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Successful Implementation of Grocery Store Loyalty Reward Programs

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Cristina Reinert

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

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by

Cristina Dawn Reinert

MBA, Saint Leo University, 2012

BA, Saint Leo University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2016

Abstract

Consumer loyalty programs are a key marketing strategy implemented across multiple industries in the United States. A successfully implemented loyalty program can benefit both the consumer and the company. The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. The theory of planned behavior was used as the conceptual framework to guide the study. Semistructured interviews, guided by the theory of planned behavior, were conducted with 4 participants who had direct involvement with the delivery of the consumer loyalty program, in Ocala, Florida. Data were also gathered from loyalty program documents and from reviewing the grocery store chain website. Data were transcribed and coded via Yin's 5 phases of analysis to identify themes. Mobile technology, consumer involvement, and lack of social media applications were the prominent themes that emerged during data analysis. The study findings are of interest to grocery store managers because they provide information for use in increasing store revenue, consumer satisfaction, and cost savings for grocery store chains implementing successful loyalty reward programs. Implications for positive social change include positive community initiatives and cause-related marketing campaigns.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this study to the three most important people in my life: my husband Chad and our two sons, Dylan and Vaughn. All the late nights, early mornings, and challenges were manageable through your support, encouragement, and love. I could not have accomplished this, nor would I have had the desire to, without the three of you. Thank you.

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I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Jill Murray, for her tireless support and patience. You have made this journey manageable, and helped me finally see the light at the end of a very long tunnel. Thank you now and always for guiding me through this journey! I would also like to thank my second committee member, Dr. Matthew Knight: Your eye for detail has improved my paper, and fine-tuned my skills as a writer and researcher. Dr. Judith Blando, my URR: I greatly appreciate your insight and willingness to jump on in and help me finish my study. Dr. Carolyn Salerno, I appreciate and value your kindness throughout my journey. When I thought I could no longer manage this uphill climb, you took the time to redirect my goals and my purpose. Thank you for keeping me grounded when I needed it the most. I would also like to send a special thank you to Dr. Julie Ducharme. You have been an ear from the beginning of my journey at Walden, and your guidance has meant a lot to me. I would also like to thank Drs. Freda Turner and Fred Walker. You two are the backbones of this program, and deserve many thanks for all you do.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Marketing can create long-term relationships that focus on the benefits to both the business and the consumer (Webster, 1992). A proactive marketing strategy that includes various promotional methods can create a positive experience for both the business and the consumer (Cant & Toit, 2012). When company managers lose focus of the consumers' needs and wants, however, their companies can lose revenue and suffer declining image (Day & Moorman, 2013). Meeting or exceeding the expectations of consumers, however, can build higher satisfaction than allowing low expectations in hopes of surpassing them (Malik, 2012).

This change in expectations has increased the need for stronger relationships with the consumer and a better understanding of consumer behavior. Consumer loyalty programs are marketing strategies that the retailing, travel, and financial service industries use to connect to their consumers while promoting the use of their products or services (Cant & Toit, 2012). Loyalty programs can be a status symbol for some consumers when the loyalty program is a tier-based program (Arbore & Estes, 2013). This study was designed to identify proven strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver a consumer loyalty program in Ocala, Florida. The study findings are intended for use by grocery store chain managers and business decision makers to provide an improved understanding of successful loyalty program strategies.

Background of the Problem

The U.S. retail grocery industry is a major economic sector with more than $500 billion dollars in annual revenue since 2011 (Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple, & Ellinger,

2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The retailing, travel, and financial services in the United States collectively spend more than $1 billion on consumer loyalty programs each year, and that number continues to grow (Steinhoff & Palmatier, 2016). One type of marketing strategy used in the U.S. retail grocery industry is a consumer loyalty program, which can create a shopping experience for the consumer that increases their loyalty (Aaker, 1997; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009).

Consumer loyalty programs are used to attract, retain, and satisfy consumers in an effort to build a long-term relationship that increases profitability (Gandomi & Zolfaghari, 2013; Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). Retail grocery store consumer loyalty programs that correctly stimulate consumers attract new consumers and increase sales (Felgate, Fearne, Di Falco, & Garcia Martinez, 2012). Grocery store chains can create a loyalty program that increases brand perception in a positive way and sustain loyalty from the consumer (Clatworthy, 2012). When consumer satisfaction or consumer loyalty is absent, grocery store chains must address these issues with a marketing strategy that may include a consumer loyalty program (Cant & Toit, 2012). The results of this research study increase the grocery store managers understanding of which consumer loyalty programs are proven effective as part of their marketing strategy to stimulate the consumers participation.

Problem Statement

Between 2006 and 2012, more than 50% of managers in the U.S. failed to increase profits through the implementation of a consumer loyalty program (Choi & Kim, 2013; Gandomi & Zolfaghari, 2013; Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). More than 60% of

loyalty programs across the United States retail, travel, and financial industries are ineffective in delivering the anticipated profits because of an oversaturation of similar programs and managers not fully applying the consumer sales data (Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). The general business problem is that some grocery store managers deliver ineffective consumer loyalty programs, resulting in lost revenue opportunities. The specific business problem is that some grocery store managers do not have strategies to deliver consumer loyalty programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. Yin (2014) suggested six types of sources when gathering evidence to conduct a case study, documents, archived records, interviews, observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. I collected data from two sources, semistructured interviews and documents related to the loyalty program available to the consumer. I specifically interviewed four individuals, employed in management positions at a grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida.

I used the interview findings to develop a template of strategies to deliver consumer loyalty programs that may stimulate consumer participation. This template was designed for grocery store managers to use when planning, updating, or implementing their consumer loyalty programs. This use is intended to facilitate grocery stores becoming more profitable, allowing deeper discounts to consumers that significantly

impact low-income families. I anticipate benefits to the communities served by the stores through marketing initiatives and community support.

Nature of the Study

I selected a qualitative single case study as the most appropriate research method. I explored a single case that focused on one retail grocery chain, in alignment with Lauckner, Paterson, and Krupa's (2012) recommendation to use fewer than four cases to allow a thorough exploration of each case and its variables. A quantitative study was not appropriate because statistical generalization was not the purpose of this study, rather analytical generalization (Yin, 2014). A mixed method study was not appropriate because I was not exploring numerical data in this study (Anyan, 2013; Wahyuni, 2012).

I considered and rejected several qualitative research designs before selecting a case study design. The most common qualitative research designs are case study, ethnography, narrative research, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Bernard, 2012). An ethnographic design was not selected because it focuses on cultural aspects of the targeted demographic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013), which was outside the scope of the proposed study. A phenomenological design was not selected because it focuses on in-depth understanding of lived experience which was outside the scope of the proposed study (Wilson, 2012). Grounded theory was inappropriate for this study because it focuses on behavior that is interactional (Goulding, 2005). Narrative design focuses on a narration story from a single perspective (Hays & Wood, 2011); since this was not the focus of this study, I rejected it.

A case study design was selected for this study for three reasons: (a) a case study design explores a phenomenon that can include managerial and organizational practices through two or more data sources, (b) the focus of a case study can be on current phenomena, and (c) the data collection can be why and how questions (Yin, 2014). Stake (1995) noted that a case study leads to a better understanding of a specific bounded system.

Research Question

The primary research question was: What strategies do grocery store managers use to deliver consumer loyalty programs?

Interview Questions

1. What consumer loyalty program strategies have you implemented at your grocery store that have been successful in reaching company goals?

2. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase consumer participation?

3. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase store revenue?

4. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase specific product sales?

5. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that include technology?

Conceptual Framework

This study used the theory of planned behavior (TPB) perspective (Ajzen, 2011) as its framework exploring the chosen phenomenon from a pragmatic worldview. TPB offered a framework model that guided my interpretation and understanding of the findings of this study. Ajzen originally developed the TPB in 1985 in order to predict human social behavior (Ajzen, 2011). The TPB's main hypothesis is that the combination of a person's intentions and motivation can determine their effort to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theory identifies five elements: (a) attitude toward the behavior, (b) subjective norm, (c) perceived behavioral control, (d) intention, and (e) behavior. These elements jointly depend upon the intention and the behavioral control to achieve the desired end behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

I specifically applied the TPB to explore consumer loyalty programs that stimulate consumer participation as part of the marketing strategy. To ensure correct alignment throughout my research, I mapped the five elements of the theory's model into the interview questions. The inclusion of the elements within the interview questions enabled me to collect relevant data and information, and maintain alignment with the problem statement. It also facilitated understanding the emerging themes during data analysis and synthesis.

Operational Definitions

Brand experience: A consumer's feelings associated with a specific brand name product or service (Shamim & Muhammad, 2013).

Brand image: An image created by a company that corresponds to a specific brand that consumers recognize (Arce-Urriza & Cebollada, 2012).

Brand-loyal consumer: A consumer that regularly patronizes a retail establishment or brand at different times throughout the lifespan of the product or consumer (Cant & Toit, 2012).

Marketing myopia: A situation in which entrepreneures define their business based on their product instead of based on the consumer's needs (Smith, Drumwright, & Gentile, 2010).

Narratology: A qualitative inquiry that tells the reader a story or experience of one or two individual's perspective (Hays & Wood, 2011). Also known as narrative research design.

Specialty retail grocery: A retail store that sells specific grocery items are an alternative to other large retail grocery chains (Johnston & Szabo, 2011).

User imagery: A term that describes who or what type of person that might use a brand through a user-driven image that relates to the specific brand (Aaker, 1997).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

This study used three assumptions intended to allow me to conduct the research study on a specific topic and remain focused, as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2014) and Moustakas (1994). In this study, the first assumption was that all research participants would answer the questions honestly. The second assumption was that I remain unbiased toward the participants and their responses to the interview questions.

The third assumption was that I could analyze the results of this study using the chosen conceptual framework.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that may affect the study and its findings in a negative way (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). I identified several limitations in this study:

1. I am a novice researcher, which limited the research and analysis of this study.

2. I did not use quantitative metrics to validate my research.

3. Ocala, Florida, may not be a good representation of retail grocery stores across the United States.

4. The length of the interviews was adequate for obtaining all relevant information.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries placed on a study that will allow a researcher to keep the study focused (Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). This study was delimited to one grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida. The participant pool was delimited to the managers at that grocery store chain that had experience with their stores consumer loyalty program. The amount of time for this study was approximately 45 minutes per interview and three days to review company documents.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative single case study was designed to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. Managers who implement proven effective consumer loyalty programs could be of value to their grocery

chains through an increase in revenue, an increase in consumer satisfaction, and through cost savings to the grocery store chain. Effective loyalty programs stimulate the consumer to make purchases that result in measurable profits (Choi & Kim, 2013; Melnyk & Bijmolt, 2015; Meyer-Waarden, Benavent, & Casteran, 2013). The proper implementation of the grocery store chains consumer loyalty program creates value for both the consumer and the grocery store chains (Choi & Kim, 2013; Meyer-Waarden et al., 2013).

The results of this study contribute to the grocery store managers improved delivery and implementation of consumer loyalty programs. Consumer loyalty programs implemented with an effective strategy increase store revenue and promote loyalty from the consumer (Melnyk & Bijmolt, 2015; Meyer-Waarden et al., 2013). The results of this study could increase the use of effective consumer loyalty programs in the grocery industry. The delivery and implementation of an effective consumer loyalty program reduces the grocery industry's marketing and transaction costs, increases cross-selling, and word-of-mouth advertising (Cant & Toit, 2012). These benefits add to a grocery store chain's internal job growth, stability within local economies, community initiatives, and community donations. Consumer loyalty programs attract new consumers and increase sales by specific category or for the entire store (Felgate et al., 2012). Anilkumar and Joseph (2012) found that consumers have many choices, and the brand image in their mind affects their brand choice. Consumers change their mind on where they purchase groceries, a consumer loyalty program is an effective marketing tool to retain the

consumers. The consumer's increased loyalty to a specific grocery store chain increases annual revenue (Felgate et al., 2012).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. My review of prior literature on consumer loyalty, the retail industry, and marketing techniques revealed that the retail industry is vast and that finding marketing research specifically focused on the grocery retail industry was challenging. This review specifically identified a gap in the literature concerning how grocery store chains can develop successful loyalty programs.

I identified pertinent literature by conducting searches using the Walden University Library, Saint Leo University Library, Lake Sumter State College Library, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Thoreau, SAGE, EBSCO, and the American Marketing Association using the following words: *attitude*, *brand image*, *brand experience*, *case study*, *consumer commitment*, *consumer loyalty*, *consumer loyalty programs*, *experience*, *grocery*, *image*, *loyalty*, *marketing*, *phenomenology*, *qualitative methods*, *retail*, *retail grocery*, *reward programs*, and *theory*. I identified 161 relevant publications, of which 99 were used in my literature review. Of these 99 references, 95 (96%) were peer-reviewed. Of the total references used in my proposal, 151 of the 161 (94%) were peer-reviewed. I ensured that 85% of the total references had publishing dates between 2012 and 2016, which was within 5-years of the anticipated completion date in alignment with Walden University guidelines.

