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Managing Negative Comments Posted on Social Media

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Managing Negative Comments Posted on Social Media

by

Darci Dawn Wagner

MBA, Capital University, 2003

BA, Capital University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2015

Abstract

Consumers use social media to share their service experiences, positive and negative. Some organizations lack strategies to respond to the negative comments, which can inhibit service recovery and harm the success of the organization. The purpose of this case study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to manage negative comments posted on social media sites. The study's conceptual framework was social exchange theory. Participants in Central Ohio were recruited through e-mail. Data were gathered by observing 2 social media marketers manage social media and by interviewing social media managers. Secondary data from the organization displayed the engagement level of consumers. The data were coded for emergent themes, which revealed community management, engagement, and reputation management. Data analysis of the themes suggested that organizations should search daily for reviews and respond immediately and organizations should create a positive social media environment by encouraging conversations and engaging followers in conversations. Further, organizations should use experience comments as an opportunity to create value and not delete comments unless derogatory to the audience. Lastly, the analysis demonstrated that organizations should build and maintain relationships with customers and other audiences through social media. Marketers reading this study can learn and implement strategies for responding to negative comments posted on social media. This study may promote social change by enhancing service recovery for organizations, improving experiences for consumers, and informing marketers of the prominent role of social media in communications and marketing plans.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my boys', Drew and Liam.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizations use social media to promote their brand and consumers use social media to learn about brands and convey their opinions. Consumers communicate their negative experiences about products and services on social media. Organizations must learn how to respond to negative comments on social media so their brand is not negatively impacted.

Background of the Problem

Human being's ability to communicate with one another has evolved over the years (Alameddine, 2013; Colleoni, 2013). Landline telephones, mobile telephones, Internet, email, and most recently social media, have provided an accessible means of communication for consumers. Due to communication availability, consumers are communicating more information and reaching more people via the Internet (Heinonen, 2011). Within the Internet, consumers use many forms of social media such as blogs, discussion boards, wikis, review forums, and social networks for social interaction.

Word of mouth communication takes place when two or more people communicate through a verbal channel (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011). Landline telephone, mobile telephone, and in person are communication tools; however, with the popularity of the Internet, people have more ways to share by word of mouth communication. Word of mouth shared via the Internet is called electronic word of mouth communication.

Organizations respond to consumer comments in many ways; however, there has not been enough conducted research to determine a successful way to manage negative

feedback submitted social media. With the advent of the Internet and electronic word of mouth communication, consumers are sharing information through social media about products, services, and organizations, whether negative or positive (Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). When negative comments are spread to other consumers, an organization's reputation could be damaged (Boo & Kim, 2013).

Problem Statement

When users share negative experience messages on social media, they share their experience with 17 people versus sharing positive experience messages with only 11 people (Conlo, Mukhopadhyay, Simmons, & Yang, 2011). The majority (60%) of organizational leaders using social media respond to less than 25% of all negative comments posted about product experiences with their company on social media (Dekay, 2012). The general business problem is that negative comments posted on social media sites can have a negative affect on purchase behavior. The specific business problem is that some social media managers lack strategies for effectively managing negative comments posted on social media sites.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to manage negative comments posted on social media sites. The targeted population consisted of social media managers in central Ohio. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve service recovery for consumers, maintaining relationships with consumers, and helping marketers understand the importance of social media being a part of their marketing mix.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative method to conduct this research. The qualitative approach helped me discover how social media managers manage negative comments on social media sites. Qualitative research allowed me to explore the main point of a specific subject (e.g., Kelly, Nesbit, & Oliver, 2013). Whereas, a quantitative study is methodological in nature, a mixed methods approach combines theoretical and methodological concerns (Small, 2011). I chose qualitative over quantitative or a mixed study because I can collect experiences of participants through observation and interviews about managing social media.

A case study design was most beneficial because I researched a specific area and I focused on how organizations responded to negative comments posted on social media. Case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data (Dickson-Swift, Hyett, & Kenny, 2014). I explored what processes marketers used to address negative social media comments by interviewing social media managers and observing social media managers posting comments on social media sites. A phenomenological approach is when lived experiences are explored, and therefore, was not appropriate for this study (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Question

The primary research question that guided this study was: What strategies could social media managers in central Ohio implement to manage negative comments posted

on social media sites? I examined social media management by observing social media managers and the techniques used to respond to consumer comments.

Interview Questions

1. How do you manage your social media and other organization's social media?

2. How do you respond to negative comments posted on social media?

3. What is your policy on deleting negative comments?

4. How often do you manage your social media?

5. Do you have a program to manage all social media concurrently? If so, what program do you use and how does it work? If not, how closely do you relate all social media platforms?

6. Do you suggest organizations use an outside firm to manage social media or should they have a dedicated person within the organization and what are the benefits?

7. How do you use social media to engage consumers?

<p align="center">**Conceptual Framework**</p>

In this qualitative case study, I used SET for the conceptual framework. Social exchange is based on social units exchanging information through social means (Homans, 1961). In 1958, Homans first introduced the theory of social exchange as understanding individuals and the influential implications of groups (Homans, 1961).

Social media are a phenomenon where individuals share opinions about products in a group atmosphere (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Once a consumer posts a comment on social media, the information spreads to others, and users form opinions.

Bacile, Hoffacker, and White (2014) found that consumers created 90% of the content on an organization's page.

Online communication is imperative in the business world to boost brand awareness (Colleoni, 2013). Homans's theory of social exchange was an appropriate framework because social exchange occurs within social media, and behaviors are influenced. In a social exchange, each participant is enthused by the other and appreciates the company (Homans, 1961). Social media allow for a social exchange between multiple participants and organizations (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014).

There are three parties involved when consumers share content online: the creator, the sharer, and the sharer's subscribers (Rui, Shi, & Whinston, 2014). In 2014, Rui et al. posited that path information flow is important to consider because the effects can differ. Social media do not have financial implications for consumers; therefore, the motivation to exchange information can vary (Rui et al., 2014). SET suggests that individuals share information because they expect to get something in return (Homans, 1961). The expected return could be financial, materialistic, emotional comfort, or social rewards. Some consumers share information because they feel their reputation could be altered in a positive way (Rui et al., 2014).

Definition of Terms

Consumer generated content (CGC), user generated content (UGC), and user created content (UCC): Consumer generated content (CGC), user generated content (UGC), and user created content (UCC) are content written by the public on any social media avenue that is available on the Internet (Bosangit, Iyanna, & Mohd-Any, 2012).

Electronic word of mouth: Electronic Word of Mouth is any positive or negative comment posted on the Internet about products or services (Boo & Kim, 2013).

Social media: Social media are web based platforms that combines social interaction with technology where consumers and organizations can connect with others (Alameddine, 2013; Hawkins, & Vel, 2013; Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, Pauwels, & Peters, 2013).

Twitter: Twitter is a fast growing social broadcasting site (Rui et al., 2014).

Viral marketing: Viral Marketing is the process of marketing messages being spread from consumer to consumer (Liu-Thompkins, 2012).

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is the interactive portion of the Internet that allows for collaboration and shared thought (Grimm, Naveed, & Schubert, 2014).

Word of mouth: Word of Mouth refers to personal communication between two parties (del Río-Lanza, Suárez-Álvarez, & Vázquez-Casielles, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is a common action made to a person and accepted by another person (Varacca & Völzer, 2012). I made several assumptions to complete this study. The assumptions included (a) participants of interviews will answer truthfully; (b) I made unbiased conclusions; (c) social media refers to all social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and digital reviews. In addition, I also assumed that I discussed relevant topics during the interviews, and that I collected relevant secondary data.

Limitations

A limitation is a potential weakness (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). In this study, I gathered information about how social media manages manage negative comments. The limitations of this study included: (a) participants may not have voiced all the techniques they use to manage social media, (b) participants may have had different levels of use for social media, (c) the observations varied depending on the time frame conducted, and (d) the limited amount of time to collect the data.

Delimitations

A delimitation is when not all possible participants had an equal opportunity to be chosen and when the researcher restricts the capacity of the study (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). A case study can bound the study due to focusing on limited participants and observable platforms. A delimitation in this study was that I included two social media managers in central Ohio. In addition, I conducted observations by viewing social media managers' management techniques.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Social media have become a more transactional medium versus a conversational medium (Crittenden, Hanna, & Rohm, 2011; Wiederhold, 2012). Consumers use social media as a way to communicate to others; however, marketers are following the lead and using social media to inform and educate consumers (Wiederhold, 2012). Consumers use the interactive Web 2.0 to engage with organizations about products and services (Crittenden et al., 2011).

In addition, social media platforms offer many features for consumers and organization to form a bond (Crittenden et al., 2011). Traditional marketing methods can be a large expense to businesses; however, the interactive web creates consumer-generated media (CGM), which is free (Manchanda & Onishi, 2012). Marketers traditionally used a *tell and sell* approach; however, in the 21st century, marketers must engage consumers to create a competitive advantage (Crittenden et al., 2011). Consumers are more interested in product attributes than previewing traditional marketing avenues, which has created disparage between new and old media (Manchanda & Onishi, 2012).

