research.

    https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-

    belmont-report/index.html

Van Der Heide, B., & Lim, Y. –S. (2016). On the conditional cueing of credibility

    heuristics: The case of online influence. *Communication Research, 43*(5), 672-

    693. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214565915

van Tonder, E., & de Beer, L. T. (2018). New perspectives on the role of customer

    satisfaction and commitment in promoting customer citizenship behaviours. *South*

    African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences, 21(1), 1-11.

    https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v21i1.1894

van Tonder, E., & Petzer, D. J. (2018). The interrelationships between relationship

    marketing constructs and customer engagement dimensions. *The Service*

Industries Journal, 38(13-14), 948-973.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2018.1425398

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 44*(1), 5-23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3

Venciute, D. (2018). Social media marketing – From tool to capability. *Management of Organizations: Systematic Research, 79*(1), 131-145.

https://doi.org/10.1515/mosr-2018-0009

Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J. (2015). From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing: Introduction to the special issue on multi-channel retailing. *Journal of Retailing, 91*(2), 174-181.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2015.02.005

Wang, J. (2018). Qualitative research in English language teaching and learning. *Indonesian EFL Journal: Journal of ELT, Linguistics, and Literature, 4*(2), 116-132.

Wang, T., Zhou, J., Zhang, G., Wei, T., & Hu, S. (2020). Customer perceived value- and risk-aware multiserver configuration for profit maximization. *IEEE Transactions on Parallel and Distributed Systems, 31*(5), 1074-1088.

https://doi.org/10.1109/TPDS.2019.2960024

Wang, X., & Yu, X. (2019). The contradictory effects of customer participation breadth and depth on customer-perceived value. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 34*(8), 1736-1748. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-01-2019-0033

Wang, Y., Min, Q., & Han, S. (2016). Understanding the effects of trust and risk on

    individual behavior toward social media platforms: A meta-analysis of the

    empirical evidence. *Computers in Human Behavior, 56*, 34-44.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.011

Wang, Z., & Kim, H. G. (2017). Can social media marketing improve customer

    relationship capabilities and firm performance? Dynamic capability

    perspective. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *39*, 15-26.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2017.02.004

Weil, S. (2017). The advantages of qualitative research into femicide. *Qualitative*

    Sociology Review, 13(3), 118-125.

West, B. T., & Blom, A. G. (2017). Explaining interviewer effects: A research synthesis.

    Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, 5(2), 175-211.

    https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smw024

Whalen, P. S., & Akaka, M. A. (2016). A dynamic market conceptualization for

    entrepreneurial marketing: The co-creation of opportunities. *Journal of Strategic*

    Marketing, 24(1), 61-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2015.1035040

Wijngaarden, V. (2017). Q method and ethnography in tourism research: Enhancing

    insights, comparability and reflexivity. *Current Issues in Tourism, 20*(8), 869-882.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2016.1170771

Wittwer, M., Reinhold, O., Alt, R., Jessen, F., & Stüber, R. (2016, July 6-8). *Social*

    media analytics using business intelligence and social media tools-differences

    and implications [Paper presentation]. International Conference on Business

Information Systems, Leipzig, Germany. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52464-1_23

Woodcock, J., & Johnson, M. R. (2019). Live streamers on twitch.tv as social media influencers: chances and challenges for strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 13*(4), 321-335. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1630412

Wozniak, T., Stangl, B., Schegg, R., & Liebrich, A. (2017). The return on tourism organizations' social media investments: Preliminary evidence from Belgium, France, and Switzerland. *Information Technology & Tourism, 17*(1), 75-100. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-017-0077-4

Xu, J., Fedorowicz, J., & Williams, C. B. (2019). Effects of symbol sets and needs gratifications on audience engagement: Contextualizing police social media communication. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 20*(5), 536-569. https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00543

Yahia, I. B., Al-Neama, N., & Kerbache, L. (2018). Investigating the drivers for social commerce in social media platforms: Importance of trust, social support and the platform perceived usage. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 41*, 11-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.10.021

Yang, P., Kang, X., Wu, Q., Yang, B., & Zhang, P. (2020). Participant selection strategy with privacy protection for internet of things search. *IEEE Access, 8*, 40966-40976. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2020.2976614

Yeong, M. L., Ismail, R., Ismail, N. H., & Hamzah, M. I. (2018). Interview protocol

refinement: Fine-tuning qualitative research interview questions for multi-racial populations in Malaysia. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(11), 2700-2713.

Yin, R. K. (2015). *Case study research. Design and methods*. Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.

You, Y., Vadakkepatt, G. G., & Joshi, A. M. (2015). A meta-analysis of electronic word-of-mouth elasticity. *Journal of Marketing, 79*(2), 19-39.

https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.14.0169

Zadeh, A. H., Zolfagharian, M., & Hofacker, C. F. (2019). Customer–customer value co-creation in social media: Conceptualization and antecedents. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 27*(4), 283-302. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1344289

Zerbino, P., Aloini, D., Dulmin, R., & Mininno, V. (2018). Big data-enabled customer relationship management: A holistic approach. *Information Processing & Management, 54*(5), 818-846. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2017.10.005

Zhang, H., Lan, H., & Chen, X. (2020). Value cocreation behavior of customers and companies on the Weibo social media platform. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, *48*(3), 1-11. http://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.8903

Zhang, S., Yao, Y., Xu, F., Tong, H., Yan, X., & Lu, J. (2019). *Hashtag recommendation for photo sharing services.* [Paper presentation]. AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Hawaii, USA.

https://doi.org/10.1609/aaai.v33i01.33015805

Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2016). Qualitative analysis of content. *Applications of Social Research Methods, 32*(1), 1-12.

Zhu, Y. -Q., & Chen, H. -G. (2015). Social media and human need satisfaction: Implications for social media marketing. *Business Horizons, 58*(3), 335-345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2015.01.006

Zolkiewski, J., Story, V., Burton, J., Chan, P., Gomes, A., Hunter-Jones, P., O'Malley, L., Peters, L. D., Raddats, C., & Robinson, W. (2017). Strategic B2B customer experience management: The importance of outcomes-based measures. *Journal of Services Marketing, 31*(2), 172-184. http://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-10-2016-0350

Zwick, D., & Bradshaw, A. (2016). Biopolitical marketing and social media brand communities. *Theory, Culture & Society, 33*(5), 91-115. http://doi.org/10.1177/0263276415625333

Appendix: Interview Protocol

Main Research Question: What social media marketing strategies do some small business leaders use to improve customer relationships? In this qualitative multiple-case study, the interview will contain eight open-ended questions to gain insights from experienced small business owners in Central Trinidad.

Selecting Participants: I will contact participants by telephone or email.

Setting Day and Time for Interview: I will conduct interviews online (i.e., Skype or Zoom) because of COVID-19 restrictions at an agreed-upon day and time between me and participants.

Explanation of Research Study: I will explain the purpose of the study, get consent from the participants, and provide a consent form to each participant.

Recording the Interview: I will record each interview. I will email a thank-you card to each participant one day after the interview.

Transcription of Interview: I will transcribe the recorded interview of each participant.

Member Checking: The participants will receive a copy of the interpretation of their interview responses. I will contact each participant by email, telephone, Skype, or Zoom to confirm these interpretations.