Table 1

Count of References Used in This Doctoral Study

Type	Recent (5-years of 2016)	Older than 5-years	Total	%
Books	5	3	8	
Conferences	0	0	0	
Dissertations	1	0	1	
Journal Articles	129	20	149	
Org. Report	1	1	2	
Websites/Other	1	0	1	
Total	137	24	161	85%
	Peer Reviewed	Not Peer-reviewed	Total	%
Lit Review	95	4	99	96%
Study	151	10	161	94%

The Theory of Planned Behavior

The TPB was first developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 as a model for predicting human social behavior (Ajzen, 2011). TPB's main tenet is that a person's intentions once combined with motivation can determine their effort to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Its model has five elements:

1. Attitude toward the behavior.

2. Subjective norm.

3. Perceived behavioral control.

4. Intention.

5. Behavior.

The literature review is organized according to the TPB model's five elements and related subtopics:

1. Consumer loyalty behaviors.

2. E-marketing.

3. Social motivations.

4. Brand image.

5. Brand experience.

6. Brand loyalty.

7. Managing brand community.

8. Commitment.

9. Relationships.

10. Consumer involvement.

According to the TPB, the intentions of a consumer are seen through motivational factors that influence behavior, good or bad: When a consumer is motivated by a strong intention, the desired behavior is more likely to occur (Ajzen, 1991). TPB's behaviorist approach to consumer behavior was a key element of this study.

Attitude Toward the Behavior

The TPB has been successfully applied to explore consumer attitudes toward the U.S. food industry (Bhuyan, 2011). A consumer's attitude toward a brand or product can lead to their purchase behavior, positive or negative (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012).

Communication is a primary component of creating consumer satisfaction and opportunities for growth (Day & Moorman, 2013). Business growth and profitability cannot occur without consumer satisfaction (Nazari, Divkolaei, & Sorkhi, 2012). The retail grocery industry uses positive attitudes to promote loyalty and establish a consumer base. Loyal consumers increase sales (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). When a consumer is satisfied, they are more likely to become a repeat customer. Consumer satisfaction is a feeling or attitude a consumer has about a product or service after consuming it. Keeping this feeling or attitude positive is important to the profitability of a business (Nazari et al., 2012). A satisfied consumer perceives a loyalty program with a positive attitude, and a dissatisfied consumer perceives a loyalty program with a negative attitude (Gandomi & Zolfaghari, 2013). When the consumer is satisfied with the loyalty program rewards, their satisfaction expands to the product or brand through a long-term loyal relationship (Kang, Alejandro, & Groza, 2014).

Loyalty programs enhance consumer purchases and consumption (Bahri-Ammari, 2012). Garcia Gomez, Guitierrez Arranz, and Gutierrez Cillan (2012a) found five determinants of whether a consumer will join a consumer loyalty program: price sensitivity, variety, enjoyment, general attitude toward program, and privacy concerns. Loyalty reward cards are a consumer relationship management (CRM) tool that benefit the marketing strategy of a business (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012; Hutchinson, Donnell, Gilmore, & Reid, 2015). Different strategies in marketing can inform current marketing research and businesses practice (Lund & Marinova, 2015; Shaw, 2012). A regression analysis compared different promotional mechanics and different tiers of product

purchased with loyalty cards (Felgate et al., 2012). The value of a consumer loyalty program to the retail grocery industry far exceeds understanding the consumer experience, because it can create a relationship with the consumer. A lack of consumer satisfaction, conversely, can negatively affect the relationship that a business is working to build (Gocek & Beceren, 2012).

Consumer loyalty behaviors. Positive behavior loyalty can create actual purchase behavior from the consumers, and possibly increase store profit (Cheng, 2011). Consumer loyalty programs fit within this idea because the design can be to seek specific behaviors from the consumer. Some consumers make purchases solely on the emotional attachment to the product, brand, or need they are trying to satisfy (Cheng, 2011; Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Khan, 2014). Consumer loyalty programs can stimulate brand identification and pull consumers away from the competition (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012). The goal of loyalty or reward programs is to maneuver the consumer into being loyal to a retail store (Arbore & Estes, 2013).

In the United States, consumer loyalty programs have more than 1.3 billion members (Khan, 2014). The number of consumer loyalty programs in the U.S. increase by approximately 11% annually (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). The average U.S. household participates in up to 12 loyalty programs (Henderson, Beck, & Palmatier, 2011). In U.S. based retail grocery chains, loyalty programs membership has increased by 27% since 2006 (Berry, 2013). The high rate of loyalty program adoption by the consumer is a positive sign for the retail grocery industry to increase or improve their loyalty programs.

Another method to encourage consumer loyalty is through corporate sponsorships. To reach consumers in the business-to-business (B2B) or business to consumer (B2C) market, businesses must use various marketing methods and techniques. Corporate sponsorships can be beneficial to the consumer and the brand image the business is creating (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015). Competition based on price may be easier to achieve, but competition that is service-based creates more value for the business and the consumer (Malik, 2012). Webster (1992) highlighted the transition from traditional marketing theory to relationship marketing in the 1990s. Webster described this transition as a strategic move by businesses to place themselves in direct contact with consumers in order to allow a relationship to form. Corporate sponsorships can come with risk when associating a brand with another image (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015).

Loyalty programs are effective methods of gathering large amounts of consumer information beneficial to potential business sales growth (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012). Loyalty programs generally retain basic consumer information like name, address, and phone number; however, if the loyalty program is set-up internally to track purchase patterns, a retailer can also gain access to marketing information. Retail grocers can avoid known pitfalls through use of proper research channels and the creation and implementation of a marketing strategy that includes consumer demands. Retail grocery store consumer loyalty programs typically have no status effect on the consumers; however, they encourage repeat purchases when they offer discount benefits (Arbore & Estes, 2013). Successful companies know their consumers and their competition (Day &

Moorman, 2013). Proper use and implementation of loyalty programs increase long-term consumer relationships with the consumer (Bojei, Julian, Wel, & Ahmed, 2013).

Subjective Norm

An understanding of consumer involvement, social motivations, and commitment to both the business and the consumer will give marketing research for the retail grocery industry a chance to improve. Consumer involvement can reap benefits to the company through consumer or business initiatives. Through external events, the behaviorist approach proved that a behavior could be learned (Watson & Rayner, 1920). Ivan Pavlov was influential in Watson and Rayner's ability to connect behavior to an external event (Watson & Rayner, 1920). Large companies use E-marketing to run cause-marketing campaigns (Furlow, 2011). Cause-marketing (CM) and social media sites have become instrumental in developing a brand image that is positive and reaches specific target markets (Furlow, 2011). Social motivations can create a community within the brand that work together to forge a positive change. CM is a budding marketing strategy that many companies are using to increase sales, though sales revenues are undetermined by industry (Andrews, Luo, Fang, & Aspara, 2014).

A loyalty program that uses a CM campaign will increase consumer participation for the grocery industry. CM allows consumers to donate money to charity indirectly by making a purchase from a sponsoring firm (Andrews et al., 2014). Cause-related marketing has become a growing trend with corporations seeking donation-based consumer purchases (Chang & Cheng, 2015). As part of a cause-marketing strategy, businesses offer discounts on products or services to attract consumer participation

(Andrews et al., 2014). Some consumers are wary of business claims that relate to social issues, and prefer economic savings to social causes spending (Chang & Cheng, 2015). A commitment that stems from both the business and the consumer benefits the business monetarily but benefits the consumer in a positive way also.

E-marketing. The increase in the use of technology, specifically e-marketing has created new methods for the retail grocery industry to inspire loyalty from consumers. Dehkordi, Rezvani, Rahman, Nahid, and Jouya (2012) focused on the various methods and benefits involved in e-marketing; The benefits and consequences of each method of e-marketing vary depending on the purpose and type of company. The Internet has also caused a shift in control from business to the consumers (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012) and has allowed new types of researchers to form known as citizen researchers (Fielding, 2014). Digital media is more efficient than most broadcast mediums available to marketers (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). The expansion of global communication and social networking sites has changed how businesses interact with their consumers.

Many researchers use social media sites to explore, inform, and question other members to gather various forms of data (Fielding, 2014). The rapid growth in social media outlets has given the consumer a stage to broadcast their likes and dislikes of a company or brand (Berthon et al., 2012). Consumers not satisfied may take to social media, the Internet, or word-of-mouth to share with others their dissatisfaction, which can negatively affect the business and possible future relationships with new consumers (Gocek & Beceren, 2012). Digital media, such as Facebook and Twitter, can provide a

large and effective base for marketers to reach their target consumers (Fulgoni &

Lipsman, 2015). When used correctly, businesses can reach out to their consumers

through various methods of E-marketing with much success (Dehkordi et al., 2012).

Grocery chain managers can use the Internet to give their consumers direct access

to their rewards and additional bonuses earned through the consumer loyalty program.

Evanschitzky et al. (2012) found that the consumer becomes more loyal to the loyalty

program itself instead of the retail brand promotion. An increase in consumer satisfaction

should be a priority for any businesses marketing strategy (Gocek & Beceren, 2012).

Citizen researchers are not academic scholars, but perform research for selfish purposes

(Fielding, 2014). Influencers are people that drive purchases on and offline; constitute

more than 20 million consumers (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). Customer service that is

positive for the consumer can lead to repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and long-

term consumer loyalty (Bojei et al., 2013). The U.S. grocery industry can use the online

retail market to push their private label brands (Arce-Urriza & Cebollada, 2012). Grocery

chains use private labels to promote their brand image and establish consumer loyalty

(Arce-Urriza & Cebollada, 2012). Retail establishments can also build positive consumer

relationships through the Internet (Gocek & Beceren, 2012).

The increased rate of consumer access to the Internet and social media has forced

businesses to be creative in retaining consumers (Kumar, 2015). Social media provides a

significant source for marketing researchers to gather data from consumers (Nunan &

Yenicioglu, 2013). Although social media has become a popular place for conducting

marketing research, however, it is not a substitute for qualitative research (Branthwaite &

Patterson, 2011). Social media can nevertheless provide a direct connection between the consumer and the business. Many venues of social media are available to consumers, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, and Facebook (Berthon et al., 2012). These social media venues can create an experience for the consumers and their favorite brands.

Research that includes proven qualitative methods and new technology that is appropriate for the target market and the retail grocery industry can help retail grocers implement a marketing strategy that targets the consumers desired experience. Qualitative analysis enhances data instead of minimizing the data (Gibbs, 2007; Singh, 2014). Gottschalk and Leistner (2013) used a Likert-type scale to quantitatively survey 231 consumers via the Internet to understand the consumer's desire for organic grocery items and their willingness to purchase them from discount supermarkets. The researchers designated four criteria; price, quality, availability, and social influence, once met, the consumer will purchase the organic grocery items (Gottschalk & Leistner, 2013).

The increase in Internet use by all consumers gives the retail grocery industry the opportunity to offer a convenience to their consumer. The online market has grown (Lawson, 2013). Consumers receive benefits from shopping online, even when shopping for groceries. More consumers are becoming comfortable with online shopping, and the rise in grocery shopping online is noticeable (Lawson, 2013). Consumers can order online and have delivered to their home items that they regularly buy and replenish. Company managers not participating in this new marketing trend might miss a valuable opportunity for brand growth (Lawson, 2013). Loyal consumers are a valuable resource for the company's growth and long-term profitability (Nazari et al., 2012). Retail grocery

brands could increase brand loyalty with rewards and online shopping. Retailers can benefit from an online presence to create or maintain their brand image.

Social motivations. The social motivations that drive a consumer to be loyal are different for every consumer and within every industry. Some consumers experience social motivations to conform or escape (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). Brand experience is a feeling; however, by using SPSS 19.0 and AMOS 19.0, Ishida and Taylor (2012) were able to focus on sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual parameters of specific brands in retail and found direct and indirect effects on satisfaction and loyalty. The layout of the store, employee's friendliness, and music can affect the consumer and their buying behavior (Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013). The connection a consumer has with a brand can be high or low. Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly (2013) found that a loss of brand meaning occurs when the consumers have a low brand connection. The high perception of value creates an inviting atmosphere for the consumer to shop in (Borges, Babin, & Spielmann, 2013). To build consumer loyalty, the consumer feels a high level of satisfaction with a product and welcomed by the atmosphere of the retail environment.

Perception

The concept of perceived behavioral control is what makes the difference between the theory of reasoned action and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived locus of control, as derived from Rotter, describes the locus of control as a generalized expectancy that remains stable. In TPB, perceived behavior control specifically refers to the person's perception of ease or difficulty when performing a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This

major difference is why managers when formulating a consumer loyalty program that fits

the needs of their specific consumers and brand should use TPB. Malik (2012) found that

the value the consumer perceives to receive relates to their satisfaction with the product

or service. Adequate rewards can create a perceived value to the consumer for their

participation (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Retail promotions can create positive experiences

for the consumer, which can include private labels (Leischnig, Schwertfeger, &

Geigenmueller, 2011).

Customized coupon campaigns are another method a grocery retailer can use to

alter consumers shopping patterns to the benefit of the store (Venkatesan & Farris, 2012).

Consumers enjoy coupons because this gives them the feeling of saving money, and

customized coupon campaigns can create feelings of gratitude with the consumer toward

the retailer (Venkatesan & Farris, 2012). Loyalty programs may include rewards, gifts,

status levels, and dedicated consumer support (Henderson et al., 2011). Businesses

benefit from these programs through repeat business and the ability to gather more

information on consumer preferences (Cant & Toit, 2012). Business and marketing

strategies can include monitored consumer satisfaction at regular intervals (Nazari et al.,

2012). Implementing and maintaining loyalty programs can create a psychological bond

with the consumer that could increase purchases, reduce switching barriers and price

sensitivity (Henderson et al., 2011). A loyalty program can encourage new consumers to

try a product or brand and keep existing consumers happy.