Consumers desire the interaction, which implies the need for organizations to employ social media. Therefore, organizations may lose a competitive advantage over businesses that use social media to engage consumers. Further, social media brings experiences to consumers allowing for intimacy with the organization (Crittenden et al., 2011). Marketers must be able to manage social media platforms individually and as a whole (Crittenden et al., 2011) to ensure consumers are informed about the organization. Many organizations are planning to increase budgets for social media marketing; however, management often struggles with managing social media successfully (Crittenden et al., 2011).

Consumers use social media to voice opinions, and research has shown that word of mouth has an influence on consumers and what they purchase (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011). Even though some consumers do not participate by creating user generated content, they rely on reviews posted by others (Flanagin, Metzger, Pure, & Markov,

2011). If consumers rely on online reviews to make purchase decisions, organizations must create a strategy to combat negative comments. Negative comments could cause the reputation of a business to be construed and decrease sales (Byrd, 2012). If organizations do not properly manage social media, then negative comments posted by consumers could have an effect on the business.

Implications for Social Change

The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve service recovery for consumers. Service recovery is when an organization can remedy a customer service issue with a consumer. Consumers use social media as a means to communicate about products and services; therefore, if organizations have a managing strategy in place, consumers will be better served and other consumers may realize service recovery from the organization (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Service recovery can help businesses with retention of consumers (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this literature review, I synthesized information from a variety of sources including journals, scholarly seminal books, and reports. To strategically locate articles, I used EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Science Direct, and LexisNexis through Walden University's library portal to access the articles. In addition, I used Google Scholar on the Internet to search for related articles. The search terms used to locate articles included *social media, social networks, marketing, negative comments, dissatisfaction,*

service recovery, and *management*. I used Nvivo as a coding tool for all articles retrieved.

I organized the literature review by themes such as (a) communication process, (b) dissatisfied consumers, (c) service recovery, (d) word of mouth and electronic word of mouth, (e) traditional marketing, (f) consumer behavior, (g) brand management, (h) social media marketing, (i) negative comments, and (j) improved business practices. Throughout the literature review, I synthesized researchers' views, the themes are compared and contrasted, and background information is provided on the topics. At least 85% of the articles referenced are within 5 years of expected CAO approval and at least 86% of the articles referenced were peer reviewed.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to manage negative comments posted on social media sites. The targeted population consisted of social media managers in central Ohio. The implication for positive social change includes potential to improve service recovery for consumers.

The conceptual framework that I used in this study is Homans' SET from 1961. The focus of SET is that people exchange, socially, with the expectation of a benefit. I also reviewed the diffusion of innovation theory, coined by Everett in 1962, which theorized the rate at which information travels from persons and cultures (Rogers, 1995). SET was appropriate because, in this study, I explored why organizations respond to negative social media comments in certain ways.

Throughout the literature review, I analyzed and synthesized articles related to social media management of negative comments. In addition, I have provided

background information on the basics of the communication process and modes that

consumers express their dissatisfaction. The literature that I used was focused on how

marketing has changed from traditional to digital such as electronic word of mouth

communication. Some of the researchers analyzed explored how consumers behave and

their reactions to organizations service and social media marketing. Finally, reasons are

provided as to why social media management can improve business practices.

Communication Process

Communication is the process of transferring information from one person to

another person, even if the individual misconstrues the message (Gallivan & Keil, 2003).

Messages can be sent through verbal communication and non-verbal communication such

as gestures and signals. Messages are communicated many ways including in person, by

telephone, and written. The sender and receiver transmit messages back and forth similar

to a current, and only once the person receives the message, communication is complete

(Weber & Word, 2001). Humans use communication everyday verbally and non-

verbally for personal and business use. Informal communication is as important as

formal communication (Kraut & Streeter, 1995).

Anderlini, Gerardi, and Lagunoff (2012) examined two types of communication,

private and *public*. Private communication is intended for a specific audience where

public communication does not have a specific audience. Regarding open discussion, all

receivers hear the same message; that makes the message hard to transform in to a

different meaning (Anderlini et al., 2012). In contrast, within private communication, the

receiver is the only person to hear the message; that creates an environment for the

receiver to change the intended message (Anderlini et al., 2012). When communication is private, the sender may transfer the message to another person with a different meaning.

The sender-receiver exchange is when one person is incentivized to stretch the truth (Andrade & Ho, 2009). The sender is the person who transmits the message, and the receiver is the person whom receives the message and decodes the meaning (Gherasim, Gherasim, & Vasiloaia, 2012). The recipient may be overwhelmed by the amount of information and may only select a portion of the message to decode. In addition, the receiver may have a prior opinion about the message and, as a result, some of the messages may become distorted (Gherasim et al., 2012). Finally, recipients may only remember selective parts of the message due to their familiarity with the topic (Gherasim et al., 2012).

Giffin (1967) posited that trust must be evident for the receiver to find the communication source credible. If the receiver does not believe the source is credible, the message may be conveyed to other receivers incorrectly. While communication involves verbal, non-verbal, and audibility, people must believe the source where the information is present (Giffin, 1967). In addition, the perception of the receiver could be affected by their values (Giffin, 1967).

Lihui Lin, Whinston, and Xianjun Geng (2005) found that due to globalization, transferring knowledge to someone in a different culture can be challenging. People may perceive messages differently depending on the person's culture. The authors studied the perceptions of the message and how they differed between the sender and receiver if they

were from different cultures (Lihui Lin et al., 2005). They found that the receiver may not be aware of the value of the message from the sender due to the culture differences and can be improperly perceived (Lihui Lin et al., 2005). In addition, if the receiver does not find value in the sender's message, the receiver will look elsewhere for the knowledge (Lihui Lin et al., 2005). When a sender is communicating to someone with a different cultural background, they should communicate in a way in which that person could understand.

Dissatisfied Consumers

Consumer complaints are inevitable (Ang & Buttle, 2012). In 2012, Gurău posited that, in order for complaints to be solved, a customer's level of satisfaction must be maintained. Consumers may not be impacted by a bad experience if they are satisfied with the way the organization handles their complaint. Gurău found that consumers would be more satisfied if organizations met certain criteria. For example, the process to file a complaint must be convenient for the consumer, the person receiving the complaint must be empathetic to the consumers' needs, and the complaint handler must treat each consumer as an individual (Gurău, 2012).

In addition, consumers want organizations to take responsibility for the issue and own their mistakes (Gurău, 2012). The problem must be handled in a timely manner, and the solution to the issue must be a quality resolution (Gurău, 2012). The level of importance of each criterion varied with consumers; however, 72% of consumers agreed that organizations taking responsibility for the issue was most important (Gurău, 2012).

Organizations should have a process in place to handle complaints from dissatisfied consumers in order to satisfy the consumer (Ang & Buttle, 2012). Consumers expect organizations to reply to their complaints and resolve the issue. If organizations fail to satisfy the consumer, the consumer may spread the negative experience to other consumers and the organizations reputation could be at risk (Ang & Buttle, 2012). If organizations satisfy the consumer regarding their complaint, the consumer may be less likely to inform others about the negative experience. Researchers have proved that organizations are not good at handling consumer complaints and consumers are usually not happy with the complaint handling experience (Ang & Buttle, 2012).

Ang and Buttle (2006) found that if organizations had a process to handle complaints, consumers were more likely to be satisfied with the handling process. If consumers are happy with the complaint process results, they may purchase from the organization again because of the positive handling experience. Ang and Buttle (2012) suggested a software management system to handle consumer complaint to ensure standardization. Software management systems allow for continuity, timely response, and a way for organizations to track the reasons for complaints. In addition, organizations should utilize consumer complaints as an opportunity to learn how to better their product and service (Ang & Buttle, 2012; Gurău, 2012).

Consumers use cognitive thinking to determine if the complaint handling process serves justice (Ang & Buttle, 2012; Gurău, 2012). The three forms of the justice theory are distributive justice, interactional justice, and procedural justice (Ang & Buttle, 2012).

Distributive justice is the perception the consumer has of the complaint resolution, while

on the contrary; procedural justice is the perception the consumer has of the fairness of

the complaint resolution (Ang & Buttle, 2012). Lastly, interactional justice is the

consumers' perception of how the interaction between persons is handled during the

complaint resolution (Ang & Buttle, 2012). Organizations can use the justice theory to

understand consumers' complaint behavior.

Richins (1983) posits that consumers could respond to a dissatisfactory

experience by switching brands, filing a complaint, or informing other consumers,

therefore, organizations can be significantly impacted by consumers' responses to

dissatisfaction. When managers learn rates of consumer complaints are low, they assume

overall dissatisfaction is low; however, some consumers do not inform organizations of

complaints (Richins, 1983). The level of dissatisfaction can vary as well as the action

consumers may take to file a complaint. Richins (1983) found that over half of the

participants shared their dissatisfaction with at least one other person; whereas, over a

third of the participants reported the issue to a third party. Organizations should be aware

of consumers informing other current and potential consumers about a negative

experience because of the potential impact on the organization. The author suggested

that managers should respond to complaints in a timely manner to show their willingness

to resolve the issue (Richins, 1983).

