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Marketing Strategies: How Small Restaurant Businesses use Social Media

Tasheenia Bennett
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Tasheenia Bennett

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Marketing Strategies: How Small Restaurant Businesses use Social Media

by

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ME, Western Carolina University, 2010

BS, Empire State College, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2017

Abstract

Social media has changed the way businesses relate to their customers. Since the beginning of social media, traditional methods of communicating with customers have begun to decline. The purpose of this multicase study was to determine the strategies of 5 owners of small restaurant businesses in Western North Carolina who successfully used social media marketing for 1 year or more. Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Data collection included semistructured interviews, documents pertaining to social media marketing strategies, and social media pages and websites from the participating restaurants. These data were analyzed following Yin's 5-step analysis plan. The themes that emerged were social media platforms, word-of-mouth, and challenges implementing social media. Facebook, Yelp, and Instagram were the most used social media platforms. The participants implied that word-of-mouth has the potential to increase sales and to grow business. Challenges implementing social media included the ability to be consistent and actively engaged on the social media sites to allow business owners to respond quickly to negative posts made by customers. Small restaurant businesses can be successful if they develop and implement a social media presence, encourage customer feedback, and formulate a plan to overcome obstacles and challenges that may arise with implementing social media marketing strategies. These findings contribute to positive social change by increasing the sustainability of small businesses in the community, which may drive economic development and improve community relations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family with love. Their continued support and encouragement made this journey possible.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Traditional methods of advertising such as radio, direct mail, cold calls, billboards, signage, television, magazines, newspapers, and brochures have become less important since the emergence of new technologies in the early 2000s (Patino, Pitta, & Quinones, 2012). Some businesses have shifted to social media (Patino et al., 2012). Business owners attribute revamped marketing, operations, and management to social media (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson 2014).

Social media is a relatively low-cost marketing tool businesses can use to expand reach to customers in less time than other marketing tools (Hassan, Nadzim, & Shiratuddin, 2015). New businesses can succeed due to the low cost of social media marketing (Hassan et al., 2015). Using social media offers opportunities for businesses because of the significant user base and because social media supports interaction with consumers, employees, and other stakeholders versus traditional media, which is one-way communication (Rauniar et al., 2014). Communication on social media allows users to interact with many at one time, rather than traditional methods of one-to-one communication as with direct mail and print ads (Patino et al., 2012). Business leaders can use social media to transcend former marketing strategies to interact with consumers and other stakeholders, which gives the ability to relate to other aspects of their business such as marketing (Rauniar et al., 2014). The purpose of the proposed qualitative multicase study was to determine the strategies that small restaurant business owners in Western North Carolina (WNC) use to support social media marketing.

Background of the Problem

The onset of more efficient marketing tools, such as the Internet and social media are increasingly replacing traditional marketing (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012). Traditional marketing tools include (a) radio, (b) direct mail, (c) cold call sales, (d) billboards, (e) signage, (f) television, (g) magazines, (h) newspapers, and (i) brochures (Bruhn et al., 2012). Social media tools are powerful when businesses conduct effective planning and implementation of integrated marketing efforts (Schlinke & Crain, 2013) to include the blending of traditional and nontraditional marketing.

Businesses face challenges when implementing social media (Schlinke & Crain, 2013). Companies struggle with how to incorporate social media tools into their marketing strategies (Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012), and they use social media without a fully integrated marketing effort (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Few businesses have strategies to use social media to promote sales (Hassan et al., 2015). Schlinke and Crain (2013) listed the following four considerations for integrating social media into a marketing strategy: (a) goals of the business, (b) strategy for content, (c) tools and implementation usage, and (d) associated risks. Patino et al. (2012) identified the following problems with using social media for market research: (a) the lack of demographics of its users, (b) lack of data control, (c) data quality and external validation, and (d) messages are subject to interpretation.

Problem Statement

Some small businesses are reluctant to engage in social media to connect with customers because of their lack of knowledge on social media marketing strategies

(Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, & Singh, 2012). Taneja and Toombs (2014) stated that only 26% of small businesses used social media effectively to reach potential customers and increase sales. The general business problem is that some business owners do not use social media as a means of marketing. The specific business problem is that some small restaurant business owners lack strategies to support social media marketing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies that small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing. The target population was five small restaurant business owners in WNC, who successfully used social media marketing for 1 year or more. The results of this study might contribute to positive social change by assisting small restaurant businesses in gaining and retaining customers, growing their business, and increasing employment. Increased employment could improve the standard of living in local communities.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative research methodology for this study. Employing qualitative research helps with understanding the meaning of the real life experiences of others (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher's intent and goal in a study are to answer the research question (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013). Researchers use qualitative methods to determine a plan of action or to gain understanding of how to accomplish objectives, whereas most quantitative methods involve hypotheses (Maxwell, 2013). For this reason, quantitative methodology was not a good choice for this research study, because I conducted an exploratory study and did not have hypotheses. I collected data

using a combination of interviews, analysis of collected documents, and a review of the businesses' online public social media sites to explore social media marketing strategies in depth. Qualitative and quantitative research methods used together create the mixed method approach to research (Maxwell, 2013). In this research study, a mixed method approach was not appropriate, because I conducted an exploratory study which requires qualitative methods only. I collected and analyzed only qualitative data from interviews, document collection, and a review of the businesses' online public social media sites.

I used the multicase study research design for this study. Researchers use case study research design to explore programs, events, or activities that involve one or more individuals (Yin, 2014). Case study research was most appropriate for this study to uncover meaning and understanding of social media marketing phenomena when little information exists.

Researchers use the ethnographic design to focus on understanding an entire cultural group (Sangasubana, 2011), which was not appropriate for this study because the participants were small restaurant business owners, not a cultural group. Researchers use grounded theory design to develop a theory (Hays & Wood, 2011). No theory development took place in this research study. Grounded theory was not the chosen design. Researchers employ the phenomenological design to study the lived experiences of participants in a study (Moustakas, 1994). I explored the social media marketing strategies of the participants rather than their lived experiences. Researchers use the narrative design to tell life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative research was not suitable because I did not explore the life stories of the participants.

Research Question

The central research question was: What strategies do small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing?

Interview Questions

1. What social media marketing strategies do you use?
2. What motivated you to use social media marketing strategies?
3. What are the obstacles you faced while developing and implementing social media marketing strategies?
4. What social media strategies are most effective or beneficial for your company?
5. What social media strategies are least effective or beneficial for your company?
6. How do you measure the performance of each social media you engage in?
7. How do you use search engine optimization?
8. What additional strategies can you share regarding your social media marketing strategies?
9. What else should I be asking you about using social media marketing for restaurants?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion of innovation occurs when members of the social system adopt an innovation, such as a new idea or practice, over time (Rogers, 2003). The four major components involved in the diffusion of innovations process are (a) innovation, (b) communication channels, (c) time, and (d) social system (Rogers, 2003). Information

sharing occurs through communication channels within a social system (Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) classified the members of a social system as (a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, and (e) laggards (p. 22) to describe the point in time which an individual adopts an innovation. The rate of adoption is the speed it takes to adopt an innovation (Rogers, 2003). A social system is a group of members who share a common goal (Rogers, 2003).

The diffusion of innovation theory applies to the marketing strategies used by small restaurant businesses who support social media marketing. The innovation element of the theory is the practice of marketing via non-traditional channels (Rogers, 2003). The communication channels used for marketing include social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter. One method for companies to understand the impact of social media is to measure the success from inception to the usage phase. After the company implements social media marketing, the final element becomes the creation of a social system, which supports ongoing interaction with consumers and stakeholders.

Operational Definitions

In the definition of terms section, I clarified the terms used in this study. This section includes a selection of terms that may be easily confused within context. The definitions provide clarity to prevent readers from misinterpreting the information provided regarding social media marketing.

Customer value: Customer value is the customer's perception of benefits received (Agnihotri et al., 2012).

Marketing return on investment (MROI): MROI is the result of expenditures made on marketing contributions such as direct mail and advertising (Mitchell & Olsen, 2013).

Small business: For the purpose of this study, small business is a business having fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2016a).

Social media: Social media is an umbrella term used to describe virtual environments where people engage with each other such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, LinkedIn, Myspace, and Instagram (Komodromos, 2014).

Social media tools: Social media tools are online forums and communities, recommendations, ratings and reviews used to interact with other online users (Hajli, 2013). Social media outlets, social media platforms, and social media tools are interchangeable throughout the literature.

Traditional marketing: Traditional marketing such as radio, billboards, signage, and newspapers are publicity and press coverage, in which businesses generate activity through professionally published or broadcast content (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

Tweet: A tweet is a text-based message (maximum of 140 characters) sent out by Twitter users (Wasike, 2013).

User-generated content: User generated content is the communication created when consumers share information and opinions through social media platforms (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012).

Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is technical infrastructure that facilitates user-generated content (Barreto, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are general knowledge claims that provide guidelines for the research purpose (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This study included various assumptions on my part. My first assumption was that the research participants understood the interview questions and responded truthfully and accurately. The second assumption was that the semistructured interview questions and business documents lead to enough data to answer the central research question of the study. The third assumption was that the research participants were able to convey their marketing strategies and experiences while participating in a semistructured interview process.

Limitations

Simon and Goes (2013) stated that a limitation is something that a researcher cannot control, which may negatively influence a study. There were two limitations of this study. The first limitation was that the research participants may not have fully engaged during the interview process. Another limitation resulted from potential lack of information and available documents, which was my second method of data collection.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions that researchers impose when determining the scope of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this multicase study, there were three delimitations. The first delimitation was that participants were small restaurant business owners. Another delimitation was a limited geographic area (WNC). The final

delimitation was that the small restaurant business owners had to have at least 1 year of experience using social media as a marketing tool.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The goal of this study was to provide insights into the effective social media marketing strategies used by small restaurant business owners in WNC. Businesses use social media to gain access to a multitude of people, and social media aids in the development of firm's credibility, expands the customer base and supplier contacts, highlights access to resources and available funding, encourages innovation, and helps develop strategic partnerships (Harris, Rae, & Misner, 2012). Personal relationships with customers, such as those obtained from social media, fuel the growth of small businesses by keeping them in constant contact globally and within the local community (Harris et al., 2012). The results of this study could contribute to effective business practice by identifying what social media platforms are most beneficial for small restaurant marketing. Social media marketing usage could alter hiring practices because businesses would want people who are social media savvy, and it could affect how restaurants interact with customers in the long term.