A company that invests in both acquiring and retaining consumers may benefit

from a long-term increase in sales (Bojei et al., 2013). Customer referral programs

(CRPs) have grown in popularity and marketers use CRPs to gain and retain consumers (Garnefeld, Eggert, Helm, & Tax, 2013). When the competition is low, managers can differentiate their brand or product from the competition with much success by implementing a loyalty program (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Implementing various loyalty programs can encourage or manipulate the consumers shopping patterns to increase store revenue (Ajzen, 2011). Consumer loyalty also influences the profitability of a company (Valenzuela, 2011). For CRPs to be effective, the reward to the existing consumer must be valuable enough to motivate the consumer to make a public statement about the company to obtain the referrals that will result in the reward (Garnefeld et al., 2013). The positive effects from various marketing strategies are increased profits and increased participation.

Two types of analysis are used to determine if a consumer will participate in a loyalty program, are adoption timing and adoption likelihood (Garcia Gomez et al., 2012a). Felgate et al. (2012) found that supermarket loyalty cards could provide specific data for promotions from a manufacturer and retailer perspective. Retail grocery loyalty program rewards can establish purchase patterns of the consumers (Garcia Gomez, Guitierrez Arranz, & Gutierrez Cillan, 2012b). Not all types of loyalty programs are effective, and not all industries can profit from loyalty programs for their consumers (Arbore & Estes, 2013). The retail grocery industry is an industry that has and can continue to benefit from effective loyalty programs. Loyalty programs are only as successful as the consumer has perceived the value (Khan, 2014). The value of the loyalty reward card to the consumer should be effective at creating a less price sensitive

consumer (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012). Price sensitive consumers may switch to an alternate brand if that brand has a promotion that reduces the price (Allender & Richards, 2012).

Brand image. The retail grocery industry has options when creating or establishing brand loyalty through the brand image. Consumers make choices based on availability and brand images that resonate within them (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). Organizations can create brand loyalty through an established brand image. Whole Foods Market is an organization that has built over 270 stores throughout North America and the United Kingdom through the brand image (Johnston & Szabo, 2011). Consumer satisfaction and trust can form between a consumer and the retail store through the perceived image of that store (Rishi & Singh, 2012). There are different dimensions of perception and awareness of retail brands (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). A trusting relationship between the consumer and the brand that creates a safe food distribution is beneficial to the brand (Rampl, Eberhardt, Schutte, & Kenning, 2012). Retail grocers also have competition from the local farmers market. Direct marketing and selling by farmers within the local farmers' market can create a beneficial and loyal relationship between the consumers and the sellers (Alfonso, Nickelson, & Cohen, 2012). A retail image is important and should relate to the social environment a consumer experiences when in the retail store (Gocek & Beceren, 2012; Lin & Bennett, 2014). Food safety is a growing issue, and retail grocers benefit from increased consumer loyalty and trust when the retailer is honest and open with this topic (Rampl et al., 2012).

Co-branding products is a strategy brands implement to create an extension of a current product or offering jointly with another brand (Hariharan, Bezawada, & Talukdar,

2012). In the retail grocery industry, this occurs with products they sell, and companies they collaborate with in joint community sponsorships or programs. Some popular brands that have had success in co-branding are Diet Coke and NutraSweet, Dell computers and Intel processors, and DuPont cookware with Teflon (Hariharan et al., 2012). The offering of co-branded products can increase sales and promote positive brand image (Hariharan et al., 2012). The U.S. retail grocery industry should co-brand their products to increase their brand image to the consumer.

Pricing can be an important part of the marketing strategy in a retail business. Some retailers create a brand image that may correlate with the consumer high or low prices (Hamilton & Chernev, 2013). An image can become difficult to change if the consumer's perception is a high pricing strategy for that brand and the brand is aiming for an image with a low pricing strategy (Hamilton and Chernev, 2013). Changing an established brand image is a challenging task for retail management. A business should decide on the image of high or low price before embarking on a marketing strategy. Increased advertising to establish a brand and promote loyalty can be beneficial depending on the industry (Goodrich, Schiller, & Galletta, 2015).

Brand experience. The focus of marketing has evolved to encompass the service, the product, and the experience of the consumer (Malik, 2012). Three factors to consumer satisfaction are the perceived quality, the perceived value, and the consumer's expectations (Malik, 2012). Annually some businesses lose 30% of their consumers and do not know whom, why, or when they lost those consumers (Nazari et al., 2012). A properly maintained and monitored consumer loyalty program could prevent or explain

the loss of consumers and may even lower the percent lost. Brand experience consists of the whole experience a consumer has from the time they enter the retail store until they have consumed the product purchased (Shamim & Muhammad, 2013). When the experience is positive, the consumer correlates that positive feeling into loyalty to the brand and may become a long-term consumer. The retail grocery industry can achieve brand loyalty through brand experience by managing the brand community and monitoring the behavior of the consumer. Affective commitment and brand loyalty connect to create a positive brand experience (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). Retail brands can host promotional events within their store to bring in new business and create a unique experience for existing consumers (Leischnig et al., 2011).

The consumer will avoid a store environment associated with negative connotations (Gocek & Beceren, 2012). In-store and online purchases can monitor and analyze the consumer experience and loyalty. Reliable data on the consumer can increase the quality and performance of the retail business (Gocek & Beceren, 2012). Shim (2012) used quantitative method and structural equation modeling to analyze brand experience and loyalty of 500 female adults aged 20-34 years old. Brand experience can increase loyalty when both the connection and the experience are positive (Shim, 2012). A happy consumer can become a loyal, long-term consumer. Felix (2012) conducted a qualitative study that used a form of ethnography known as netnography to review consumer loyalty with mainstream brands, and if that loyalty is universal across multiple brands or brand specific. Though Felix focused on a specific mainstream brand, the result of understanding brand communities and their loyalty is beneficial to any industry. Both

quantitative and qualitative methods explore consumer behaviors that link loyalty to brand image. A positive image can increase loyalty from a behavioral perspective (Cheng, 2011).

Brand associations are more important to determine loyalty than just buying frequency alone (Romaniuk & Nenyez-Thiel, 2013). The brand extension allows a business to use an existing known brand and introduce a new product under that name (Kim & Yoon, 2013). Brand extensions could be useful to the grocery industry when creating or implementing a loyalty program as an extension of the current brand the consumer already recognizes. Improved advertising can create a successful transition to a new product from an existing brand (Kim & Yoon, 2013). Consumers recognize with a specific brand then make their purchase, not purchase first then form a bond with that brand (Romaniuk & Nenyez-Thiel, 2013). A positive relationship can exist between behavioral loyalty and current brand associations. The consumer experience should align with the brand to achieve loyalty (Clatworthy, 2012). Consumer loyalty driven by brand experience can create a long-term consumer (Allaway et al., 2011). Retail grocery brands that focus on consumer behavior and the brand experience can benefit from a long-term loyal consumer (Allaway et al., 2011). The retail grocery chains can establish an image that is also an experience by the consumer each time they enter any store within that chain.

Brand loyalty. In an oversaturated market, a positive strategy should encompass all aspects of the product or brand. Visentin, Colucci, and Marzocchi (2013) used an exploratory method to examine measurement scales for brand positioning. Two types of

loyalty consumers may identify with, attitudinal and behavioral (Cheng, 2011). For a consumer to have attitudinal loyalty, their loyalty stems from an emotion, not a utility. For a consumer to have behavioral loyalty, their loyalty may stem from utility or habit. Chang and Cheng (2015) believed that consumer's shopping orientation affects their attitude toward advertising methods. Various options are available for businesses to reach the consumer. Creating a store brand creates a brand image to establish brand loyalty with the consumers (Rocereto & Mosca, 2012). Some consumers may choose a specific retail grocery chain simply because its on their way home, while the goal of the loyalty program could be to increase that consumers spending and establish a loyalty that is not pure utility.

Qualitative methods can use a survey style study, and Dolnicar and Grün (2013) found that the inclusion of a "don't know" option creates more accurate results. Consumers base decisions on income and the consumer's belief in their job security. Building a relationship with specific market segments, specifically Generation Y continues to be a challenge for the retail industry. Lazarevic's (2012) conceptual approach to understanding Generation Y's lack of loyalty provide an explanation for marketers on achieving loyalty from this target group. Lazarevic used generational theory to explain the difference of generation Y compared to the marketing to other generations. The oversaturation of this generation with brands and marketing efforts has caused a numbness to the marketing efforts put forth by retail businesses. This research fills literature gaps on this generation. A better understanding of this generation can assist the retail grocery industry in building a better relationship with all other generations.

Creating a marketing mix that encompasses the transaction and the relationship can benefit brand image in the consumer's view (Kang et al., 2014). Various marketing segments could mean that the retail grocery industry needs a more personalized loyalty program that can adapt to each market segment the chain is targeting.

Intention

Smith et al. (2010) found the new form of marketing myopia damaged businesses working to gain market share. Business leaders within the marketing industry implemented some ideas so well that the new marketing myopia occurred. Marketing myopia occurs when the business loses their focus on the stakeholders (Smith et al., 2010). The stakeholders are the people outside of the direct consumer (Duesing & White, 2013). Through the creation of a corporate brand and corporations realizing the value of their stakeholders, consumers, and the product, corporate marketing myopia can be avoided (Smith et al., 2010). Stakeholders in the advertising process include advertisers, marketers, web site owners, and consumers (Goodrich et al., 2015).

Another form of myopia some companies face is the myopia of complacency (Day & Moorman, 2013). The myopia of complacency is when a company sees success and refuses to change as their consumers change, and the company believes that they are immune to the changes in the market (Day & Moorman, 2013). For a business to remain competitive, consumer satisfaction must be at the core of their business strategy (Nazari et al., 2012). Achieving long-term consumer loyalty, the retail grocery industry can increase their revenue and their image. When avoiding this new marketing myopia and increasing brand loyalty, the retail grocery industry should recognize the connection

between the brand and their loyal consumer, both direct and indirect. Losing the connection that bonds the consumer to the brand image will cause a loss of revenue. Managers can build strong brands through marketing communications that permit the consumer to form a bond with the brand (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2015). If the consumer has no connection to the brand, he or she may make their purchases elsewhere, causing a loss of sales.

Westbrook and Black (1985) described motivations for consumers when shopping. The seven motives are utility, a role, negotiation, optimization, affiliation, authority, and stimulation (Westbrook & Black, 1985). Consumers shop based on their needs, but if they have loyalty to the brand, they may choose a specific retail establishment over another that can meet their specific item need. In many circumstances, the consumer's loyalty is emotional based, not rational (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). Negative consumer feelings can negatively affect the goals of the marketers and the companies advertising their products or services (Goodrich et al., 2015). The natural desire that people have to feel important and to have the status persona is at the root of loyalty programs and their benefits to the consumer (Arbore & Estes, 2013). Loyalty programs offer two types of benefits that serve the consumer. Hard benefits and soft benefits are the two types of benefits built into loyalty programs (Arbore & Estes, 2013). Hard benefits are tangible rewards to the consumer, and soft benefits are feeling rewards to the consumer (Arbore & Estes, 2013).

Managing brand community. The entire organization plays a role in building and managing a brand through current contacts and connections (Goodrich et al., 2015).

Employees that directly interact with the consumers can form a positive or negative image. If the image the business desires to portray is consumer service quality and every time a consumer interacts with consumer service, the quality is lacking; that can alter the image of that business for that consumer. Management strategies benefit marketing strategies within a company. Regardless of the industry, effective management strategies can transfer to other industries that need improvement.

The induction of large supermarkets into the retail grocery market can be of benefit to the smaller grocery chains (Igami, 2011). Competition has over saturated the retail grocery industry (Lang & Hooker, 2013). The "Wal-Mart effect" can cause between two to five stores to exit the market upon their entry (Igami, 2011). Large national chains like Wal-Mart and Target are invading the retail grocery market driving prices down and consumer brand-switching up (Lang & Hooker, 2013). Though large global brands enter the market, leaders of local, or smaller retail grocery chains can use that as an opportunity to establish their brand as unique (Brakus et al., 2009; Igami, 2011). Bigger is not always better as seen by McDonald's when they opted for more stores instead of more choices to meet their consumer's needs (Day & Moorman, 2013). McDonald's lacked a consumer-driven focus, but with careful CRM strategies, they were able to refocus on consumer satisfaction with increased success (Day & Moorman, 2013). A brand can create an experience, and in some instances, this experience alone can lead to consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). The retail grocery chains can compete with the likes of Wal-Mart and Target by focusing on variety, not quantity.

Understanding consumer satisfaction and loyalty can increase the chance of survival in the current grocery industry (Lang & Hooker, 2013). A positive brand experience might be the reference a consumer takes to investigate further a brand and consider becoming a consumer, giving the brand a chance to forge a loyal relationship (Brakus et al., 2009). Effective brand management creates product differentiation through brand image and sets a brand apart from other brands (Arce-Urriza & Cebollada, 2012; Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). For a company to become consumer-driven and consumer focused three specific steps are, understanding what made the company lose its consumer focus, a sense of urgency should be felt in all parts of the company, and building a reconnection strategy to the consumer (Day & Moorman, 2013). Some companies create a brand image using advertising icons (Folse, Burton, & Netemeyer, 2013). The advertising icons can benefit the image of a brand and can adversely affect the image of the brand through the consumer's perception of the advertising icon used (Folse et al., 2013).