Service Recovery

Organizations have an opportunity to improve service recovery when consumers

post negative comments on social media. If organizations are effective in service

recovery, consumers may view the interaction as positive (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Furthermore, as the popularity of social media increases, consumers have higher expectations of organizations to respond to their comments (Labrecque, 2014). Consumers post complaints to social media instead of traditional methods such as calling customer service, filling out an online form, or mailing a complaint.

Consumers use organizations' social media to inform businesses about issues they have encountered and expect a response via social media (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014; Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). User generated content posted on a firm's social media can produce negative or positive repercussions for other consumers (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Barger and Labrecque (2013) found that when consumers post service inquiries on social media and the organizations resolve the issue they are less likely to share the information with others. When consumers post a complaint about a negative experience on social media, the information is available to anyone on the Internet. Organizations must reply to the post immediately in order to remedy the experience before the information is spread throughout users of social media. When consumers post a service issue on an organization's social media, management can attempt to resolve the issue (Barger & Labrecque, 2013).

Marketers suggest that negative comments on social media create an opportunity for service recovery; however, large corporations tend to ignore comments (Dekay, 2012). Negative experiences could turn in to positive experiences if organizations utilize the consumer complaint information to prevent future instances. Once service recovery has met the consumers' expectations, marketers must continue to build a relationship

with the consumer (Dinnen, & Hassanien, 2011). Although organizations may meet the expectations of the consumer regarding their complaint, the organization should have a method in place to build the trust back of the customer. If marketers impress consumers with service recovery, the word of mouth could be positive and help win customers (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014).

Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth

Word of mouth communication is the process of two or more people informally communicating verbally about a product or service (Hyde, & Lang, 2013; Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011; Cheng, Lai, & Shih, 2013). Word of mouth communication is influential and credible, can alter consumer behavior ((Chin-Lung, Der-Juinn, & Sheng-Hsien, 2011; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013; Fay & Keller, 2012). For word of mouth communication to be effective, the communication must be an informal format from another consumer, not a marketer (Del Rio-Lanza et al., 2013). Consumers may converse with friends and family about recent purchases and their positive or negative experience. Furthermore, positive word of mouth communication has a positive impact on purchase behavior, whereas, negative word of mouth communication has a negative effect on purchase behavior (Del Rio-Lanza et al., 2013). For example, loyal customers that produce positive word of mouth communication can increase consumers' chance of purchasing a product (Hawkins & Vel, 2013). Rogers (1995) found that word of mouth communication shared by friends and family are influential and have more impact than do traditional advertisements. Organizations should be aware of the impact word of mouth communication can have on purchase behavior.

Word of mouth communication and electronic word of mouth communication are different because word of mouth communication entails communicating with someone you know, whereas, electronic word of mouth communication can come from someone you do not know (Curran, McCabe, & Meuter, 2013; DeMoss, Li, & Shen, 2012). Electronic word of mouth is utilized in social media where consumers state their opinions. Electronic word of mouth has a convincing influence on consumers and their behaviors (Chen, Wang, & Xie, 2011; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013; Dewan, & Ramaprasad, 2014). The information can spread rapidly with the use of the Internet. Previous research shows that consumers are comfortable with passing electronic word of mouth communication through social media to other consumers (Korgaonkar & Petrescu, 2011). Consumers may be more comfortable utilizing social media because of the indirect audience. If the message is positive, purchase behavior can be affected positively, which can lead to an increase in revenue (Colvin, 2013). Consequences could ensue by negative comments and marketing managers must learn the to engage consumers in hopes of service recovery and electronic word of mouth communication should not be ignored because consumers will read the message, due to the popularity of the Internet (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013).

The exchange process of complaints has evolved from consumers calling customer service to posting the complaints online (Boo & Kim, 2013), sometimes called user generated content. Additionally, consumers could have complained via mail or an organization's website, however, social media has become an efficient way to post complaints. Organizations may want to manage their social media to respond to

complaints. User generated content can affect consumers purchase decision and, therefore, have an affect on sales of an organization (Galak & Stephen, 2012). Once a consumer posts content, the information can spread to large amounts of people (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014).

Traditional Marketing

Social media is the process of combining sociology and technology in an effort for people to share their opinions and converse with each other (Alameddine, 2013; Jones, Lopez, Walker, & Wallace, 2011). Consumers are not only able to converse with other consumers they also have the ability to communicate with businesses (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). In addition, organizations use social media to connect and engage with consumers. Traditional marketing such as billboards, radio ads, direct mail, and television commercials have not been consumer friendly and intrusive, restricting individualization (Alameddine, 2013). Traditional marketing does not allow for engagement between consumers and organizations. Traditional marketing is directly from the marketer and can be perceived as so by consumers (Pehlivan & Weinberg, 2011). Consumers may have a differing perception between traditional marketing and electronic word of mouth communication. Traditional marketing allows marketers to send a message without the concern of user generated content; however, the information may not be up to date (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Whereas, digital age media users must be watchful of user generated content; however, digital media provides the ability to release time sensitive information (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Social media have allowed consumers to have the upper hand on the content versus organizations having the control

(Xia, 2013). Even though consumers may start conversations on an organizations social media page, managers can redirect the conversation to maintain a positive environment for their products.

The change from traditional marketing to social media has been a significant shift in the marketing field (Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). Social mediums allow consumers to personalize the site and create an interactive environment (Alameddine, 2013). Social media allows consumers to post positive or negative comments; therefore, social media management is an important part of maintaining social media for an organization. If marketers choose to use traditional advertisements, they must determine if engagement of a smaller amount of consumers or reach of a larger number of consumers is important; where social media can reach and engage large quantities of consumers (Crittenden et al., 2011). Social media may be appropriate for some marketing objectives, whereas, traditional marketing may be appropriate for others. Furthermore, organizations are planning to spend less on traditional marketing and more on social media (Henke, 2013; Melanthiou & Papasolomou, 2012).

To stay competitive, some researchers believe that businesses should mix the use of social media and traditional marketing (Canhoto & Kietzmann, 2013; Luo & Zhang, 2013; Manchanda & Onishi, 2012). Businesses can reach more consumers by a myriad of ways by using traditional marketing and social media (Luo & Zhang, 2013; Manchanda & Onishi, 2012). Organizations may be able to reach multiple generations and target markets if they utilize multiple marketing avenues. Additionally, organizations can employ specific techniques in social media to engage even more

consumers (Advincula, Austin, Graiko, Powers, & Snyder, 2012). Research shows that consumers are sitting in front of the television with a digital device, hence the attention to both traditional and digital marketing (Hier, Millward, Nield, Pynta, Seixas, & Silberstein, 2014). The combination of social media and traditional marketing can create a competitive advantage. Therefore, organizations should integrate traditional media and digital media in marketing plans. Finally, organizations can use traditional media to inform consumers about locating social media sites.

Consumer Behavior

Consumers value social media and use it to mold their purchase intentions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014; Colvin, 2013). Consumers are able to find a multitude of opinions by using social media while researching products or services. Research has shown that activities on social media, which are consumer generated, are more influential than those that are created by an organization (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). Consumers use their beliefs and attitudes to make purchase decisions (Alameddine, 2013). One way organizations can benefit from social media is because it allows consumers' behaviors to be analyzed closer by studying the comments (Byrd, 2012). Organizations should strive to learn why consumers post comments about their brand so they can take proactive measures for future postings and engagement (Chen, Wang, & Xie, 2011; Heinonen, 2011). Managers could speculate how consumers' posts will affect other consumers by observing consumers' behaviors on social media.

Consumers' behaviors are varied and can be sporadic. Organizations are engaging consumers to add content to their social media. Bloching, Hennig-Thurau, and

Hofacker (2013) describe consumers' behavior like a pinball because the conversation goes back and forth between multiple consumers and organizations. The conversations may be positive or negative about the brand or simply about an experience the consumer had while utilizing the product or service. While marketers are encouraging consumers to post opinions about products, they are also encouraging consumers to post their feelings (Fay & Keller, 2012). Consumers feel that by posting information on social media they have a sense of control and may better their mental well being (Chin-Lung et al., 2011). Multiple avenues of social media engage consumers; which enables consumers to interact with brands and other consumers quickly (Luo & Zhang, 2013). Often, consumers desire others opinions before making a purchase decision, and social media is a way consumers seek opinions (Mejova, 2012). Social media will become even more apparent and powerful as technology advances (Luo & Zhang, 2013).

Consumers have more of an active role with organizations' social media and therefore, organizations today find they do not have full control of customers (Haenlein, Malthouse, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013; Manchanda & Onishi, 2012). Due to consumers utilizing social media to state opinions about products, organizations can utilize the information for product ideas and to improve service (Manchanda & Onishi, 2012). Research shows that social media has taken a significant role in empowering consumers to share their feelings, while enabling organizations to facilitate conversations taking place on their social media (Advincula et al., 2012; Haenlein et al., 2013).