Implications for Social Change

In this research study, I provided a better understanding of new strategies to support social media marketing. Small businesses engage in social media marketing to promote visibility and awareness of their brand within the local community (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Small business's social media marketing strategies aid in community

involvement by encouraging the community to interact with peers and the wider environment to increase visibility, viability, and sustainability (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The sustainability of small businesses could increase employment and the standard of living for local residents. In turn, these businesses might help contribute to the economy of their community, drive economic development, and improve community relations.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore successful social media marketing strategies implemented by small restaurant businesses. The research question guiding this study was: What strategies do small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing? In this research study, I discussed and explored literature about social media marketing while providing background on different methods, tools, and strategies used for marketing. I also addressed social media challenges identified by researchers, the value of social media, and a review of previous studies.

Research databases that I used to find the literature included: ABI/INFORM Complete, EBSCOhost, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, and Multidisciplinary databases. The search generated references to scholarly and peer-reviewed articles. During database searches, I used the following primary and secondary search terms: *social media, Facebook, LinkedIn, marketing, Twitter, e-marketing, online marketing, small business marketing, Internet marketing, hospitality business marketing, restaurant marketing, social media marketing, traditional marketing, Web 2.0, advertising, word-of-mouth, and marketing strategies*. This study included 170

references. Of those 170 references, 159 (94%) were peer reviewed, and 149 (88%) had a publication date less than 5 years of receiving Walden University's chief academic officer (CAO) approval. This literature review contained 154 references. Of those 154 references, 149 references (97%) are peer reviewed, and 141 references (92%) have a publication date within 5 years of receiving Walden University's CAO approval. I organized the literature review by the following themes (a) online communities, (b) overview of social media, (c) social media platforms, (d) social media marketing, (e) challenges of social media, (f) social media and traditional marketing, (g) word-of-mouth, (h) social media with restaurants, (i) customer relationship management, (j) creating value, (k) return on investment, (l) improved business practice, and (m) conceptual framework.

Online Communities

Web 2.0 uses World Wide Web (WWW) technologies to create virtual communities, which pass control of the content on the WWW to Internet users (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Web 2.0 users reach outside their personal network to obtain product and service recommendations from unknown people (Barreto, 2014). Consumer-generated advertising is a revolutionary change in marketing. Businesses should align their traditional marketing media with consumer-generated content to obtain competitive advantage (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014).

Businesses achieve better customer relationship management by participating in online communities (Hajli, 2014). Businesses maintain community relationships by actively engaging and overseeing by collaborating, conversing, and connecting with

online communities (Parsons, 2013). Virtual communities provide an opportunity for social bonding (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). The social benefits obtained through viral communities increase interaction among users (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Business managers and owners learn from the interactive engagements within viral communities to develop products and services specific to the needs of the community (Taneja & Toombs, 2013). Not all visitors who use social media outlets are potential customers, but rather customers who want to be a part of a community or to seek information (Zhu & Chen, 2015).

Chua and Banerjee (2013) suggested the use of online communities for market insight, customer-client loyalty, customer support, product development, knowledge management, and recruiting. Online discussion forums and virtual communities help companies uncover strengths and weaknesses of their own and that of their competitor's offerings (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Businesses having online community involvement help increase demand for products, help marketers identify key influences, and provide marketers with insight into customers' wants and needs (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). Consumers look to online communities to form opinions about unfamiliar brands (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). Using online communities offers the ability to help others locate products or services and to create a fairer exchange between customers and businesses (Chua & Banerjee, 2013).

Online communities provide an opportunity to define how people want the world to see them (Croft, 2013). Members of the online communities use social media as a way to deceive others (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). Users create online identities by how

they describe themselves and the products they relate to (Croft, 2013). Social media platform providers encourage creativity by facilitating user storytelling through conversation and images (Croft, 2013).

Online communities promote social interaction that may create buzz and encourage purchases (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Consumer influence increases among people who have more in common, because they value others' opinions about brands (Naylor et al., 2012). Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013) concluded that increased levels of participation among online communities lead to more willingness to pay for premium service, thereby increasing sales.

Overview of Social Media

Social media is not a new concept, but rather a new form of networking (Harris et al., 2012). The results of a Gallup survey stated that 72% of adults use social media sites frequently throughout the day (Gallup, 2014). Social media has a significant role in the current technology and information age (Taneja & Toombs, 2014).

The influence of social media has changed the way businesses relate to their customers (Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014). Small businesses use social media to form one-on-one relationships with their customers and to reach new prospects (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2016). Social media provides a space for others to communicate with the world (Zhu & Chen, 2015), connects businesses to customers (Taneja & Toombs, 2014), and fosters collaboration among like-minded individuals (Felix et al., 2016). Individuals can openly communicate in online social media outlets (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2013). Some consumers want to obtain knowledge about the products and

services offered (Andzulis et al., 2012). Customers use social media to offer valuable advice to others (Hajli, 2014), sharing experiences and information globally and quickly (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Social media platforms provide an opportunity for companies to interact with existing and potential customers, which, builds relationships (Goi, 2014). Business leaders use social media to engage and interact with customers in an attempt to affect sales and awareness (Taneja & Toombs, 2014).

Social Media Platforms

Technology usage has increased among small businesses as marketers embrace social media tools (Go & You, 2016). Social media platforms afford users the opportunity to stay current on the news, to voice concerns, to offer opinions, and to engage in communication with others (Go & You, 2016). As with any marketing strategy, a company assesses what the customer wants and determines how they will deliver (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Although Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are the most used social networking sites worldwide, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and blogs are also nontraditional marketing methods used as part of the social media phenomenon.

Facebook. Facebook is the preferred social media site (Jennings, Blount, & Weatherly, 2014). As of January 2013, Facebook was the most used social media in the United States (Aichner & Perkmann, 2013). It is easier to access Facebook through smartphones and other mobile devices (Fan & Gordon, 2014), which contributes to its popularity with over 1.49 billion monthly active users as of 2015 (Niedermeier, Wang, & Zhang, 2016). Facebook users post pictures and updates about their daily lives while businesses post about products and services offered (Go & You, 2016).

Facebook communication and collaboration forms relationships among the users (Goi, 2014). Businesses use Facebook as a marketing tool because of the potential to reach and communicate to a large population (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Companies use marketing campaigns to grab the interest of their followers, which, fosters participation (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012). Facebook provides increased opportunities to exchange information through approaches such as conducting live question and answer sessions and delivering information quickly about new developments (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Other businesses use Facebook as a way to get information to many customers and clients in a short amount of time (Goi, 2014). Organizations not engaged in Facebook miss valuable chances to communicate with customers (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012). Maintaining a personal Facebook page separate from a business page, is a best practice for businesses (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012).

LinkedIn. As of 2013, LinkedIn was the largest professional networking website in the U.S. (Ferguson, 2013). LinkedIn allows business professionals to build and manage their network of business associates to promote future business relationships (Mihalcea & Savulescu, 2013). Users accomplish self-promotion by keeping current information listed on the LinkedIn site for potential career opportunities (Ward & Yates, 2013). LinkedIn allows individuals to learn more about others and helps bolster credentials (Agnihotri et al., 2012).

Blogs. Blogs help facilitate word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing and help improve business reputation (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Fan and Gordon (2014) discovered that large companies have not devoted resources to manage blogging because they lack

understanding of its potential benefits. Benefits of blogs include increasing information visibility, stimulating creativity, and providing ideas with a human perspective (Wu, Kao, & Lin, 2013). Trust via blogs correlates positively and significantly and influences knowledge sharing (Wu et al., 2013). Bloggers express opinions, educate customers, and initiate discussion related to products and services (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015).

Twitter. Twitter is a social networking website used to post or tweet about the latest stories, ideas, opinions, and news on topics that interest the user and their followers (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2016). A tweet can only have 140 characters; users have to send short bursts of information at a time (Yıldırım, Üsküdarlı, & Özgür, 2016). If an organization chooses, it can bypass restrictions on the number of characters used for the presentation of detailed information with hyperlinks (Lovejoy et al., 2012). Twitter includes email, instant messaging, texting, and blogging (Azhar & Abeln, 2014). Tweets may also contain links to stories, images, and videos (Wasike, 2013). In addition, individuals and organizations may share information through retweets, build information communities, and demonstrate responsiveness with the use of public messages (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2016).

People use Twitter to (a) gauge what people say about businesses and their competitors, (b) follow news about businesses, and (c) allow professionals to learn about topics of interest (Schlinke & Crain, 2013). Businesses can use Twitter for policymaking, campaign management, and marketing (Yıldırım et al., 2016). Soo Jung and Hadley (2014) stated that news journalists receive news from monitoring the tweets of others. Although tweeting is not the main source of news information, it offers a substitute for

finding the latest information (Soo Jung & Hadley, 2014). Sports organizations and athletes use social media to communicate with fans (Witkemper et al., 2012). Brands mentioned on Twitter have on average more followers than brands that are not, suggesting that social media tools attract new followers and increase credibility (Wolny & Mueller, 2013).

Social Media Marketing

Social media has changed the digital media landscape, thus influencing the way organizations market their products (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The effective use of social media marketing is advantageous to small business, because it increases revenue, is more cost-effective, and efficient (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Social media marketing is a low-cost marketing option (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2015).

Bruce and Solomon (2013) stated that social media marketing is like a multilane highway giving users a chance to voice their opinions about products or services. Traditional marketing is similar to a one-lane street, where the businesses tell the consumers what they want them to know about their products and services (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Kwok and Yu (2013) referred to social media as a hybrid-marketing tool. Businesses used social media as a more traditional type of marketing strategy by pushing information out to the customers (Kwok & Yu, 2013). That information then becomes a conversation within their social networks, allowing customers to create user-generated content used as WOM marketing for the business (Kwok & Yu, 2013).

Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) stated that social media marketing efforts used to increase sales, profits, brand awareness, and positive WOM must relay the *right* message

to the *right* individual. Companies view social media communication as either positive or negative (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Businesses have the ability to monitor what consumers communicate about the company's brand (Kohli et al., 2015). Social media users want their voice heard; accordingly, social media tools make listening easier for businesses (Patino et al., 2012). By listening to consumer feedback, businesses are in a position to develop responses to change the behavior and the mindset of consumers (Kohli et al., 2015). Also, the dialog created through social media could aid in new product development (Peltola & Mäkinen, 2014). Companies have begun to realize the power of social media as a marketing tool (Hassan et al., 2015).