Commitment. When businesses want to keep their current consumer base, they need to use the data they have readily available to them, such as consumer patterns, credit card transactions, reward programs, and repeat consumers (McQuilkin, 2013). When building a relationship with marketing efforts, the strategy should include the consumers, suppliers, and business developers (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Consumer retention, efficient consumer response, and shared resources build a positive relationship that is efficient and effective for both the business and the consumer (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Some loyalty reward programs are not an incentive for the consumer to become loyal, but

a reward for already being loyal to that store (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012). When the

consumer is committed to the specific store or brand, an opportunity to maintain an

already satisfied consumer is available. Bhuyan (2011) applied the TPB to consumer's

attitudes toward the food industry and was able to explore consumer attitudes. The TPB

is a model to predict human social behavior (Ajzen, 2011). Creating an environment that

is visually pleasing and that satisfies the consumer expectations with a positive

experience will create a happy long-term consumer (McQuilkin, 2013). Not all brand

experiences affect all forms of brand relationships; however, brand trust does affect brand

commitment (Hee Jung & Myung Soo, 2012).

      Pandey and Pathak (2013) examined the supermarket industry and its ability to

analyze market segmentation while remaining competitive. The competition in the retail

grocery industry is more of consumer commitment, loyalty, and brand image of the retail

brand itself. The retail grocery industry must differentiate themselves to the right market

segment and manage that relationship to retain long-term success and remain competitive

(Pandey & Pathak, 2013). Store brands have increased loyalty among consumers in

certain instances and can add value to the consumer experience (González-Benito &

Martos-Partal, 2012). Brand awareness can be positive or negative for the store brand

(Dabija, 2011). Positive associations with the brand will increase the positive perception

of the consumer over time, and negative associations with the brand will decrease the

perception of the consumer (Dabija, 2011). Repeat consumers save the business money

because keeping a loyal consumer is less expensive than gaining a new one (Bojei et al.,

2013). The consumer's ability to name a brand when asked creates the presumption that

the brand is known, and if a consumer cannot name a brand that brand is considered unknown (Dabija, 2011). For the retail grocery industry, store brand labels and the store brand itself, can become a brand association by the consumer that will benefit the brand and establish the brand as a dominant in the consumers mind (Dabija, 2011).

Behavior

To achieve the desired behavior from the consumer, both intention and behavioral control must be present, and resources available to the consumer (Ajzen, 1991). Time, money, and skills can alter behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The retail grocery industry can encourage their consumers to frequent their stores by offering rewards or conveniences to them. For a business, frequent consumers could mean fewer dollars wasted on ineffective strategies when implementing a consumer loyalty program (Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). In the United States, more than 55% of the population participates in some form of a loyalty program (Meyer-Waarden et al., 2013). Cant and Toit (2012) explored the benefits of consumer loyalty programs and compared those results to other drivers of consumer loyalty. The creation of consumer loyalty builds upon the relationship between the brand and the consumer, not just loyalty programs or price. The goal of a consumer loyalty program is to maintain consumers (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). This method is beneficial to the retail grocery industry because it encourages repeat business. Researchers believe that loyalty programs must incorporate psychological components to be successful (Henderson et al., 2011). When consumers make a purchase without thinking about why they are purchasing that brand, or why they shop at a certain store, they have a psychological connection. Research has found that for a consumer to be truly

loyal they must have some psychological connection to the brand (Henderson et al., 2011). Consumer loyalty can decrease switching behavior by consumers and increase revenue (Alrubaiee, 2012). Consumer loyalty programs have grown in popularity. In some cases, a business can increase their profits by up to 100% through consumer loyalty (Valenzuela, 2011). Though loyalty programs have increased in popularity and use, they do not typically meet the financial return on investment expectations by the companies that implement them (Henderson et al., 2011).

Some consumer purchases are habit based, and habits can form and cultivate to purchases. Habit based loyalty programs can be very efficient because consumer psychology has found a link to habit and behavioral outcomes (Henderson et al., 2011). Loyalty programs can promote habit-creating behaviors that promote purchases. When the loyalty program creates intention, repetition, and context stability, a purchase habit can form (Henderson et al., 2011). Depending on the industry and their consumers, the loyalty program should consist of any method that will positively influence the consumer toward the directed brand (Henderson et al., 2011).

Understanding consumer behavior is beneficial to the retail grocery industry because this information can grow their brand and increase consumer loyalty. Consumer behavior that is positive or negative can affect the grocery chains profitability. Not all consumers are loyal because of the brand but are loyal out of convenience (Kang et al., 2014). When consumers use convenience as their main form of loyalty, a consumer reward program may encourage that consumer to spend more money, more often. Consumers are loyal because of the quality of the product or brand, and are willing to pay

for the additional perceived quality (Bertini, Wathieu, & Iyengar, 2012). A consumer

may be willing to travel farther, and pay more just to experience or purchase a specific

product or brand. Loyalty for the brand is how a consumer can create value for the brand

(Kang et al., 2014).

Aaker (1997) found five dimensions that can be used to measure brand

personality through consumer behavior: (a) sincerity, (b) excitement, (c) competence, (d)

sophistication, and (e) ruggedness. Loyalty or reward programs can manipulate consumer

behavior (Choi & Kim, 2013). In the grocery industry three types of loyalty programs;

they are; reward programs, loyalty cards, and VIP programs (Garcia Gomez et al.,

2012b). When consumers use these types of programs, the company can monitor their

purchasing habits to create an environment that rewards consumer's purchases (Choi &

Kim, 2013). Reward programs, loyalty cards, and VIP programs all operate differently,

however, are in the retail grocery industry (Garcia Gomez et al., 2012b). A reward

program rewards the consumer for making specific purchases or repeat purchases. A

loyalty card rewards the consumer each time they shop at the retail store. A VIP program

is typically a tier-based program that rewards consumers at various levels depending on

dollars spent or products purchased. To define consumer satisfaction, the manager can

explore consumer experience, intentions, and behaviors (Lin & Bennett, 2014).

Relationships. Building a relationship between the consumer and the brand can

create a positive long-term relationship that can potentially increase revenue. Andrews,

Luo, Fang, and Aspara (2014) found that cause-marketing could create consumer demand

and increase sales revenues. Any company that has the goal to build relationships with

their consumers should grow loyalty through rewards to their consumers (Bahri-Ammari,

2012). Most industries have implemented some form of the loyalty program to drive

consumer habits and establish consumer loyalty (Garcia Gomez et al., 2012b). The airline

industry uses a miles loyalty reward system that is extremely popular (Meyer-Waarden,

2013; Schumann, 2015). A loyalty program is successful if the expected results occur and

are measurable (Bojei et al., 2013).

      The specialty retail brand, Whole Foods, has created an environment built on a

positive relationship with the consumer (Johnston & Szabo, 2011). Johnston and Szabo

(2011) explained the goal of Whole Foods creating positive change for consumers by

looking at reflexivity and consumer choice. Researchers should use reflexivity to avoid

preconceived thoughts and embrace new thoughts regardless of past knowledge on a

topic (Johnston & Szabo, 2011). Retail grocers can use reflexivity to expand their loyalty

programs in a new and more marketable way than they have in the past. The quality of

service and products the consumer receives from a retail store can establish confidence

and loyalty to the retail brand (Rishi & Singh, 2012). Consumer satisfaction is a type of

phenomenon for the consumer to experience and important for creating a loyal and long-

term relationship (Gocek & Beceren, 2012).

      Contemporary marketing practices focus on the consumer and building a solid

relationship for long-term loyalty between business and consumer (Kim, Lee, Choi, Wu,

& Johnson, 2013). Long-term consumer relationships can increase company profits

(Bahri-Ammari, 2012). The sense of satisfaction a consumer feels is a direct relation to

the amount of purchases that the consumer makes from one retail establishment (Gocek

& Beceren, 2012). Retail stores that retain loyal consumers have increased profits and improved stability (Stading & Johnson, 2012).

      Consumer involvement. To influence consumers, Shamim and Muhammad (2013) found that brand experience, brand attitude, brand credibility, and CBBE directly or indirectly were sufficient. Brand attitude or attitudinal loyalty can create a positive image for consumers through referrals or word-of-mouth (Cheng, 2011). Referral programs, known as member-get-member, are a marketing strategy that uses current consumer's positive word-of-mouth to attract new potential consumers (Chan, Lin, & Bodhi, 2014). Word-of-mouth (WOM) is another method of marketing that involves the consumer, not the business directly. Information regarding consumer's brand preferences can spread via word-of-mouth. Effective referral programs can increase the value of a consumer, promote long-term relationships, and create a surge in new consumer sales (Chan et al., 2014). WOM, or lack of, can determine the final purchase decision made by the consumer (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). WOM can hurt or help a brand both online and off (Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). Social networks and the Internet are a driving force of WOM (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). Social media and brand evaluations done by consumers online may or may not benefit the brand (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). The primary drivers of digital WOM is to create consumer awareness, pique interest, and result in a purchase of a product or service (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). These components are methods that consumers become involved with a brand, and when the brand fails to recognize what aspect of the brand is driving the consumer's involvement, negative publicity could occur.

I applied Ajzen's TPB model (1991) to the results of this study (see Figure 1).
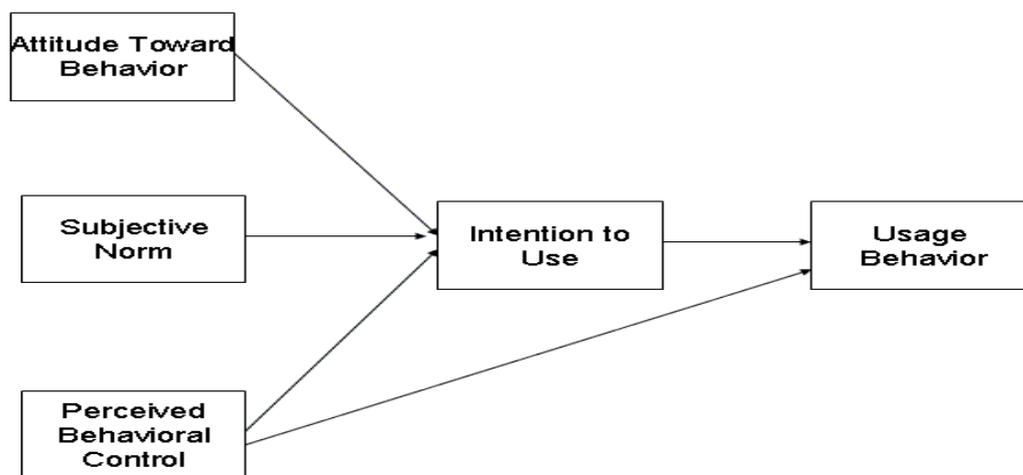
Figure 1. The theory of planned behavior. Adapted from "The Theory of Planned Behavior" by Icek Ajzen, 1991, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*, p. 182. Copyright © 1991 by Academic Press, Inc.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 introduced the business problem that some grocery store managers do not have strategies to deliver a consumer loyalty program. I provided a thorough background of the problem and a review of academic literature to lay the foundation for this study on proven effective strategies to deliver a consumer loyalty program. In Section 2, I present the design of the study and the method for which I have achieved this. I discuss data collection and participant information at length. In Section 3, I present my findings, highlight the possibility of social change, and make recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. Yin (2014) suggested six types of sources when gathering evidence to conduct a case study, documents, archived records, interviews, observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. I collected data from two sources, semistructured interviews and documents related to the loyalty program available to the consumer. I specifically interviewed four individuals, employed in management positions at a grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida.

I used the interview findings to develop a template of strategies to deliver consumer loyalty programs that may stimulate consumer participation. This template was designed for grocery store managers to use when planning, updating, or implementing their consumer loyalty programs. This use is intended to facilitate grocery stores becoming more profitable, allowing deeper discounts to consumers that significantly impact low-income families. I anticipate benefits to the communities served by the stores through marketing initiatives and community support.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I was the instrument who conducted the research including the semistructured interviews. I asked each participant the same interview questions, in the same order, and allowed each participant the same amount of time for the interview. I kept the interview time under one hour to respect the participants time

and mine. Upon completion of the interviews, I organized the data for analysis, performed member checks with the participants, and performed data triangulations. I followed Elo et al.'s (2014) suggestions of obtaining qualitative data through proven methods to establish trustworthiness with my readers and participants. I conducted face-to-face interviews as recommended by Gibbs (2007) to gather the experiences and strategies of the managers at the grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida.

Before the interview, I obtained approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct my research (approval #: 10-28-15-0408820) that expires on October 27, 2016. As a consumer, I participated in various loyalty programs through various companies. I disclosed to each participant that I was a consumer at the grocery store chains in Ocala, Florida, and that I lived in Ocala.

I took steps to act as an ethical researcher in accordance with *The Belmont Report* (U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). This included abiding by basic principles of conduct that included, but were not limited to, respect for the participants privacy, equal treatment to all participants, and not harming the participants. I treated each participant equally and respectfully at all times.

To avoid bias in a qualititative study, a researcher should implement member checks, data triangulation, and journaling (Denzin, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012; Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). Bias in qualitative research is subjective and accepted within the academic community (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). I conducted member checks with each participant to verify information analyzed. I

performed data triangulation to confirm data collection and analysis. I also kept a journal for review of data once themes became evident. To protect the privacy of the participants and the grocery store chain, I have removed their names from all documents pertaining to the study, as suggested by Vainio (2012).