Consumers learn by interacting with other consumers and social agents, resulting in the creation of behaviors and attitudes (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). Consumers are

driven to informational sources that provide valuable information about products (Wang et al., 2012). Social media also offers a means for marketers to present highly valued content to prospective and current customers. Additionally, the information consumers read may have an affect on purchase intentions (Wang et al., 2012). Social media create an environment where consumers are trusting strangers' opinions (Luo & Zhang, 2013). Social media allows consumers to gather input from other sources expanding beyond family and friends, by doing so, some consumers trust strangers on social media more than their traditional reference groups.

Brand Management

Brand Management is a required activity for most marketers (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). Social media allow consumers and organizations to interact, and therefore, change the dynamics of brand management; which can have an effect on the organizations brand performance (Gensler, Völckner, Wiertz, & Yuping, 2013). Brand managers do not have full control of their social media because consumers generate the content (Gensler et al., 2013). Brand managers take the role of promoting content generated by consumers. When consumers post information about a brand, the marketer can use the information as a form of promotion. Additionally, brand managers are tasked with reacting to any negative stories that ensue (Gensler et al., 2013). Complaints on social media may have a direct affect on brand management. Therefore, organizations should respond in a way that creates positive brand awareness and makes the customer happy (Boo & Kim, 2013; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013; Xia, 2013). Brand managers may choose an appropriate time frame in which to respond depending on the comments

posted. Xia (2013) implies that consumers use organizations' reactions to base their ongoing brand perception. Consumers may need to be engaged from the manager's reply to be prompted to continue the conversation. When consumers are not provided with satisfactory service recovery, they may create their future perceptions around that one experience.

One study found that almost half of brand conversations mention a type of media or marketing, such as an advertisement, they previously saw (Fay & Keller, 2012). Brand managers can be part of the conversation to ensure integrity of the brand. Therefore, organizations are encouraging consumers to comment how a brand makes them feel (Fay & Keller, 2012). Consumers may be affected by other consumers' opinions of the brand and purchase decision. Additionally, organizations may be financially affected, positively or negatively, when consumers post comments about products or services (Conlo et al., 2011).

Relationship Management

Traditionally, marketers would use the mass marketing approach to gain consumers; however, marketers are turning to relationship management to retain customers, instead of searching for new customers (Bauer & Grether, 2005). Social media creates an environment where marketers can build relationships with consumers. Consumers are communicating with organizations through social media and enhancing the relationship with the organization. Colvin (2013) agrees that relationship building is the key to being successful. Even though social marketing is a strategy to gain a competitive advantage, both traditional and social media marketing should be used in

building relationships with consumers (Algharabat, Alhammad, Al-Hyari, Alnsour, & Al-Weshah, 2013). Many organizations are using automated software programs to manage social media platforms, although, keeping the relationship personal with consumers can be a challenge (Labrecque, 2014). Consumers may be able to determine if a person answered the social media post or if a computer generated the reply. If consumers believe a computer generated the comment, the consumer may not feel the issue was resolved (Labrecque, 2014).

Social Media Marketing

Social media are the most popular activities on the Internet (Brooks, 2013). Consumers use social media to connect with friends, state opinions, and research brands. Consumers also rely on information on social media even if the information is from someone they do not know. Byrd (2012) suggests that organizations who have upper management and who understand the important role public relation managers play are more likely to comprehend how fundamental it is to manage communications. Organizations realize the importance of a presence in social media to engage consumers and to inform consumers about their brand. The challenge is managing the social media (Crittenden et al., 2011; Chen, Fay, & Wang 2013). If social media is managed manually, organizations may consider the time constraint. Some large organizations may need multiple employees managing social media around the clock. Consumers value social media more than traditional advertising mediums, hence the importance of organizations using social media to create a competitive advantage (Colvin, 2103; Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). Social media provide organizations with accurate

information about consumers and allow organizations to create products that consumers desire (Alameddine, 2013). The information that consumers post on their profiles gives organizations insights about the consumers buying patterns (Alameddine, 2013). Social media creates an environment for organizations to gather information about their current, past, and future customers. The information gathered can be utilized to encourage consumers to purchase more of their brand.

Social media can provide organizations with a competitive advantage; however, the e-networks must be placed well in the market (Algharabat et al., 2013; Chin-Lung et al., 2011). Some social media may work for some industries and not for others. Organizations must become aware of the social media their consumers are active. In order to engage consumers, managers must actively participate in conversations to keep consumers engaged. If consumers post a comment on social media and are ignored, they may not continue to be engaged with that organization's social media. One way to gain a competitive advantage is to explore consumers' behaviors of the organization's target market. Managers can create social media that allows engagement with consumers by understanding the consumers' behaviors. Marketers can determine what needs and wants the consumers have to create more products in the future and to enhance service recovery for consumers.

Organizations can utilize social media to promote products, promotions, and activities the organizations are involved. Bolls and Eckler (2011) have found that social media is viral and can reach vast amounts of people. Social media provides an inexpensive way to reach a mass market. Research shows that some consumers respond

positively to having information on new products presented through social media (Kolk, Lee, and Van Dolen, 2013). Some researchers view social media as a relationship builder for organizations (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). Creating brand awareness and building relationships are the forefront of social media rather than generating revenue (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). In addition, social media can be used to reach consumers directly; however, those consumers can also reach other consumers, which creates electronic word of mouth. Social media provide an interactive environment for consumers and organizations as well as influence other consumers (Alameddine, 2013). When consumers post positive comments about a product or service, other consumers' decision making about purchases may change positively for the organization.

Consumer decisions are becoming more dependent on social media (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Social media provide consumers with immediate access to information on products, services, and organizations. Due to low cost access and production costs, consumers' and organizations are now using social media more. Organizations can understand consumer behavior more clearly by viewing profiles of consumers while engaging them in ways that fit their desires (Alameddine, 2013). Due to the popularity of social media, marketing managers can search for consumer buying behaviors and predict future buying behaviors (Alameddine, 2013).

Marketers use social media to encourage feedback, known as consumer generated feedback (Pehlivan &Weinberg, 2011). Consumer generated feedback is important to organizations because they can use it to alter their product or service offering. Organizations should not ignore deep conversations because they could provide insight

into what the customer wants (Alameddine, 2013). Further, consumer generated feedback can be a relationship builder and enhancer, specifically creating brand awareness and service engagement. When consumers hear about a positive experience from a peer, they are more likely to try the brand. Additionally, some consumers may prefer social media to communicate service issues because of the ease of use.

Negative Comments

Consumers post negative comments online about products or services when they have a damaging experience; which can be harmful to organizations (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012). The number of consumers posting product reviews is growing. Consumers use information on social media to make purchase decisions and businesses use the information to gain consumer insight (Pan & Zhang, 2011). Further, consumers use the Internet to share opinions about products, and product reviews on social media are expected to grow exponentially (Ong, 2011). Additionally, consumers find reading product reviews valuable and credible in decision making (Hong & Park, 2012). Consumers can post negative experiences on social media instead of traditional methods because it takes less time out of their daily lives and can be less stressful (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012).

Alameddine (2013) suggests that social media is a way for organizations to learn of consumers' opinions toward products and services and to enhance social media content by engaging consumers. When consumers post negative comments, marketers can turn the situation into an opportunity to improve products or services (Chen, Hsiao, & Huang,

2012; Nassar, 2012). Additionally, marketers should be aware that product reviews could affect both consumers and organizations (Hong & Park, 2012).

Many researchers have found that negative comments have a greater negative affect than positive comments have a positive affect (Boo & Kim; del Río-Lanza, 2013). Boo and Kim (2013) found that the negative and positive comments posted on social media spread to a large unknown amount of people. In addition, Cheng, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, and Leskovec (2014) found that negative social media comments cause damage to the intended community. The results of one study showed that positive comments were responsible for a 7% increase in sales, and negative comments were responsible for a 6.9% decrease in sales (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). Marketers should understand that if consumers post a negative comment, but the overall opinion of the product is positive, other consumers would perceive the comment as negative (Goh, Robinson, & Zhang, 2012).

Del Rio-Lanza et al. (2013) posit that if the consumer is familiar with a brand, both positive and negative comments do not have a significant impact on purchase decisions. In contrast, if the consumer is not familiar with the brand, then negative comments are more helpful to consumers (del Rio-Lanza et al., 2013). Consumers post opinions on social media with the assumption that organizations are reading the comments (Canhoto & Kietzmann, 2013; Labrecque, 2014).

Daugherty and Hoffman (2013) found that sharing pictures to accompany positive comments for non-luxury goods would ensure a beneficial exchange throughout social media. In contrast, messages are of most importance for luxury goods rather than

pictorial messages (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013). User generated content can have negative consequences and organizations must be aware of the influence on other consumers (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Therefore, Bruce and Solomon (2013) suggest that businesses monitor social media that is an unregulated communication channel. Monitoring social media is a way to mediate the content and enforce the organizations brand and values (Bruce & Solomon, 2013).

Marketers do not have control of comments posted on social media, and therefore it is imperative that marketers manage social media (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012; Henke, 2013). Many companies have a means of managing social media, however, responding adequately to the comments is the challenge (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). The emotional connection consumers have to brands implies the importance of responding correctly to comments on social media (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013).