Challenges with Social Media

Small businesses were reluctant to engage in social media to connect with their customers (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Rapp & Panagopoulos, 2012). If companies do not take the time to understand how to use social media as a marketing tool, businesses could cause potential damage to their organizations (Li, 2012). Results from the 2012 Social Business Global Executive Survey showed that the number one barrier to impeding the adoption of social software in an organization is the lack of management understanding (Kiron, Palmer, Phillips, & Berkman, 2013). Agnihotri et al. (2012) believed that due to lack of management knowledge, companies have not adopted social media as part of their marketing strategy. Businesses can invest millions of dollars in developing an online presence and build social media outlets to conduct business, but it does not help the company if they do not understand how to use the marketing tools (Divol, Edelman, & Sarrazin, 2012).

Rapp and Panagopoulos (2012) stated that the primary obstacle to implementing social media is the lack of information technology (IT) and communication skills. Technology-related challenges have hindered companies' ability to adopt social media as a marketing tool (Rapp & Panagopoulos, 2012). Training helps businesses to operate social media technology (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013). A common barrier to integrating social media is the time and learning associated with the new marketing tools (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Small businesses were reluctant to turn away from traditional marketing through newspapers and radio (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Due to the increasing amount of Internet users, it is crucial to understand how to incorporate social media into traditional methods of marketing to increase sales (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

Social media is a dynamic process of any business. Social media is a tool and a strategy requiring commitment and constant monitoring in all elements of an organization (Andzulis et al., 2012; Fan & Gordon, 2014). The greatest challenge for companies regarding social media marketing is to figure out how and when to use it appropriately and efficiently (Bruce & Solomon, 2013; Harris et al., 2012; Kiron et al., 2013).

Small businesses are uncertain they can reach their target markets using social media marketing techniques (Durkin, McGowan, & McKeown, 2013). Small and large businesses have successfully used social media to connect with new customers (Hassan et al., 2015). Companies are unsure how to use the new marketing technologies to maintain relationships with their clients (Durkin et al., 2013), resulting in only 26% of small businesses using social media effectively to reach potential clients and increase sales (Taneja & Toombs, 2014).

Another challenge faced by small businesses is how to incorporate the use of social media into the competitive environment in which they operate. Taneja and Toombs (2014) noted the five conditions for recognizing the opportunity to engage in peer networks. The first condition is that businesses often articulate a lack of opportunities to learn the different tools available for the use of social media. Another condition is that business managers and owners must commit to networking. The third condition is that building trust, communication and sharing among fellow business managers and owners takes time. The next condition is that negative publicity is a result of disagreement and criticism among members. The final condition is that the image of the business may alter the company's articulated benefits and experience.

Large organizations have the resources available to hire personnel to integrate social media into their communication and marketing plans (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Kacker and Perrigot (2016) realized small businesses lack the resources and labor to implement social media strategies. Small businesses require knowledge in using social media; therefore, utilizing employees with social media experience is beneficial (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). To address this challenge, business education curricula include social media marketing to teach college students and entrepreneurs how to interact socially (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Educating students and entrepreneurs may help small businesses adopt social media marketing (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012).

Businesses that engage in social media understand they have limited control over the content shared with their target market (Kohli et al., 2015). Businesses view their inability to control content as a disadvantage (Austin & Upton, 2016). Social media is

primarily user-generated content, which can sometimes be deceiving (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). Blogs and microblogs enable people to deceive others because there are no control mechanisms in place (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014), and online reviews cannot always be trusted (Kugler, 2014). Once customers share negative information, it is nearly impossible for a business to stop the flow of information (Austin & Upton, 2016). Software is available to assist businesses in responding to the negative comments posted on social media sites (Labrecque, 2014).

Companies miss opportunities to interact with customers by not incorporating social media into their marketing strategies (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). Felix et al. (2016) posited that businesses fail to see the benefits of social media. Among the many platforms of social media, each has unique functionalities, that organizations take into consideration to maximize results (Go & You, 2016). With the vast amount of social media tools available, no one single approach exists for all businesses; social media should be flexible to suit the needs of each individual (Go & You, 2016).

Social Media and Traditional Marketing

Social media differs from traditional media in performance, immediacy, cost, quality, frequency, and reach (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). Since the onset of social media, traditional methods of communicating with customers have begun to decline (Goi, 2014; Lacoste, 2016; Yu, Duan, & Cao, 2013). Businesses have since created social media applications accessible through mobile devices to communicate, offer coupons, and to advertise company promotions (Yadav, Joshi, & Rahman, 2015). Bruhn et al. (2012) concluded that social media continues to replace traditional media. Bruhn et al stated that

consumers continue to turn away from traditional media because they feel that social media is a more trustworthy source of information.

On the contrary, Andzulis et al. (2012) stated that social media complements traditional marketing strategies to increase the value of each interaction with current or potential customers. The viral diffusion of information through social media has enhanced capacity to reach more people than traditional forms of media (Bruhn et al., 2012). Patino et al. (2012) felt that social media is not a replacement for traditional marketing, but rather a tool to complement these traditional strategies.

Social media marketing is a two-way communication (Valentini, 2015) and not a one-way communication tool such as radio or newspaper marketing methods (Nevin & Torres, 2012). Social media presents an opportunity for businesses to conduct marketing in a new way in addition to traditional methods (Roseman & Stuhura, 2013). Companies using social media as they would traditional marketing methods, limit their ability to meet the consumers' needs (Nevin & Torres, 2012). Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, and Shapiro (2012) suggested that to successfully integrate social media with traditional marketing strategies, marketing professionals must understand it. Small businesses achieve competitive advantage by integrating social media strategies with traditional marketing efforts (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Companies must embrace social media to ensure integration with their traditional marketing efforts to leverage the purchasing decisions of customers (Eisenberg, Johnson, & Pieterse, 2015).

Word-of-Mouth

Traditional and nontraditional marketing may generate WOM communication (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Electronic WOM influences customer feedback, comments, product reviews, and product recommendations (Castronovo & Huang, 2012), which could contribute to sales. Some purchasing decisions rely heavily on social media marketing interactions (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013; Wu et al., 2013).

The dominant factor in WOM engagement is customer satisfaction, which occurs when the client wants to share a positive experience about a product or service (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Social media allows WOM to accelerate its reach (Walaski, 2013). WOM can be an attempt for customers to improve their social interaction by making conversation about products or services (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Social media platforms offer the ability to spread information via WOM more effectively than traditional marketing, because of the high levels of consumer engagement (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

A WOM strategy is crucial to marketing success (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). WOM and online WOM work together to get the desired response from consumers (Barreto, 2014). Social media has the potential to amplify WOM strategies (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). Online WOM is powerful in promoting new products and helps in brand development (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Wu et al., 2013). Electronic WOM can support the development of the brand image and build customer relations (Wu et al., 2013).

Electronic WOM marketing can have both negative and positive influence on businesses (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). Customer reviews on social media websites help develop a loyal customer base (Kugler, 2014). The customers view the relay of information about a product as a more reliable source of information (Kohli et al., 2015). Potential consumers are more interested in what others recommend rather than the vendor-generated information provided (Hajli, 2014).

Consumer trust is important in electronic commerce (e-commerce) because businesses can assess risk and uncertainty in online transactions (Hajli, 2014). When the level of trust increases, the perceived risk may decrease (Hajli, 2014). Reviews and recommendations create an atmosphere of trust and consumers perceive them as useful in purchasing decisions based on the impression created about a product or service (Hajli, 2014). Wolny and Mueller (2013) believed negative posts might be necessary to increase the credibility of products or services where only positive comments exist.

Social Media with Hospitality Businesses

Consumers rely on reviews posted on social media websites when making travel plans and when deciding on restaurants and hotels because they feel the information is trustworthy (Kim, Li, & Brymer, 2016; Kwok & Yu, 2013) and easy to use (Goldsmith, Pagani, & Lu, 2013). Hospitality businesses have a unique relationship with consumers in that they provide an experience rather than a tangible product like other businesses (Kwok & Yu, 2013). Hospitality companies can communicate more effectively with their market if they are aware of the information consumers seek on social media websites (Kwok & Yu, 2013).

As social media escalates in popularity, hospitality businesses have an increased opportunity to build customer relationships by marketing themselves effectively on social media sites (Roseman & Stuhura, 2013). Hospitality businesses are more involved with their consumers on social media websites creating customer loyalty (Roseman & Stuhura, 2013). A positive relationship that a brand or company has with its customer is likely to increase repeat business and referrals (Ahuvia, Bagozzi, & Batra, 2014; Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Rajeev, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). Hospitality businesses should build a personal connection with consumers by providing a customized experience that they will in turn share with others (Kwon & Mattila, 2015). Consumers who feel a connection with the brands they love are more likely to spread positive, electronic WOM through social media (Kwon & Mattila, 2015).

DiPietro, Crews, Gustafson, and Strick (2012) found that leaders in the restaurant industry were unsure of how social media could be used to their benefit; however, restaurants use social media websites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn to advertise to customers and obtain feedback. Restaurants that use social media websites gain the advantage of increased customer satisfaction, increased revenues, and productive employees (DiPietro et al., 2012). Kwok and Yu (2013) stated that restaurants draw in new business and increase sales by using social media websites.

Kim et al. (2016) conducted a study to examine how customer reviews on social media websites influence restaurant performance. The researchers concluded that the restaurant performance increased as the amount of positive online customer reviews increased (Kim et al., 2016). Consumers use social media websites to exchange

information about their personal dining experiences (Bilgihan, Cheng, & Kandampully, 2014). Consumers look to social media websites such as Yelp.com and Chowhound.com to seek reviews before choosing a restaurant (Kim et al., 2016; Ong, 2012). Consumers post about their dining experiences on Facebook.com, Twitter.com, and MySpace.com (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Consumers share not only opinions, suggestions, and comments about their meal, but also pictures (Bilgihan et al., 2014).

Restaurants that engage in social media have the ability to establish credibility with their consumers by developing relationships and allowing users to exchange their dining experience with others (Bilgihan et al., 2014). This collaboration helps restaurants to identify their target market and distribute information to consumers (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Restaurants struggle with how to respond to the reviews made by consumers about their products or services. Ong (2012) suggested that more social media marketing research is needed.