I conducted interviews as part of a single case study because of Yin's (2014) description interviews with participants as an opportunity for the researcher to observe, discuss, and explore all interview questions that relate to the problem at hand. I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions because Yin (2014) found this structure to allow the participants to provide sufficient responses and myself the ability to explore further. The semistructured interview design used in this study is a guide the researcher can use during the interview process and provides for the inclusion of participant thoughts or ideas in their own words (Stuckey, 2014). The interview questions were open-ended to explore the participant's experiences and their strategies with the consumer loyalty program at their grocery store chain (Yin, 2014). The questions allowed the participants to answer without time restrictions and in a nonjudgmental environment. Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) suggested a researcher establish a positive rapport with each participant prior to and while conducting the interview because the researchers personality and interview style can influence the participant's responses.

Participants

I selected the participants based on four criteria:

- employment by the selected grocery store in Ocala, Florida;

- my goal of interviewing two store managers, one merchandising manager, and one marketing manager;

- each participant having direct involvement with the formulation or delivery of, the store's loyalty program; and

- if no participants fit this criterion directly at the chosen grocery store, I would contact the corporate office of the grocery store to seek the appropriate participants.

The goals of the semistructured interviews were to uncover information and knowledge that would lead to the identification of proven effective consumer loyalty programs elements that resulted in achieving the desired results. After completion of all data collection, I sorted the data using triangulation to find emerging themes, as suggested by Yin (2014).

I used a non-probability purposive sample technique to identify and invite potential participants to this study. Purposeful sampling or case sampling is widely accepted and used in qualitative research to select participants for a study (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2013). Understanding the effects of the participant selection is important in protecting the quality of qualitative research (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling, 2013). I contacted the participants directly at the grocery store chain.

Each participant first received a consent form that included a confidentiality statement (see Appendix A). Each participant agreed to participate in a formal interview that was face-to-face for a time that did not exceed one hour. This time limit aligned with

Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, and Cieza (2012) and Englander's (2012) recommendations that

formal interviews not exceed one hour as a courtesy to the participant. I personally

interviewed each participant one time and performed member checks on the transcribed

data, as recommended by Elo et al. (2014) and Granot et al. (2012). I formally introduced

myself to each participant and I explained to the participants what my study was about,

and why each participant met my selection criteria, as recommended by Elo et al. (2014).

I also provided an explanation of what I hoped to achieve from their participation in the

study, in alignment with Damianakis and Woodford (2012) and Hammersley's (2014)

recommendation that participants be made to feel valued and important to the research

process and study. I answered all questions and concerns that the participants had. I used

caution while interviewing to display a lower power position than the interviewee to

encourage honest responses, as suggested by Anyan (2013).

I interviewed each participant until I achieved data saturation. Data saturation

occurs when the participants are no longer offering new information to the researcher

(Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012); this occurred after I

interviewed four participants. With each interview, I collected large amounts of data.

Participants could stop the interview at any time and remove themselves from the

interview location or phone call without consequence. No participant requested removal

from the study.

The interviews took place at a time each participant chose. I interviewed each

participant at the retail grocery store in Ocala, Florida. I audio recorded each interview

with my iPhone audio recording application, in accordance with Englander's (2012)

recommendation of audio recording and transcribing each interview for ease of analysis. I then listened to each interview and transcribed for evaluation. I also took steps to protect the participant's identities throughout the study and within the results through anonymity, in accordance with Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) and Vainio's (2012) recommendations. This included securing all transcribed data and journal information from this study in a password-protected file and in a lock-box that only I have access to. The Walden University Institutional Review Board requires that data collected remain in a secure location with the researcher for a period not to exceed 5-years; as a result, after 5-years, I will destroy the data collected and participant information by shredding paperwork and burning disk drives.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) recommended a strategy to assist researchers to determine the best method for their qualitative studies. The strategy suggested that novice researchers delay method selection until the research question and setting are well established. Because I considered myself to be a novice researcher, I selected a research question and setting before determining the most appropriate method and design for my study. I ultimately selected the qualitative method to examine what the consumer desires.

In this study, I explored strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs as part of their marketing strategy. Barnham (2012) described the qualitative method as a way to examine the desires of the consumer effectively. According to Gibbs (2007), the qualitative method is used to analyze the

experiences, interactions, and communications of individuals or groups. Quantitative research uses high volumes of numerical data (Anyan, 2013). Qualitative study designs focus on emotions, and quantitative designs focus on numbers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). I did not choose a quantitative or mixed methods study because statistical generalization was not the purpose of this study, making these methods inappropriate (Yin, 2014). Because I was exploring how the grocery store managers deliver a consumer loyalty program, the qualitative design was the better choice.

Research Design

Commonly used qualitative research traditions include; case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, consensual research, ethnography, narratology, and participatory action (Hays & Wood, 2011; Yin, 2014). I selected a single case study design to conduct this study based on the following criteria: (a) a case study design explores a phenomenon that can include managerial and organizational practices through two or more data sources, (b) the focus of a case study can be on a current phenomenon, and (c) the data collection can consist of why and how questions (Yin, 2014).

I did not select ethnography because ethnography focuses on a shared system, or culture (Goulding, 2005), which did not match my study goals. Narrative research was not appropriate because narrative research examines a story from a single perspective (Hays & Wood, 2011) and I wanted to collect several perspectives. I also rejected grounded theory because it is best suited to interactional behavior or developing a new theory(Hays & Wood, 2011), which was not the purpose of this study. I did not choose phenomenology because I did not explore the lived experience of a specific group or

individuals, which is its normal goal (Moustakas, 1994). I ceased data collection when I achieved data saturation, as defined by the participants giving no new data about the topic (Walker, 2012) and all transcribed interview data having repetitive information (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Population and Sampling

The population sample for this study consisted of four participants from one retail grocery store: two managers, one merchandising manager, and one marketing manager. I sought additional participants meeting my criteria to establish a small pool of participants who were prepared and willing to participate in the study in the event an active participant withdrew from the study, or was unable to provide information required. To reach this population, I used purposive sampling because this method of sampling allows the researcher to target a specific population (Robinson, 2014). Specifically, I used a typical case sampling with minimum criterion for quality assurance. To obtain a nonprobability purposive sample of participants, I contacted the retail grocery chain using the customer service number listed on their website and solicited the managers for interest in participation. The managers of the retail grocery chain in Ocala, Florida, fit my population criteria.

I interviewed four participants in this bounded case study until no new information was offered, in alignment with Walker's (2012) recommendations. There is no consensus on what number of participants will achieve data saturation (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Walker, 2012); however, by conducting a case study, I controled the scope and size of my study (Cronin, 2014; Moll, 2012) by a specified

time, location, and phenomenon (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013;

Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). Data saturation occurs in a case study because the

researcher is exploring various data sources within the bounded case, not just conducting

interviews (Yin, 2014). I knew that I had achieved data saturation because as suggested

by Fusch and Ness (2015) there was no new information available from my collected data

and analysis.

The correct number of participants for any study should be based upon choosing

participants who have direct knowledge about the research topic and that can answer the

interview questions in-depth (Dworkin, 2012). Yin (2014) did not set a specific number

of participants to use within a case study to achieve data saturation. I ensured data

saturation with the four participants by asking in-depth, open-ended questions that the

participants could fully respond to, leaving no new information about the topic unheard

(Dworkin, 2012; Walker, 2012).

I obtained commitments from four managers who fit my criteria and who were

willing to participate fully in the study. Upon selecting a participant, I supplied them with

the consent form and confidentiality agreement (see Appendix A) to review, sign, and

return to me prior to their scheduled interview time. In an effort to accommodate the

participants, I set up the location for the interviews in a mutually acceptable location that

provided the participant with comfort, quiet, and an uninterrupted environment at the

retail grocery store. I also set up a mutually acceptable time for each interview with the

participant.

Ethical Research

Qualitative researchers must implement and follow ethical guidelines and outline risks and benefits to their participants (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Pollock, 2012). To obtain consent, I informed the participants of the purpose of the study and I explained that participation was voluntary. I informed participants of their privacy during and after the study, as well as how I will respect their privacy and time, in accordance with guidelines by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). All participants were required to review and sign a consent form and confidentiality agreement (see Appendix A) prior to commencement of the interview.

Participants had the option to stop their participation at any time before, during, or after the interview, as recommended by Granot et al. (2012). There was no penalty for choosing to withdraw from the study or incentives or financial compensation for participating. No participant chose to withdraw from the study before, during, or after his or her participation. Participants could choose to participate or to discontinue their participation at any time during the study.

The data collection from the interviews will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in a secure location with me, and I will destroy the data after 5 years. Upon completion of the study, I secured all names and contact information of the participants by labeling the participants and kept anonymity by removing their names from the study. All data collection instruments or recordings have the participants' label information only, and not their names.

Data Collection

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study as described by Xu and Storr (2012). The collection of data took place during the interviews with each participant and from documents related to the loyalty program. The interview instrument is in Appendix B and the data collection instrument is in Appendix C.

I conducted the interviews with the four selected participants, used active listening during the interviews, and performed in-depth reviews of the interviews upon completion. The interviews allowed participants to discuss at length their expectations and experiences (Anyan, 2013). The interviews and review of the interviews was consistent with accepted interview procedures according to Goulding (2005), Moustakas (1994), and Yin (2014). The interview questions were open-ended (Yin, 2014) to allow an in-depth exploration of the participant's responses.

I also reviewed the documents, as suggested by Gentles et al. (2015), that were related to the loyalty program available to the consumer via the company website and the consumer loyalty program flyers. I transcribed the interviews and performed member checks to confirm data accuracy (Elo et al., 2014). I used bracketed themes to calculate and explore recurrent themes and match these themes, as recommended by Morse, Lowery, and Steury (2014); and St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) with the appropriate meanings, brand image, brand experience, and consumer loyalty. Based on the findings, I interpreted the value of each theme to determine meaning and proper implementation to the retail grocery chains consumer loyalty program.

Data Collection Technique

For this case study, I used a face-to-face interview with each participant. Either a face-to-face or a telephone interview is acceptable in qualitative case studies (Englander, 2012; Granot et al., 2012). I acquired and reviewed documents related to the consumer loyalty program, and performed member checks with the participants to verify data collection during the interview.

An advantage of face-to-face interviews is that I was able to observe the participant as they answered each question, which led to additional opportunities to probe the participant for further information (Gibbs, 2007). The disadvantage of telephone interviews is the inability of the researcher to observe the participants non-verbal responses (Gibbs, 2007). I did use the telephone interview to perform member checks with each participant. The collected documents also provided an advantage during the data collection process to fill gaps in the literature and the interviews.

Yin (2014) referenced the use and benefits of running a pilot case study before conducting the actual case study. I conducted a field test of the interview instrument (see Appendix B) with two managers to verify that the interview would not exceed one hour. The field test participants provided feedback on the interview questions, the length of time the interview took, and were only able to answer the interview questions to the best of their ability. Based on the results of the field test, I chose not to adjust the interview instrument (see Appendix B) prior to conducting the actual research with the four chosen participants. The field test participant's responses are not included in the actual research

study, nor were the field test participants part of the four chosen participants for this

study.

I conducted each interview in the same manner, and asked the questions in the

same order at each interview. Covell, Sidani, and Ritchie (2012) recommended

consistency in the interview process to establish a quality interview each time. I

transcribed and analyzed the data for themes. I entered the data into Microsoft Excel® for

further evaluation and organization of themes. To establish accuracy in my coding, I

performed member checks with each participant on the telephone to verify my

understanding of their interview. I also conducted a peer review to analyze the coding

once complete.

Data Organization Techniques

I recorded interviews with a digital recording app that I downloaded onto my

iPhone. I transcribed each participant's interview word for word (St. Pierre & Jackson,

2014). I provided a copy of the interview to each participant to perform member checks

as recommended by Elo et al. (2014). I confirmed with the participants my understanding

of their interview. Each participant's interview was labeled with a P1 through a P4 to

keep the participants name and any identifying information confidential. I sorted all data

collected. I prepared a list of precodes, and coded the data. I listened to and read each

interview transcription several times to reduce the data down to possible emerging

themes (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). I bracketed all emerging themes. After secondary

analysis, I entered the predetermined themes; attitude, consumer loyalty, subjective norm,

technology, social motivations, perception, brand image, brand experience, brand loyalty,

intention, managing brand community, commitment, behavior, relationship, and consumer involvement along with the emerging themes into Excel software for further analysis. I used Excel software to further break down the data to find additional themes and categorize the data. I used the Excel software to find the themes of higher importance to the targeted participants and further exploration.

I kept journals, notes, and observations along with each interview file in a secure location that only I can access. The journals provide detailed information on each interview, the transcribed interview, and the collected documents. My notes include meeting times and dates from each interview. The observations I made are included with my notes and provide information pertaining to the behavior of the participant during the interview. All files are password protected, and only I have the password. I will destroy each interview file 5-years after completing the study per IRB guidelines.

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) described four general strategies to begin data analysis, of the four; I relied on theoretical propositions as a strategy of analysis. Data analysis for this study included audio recordings of all interviews, journals, notes, and transcripts. According to Yin (2014), I used data triangulation that consisted of semistructured interviews, observations, and documents. Using multiple sources to triangulate the data increases the reliability of the study (Denzin, 2012). For proper analysis of the data, I used the five phases of analysis as described by Yin (2011). I analyzed the compiled data, disassembled the data, reassembled it again, interpreted meanings within the data, and concluded with meaning of the data (Buchanan, 2013; Yin, 2011).