Improved Business Practice

Social media are imperative for an organization's marketing plan to engage consumers and build business (Labrecque, 2014). When consumers post comments on social media about products, organizations should not leave the comment unanswered (Canhoto & Kietzmann, 2013; Chen, Wang, & Xie, 2011). Dekay (2012) found that marketers should post fun messages integrated with the marketing message to ensure there is a minimal amount of negative feedback, which could improve business practice. Additionally, consumers feel unimportant when negative comments are not responded to (Dekay, 2012).

Dekay's (2012) study resulted in almost half of organizations deleted negative comments without a response and 60% of the organizations responded to less than a quarter of the negative comments. Dekay's results indicate that large corporations do not have a plan in place to respond to negative comments by creating an opportunity. Creating a process to handle consumer complaints is a way to improve business practice (Dinnen & Hassanien, 2011). Dinnen and Hassanien (2011) recommend that organizations should encourage positive and negative feedback for continuous improvement and to stay competitive. Organizations may be able to turn a negative consumer comment into a positive experience for the consumer (Dinnen & Hassanien, 2011).

Organizations should be cautious about choosing the correct communication channel and time to respond to a negative comment because they could have an impact on the consumer's response (Dinnen & Hassanien, 2011). Some research suggests that social media is the best marketing tool to strengthen relationships with consumers (Alamaddine, 2013; Bloching et al., 2013). Social media provide a way for organizations and consumers to build a stronger relationship with the opportunity of self-expression (Alamaddine, 2013).

There is little research on automated social media management software. Labrecque (2014) found that software could respond to consumers' comments on social media with an intelligent response without deciphering human and computer response. I have utilized Homans' Social Exchange Theory as the lens to explore the management of negative social media comments

Conceptual Framework

In 1958, Homans first theorized the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Homans, 1961). The Social Exchange Theory is the process of people exchanging information by social means with the expectation of gaining something in return (Homans, 1961). In 1964, Blau further theorized the Social Exchange Theory and described that two things must be apparent for social exchange to happen. One, social interaction must occur between people and, two, the people must be interacting with the understanding of benefiting from the interaction (Blau, 1964).

Guynes, St. John, and Vedder (2013) used the Social Exchange Theory to assess the relationships between clients and vendors in the offshoring industry. The authors found that if the contract between partners is long term the relationship becomes more complex (Guynes et al., 2013). Furthermore, exchange through communication is an essential factor in building trust with partners (Guynes et al., 2013). Additionally, partners should share information regarding their needs and desires and not limiting communication to operational information (Guynes et al., 2013). Partners who trust each other are willing to give more than receive (Guynes et al., 2013). Homans (1961) explained that cohesion of desires and needs builds a common environment. Finally, Guynes et al. (2013) found that a strong relationship creates a more valuable partnership.

Kuan-Yang, Shou-Chien, and You-De (2014) utilized the Social Exchange Theory to evaluate relationships in the lodging industry. The authors found that consumers whose expectations go further than the norm are dependent on how invested the firm was in the customer (Kuan-Yang et al., 2014). The Social Exchange Theory

shows that people are more likely to go beyond expectations when they feel an obligation from another person due to benefiting from that person (Kuan-Yang et al., 2014). The findings were that customer satisfaction rates would be higher if there is a social exchange that took place (Kuan-Yang et al., 2014).

Rui et al. (2014) studied the reason behind users sharing content on Twitter. The authors hypothesized that users are more likely to share content when there are weak ties; meaning ties with acquaintances rather than ties with friends (Rui et al., 2014). Further, the research showed that users share content when they understand there is a benefit of relationship enhancement (Rui et al., 2014). The findings were in line with the hypothesis and users share content more from acquaintances versus friends (Rui et al., 2014).

Transition and Summary

In this section, I explained the purpose of the study as well as the research question. I explained how social media usage is common between consumers and organizations, and the importance of marketers to manage negative social media comments. In addition, Section 1 included an extensive literature review of past research on social media and negative comments. Section 2 contains my discussion of the methodology and design of the study, population and sample size, ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis. Section 3 includes the presentation of findings, application to professional practice, and implications to social change.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to manage effectively negative comments posted on social media sites. The targeted population consisted of social media managers in central Ohio. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve service recovery for consumers.

Role of the Researcher

My role was to gather data without the biases of a qualitative case study and be aware of any ethical issues that ensued. The Belmont Report contains the ethical regulations I will follow to protect the participants, which are as follows: (a) the boundaries between biomedical and behavioral research and the accepted and routine practice of medicine, (b) the role of assessment of risk-benefit criteria in the determination of the appropriateness of research involving human subjects, (c) appropriate guidelines for the selection of human subjects for participation in such research and (d) the nature and definition of informed consent in various research settings (United States, 1978).

I mitigated bias by ensuring that I used appropriate interview techniques such as asking the question appropriately and through active listening (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I have experience working with marketing managers and was able to communicate in a way conducive to the participants. In qualitative studies, researchers must use rigor to

collect data with accuracy and pragmatism (Hickson, 2011). To ensure accuracy, I asked clear open-ended and follow-up questions that kept the participant on the research topic. I also provided the participants with the study results and specified the findings of the research.

Participants

I selected my participants by a purposive, nonrandom sample technique. I chose participants by a purposive sampling method so I could gather data for a variety of concepts (Bailey, Hennink, & Hutter, 2011; Petty et al., 2012). I created a search on the Internet for firms that manage social media for organizations in the central Ohio area. I contacted the organizations that populated from the search by emailing the letter of cooperation authorizing representatives of organizations to determine the interest (see Appendix C). Once I received consent from the letter of cooperation by the authorizing representative, I emailed the consent form (see Appendix A) to employees who met the inclusion criteria, participants must be 18 years or older and a social media manager. I obtained email addresses by searching the organizations website and reading the employees profiles.

Social media management firms in central Ohio use either software to manage social media or manually manage social media; I chose an organization that manages social media manually. I selected interview participants from one firm to explore how their management techniques help to manage social media, specifically negative comments. In addition, I observed social media managers manually administer social media to understand the detailed procedures of social media management (Bailey et al.,

2011). By interviewing and observing participants who manage social media, I gained an understanding of how a firm can manage social media and how negative comments can be managed. Secondary data were provided to me by Participant 2 from Company A to enhance the research.

I obtained permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gather and analyze data 07-08-15-0415278. Before I interviewed the participants, I ensured that I met ethical standards and had them sign consent documents (see Appendix A). The documents provided the participants with information on the voluntary study and the option to withdraw at any time. I did not provide incentives to participants and kept their identity confidential (Bailey et al., 2011) by assigning a letter to each participant (i.e., Participant 1 and Participant 2). The professional risk was minimal and not greater than risk in every day life. In addition, I did not have any prior relationships with the observation and interview participants. Lastly, I did not collect data until granted permission from the IRB.

Research Method

There are three types of research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The method a researcher chooses between these methods based on the nature of the research question (Moore et al., 2011). The purpose of social science research is to tie the literature together to gain an understanding and to collect data to add to the literature (Suri, 2011). The quantitative method allows for limited biases and maintains that the researcher does not use opinion to communicate data (Moore et al., 2011). A quantitative study is methodological in nature (Small, 2011). Alternatively, a mixed

method combines theoretical and methodological concerns (Small, 2011), and is appropriate when the results would be substantial than a only a qualitative or only a quantitative study alone (Bak, 2011).

The literature behind my choosing the qualitative method was Moore, Petty, Ramage, and Thomson (2011). Moore et al. suggested that a qualitative method should be utilized when *why* questions are unanswered, conversely, a quantitative method should be utilized when researching *how* and *what* questions. Further, qualitative research is used for natural settings of participants regarding a phenomenon (Moore et al., 2011). Bak (2011) explained that qualitative research is theory generation, whereas, quantitative research is theory verification. Therefore, in this study, I explored why participants managed social media in various ways.

Qualitative research allows for exploration of the main point of a specific subject (Kelly et al., 2013). This study was qualitative versus quantitative or mixed because I wanted to focus on the experiences of participants with respect to managing social media. I discovered how social media managers manage negative comments on social media sites by using a qualitative method to conduct this research.

Research Design

There are several types of qualitative research designs: case study, phenomenological, narrative, ethnography, and theory (Petty et al., 2012). A grounded theory researcher aims to gather data from participants who have experienced a social process, action, or interaction (Petty et al., 2012), while a narrative design's intention is to learn biographical information about a person(s) and his or her experience of event(s)

(Petty et al., 2012). Ethnography is used when cultural groups and their shared patterns

are observed (Petty et al., 2012). A phenomenological approach is applicable when lived

experiences can be explored, and therefore, I did not use a phenomenological approach

(Moustakas, 1994).

Petty, Stew, and Thomson (2012) explored designs used in qualitative research.

Grounded theory is used to explain a social process, action, or interaction (Petty et al.,

2012). Phenomenological theories are used to explore lived experiences, whereas,

narrative theories are used to describe detailed stories (Petty et al., 2012). Ethnography is

used to examine behaviors and beliefs of cultures and time intense (Petty et al., 2012).