Customer Relationship Management

Social media sites allow open communication about products or services offered and allow businesses to engage in conversations with their customers to strengthen their relationship (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). DiPietro et al. (2012) conducted a study surveying restaurants that use social media and found that building customer relations is the most significant benefit. Roseman and Stuhura (2013) defined customer relationship management (CRM) as a process which depicts what prospective customers want and building relationships with them by providing products and improved customer service based on their needs. Roseman and Stuhura (2013) delineated the CRM process in three

steps: (a) step 1 is to get to know the consumers, (b) step 2 is to retain customers, and (c) step 3 is to engage with the customer. Implementing all three stages improves customer service (Roseman & Stuhura, 2013).

Creating Value

It is hard to define the value gained by social media (Hutter et al., 2013). Researchers argued that value created via social media channels might not enhance customer relationships (Durkin et al., 2013). The value-creating process involves the company and the customer (Lacoste, 2016). Customer trust and loyalty creates increased co-created value to the business (Rapp & Panagopoulos, 2012). Erragcha and Romdhane (2014) defined co-created value as the information and comments shared on the Internet by consumers for the benefit of the company. Improved customer relations (Durkin et al., 2013) can reduce risk and uncertainty.

Social media has a significant influence on customer perception of organizations (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Value is created by the clients' perception of benefits they receive (Lacoste, 2016). Accessibility, relevance, and experience are the factors that contribute to the value of information obtained through social media (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Customers want to stay informed about products and services offered and render their opinions (Andzulis et al., 2012).

Social media is collaboration between customer and company to create value (Lacoste, 2016). Customers must gain a perceived value from social media efforts for the strategy to be successful (Andzulis et al., 2012). The higher the customer values the product or service, the more likely they remain loyal. Marketers must understand that to

gain a competitive advantage over other companies; one must create value to the customers (Hajli, 2014).

Marketers who build a level of trust with their consumers will grow their business faster, than those who only advertised to consumers (Bertrand, 2013). Enterprises and consumers develop loyalty and trust through social media marketing (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; Yadav et al., 2015). When employing social media marketing tactics to reach potential customers, businesses must have consistent communication to earn trust (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Opinions and experiences of others influence consumer purchasing decisions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Customers become familiar with one another fostering an environment of trust, which affects user's intention to purchase (Chang et al., 2015). The results of a Gallup survey suggested that close relationships influence consumers' purchasing decisions rather than the content found on social media websites (Gallup, 2014).

Marketing Return on Investment

Marketers find it difficult to measure return on investment (ROI) (Luke, 2013). Some marketers believe that they cannot calculate social media marketing ROI while others consider it higher than ROI of traditional marketing methods (Indrupati & Henari, 2012). Mitchell and Olsen (2013) defined MROI as the results of expenditures made on marketing contributions such as direct mail and advertising.

Whiting and Williams (2013) expected ROI to increase for businesses who use social media marketing. Public Relations Society of America reported that in 2016, over half of the 90% of the active U.S. businesses would increase sales by using social media

as part of the total marketing mix (Public Relations Tactics, 2016). Integration of new marketing channels may yield an increased return (Eisenberg et al., 2015). A basic way to measure MROI, as suggested by Luke (2013), is to track communication from the original point of contact with a consumer. The most important component to measuring MROI is customer lifetime value (CLV), which measures the overall value the customer adds to a business (Lee & Yoo, 2012).

Improved Business Practice

Social media is the new way of doing business (Durkin et al., 2013), even though, marketing objectives such as attracting and retaining customers have not changed (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). It is beneficial for marketers to refine their marketing strategy across all age groups (Schlinke & Crain, 2013). Coleman, Chandler, and Gu (2013) researched the demographics of social media users and found that educated, affluent, young white men were among the majority. Millennials, those born in the 1980s and 1990s (commonly called Generation Y), are identified as a prime target for e-commerce because it is the largest generational group; however, the Baby Boomers hold the most buying power in the digital marketplace (Smith, 2012). The millennial generation group caused marketers to rethink their marketing strategies (Smith, 2012).

Companies successfully using social media articulated the importance of having a social media plan to other companies who have yet to engage in this new marketing tool (Coleman et al., 2013). A successful social media strategy involves all departments of an organization working together on all marketing activities (Eisenberg et al., 2015).

Salespeople are the customer relationship builders of the organization. It is imperative for

them to understand how social media tools can enhance their efforts (Agnihotri et al., 2012). The social media marketing tactics employed by a business influences the buyer-seller relationship (Agnihotri et al., 2012).

Salespeople can connect with customers through social media (Agnihotri et al., 2012). Connecting with customers on social media platforms facilitates a company's ability to gain detailed personal information about its customers and maintain awareness of customer interests and preferences that can help add a personal touch to foster stronger customer relationships (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Interaction on social media outlets also allows salespeople to respond quickly to customer's questions and concerns (Agnihotri et al., 2012). As with WOM, social media affords businesses the opportunity to reach new markets (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Companies that understand how to leverage customer connections with social media have an increased chance of obtaining and retaining customers (Harris et al., 2012).

Businesses use social analytic techniques to understand and analyze data obtained from social media platforms (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Information obtained through social media channels positively influences purchasing decisions (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Chang et al. (2015) indicated that the customer's emotional experience also influences their purchasing decisions.

Conceptual Framework

Many theories relate to social media marketing strategies either directly or tangentially. The conceptual framework for this study is the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion of innovation theory explains the initial adoption of a

certain innovation or media outlet and assists researchers in exploring why users chose a certain media by exploring their adoption rate. Researchers have used the diffusion of innovation theory across various disciplines to identify a technology users' rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003). The diffusion of innovation theory provides the best framework to focus on the strategies of small restaurant businesses. The business relationships formed on social media websites create the connection for diffusion of information. Small restaurant businesses use marketing strategies on social media websites to disseminate their marketing message (Kwok & Yu, 2013).

Diffusion occurs in stages since the process develops over time (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013). Much like Rogers's (2003) five stages in the diffusion of innovation theory, Mergel and Bretschneider (2013) identified three stages of the diffusion process. The researchers examined social media as it relates to the three stages of diffusion. The first stage is the intrapreneurship and experimentation phase. In this stage, individuals diffuse technology, such as social media, into an organization by integrating it into their standard business practices. Phase 2 is the order from chaos phase. In this phase, the organization accepts the new technology and establishes standards and rules based on the variance of use by the individuals within the organization. Institutionalization is the third phase. During the institutionalization phase, the organization utilizes their rules and standards to implement a standardized protocol for the use of the new technology (Mergel & Bretschneider, 2013).

Business decisions typically rely on a single person in the position of manager or owner for small businesses (Thong, 1999). Small businesses lack the technical

knowledge and resources to adopt new innovative technologies, such as social media (Thong, 1999). Business innovation exists when there is a need for new product development or a solution to a current business problem (Thong, 1999). Thong (1999) conducted an empirical study, using questionnaires, to obtain data from small businesses in Singapore on information system (IS) adoption. Thong compared small businesses in Singapore with those of the United States and found that since they have the same characteristics and limitations his research applies to most small businesses. Thong (1999) stated that many models and theories might be applicable to large organizations but not always small businesses because of their limited resources and work force.

Researchers have used the diffusion of innovation theory to investigate factors that influence social media and the impact social media has on financial performance of small businesses (Ainin, Parveen, Moghavvemi, Jaafar, & Mohd Shuib, 2015). Harris et al. (2013) used the diffusion of innovation theory to examine patterns and characteristics associated with social media adoption in state health departments across the United States. Mergel (2013) found that two main factors influenced the adoption of social media usage in the U.S. federal government: (a) the passive attention network among social media practitioners, and (b) to a much lesser extent (initially lacking) formal guidance from the top management. Researchers also used the diffusion of innovation theory to explain the adoption of Facebook in the 2012 campaigns for the U.S. Congress and to identify characteristics that differentiate the small subset of candidates who did not create a Facebook presence from the large majority who did (Gulati & Williams, 2013).

Social network theory combined with the diffusion of innovation theory was the framework for a mixed method research study to determine how social media experts could support the implementation of social media programs in Belgium libraries (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry, Vanderlinde, & Verdegem, 2014). Ainin et al. (2015) used the diffusion of innovation theory to explore the influential factors and the performance impact of Facebook usage on organizations. Unlike previous studies, these researchers found that trust was not an influential factor in Facebook usage. In addition, they found that Facebook had a positive impact, both financial and non-financial, on organizational performance. Using the compatibility attribute of the diffusion of innovation theory, the researchers showed that organizations adopt new technology if it benefits business. Likewise, Nah and Saxton (2012) used the diffusion of innovation theory to understand the adoption of Facebook usage by nonprofit organizations. Organizations employ various strategies to fulfill the organization's mission. The organization's mission determines the acceptance of the innovation, such as social media (Nah & Saxton, 2012). Furthermore, organizational strategies, capacities, governance features, and external pressures (Nah & Saxton, 2012) regulate social media adoption rate.

Hayes (2012) suggested that the user's *mental mode* affects their usage of technology. The term mental mode is the user's comprehension of how a system works (Hayes, 2012). The attitude toward technology relates to the ease of use. The better a user can understand the benefits of a system, the more apt they are to using it. Hayes (2012) conducted an empirical study using two case scenarios, both with a conceptual model of the decision aid technology. The participants received training on the conceptual model

and were required to use it in the first case, while the second case the participants were not required to use the conceptual model. The researchers used questionnaires to gather demographic and ease of use information. Participants self-reported their intent to use the technology. Hayes (2012) found that the conceptual model enhances the mental model thus making ease of use greater. Hayes also found that users are more likely to accept a technology that they perceive as easy to use. The conceptual model aided in the perception of the ease of use because the users felt more knowledgeable of the technology, thus increasing the adoption of a technology (Hayes, 2012).

In the theory of planned behavior (TPB) framework intentions lead to behavior toward information technology (Ajzen, 1991; Muk, Chung, & Kim, 2014). Personal beliefs and worldly knowledge often impact individual behavior (Muk et al., 2014). Individuals' attitudes, social influences, and volitional control stimulate their behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The positive or negative response of performing the action is an attitude (Fielding, Terry, Masser, & Hogg, 2008). Social influences are subjective norms derived from the perception of the behavior by ones' peers (Muk et al., 2014). Social norms are expectations about human behavior. Instead of influence by others, relevant group member expectations influence most behavior (Fielding et al., 2008). Internal and external forces influence individual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, consumers base their desires to purchase products on their psychological needs to feel connected to others (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2012). Muk et al. (2014) conducted a study using the TPB to examine the effect of social media on consumer behavior. Muk et al. (2014) found that

TPB helps to explain the consumer's behavior but does not give insight as to the business owner's strategy in obtaining and retaining customers using social media marketing.