I finished my analysis of the interview files using the themes produced with the Excel software. With the themes, I interpreted the results using the TPB and the model for TPB. I placed each theme with one of the five elements that best interpreted that theme. The TPB model provided five elements that I applied to consumer loyalty programs in the grocery industry. The elements are attitude, subjective norm, perception, intention, and behavior. I explored the results for proven effective strategies that grocery store managers use to deliver consumer loyalty programs and how each strategy relates to the elements in the TPB model. Upon publication, I will mail a report showing the results from this study to each participant and I will make this report available to any retail grocers interested in the findings.

I coded the data to identify specific words that highlighted participant's proven effective strategies when delivering a consumer loyalty program. I based the words of the initial coding with the following themes: attitude, consumer loyalty, subjective norm, technology, social motivations, perception, brand image, brand experience, brand loyalty, intention, managing brand community, commitment, behavior, relationship, and consumer involvement. Additional words for further coding were determined by reading current new literature while the study was in progress and upon completion of analysis of the transcribed interviews and then added to the Excel software and the literature review.

Qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to explore possible themes that occur in data collection (Gibbs, 2007; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). After data was gathered and analyzed, I eliminated redundancies through the coding process (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). I input the data into Excel software to verify and find new

themes that might emerge from the data. Identifying the themes that were recurring allowed me to see why loyalty programs are working and how they are working.

Excel software was used to analyze data and explore themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews. I looked for themes consistent with a positive brand experience through perception and intention and the consumer's loyalty through culture and thought processes. Attitude, subjective norm, perception, intention, and behavior encompass both brand experience and consumer loyalty as they pertain to the TPB conceptual framework for this study. Excel software was used to organize the interviews for a theme presentation of the findings. I entered attitude, consumer loyalty, subjective norm, technology, social motivations, perception, brand image, brand experience, brand loyalty, intention, managing brand community, commitment, behavior, relationship, and consumer involvement as themes in the Excel software. I searched and separated the data into five separate columns, adding new themes as they emerged.

Reliability and Validity

Dependability

Reliable qualitative research should follow a specified method with parameters that can be repeated (Goulding, 2005). I used the five phases of analysis as described by Yin (2011). The use of interviews to obtain data is an accepted form of data collection believed to be reliable in a qualitative study (Goulding, 2005). In-depth interviews that will view the participant's attitudes and experiences with reflection on Ajzen's TPB and TPB model (1991) provide additional reliability to the study. Dependability, as described by Marshall and Rossman (2014), is through member checks and peer debriefing. In peer

debriefing, a researcher discusses the coding and analysis of the data to verify accuracy (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I provided a chain of evidence. A chain of evidence can provide the researcher with a defense in their analysis of the data to the reader (Yin, 2014).

Credibility

Credibility can establish trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that between methods triangulation and data triangulation can establish credibility. For my data triangulation, I used semistructured interviews, collected documents, viewed the grocery store chain website, and asked open-ended interview questions. Performing member checks with each participant can validate the transcribed data (Elo et al., 2014; Granot et al., 2012; Hayman et al., 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I conducted member checks with each participant by calling the participants on the telephone and relaying the gathered information to the participants to verify the data was understood.

Transferability

Transferability can establish trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Interviews and their transcripts, email, videos of interviews, and online chat group conversations are all acceptable means of collecting qualitative data (Gibbs, 2007). I conducted interviews and transcribed the interviews to a Microsoft Word® document for analysis. I listened for general meanings and created brackets of interpretation (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

Confirmability

Confirmability can establish trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I did not mix methods, which can threaten validity (Yin, 2013). I only used the case study design to conduct my study (Snyder, 2012). Achieving external validity can be challenging and time consuming for a qualitative study (Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012; Street & Ward, 2012). I achieved this by following accepted guidelines and standards when conducting a qualitative case study. Yin (2014) did not set a specific number of participants to achieve data saturation in a case study, and a specified number of participants is not required to achieve data saturation in a qualitative study (Dworkin, 2012). To achieve data saturation, the researcher will hear no new information during the data collection process (Walker, 2012). Data saturation occurs in a case study because a researcher is exploring various data sources within the bounded case (Yin, 2014). I know I achieved data saturation because there was no new information available from my collected data and analysis.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I presented the design of the study and the method for which I achieved this. I discussed the data collection and participant information at length. In Section 3, I present my findings, highlight the possibility of social change, and make recommendations for future research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. I conducted four semistructured interviews with two store managers, a merchandising manager, and a marketing manager all employed at one grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida. I also triangulated the interview data using collected documents related to the loyalty program from the grocery store chain and its website.

Each participant provided valuable data during their interview. The combined data from the participant interviews, the loyalty program documents, and company website highlighted the driving factors to this successful loyalty program: the rewards that they receive from the loyalty program. The benefits to a company through consumer tracking establishes a base line that the company can follow to provide a more personalized experience to the consumer through their participation and continued loyalty. The grocery store chain under study has also collaborated with an outside vendor to provide specific rewards that gratify loyal consumers immediately after purchase. With these findings, a template of strategies can be formed to deliver an effective consumer loyalty program.

Presentation of the Findings

The study findings are of interest and potential value to managers in industries that implement a consumer loyalty program, specifically the retail industry. I provide a breakdown of the findings, an overview of the participants responses to each interview

question, an in-depth discussion of the themes that emerged, and how those themes relate back to the conceptual framework and literature.

The overarching research question investigated by this study was: What strategies do grocery store managers use to deliver consumer loyalty programs? Different industries and different managers use multiple strategies when delivering a loyalty program. The strategies of a loyalty program can vary based on the goals the company is hoping to achieve, the type of loyalty program that is being implemented, the type of consumer, the type of product or service, and the out of pocket cost for the company to initiate and maintain the program.

There were five interview questions used to collect data from the participants. I have listed the general responses to each question and a more in-depth discussion of themes follows. The first interview question was: What consumer loyalty program strategies have you implemented at your grocery store that have been successful in reaching company goals? The participants stated that the loyalty reward program that their grocery store chain offers is their primary strategy that has been successful in reaching company goals. Implementing multiple strategies within a loyalty program can target various consumer markets, track consumer patterns, determine product movement, and predict consumer-buying patterns. A loyalty program has a cost and reward value for each consumer. The cost to the consumer is their time to participate and the amount of effort they must expend to collect their rewards. The cost to the consumer needs to be less than the perceived value of the reward the loyalty program is offering for the

consumer to value the program (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Using multiple strategies, this grocery store chain is achieving their company goals.

The second interview question was: What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase consumer participation? The shared belief stated by the participants was that rewards drive and increase consumer participation in their loyalty program. There is consistency in the relationship between loyal behavior and loyalty programs (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). This grocery store chain uses a reward card program that encourages consumer purchasing of specific products to increase their earned rewards. The card also provides a discount on all purchases through membership, and gives automatic coupons to the consumer based on their past and present purchases. The reward card is available via the consumers actual reward card, their telephone number, or with an app on their smartphone. This grocery store chain has designed their reward card program to encourage consumer participation by creating effortless ways for the consumer to participate.

The third interview question was: What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase store revenue? Each participant's responses focused on the loyalty reward card and the additional bonuses provided via an outside vendor. At the study site, the corporate office sends plans to the grocery stores for the layout of the store and specific displays that directly relate to the weekly circular, website, smartphone app, and reward bonuses for that week. The consumer receives rewards by way of coupons or additional discounts by purchasing everyday items and specific items advertised. In addition to those discounts, the consumer can receive bonus

rewards by purchasing specific products outlined in the weekly circular or via the

company website or the smartphone app that will give the consumer a discount at the

designated outside vendor. The rewards are immediately available for the consumer to

use, and the rewards accumulate over a 60-day period. The participants stated that this

direct relationship between the ad the consumer sees online, in-store, and on their

smartphone app is what increases store revenue and participation from the consumer.

The fourth interview question was: What are the specific strategies used in your

consumer loyalty program that increase product sales? Participants discussed specific

products tied directly to the reward card each week. The products change weekly based

on the time of year, sales promotions, and inventory overflow. Specific product purchases

or product purchases by specific quantity provide additional discounts and bonus rewards

to the consumer. Loyalty programs reward or stimulate consumers to make purchases at a

specific store (Reczek, Haws, & Summers, 2014). Participant P3 described the store's

buy one, get one free deals BOGOs were the most representative example of this in

action.

For a consumer at the study site to receive BOGO deals, they must have a reward

card. Certain products are considered a higher rate of return product, are offered in

conjunction with "buy two, receive X amount of reward" deals with the designated

outside vendor. Participant P2 similarly described a previous promotion that required the

consumer to purchase four of a specified product to receive X amount of bonus reward

and additional discount on total purchase price. Specifically designed promotions by the

corporate marketers at this retail grocery store chain can increase product sales or move specific products quickly.

The fifth interview question was: What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that include technology? Each participant believed that the technology used in the loyalty program was pivotal to its success. At the time of the study, the loyalty program at this grocery store chain used a reward card, the consumer's telephone number, a smartphone app, and a company website. Using the smartphone app or the company website, a consumer can find the information to keep track of their rewards, discounts, and coupons. This consumer has the option of using either their reward card, telephone number, or smartphone at checkout to receive their rewards and discounts applicable to their purchase. Internally, the grocery store chain used technology to gather data from the reward cards, telephone numbers, and smartphone apps to create personalized coupons and discounts to their consumers. When planning future promotions, the retail grocery store uses the collected data from consumer tracking information and reward usage by the consumer. The reward data that is collected allows the grocery store chain the ability to create promotions with the outside vendor, and to share with the outside vendor the increase in product sales that directly relate to the bonus rewards being offered through the outside vendor.

I collected documents related to the loyalty program from the grocery store chain and the website. The documents highlight to the consumer the benefits of joining the loyalty reward program and provide an explanation of rewards. The documents also illustrate the themes of managing brand community, and consumer involvement. The

retail grocery store chain details to the consumer what the corporate marketers want the consumers to know about the company and what the company can offer to the consumer through their use of the loyalty reward card. The amount of time and energy the consumer must expend to participate in the loyalty reward program emphasizes the consumer's involvement. The sign-up process is very simple for the consumer to complete, and can be done in-store via a kiosk or online. The consumer only has to provide their name, phone number, and zip code to participate. The privacy policy, an explanation of the smartphone app, and website are included in the loyalty program documents. The loyalty reward program uses mobile technology. The consumer can use their smartphone and download the smartphone app to participate and interact with the loyalty reward program. Managing brand community, consumer involvement, and mobile technology were themes consistent with the participant interviews about the loyalty reward program.

Emerging Themes

Six themes and one sub-theme emerged from my data analysis and I have aligned the themes with the interview questions, the framework, and the literature I found on consumer loyalty, the retail industry, and marketing techniques. The themes were: (a) managing brand community, (b) mobile technology, (c) consumer involvement, (d) tier-based rewards, (e) management lack of control, (f) lack of social media applications, and (g) lack of cause-related marketing. I have separated the themes by affirmative actions and those that represent a lack of action by the retail grocery store chain.

Managing brand community. This theme emerged as a topic from the previous literature. There is a high level of competition in the retail grocery industry (Lang & Hooker, 2013). Retail grocery store managers should use many avenues to implement a successful loyalty reward program. All methods of reaching out to the consumer is around managing the brand as a community. The participants described organizing store displays from a preplanned layout received by the corporate marketing office. This layout links the paper ad to the coupons that the consumer receives through their loyalty reward card. The online ad links to both the paper ad, the coupons, and the display found in the retail grocery stores. The retail grocery store chain participants believe that this suggestive selling increases participation by the consumers, which increases sales and store revenue.

The consumer receives automatic savings off their grocery bill at checkout by using their loyalty reward card. Each week, the retail grocery store chain offers the consumers bonus deals, BOGOs, promotions, bonus rewards, and bonus promos. The consumer can purchase these items and receive the savings and rewards by using their loyalty reward card at the checkout. The participating consumers can immediately view their bonus rewards via the smartphone app. Consumers respond positively to monetary savings and reward benefits as part of a loyalty program (Kim et al., 2013). The immediate results allow the consumer to connect their use of the loyalty reward card to their bonus rewards at an outside vendor.

Day and Moorman (2013) found that creating a consumer-driven focus as a management strategy can increase satisfaction of the consumer. The managers have

implemented a loyalty program that focuses on the consumers and increases their

satisfaction with the grocery store chain. The retail grocery store chain managers can

track consumer spending with the use of the loyalty reward card. The ability to track how

the consumer uses their loyalty reward card benefits both the retail grocery store chain

and the consumer. The retail grocery store chain can personalize coupons, savings, and

create item specific deals for the consumer. The highly saturated market of retail grocery

causes an increase in consumer switching behavior, which decreases consumer loyalty

(Lang & Hooker, 2013). Participants believe that the coupon personalization is unique

and helps the consumer feel valued by the retail grocery store chain. Establishing a

loyalty program that corresponds to each consumer segment can increase sales and profits

(Stading & Johnson, 2012). The consumer benefits by receiving useful coupons and

rewards from products that they buy every week. As an example, participant P3 believed

that the consumer viewpoint on the benefits received from the loyalty reward program is

what drives their use of and the consumers continued loyalty to the retail grocery store

chain.