Case studies are flexible, and the researcher can use multiple ways to collect data

such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (Petty et al., 2012). Carr-

Chellman, Lohmann, and Pastore (2011) explained case studies as exploratory and used

the design to explore user design in an organization. Bak (2011) used a case study design

due to the flexibility and ability to use multiple data collection methods to show why e-

business has changed within an automotive company. Finally, Yin (2014) indicated that

case studies are for researchers who have little control over the behaviors and when the

study is contemporary.

A case study design is most beneficial when a specific area can be researched.

The case study design may elicit details from the viewpoint of the participants by using

multiple sources of data and allow triangulation (Dickson-Swift et al., 2014). I explored

what processes marketers are used to address negative social media comments by

interviewing social media managers, observing comments posted on social media sites,

and collected secondary data from the organization. Data saturation is evident when the data collected does not show new information or new themes (Bowen, 2008). In a case study design, data saturation is met by utilizing multiple methods of data collection and by allowing enough time to interview and observe social media managers at the same organization (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). I observed and interviewed social media managers until no new information was generated.

Population and Sampling

The qualitative research method's purpose is to understand a phenomenon and not to generalize the findings (Petty et al., 2012). A purposeful sample eliminates the biases of generalizing because I chose participants who have knowledge of the subject (Petty et al., 2012). I chose interview participants from the same organization that specialize in social media management because I wanted to learn how they manage social media. I observed over a 2-week time frame, until I gained a holistic view of how social media is managed.

After the observation, I transcribed the data and used member checking to ensure I presented the data correctly. I allowed the participant to read the transcribed data and provide feedback and confirmation of the material. As a third method of data collection, I collected secondary data from the organization about previous social media management experiences. The organization specializes in working with businesses that use social media marketing to create a competitive advantage. In addition, the organization manages the ongoing social media feeds. I interviewed and observed the participants in their workplace that allowed a comfortable environment for them. To

create a useful case study, I chose the purposive sample technique to select the interview participants (Bailey et al., 2011).

Ethical Research

I obtained permission from Walden University IRB to collect data <u>07-08-15-0415278</u>. The role of the IRB is to protect human participants and to certify this research abides by federal regulations (Abbott & Grady, 2011). To ensure ethical requirements, I confirmed all participants were willing to participate before the interviews or observations begin.

To assure each participant and the organization remains anonymous; I assigned each one an alphabetical code. For example, the participants are labeled as Participant 1 and Participant 2 and the organization is labeled Company A. I also notified each participant that the interview and observations are voluntary by having them sign the consent documents (see Appendix A) and I conveyed to the participants that they could withdraw at any time by emailing or calling me. I did not offer incentives in return for participation; however, I offered a condensed summary of the results. Once I collected the data, I entered them electronically and they will be stored on a flash drive in a locked cabinet for 5 years, to which only I have access. Any paper materials used to collect data were be shredded and any digital materials were shredded using Mackeeper.

Data Collection Instruments

Many data collection instruments can be used in qualitative case study research such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, and secondary data collection, which all provide in-depth analysis (Carr-Chellman et al., 2011). I was the primary data

collection instrument and collected data by conducting interviews and observations. I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's experience by using interviews as a data collection tool (Petty et al., 2012). I used observations as a data collection tool, which allowed me to understand firsthand how the participant reacted and was involved in certain situations (Petty et al., 2012). I also collected secondary data to ensure that I had enough information to synthesize for substantial research.

I used a semistructured interview, which allowed me to create questions to guide the interview but also allowed participants to offer information beneficial to the research (Petty et al., 2012). I used transcript review and member checking to ensure the reliability and validity of the interviews and the observation (Carlson, 2010). Once I completed the observation, I used member checking by allowing the participant to read the information I interpreted to confirm I analyzed the information in a manner representative of the participant. During the interviews, after each question was answered, I asked if the participant wanted to add anything pertaining to the question that we had not already discussed. Once I interpreted the information I collected from the interview, I allowed the interview participant to read the material to ensure that I did not misrepresent the information in any way. I created seven questions to offer guidance throughout the interview (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Technique

I asked all participants if he or she had an interest in answering interview questions for data research and if other employees would be willing to be interview participants or be observable participants. Upon consent (see Appendix A), I observed

participants managing social media to gain knowledge for the study. The observations

were informal, which allowed me to interpret the data (Petty et al., 2012). In addition to

interviews and observations, I asked the social media manager if they were willing to

provide secondary data. I did not perform a pilot study.

To remain compliant, I ensured all participants understood what they were

volunteering to do as well as clarified any questions regarding the consent form (see

Appendix A). I informed the participants that I would keep all information confidential,

including their names and the names of organizations. All questions focused on how

social media could be managed and about the process used to manage social media. I

interviewed two participants and observed one participant as she managed an

organization's social media. The interviews lasted no longer than 1 hour, and the

observations occurred over a two week time period. Throughout the two weeks, I

observed social media managers three times per week for three hours. The length of the

interviews and observations allowed enough time for data saturation; however, I ensured

the information was not abundant and could be analyzed (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011).

After the interviews, I transcribed the material recorded and offered transcription review.

I also interpreted the data and used member checking by offering the participants time to

review and correct any misinterpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

Data Organization Techniques

I collected data from interviews, by recording the sessions, and observations, and

then transcribed the data by typing the participant's responses on my Mac in a Microsoft®

Word document. After transcription, I organized the data and used Nvivo software to

code common themes. To ensure security of the collected data, the data was loaded on a flash drive and will be stored in a locked cabinet for 5 years, where I will be the only one with access. I ensured confidentiality by deleting any names used in the interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

In this study, I asked in-depth questions about how participants manage social media. I also observed a participant who manages an organization's social media. The main research question was as follows: What strategies could social media managers in central Ohio implement to manage negative comments posted on social media sites? Triangulation is apparent when multiple methods are utilized to fulfill an understanding of the research question (Denzin, 2012). I used interviews, observations, and secondary data collection to ensure triangulation was met.

This study is a qualitative case study and, therefore, does not have hypotheses. I collected data from interview participants, observation participants, and secondary data. Once I collected the data, I organized by themes using Nvivo software. The interview questions I chose helped me gather specific information about managing social media and complemented the main research question. A qualitative approach allowed me to gain experiential information from the participants and an understanding of how they manage social media (Kelly et al., 2013). Case studies allow for a diversity of multiple forms of data collection (Petty et al., 2012) and explore the real world phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

Validity

Boesch, Scholz, Schwaninger, and Weber (2013) explained how qualitative studies use confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability to indicate reliability and validity, used in quantitative studies. Confirmability allows the conclusions to be the most pragmatic gathered from the data (Boesch et al., 2013). Therefore, I ensured confirmability by analyzing the data several times before submitting the research. I provided a step by step guide to the procedure that I will use to collect, organize, and analyze the data. Credibility is the means of making sure the research and analysis are credible (Boesch et al., 2013). To ensure credibility, I used member checking by devising participants to review the transcriptions for errors or confusion (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Transferability enables readers to certify that the research is comparable or not comparable to other research or theories (Boesch et al., 2013). I compared the findings of this study to previous research and theories, and I made suggestions for future research. Dependability warrants stability in the research (Boesch et al., 2013). I used member checking by allowing participants to review the transcription and data interpretation to confirm that I portrayed an accurate view of their experience (Moore et al., 2011). Throughout this research process, I thoroughly explored peer reviewed journal articles, marketing industry websites, and government websites to ensure validity. I ensured data saturation was met by allowing enough time to answer interview questions thoroughly and observed social media managers at the same organization (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). I observed and interviewed social media

managers until I saw that the information was duplicated and new information was evident.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included explanation of what role the researcher had in the study, how the participants were selected, and the reason for selecting a qualitative method and a case study design. In addition, in Section 2, I discussed data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I provide the research findings as well as business and social change implications.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this section, I present the findings of the study and my recommendations. In addition, I describe how the research and the literature relate. Section 3 includes (a) overview of the study; (b) presentation of the findings; (c) applications to professional practice; (d) implications for social change; (e) recommendations for action; (f) recommendations for further research; (g) reflections; and (h) summary and conclusions.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to effectively manage negative comments posted on social media sites. The central research question was: What strategies could social media managers in central Ohio implement to manage negative comments posted on social media sites? The study included an observation of a social media manager and two interviews with social media managers from a social media management firm. The inclusion criteria for the professional(s) observed and interviewed were: (a) be a social media manager in Central Ohio; and (b) be at least 18 years of age.

I collected data through observation over a 2-week time period and in-depth, semistructured interviews. The three themes that appeared from the analysis were: (a) community management, (b) engagement, and (c) reputation management. The analysis of the data revealed the importance of organizations having a social media presence to maintain consumer relationships. In addition, the analysis proved that organizations should respond to negative comments from consumers immediately.

Presentation of the Findings

In this section, I describe the different viewpoints that I gathered from participants through observations and interviews to gain a holistic view of the study (Dickson-Swift et al., 2014). After collecting the data, I transcribed the interviews and performed data analysis. I used member checking to ensure I represented the data I collected appropriately (Carlson, 2010). I used Nvivo software to learn common themes as I analyzed the data. The common themes that emerged from the data were (a) community management, (b) engagement, and (c) reputation management. The themes related to the central research question, the conceptual framework, and the existing literature.