Another theory that relates to social media is the social identity theory (SIT) which suggests an individual's identity comes from their surroundings (Barker, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Individuals have multiple identities developed by their association with various social groups (Barker, 2012). A group includes collaboration with people who share similar social or emotional views (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People evaluate their friends (in-group) positively while developing social norms (Baker, 2012). Unknown associates (outgroup) is categorized negatively (Baker, 2012). Abrams and Giles (2007) stated that the in-group determines an individual's perception of media content (Barker, 2012). As with the TPB, SIT includes exploration of the consumer's perspective on their associations with business brands, rather than focusing on the business strategies that attracted them to the company.

Some researchers integrated SIT with TPB to explore all elements that come together during business sales transactions (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Terry and Hogg (1996) have provided evidence from their research that the behavioral aspect of the social norms in TPB and SIT are related. In TPB, the evaluation of choices is deliberate and informed by identity or group related variables (Nenci, Carrus, Caddeo, & Meloni, 2008). TPB includes connections to SIT because the behavior was a result of the social identity impacted by the in-group norms (Nenci et al., 2008). The integration of SIT and TPB helps explain online consumer purchasing decisions when influenced by relationships formed on social media websites.

Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi developed the technology acceptance model (TAM) in 1989 (Lin, 2013). TAM is a commonly used theory relating to the acceptance and usage of technology (Pinho & Soares, 2011). TAM was inspired by the theory of reasoned action (TRA) developed by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1975 (Lin, 2013). Usefulness and ease of use are two constructs of the TAM model that are appropriate in a study relating to social media marketing studies. TAM relates to the other models and theories by ease of use. Rauniar et al. (2014) conducted a study regarding social media with a focus on Facebook using the TAM. The authors developed a revised social media TAM model to include perceived usefulness (PU) and intention to use (IU), which resulted in the revised model. The researchers revised the TAM model specifically for Facebook to conduct their study. The revised model was consistent with prior results of hypothesis that relate to the original TAM model. The results of their study were that the TAM model constructs were consistent with the original TAM model with social media and Facebook. Their study was limited to a small number of U.S. based university business students. Further research should include other participants and other social media sites such as Google, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Riemenschneider, Harrison, and Mykytyn (2003) used TPB and TAM to understand IT adoption among small businesses. Riemenschneider et al. (2003) collected data from U.S. small business executives. The combination of the TAM and TPB allowed the researchers to examine the adoption of small business websites. The researchers found that the combination of TAM and TPB was most appropriate for understanding the ease of usage and the behavior to adopt IT in small businesses. Lederer, Maupin, Sena,

and Zhuang (2000) used the constructs of TAM to explore the ease of use and usefulness of the world-wide-web (WWW) by including 163 participants who use the Internet for their job. Lederer et al. (2000) collected data by an email survey. The researchers validated TAM in terms of ease of use and usefulness of the WWW.

As with other researchers, Carlos Martins Rodrigues Pinho and Soares (2011) used the TAM to gain a better understanding of new technology adoption. The quantitative study was limited to 150 university students. The researchers applied a survey method of data collection. The results of the study were consistent with the TAM in the adoption of social networks. Lin (2013) conducted a study different from other researchers who used the TAM constructs. Lin explored the relationship between TAM and usability testing. Researchers frequently develop tests to determine how well technology users understand a specific technology (Lin, 2013). Lin performed the usability test on an eCampus learning system with a personal digital assistant (PDA) mobile device. Lin did not find a relationship between the TAM's perceived usefulness and usability.

Researchers commonly employ the uses and gratification theory (U&G) theory to understand media usage. Researchers use the U&G theory to explain why people chose a certain media to fulfill their gratification needs and why they continue to use that media (Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016). In the U&G theory, media users choose their level of participation and decide whether to engage in certain media based on their socio-psychological needs (Krause, North, & Heritage, 2014). Media users select a media based

on their needs and continue to use that media as long as their needs are satisfied (Ku, Chen, & Zhang, 2013).

The U&G theory is an adoption theory researchers use to explore Internet usage (Luo & Remus, 2014). Researchers use the U&G theory to explore consumer context and behavior. A number of studies have used U&G theory to evaluate Facebook activities such as photo sharing (Malik et al., 2016), listening to music (Krause et al., 2014), sharing information (Lee & Ma, 2012), and sharing music videos (Karnik, Oakley, Venkatanathan, Spiliotopoulos, & Nisi, 2013). The U&G theory often helps researchers explain the motivations for media usage, whereas diffusion of innovation theory and the TAM explains IT adoption. For example, Krause et al. (2014) used the U&G theory to understand the uses and gratifications of Facebook music listening application users. The researchers found that communication, entertainment, and habitual diversion were the key motivations for usage of Facebook music listening applications (Krause et al., 2014).

When businesses develop social media sites, they should take into consideration the demographics of their target base to ensure it is user friendly. Social media usage increases as users discover the multitude of features available to connect with others and share information (Rauniar et al., 2014). The results of this study explained how small business restaurant owners accept social media at various levels of engagement by using the diffusion of innovation theory.

Transition

The goals of Section 1 were to explore relevant, current, and available works on social media strategies used for marketing. The literature review provided a social context for online communities, social media marketing, WOM, customer relationship management, creating value, MROI, improved business practice, and conceptual framework. Section 2 includes a discussion of the qualitative method of research used to determine which social media marketing strategies small restaurant business managers and owners use to support social media. In section 3, I provided the data results from interviews, study conclusions, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and personal recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 includes the sampling method, sample size, and eligibility criteria for the participants. In addition, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis were key elements of this research study. This section expands on Section 1 and provides an in-depth review. In Section 3, I present the findings of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to examine strategies that small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing. The target population was five small restaurant business owners in WNC, who successfully used social media marketing for 1 year or more. The results of this study might contribute to positive social change by assisting small restaurant businesses in gaining and retaining customers, growing their business, and increasing employment. Increased employment could improve the standard of living in local communities.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this qualitative multicase study was to gather data without bias. I have a personal Facebook and Twitter account, but I have no direct experience with using social media as a marketing tool. I do not have any personal or professional relationship with the participants of the study, which helped to minimize associated bias.

Researchers use their strengths to obtain perspectives and viewpoints to discover and explain the thought process and experiences of the participants (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012). The researcher assumes the role of the data collection instrument, in a

qualitative study in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Parker (2014) suggested that proper planning and preparation include careful selection of the participants, data collection, data organization, and data analysis helps to understand the participants. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that researchers use an interview protocol with each participant to ensure reliability and validity. I used an interview protocol. I followed all ethical standards by adhering to the protocols outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), which provides the ethical guidelines for the protection of human participants.

Participants

Researchers use purposeful sampling to identify participants who have successfully addressed the business problem. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants who meet set criteria to provide data that reflect that particular population (Robinson, 2014). For this study, the participants met the following criteria: (a) at least 1 year experience in creating and implementing marketing strategies using social media, and (b) small restaurant business owners in WNC.

I sourced participants for this study from restaurants in WNC on social media websites and a list provided by the local Chamber of Commerce. Food service companies are among the top three industries with the smallest business employment in North Carolina (SBA, 2015). After identifying that the participants met above criteria, I sent each participant a letter by email to ask for their interest in participating in this study. I followed up the email with a personal visit to the restaurants to speak with the owners to

introduce my study and myself. The personal visit to the restaurants offered me the opportunity to establish a working relationship with the owners. Establishing a working relationship with each participant by being honest about the intended purpose and outcome of the study helps to obtain their trust (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As participants showed interest in participating in this study, they received a detailed written description of study expectations. Dworkin (2012) suggested a small sample size for qualitative research. This study included five small restaurant business owners to interview. Accommodation and food service small businesses represent over 58% of total employees in North Carolina (SBA, 2016).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

In this research study, I followed a qualitative approach to explore successful marketing strategies used by small restaurant business owners. The qualitative research method is useful in obtaining knowledge on peoples' perspectives, thought processes, and experiences (Adams, Broom, & Jennaway, 2012). Parker (2014) stated that a qualitative methodology suits the need of research if certain considerations exist. These considerations were: the study was exploratory, the use of hypothesis was not appropriate because of the complexity of the business problem, the themes from the study assisted in data interpretation, that a large sample was not appropriate, and the researcher controls the analysis of the meaning of the data (Parker, 2014). Researchers use qualitative methodology to source data through interviews, observation, and documentation (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). A qualitative research method was appropriate for this study

because the research question included exploration of social media strategies that small restaurant business owners used to support social media marketing.

In contrast, in quantitative data collection, researchers remain consistent with their research questions and hypotheses throughout the study to provide accurate information (Diefenbach, 2009). Researchers use quantitative research to test theories by examining the relationships and differences between variables (Frels & Onweugbuzie, 2013). In quantitative studies, the results provide numerical data used to measure the relationship between factors and variables (Parker, 2014). Quantitative research was an effective approach to exploring human experiences in the context of the social media phenomena. In this study, employing quantitative research methods would not have provided the data necessary to understand the strategies small restaurant business owners used to support social media marketing.

In mixed method research, the investigator combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (Harrison, 2012). The mixed method approach is useful in determining not only the cause of the phenomenon but also the underlying facts of the cause using both quantitative and qualitative data (Maxwell, 2013). Data obtained from a mixed method approach combines both quantitative data and qualitative data into one dataset for analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this research study, a mixed method approach was not suitable because I collected and analyzed only qualitative data from interviews and documents.

Research Design

The multicase study research design was the most appropriate design for this study. The goals of case study research include in-depth exploration of the program, event, or activity that involves one or more individuals (Yin, 2014). Researchers who conduct multicase study research gather data from multiple cases to get a more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and to increase credibility (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). Boblin et al. (2013) used case study research to explore processes and the outcomes of activities. In this study, I explored the strategies of small restaurant business owners in using social media marketing. Case study research was most appropriate.