　　　　Mobile technology. Successful loyalty reward programs use many forms of

technology to stimulate consumer participation and increase sales. Mobile technology

was a strong emerging theme from the interviews, documents collected, literature review,

and new literature. All participants referred to the smartphone app as the number one

factor in consumer targeting and consumer retention. Lawson (2013) found an online

shopping application for the smartphone could increase consumer participation because

online shopping via smartphones is a growing trend. Consumers have become more

comfortable with using technology as a tool for their shopping from their home computers or their smartphone (Holmes, Byrne, & Rowley, 2014). This confirms the participant's responses and the literature from the literature review on the use of smartphone technology. The smartphone app gives the consumer immediate access to coupons, the weekly circular, and their accumulated rewards. Instead of showing their loyalty reward card, the consumer can use the smartphone app at checkout.

Built in technology links the loyalty reward card simultaneously to the smartphone app and to the corporate marketing office of the retail grocery store chain. This type of technology use allows the store to track purchases, track spending of the consumer, and track participation in varying aspects of the loyalty reward program. Accessing the data provided by the consumer's use of the loyalty reward card allows the retail grocery store chain to promote product specific promotions or coupons to each consumer. The personalization of the loyalty reward program is what promotes repeat purchases and repeat shopping.

The interaction between technology and consumer begins upon initial enrollment of the loyalty reward card. The consumer can enroll via a kiosk in the retail grocery store. Upon enrollment, the benefits of the loyalty reward card are immediate. Participant P3 believed that the ability to immediately enroll and begin saving money is one reason consumers are willing to sign up. The continued benefits of automatic savings, sale prices, bonus promos, and outside vendor rewards may increase continued consumer participation.

The retail grocery store chain trains their employees to understand the loyalty

reward program and to be able to explain the program benefits to the consumer.

Managers and their employees can also refer the consumer to the company website for

additional information or the customer-service phone number. Positive and consistent

customer service can increase a company's market share (Bojei et al., 2013). The

participants believed that, the use of technology across the loyalty reward program allows

corporate and local managers the ability to communicate, plan, and respond to their

consumer's wants or needs.

Consumer involvement. A successful loyalty program requires the continued

participation of the consumer. I found literature that pertains to consumer involvement at

varying levels of participation. The brand experience, brand attitude, and brand

credibility can encourage consumer action (Shamim & Muhammad, 2013). Participants

described the consumers' willingness to use their smartphone app to participate in the

loyalty reward program as a major plus. Many consumers join a loyalty program, but fail

to use their rewards once earned (Gandomi & Zolfaghari, 2013). Participants described a

time limitation on the rewards earned for use at an outside vendor to the consumer. The

consumer forfeits the earned rewards if not used within a 60-day period. The consumer

can earn more savings and rewards the more they use their loyalty reward card at the

retail grocery chain. Consumers may receive various benefits through loyalty programs

(Reczek et al., 2014). Participants believed that the accumulated rewards and bonus

promos are why the consumers participate.

The retail grocery store chain has kiosks in each grocery store. The kiosk is an easy way for a consumer to sign-up for the loyalty reward program and immediately begin saving money and earning rewards. The kiosk also provides the consumer information on the loyalty reward program, their rewards and benefits, and the ability to update their contact information. When using the in store kiosk, the consumer also has access to managers and employees to provide additional assistance.

Tier-based rewards. This theme emerged within the literature and during data collection. Consumers have a natural desire to be valued (Arbore & Estes, 2013). Loyalty programs, specifically loyalty programs that include a reward system can create the feeling of value to the consumer. The retail grocery store chain in this study does not use a specified tier-based reward system, however, does reward consumers based upon how often they shop. Each consumer of this retail grocery store chain has access to the same rewards and benefits as every other consumer. The deciding factor of difference is the amount of money the consumer spends, the products they purchase, and their use of earned rewards via the outside vendor. A loyalty program can have two types of benefits, they are tangible rewards or feeling rewards (Arbore & Estes, 2013). The loyalty reward program for this retail grocery store chain offers both types of benefits to their consumers. Rewards that equate to dollars saved via outside vendors and coupons for the grocery store, and making the consumer experience being valued through various methods of savings.

Management lack of control. This theme may highlight a gap in the literature. Store managers may have insight into the high rate of consumer dissatisfaction and could

be a part of the solution (Nazari et al., 2012). The managers at the retail grocery chain implement the loyalty reward program as directed by the corporate marketing office. Each week the corporate marketing office chooses and sends electronically the weekly circulars, deals, promos, and rewards to the managers at the retail grocery stores. Participants described a specific layout made available to the managers through the corporate internal network. The managers follow the layout when setting up the store end-caps and displays for that promotional week. A manager's lack of control can lead to their inability to implement a successful loyalty program (Choi & Kim, 2013). The interviewed participants believe that the corporate initiatives are beneficial; however, additional local control could increase individual store revenue and consumer participation locally. The corporate marketing office provides the store managers information on the weekly promotions and continued training on the reward program through their internal network. Managers are able to communicate directly back to corporate via internal channels or district meetings. For the grocery store managers to remain competitive, consumer satisfaction and profitability must be a part of their strategy (Nazari et al., 2012). Training of the employees include asking consumers if they have a loyalty reward card, and if the consumer does not, the employee will encourage them to enroll and explain the benefits. The managers are responsible for relaying the appropriate information to their employees regarding the loyalty reward program and all current promotions. The environment of a store can create a positive or negative experience for the consumer (Gocek & Beceren, 2012).

Lack of social media applications. Social media was an emerging theme within the literature (Berthon et al., 2012; Kumar, 2015; Levy & Gvili, 2015). The retail grocery store chain in this study is not using social media as part of their current strategy. Consumers use social media to explore and communicate with other consumers (Fielding, 2014). All participants described the use of mobile technology with a smartphone app; however, their loyalty reward program strategy does not include a social media component. Social media is continuing to grow and has become an acceptable form of communication between consumers and business (Berthon et al., 2012). The retail grocery store chain already use mobile technology, and a transition into social media could be beneficial and welcome by the consumer. Social media provides a vast network of consumers to marketers (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). Adding a social media component could increase consumer participation, increase data collection by marketers, and create new opportunities for the managers to connect with the consumer. Social media smartphone apps give consumers immediate access to other consumers (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011). The ability to connect loyal consumers to other loyal consumers could widen the amount of participants. The increase in consumers actively using the reward program and could encourage stale consumers to become active again. Mobile technology and social media can drive consumer participation positively or negatively for the brand (Naylor et al., 2012). A risk with social media is that some consumers may not be satisfied, and will use social media to voice their dissatisfaction; however, a satisfied consumer may use social media to voice their loyalty and satisfaction.

Lack of cause-related marketing. Cause-related marketing is a fast growing trend for driving an action from the consumer (Chang & Cheng, 2015). This form of marketing appeared across various industries within the literature, including airlines, finance, and retail. Marketing strategies should vary based on the industry setting (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015). A combination of cause-relation and economic savings could increase consumer loyalty (Chang & Cheng, 2015). The loyalty reward program already provides its participants with economic savings. Both the retail industry and the manufacturing industry have brands that need an established consumer loyalty to reach their consumers (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015). The addition of a cause-related campaign may encourage additional consumer participation and an increase in consumers signing up for the program.

Based on the literature (Chang & Cheng, 2015), retail grocery store chain managers may consider running a cause-related marketing campaign with the consumer's loyalty reward card beneficial. This retail grocery store chain already uses the Internet and smartphones, adding a cause-related campaign could be a simple transition. Furlow (2011) found that technology allows the company to implement a cause-marketing campaign easier and more efficiently. Cause-marketing is a strategy that has shown an increase in sales across various industries (Andrews et al., 2014). At the local level, a cause-related campaign could benefit social causes that matter within the community, increasing this retail grocery store chains consumer participation in the loyalty reward program and store revenue.

Themes and the Conceptual Framework

The chosen theory for this study was the theory of planned behavior. The theory's model consists of five elements: (a) attitude toward the behavior, (b) subjective norm, (c) perceived behavioral control, (d) intention and (e) behavior. These elements are jointly dependent upon the intention and behavioral control to achieve a desired end behavior (Ajzen, 1991). I mapped the five elements to each of the five interview questions asked to the participants in this study. From these interview questions six primary themes and one sub-theme emerged, and directly relate to the five elements within the TPB constructs.

The themes, managing brand community, consumer involvement, lack of social media applications, and lack of cause-related marketing tie into the elements of attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. The loyalty reward program offered by the managers' at the retail grocery store chain in Ocala, Florida, aims to create a positive attitude from the consumer while using the reward card. The personalization of the reward card by tracking purchases, spending, and rewards earned can create a positive attitude from the consumer. The consumer's view of the reward card is vital to the success of the loyalty program. By not aligning the loyalty program reward with the purchase, the consumer may have a negative feeling toward the reward program and the brand or product (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Many benefits are offered to the consumer to encourage their participation and provide them with a positive experience. One benefit is the tailoring of coupons to a consumer's regular purchases and an additional reward program that includes baby items for new parents.

The subjective norm that the retail grocery store chain is attempting to achieve relies heavily on corporate store layouts aligning with the weekly circular, online ad, and current promotions. These marketing tools allow the retail grocery store chain to create an environment for the consumer that is consistent across stores and the consumer viewpoint. Promotional sales that include seasonal items or bonus reward promotions are direct drivers of consumer behavior. Effective pricing and incentives can promote positive WOM from consumers causing referrals and new reward card members (Barrot, Becker, & Meyners, 2013). Cause-related marketing could provide an additional incentive for consumers to feel good about. Chang and Cheng (2015) found that the correct cause-related promotion could spur an action from the consumer in a positive way for the business.

The perceived behavioral control or perception of the consumer is an important part of the reward card program at the retail grocery store chain. Suggestive selling of specific items and large store displays highlight the current sales or promotions to the consumer. The immediate results after purchase that highlight rewards earned to the consumer through the smartphone app provide a positive and rewarding experience to the consumer. Retailers can increase their sales through direct marketing that is attainable and measurable (Lund & Marinova, 2015). The desire of the consumer to earn rewards for everyday purchases can increase their participation and promote their loyalty to the specific retail grocery store chain. Social media applications could affect the perception of the loyalty program to the consumer. In conjunction with the smartphone app, a social

media application could add to the positive experience of the consumer (Branthwaite &

Patterson, 2011).

The themes, mobile technology, management lack of control, and tier-based

rewards tie into the elements of intention and behavior. The intention of the retail grocery

store chain is to track purchases, track spending, increase consumer participation, track

coupons, target specific products, and target specific consumers. The reward card, the

consumer telephone number, the smartphone app, and the company website are all forms

of trackable technology. Technology has enabled marketers to analyze consumer

behavior more easily and respond more effectively (Kumar, 2015). The retail grocery

store chain identifies the consumer through their reward card or telephone number. The

use of the telephone number is so the consumer can input their number at the time of

purchase if they do not have their reward card with them and still receive the discounts

and rewards. For consumers that wish to use their smartphone, they can download the

free app from the Apple® store or the Android® store. This smartphone app gives the

consumer direct access to their reward card bonuses, coupons, online ad, and store

information. The consumer can also use their smartphone app at checkout in lieu of their

reward card. Technology has improved marketing promotions (Kumar, 2015). The

company website provides the consumer with store information, location, and the online

ad. The website also provides the consumer with detailed information on the loyalty

reward program, store contact information, and answers to the most frequently asked

questions. Methods of marketing include strategies with technology to increase the

lifetime value of the consumer and ROI back to the company (Kumar, 2015). All of these

touchpoints using technology provide valuable tools to the retail grocery store chain

managers: however, corporate evaluates and analyzes this information.

The behavior of the consumer, the retail grocery store chain managers, and

corporate marketers affect how the reward program works and why it is successful. The

behavior element within the context of TPB is the desired result. To achieve the desired

end behavior of the consumer, all the other elements of the loyalty reward program need

to function together correctly. The use of mobile technology to implement and run the

reward program allows the managers and corporate marketers to monitor consumer use of

the reward card and if the consumer redeems their bonus rewards from the outside

vendor. Tier-based rewards can create a feeling of value for the consumer (Arbore &

Estes, 2013). The retail grocery store chain does provide more rewards to consumers

based upon their purchases, which is a type of tier-based reward system. Benefits of a

reward program met through tangible rewards can increase the consumer's positive

feelings and sense of value (Arbore & Estes, 2013). Marketers have increased their focus

to include consumer value, maximization of consumer value, resources available to the

consumer, and allocating resources to increase consumer profitability (Kumar, 2015).

Technology allows the consumer to monitor their earned rewards and enjoy direct

savings with coupons or BOGOs.

By increasing the manager's focus toward successful planning and

implementation of the loyalty program could improve upon the lack of management

involvement at the local level and create increased success for the corporate marketing

office. The managers only implement corporate marketing ideas. Future training of the

managers could provide valuable input back to the corporate marketing office where marketing strategy occurs for future consideration and implementation of the reward program.

<center>**Applications to Professional Practice**</center>

The information gathered from this study is valuable to current managers improving or considering implementing a loyalty reward program for their consumers. The attitude of the consumer projects onto a brand or product in a positive or negative way (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). A loyalty program that includes rewards to the consumer can promote positive feelings and attitudes. Companies can promote consumer referrals through incentives and rewards (Barrot et al., 2013). A loyalty program that includes rewards may provide long-term benefits to the company and the consumer. New consumers are beneficial; however, retaining existing consumers can benefit a company long-term (Bojei et al., 2013). Mismanagement of the consumer or a lack of incentive to the consumer to participate contributes to the failure rate with some loyalty programs (Luxton et al., 2015; Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). Improved strategies and accurate collection of sales data could minimize the high percent of failure, more than 60%, of loyalty programs (Zhang & Breugelmans, 2012). Sales data collected with a loyalty program can assist managers in personalizing the program to the consumer (Nazari et al., 2012). The results from this study show that managers can provide consumers with personalized savings and rewards for their loyalty to the company.