I performed data collection at a social media management firm, Company A. I observed and interviewed one social media manager, Participant 1 and interviewed another social media manager, Participant 2. I asked both participants the same interview questions and allowed them time to add any other related information at the end of the interview.

Research Question

The central research question of the study was: What strategies could social media managers in central Ohio implement to manage negative comments posted on social media sites?

Theme 1: Community Management

Community management relates to the central research question by ensuring organizations have a presence within social media. Organizations that create a positive environment for followers could create a positive environment for service recovery for

consumers that post negative experience messages. SET involves social units exchange information (Homans, 1961). Social media platforms are an environment where consumers and businesses can share information. Company A engages in communication within social media platforms with followers and other organizations, practicing the social exchange theory.

I observed the practice of community management by Participant 1. She visited clients' social media pages such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and read the posts. If a person mentioned a client specifically, Participant 1 would acknowledge the post by responding or *liking* it (Facebook or Instagram), and *favoriting* or *retweeting* it (Twitter). Participant 1 also found conversations by searching for key terms relating to the business. Twitter is especially user friendly when searching for key terms because users can search for common hashtags (#; Participant 1 Interview).

When a follower shared something that related to the client, Participant 1 *shared*, *retweeted* or *liked* the post so the client's followers could read the information as well. Social media users can add their location to Instagram when posting comments; therefore, Participant 1 searched for comments posted in the location of her clients to determine if there were conversations relating to them. Algharabat et al. (2013) posited that the Internet should not be the only means of managing relationships with consumers, although marketers can create relationships faster, and the Internet provides an additional source to maintain relationships.

Participant 1 searched organizations comparable to the client organization she was working on and shared posts when the material related to the client. An example I

observed is a flooring company that shared information about interior design. Participant 1 explained that a community could be built by sharing other organizations and follower's information. Additionally, by sharing information of organizations and followers, more people may view the information and, therefore, could create more followers. Dekay (2012) recommended responding to comments to show concern for the consumers.

When followers share information on a client's social media page, Participant 1 responded with, "thank you for sharing," and shared material about the client that related to the original post. An example I observed was a follower posted information about interior design ideas and Participant 1 added to the post by sharing the client's tips on interior design.

Community management is an ongoing task for Company A to engage in for their clients' daily. Participant 1 adds content to all of her client's social media networks that she manages every day. She creates content for an entire month and then each day she posts the content she had planned. Participant 2 explained how it is important to plan the content ahead of time instead of creating it daily because this could result in less time to respond and engage the followers. However, unplanned content may need to be added as changes can occur daily. Participant 2 provided secondary data from social media analytics that showed that a higher reach was followed by frequent posts rather than limited posts.

An important aspect of community management is keeping information about the business current on all social media platforms (Participant 1 Interview). Users rely on

social media for general business information (Participant 1 Interview). The information

should be user friendly and easily accessible. Participant 1 also used social media to tell

followers about other aspects of the business. One example I observed was informing a

follower about a mobile application that could be used to help design a room.

Some social media platforms have a means of separating followers into similar

categories based on their interests. Participant 1 utilized Twitter's settings to separate her

client's followers so she could easily search for key terms. By doing so, Participant 1

was able to target similar users with information about her clients. Additionally,

Participant 1 searched for organizations similar to her clients and shared their related

posts to create a positive community with other businesses. Alameddine (2013)

explained that communication through social media could build trust with consumers.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 explained that they use social media native sites to

manage daily activities as well as Hootsuite and Sprout Social. Hootsuite and Sprout

Social are social media management tools, which can be used to manage, monitor, and

measure multiple social media platforms from the same space (Participant 2 Interview). I

observed Participant 1 while she added posts to Sprout Social and scheduled them for a

future date.

Theme 2: Engagement

Engagement relates to the central research question by encouraging

communication within social networks to create an environment where consumers and

organizations can share information. Engagement could create a positive environment

allowing consumers to post experience messages and allowing organizations to respond

and rectify if needed, the experience. SET exhibited when Company A engaged
consumers while communication exchanged between social units.

Engaging followers on social media is part of Company A's strategy for their
clients to maintain relationships. Gensler et al. (2013) postulated that by engaging
consumers, brand stories and be shared and promoted. The social media manager,
Participant 1, started conversations with followers by searching for terms that related to
the client. Participant 1 shared with me that starting conversations relating to the
organization creates a positive environment where followers can have open discussions
about the topic. Both, Participant 1 and Participant 2, explained that the native social
media sites are more useful than Hootsuite and Sprout Social platforms to engage
followers in conversation.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 described how each social media platform has a
feature to create reports. The reports show the number of followers who have viewed the
content, called reach, and if followers have engaged in the content by clicking *like*. The
reports are utilized to determine if there is a specific time in the day to post content when
engagement is high. Additionally, Company A creates reports to determine what type of
content followers engages in more often. "When followers click *like* or *share* something
we have posted, that is considered positive sentiment" (Participant 2 Interview).
Participant 2 also used a term, key performance indicator, to describe insights she learned
from the reports. Participant 2 shared secondary data reports with me and explained that,
from 2014 to 2015, the more number of posts resulted in a higher reach of users.

I observed Participant 1 while she measured performance for one of her clients using a technique called AB testing. Participant 1 described that she utilizes AB testing when she posts specific content and frequency for one week and posts different content at a different frequency for the following week to determine which week had the highest engagement. Participant 1 and 2 discussed that after AB testing has been completed they use the social media platform's reporting mechanisms to determine which week had the highest engagement by followers. AB testing is a good tool, however, because of the weekly changes, Participant 1 suggested to use AB testing sparingly.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 shared in the interviews that another technique to engage consumers is by informing followers of contests or promotions through social media. An example I observed was notifying followers that one client, a restaurant, was offering free food to consumers who came to the place of business at a particular time of the day. A positive conversation could start by requesting the followers to act for a promotional activity. Participant 1 and Participant 2 explained the importance of a daily presence on social media. Bloching et al. (2013) explained that social media could help create individual relationships with consumers rather than traditional marketing, such as commercials targeting large markets. Purchase behavior for an organization could occur when positive conversation or informative posts by an organization's social media engage followers.

Theme 3: Reputation Management

Reputation management is related to the central research question by offering strategies for organizations to respond to consumer's negative experience comments.

Reputation management could create an environment for organizations to improve service recovery. The social exchange theory, where social units exchange communication (Homans, 1961), is revealed in reputation management when consumers and organizations communicate about an experience.

Reputation management is when marketers search for and respond to comments posted about clients (Participant 1 Interview). If a consumer posted a positive experience comment, Participant 1 simply commented back by thanking the customer for their business and then sharing the comment for other followers to view. However, due to the sensitivity of negative comments, Participant 1 explained that she sets up alerts through the social media platforms, so she is made aware of negative comments immediately, although she is not made aware of comments posted in other areas of the Internet. Consumers actively utilize social media to post negative comments with the expectation of a response from the organization (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014).

Aside from reviews posted on social media platforms, the social media manager, Participant 1, used a search engine to discover reviews about clients by entering the client name and the term "reviews." She finds reviews on Yelp, which is a review site where many consumers will post about their experiences. Within the Yelp platform, organizations can respond to the reviews by posting a comment publicly or privately. When Participant 1 responded to positive Yelp reviews, she privately thanked the consumer, when she responded to negative comments she publicly thanked the consumer, apologized, and offered further contact information.

When the participants were made aware of a negative comment posed to a client's social media, they followed a step by step process. The first step, Participant 1 researched the consumer's profile to explore other experiences the consumer posted and to determine if a true customer posted the comment or if the profile was spam. Then, Participant 2 recalled that when she was made aware of a negative comment she researched the incidence by asking the client about background information. An example I observed was when a consumer posted about a poor customer service experience. Participant 1 asked the client if there was any background information they should be made aware of regarding the issue posted. Then, with the information Participant 1 collected, she created a response. The response included a thank you to the consumer, an apology, and the manager's email encouraging the consumer to contact further to remedy the situation.

During the observation of Participant 1, she responded to consumers that posted about experiences other than poor customer service. For example, a consumer posted about disliking the taste of the food. Participant 1 stated, "since consumers have different tastes and we can not do anything about that, I respond by thanking the consumer and apologizing, however, I do not leave further contact information" (personal communication, July 21, 2015).

Another example of a negative comment is if a consumer posts a false statement. For instance, Participant 2 described a situation when a consumer posted a comment regarding her client, a restaurant, about food not being offered at a certain time. Participant 2 responded to the consumer explaining that food was available at certain

times and where the consumer could find the information. She went on to explain that she does not tell the customer they are wrong, she only informs them where to find the information.

The participants both explained that each time a negative service comment is posted they thank the consumer, offer an apology, and offer information to contact the business outside of social media. Participant 2 mentioned the importance of rectifying the situation outside of social media avoid any escalating issues or further attention to the incident. Participant 1 discussed that after the remedy of the incidence; sometimes consumers will update the original post or review. Participant 1 and 2 both suggest daily management of social media so that if a consumer posts a negative comment the incidence could be corrected right away. Barger and Labrecque (2013) also suggested handling the negative comment promptly to ensure service recovery before other consumers become aware of the situation and *share* the incidence with other consumers.