I used the multicase study research design for this study. Researchers use case study research design to explore in depth programs, events, or activities that involve one or more individuals (Yin, 2014). Case study research was most appropriate for this study to uncover meaning and understanding of social media marketing phenomena when little information exists. Researchers use the ethnography design to focus on understanding an entire cultural group (Sangasubana, 2011), which was not appropriate for this study because the participants were specifically small restaurant business owners. Researchers use grounded theory to uncover repeated themes or concepts from data to develop a theory (Hays & Wood, 2011). The purpose was not to develop a theory in this research study. Grounded theory design was not appropriate. Researchers use phenomenology to study the lived experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994). I explored the marketing strategies of the participants rather than their lived experiences. The narrative research design helps researchers tell a life story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative research

was not suitable because I did not explore the life stories of participants. Researchers often use semistructured interviews to saturate the data (Robinson, 2014). I conducted semistructured interviews, document analysis, and a review of social media pages with member checking until I saturated the data. The data is saturated when there is no new information found in all of the data (Cleary et al., 2014; Rao, 2012).

Population and Sampling

The population of this study included five small restaurant business owners in WNC who had at least 1 year of experience using social media for marketing. I searched for small restaurant businesses in WNC on social media websites and obtained information from the local Chamber of Commerce for a list of participants for this study. I emailed the first 10 participants a letter to ask for participation in my study. No one responded to the email so I personally visited the restaurants to speak with the owners. Five participants agreed to participate in this study. Purposeful sampling is highly effective in supplying abundant, in-depth information concerning experiences of business owners (Robinson, 2014). The participants' knowledge and experience determine the value of the data (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014); therefore, I used a purposeful sampling technique for this study. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) encouraged purposeful sampling with a small sample size to collect information rather than a larger population.

In qualitative research, the number of participants can be sufficient to reach data saturation (Dworkin, 2012). For this study I began the data collection process by interviewing five participants and after completion of these five interviews, I reviewed to determine saturation in the interview data. The data is saturated when there is no new

information found in all of the data (Cleary et al., 2014; Rao, 2012). I continued interviewing until the interview data was saturated. All interviews and member checking took place over the phone. The interview setting was in a quiet home office with a closed door to ensure confidentiality. The participants' setting was in their natural environment to provide comfort during the interview.

Ethical Research

I followed all ethical practices and regulations to conduct research within this study. Research began after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) authorization. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 09-26-16-0242483. Researchers use a written consent form to indicate that participation is voluntary (Cane, McCarthy, & Halawi, 2010). The participants received a written consent to interview form and confidentiality agreement via email. The participants responded to the email stating that they consent. I informed the participants that the interviews were confidential.

To ensure confidentiality, no information such as business names or participants' names appear in published or written documents that could identify the participants of this study. I assigned each participant a number instead of using names to organize and store the data, as suggested by Brady (2011). I addressed any questions or concerns from the participants as part of the consent process. Yin (2014) suggested that researchers should allow participants to withdraw from a study at any time. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me via phone or email.

This study had no potential risk to the participants because the research involved collecting data in the participants' natural setting. Notes, transcripts, and interview

recordings are stored on a personal hard drive in a locked home office cabinet. All data is securely stored for 5 years and I will destroy it by shredding printed documents and electronically erasing digital information thereafter to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Koocher (2014) suggested that participants should not receive incentives to complete an interview. The participants did not receive incentives to complete the interview, nor had any obligations after the study. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). The researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data (Parker, 2014). I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions as the primary data source for this study (see Appendix A), over the phone with small restaurant business owners in WNC. Before conducting the interview, participants received an emailed informed consent form to review and sign. With the permission of the participants, I used an audio recording device to record the interviews and later transcribe the interviews using *Echo Smartpen* by Livescribe. An interview protocol ensures reliability and validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I asked all participants the same interview questions systematically by using an interview protocol (See Appendix B). Detailed field notes and audio recordings include spontaneous questions and answers. I requested documents from the participants relating to social media marketing strategies. I also collected public information from social media websites and business websites.

Member checking is a participant validation technique used to ensure the researcher has accurately interpreted the participants' answers to the interview questions (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Researchers conduct member checking to give the participants a chance to review the researcher's depiction of their answers to the interview questions (Yin, 2014). Participants received emailed copies of the interview summaries. I then contacted participants by phone to review the interview summary and to give them the opportunity to comment. All participants agreed that I had captured their interview responses correctly. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested member checking to enhance reliability and validity.

Data Collection Technique

In qualitative research, interviews include ideas and insights better than other research methods (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). In this study, I used interviews to collect data about the participant's social media marketing strategies. Researchers conduct interviews via telephone, Internet, or face-to-face (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) conducted research to compare telephone and face-to-face interviews, which resulted in no significant differences in collecting data by phone than face-to-face. I personally conducted phone interviews for this study. Consistent, open-ended questions allow flexibility for follow-up questions to encourage the flow of the interview conversation (Knight, 2012). I did not conduct a pilot study.

During the interviews, I used the Echo Smartpen by Livescribe to take field notes. The Echo Smartpen by Livescribe software enabled me to record and to transcribe handwritten notes. Audio recordings and interview notes serve as verification of the

transcribed interviews. Accuracy and completeness establish credibility (Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checking is the participant's review of the researcher's interpretation of the answers to the interview questions (Yin, 2014). To complete member checking, I emailed participants a one to two-page summary of the interview and contacted them by phone to review my interpretations of their interview responses. The participants' responses and comments verify that the researcher depicted their feelings and experiences accurately (Harper & Cole, 2012). Researchers use member checking to confirm that the responses of each participant in the study were clearly understood and represented (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Data Organization Technique

I collected data by interviewing five owners of small restaurant businesses. To remain consistent, researchers organize and categorize all data collected after each interview (Petty et al., 2012). Data are organized into groups to manage the multiple forms of data collected (Yin, 2014). I used an electronic file system and a hard copy file system for each participant to maintain and organize documents, interview transcriptions, and field notes. Using numerical labels rather than names protects the identity of the participants (Brady, 2011). I assigned a number to each participant. A personal external hard drive in a locked home office file cabinet will house audio recordings, notes, and transcriptions as individual files. I will securely store all data for 5 years and destroy it by shredding printed documents and electronically erasing digital information thereafter.

Data Analysis

In case study research, it is important to understand the data collected (Yin, 2014). The researcher analyzes the collected data to interpret the meaning of the participants' responses (Petty et al., 2012). DeMassis and Kotlar (2014) suggested reviewing and labeling each document. I carefully reviewed and labeled each document before analyzing the data.

Coding is the process of defining and sorting information applicable to the study. The purpose of coding is to connect data for interpretation (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). Interview notes and transcripts were hand coded, by color-coding, to find commonalities. I first identified key terms and word similarities and placed them into categories. Then I looked for phrase similarities. Finally, I focused on identifying key themes that relate to the literature. DeMassis and Kotlar (2014) described the analysis phase as the categorization of themes that emerge resulting from examination of the data. The use of the methodological triangulation approach improves data analysis (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012) and ensures data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used Yin's 5-step analysis approach and methodological triangulation that consisted of semistructured interviews, a review of the business social media pages, and an analysis of collected documents. The conceptual framework links the literature with the methodology and results of the study (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative reliability occurs when consistency exists among various researchers in different research studies (Onwugbuzie & Byers, 2014). Documenting each step in the research study is imperative for reliability (Kikooma, 2010). Using a systematic approach to collecting data, organizing data, and data analysis to ensure dependability minimizes errors and bias (Trotter, 2012). I collected data through in-depth interviews with open-ended questions with small restaurant business owners. The interview questions in this study allowed the participants to respond to their experience in using social media for marketing. Researchers use an interview protocol to help strengthen reliability (Trotter, 2012). I used an interview protocol for each interview.

Validity

Qualitative research involves detailed and in-depth knowledge of the research topic (Onwugbuzie & Byers, 2014). I conducted an on-going investigation of the topic by the continued research of peer-reviewed journal articles, marketing websites, and periodical publications. To ensure credibility in this study, I was the sole researcher who conducted all interviews as suggested by Brod, Tesler, and Christensen (2009). I recorded each interview to ensure accuracy. Audio recordings help to eliminate any errors in transcription (Kikooma, 2010). Robinson (2014) suggested conducting additional interviews, if required, to reach data saturation of the interview data. I did not need to conduct any further interviews to do so because no new data was uncovered. Data saturation is one measure of the validity of the study.

Researchers use transferability to indicate whether the qualitative research results apply to other settings (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). I enhanced transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the process used to conduct the study. Ultimately, the reader decides transferability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Confirmability refers to the exactness of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Member checking enhanced the accuracy of the data. I used member checking to validate my interpretation of the interview responses. I incorporated follow up and probing questions to clarify topics.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore successful social media marketing strategies implemented by small restaurant business owners or managers. The data collection and analysis procedures allowed for exploration of effective social media marketing strategies used by small restaurant business owners. In section 3, I include discussions of the results of the study, implications for social change, and recommendations for actions and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore what strategies small business owners use to market their restaurant business via social media. Data came from semistructured interviews, document collection, and a review of social media pages and websites for the participating restaurants. As cited by the participants, Instagram, Yelp, and Facebook were the most widely used social media platforms. I conducted a review of the pages on those platforms for each of the respective restaurants and reviewed their standalone websites as part of the document review process. The findings of the study revealed three themes regarding social media marketing strategies: (a) social media platforms, (b) word-of-mouth, and (c) challenges implementing social media.

Presentation of the Findings

In this section, I present the research findings of this study. The primary research question was: What strategies do small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing? Data collection included semistructured interviews, document collection pertaining to social media marketing, and a review of social media pages and websites for the participating restaurants. I analyzed the collected data to explore the strategies that small business restaurant owners use to support social media marketing. The data analysis resulted in the development of themes that aligned with the study's conceptual framework and literature review. I also discussed findings that did not align with the literature review.

Participant Demographics

The five participants in this study were each owners of small restaurant businesses in WNC. I gathered participant demographic data and company background information from the restaurant websites and social media pages. Participants were both male and female, between the ages of 36 and 53. All five participants owned restaurants in WNC and had less than 20 employees. Each participant had recently been actively engaged in social media and had over 1 year of experience in developing and implementing social media marketing strategies. On average, the participants posted twice a week on social media pages engaging with their customers.

Semistructured Interviews

One source of the data collection for this study was semistructured, over-the-phone interviews with the participants. The interviews included nine open-ended questions, which helped me ask probing questions to explore the participants' use of social media marketing. I interviewed the participants between September 30, 2016 and October 5, 2016.