Based upon the interviews and literature, mobile technology is a valuable component to the success of a loyalty program (Kumar, 2015). The results from this

study have highlighted the importance of technology with the success of these managers implementing a loyalty program with positive outcomes. Smartphone apps can reach the consumer easily and provide convenience at the consumer's fingertips. The growth of the Internet has provided a valuable tool for managers to use with their loyalty programs (Lawson, 2013). Consumer participation with the smartphone app and a loyalty reward program provide a positive experience for the consumer.

A loyalty program that includes rewards, technology, perceived value, and savings to the consumer should provide the best results to managers (Kang et al., 2014). Digital media allows marketers to follow consumers from their conversations through purchase (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015). Managers could implement a loyalty program that focuses on the consumer and methods of rewarding the consumer for their continued loyalty. Gaining consumer loyalty with a loyalty program is fundamental to retaining the consumer (Kang et al., 2014). Managers could provide the consumer a reward of value for using the loyalty program. If the loyalty program reward is of higher value than the brand, some consumers will only participate to obtain the reward (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Discounts, savings, and rewards with the company or with outside vendors may influence the consumer to sign up and participate with the loyalty program. The retail grocery store chain in this study has found success in offering all three to their consumers. Both cultural influence and economic factors affect consumer response to marketing strategies (Petersen, Kushwaha, & Kumar, 2015). Current business practices can apply the results of this study by using the following template (see Figure 2).
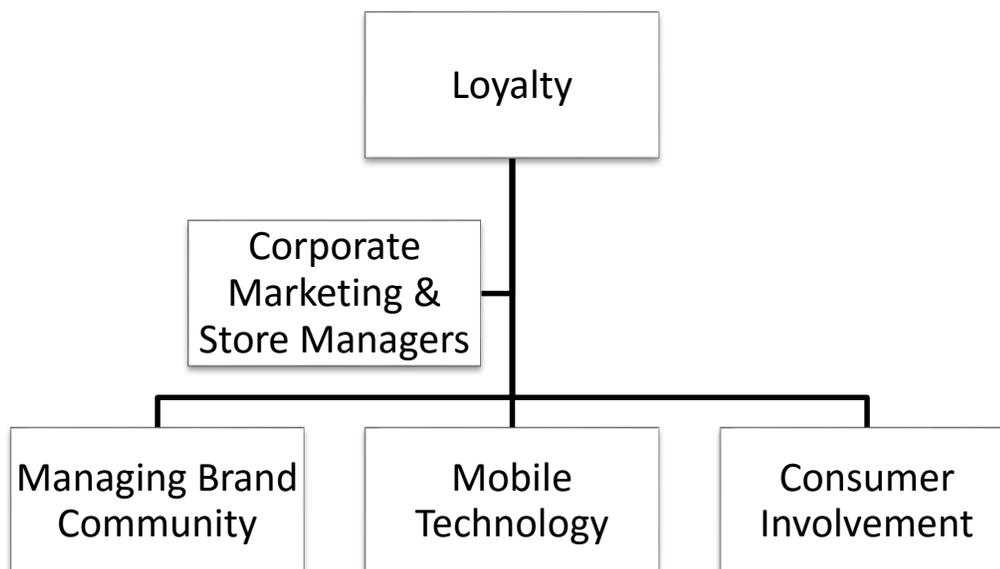
Figure 2. The template for successful implementation. Copyright 2015 by Cristina D. Reinert.

When creating or implementing a loyalty program, managers may need to include technology (Dehkordi et al., 2012). The data collection shows that technology can provide real time information to the consumer regarding their rewards and benefits through their participation. Combined methods of technology can include the Internet, smartphone apps, and social media. Managers may also include rewards to their loyal consumers (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Coupons, money back savings, or incentives offered through a third-party vendor are rewards supplied by this retail grocery store chain. Consumers value these rewards as a sense of belonging and are encouraged to continue their participation (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Other industries, specifically the airline industry, have had success with implementing a loyalty reward program (Meyer-Waarden, 2013).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change include the potential for grocery store managers to increase store revenue, consumer satisfaction, and cost savings to the grocery store chain through a successful loyalty reward program. A successful loyalty reward program should result in measurable profits (Choi & Kim, 2013; Meyer-Waarden et al., 2013). A successful loyalty reward program can save the grocery store chain additional marketing costs and promote positive WOM advertising directly from consumer satisfaction. Cost savings directly reinvested back into the grocery store chain and their community is beneficial to society. Increased job growth, community initiatives and donations can affect the local economy that the grocery store chain operates. Positive community initiatives, like assistance to low-income families or cause-related marketing campaigns, can promote positive feelings about the brand to the consumer. Loyalty programs combined with a company's view on social responsibility can increase loyalty and promote cause-related campaigns (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015). Loyalty by the consumer to a specific brand may increase annual revenues (Felgate et al., 2012), which could increase assistance programs in each community. Loyalty programs that include corporate social responsibility (CSR) have become a growing trend among companies (Hwang & Kandampully, 2015). A positive CSR and loyalty reward program could benefit local causes for the community.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the research findings and the emerged themes, I make the following recommendations to retail grocery store chain managers. First, loyalty reward programs

should include a reward to the consumer for their participation and continued loyalty. The reward could be bonus savings on repeat purchases, cash back, or savings through a third-party vendor. Rewards earned by the consumer may improve their experience and their attitude toward the company. A positive viewpoint from consumers can be a beneficial form of WOM marketing in acquiring new consumers to the brand (Ahrens, Coyle, & Strahilevitz, 2013). The rewards should also be measurable to the consumer and personalized by the grocery store. A more personalized experience for the consumer can influence their loyalty over a longer term. The attitude of the consumer forms through experiences and social influences of the consumer (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012). Another reward option I would recommend is a referral reward. Referral programs that include a reward to the participating consumer can be more beneficial to the company as a long-term marketing strategy (Chan et al., 2014).

Second, the use of technology with the loyalty program is a part of the success of the program. Technology can be used to track purchases, track spending patterns, track specific products, and personalize coupons or rewards for the consumer. Smartphones, the Internet, and social media are staples in the lives of consumers. The consumer can enjoy the benefits of the loyalty program or monitor their rewards earned from the loyalty program by using a Smartphone app. The Internet is useful in advertising weekly specials and as a touchpoint for the consumer to access information about the loyalty program or access their own loyalty card account. Social media has allowed marketing researchers to collect large amounts of data on consumers easily and has provided a direct source of contact between the product and the consumer (Kumar, 2015). I would highly

recommend that a loyalty program include a social media application that would allow consumers to share and connect with other loyal consumers. Social media emerged as a theme from the literature. Social media is a dominant theme across various industries and loyalty programs. Social media is a marketing opportunity that allows companies to reach their consumers on a more personal level (Kumar, 2015). Social media connections could include contests, brand promotion, and consumer behavior patterns.

Managers and marketing professionals who implement or consider implementing a loyalty program should review these results. The high rate of failure or dissatisfaction with loyalty programs is because of mismanagement of data and a lack of understanding what consumers want from such a program. I will provide a copy of the study upon request. I will also offer training to managers and marketers via literature and conferences to further disseminate the results of this study. The described template could be of use when evaluating a loyalty program and its usefulness to the company and the consumers using the program.

Recommendations for Further Study

My recommendations for further study are that researchers explore other geographic locations, the consumers' perspective, social media marketing, cause-related marketing, and corporate data use. There were four limitations within my study. My recommendations should allow future researchers the ability to avoid the limitations I had. The success of a loyalty program may vary in different locations because of varying demographic and geographic influences. A quantitative method may provide additional data for grocery store managers to understand the consumers in each geographic location.

The results from this study were limited to Ocala, Florida, only, and from one grocery store.

A better understanding of the consumers' perspective would be valuable information to managers. A multi-case study could best achieve an understanding of the consumer's perspective. There is limited research that explains the consumer's feelings toward loyalty programs after their initial enrollment (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Improved loyalty programs and direct marketing efforts could save companies millions of dollars each year (Steinhoff & Palmatier, 2016). The results from the study were limited to the managers from one grocery store.

Social media is a growing trend in marketing (Berthon et al., 2012). Marketing as a discipline, has evolved dramatically thanks to emerging social media applications and increased consumer awareness (Kumar, 2015). When companies are already using mobile technology within their loyalty reward program, social media application would be an easy transition and logical next step. Social networking sites are communities that consumers have built trusted relationships with over time, this relationship creates a trusted flow of dialogue that can be beneficial to a business when the dialogue is positive (Levy & Gvili, 2015).

Cause-related marketing creates a bond between the consumer and a company because some consumers desire a connection with a specific cause. A consumer's culture and experience can determine their financial decisions and their responses to marketing strategies targeted to them (Petersen et al., 2015). Further exploration of consumer behavior toward a loyalty program and a cause-related campaign could be beneficial. A

direct effort of marketers may allow a better understanding of consumer behavior across the globe in an effort to reach many consumers at once, instead of a few at a time (Petersen et al., 2015). For a retail grocery store chain, this may provide a more direct marketing approach by region instead of district.

The data collection from the use of a loyalty program is vast, and beneficial to the company when used correctly. A quantitative or qualitative study could identify this information effectively. Managers implementing a loyalty program could gain a better understanding of data collection and use as a full benefit to the company.

Reflections

The process of conducting this research has been frustrating and enjoyable. I was pleasantly surprised at the participants' willingness to work with me, and their eagerness to answer my questions. I had anticipated much more difficulty with securing participants and gaining their trust. I enjoyed the interview process the most during my study. I was surprised to discover how little control the store managers have over the loyalty reward program. I had anticipated much more involvement at the store-end, not just a filtration down from the corporate marketing office because the managers at the stores have regular and direct contact with the consumer. The literature reiterates the importance of managers involvement and control over the implementation of a successful loyalty program. To connect with the participants and hear what they had to say was a very fulfilling part of this journey.

My experiences with loyalty programs as a consumer did not bias my view or opinion during this study. My experience is as a consumer, not as a manager who

implements the program. I did not expect mobile technology to be such a driving force

behind the success of a loyalty program. As a consumer, I am accustomed to using this

type of technology that I did not see the benefits clearly from a manager's perspective. I

have a better understanding of how a manager or marketer can use technology and its

benefits to implement a successful loyalty reward program without that burden becoming

an issue for the consumer.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that

grocery store managers use to successfully deliver consumer loyalty programs. The

findings of this study correspond to the literature on consumer loyalty and loyalty

programs. The gap in the literature was how the grocery industry can develop successful

loyalty programs. The findings of this study can help managers in the grocery industry

develop and implement a more successful loyalty program. To implement a successful

loyalty program the manager should have knowledge of the consumer and the goals of

the company. A loyalty program can encourage consumer participation through

management, technology, and rewards. Managers can implement a successful loyalty

program through an understanding of their brand and their consumer. Other retail

industries could benefit from the findings of this research study as a starting point to

implementing or creating more effective loyalty programs.

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Appendix A: Confidentiality Forms

Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: Cristina D. Reinert

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "Grocery Store Loyalty Reward Programs and their Successful Implementation" I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Appendix B: Interview Instrument

1. What consumer loyalty program strategies have you implemented at your grocery store that have been successful in reaching company goals?

2. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase consumer participation?

3. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase store revenue?

4. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that increase specific product sales?

5. What are the specific strategies used in your consumer loyalty program that include technology?

Appendix C: Data Collection Instrument

Documents to Collect		
Scale 0-5 0-N/A 1-Low requirement. 5-High requirement.	Flyers (Available to consumers prior to joining loyalty program).	Company Website/Internet/Social Media (Consumer access to join or participate in loyalty program).
Benefits.		
Longevity.		
Requirements to earn or participate.		
User friendly.		

Appendix D: Research Partner's Letter of Cooperation

████████
████████

Date ████████

Dear Cristina D. Reinert,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Grocery Store Loyalty Reward Programs and their Successful Implementation within the XXXXX. As part of this study, I authorize you to directly contact the requested managers, interview those managers on or off site, perform member checking of each participant, and receive documents pertaining to the loyalty program from the participating managers. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing contact information of requested managers and providing necessary documents that pertain to the loyalty program that do not violate our corporate policies. 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,

████████
████████

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).

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- Arrive approximately 5-10 minutes prior to interview time to set up recording device and prepare paperwork.

- Confirm receipt of CONSENT FORM and CONFIDENTIALITY FORM to and from participant.

- Greet participant upon arrival, thanking them again for their time and offering a beverage (water/soda).

- Briefly explain what will happen during their interview, reminding them that I will be audio recording the entire interview and that if they become uncomfortable or choose to stop participation at any time, they may do so.

- Answer any questions they may have.

- Commence interview with INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT.

- Take observation notes during the interview of the participant.

- Upon completion of interview questions, ask the participant if there is anything else they feel is important for me to know or understand. Was there something that I did not ask, or that they would like to elaborate on at this time?

- Shut off recording device, and thank the participant for their interview. Inform the participant that they did a fantastic job.

- Remind the participant about the MEMBER CHECKING process that will need to occur. Schedule this appointment time now if they can commit a time slot via

face-to-face or on the telephone to do this. Explain the importance of this process

in the study, and again thank them for their willingness to participate.

- Part ways with the participant; having scheduled the MEMBER CHECKING

    interview and answering all questions that may have arisen.