Participant 1 and 2 both explained in the interviews that they do not offer consumers gift cards, discounts, or other forms of financial reward to compensate for a poor experience. Yelp, specifically, does not allow any form of bribery to reviewers whether positive or negative. Participant 2 stated, "people are upset, and they want to be heard, and they want someone to say I am sorry, they want to apply a human element to the whole social experience and sometimes that is just good enough" (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

When I asked the participants what their policy was on deleting comments, they both informed me that they do not have a policy on deleting comments. In 2012, Dekay

found that almost half of organizations delete negative comments by consumers;

however, Dekay (2012) and Dinnen et al. (2011) suggested that organizations should use

negative comments as an opportunity for service recovery. In 2015, social media

platforms for businesses do not have the option to delete comments rather they have the

ability to hide the comments. If someone posts a comment or picture that is derogatory

or not related to the client, the participants report the post by following the social

network's review process. If a follower is consistent on posting information that could

disturb other people, Participant 2 suggests hiding the comment and banning the user. If

the comment is reported and deleted, the comment is not viewable to other users.

However, if the comment is hidden, then the comment is hidden from the organization's

page but is still visible on the user's page. Participant 2 added that if the comment is

liable and does not disturb other users, for example, a negative customer service

experience, then the social network is unlikely to remove the comment. "It is the power

of the people, and that is why social media exists" (Participant 2 Interview).

When I asked Participant 2 if she wanted to add anything at the end of the

interview, she responded by explaining that there is not a process or protocol that is

specific to every negative comment posted. She added that her goal was to respond as a

human by adding personalization and not creating a depersonalized robotic response.

Participant 2 stated, "plans are good but sometimes with reputation management it

doesn't work that way, if you are face to face at a customer service desk, you are not

going to tell the customer to wait while you check your manual, you are going to react

like a human being" (Participant 2 Interview). Participant 1 suggested that when creating

a response to a negative comment; think about how a person would react if they were face to face with the consumer, and respond in that manner.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study indicate the need for a strategy to respond to negative comments on social media. Some organizations do not have a strategy in place to manage social media or respond to experience comments. Organizations should realize the importance of encouraging consumers to relay their experiences, positive or negative, on social media because the social media manager can benefit by improving service recovery and creating a competitive advantage (Dinnen & Hassanien, 2011). The research of this study could provide marketers with effective strategies to manage social media.

Social media managers can benefit from the findings of this study by creating a strategy to respond to negative comments and improve service recovery. The following recommendations were determined from the interviews and observations I completed: (a) search daily for reviews and respond immediately; (b) respond with a thank you, an apology, and contact information to further the discussion apart from social media; (c) create a positive social media environment by encouraging conversations related to your product; (d) research the issue with employees to ensure the response is appropriate; (e) engage followers in conversations by promoting your product; (f) use experience comments as an opportunity to create a competitive advantage; (g) do not delete comments unless derogatory to the audience; and (h) build and maintain relationships through social media.

The findings of this study contribute the existing academic literature of social media management strategies. There is literature on social media management, however, there is not extensive literature regarding responding to negative comments. This study will contribute to the literature by adding research about negative comments. Alameddine (2013), Ang and Buttle (2012), Chen et al. (2011), and Dekay (2012) conducted similar studies concerning social media management strategies. This qualitative case study will add another viewpoint to the existing literature.

Implications for Social Change

This study contributes to positive social change by offering a strategy to respond to negative comments on social media. Social media is a vehicle for consumers to share their experiences (Gensler et al., 2013). Consumers want to have a voice and have expectations of organizations responding to their comments (Labrecque, 2014). Service recovery could be improved if marketers have a strategy in place to manage social media and to respond to negative comments. Social media is the "power of the people" (Participant 2 Interview), and consumers' experiences may improve if organizations have a strategy in place.

The findings of this study contribute to positive social change by understanding that social media has brought a new facet to marketing. Organizations and consumers alike should be aware of the communication capabilities of social media as well as the benefit of maintaining relationships (Nassar, 2012). Social media encourages everyone to have a part in building the brand of an organization (Gensler et al., 2013).

Finally, this study can contribute to social change by giving marketers the opportunity to realize that social media should be a part of their marketing mix. New marketing techniques and traditional marketing techniques deliver many differences (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). Digital and traditional marketing strategies should be entwined to deliver a competitive advantage (Luo & Zhang, 2013).

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies used by social media managers to effectively manage negative comments posted on social media sites. Dekay's (2012) research showed that an organizations social media environment could be unfavorable to consumers when organizations do not respond to negative comments. The findings from this study could help organizations create a social media strategy, specifically, how to respond to negative comments.

I plan to share the findings of my research with my place of employment, including the marketing students that I teach as an academic instructor. Once in ProQuest, the findings of this study may also help other student's research. I plan to use this information as a marketer and a home party consultant to manage my social media platforms.

Recommendations for Further Research

Limitations were apparent in this study. A limitation is a weakening of the scope of study (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). Further research should be conducted by expanding the scope of the study to eliminate the limitations. Research could be conducted to determine how purchase behavior is affected after service recovery is complete and to

determine if there are financial implications to the organization. Additionally, multiple social media firms could be observed within a larger geographical area to learn multiple social media strategies. Finally, research could be done regarding positive comments and the affects on relationship management.

Reflections

I found the doctoral study process intense and challenging as well as fun and rewarding. As a marketing instructor, I was pulled in the direction of studying marketing and a current issue that marketers face. Social media has become a common practice for marketers and more focused on relationship building rather than generating revenue (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). The findings of this study show the importance of responding to negative comments to maintain relationships with consumers.

Before starting research and collecting data, my mission was to find a process that organizations could follow to respond to negative comments. After completing the study, my thinking has evolved to understand there is not a specific process of responding to negative comments. Social media managers should treat follower's comments as individuals and an opportunity to improve service recovery.

Conclusion

I gathered the data in this qualitative case study by observing and interviewing participants from an agency in central Ohio. The data were collected to unveil a social media management strategy, specifically responding to negative comments. I uncovered three themes through data analysis and they were as follows (a) community management; (b) engagement; and (c) reputation management.

The results of this study contributed to positive social change as well as professional practice. Organizations could benefit by creating a strategy to improve service recovery and maintaining customer relationships and, therefore, creating a competitive advantage. Consumers could benefit by having a pleasant service experience with organizations by communicating via social media.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of organizations and how they

manage social media. The researcher is inviting social media managers that are at least

18 years of age, to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed

consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Darci Wagner, who is a doctoral
student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to explore strategies used by social media managers

to effectively manage negative comments posted on social media sites. The targeted

population will consist of social media managers in central Ohio. The implication for

positive social change includes the potential to improve service recovery for consumers.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Be observed over a three week time period for three days each week and for 3 hours each day. If I am able to gain a holistic view of how social media is managed in less time than stated, the observations will conclude.
- If available, provide documents that have been used to track past social media management methods and/or statistics showing the results of social media management techniques.
- Be interviewed for 1 hour and audio recorded.
- Upon the completion of observations and interviews, I will provide a summary of data I have collected for your review to ensure I have accurately represented the observation or interview.

Here are the interview questions:

1. How do you manage your social media and other organization's social media?

2. How do you respond to negative comments posted on social media?

3. What is your policy on deleting negative comments?

4. How often do you manage your social media?

5. Do you have a program to manage all social media concurrently? If so, what program do you use and how does it work?

6. Do you suggest organizations use an outside firm to manage social media or should they have a dedicated person within the organization?

7. How do you use social media to engage consumers?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The benefit or participating in this study is becoming aware of how your organization manages social media and the strengths and opportunities that may arise.

Payment:
There will not be any form of payment given for participating in the study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by being stored in a locked safe and will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at xxxxx.xxxxxx@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-xxx-xxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is **07-08-15-0415278** and it expires on **July 7, 2016.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to the email (xxxxx.xxxxxx@waldenu.edu) with the words "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1.   How do you manage your social media and other organization's social

       media?

2.   How do you respond to negative comments posted on social media?

3.   What is your policy on deleting negative comments?

4.   How often do you manage your social media?

5.   Do you have a program to manage all social media concurrently? If so,

       what program do you use and how does it work?

6.   Do you suggest organizations use an outside firm to manage social media

       or should they have a dedicated person within the organization?

7.   How do you use social media to engage consumers?

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

xxx xxxxx xxxx
xxxx xxxx xxxxx Street
xxxxxxxx, Ohio xxxxx
xxx.xxx.xxxx

06.26.2015

Dear xxxxx xxxxxx,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Managing Negative Comments Posted on Social Media
within xxx xxxxxx. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit employees that meet the inclusion criteria, conduct interviews and observations, collect secondary data, if available, such as documents that have been used to track past social media management methods or statistics showing the results of social media management techniques and disseminate the research findings. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Providing a space where you can observe and interview voluntary participants. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
_____Sign Name _____Print Name

Authorization Official
xxxx
xxxxxxx, Ohio xxxxx
xxx.xxx.xxxx

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).