Using the interview protocol, I completed individual interviews with the owners of five small business restaurants. I used an Echo Smart Pen to capture the interview dialogue, which enabled transcription of the data. Following each interview, I completed member checking by writing a one to two-page interview summary and emailed the interview summary to the participants for review. I followed up with a phone call to ensure that I accurately interpreted their responses to the interview questions. All five participants agreed that I correctly interpreted their responses to the interview questions.

None of the participants shared additional information during the member checking process. After transcribing the interviews using Microsoft Word, I printed and hand coded the transcripts by way of color-coding to promote organization and thematic analysis of the data.

Social Media Page and Document Review

A review of each participant's social media pages and documents regarding social media marketing served as supplementary data sources for this study. During the individual interviews, I received information from the participants about their social media platforms and websites and requested documentation of their social media marketing strategies. Using Microsoft Word, I reviewed each company's social media web pages and recorded information pertaining to usage. I reviewed each company's pages to obtain demographic information and to ensure each restaurant met the criteria for inclusion of my study. These data provided detailed information to understand the participants' social media usage and to allow comparison of the participants' usage patterns.

I collected documents that pertained to the businesses' social media marketing efforts. Participant 2 provided a business-marketing plan that revealed the restaurant's social media marketing strategy was to incorporate social media on all marketing materials to solicit engagement. The restaurant owner stated in the marketing plan that social media site logos, such as Facebook and Instagram, are placed on business websites, signage throughout the restaurant, and menus to invite customers to share, like, and follow their business on the websites. Participant 2 also emailed a sample customer

receipt to serve as evidence of how their business included these logos on marketing material as an invitation to connect with the restaurant on social media sites. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 5 did not have a written business marketing strategy plan. The participants posited that a written marketing plan was not necessary. In addition, participants 1, 3, 4, and 5 were not able to produce printed marketing materials because they no longer use them as a form of marketing. The participants believed that MROI was not achievable, thereby; the restaurant owners eliminated the cost by not utilizing printed forms of marketing.

Based on the data collected from interview question responses, participant social media web pages, and document review, three major themes emerged. The first theme identified the social media websites that the participants used, the second theme accentuated the importance of WOM, and the third theme involved the challenges businesses face when implementing social media marketing. All three of the themes correspond with the strategies used by the participants to support social media marketing. The following subsections provide descriptions of the three major themes.

Emergent Theme One: Social Media Platforms

The first theme that emerged from the data concerned the social media platforms that each participant used. Social media platforms afford users the opportunity to stay current on the news, to voice concerns, to offer opinions, and to engage in communication with others (Go & You, 2016). Kwok and Yu (2013) stated that restaurants draw in new business and increase sales by using social media websites. Using specific social media platforms can aid in increased communication by developing

a relationship between the company and the consumer, creating trust and credibility (Shen, Chiou, Hsiao, Wang, & Li, 2016). Otherwise, the marketing efforts could decrease in effectiveness by not engaging with the consumer (Shen et al., 2016).

Facebook, Yelp, and Instagram were the most employed social media platforms among the participants of this study. Participant responses supported the assertions of Kohli et al. (2015), who stated that social media marketing provides a low-cost marketing option. Two participants reported that they only use Facebook to market to their customers because it is cost-effective and efficient to reach their customer base. The remaining three participants found that while Facebook was the most efficient social media platform, engaging in additional social media platforms helped to reach more customers.

Facebook is the most preferred social media site (Jennings et al., 2014). Businesses use Facebook as a marketing tool because of the potential to reach and communicate to a large population (Fan & Gordon, 2014). As of July 2016, there were 1.71 billion people on Facebook (DMR, 2016). All five participants had business Facebook pages, three participants employed Yelp for customer reviews, and two participants used Instagram to post pictures.

Table 1 shows the various social media sites in which the participants had an online presence. Menupix, Zomato, Menuism, and Foursquare are social media sites that generate restaurant ratings based on customer input. It does not appear that the participants were actively engaged on the respective sites.

Table 1

Review of Participants' Social Media Presence

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Facebook	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Instagram	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Yelp	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Menupix	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Zomato	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Menuism	N	Y	N	Y	N
Foursquare	N	N	N	Y	N

Note. Y = Yes; N = No.

The influence of social media has changed the way businesses relate to their customers (Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2014). It is easier to market to customers with social media (P1, P5). Business websites can link to social media websites to allow customers to place online orders for pick up or delivery (P3, P4, & P5). Participant 5 stated that 54% of food purchases were in some way linked to the restaurant's social media page. A review of the businesses' social media sites revealed that the participants used social media to post pictures and videos, promote community events, advertise daily specials, and post the restaurant's menu (See Table 2).

Table 2

Review of Participants' Facebook Posts

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Photos	Menu Items Customers Community Events Employment Opportunities Holiday Events	Daily Specials Menu Items	Menu Items	Customers	Menu Items Specials Board Customers
Menu	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Videos	Salad & Buffet Tables	Bdays Employee Engagement w/Customers		Bdays & Holidays	
Events	Themed Kids' Night Cruise-in				
Recent Posts	Daily Specials Promotions Gift Certificates Holiday and Seasonal Events Kids' Night	Daily Specials	Daily Specials	Voted Best Restaurant Certificate Karaoke Menu Items Kids' Night	Hours of Operation Menu Specials

Note. Data current as of October 2016

Competition influences business owners to engage in social media (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The participants' responses to the interview questions affirmed that the primary reason for engaging in social media marketing was that it is the new way of reaching customers in this digital age. Many restaurants in the surrounding area communicate with customers on social media (P1). Other restaurants have been successful with using social media (P2). Social media is how people communicate these days (P3).

Using social media as a marketing strategy confirms Rogers's findings on diffusion of information. The participants further assessed that social media amplifies electronic WOM, which is consistent with the findings of Kumar and Mirchandani's (2012) research. Social influence affects the rate of social media adoption (Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) referred to this as relative advantage in his diffusion of innovations theory. Businesses are motivated to adopt an innovation when there is a foreseeable advantage (Rogers, 2003). Consistent with the diffusion of innovation theory, small business restaurant owners adopted the innovation of social media to communicate with the customers in their social system. The participants of this study acknowledged that social media connects their business to customers and the community increasing brand awareness and sales.

Emergent Theme Two: Word-of-Mouth

All five participants emphasized the power of electronic WOM marketing. An electronic WOM strategy is crucial to marketing success (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Participant 1 stated, "WOM is how I get all my business." Participant 2 agreed that most of their business also comes from electronic WOM when customers share posts and communicate with one another. Three of the five participants added that they encourage customers to post pictures of the food on social media sites and comment about their experience in the restaurant to help spread the word about the service they received (P2, P4, & P5). In addition to posting pictures and sharing experiences, Participants 4 and 5 offer incentives to share, like, and comment on a post for discounts and coupons on future purchases. Shen et al. (2016) suggested that interactive advertising could increase

the potential for positive consumer reaction. The dominant factor in WOM engagement is customer satisfaction, which occurs when the client wants to share a positive experience about a product or service (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). All five participants confirmed that customers are enthusiastic to share their experience on social media sites, especially when it is a positive one.

Social media allows WOM to accelerate its reach (Walaski, 2013). Participant 4 mentioned that friends also help encourage the spread of information on social media sites. Potential consumers are more interested in what others recommend rather than the vendor-generated information provided (Hajli, 2014). People respond to comments made by customers, but do not typically respond to posts originated by the restaurant (P3). Tracking user activity identifies who communicates and which posts users view on your social media page (P2). Facebook's business page manager mobile phone application offers a weekly report of Facebook user activity (P2). The followers and likes on a social media page is another indication of who the active users are on your page (P3). Table 3 lists the participating restaurants' Facebook user activity.

Table 3

Facebook User Activity

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
People Talking About This	27	7	16	94	38
People Checked In	515	1668	13	13048	9
Likes	750	464	724	1823	191
Page Followers	739	454	717	1760	191

Note. Data current as of October 2016

Customers spread WOM by posting feedback and sharing the business's social media pages with their friends and followers. The customers create dialogue about the

service and the quality of the food (P1, P2, P3, & 5). Customer reviews increase brand awareness (P5). “When people see that your restaurant ranks five stars, it encourages them to want to visit” (P5). Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the number of customer reviews and the customer ratings of the participating restaurants on Facebook and Yelp.

Table 4

Facebook Customer Reviews and Ratings

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
# of Reviews	96	51	21	469	12
Star Rating	4.8	4.7	4.9	4.4	5

Note. Data current as of October 2016

Table 5

Yelp Customer Reviews and Ratings

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
# of Reviews	13	2		21	
Star Rating	4.5	4.5		4	

Note. Data current as of October 2016

Emergent Theme Three: Challenges Implementing Social Media

The final theme that emerged from the data involved the challenges businesses face when implementing social media marketing. Results from the 2012 Social Business Global Executive Survey showed that the number one barrier impeding the adoption of social software in an organization is the lack of management understanding (Kiron et al., 2013). The greatest challenge for companies regarding social media marketing is to figure out how and when to use it appropriately and efficiently (Bruce & Solomon, 2013; Harris et al., 2012; Kiron et al., 2013). DiPietro et al. (2012) found that leaders in the restaurant industry were unsure of how to use social media to their benefit. The findings

from the participants of this study are not consistent with the above-mentioned research concerning the challenges of implementing social media for marketing. Although Participant 1 and Participant 4 indicated that they had a lack in knowledge concerning social media usage, their efforts have been successful. Participant 1 further acknowledged that they were not using social media to its full potential, “Being a small business, I am able to generate more than enough business with just posting the daily specials and communicating with customers.” Participant 2 stated, “My friends and family had to show me how to develop a Facebook page because I did not know where to start, but Facebook is a user friendly site.” Participant 5 admitted that he learned social media by trial and error. Participant 4 commented that when having a business social media site, you are able to track the activity of your friends and followers. “If it weren’t for the synopsis of user activity that social media sites provide, I would not know how successful my marketing is.” Participants 2 and 4 periodically review reports on social media mobile phone applications, generated by social media sites to track user activity.

By listening to consumer feedback, businesses are in a position to develop responses to change the behavior and the mindset of consumers (Kohli et al., 2015). Participant 5 stated that he was able to respond quickly to negative posts by constantly monitoring posts made on the social media websites. Researchers Austin and Upton (2016) believed that once customers share negative information, it is nearly impossible for a business to stop the flow of information. Participant 5 argued that, “Negative reviews are like a doubled edge sword and can potentially damage the reputation of your business. Customers can help diffuse the negative comments by posting positive

comments to the original negative post.” Businesses can purchase software to help track negative comments posted on social media sites and assist them in responding (Labrecque, 2014). The participants in this study did not purchase such software, as they did not feel they needed it.

The participants’ responses were consistent with a study conducted by Mariani, Di Felice, and Mura (2016) on Facebook usage in Italy. The researchers found that the majority of Facebook posts by businesses were made during the work week (Monday to Friday), even though users interact more on the weekends and most posts were during the evening or at night (Mariani et al., 2016). “It is time consuming to post on social media throughout the day” (P2). “I spend part of my day, during down times, responding to posts and participating in conversations from the day before” (P3). “It seems that I have more hits on my site when I’m not at work” (P4).

When asked about the challenges faced in implementing social media marketing strategies, Participant 3 asserted that her biggest challenge was maneuvering Facebook’s system. Participant 3 stated:

Facebook has too much control over the content that businesses can put on their pages. Facebook monitors all activity and you have to pay attention to how many times you post a certain phrase or word. It limits reach to potential customers. I am constantly trying to find a work around to how their system operates. It is a struggle to keep up with the constant changes with Facebook. Facebook has a problem when you use a word too many times and gives you a warning that your site will be shut down if you continue.

As with any marketing strategy, a company assesses the customer wants and determines how they will deliver (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Shen et al. (2016) suggested that businesses chose the correct social media for their competency level to maximize results. DiPietro et al. (2012) conducted a study surveying restaurants that use social media and found that building customer relations is the most significant benefit. Participants of this study confirmed that they build relationships within their communities using social media. Participant 1 noted that networking with other local businesses helps to obtain potential customers. To collaborate with local businesses, Participant 1 hosts events such as cruise-ins and holiday celebrations at the restaurant, while Participant 4 hosts karaoke nights for community groups and organizations (See Table 2).

Connecting Findings to Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study exemplify Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory. Diffusion of innovation occurs when members of the social system adopt the innovation, such as a new idea or practice, over time (Rogers, 2003). The four major components involved in the diffusion of innovations process are (a) innovation, (b) communication channels, (c) time, and (d) social system (Rogers, 2003). In this multicase study, the innovation or new idea was social media marketing. Social media provides businesses the opportunity to network with others (Harris et al., 2012). The participants used this new way of networking to market to current and potential customers through various communication channels such as Facebook and Instagram. Participants developed social media web pages to increase awareness and promote sales. Once a social media presence was established, the participants posted information about products and services,

promotions, and menu specials. Over time, each participant attracted more followers by collaboration with customers on their social media pages, which increased brand awareness. One participant explained that they implemented social media marketing first by developing a Facebook page and later incorporated Yelp and Instagram (P4). Participant 4 further noted that this decision was due to the responses received from customers. WOM was a driving force for increased business. As the restaurants acquired popularity, their brand circulated through people who connect (social system) on social media sites, which is the final component of Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this study provided social media marketing strategies employed by owners of small business restaurants. This study's findings may help owners of small business restaurants understand the most effective social media marketing strategies, the significance of WOM, and the challenges faced when implementing social media marketing strategies. The effective use of social media marketing is advantageous to small business, because it increases revenue, and is more cost-effective (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). The specific business problem was that some small restaurant business owners lack social media marketing strategies. The results of this study may provide small business restaurant owners a solution to engage in social media marketing effectively.

Many small business restaurant owners may not understand the importance of developing social media marketing strategies. In the current technology and information age, social media has a significant role (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Todor (2016)

suggested that the most efficient marketing strategy is the combination of both traditional and digital marketing. Participants in this study indicated that they rely heavily on digital marketing rather than traditional marketing methods. In an effort to combine traditional and digital marketing, one participant integrated social media with printed menus, messages on customer receipts, and signage throughout the restaurants asking customers to like or follow their social media pages. None of the participants used the common forms of traditional media such as newspapers, brochures, and billboards for marketing.

With this study, I confirmed that implementing social media marketing strategies successfully does not require formal training or understanding of all the components on the various social media platforms. As such, small business restaurant owners should choose at least one social media platform to begin developing a social media presence. I have noticed that with the growing rate of social media, many local venues and companies offer seminars, webinars, online tutorials, and training guides for business practitioners. The participants in this study did not participate in any form of training to learn how to implement social media marketing. If business owners do not take the time to understand how to use social media as a marketing tool, businesses could cause potential damage to their organizations by missed opportunities for growth and sales (Li, 2012). I believe that recruiting employees who are social media savvy may relieve business owners from the learning curve associated with social media and may increase employment rate in the community.

Businesses that engage in social media understand they have limited control over the content that customers share with their target market (Kohli et al., 2015). One

participant indicated that a negative comment on the restaurant's social media site created an online dialog between customers and resulted with a positive outcome (P5). The customers replied to the negative post by sharing their positive experience, thus, making the original negative comment appear not credible. Being active on social media can allow business owners to facilitate positive conversation, identify customer concerns, and obtain information for new menu items, and recommendations for better services. Creating a plan to combat negative comments and posts on social media sites could benefit small business restaurant owners.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study reveal that social media marketing has a significant positive impact on restaurant performance. Small businesses engage in social media marketing to promote visibility and awareness of their brand within the local community (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Small restaurant businesses use marketing strategies on social media websites to disseminate their marketing message (Kwok & Yu, 2013). The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by increasing community relations by allowing them to communicate on businesses' social media pages. Encouraging the community to interact with peers and the wider environment increases visibility, viability, and sustainability for small businesses (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The sustainability of small businesses could increase employment and the standard of living for local residents. In turn, these businesses might help contribute to the economy of their community, drive economic development, and improve community relations.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies that small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing. Based on the findings of this study, there are three recommendations for small restaurant business owners to consider. The first recommendation is that small business restaurants should determine which social media strategies align with the goals of the restaurant and take the time to create a presence on social media platforms. I recommend taking advantage of available social media training opportunities to increase success in implementing social media marketing tools. Participants of this study received no training or education in using social media. The participants further stated that Facebook was a user-friendly social media site. Implementation takes little to no experience.

The second recommendation is to encourage customer feedback. Social media is helpful in engaging in communication with current and potential customers. Customers increase WOM by posting comments and reviews, following or liking a page, and sharing social media pages with their network. To facilitate this, I recommend providing incentives such as coupons or discounts on future purchases, as suggested by the participants.

The third recommendation is to formulate a plan to overcome obstacles and challenges that may arise with implementing social media marketing strategies. It is important to understand policies and procedures for approved content that businesses can post on their social media pages. In addition, constant communication with active users on social media platforms decreases the potential of negative content. The findings of this

study can be useful information to create training programs on the use of social media marketing for small business restaurants. This information could be disseminated to small restaurant business owners through journals and conferences.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study provide a foundation for further research in the areas of social media marketing. In this qualitative multicase study, there were two main limitations: research participants may not fully engage during the interview process and the potential lack of information and available documents. The participants in this study were eager to share their social media marketing strategies. Since the participants did not use search engine optimization such as pay per click advertisements or Google analytics, documentation was limited. Researchers could expand this study to include face-to-face interviews and on-site visits to small business restaurants to observe the customer's experience. This study included small restaurant businesses in WNC. Recommendations for further research are to expand research to other geographic locations. Further research utilizing a quantitative method to examine in-depth financial performance analysis of the relationship between marketing techniques and profitability rates may provide additional information on effective marketing strategies.

Reflections

The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program has been a challenging yet rewarding experience. I began the program with a preconceived notion that I was at a disadvantage in completing a doctoral study since I was not required to conduct research while obtaining my Master degree. The courses included in

this program provided a solid foundation in conducting research and has encouraged me to develop this skill further once completing the program.

I chose to research social media marketing strategies based on my past marketing experience. I spent a few years as a virtual real estate agent where I was in charge of managing a high producing real estate team. My main objective was to make sure that all agents on the team were successful and that everyone had a constant stream of clients. Marketing became my specialty. It had been a while since then and marketing has evolved with the growth of social media so I chose to focus my study on learning about this new way of marketing.

The participants of this qualitative multicase study provided knowledge and understanding of social media marketing strategies. I was surprised at their openness and willingness to share their marketing strategies with me. Having only a personal Facebook page, I was unaware of the benefits and challenges of using social media marketing for business. I gained valuable information on implementing social media marketing and awareness of the obstacles and challenges associated. Prior to conducting interviews, I had no relationship with the participants, which helped to avoid bias. One challenge that I faced during this study was collecting documents pertaining to social media marketing strategies. The participants could not provide written documentation, such as financial reports or social media website analytics, because they did not track such information. I found that documentation was limited.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to determine the strategies that small restaurant business owners use to support social media marketing. Five small restaurant businesses in WNC participated in interviews to explore this subject. Study findings revealed three themes: (a) social media platforms, (b) WOM, and (c) challenges when implementing social media. Social media has increased in popularity when compared to traditional methods of marketing. Some participants of this study have eliminated printed marketing material and implemented social media as their sole source of marketing. Participant responses confirmed the importance in using social media marketing strategies to generate sales. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations could help small restaurant businesses understand how to incorporate social media into their marketing mix. Facebook was the most used social media marketing platform by the participants of this study. The findings of this study affirm that constant contact and communication with current and prospective customers fosters relationship building and expands WOM. WOM has the potential to increase sales and brand awareness. I concluded from the findings that social media is a powerful marketing tool for small business restaurants when used and properly implemented.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The following interview questions will allow exploration of the strategies used by small restaurant business owners concerning social media marketing:

1. What social media marketing strategies do you use?
2. What motivated you to use social media marketing strategies?
3. What are the obstacles you faced while developing and implementing social media marketing strategies?
4. What social media strategies are most effective or beneficial for your company?
5. What social media strategies are least effective or beneficial for your company?
6. How do you measure the performance of each social media you engage in?
7. How do you use search engine optimization?
8. What additional strategies can you share regarding your social media marketing strategies?
9. What else should I be asking you about using social media marketing for restaurants?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

- I. Commence with introduction of self and research study
- II. Thank them for their time
- III. Review consent form and answer any questions
- IV. Turn on recording device, noting the date and time
- V. Introduce participant with pseudonym/coded identification
- VI. Begin interview with question #1; follow through to the final question.
- VII. Follow up with additional questions
- VIII. End interview sequence; discuss member checking with participant
- IX. Thank them and verify their contact information
- X. End protocol.